

JONATHAN GILMOUR & DOUG LEVANDOWSKI

KIDS ON BIKES

DELUXE EDITION



A ROLE PLAYING GAME ABOUT SMALL TOWNS AND BIG ADVENTURES!





KIDS ON BIKES

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KIDS ON BIKES

DELUXE EDITION

FORGOTTEN FARMHOUSE

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JENNIFER YONGE:
KIDS IN TOWN TEASE HER
WITH THE NICKNAME "HER
MAJESTY, THE DARKNESS."

OKAY,
SHORTY...
WHAT DO
YOU GUYS
SEE WHERE
YOU ARE?

W.K.: "WEIRD KID."
A STRANGE BOY
WHO APPEARED IN A
FLASH OF LIGHTNING
IN THE YONGE'S
BACKYARD 45
MINUTES AGO. SINCE
THEN, POWER HAS
BEEN OUT ACROSS
THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

SHEP YONGE:
JENN'S LITTLE BROTHER.
LOVES WRESTLING.
HATES GHOST STORIES.



ASHLEY HUNTER:
JENN'S BEST FRIEND
BEFORE SHE STARTED
LISTENING TO *THE CURE*.
WORKS AT THE SCHOOL
LIBRARY.

I REALLY
DON'T LIKE
THIS...

IT'S
FINE,
HENNEY.
DON'T BE
SUCH A
BIG
BABY.

PENG "SHORTY" ZHOU:
SHEP'S BEST FRIEND. HAS A
CRUSH ON ASHLEY. NEVER
LEAVES HOME WITHOUT
HIS BACKPACK CRAMMED
WITH BOOKS AND TOYS.

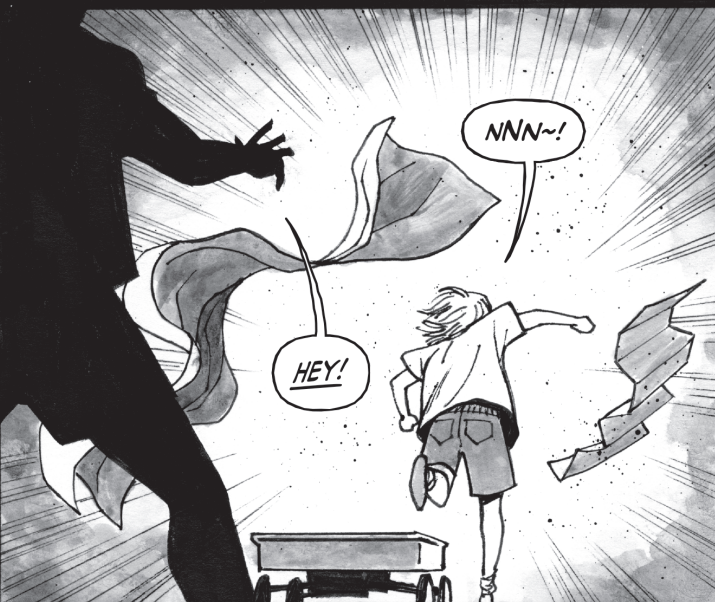
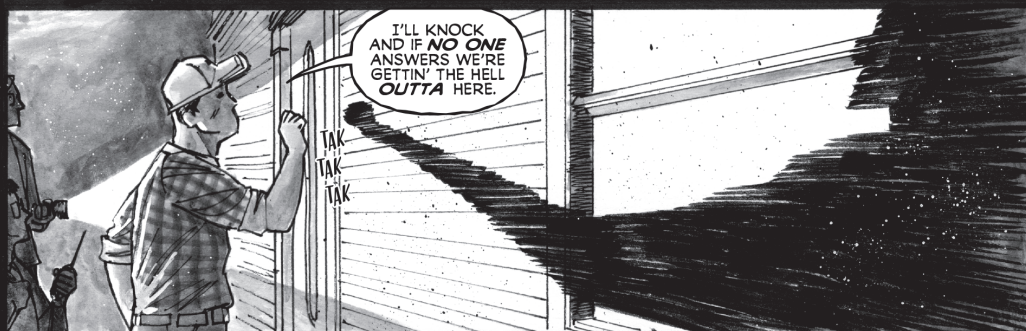
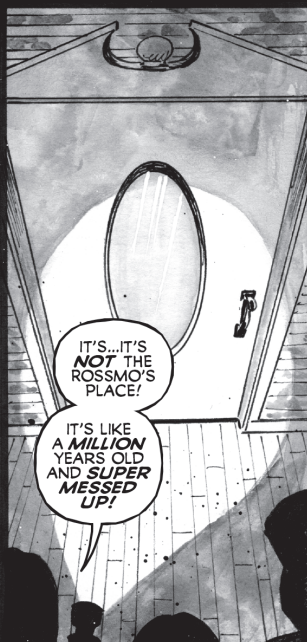
OUR
LOCATION'S
COVERED IN A
WEIRD KINDA FOG.
WE CAN'T SEE THE
NEIGHBOR'S
HOUSE... OR
ANYTHING...

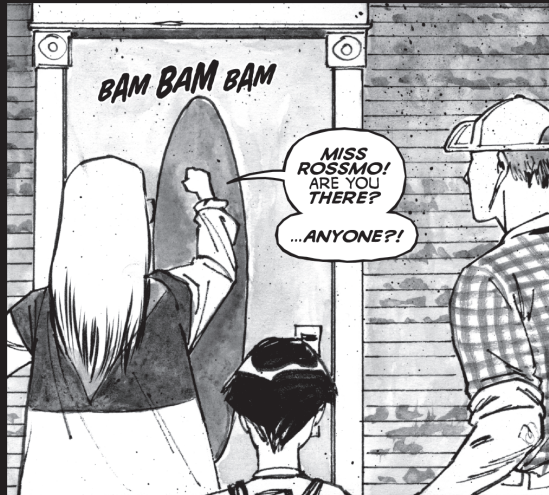
...OVER.

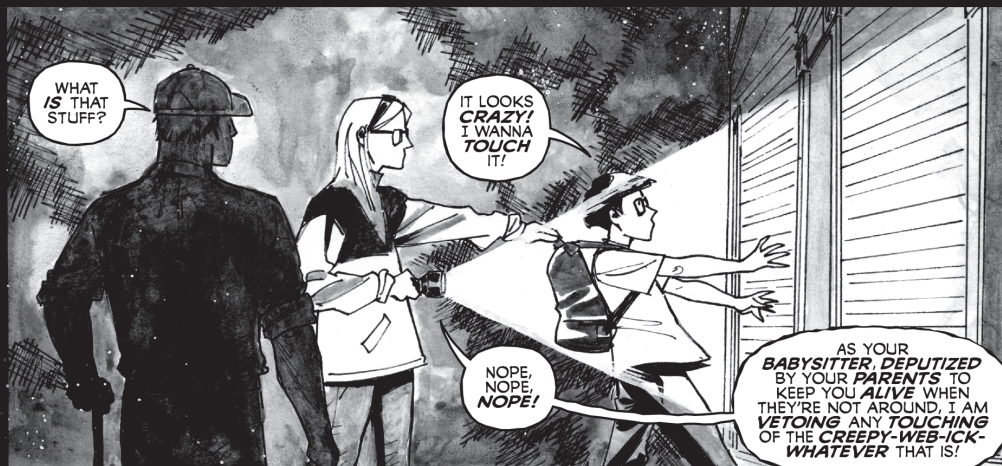
**HENNEY
KREUTZFELD:**
BIG FOR HIS AGE,
BUT BULLIED
BECAUSE OF HIS
INFAMOUS FAMILY.
HAS A KNEE INJURY
FROM WORKING
AT THE LUMBERMILL
LAST SUMMER.

OH,
WAIT...
THERE
IT IS!

UH...
THIS...
THIS *ISN'T*
RIGHT.









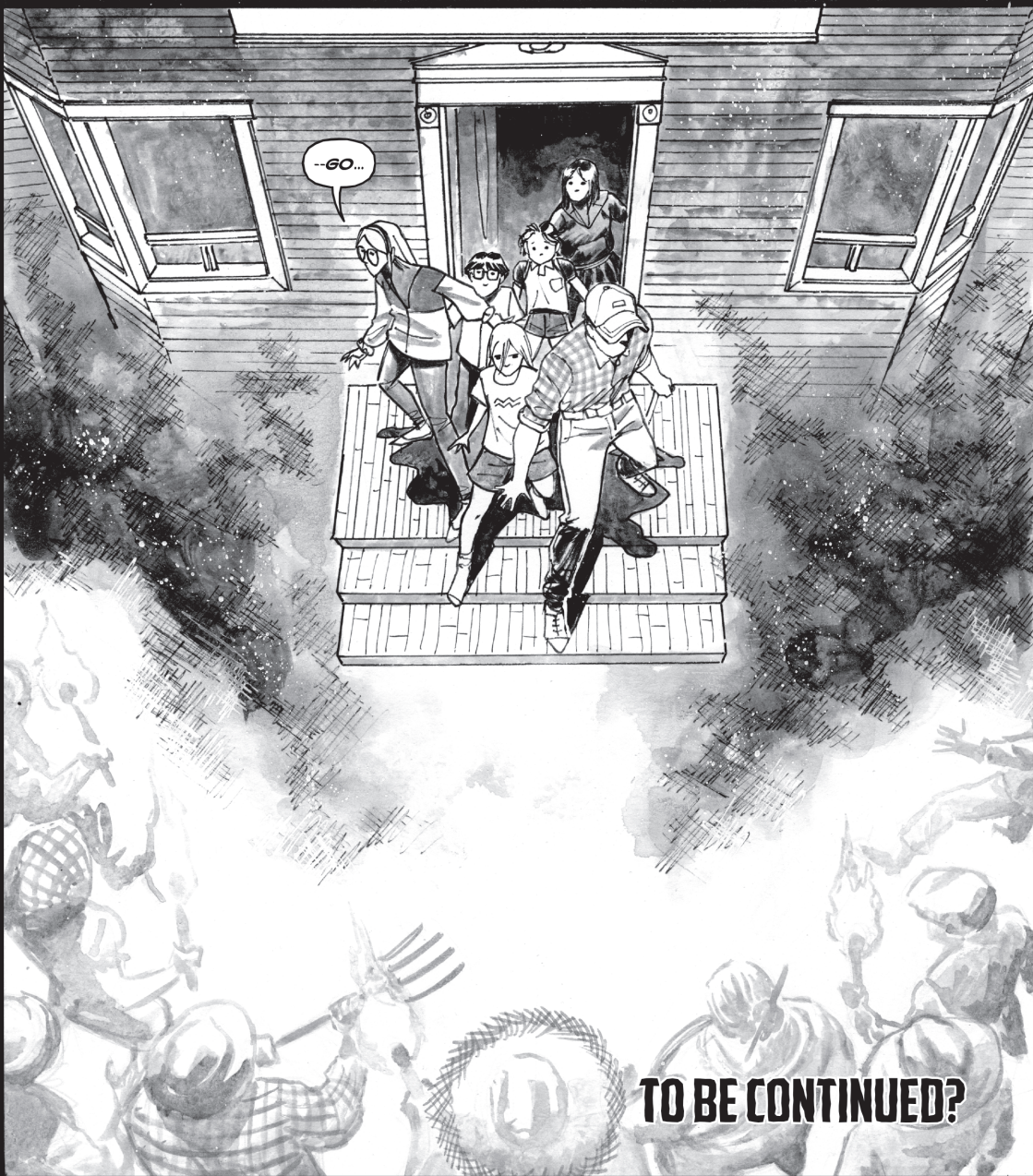


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KIDS ON BIKES

The door to the old house creaks open, the rust on the hinges groaning as you see the dust floating like spores in the air inside. By the faint light of your cheap flashlights, you see the stairs to the upper floor, its railings gnarled and broken like crooked teeth. Their curve makes the stairs seem almost like a hungry grin, and you wonder if their age will support your weight. Still, you must go in.

The only question is who will go first?

In *Kids on Bikes*, you'll take on the roles of everyday people grappling with strange, terrifying, and exceptionally powerful forces that they cannot defeat, control, or even fully understand. The only way to face them is to work together, use your strengths, and know when you just have to run as fast as you can.

NOTE: Most of this book is written with players in mind and directed toward them. GMs, all of this information will be pertinent to you, too, and we've included more information for you at the end of the book, starting on page 47.



- SETTING BOUNDARIES -

Before starting to create your characters, you and the gamemaster (GM) should address the kinds of things that the players want to see in the game and the things they don't want to see. You'll already have agreed on the overall tone you want the game to have, but it's important to know what narrative elements might upset players so the group can avoid them. Doing so will make the game more enjoyable for everyone. To start this process, the GM will ask whether the players would like to discuss these boundaries or simply give the GM lists.

If players agree to have a discussion, everyone will talk about what they're okay with and what they want to avoid. During this discussion, don't ask others to explain why they don't want certain elements in the game; take their requests at face value and respect them. However, do feel free to ask for clarification.

If players would rather give the GM lists, they'll each write down the topics they'd like to avoid, and the GM will compile that list anonymously. As with the other method, there shouldn't be discussion of why players don't want to address certain topics.

In addition to the group's comfort, another factor to consider while establishing boundaries is where you're playing the game. If you're playing in the privacy of your own home or in a conference room at a convention, you only need to consider the players' preferences. However, if you're in a public place, if you're around younger people, or if there are other factors beyond the preferences of the group, you should consider them when establishing boundaries. In general, you should be playing the game in a way that will be comfortable for everyone who may hear it. For example, your group may be comfortable addressing issues of race in '50s suburbia — but if you're in public, everyone who overhears you might not be. Try to keep this in mind and be respectful to anyone who might overhear your game.

If, during the game, someone accidentally brings up one of the topics that should be avoided — or if anything that is part of the story is making you uncomfortable — simply knock quickly and lightly on the table. Whoever is currently narrating should simply rewind and proceed down a different path. There is no need to discuss your request to go in a different direction; the group will just move on with the story in another direction.



- WORLD BUILDING -

Kids on Bikes should probably be set in a small town at any point in history before everyone had a video camera in their pocket at all times. It should probably be a place remote enough that the rest of the world just doesn't care about it but close enough that black helicopters can be there within hours. Everyone in the town probably knows everyone else — for better or for worse. People look out for each other, but rumor also travels fast. Ultimately, though, this is all up to you.

We recommend letting the players work together to craft the town, possibly in a short session prior to playing, or even during the same session if the players are okay with the GM thinking on their feet.

For groups who aren't comfortable creating their world together or for groups who want to dive right into the gameplay, the GM can also create a setting for the group instead, answering the questions below ahead of time and then sharing the answers with the group to start the game.

Collaborative Creation

If you choose to collaboratively build the world, players should first agree on the tone they want the game to take — whether that's serious, goofy, or somewhere in the middle. This decision will help guide the decisions you'll make when creating the town. As with the rest of the game, there are no wrong answers here! It's whatever you want the game to be.

Second, all players should discuss the era in which you want the adventure to take place. Early '80s? Mid '60s? Present day? Since the time period will have such a strong impact on the course of the game, make this decision as a group, with as much discussion as you need.

If you choose to build the world together, answer the following questions to create the location, adapting the number of questions asked, as indicated below, so that each player is answering the same number of questions about the town.

1. Our adventure takes place in... (name of town and state)
2. The industry our location is best known for is...
3. Our town is famous for...
4. Our town is infamous for...
5. Economically, our town is... (prospering, floundering, stagnant, etc.)
6. A notable local organization is... (Duplicate in a five-player game.)
7. A notable local landmark is... (Duplicate in a three-player game or five-player game.)
8. Our school's sports team is called...

After constructing the town, each player shares one rumor about the town.

Especially in a small town, rumors drive a lot of what goes on. The GM writes these rumors down, keeping them in mind so that they can influence the upcoming game — though there may be sources for the rumor that the players can't even imagine. Also, not all rumors have any truth to them. Finally, keep in mind that as long as you're within the bounds of what the group has agreed to include in the game, there are no wrong answers.

For Example: Carlos goes first and says that they're in a town called Perkins, Colorado. Yasmin follows and says that the town is best known for mining. Emily then says that the town is famous for its candles, which it has made and sold to the world for years. Carlos then says that the town is infamous for a mining accident that trapped twelve miners underground a decade ago. Yasmin decides that the town is economically floundering as people move away from coal energy. Emily says that a notable local organization is the Elks, an organization that most of the adult men in the town belong to. Carlos says that one notable local landmark is the closed mine that no one is allowed to go near. Yasmin adds that another notable landmark is the diving cliff, a place where teens often jump into the river that surges during the late spring thaw. Emily rounds out the answers by saying that the high school's sports team is called the Mountain Lions.

As they move into the rumors, Carlos says that he heard that the Elks is really a front for a devil-worshipping cult. Yasmin says that she heard that Mr. Worthy, the principal of the high school, is carrying on an affair with Mrs. Yates, the principal of the middle school. Finally, Emily says that she heard that when they found the bodies of the trapped miners, two were missing — and that the ten that were recovered seemed to have been attacked by some sort of animal.

Gautier, the GM, should abide by the elements that the players created for the town. But over the course of the game, the GM and the players can decide together whether any — or all — of those rumors are true.

Our Suggestions

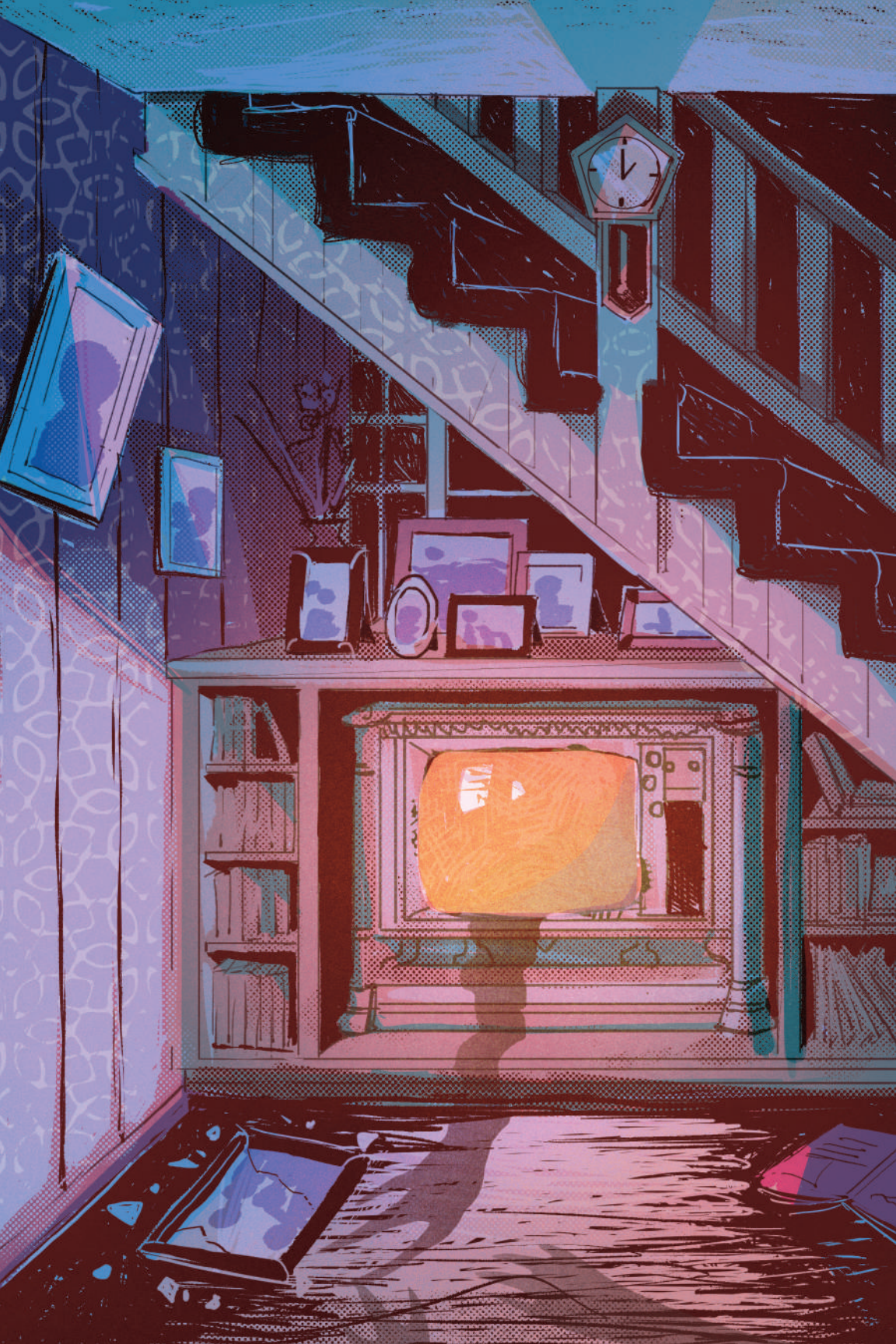
We suggest that the game takes place in a town where children can ride their bicycles from one side of town to the other relatively quickly, probably in under an hour — so a town that's no more than ten miles across. A town this size also allows non-player characters (NPCs) to spread information and rumors more quickly — and for NPCs who are important to the characters to hear about these rumors just as quickly. And, more frighteningly, it prevents the characters from having a lot of places to hide. It's also important that there will be parts of town that are empty, especially at night. In a place like New York City, nothing could happen without at least a few people seeing it...

A note about historical accuracy: While avoiding anachronisms makes the experience more realistic, nobody likes that person at the table who says, “Well, actually, the Millennium Falcon toy in question wasn’t released until 1978!” Just roll with it — unless a person in 1973 whips out a smartphone. In general, leave it to the GM to correct any necessary anachronisms.

Multiple Sessions

We hope that you’ll enjoy *Kids on Bikes* enough to play it over multiple sessions, developing and growing your characters and the world around them. Assuming that time has elapsed in the world of the game between sessions, before you start a new session, each player should explain one thing that has changed in the town between then and now — big or small. Perhaps it’s a new rumor that’s floating around. Perhaps in the time between the last adventure and the new one, things have changed about the town, like the mill that was struggling finally closed, or the school mysteriously burned down. These new events can help to drive the narrative of the new game — and give the players some control over where the story goes.

For Example: In the story, the characters go into the mine to see if there’s any truth to the rumors. They find another body down there, another one of the miners, but it has been very badly attacked... by what seem like human teeth. And they swear that they hear something down there with them, but it is too dark to really see. At the start of their next game, Emily says that she heard that some of the livestock around town have started to go missing — victims of strange, midnight attacks. Yasmin says that one change to the town is that government agents have come in to investigate the mine further after the group’s discovery. Carlos says that a new restaurant has opened up, and the food isn’t very good — but all of the Elks seem to always be there. Again, the rumors may be true or they may not be. But the changes to the town (in this case, the arrival of government agents and the opening of a new restaurant) should be taken as fact.



- CHARACTER CREATION -

The core of any RPG is the character you'll be embodying. You and your GM should work together to agree upon a character you'll be excited to play. One who reminds you of yourself in important ways — but who also is different enough from you to be an escape from the real world.

If there are boundaries that you want the characters to have or modifications that you want to make to the creation process, as a player or GM, please do! The core of the game is the experience that the players will have, and anything you want to do to augment that experience is great.

Process Overview

When creating your character, you'll move through the following steps, likely in this order:

1. Select a trope from the Playbook and take the appropriate character sheet.
2. Make trope selections for your character: age, strengths, flaws, first name.
3. Introduce your character to the rest of the group.
4. Answer questions about your character's relationship with the other characters in the game.
5. Complete the finishing touches for your character: motivations, fears, backpacks, last name, trope-specific questions.

Selecting a Trope

To streamline the character creation process, we've created a set of tropes that you can use at the start of game to get into character more quickly. These tropes, which fall into categories like Loner Weirdo, Stoic Professional, or Brilliant Mathlete, will determine your character's stat dice and streamline some choices for you. Tropes can be found in the Playbook, which is available at huntersbooks.com/downloads-kidsonbikes. Alternatively, you can find the information for these tropes in Appendix E on page 66.

Choose the trope that you're most interested in playing. There's no right or wrong answers here, and your GM will work with you to make sure that, whatever character you choose, you'll be central to the story of the game. And remember, selecting a trope does not mean that you'll be forced into a certain style of play. True, the Brutish Jock isn't going to be as charming as the Popular Kid, but, as in life, be careful not to assume too much about a personality based on only a few descriptors.

If you don't find a trope that fits your sense of your character, feel free to work with the GM to create your character from the ground up! This will take more time, but for players who already have a clear vision of who they want their character to be — or for players who don't want their character to fit into one trope or another — this might be the most satisfying way to create a character. (For more details on this process, refer to "Creating a Character from Scratch" on page 24.)

In the bottom right corner of your trope sheet, you'll find two questions specific to your trope and, likely, your age. These will help you flesh out who you are. You don't need to answer these out loud, but by the end of the character creation process, you should know what your answers are.

Character Stats

The trope you choose will determine how you assign dice to your six stats. The higher the possible value on a die, the better your character is with that stat. The six stats are:

Brains: This stat determines how book-smart a character is. This will determine how well they understand problems, how well they did or are doing in school, and how quickly they're able to solve academic problems.

Brawn: This stat determines how much brute strength a character has. It does not determine how well they can fight — just how well they can lift things and how much physical damage they can take. It also determines how physically intimidating a character is.

Fight: This stat determines how good a combatant a character is with whatever weapons or fighting skills you decide your character knows. While a character with a high Fight stat won't be able to pick up a gun and use it effectively if they have never fired one before, this stat will make them good with weapons that they do have experience with. Also, they'll be able to learn how to use new weapons and fighting skills more easily, if given proper training.

Flight: This stat determines how fast a character is — as well as how skilled they are at evading their problems (both literally and figuratively). Characters with a high Flight stat will be fast and tough to trap both physically and verbally.

Charm: This stat determines how socially adept a character is and how good they are at reading the emotions of another person or group of people. Characters with a high Charm stat will be able to talk themselves out of tough situations and into good ones with relative ease — within reason.

Grit: This stat determines how hard it is to break a character emotionally or physically. Characters with a high Grit stat will be able to keep a level head in the worst of situations and will be able to keep their cool even when pushed hard. Finally, this stat also determines how street-smart a character is.

The higher a stat is, the better a character is at skills involving that stat — and the more likely they are to succeed when using that stat. While there's no guarantee that you'll roll your maximum, generally, characters will be better able to pass checks with their higher dice.

DIE	BRIEF EXPLANATION
d20	Superb — Even upon first meeting you, anyone would be able to readily tell that this is a strength of yours. You are remarkably good with respect to this stat.
d12	Impressive — People who know you would say that you're pretty good with respect to this stat, but it wouldn't be something that's obvious during a first encounter.
d10	Above Average — You aren't remarkably good in terms of this stat, but you're slightly above average.
d8	Below Average — You aren't too bad in terms of this stat, but you're certainly not good, either. You're just slightly worse than average.
d6	Bad — People who know you would say that you're pretty bad with respect to this stat, but it wouldn't be something that's obvious during a first encounter.
d4	Terrible — Upon first meeting you, people would immediately be able to tell that this is a weakness of yours. You are remarkably bad with respect to this stat.

When creating your character, think carefully about how your d20 stat and your d4 stat balance each other out. If your character has a d20 in Charm and a d4 in Flight, consider what that means for your character. Have they always talked their way out of their problems instead of having to run from them — including gym class? Or were they always so slow that they had to use humor and kindness to compensate for their inability to escape? Think about how your other stats relate to this balance, too.

Stats will also be used to resolve skill checks and combat, which we'll address in “Stat Checks” on page 27 and “Combat Encounters” on page 34.

Character Ages

For some of the tropes, you'll also need to pick your character's age: child, teen, or adult. Groups of characters can certainly be a mixture of all three ages. The GM and the players will just need to establish early on what draws their characters together for their first adventure. For future adventures, you'll be linked by the events of the first session. The age of the characters has implications throughout the character creation process and during gameplay. The rules will discuss these implications as they become important.

At the start of the character creation process, the character's age determines what strengths each character gets for free — and what modifiers they have to roll with their stat dice.

Children automatically receive the Quick Healing strength, and they cannot take the Rebellious strength. When rolling stat checks (described in the “Stat

Checks” section, starting on page 27), children add +1 to their Flight and Charm checks, as they’re fast and likeable.

Teens automatically receive the Rebellious strength. When rolling stat checks, teens add +1 to their Fight and Brawn checks, as they’re pugnacious and in their prime.

Adults automatically receive the Skilled at ____ strength. This skill will correspond to their profession — either legal or illegal. When rolling stat checks, adults add +1 to their Brains and Grit checks. Even if they aren’t always geniuses, they’ve seen enough of the world to know what it’s about and to not get shaken by much.

Selecting Strengths and Flaws

Once you’ve selected your trope and age, choose from the strengths and flaws associated with that character. Strengths are mechanical advantages that your character will have when playing the game. Flaws are not mechanical, but they’ll help you develop your character’s personality. Choose two strengths and two flaws from those associated with your character’s trope. Or, if you want to draw from the larger list when deciding, you may. The full lists can be found in Appendix B: Strengths (page 59) and Appendix C: Flaws (page 61).

Once you have done this, give your character a first name — or a nickname that they go by. Hold off on a last name for now just in case you find out, as you’re introducing your characters, that they’re related to another character.

Including Characters Who Are Disabled or Neuroatypical

For some players, a traditionally “able-bodied” or “neurotypical” character might not fit their vision of their character. Instead, a player may want to play a character who is physically disabled or whose brain functions differently. As long as the players and the GM agree that you will be appropriately sensitive in playing the character, you can play any kind of character you want to play. When embracing these differences, keep in mind all of the likely consequences, both positive and negative. Fleshing out these traits will help you play your character better.

For Example: If Helene’s character has been using crutches to get around for most of her life, she won’t be quite as mobile, but her upper body might be accordingly stronger. If Raj is deaf, he may have picked up the ability to read lips. Also, think about what your character needs to do in response to their difference. If Hana is on the autism spectrum, she might need time after experiencing sensory overload before she can focus again, and she might have a process that helps her refocus more quickly.

Remember that the limitations that accompany these differences should consistently develop the role-playing experience. Some differences may present situations that require more complex problem solving — or may lead

to easier solutions to others. Remember, the GM and player should both carefully consider whether or not a player is ready to embrace this role-playing respectfully before agreeing — and you should make sure that everyone at the table is comfortable with the direction of the character.

Also, remember that things that would make a character disabled or neuroatypical are almost always on a spectrum, not a binary. To the casual observer, a character with autism, for example, might be indistinguishable from other members of the party — or that character may be non-verbal. If the character is hearing-impaired, they might be able to hear normally with hearing aids — or they may be completely deaf. It's up to you where you put your character along any spectrum.



Two words of caution about these changes, though: First, make sure that you're playing them in order to develop the character and the story, not for jokes or for novelty. Second, the GM should take care to not consistently exclude characters from events based on any agreed-upon changes.

As stated before, playing a character with limitations provides you with an opportunity to problem-solve or think about a situation that you may not have considered. How would Raj problem-solve in a scenario where he couldn't see the lips of a person who is trying to communicate with him? How would Helene problem-solve if the only way of a situation is to run away? As in real life, differing abilities provide an opportunity for what could be considered non-traditional problem solving.

There may be a few moments when a character who is confined to a wheelchair might not be able to stay with the group. However, since the GM agreed to a player's modifications to their character, they should take care not to make these moments frequent. And the GM should encourage players to feel good about the choices they made for their characters, especially if they made those choices to deepen the role-playing in the game.

For Example: Priya chooses to create a character named Becky, who is on the autism spectrum. All of the players and the GM agree that they're comfortable with Priya's ability to play this character thoughtfully. Priya decides that Becky is a Scout who knows quite a lot about the great outdoors. She can identify all local vegetation by sight, knows which plants are edible and which are poisonous, knows when they flower, and can vividly describe all of these plants from memory. One of Becky's favorite things is to be outside, away from lots of people and loud noises, both of which make her very uncomfortable. Sometimes, Becky gets overwhelmed if too much is going on around her, and as a consequence, she has learned every inch of the wilderness in and around Perkins. When Becky gets overstimulated, which often happens if she's around too many people or if it gets too noisy, she starts to have trouble focusing. She needs to go to a quiet place and, if possible, spend time grounding herself by looking at plants and studying their details for a few minutes. That's usually enough to help her feel like herself again.

Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Sexuality

When creating your character, carefully consider their race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. These parts of your own identity are important to who you are — and they will be important to who your character is, too.

As a group, you will need to decide to what extent historical accuracy influences the treatment of different races, non-local ethnicities, and LGBTQIA people within your game. However, keep in mind that historical accuracy is not an excuse to be horrible. "But this is how people would have talked back then" doesn't go far when you've established boundaries. If paranormal events can happen regularly in the town, then a mining town in the 1950s can be accepting of all people.

If handled appropriately, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality contribute quite meaningfully to your sense of the character and to narrative elements in the game. As long as your group agrees on the way these elements will be addressed and everyone is comfortable with these decisions — and as long as you are addressing these issues seriously and compassionately — you'll be playing within the spirit of the game.

For Example: Dale creates Harper, a gender-queer character who is out to their closest friends and their family, but not to the town at large. As with Priya's character Becky, all of the players and the GM agree that they're comfortable with Dale's ability to portray this character well. Based on the ground rules that they set — during which they agreed that there would be no slurs related to, or mistreatment of, LGBTQIA people — they agree that they aren't going to make Harper's gender identity something that non-player characters really take much note of. The players and the GM agree that it won't be something that non-player characters address unless Harper brings it up.

Introductions and Questions

Now that you have the basics of your character sketched out, think about how they're related to the other characters at the table. We encourage you to make these decisions based on what the players tell you about their characters. While it probably wouldn't make much sense for every character in a five-player game to know every other character at the table well, each character should have at least one meaningful connection to another character. This will give your GM ways to bring your characters together in the narrative.

If you're feeling stuck, some possible relationships include parents and children; siblings, step-siblings, and half-siblings; cousins; classmates, teachers and students; best friends or worst enemies; neighbors; mentors and mentees; bosses and employees; and significant others or spouses.

This is a good time to start talking as your character would: "We know each other from back when we were in high school" rather than "My character dated their character for a few years."

For Example: Oswald, Isabella, and Yoon are talking about how they know each other. Oswald is a teen with the Lone Weirdo trope, Isabella is a teen with the Wannabe trope, and Yoon is an adult with the Blue-Collar Worker trope. Isabella says that she and Oswald used to be close friends, since they're neighbors, but when she started trying to be one of the cool kids a few years ago, she stopped hanging out with Oswald completely and quite suddenly. Oswald adds that since they started out as friends because they're neighbors, he wasn't all that hurt when they stopped hanging out. He just kind of shifted to hanging out with other people, and it was fine.

Yoon says that she knows Oswald because he's friends with her son, Daniel, who's also not that popular in school. She says that Oswald often sleeps over, so she knows him well enough to know what he likes on his pizza. Oswald adds that he feels comfortable talking to Yoon — more-so than his parents sometimes, so he often confides in her. Yoon and Isabella agree that they don't know each other well. Since it's a small town, though, they know each other by sight. Everyone in their small town knows everyone else in their small town by sight.

Having broadly established how you know and don't know each other, each player will answer questions about the other characters. You'll do this one at a time, passing the list of questions around the table and collaborating to make the established relationships more complex and to hint at information about who you don't know. This process will make the story of the game richer, even before the strange events start happening.

Depending on the length of time that you have for character creation, you could take one of three approaches to answering the questions: quick start, one sided, or complete.

Quick Start Questions (2 minutes per player)

In the shortest version of setup, each player will answer one question about the character clockwise from them at the table. Before answering the questions, you should move so that you are sitting next to someone you have a close relationship with.

We do not recommend this setup — though if you're trying to get a group up and running for a demo of the game, this can cut down on the time needed to start playing.

For a character you know:

- Decide whether your relationship with that character is mostly positive or mostly negative.
- Roll a d20 and answer the corresponding question from the “Character You Know - Positive” list on page 56 in Appendix A or the “Character You Know - Negative” list on page 57 in Appendix A. (If the question doesn't fit the relationship that you have in mind or if the question you roll has already been answered, you may answer a question above or below the one you rolled that hasn't been answered yet or reroll.)
- Cross out that question.

For a character you don't know:

- Roll a d20 and answer the corresponding question from the “Character You Don't Know” list on page 58 in Appendix A. (If the question doesn't fit the concept of that character that you have in mind or if the question you roll has already been answered, you may answer a question above or below the one you rolled that hasn't been answered yet or reroll.)
- Cross out that question.

Once each player has answered a question about the person to their left, this part of the setup is complete.

For Example: Yoon, Isabella, and Oswald are answering the Quick Start Questions about each other. Oswald goes first and feels mostly positive about Yoon and rolls a 15: “What do you and this character have a mutual, weird love of?” He decides that they both really like fantasy novels. Yoon was reading *The Hobbit* when he was over at Daniel's house a few years ago, and he borrowed it, read it, and couldn't get enough fantasy novels. In Arkansas in the early '80s, where the game takes place, there aren't that many people who read those kinds of books.

Next, Yoon rolls for Isabella, whom she doesn't know. She rolls a 6: “Why is this character's family so important in town?” Yoon tells the group that Isabella's mom is the sheriff in town and her dad owns the grocery store, so both of them are pillars of the community. They're both good people, and they're well respected in town.

Finally, Isabella feels more negative than positive about Oswald and rolls a 20: “How did this character betray you the last time you confided in them?” Isabella and Oswald agree that he’s not the type to betray people easily, and Oswald pointed out earlier that he’d have to want something pretty badly to betray her — so Isabella decides that it was unintentional. A few years ago, Isabella told Oswald about how much pressure her parents were putting on her, and Oswald talked to Daniel about it. A few of the cool kids overheard, and they made fun of Isabella for even talking to Oswald.

One-Sided Questions (5 minutes per player)

In the mid-range version of the setup, each of you will answer a question about each other character. Seating arrangement is not important for this version of character questions.

We recommend this approach if you want to jump into the game, especially if you are running a one-off session of the game.

For a character you know:

- If you feel mostly positive about them, roll a d20 and answer the corresponding question from the “Character You Know - Positive” list on page 56 in Appendix A. (If the question doesn’t fit the relationship that you have in mind or if the question you roll has already been answered, you may answer a question above or below the one you rolled that hasn’t been answered yet or reroll.)
- If you feel mostly negative about them, roll a d20 and answer the corresponding question from the “Character You Know - Negative” list on page 57 in Appendix A. (If the question doesn’t fit the relationship that you have in mind or if the question you roll has already been answered, you may answer a question above or below the one you rolled that hasn’t been answered yet or reroll.)
- Cross out that question.
- Now have them answer a question about you from the other list: Negative if you answered a Positive question about them, or vice versa.
- Cross out that question.

For a character you don’t know:

- Roll a d20 and answer the appropriate question from the “Character You Don’t Know” list on page 58 in Appendix A. (If the question doesn’t fit the concept of that character that you have in mind or if the question you roll has already been answered, you may answer a question above or below the one you rolled that hasn’t been answered yet or reroll.)
- Cross out that question.
- Now have them answer a question about you from the same list.
- Cross out that question.

Once each player has answered one question about each other character at the table, this part of the setup is complete.

For Example: Yoon, Isabella, and Oswald are answering the One-Sided Questions about each other. Oswald goes first, since he knows both characters well. He starts with Isabella and a positive question and rolls a 5: “Why do you care about this character more than they care about you?” He decides that Isabella really seems to have forgotten about him, and he misses hanging out with her — but his few overtures to her have been misinterpreted, he thinks.

Isabella then rolls for a negative question about Oswald (since he rolled a positive one for her) and gets a 16: “What would losing this character mean to you?” Isabella says that she and Oswald don’t have much of a relationship anymore, but that Oswald reminds her of her past. Even though she wants to be a cool kid, every once in awhile she wants to go back to not caring about what other people think about her. Hanging out with Oswald would definitely be that.

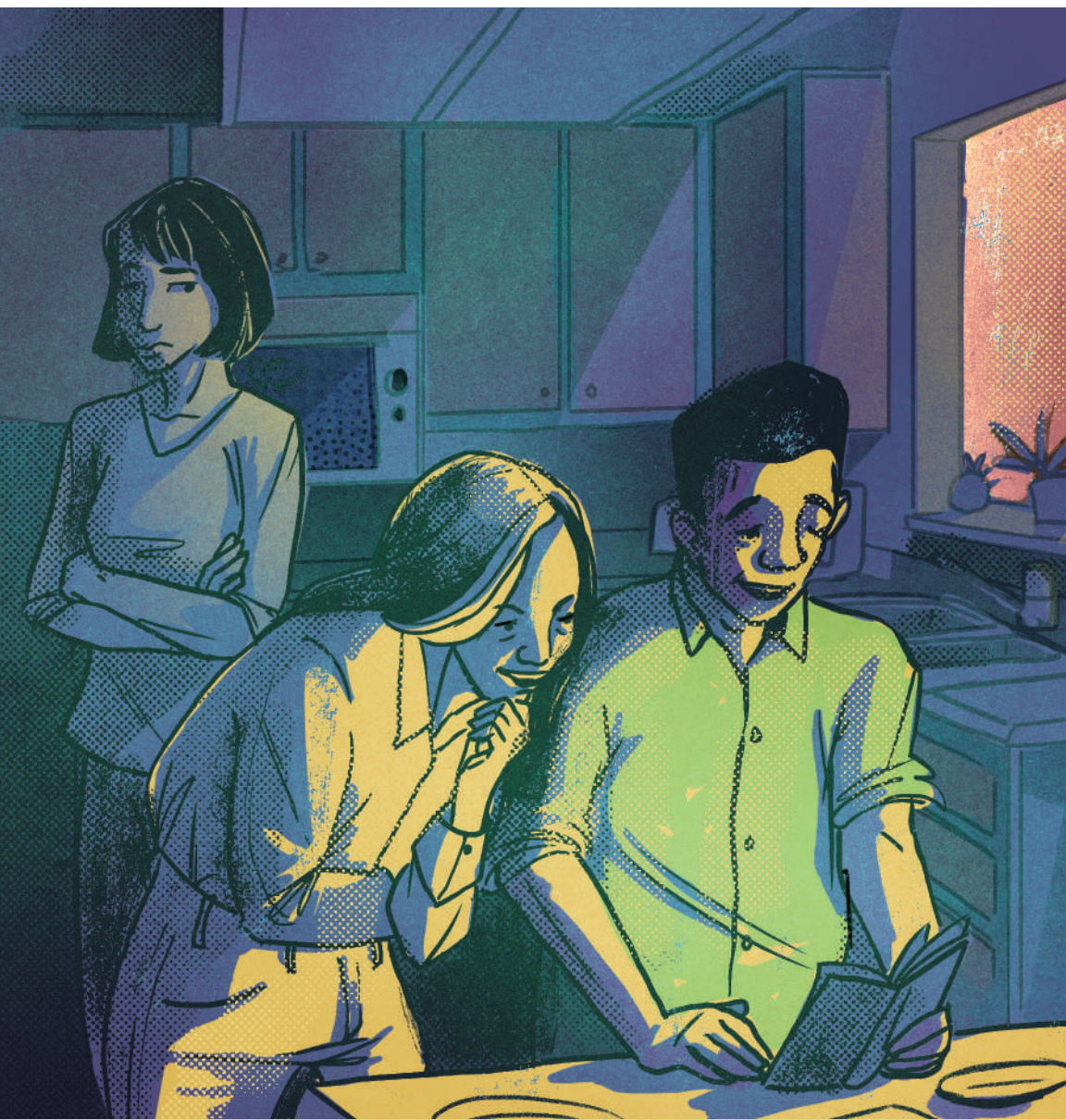
Next, Oswald rolls for a positive question about Yoon and gets a 15: “What do you and this character have a mutual, weird love of?” He decides that they both really, really like fantasy novels. Yoon was reading *The Hobbit* when he was over at Daniel’s house a few years ago, and he borrowed it, read it, and couldn’t get enough fantasy novels. In Arkansas in the early ’80s, where the game takes place, there aren’t that many people who read those kinds of books.

Yoon then rolls a negative question for Oswald, and gets an 18: “You hurt this character years ago. Why can’t you apologize?” Yoon decides that, about a year ago, Yoon and Oswald’s father nearly had an affair. Though nothing more than a few kisses happened, it caused serious tension between Oswald’s parents. Yoon doesn’t know if Oswald’s mother knows or if Yoon just projected the concerns. She’s fairly sure that Oswald has no idea even though he has said that things have been weird between his parents. (This would be something that the player controlling Oswald would know but, in the game, Oswald would not.) Because he doesn’t know, she can’t apologize to him for what she assumes is her role in that tension.

Next, Yoon rolls for Isabella, whom she doesn’t know. She gets a 6: “Why is this character’s family so important in town?” Yoon tells the group that Isabella’s mom is the sheriff in town and her dad owns the grocery store, so both of them are pillars of the community. They’re both good people, and they’re well respected in town.

As a final question, Isabella rolls an 18 for her question about Yoon, whom she doesn’t know well: “What is this character doing to threaten their family’s reputation?” Since Yoon is a first-generation immigrant, her family doesn’t have a reputation in the town, so she rerolls and

gets a 14: "Who does this character have a very public feud with?" Isabella asks Yoon what she did before she moved to America, and Yoon tells her that she was training to be a pharmacist. Isabella decides that, some years ago, Mr. Talbot the local pharmacist was giving bad advice to people about what's dangerous for children. Yoon heard about it and warned parents. Though she was right, Mr. Talbot said some unkind things about her, both about her level of training and her race. Mr. Talbot isn't a particularly good person, Isabella says — and most people think he's wrong on this one.



Complete Questions (8 minutes per player)

In the long version of the setup, each player will answer two questions about each character they know at the table and one question about each character they do not know.

For multi-session plays of *Kids on Bikes*, this is the approach we recommend. It takes a while, but it helps you to develop rich, interesting relationships with each other, and it can lead to good directions for the story to take as you play. To foster this, while others are establishing their relationships, start thinking about how you could insert yourself into their dramas. For example, if Hector thinks Esme stole his bicycle even though she didn't, perhaps you were the one who actually did. Or, if Hank cheated on Morris, perhaps you were the other man... or you know who was.

Remember, this is a big part of the world building of the game. As long as you're within the bounds of what everyone wants from the game, there are no wrong answers here. Create the game you want to play by answering these questions!

For a character you know:

- Roll a d20 and answer the appropriate question from the "Character You Know - Positive" list on page 56 in Appendix or the "Character You Know - Negative" list on page 57 in Appendix A. (If the question doesn't fit the relationship you have in mind or if the question you roll has already been answered, you may answer a question above or below the one you rolled that hasn't been answered yet or reroll.)
- Cross out that question.
- Roll a d20 and answer the appropriate question from the "Character You Know - Negatives" list in Appendix A. (Same caveats as above.)
- Cross out that question.

For a character you don't know:

- Roll a d20 and answer the corresponding question from the "Character You Don't Know" list on page 58 in Appendix A. (If the question doesn't fit the concept of that character that you have in mind or if the question you roll has already been answered, you may answer a question above or below the one you rolled that hasn't been answered yet or reroll.)
- Cross out that question.

Once you answer questions about all other characters, pass the sheets to your left, and that player repeats the process until every player has answered questions about all other characters.

For Example: Yoon, Isabella, and Oswald are answering the questions about each other. Oswald goes first, since he knows both characters well. He starts with Isabella and a positive question and rolls a 5: "Why do you care about this character more than they care about you?" He decides that Isabella really seems to have forgotten about him, and he

misses hanging out with her — but his few overtures to her have been misinterpreted, he thinks.

Next, he rolls for a negative question about her and gets a 3: “What could make you betray this character?” He decides that he’s feeling kind of disconnected from her, so it wouldn’t take much. The last time he tried to talk to her at school, she was really nasty to him, so if it would get him something he wanted, he’d betray her — but not in a major way.

Next, he rolls for a positive question about Yoon and gets a 15: “What do you and this character have a mutual, weird love of?” He decides that they both really, really like fantasy novels. Yoon was reading *The Hobbit* when he was over at Daniel’s house a few years ago, and he borrowed it, read it, and couldn’t get enough fantasy novels. In Arkansas in the early ‘80s, where the game takes place, there aren’t that many people who read those kinds of books. Then he rolls a negative question about her and gets an 11: “What does this character do that makes you immediately lose your temper?” Oswald decides that doesn’t really fit their relationship and rerolls, getting a 15: “What insanity has this character shown warning signs of?” Oswald has seen Yoon be a little bit too fastidious and worries that she might be tending toward compulsive behavior — but he’s a teen and doesn’t necessarily know what all of the warning signs are.

Next, Yoon rolls for Isabella, whom she doesn’t know. She gets a 6: “Why is this character’s family so important in town?” Yoon tells the group that Isabella’s mom is the sheriff in town and her dad owns the grocery store, so both of them are pillars of the community. They’re both good people, and they’re well respected in town.

Yoon then rolls a positive question for Oswald, a 10: “What is this character sacrificing to protect you?” She decides that it isn’t protecting her, per se, but Oswald is always willing to talk to Yoon about what’s going on at the high school, something that her son isn’t usually willing to do. He’s giving up some of his time to let her know what’s going on.

Yoon then rolls a negative question for Oswald, and gets an 18: “You hurt this character years ago. Why can’t you apologize?” Yoon decides that, about a year ago, Yoon and Oswald’s father nearly had an affair. Though nothing more than a few kisses happened, it caused serious tension between Oswald’s parents. Yoon doesn’t know if Oswald’s mother knows or if Yoon just projected the concerns. She’s fairly sure that Oswald has no idea even though he has said that things have been weird between his parents. (This would be something that the player controlling Oswald would know but, in the game, Oswald would not.) Because he doesn’t know, she can’t apologize to him for what she assumes is her role in that tension.



Lastly, Isabella rolls a positive question for Oswald, a 16: “What would losing this character mean to you?” Isabella says that she and Oswald don’t have much of a relationship anymore, but that Oswald reminds her of her past. Even though she wants to be a cool kid, every once in a while she wants to go back to not caring about what other people think about her. Hanging out with Oswald would definitely be that.

She then rolls a 20 for the negative question about him: “How did this character betray you the last time you confided in them?” Isabella and Oswald agree that he’s not the type to betray people easily, and Oswald pointed out earlier that he hadn’t betrayed her yet — so Isabella decides that it was unintentional. A few years ago, Isabella told Oswald about how much pressure her parents were putting on her, and Oswald talked to Daniel about it. A few of the cool kids overheard, and they made fun of Isabella for even talking to Oswald.

As a final question, Isabella rolls an 18 for her question about Yoon, whom she doesn’t know well: “What is this character doing to threaten their family’s reputation?” Since Yoon is a first-generation immigrant, her family doesn’t have a reputation in the town, so she rerolls and gets a 14: “Who does this character have a very public feud with?” Isabella asks Yoon what she did before she moved to America, and Yoon tells her that she was training to be a pharmacist. Isabella decides that, some years ago, Mr. Talbot the local pharmacist was giving bad advice to people about what’s dangerous for children. Yoon heard about it and warned parents. Though she was right, Mr. Talbot said some unkind things about her, both about her level of training and her race. Mr. Talbot isn’t a particularly good person, Isabella says — and most people think he’s wrong on this one.

Finishing Touches

Full Name: Now that you’ve fleshed out your character and your relationship with the other characters, you’ll add the finishing touches. If you were waiting to complete your name, do that now, keeping in mind that relatives probably have the same last name — but maybe not. Remember, try to keep your name in line with the tone that you and the other players have agreed to for the game.

Motivation: Write down something that strongly motivates you. It might not be the thing that drives all of your decisions, but it should certainly drive most of them — and especially the big decisions. It could be a specific motivation (e.g., “find my son no matter what it costs me” or “impress Tom so that he’ll go out with me”), it could be more general (e.g., “look cool” or “learn”), or it could have to do with concealing some information (e.g., “don’t let the others find out that my business is failing” or “don’t let my children learn that I killed their father”). If appropriate, share these with other players — but most likely, you’ll just be sharing this motivation with the GM.

Typically, children will be motivated by their curiosity. Teens will often be motivated by social factors like fitting in or finding and maintaining a romantic relationship. Adults will be motivated by holding onto or protecting what they have, whether that's a business or family. And all ages can be motivated by something or someone that they've lost.

Fears: Think about what it is that scares you. There will be some mechanical implications for this fear that will be addressed in “Planned Actions and Snap Decisions” on page 29. In terms of role-playing the fears, you will, of course, want to avoid your fears, and when faced with them, you'll behave more irrationally. Ultimately, what you fear in the game is up to you.

Children usually fear things that, rationally, they shouldn't fear — and don't fear things that they ought to. They're more likely to walk up to a stranger covered in blood to make sure they're okay than they are to open up their closets in the middle of the night. Generally, children fear the unknown and what they can't see. Children are also generally not ashamed of their fears; they'll gladly declare them to friends and strangers alike.

Teens are all over the place. Some teens are still scared of the things that scared them as children, but they'll tend to be very tight-lipped about these fears. No teen wants to admit that they're still scared of the dark. Often, though, teens are more scared of social isolation, losing friends, or embarrassing themselves. But sometimes, more mature teens — or ones whose lives have been rough — will have fears more like an adult's.

Few adults have the fears that children have — and most of them aren't worried about the kinds of social things that concern teens. Rather, they're typically afraid of things being taken from them, whether that's their families, their homes, or their livelihoods. Some adults also fear realistic things going wrong — and there's nothing saying that an adult can't be afraid of something that most adults aren't.

Backpack: The final finishing touch is indicating what you have in your backpack, literally and figuratively. What items are you never without? For children or teens, these might literally be in their backpack. For adults, these might be in the trunk of their car. Ultimately, though, they're wherever would make the most sense for you.

Figuratively speaking, the backpack is also a good place to list advantages that you have over other people. While this doesn't have to consider all of the ways in which you are privileged, it would be a good place to think about the more intangible resources you have at your disposal. For example, Azra's backpack might indicate that her parents are exceptionally supportive and do everything they can to give her the resources to succeed at school. Adewale's backpack, on the other hand, might indicate that his bad relationship with his parents has given him a strong sense of self-reliance and ability to do for himself. The intangible resources in your backpack won't have a

mechanical impact on the game, but they should give you places to turn if you need help in getting out of a problem — or create tension if that resource is suddenly not available.

Trope-Specific Questions: Each trope sheet in the Playbook has two questions about your character that should be answered at some point during the character creation process. So, if you haven't yet answered them, make sure to do so now!

The answers to these questions do not need to be shared with the other players at the table — but they can be if you would like to. Certainly, though, your responses should be shared with the GM.

Now, you're ready to start your adventure in *Kids on Bikes*!

Creating a Character from Scratch

Some players may wish to create their character entirely from scratch rather than beginning with a trope. Doing so takes longer, but it allows for truly unique characters that don't fit into any specific mold. If this is a route you're interested in, we encourage you to take it!

Using the blank character sheet in the Playbook (huntersbooks.com/downloads-kidsonbikes) or on page 75 of this rulebook, begin by assigning the dice that you'll use for your stats. The best way to do this is to assign your d20 stat and d4 stat, then think about how those stats complement each other. Then, assign the other dice to the other stats.

Next, select your age: child, teen, or adult. Remember to give yourself the appropriate bonuses based on your age. Children get +1 to Charm and Flight and get Quick Healing for free. Teens get +1 to Brawn and Fight and get Rebellious for free. Adults get +1 to Brains and Grit and Skilled at ____ for free.

Then, select your other two strengths. Referring to the list in Appendix B on page 59, select two that fit with your vision for your character. Then, select your flaws. You may select any two from the list in Appendix C on page 61.

Finally, give your character a first name. From this point on, character creation continues as normal. Refer to the section titled "Introductions and Questions" on page 15.

Changes to Your Character Across Multiple Sessions

While it's unlikely that characters will change much over the course of a single game, in the case of longer campaigns, there might be changes to a character based on what happens during play. A character who nearly drowns might develop a fear of water — just as a character who manages to overcome their fear of water in a critical moment might find that they aren't as afraid of it

anymore. At the end of each session, the GM and players should discuss the ways in which the characters grew — or regressed — over the course of the game. Each time you play, you should learn more about your character. They should never be static. These changes will likely come in the form of new skills, new fears or flaws, or changed answers to the trope-specific questions.

Except in extreme cases, losses should be counterbalanced by gains. A character who conquered their fear of dogs at a critical moment might become boastful, which could cause tension with friends who previously appreciated their humility. The players and the GM should decide collaboratively what gains and losses occur at the end of one game or before the next one. Again, though, except in the strangest cases, there should always be a balance of what is lost and what is gained.

For Example: In the first game, Yoon, Isabella, and Oswald work together to go looking for Yoon's son, Daniel, who disappeared before the game began. They were able to find him, but he's currently in a coma, and doctors aren't sure if he'll recover. As a result of seeing the measures that Oswald and even Isabella went to in order to save her son, Yoon has gained the "Protective" strength when it comes to those two; however, because she found her son covered in some kind of strange webbing, she has added "Spiders" as a fear. Oswald and the GM agree that not much has changed for him. Isabella and the GM agree that she's feeling closer to Oswald again and remembers why she valued him as a friend when they were younger — but there aren't any mechanical changes for her, either.



- PLAYING THE GAME -

The game will take the form of a story that you, the other players, and the GM tell together. The GM will help guide the action of the story and will make the “big picture” stuff happen, but you’ll have a lot of control over what you do and how you face the situations the GM throws in your way.

You’ll even have control over which parts you skip over. If your characters are going to have a pretty run-of-the-mill day at school, you don’t need to tell the story of all nine periods. Think of the game as the important scenes that will carry the narrative forward. Focus on the parts that promote action, excitement, and intrigue.

Stat Checks

While you’re playing, any time you do something that runs the risk of failure, the GM will set a numerical difficulty for the action. You will then roll the appropriate stat die and check the value of that die against the difficulty. If you roll the maximum value of the die and that isn’t enough to succeed at the check, your die will “explode” — meaning that you reroll the die and add the maximum value that you rolled the first time to the new roll. Your die may explode multiple times on a check — but once you succeed at that check, your die no longer explodes for that check.

Keep in mind that the most you can roll (without the luck of exploding a die) is 20, and that number is extraordinarily unlikely. However, that doesn’t mean that the difficulty can’t be higher than 20 in cases where a feat seems truly impossible for mere mortals.

Choosing a Stat for the Check

As in life, there are always multiple ways to solve a problem. If a character is being confronted by bullies, it may seem like they have to start swinging and hope it goes well (Fight) or turn heel and run and hope they’re faster than the bullies (Flight). But depending on who the character is, they might use other stats instead.

A character with high Charm might convince the bullies that he’ll show them a secret entrance into the movie theater if they don’t beat him up. A character with high Grit might tell them that she has taken worse beatings before breakfast and make it not seem worth their time. A character with high Brains might talk the bullies in circles until they let her go because they’re too confused to throw a punch. A character with high Brawn might physically intimidate their aggressors to get them to back down. There are always multiple ways you can solve your problems.

When you’re not sure what kind of check something will call for, you can always just describe what you’re doing and the GM will tell you what check to make. For things like deceit and lying, it’s probably going to be Charm.

DIFFICULTY	EXPLANATION & EXAMPLE
20	<p>A task at which only the most incredible could even possibly succeed — but if they succeed, it will be one of the most impressive things a character has ever done. This is a nearly guaranteed failure.</p> <p><i>Examples: Lifting a car off of someone trapped under it; solving a nearly impossible math problem just by glancing at it.</i></p>
17-19	<p>A task for which success would be incredible and impressive. This, too, is a nearly guaranteed failure.</p> <p><i>Examples: Talking a police officer out of arresting you when you have clearly broken the law and have no relationship with the officer; breaking a school record in track.</i></p>
13-16	<p>A task where success is extraordinary — but decidedly possible for characters who are truly skilled at it.</p> <p><i>Examples: A lucky character finding the right item on the first try; someone trained in espionage withstanding police interrogation.</i></p>
10-12	<p>A task where success is impressive — but completely expected for characters skilled at it.</p> <p><i>Examples: A strong person prying open a heavy, locked door; a computer whiz repairing a computer quickly under pressure.</i></p>
7-9	<p>A task where success is certain for characters who are very skilled at it — but not for those who aren't.</p> <p><i>Examples: Convincing the principal that it wasn't you and your friends who started the cafeteria food fight; running a message from one end of a building to the other in a very short time.</i></p>
3-6	<p>A task where success is likely for all characters except those who aren't skilled or who have a low stat in that field.</p> <p><i>Examples: A lucky person drawing a non-face card from a deck; a character silently withstanding a verbal berating.</i></p>
1-2	<p>A task where success is guaranteed, except in extreme cases.</p> <p><i>Examples: A character lifting a 10-pound weight over their head; a character reciting a multiplication table.</i></p>



But if you're throwing around a lot of science-y words to convince the sheriff that the mine shaft where you're actually hiding the half-goat, half-child creature is structurally unsound so he should stay away, that might be Brains. Or if you're threatening your way into a secure area past a young, scared guard, that might be Brawn — or Fight if you're describing what you'll do to him if he doesn't step aside. The bottom line is that the stats are here to help guide your storytelling and help you have fun. If you aren't sure what to do, ask the table — and if they aren't sure, go with your gut.

For Example: Ana has been cornered while she was snooping around an abandoned warehouse that she and her friends noticed a lot of the town's adults going to. The three deranged members of a cult who cornered her seem intent on sacrificing her to the elder god they worship, and they're all brandishing really big knives. Ana is a child with the Bully trope, so Fight is her best stat. However, the GM tells her that to fight her way out of this situation would be a very tough Fight check, a difficulty of 14. It's not impossible, but Ana doesn't feel good about her odds there. Since the cult members are completely deranged, intimidating them with Brawn (Ana's d12 stat) is a difficulty of 22. Similarly, charming them would also be a 22, and since Charm is Ana's d4 stat, that's unlikely to work. The cult members, though, are on the older side and thus a bit slower than children. The GM tells Ana that a Flight check would be a difficulty of 7. Ana decides that her chances are best if she goes with that — especially since she gets +1 to her Flight checks as a child and she has a few Adversity Tokens to spend if need be.

Planned Actions and Snap Decisions

Although the GM always sets a numerical difficulty, there are two distinct kinds of stat checks: Planned Actions and Snap Decisions. Planned Actions are stat checks when you have time to think about the best course of action and, perhaps, work with your friends. If the characters are sitting at a kitchen table trying to break a coded message that someone left for them and have all night to do it, that's definitely a Planned Action. If your character needs to climb up a wall to sneak into an abandoned factory and has the cover of night and no one in pursuit, that's a Planned Action. In short, Planned Actions are when the conditions are relatively optimal to achieve something.

Snap Decisions, on the other hand, are choices that have to be made quickly under bad conditions — and are thus more chaotic and unpredictable. If your character is being chased through a cave, stat checks they make while fleeing in panic will definitely be Snap Decisions. If your character is under any kind of great pressure, that would likely be a Snap Decision, too.

Ultimately, it's the GM's call whether something is a Planned Action or a Snap Decision. Players, though, should feel free to try to convince the GM of how they can get a moment of calm to make a Planned Action in a setting that would seem to call for a Snap Decision.



In order to make a check for a Planned Action, do the following steps:

- Once you decide to resolve a problem with a particular stat, the GM sets a numerical difficulty. For example, if you are trying to crack a safe in the privacy of your own home with the right tools, you might try to muscle your way in (Brawn), crack the safe (Brains), or sweet talk a buddy of yours to apply their safe-cracking skills (Charm).
- Either roll the appropriate die or, because you have time to think and react calmly, take half the value of that stat's die. For example, if you have a d20 in Flight, you may choose to take a score of 10 for Planned Actions involving Flight instead of risking a roll.
- If the value of the first die rolled is the maximum value of the die, but still below the difficulty level, the roll "explodes." Roll the same die again, adding both values together. This may be repeated as many times as you roll the maximum, though you must stop as soon as you succeed at the check.
- After determining whether the roll explodes, add any age bonuses to the roll. Age bonuses cannot cause a roll to explode.
 - Children: +1 Charm, +1 Flight
 - Teens: +1 Brawn, +1 Fight
 - Adults: +1 Grit, +1 Brains
- You may also spend Adversity Tokens (earned from failed checks), with each token adding +1 to the roll. As with age bonuses, Adversity Tokens cannot cause a roll to explode.
- Other players may also spend Adversity Tokens to help you, with each token adding +1 to the roll, though they must also narrate how their actions are also helping your cause. This is at the GM's discretion.
- If the total roll is greater than or equal to the difficulty level, you have succeeded. You and the GM will narrate the success collaboratively.
- If not, you have failed. The GM will direct the narration with minimal input from you (the greater the failure, the less input from you). The more you miss by, the worse the failure. You also receive one Adversity Token, which can be used on future rolls.



When things are dicier and you're under more duress and stress, you'll have to make a Snap Decision. In most ways, the process works as with Planned Actions but with the following changes:

- First, you cannot take half of the value of the appropriate die. You must roll to see if you succeed since this is a rushed attempt that you cannot plan.
- Second, although you may spend Adversity Tokens to help yourself, other players cannot spend Adversity Tokens to help you. There's no time for the kind of planning that collaboration requires.
- Third, the GM should make the consequences for failing a Snap Decision less weighty than failing a Planned Action, though you may still gain an Adversity Token. Narratively, when everything's on the line, the tension is already there, and you aren't doing something stupid — you're just in a bad spot. (On the other hand, when you have time to plan and still fail, that usually means you've decided to take a risk.)

For Example: Two characters have been captured by government forces and are being aggressively interrogated in different cells to try to get information out of them. Certainly, this is a Snap Decision — the characters are under pressure, and the interrogators aren't going to wait patiently while the characters plan their responses. The GM might decide that in order to withstand this level of interrogation, each character will need a score of 12.

Rebecca, one of the characters, has a Grit stat of d20. She has seen some rough things in her life, and nothing scares her. She rolls a 13, succeeding. The GM and the player controlling Rebecca narrate her success at holding up under questioning. She just barely held up, though, so there won't be any benefits beyond the fact that she did succeed.

The other character, Tricia, has a Grit stat of d6. She rolls a 3, failing by 9 points — fairly badly, but not a complete disaster. Perhaps Tricia gives



up more information than the interrogator even knew she had. Perhaps she breaks quickly, giving them time to act on that information and prevent other characters from being able to do what they need to do, forcing them to scramble to come up with another way to get done what they need to get done. Perhaps she gives them more information than she should have, revealing the identity of her accomplices. Ultimately, this will be up to the GM with minimal input from the player.

Failing a Roll

Remember, in *Kids on Bikes*, failing a roll isn't all bad. First and foremost, it gives you an Adversity Token, which you can use to succeed when you really need it — especially if you pool it with other Adversity Tokens — or to activate your character's strengths. Adversity Tokens give you more options later on, so failing a few times at the beginning is actually a good thing.

Second, failure can and should push the narrative forward. A failed roll means that what the character wants to happen doesn't happen — but that doesn't mean that what happens is bad for the story. For example, if the characters try to hack a computer but aren't able to, it might mean that they have to seek out an NPC to help them with it. That character might, in turn, inadvertently give them a clue that helps them puzzle out a mystery. Or, if a character tries to escape on foot from government forces pursuing her, she might be brought to a facility that holds the secret to the next part of the game.

So, while failures won't be what your character wants, they should almost always feel good for the story — and should give the group more directions to take the narrative you're building together.

For Example: Tricia rolls a 3 when trying to hold up against the interrogation, but she needed a 12. The result is bad — but not a disaster. As the agent starts applying verbal pressure to her, she cracks and tells the agent everything: where her friends are hiding and enough details about the strange animal she and her friends found in the forest to let the agent know that they're indeed the children that the government agents are looking for. That agent quickly tells his supervisor, but in his rush to tell the others what's happening, Tricia manages to not tell him that the animal seems to be able to teleport short distances. Thus, when the agents arrive at the house of Tricia's friend, the strange animal is able to get to safety.

When deciding on the consequences of a stat check, the GM should consult the following guide:

+10 or higher	<i>The character succeeds smoothly and easily.</i> Likely, it looks like the character is just showing off, or that the task is done so readily that it happens without any effort at all. At the GM's discretion (and certainly not necessarily), there could be some unexpected positive results from a success of this degree.
+5 to +9	<i>The character succeeds quite impressively.</i> At the GM's discretion, the character might have some additional benefits beyond the success, but these will be slight — and only if important for pushing the game forward.
+1 to +4	<i>The character succeeds, but not impressively.</i> Any benefits the character gains above and beyond the success should be quite limited — if present at all.
0	<i>The character succeeds, but just barely.</i> Decidedly, nothing surprising happens — and the player and the GM should make this success as skin-of-the-teeth as possible.
-1 to -4	<i>The character fails, but not too badly.</i> There might be some very, very minor short-term consequences, but these won't shift the story for more than a minute or two. The character has tried and almost succeeded.
-5 to -9	<i>The failure is bad, but not a disaster.</i> There will be some short-term consequences that might lead to some immediate difficulties — but nothing that the character can't handle if they focus on them. The character has tried to do or has been forced to do something beyond their capabilities. And, not surprisingly, they've failed.
-10 to -14	<i>The failure is profound.</i> There will be consequences for this failure, likely in keeping with what would be expected, but that doesn't mean that those consequences won't be very bad. These consequences may strongly influence the course of the current play session. Generally, though, a character will only find themselves failing this badly when they bite off more than they can probably chew — or because of the cruelty of the GM.
-15 or lower	<i>The failure is staggering and catastrophic.</i> There will be both immediate and long-term consequences for this failure, above and beyond what might be expected. These consequences might lead to serious changes in the course of the long-term arc of the story — especially because the character should only find themselves failing this badly through total recklessness or because the GM has purposefully put them in a staggeringly difficult situation.

Exploding Rolls and Narrative

When you roll the highest value of the die and thus roll again (when the roll “explodes”), the narrative should reflect that you have done something beyond what you could accomplish on your own. As the GM works with a player to narrate an “exploding” roll, the outcome should be influenced, in part, by external forces.

For Example: Take Tricia from the previous example, the character being interrogated. She has a Grit stat of d6 and needs a 12. Since her maximum possible Grit roll is a 6, she will need external forces to intercede for her to succeed. Instead of the 3 she rolled in the previous example, she rolled a 6 on her first roll. She rolls again, getting a 5, and adds that roll to the first result, making her total 11. She only fails by 1, meaning that there are very, very minor short-term consequences. Tricia holds out long enough to give her friends time to do what they need to do — but the government agents show up just as they’re finishing. Tricia’s friends then have to flee quickly, making checks to ensure that they escape. Narratively, you could say that Tricia holds up as well as she possibly could, and there is something else that happens to prevent her from failing badly. Just as Tricia reaches her limit and is about to tell the agent what he wants to know, that agent gets called out of the room by a supervisor, buying Tricia some time to collect herself.

Or perhaps it’s Penelope who is trying to run away from a group of government agents who are pursuing her on foot. She has a Flight stat of d8, and the GM sets the difficulty at 12: impressive, but certainly possible for someone skilled. She rolls an 8 on her first roll, then 6 on her next roll for a total of 14 — a success! Perhaps, as she’s running from the agents, a gate comes down, separating them. Perhaps as she’s running she knocks over and spills a container of motor oil, on which the pursuing agents then slip and fall, allowing her to escape. Whatever the outcome, it’s not that Penelope simply outruns them.

Combat Encounters

Combat in this game functions in the same way as other stat checks, though sometimes you will be rolling against another character to determine success or failure.

As with the other checks in the game, combat can be resolved in multiple ways. Suppose you are about to be physically attacked. You could stand firm and take the hit (Brawn check). You could attack first and hope to be a better fighter (Fight check). You could try to talk the attacker out of it before the punches start flying (very difficult Charm check). You could try to intimidate the attacker from carrying out the assault (Brawn check or very difficult Grit check). You could run (Flight check) or stand your ground and dodge the punches (difficult Flight check).

For combat between two player characters, the GM must confirm that both players are comfortable with their characters combating each other. Because of the possible consequences of in-game physical violence, if both players do not agree to it, the story will need to take a different direction.

Physical Damage: Physical attacks are more direct combat, either a fistfight or, if things have gotten really bad, knives and bats.

Roll the attacker's Fight against the defender's Brawn (if they're planning to stay and fight back) or Flight (if they're planning to dodge or flee). Presumably, in a physical fight, both characters will be attacking each other, and assuming that's the case, roll separate attack and defense for each character.

At the GM's discretion, weapons like knives, baseball bats, and so forth might lead to successful hand-to-hand hit being treated like a projectile hit — or a slingshot or thrown object might be treated like a hand-to-hand hit. Still, whether the hit occurs or not should be calculated the same way.

Remember, there are no safe fights in this game. Any time physical conflict occurs, a character might die. Once players decide to attack each other, a misplaced blow could hit a temple or a throat. There are no "pulled punches" or "called shots." Every fight could be fatal. That said, of course the GM should allow a playful (or even somewhat aggressive) shove or a nuggie — or even somewhat hostile wrestling — without risk of anything serious.

Projectile Damage: Most of the time in the game, projectiles will take the form of guns, which are terribly dangerous for all characters. But, children sometimes throw rocks or have bows and arrows, which could land just right and be bad — but most likely won't be all that bad. Keep in mind, though, that all projectile weapons are potentially lethal.

When projectile combat occurs, roll the attacker's Fight against the defender's appropriate stat (likely Flight or Brawn, depending on whether the character is diving out of the way or taking the shot). If both characters are shooting or throwing at each other, roll separate attack and defense for each character. Remember, high differences between attack and defense with projectiles are much more dangerous than the same difference for physical combat.

Injuries & Death

During the course of the game, one or more of the characters will likely be injured. In this game, there are no hit points — but none of you are immortal. Far from it. Compared to the forces you will probably come into contact with, you're exceptionally fragile. A well-aimed bullet from a government agent, the quick flick of a monster's jaws, or a telekinetic character could end things in a moment.

In this game, violence should never be without consequence. Rather than trading blow after blow, stat rolls and applicable skill rolls should determine the outcome of a fight before it starts. Players and the GM should then narrate the outcome. The difference between the rolls (and applicable modifications) should determine the amount of damage that a player sustains (refer to chart below) and who gains narrative control over the encounter.

RESULT OF ROLLS

(with applicable modifiers)

NARRATIVE RESULT

defender's roll is greater than or equal to attacker's roll	<p>Narrative Control: The defender narrates the outcome.</p> <p>Effect: The defender is uninjured; the projectiles miss or the blows don't land or hurt them enough to matter.</p>
attacker's roll is greater by 1 to 3	<p>Narrative Control: The attacker explains how they attack, and the defender narrates what they do to mitigate the harm to them.</p> <p>Effect: The defender is hurt, but only temporarily; the bullet grazes them, but they're okay; the punch stuns them, but they can shake it off.</p>
attacker's roll is greater by 4 to 6	<p>Narrative Control: The attacker explains their attack, and the defender explains how they respond. The attacker then explains how this barely mitigates the harm.</p> <p>Effect: The defender is fairly hurt; the bullet hits them and they need medical attention soon to prevent it from causing permanent damage; they're dazed and likely concussed, but they can keep going; their ribs are going to hurt for a few days and breathing might sting for a few hours.</p>
attacker's roll is greater by 7 to 9	<p>Narrative Control: The attacker explains their attack, and the defender explains how they respond. The attacker can alter any of these details as the defender explains them. Then, the attacker explains how this response fails to prevent harm.</p> <p>Effect: The defender is badly hurt; the bullet hits them dead on, and they're losing a lot of blood and need professional care immediately or they'll die; they're unconscious and will be badly concussed when they wake up; the bone is broken.</p>
attacker's roll is greater by 10 or more	<p>Narrative Control: The attacker has full control over the narrative. They explain what the defender does in response to the attack — and how ineffective this response is.</p> <p>Effect: The defender is dead or quite nearly dead; the bullet hits them between the eyes and nothing can save them; they're beaten so badly that only immediate medical attention can help — but there will be permanent effects.</p>



For Example: Elena and Jordan get into a physical fight over the car keys, since Elena thinks that they need to drive away and Jordan thinks that they need to stay and wait for their friends to get back. Both players agree that they're comfortable with physical combat and that Jordan is going to attack Elena to try to take the keys from her. Jordan rolls their Fight (d12) and gets a 7. In response, Elena rolls her Brawn (d8) to see how bad the damage is to her. She rolls a 6, a difference of 1. Elena will be injured, but not badly. Since the fighting is mutual, Elena rolls her Fight (d10) and gets a 3. Jordan rolls their Brawn (d20), since they're taking the hit, and gets a 9. Jordan won't be injured, since their roll is greater than Elena's attack roll.

At this point, they narrate what happens. Jordan describes that they try to sucker-punch Elena, but Elena says that she notices at the last second and moves her head to avoid taking too much of a hit. She then says that she swings back, but because Elena was startled, Jordan, the better fighter, is able to easily deflect the blow and land a few shots to Elena's ribs, causing her to drop the key. While Elena is stunned, Jordan takes the key and puts it in their pocket. "We're. Not. Going. Anywhere. At least not until they get back," they say. "Clear?" Elena, not badly hurt at all but winded, coughs a few times and nods.



Spending Money

Since your game is likely going to take place in a town with a functioning monetary economy, you might, at some points, want to buy something to help you in your efforts.

It should be assumed that you have access to money. However, the degree of access you have depends on your age and in-game socio-economic status.

Children cannot have jobs and thus have almost no access to money beyond what is given to them. If they need to buy something, they almost certainly need to find someone to get it for them. Under rare circumstances, they might have saved enough to buy a small item. Remember, the exact amount depends on the era in which you're playing and whether or not you have the Wealthy strength. It also is likely to depend on the age of the child. A six-year-old won't have the same access to money that an eleven-year-old will.

Teens have limited access to money, but they can afford necessities for a few days, depending on their socio-economic status. Teens will not be able to buy a car, but they could certainly have enough saved to get a hotel room for a few nights — though that'd likely be about it. They might, though, be able to convince their parents to give them some money.

Adults have much more access to money than teens and can, within reason, buy what they want to buy. If they needed to buy a car in a pinch, they most likely could — though that might represent a significant sacrifice for them. In terms of money for adults, their group will have the most variance, which will be based on their job. But remember, in order to be wealthy, even an adult with a traditionally high-paying job must take the Wealthy strength.

Playing Multiple Sessions

While *Kids on Bikes* can be played as a single-session game, you and the other players might decide that you want to keep playing. If you do, the GM will have more time to plan the story and can throw some more orchestrated surprises your way.

If you have decided to play multiple sessions, the GM might decide to end the session's events on a cliffhanger (perhaps literally) so that you can pick up right where you left — or fell — off. That's great, and will keep you anxious about the resolution from one session to the next! If you're taking this approach, ignore the rest of this section.

But if at the end of your session you've reached a point where there will be some in-game time between the end of this session and the start of the next, you should work as a group to create a "coda" for the story. In classical music, a coda is the final portion of the work, one that brings the work to a close. Here, you'll do the same by telling everyone else how the events in the game thus far affect you in the weeks following the events. What changes for you? Are you suddenly more confident and willing to walk back into middle school with your head held high? Does a rift between you and the other characters

manifest in the form of you sitting by your locker to eat lunch instead of with them? Are your children happier to have dinner all together now? Do you finally have the courage to leave him and not come back?

After developing your story, if you are planning to play multiple sessions, you and the GM should agree upon changes to the character as a result of the session (or sessions). There isn't a "leveling up" mechanic in this game, but no interesting character is static over a series of sessions. Think carefully about what changes about you as a result of the session, as it relates to the mechanics of the game. Did you face a big fear that won't be as much of a problem for you anymore? Or did something almost kill you that will now be a fear in the future? Does it make sense to keep the strengths that you had at the start, or did you learn a new trick? And, of course, if you sustained any serious injuries, how will those affect you going forward?

After discussing with the GM, if you both agree, make the changes to your character's sheet.

Remember, if it makes narrative sense, gaining a strength does not mean losing another — but by the same token, losing a strength doesn't mean gaining another, either. You and the GM should take care to make sure that you aren't becoming too weak or too strong to face what comes next. Fear and tension can be fun, but hopelessness usually isn't. So, be sure to keep your strengths, flaws, and fears in the right range — which will be different for each player and each game.



- POWERED CHARACTERS -

Players cannot create a character with powers to play throughout the campaign. But, early in the first session, the GM will introduce a powered character that will then be co-controlled by all of the players.

Introducing & Playing Powered Characters

When the powered character is first introduced, the GM will give each player a few deliberately selected traits for that character. These traits, called aspects, should be written on separate notecards. These aspects will provide information that helps players play the powered character, such as their personality traits, patterns in their behaviors, and, of course, their powers. We recommend two per player to start, but the GM can adapt that as they see fit.

The GM also establishes how much psychic energy the powered character has, represented by Psychic Energy Tokens (PE Tokens), and puts that many PE Tokens in the middle of the table. We suggest starting with 7.

When situations come up that relate to the aspects in front of a player, they'll be in charge of the narration. In any other situations, players will share control of that character. As with the rest of the game, players share control of the narrative. If the GM gives you an aspect that you think you would have a difficult time incorporating, you can ask the GM to give that aspect to another player.

When an aspect becomes relevant, turn the card featuring that aspect sideways. This action helps to focus the table on who will be controlling the powered character. Any player may activate any aspect at the table, even one in front of another player, but the player with that aspect in front of them should be in charge of the narration related to that aspect. Thus, when another player activates an aspect in front of another player, they're handing narrative control over to that player.

For Example: Sofia thinks that it would be a particularly good time for the powered character to use his telekinesis, but Gyasi controls that aspect. Sofia reaches over and turns the notecard indicating that power sideways, thus indicating that Gyasi has narrative control of the powered character and making a suggestion of what to do with that control. (If Gyasi disagrees, he could narrate without using the powered character's telekinesis. Ultimately, it is up to the player controlling each aspect to determine how and when it is used.)

For a table of suggestions for the powered characters' aspects, see Appendix D on page 62. You may, of course, create your own as you see fit — and the GM should remember that the initial narrative path of the story should guide what powered character the players meet! When the players do meet them, the GM should also establish d4 and d20 stats for the powered character. The other four stats will be filled in by players as they discover who the powered character is and what they can do.

Characters may flesh out the powered character as they see fit, adding desires, fears, and motivations as they go. Once a player introduces a new aspect to the powered character, players should go along with it unless there are issues with established behaviors or cards that players have. It also might be a good idea to create a notecard for that aspect, especially if you are planning to play multiple sessions. Remember, though: the only way new psychic powers can be added is through intervention of the GM. Players cannot, under any circumstances, give the powered character new powers.

For Example: The GM narrates a young boy, covered in blood, walking into a police station where the characters are. The GM then hands two cards to each player. To Andrea, the GM gives the aspects “loves kittens” and “scared of bright lights.” To Doug, she gives the aspects “lashes out when touched” and “communicates only through grunts and gestures.” To Jamie, she gives “this character mimics Andrea’s behavior.” and “able to move objects with his mind.” To Jon, she gives “loves a member of the group platonically” and “fiercely loyal to the group.” Finally, the GM puts 8 PE Tokens in the middle of the table. Jon, Jamie, Doug, and Andrea will now narrate what the powered character does throughout the game in accord with what is on the cards they know about — and with correction from other players and the GM whenever necessary.

When playing the powered character, there should ideally be roughly equal input from each player and the GM. As a player, you should have enough information to make decisions about what the powered character does. If you don’t, ask the GM for more guidance — and remember that *Kids on Bikes* is a game where players have strong input over the direction of the narrative of the game. As long as you’re within the bounds of what other players want out of the game, your decisions are right!

As a GM, your control over the powered character should be used to drive the narrative toward exciting encounters and stressful situations. If players are unsure what to do or seem stuck, the GM could certainly have the powered character figure something out. If the characters need to be pushed toward the revelation of a secret that only the GM knows, the powered character could be very useful in this respect, too. Remember, though, that players’ input is important in the game — and if their ideas conflict with the plan, try to adapt.

Options for the Powered Character

Alternatively, for the element of surprise, the GM could wait to give out some aspects, especially the powered character’s powers, until they’re relevant. For example, the young boy covered in blood walks into the police station. While the characters are getting to know the powered character, they might not have access to the aspects dealing with his psychic powers. When the need to use them arises, though, the GM could hand out the notecards.

The GM should also feel free to give out additional aspects as the game goes on. Perhaps it is, as above, that the players discover a new aspect of

the powered character's personality. But this could also be to get a player more involved with the control of the character. For example, if a player isn't participating as much with narrating the powered character, the GM could give that player a new aspect card to give them more to do with the character, especially if that aspect is immediately relevant. Changes on the fly are a big part of what this game is all about, so as a player, expect to have those thrown at you!

Using the Character's Powers

Using powers always has consequences. When using powers, the GM will establish a numerical difficulty for the action being attempted. This number should take into account how practiced the powered character is with using their psychic powers in this way and how significant an expenditure of psychic energy it would represent. Then, if the player choosing to take that action with the powered character wishes to still take that action, the powered character immediately spends one psychic energy (represented and tracked by PE Tokens) and the player rolls 2d4.

Subtract the roll on the dice from the GM-established difficulty value. If the result is zero or negative, the powered character suffers a very minor physical result (e.g., a very brief nosebleed, a muscle twitch, a momentary but painful headache). If, however, the result is one or greater, the player taking the action has two options: either the attempt fails or the player chooses to spend more PE Tokens to increase the roll, spending one PE Token for each +1 to the roll. As soon as the roll plus the PE Tokens spend is equal to the difficulty value, the result becomes a success.

For Example: Jamie is controlling the powered character's telekinesis. She wants to use his powers to move a set of keys off a desk and over to Jamie's hands so that she can let herself out of a pair of handcuffs. The GM tells Jamie that the precision required for this task sets the difficulty at 5. Jamie spends one of the powered character's PE Tokens and rolls 2d4, getting 4. She then has to decide whether the attempt fails (in which case the GM narrates the failure) or whether she wants to spend an additional PE Token (in which case she narrates the success).

If completing such an action reduces the powered character to zero or fewer PE Tokens (which could happen with the GM's permission), very bad things happen to the character. Whatever their standard physical reaction to using powers is will be far worse (e.g., a violent, full-body seizure instead of a muscle twitch) and they will lapse into unconsciousness — or even die if they drop too far into negatives. The exact effects are up to the GM.

Replenishing Mental Energy

In order to replenish their mental energy, the powered character needs to rest, eat, or take other appropriate action. A full night's rest should restore the character to full mental energy — unless they have dipped below zero. In that case, recovery should take more time, though the exact duration is up to the GM's discretion.



Also, there should be one or two things that can help the character recover without sleeping — or recover more quickly if they've dipped into negative psychic energy. Do they have a particular sweet tooth? Do foods that are high in iron help them more than other foods? Maybe it's meditation or direct sunlight helps them to recover. In all situations, the powered character should be subtly drawn to these things to give players clues — but the GM should feel free to throw in some red herrings.

Powered Character Checkpoints

Just as your personal character develops, your powered character should develop in some way, too. And just as the individually controlled characters will develop through reaching goals that they've set for themselves and through the natural and unpredictable turns of the story, the same will happen for the powered character.

In terms of the natural changes to the character over the course of the story, a character the powered character fears standing up for them is likely to change how they feel about him. One of the characters betraying the powered character to save herself is likely to make the powered character mistrust the traitor. The GM should modify the character's details as appropriate.

In terms of major changes to the powered character, though, the GM should consider, when creating the character what the “Character Checkpoints” will be for the powered character. Character Checkpoints should be elements that are both narratively and mechanically significant, places where something triggers a meaningful change in the character. When determining these Checkpoints, think about how the causal event would influence the character.

For Example: If the powered character was given their powers in a lab, returning to that lab might be a Character Checkpoint. It could be that the character discovers a way to augment their powers — either gaining a new power or increasing the number of dice they roll in checks. Perhaps they discover an important object or undergo a process similar to what they underwent to gain their powers. It could also be that, if the powered character had false memories, seeing the lab might reveal the old, actual ones to the character — which could trigger new powers or give the powered character a clearer understanding of what the next step in their journey is.

The GM should use these Checkpoints as some of the “big” moments of the game, moments when things change — but not necessarily for the better. Such Checkpoints should be used to complicate the players’ lives. Perhaps they meet a key villain who is now aware of them, too. Perhaps the powered character becomes less stable — maybe rolling a d10 instead of 2d4 when making checks.

What’s important is that players, even though they’ll be pushed toward these Character Checkpoints, feel a sense of dread as they approach these pivotal moments. The clues that lead players to these moments will give their experience a structure, so that they aren’t just fumbling around in the world they helped to create — but they’ll also create the edge-of-your-seat, anything-could-happen moments that make games memorable.



- INFORMATION FOR THE GM -

So, you've agreed to run the game for your friends. Thank you for facilitating their experience with the game! In this section, you'll find some advice for how to best make that happen. If you're an experienced GM, a lot of this section will cover material that you've probably heard of or thought through before. If you're reading a section that seems like something you already know, feel free to skip to the next one. We won't know — and if we did, we wouldn't be hurt.

Player Safety

A key part of any role-playing experience is pulling players out of their comfort zones and, often, forcing them to make difficult decisions for their character. Will Arthur choose to disobey his parents and dive into the river, or will he let the raft that they'd tied off to a rock float away when it comes loose? Will Alex lie to their children or let them know just how much danger they're all really in? However, as discussed in the "Setting Boundaries" section, you don't want to address any issue that players have agreed are out of bounds. So where's the line between pushing players and overstepping the agreed-upon boundaries?

Our suggestion is to make sure that you're steering quite clear of the topics players have agreed to avoid. If players feel strongly enough about them to mention them at the start, it might make them nervous to even approach them — but that's something that you and the group should discuss at the start. However, if that conversation doesn't happen at the beginning of the game, feel free to pause the action.

Also, even if you're using a method to ensure that players have the chance to stop anything they're finding unpleasant, don't hesitate to take a step out of the game to make sure that everyone is still okay with things. When players get caught up in the story, they can sometimes roll right into things people find troubling, even if those things weren't covered in the discussion of those boundaries. If it seems like this might be happening, it's a good idea to pause, check in with everyone, and either continue or adjust as needed.

For example, some conflict between characters will help to drive the story and create tension. However, if there is increasing tension at the table and players — not just characters — seem to be getting frustrated with each other, it's a good idea to make sure everyone's still enjoying themselves.

Also, give some thought to the safety methods your group is using. We've recommended a slightly modified version of John Stavropoulos's x-card for *Kids on Bikes*, but there are many others that can work well. Here are just two examples we like, but use what works best for your players:

- Brie Sheldon's Script Change Tool — When something players want to avoid is occurring, they say "rewind," "pause," or "fast forward." "Rewind" means that a player is telling the group they want to go back a bit and



head in a different direction to avoid elements they don't want in the game. "Pause" means that a player needs a break but that the game may continue in the same direction it was going. "Fast forward" means that a player wants to skip over a part of the game — that they're okay with the event happening in the world of the game, but they're not okay in hearing it described or playing it out. For more information, visit <http://www.briecs.com/p/script-change-rpg-tool.html>

- Ron Edwards's Lines & Veils — Rather than establishing firm "off-limits" topics at the start of play, players can address issues as they come up, drawing a "line" (a topic that a player does not want to address in the game) or drawing a "veil" (a topic that can occur in a game so long as it is "off camera" (similar to the fast forward described above). This is best used with players who are comfortable enough with each other and with role-playing to pause the game and address issues as they arise. It comes from Edwards's 2003 game, *Sex & Sorcery*.

We're sure there are numerous other approaches to making sure that everyone at the table feels safe and enjoys their experience. We encourage you to use whatever techniques work best for you — and adapt them as necessary.



Starting to Craft the Story

In *Kids on Bikes*, the setup at the start of the game, where players create the town and establish the connections between each character, is vital to helping them craft a good story later. Let's talk about the elements to pay attention to during the setup in order to have more hooks for the adventure and to get the inspiration you need for the upcoming game. Here are some questions to think about (and possibly take notes about) during the setup:

- **Notable organizations:** What are these organizations hiding? Is there something sinister about one of these organizations — or is one of them holding back a great evil?
- **Notable landmarks:** Is there more than meets the eye to one of these landmarks? What happened in the past that made this place such a nexus of attention — and how does it factor into the powered character's back-story? Or how is the evil entity the characters will face trying to use this landmark for their own nefarious ends?
- **Rumors about the town:** Which rumor is true? Which rumor is completely false? Which rumor is only part of a much more complex story? Probably most importantly, which rumor gets all of the players excited? Is there one where other players almost involuntarily chime in to add to it — or say, "Oooh! That's good!" If so, that's the rumor to lean into, but in some unexpected way.
- **Strengths and tropes:** What are the characters going to generally be good at based on their strengths and tropes, either as a group or individually? For the things that multiple members of the group will be good at, those are a good way for the group to form at the start of the game, giving them all something that they can be successful at together. For things that only one member of the group will be good at, later in the game, once the characters have learned to rely on each other more, this can be a good opportunity for specific characters to shine, especially if they haven't had the chance to yet or if their player has been taking more of a passive role in the game.
- **Relationship questions:** Especially with the negative questions about how characters are connected, what are some "pressure points" you could press for the group to create tension? For questions about characters who don't know each other, what truth is there to what they've heard — and what isn't true at all?

For Example: Think back to the sample responses to questions given on pages 6-7. Gautier, the GM for that game, might have jotted down the following questions about the game, listing possible points of tension and story elements as Carlos, Yasmin, and Emily collaboratively created the town:

- **Mining:** Do they unearth something while mining? What caused the mining accident? Will it happen again? Will the characters need to explore that collapsed mine for some reason? When they found the bodies, were there really bite marks? Did one of the men really do that to the others? Where are the other two bodies?

- Candles: Why does the town want to drive out the darkness? Are they afraid of something?
- Economy: As characters get hard up for money, what starts to influence them?
- Elks: Why so popular? “Most of the adult men” is an interesting amount. What keeps some of the men out of the Elks? Is it really a front? Or is it actually the opposite, that they’re actually a powerful but secret force for good in the town?
- Diving cliff: Good place for a strong moment of tension? What time of year are we going to be playing in?
- Worthy/Yates: Are they actually an item? What if they’re meeting frequently to cook up some evil — or to share notes on some evil that they’re keeping an eye on? Does that have anything to do with the mining accident?

In thinking over his notes, Gautier thinks that making the rumor about only finding ten of the twelve miners the central part of the first story could be really cool. He noticed that there wasn’t much reaction from the other players when Carlos mentioned that the Elks might be a front, so that doesn’t seem to grab the players the way the mine did. But, he thinks that he’ll see if players start bringing it up in the game. If so, that might be something to lean into. Other than that, he sees the relationship between the two principals as something that might be worth pursuing — but he decides that taking it in a very different direction than the players might be expecting could be cool. He only has a rough idea: there are students in the schools who need to be kept under surveillance, which could be an interesting twist. If the characters follow them, he decides that he’ll let the characters see them meeting at the local diner and talking, but not in the way lovers might. That, he thinks, might be enough to interest them in sneaking in to find out more. He’ll see where things go, but he figures having two hooks is a good start.

As you look for ways to draw ideas out of the character creation, think back to the relationships established between Oswald, Isabella, and Yoon from pages 20-22. For the sake of this example, we’ll say they did the Complete Questions, where each character answers two questions about each other character they know and one question about each character they don’t know.

For each pairing, Maya, the GM, takes notes about points of tension in the relationship — or about ways to draw the characters together:

- Oswald/Yoon: Oswald is comfortable talking to Yoon, the mother of his best friend (if something happened to Daniel, they’d likely work together to fix it), similar love of fantasy novels, deep secret about the near affair between Yoon and Oswald’s dad (Oswald doesn’t know. Does Oswald’s mom? Probably.)
- Oswald/Isabella: Isabella as a Wannabe and Oswald as a Loner Weirdo means that she wouldn’t want to be seen with him, old friends but not anymore, sweet that Oswald reminds Isabella of who she was, she

might be willing to help if Oswald needed her (especially if no one else would ever find out), Oswald seems like he would definitely be willing to help her if she asked

- Yoon/Isabella: Yoon as a Blue-Collar Worker and Isabella as a Wannabe who doesn't know her means there's not much here — Oswald seems to be the nexus, Isabella's mom being the sheriff might be a way to connect the two (if Yoon goes to Isabella's house to find her mom off hours, Isabella might overhear — good if something happens to Daniel)

As you start to think about these possible hooks and points of tension, you'll start to see directions to take the story. That's good! You don't need to narrow it down to just one, and you can dangle a few different hints and see which direction the players take. With the shared narrative control, it's important to let the players also have a strong role in the direction that the story takes. So if you're feeling stuck in where to take the story to make it interesting for players, ask your players questions — even very open-ended ones, like, “Who are you surprised to find in the cave with you?” or “When the door creaks open, what do you find on the other side?” You don't have to do all the work setting up the story!



Narrative Control

Depending on how many role-playing games you've enjoyed over the years, you might be used to different approaches for the GM (or DM, MC, or any number of other titles). In traditional role-playing games like *Dungeons & Dragons*, the GM directs a lot of the action and is almost always responsible for telling players what happens in response to their actions. As a result, with these approaches, each player is responsible for their own character's actions, but not for the world around them. For example, “You reach into the dark portal that just opened on the wall and your hand feels warm suddenly. Although you want to withdraw your hand, you cannot. Something is holding you there, something that feels like a strong, skeletal hand.”

Many contemporary role-playing games take a different approach, letting players tell more of the story, with the GM as more of a facilitator. Rather than telling players what happens, the GM will often ask players what happens, relying on them to co-create the world they're interacting with. As such, each player is responsible for their own character's actions and some aspects of

the world around them. For example, “As you reach your hand through the dark portal that just opened on the wall, what do you feel that surprises you — and why don’t you pull your hand out of the portal when you feel it?”

Typically, *Kids on Bikes* takes this approach. Sure, there will be times when you present something to the table that’s entirely from your imagination, but whenever possible, try to encourage the players to create the story with you, not just react to what’s going on around them. Continuing the example above, there might be a very good reason that there has to be a skeletal hand on the other side of the portal — and if there is, make sure that’s part of the story. But for the incidentals, leave those up to the players. Heck, even for the big stuff, sometimes, players should get to decide what happens.

Another way in *Kids on Bikes* that narrative control is removed from the GM and players is through the dice rolls. When a character fails a stat check, both you and your players are bound in your decisions by an unalterable truth: that character failed the stat check.

As the GM, you can take some small liberties with the harshness of the penalties for failure, and that character’s player can spend Adversity Tokens to the same end — but unless the player has enough Adversity Tokens to get over the needed value, the character has failed. Go with it. Take the story in unexpected directions when the most intimidating character at the table brandishes a gun at a small child and the child laughs at them. Think about why that is — and ask the player to explain. Maybe they decide that they try to smoothly pull the gun from its holster menacingly but it gets stuck. Maybe the child is distracted by the large stain on the character’s pants from when they fell earlier. Players will surprise you with their creativity within these bounds.

All of this is especially true when it comes to the powered character. Each player will be controlling part of that character’s actions and reactions, and you’ll know things about the powered character that they don’t. Even if something doesn’t fit with your idea of the powered character, try to adapt to the changes players make to them. If you’d planned on having them hate chocolate but a player declares that they stuff an entire bar into their mouth and smile, ask yourself if that detail matters or if they could just as easily hate peanut butter.

To boil this section down to two main, simplified ideas: roll with the punches, and, as the GM, let your players throw some of those punches, too.

That said, some players really prefer a game where they only control their own character. As long as everyone agrees that’s how the players want to play the game, there’s nothing wrong with that! You could even control the powered character if that’s what all of the players want for their experience from the game.

Tone and Pace

One of the most difficult elements of GMing is keeping consistency for the players without the game getting boring. There are two key elements that can be particularly difficult: tone and pace.

With respect to tone, players will discuss at the beginning of the game whether they want a serious game, a silly one, or something in the middle. However, especially in campaign-style games, having only serious, morose characters glumly struggling against the forces of evil can get old. So too can a cartoonish hodge-podge of characters absurdly gallivanting through unrealistic scenario after unrealistic scenario. Figuring out what the right balance is part of the art of GMing.

The same is true of the pace of the game. The world you're helping to create will feel disjointed if it throws the players right into a conflict with a powered monster without any preamble every time they play. Spending twenty hours establishing characters and their relationships before they get even a hint as to any central conflict, too, will get boring. Again, variety is vital.

As a result, GMing often relies heavily on your ability to read the group and adjust the tone of the game. There are, however, a few suggestions that have generally worked for us in the past:

- Don't feel like you have to role-play everything that happens in the world of the game. If the characters are driving for two hours to a neighboring town, you don't need to have the characters narrate their conversation for those two hours. If the characters are going their separate ways, you can have them give quick snapshots of what they did during that time. Don't feel like every moment has to be accounted for.
- Encourage players to tell you whether they want more or less of something, both before games and even during sessions. If the group is getting bored with the way the current game is going, work to give them more of what they want.
- Even more, encourage players to actively push the narrative toward what they want. In *Kids on Bikes*, players have control over more than just their characters' reactions, so if they want some action to happen, let them make that action happen.
- If players seem to want different things, feel free to pause the game, discuss what's happening on a meta level, and then step back into the game. For example, if Riku is really enjoying the slower-paced role-playing but Yasmin wants some action, discuss this. Is there a way for both of them to get what they want — or can one of them agree to hold off on what they want in exchange for more of that later on? Trust your players' maturity.
- After particularly intense sessions (or parts of sessions), try to give the players a bit of a break. You've probably noticed in film that after big action scenes there's usually a bit of a lull — especially if a character has suffered a big loss. Not only does this give the audience a break from frenetic action, but it also gives them time to process what the loss means going forward. Especially in a game where you want your players to take

ownership of the direction of the story, you need to give them time to think about what big events will mean going forward. However, you also don't want to jump from a loss in the party to screwball comedy. Again, a big part of GMing is reading the room.

- You're a player in the game, too. If you're enjoying the pace and the tone, chances are the group is, too. When in doubt, just ask the other players if they are enjoying themselves as much as you are.

Failing a Stat Check

One of the key differences between *Kids on Bikes* and role-playing games that focus on combat is that, as in all stories, failure isn't necessarily bad. While it certainly means that the thing the character was trying to do doesn't happen, it doesn't mean that players have failed.

Think back to the source material that you've enjoyed and that you're probably drawing inspiration from to run the game. In those stories, the characters don't always succeed at what they're trying to do right off the bat. If they did, it wouldn't be a very interesting story. So when players aren't successful, remember that this is an opportunity for creativity on their part (and, if necessary, on your part) to approach the problem from another angle. It is also a chance for the story to take an unexpected twist.

For Example: If Ida and Lucas are trying to break a coded message that they found in a secret government lab and fail their Brains rolls to solve it, what else could they do? Perhaps the code remains secret to them and they need to figure out another way to get to the bottom of what's going on. Alternatively, though, they might seek out a non-player character who's well-versed in codes... or one of their parents might walk by and notice something that gets them started. Don't be afraid to use a little *deus ex machina* to keep things moving!

Or if Ida, Lucas, and the strange young girl they met in the woods are running from the men in dark suits chasing them, but their Flight rolls don't come up the way they wanted, that might force a confrontation with the men in suits. As a result, the strange young girl might reveal that she can create and control fire sooner than you had been expecting her to. There's nothing wrong with changing plans in the game, either!

Changing the Rules

As you know if you've looked at the modules that some of our amazingly creative friends have made for the game, we're 100% okay with people changing the rules of the game. The purpose of playing is to make sure that everyone has fun and, with that in mind, if there's something that would make it more fun for your group, we encourage you to add, alter, or discard rules to make *Kids on Bikes* the best experience it can be for you and your players.

Early in the development process, our friend Nicholas Malinowski, whose work we consistently love and encourage everyone to check out, said, “I have an idea — but it would need to have a single player controlling the powered character. Is that okay?” It turned out to be one of the coolest early playtests we had of the game, and it really reinforced that if the experience is going to be made better through the addition, modification, or removal of rules, you should absolutely run with it.

Small changes, though, can have big consequences — so while it’s not possible to imagine all of the potential ripple effects, try to imagine them. And if you do change something and a clever player figures out an unexpected exploit, feel free to tell them not to do that or to change the rule back or tweak it again.



APPENDIX A – RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONS

Character You Know - POSITIVE

1. What did this character do for you that makes you owe them a debt you can't repay?
2. What do you admire about this character — but would never tell them?
3. What great kindness did this character do for you that they don't even remember but you do?
4. What trait about this character that they despise do you genuinely appreciate?
5. Why do you care about this character more than they care about you?
6. What role did this character play in the best day of your life?
7. What plan do you and this character have that most excites you?
8. What is your private nickname for this character and why?
9. What is the kindest thing this character has ever done for you?
10. What is this character sacrificing to protect you?
11. What lengths would you go to in order to defend this character?
12. Why do you have a bond with this character that can never be broken?
13. What about this character always makes you happy?
14. What is the bravest thing you've ever seen this character do?
15. What do you and this character have a mutual, weird love of?
16. What would losing this character mean to you?
17. What aspect of this character's personality do you try to use as a model for your own?
18. When did you first realize that you loved this character — either platonically or romantically?
19. What's your first memory of this character?
20. What item did this character give you that you treasure?

Reminders:

- Roll a d20 and answer that question about the character you're establishing a relationship with. If the question doesn't fit what you have in mind for that relationship, feel free to reroll or choose another question.
- Once you've answered, remember to cross out the question so that you don't answer that question about another character — and so that other players don't answer the same question.
- If you roll a question that has already been answered, choose the question above or below, choose any question on the list, or reroll.

APPENDIX A – RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONS

Character You Know - NEGATIVE

1. What did this character do in the past that you still resent them for?
2. What secret are you keeping from this character that you would be devastated if they found out?
3. What could make you betray this character?
4. What are you sure this character is hiding from you?
5. What does this character have that you want to take from them?
6. What is this character doing, either knowingly or unknowingly, that hurts you?
7. What do you need to take from this character for their own good?
8. What role did this character play in the worst day of your life?
9. What is the most dishonest thing you've seen this character do?
10. What is this character doing that's putting you both at risk?
11. What does this character do that makes you immediately lose your temper?
12. How far would you go to avoid being alone with this character?
13. What part of this character's personality scares you?
14. What would this character have to do to get you to forgive them?
15. What insanity has this character shown warning signs of?
16. How far would you go to make this character suffer?
17. Why do you dislike this character when all the other characters seem to love them?
18. You hurt this character years ago. Why can't you apologize?
19. What do you do to intentionally annoy this character?
20. How did this character betray you the last time you confided in them?

Reminders:

- Roll a d20 and answer that question about the character you're establishing a relationship with. If the question doesn't fit what you have in mind for that relationship, feel free to reroll or choose another question.
- Once you've answered, remember to cross out the question so that you don't answer that question about another character — and so that other players don't answer the same question.
- If you roll a question that has already been answered, choose the question above or below, choose any question on the list, or reroll.

APPENDIX A – RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONS

Character You Don't Know

1. What good thing have you heard about this character that you can't believe is true?
2. Why do some members of the town seek out this character?
3. What wonderful thing did this character do that the whole town was talking about?
4. What charming habit is this character known for throughout the town?
5. What strange record does this character hold in the town?
6. Why is this character's family so important in the town?
7. Why was your only brief interaction with this character so positive?
8. Based on what you know, how is this character different from the rest of their family?
9. What volunteer work have you heard that this character does?
10. How far would you go to get to know this character and why?
11. What bad thing have you heard about this character that you can't believe is true?
12. What do you hope to gain by humiliating this relative stranger?
13. What bad reputation does this character have around the town?
14. Who does this character have a very public feud with?
15. Why are so many townspeople afraid of this character?
16. What terrible loss did this character suffer?
17. What do you hope to learn about this character to manipulate them?
18. What is this character doing to threaten their family's reputation?
19. What scandal in the town was this character involved with?
20. Why don't you want to associate with this character?

Reminders:

- Roll a d20 and answer that question about the character you're establishing a relationship with. If the question doesn't fit what you have in mind for that relationship, feel free to reroll or choose another question.
- Once you've answered, remember to cross out the question so that you don't answer that question about another character — and so that other players don't answer the same question.
- If you roll a question that has already been answered, choose the question above or below, choose any question on the list, or reroll.

APPENDIX B – STRENGTHS

The strengths commonly associated with your trope can be found on their sheet in the Playbook. In discussion with the GM, you may instead choose from the list below. Remember, you start the game with two strengths.

STRENGTH	DESCRIPTION
Cool Under Pressure	May spend 1 Adversity Token to take half of your die's value instead of rolling on a Snap Decision.
Easygoing	Gain 2 Adversity Tokens when you fail, instead of 1.
Gross	You have some kind of gross bodily trick (loud, quiet, smelly... up to you) that you can do on command.
Heroic	You do not need the GM's permission to spend Adversity Tokens to ignore fears.
Intuitive	May spend 1 Adversity Token to ask the GM about your surroundings, an NPC, or the like. The GM must answer honestly.
Loyal	Each of the Adversity Tokens you spend to help your friends gives them a +2 instead of a +1.
Lucky	May spend 2 Adversity Tokens to reroll a stat check.
Prepared	May spend 2 Adversity Tokens to just happen to have one commonplace item with you (GM's discretion).
Protective	Add +3 to rolls when defending one of your friends.
Quick Healing (free for children; available to teens & adults)	You recover from injuries more quickly, and don't suffer lasting effects from most injuries.
Rebellious (free for and available only to teens)	Add +3 to rolls when persuading or resisting persuasion from children. Add +3 to rolls when resisting persuasion from adults.

STRENGTH	DESCRIPTION
Skilled at ____ (free for adults; available to teens and, at GM's discretion, to children)	Choose a skill (GM's discretion). You are assumed to succeed when making even moderately difficult checks (9 or less) involving this skill. If the GM determines that you do need to roll for a more difficult check, add up to +3 to your roll.
Tough	If you lose a combat roll, add +3 to the negative number. You still lose the roll no matter what, but could reduce your loss to -1.
Treasure Hunter	May spend 1 Adversity Token to find a useful item in your surroundings.
Unassuming	May spend 2 Adversity Tokens to not be seen, within reason (GM's discretion).
Wealthy	May spend money as though you were in a higher age bracket. For example, a wealthy child is considered to have the disposable income of a typical teen, and a wealthy teen is considered to have the disposable income of a typical adult. A wealthy adult is considered to not have to worry too much about money — they would certainly be able to buy anything they need, and likely able to spend their way out of a lot of situations.



APPENDIX C – FLAWS

The flaws commonly associated with your trope can be found on their sheet in the Playbook. In discussion with the GM, you may instead choose from the list below. Remember, you start the game with two flaws.

FLAWS	
Absent-Minded	Neurotic
Blunt	Obnoxious
Boastful	Paranoid
Clumsy	Patronizing
Conceited	Perverse
Cowardly	Petty
Deceitful	Picky
Demanding	Prejudiced
Disloyal	Prim
Disobedient	Reckless
Dogmatic	Resentful
Envious	Restless
Flippant	Rude
Gloomy	Secretive
Greedy	Self-Centered
Hot-Tempered	Self-Pitying
Ignorant	Slovenly
Inconsiderate	Superstitious
Insecure	Vain
Irrational	Vindictive

APPENDIX D – POSSIBLE ASPECTS FOR POWERED CHARACTERS

TYPE OF CARD	PRE-GENERATED OPTIONS
PERSONALITY TRAIT	Aggressive
	Borderline Pyromaniac
	Communicates Only Through Grunts and Gestures
	Creative
	Dexterous
	Fascinated by Shiny Objects
	Frequently Bursts Into Song
	Gentle (Unless Provoked)
	Good at Calming Others Down
	Good at Hiding
	Good at Reading People
	Good Listener
	Good Sense of Humor
	Highly Concerned With Others
	Ignorant of Social Norms
	Impulsive
	Lacks an Internal Monologue
	Lashes Out When Touched
	Loves Animals
	Naive
	Nearly Complete Amnesia
	Never Wants to Be Alone
	Obsessed With Cleanliness
	Obsessed With Music
	Obsessed With Solving Puzzles
	Outgoing
	Perfect Memory
	Profoundly Claustrophobic
	Quick (d20 Flight)
	Rambles in an Unknown Language
	Sarcastic
	Scared of Being Inside
	Scared of Bright Lights



TYPE OF CARD	PRE-GENERATED OPTIONS
PERSONALITY TRAIT	Scared of Dogs
	Scared of Loud Noises
	Scared of Middle-Aged Men, Especially in Suits
	Scared of the Dark
	Scared of the Outdoors
	Scrappy (d20 Fight)
	Socially Adept (D20 Charm)
	Strong (d20 Brawn)
	Thinks They Are Being Pursued by a Cult
	Thinks They Are Being Pursued by a Shadowy Corporation
	Thinks They Are Being Pursued by an Evil, Supernatural Force
	Tough (d20 Grit)
	Usually Hungry
	Very Fidgety
	Very Intelligent (d20 Brains)
	Well Spoken
TYPE OF CARD	PRE-GENERATED OPTIONS
RELATIONSHIP TO GROUP	Afraid of a Member of the Group
	Asks a Lot of Questions
	Believes a Member of the Group Is Also Being Pursued
	Believes a Member of the Group Is the “Chosen One”
	Believes the Entire Group Has a Special Destiny — But Only Together
	Compelled to Help the Group Solve Mundane Problems
	Completely Trusting of a Member of the Group
	Demands Complete Respect or Worship From the Group

TYPE OF CARD	PRE-GENERATED OPTIONS
<p>RELATIONSHIP TO GROUP</p>	Distrusts a Member of the Group
	Feigns Indifference Toward the Group
	Highly Protective of a Member of the Group
	Highly Protective of the Entire Group
	Immediately Bonded to a Member of the Group
	In Love, Platonically or Romantically, With a Member of the Group
	Insists That the Group Remain Non-Violent
	Mimics a Member of the Group
	Openly, but Not Physically, Hostile Toward a Member of the Group
	Playfully Aggressive With a Member of the Group
	Talkative With Members of the Group
	Tries to Spread Forbidden Knowledge
	Tries to Turn Members of the Group Against Each Other
	Very Shy Around a Member of the Group
	Wants to Bring the Group to Another Realm
	Wants to Help a Member of the Group
	Willing to Sell the Use of Their Powers
TYPE OF CARD	PRE-GENERATED OPTIONS
<p>PSYCHIC POWER</p>	Able to Affect the Speed of Time
	Able to Astrally Project
	Able to Become Invisible
	Able to Block Others' Senses



TYPE OF CARD	PRE-GENERATED OPTIONS
<div> <div>PSYCHIC POWER</div> </div>	Able to Change Their Body's Density
	Able to Change Their Physical Appearance
	Able To Communicate Telepathically With Animals
	Able to Communicate Telepathically With People
	Able to Control Fire Telepathically
	Able to Control Plants Telepathically
	Able To Control Technology Telepathically
	Able to Control the Weather
	Able to Create False Memories
	Able to Create Illusions
	Able to Evoke Vivid (Often Painful) Memories
	Able to Fire Bursts of Energy From Their Hands
	Able to Harm Others by Touching Them
	Able to Heal by Touching
	Able to Hypnotize With Their Gaze
	Able to Know an Object's History by Touch
	Able to Lift Much More Than Normal
	Able to Move Faster Than Sight for Short Bursts
	Able to Move Objects With Their Mind
	Able to See Confusing Glimpses of the Future
	Able to Teleport Short Distances

These pre-generated options are the ones found in the Powered Character Deck. As the GM, you should feel free to add any options that make sense for your game. Don't feel confined by these suggestions.

APPENDIX E – TROPES

BLUE-COLLAR WORKER

Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Adult	Brawn	Fight	Grit	Charm	Brains	Flight
Possible Strengths		Likely Flaws		Question 1		Question 2
Cool Under Pressure, Lucky, Prepared, Skilled at..., Tough, Treasure Hunter		Blunt, Boastful, Disloyal, Disobedient, Dogmatic, Envious, Greedy, Ignorant, Prejudiced, Reckless, Slovenly, Superstitious		To what extent do you enjoy the work you do?		What would it mean for you if you lost your job?

BRILLIANT MATHLETE

Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Child/Teen	Brains	Flight	Grit	Charm	Fight	Brawn
Possible Strengths		Likely Flaws		Question 1		Question 2
Gross, Intuitive, Loyal, Prepared, Skilled at..., Wealthy		Absent-Minded, Clumsy, Conceited, Cowardly, Insecure, Neurotic, Obnoxious, Patronizing, Resentful, Rude, Self-Pitying, Slovenly		Why do you get satisfaction from being good at math (or your other area of expertise)?		How does your social isolation manifest itself?

BRUTISH JOCK

Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Teen	Brawn	Fight	Grit	Flight	Charm	Brains
Possible Strengths		Likely Flaws		Question 1		Question 2
Gross, Heroic, Loyal, Protective, Skilled at..., Tough		Boastful, Hot-Tempered, Ignorant, Inconsiderate, Perverse, Petty, Prejudiced, Reckless, Restless, Rude, Self-Centered, Vindictive		Why do you get satisfaction from being good at sports?		What does your involvement with sports keep you from doing that you wish you could do?



Instead of using this chart, you can also download the PDF Playbook from huntersbooks.com/downloads-kidsonbikes.

BULLY						
Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Child/Teen	Fight	Brawn	Filight	Grit	Brains	Charm
Possible Strengths		Likely Flaws		Question 1		Question 2
Gross, Lucky, Prepared, Skilled at..., Tough, Wealthy		Demanding, Disobedient, Envious, Hot-Tempered, Ignorant, Inconsiderate, Insecure, Irrational, Obnoxious, Perverse, Petty, Vindictive		What motivates your bullying?		How do you feel when you hurt others?

CONSPIRACY THEORIST						
Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Teen/Adult	Brains	Fight	Flight	Grit	Charm	Brawn
Possible Strengths		Likely Flaws		Question 1		Question 2
Heroic, Intuitive, Prepared, Skilled at..., Treasure Hunter, Unassuming		Blunt, Deceitful, Demanding, Inconsiderate, Irrational, Neurotic, Paranoid, Prejudiced, Restless, Secretive, Slovenly, Superstitious		What do you think is happening in the town that no one knows about?		How far will you go to prove that you're right?

FUNNY SIDEKICK						
Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Child/Teen	Charm	Brawn	Flight	Brains	Grit	Fight
Possible Strengths		Likely Flaws		Question 1		Question 2
Easygoing, Gross, Heroic, Protective, Skilled at..., Treasure Hunter		Absent-Minded, Boastful, Clumsy, Flippant, Neurotic, Obnoxious, Perverse, Picky, Reckless, Restless, Slovenly, Superstitious		What do you do that always lightens your friends' moods?		When does being in the "sidekick" role frustrate you?

APPENDIX E – TROPES

LAIID-BACK SLACKER

Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Teen/Adult	Flight	Charm	Brains	Grit	Brawn	Fight
Possible Strengths		Likely Flaws		Question 1		Question 2
Cool Under Pressure, Easygoing, Skilled at..., Treasure Hunter, Unassuming, Wealthy		Absent-Minded, Blunt, Clumsy, Cowardly, Disloyal, Disobedient, Flippant, Ignorant, Irrational, Reckless, Secretive, Slovenly		What do you think of people who try much harder than you do?		What are you willing to go the extra mile for?

LONER WEIRDO

Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Child/Teen	Grit	Fight	Brawn	Brains	Flight	Charm
Possible Strengths		Likely Flaws		Question 1		Question 2
Cool Under Pressure, Intuitive, Prepared, Skilled at..., Tough, Unassuming		Blunt, Deceitful, Disloyal, Disobedient, Gloomy, Hot-Tempered, Inconsiderate, Obnoxious, Paranoid, Reckless, Rude, Secretive		Why are you happier fending for yourself?		What part of the "cool kid" life do you wish you had, just a little bit?

OVERPROTECTIVE PARENT

Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Adult	Fight	Brains	Brawn	Charm	Flight	Grit
Possible Strengths		Likely Flaws		Question 1		Question 2
Heroic, Loyal, Prepared, Skilled at..., Tough, Wealthy		Demanding, Dogmatic, Gloomy, Insecure, Irrational, Neurotic, Paranoid, Patronizing, Prim, Self-Pitying, Superstitious, Vain		When do you feel appreciated by your child/children?		What would losing your child/children mean to you?

Instead of using this chart, you can also download the PDF Playbook from huntersbooks.com/downloads-kidsonbikes.

PLASTIC BEAUTY						
Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Teen	Charm	Flight	Fight	Brains	Brawn	Grit
Possible Strengths		Likely Flaws		Question 1		Question 2
Cool Under Pressure, Intuitive, Lucky, Prepared, Skilled at..., Wealthy		Boastful, Conceited, Demanding, Flippant, Inconsiderate, Petty, Picky, Prim, Rude, Self-Centered, Vain, Vindictive		How does it feel to have others think that you're "beautiful but terrible"?		What do you sacrifice to remain beautiful?

POPULAR KID						
Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Child/Teen	Charm	Flight	Brains	Grit	Brawn	Fight
Possible Strengths		Likely Flaws		Question 1		Question 2
Cool Under Pressure, Easygoing, Loyal, Lucky, Skilled at..., Wealthy		Conceited, Cowardly, Deceitful, Demanding, Disloyal, Flippant, Patronizing, Petty, Picky, Prim, Self-Centered, Vain		Beyond people wanting to impress you and the social capital that brings, what do you like about being popular?		How do you treat the unpopular kids?

REGLUSIVE ECCENTRIC						
Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Adult	Flight	Brains	Grit	Brawn	Fight	Charm
Possible Strengths		Likely Flaws		Question 1		Question 2
Prepared, Skilled at..., Tough, Treasure Hunter, Unassuming, Wealthy		Absent-Minded, Blunt, Clumsy, Dogmatic, Gloomy, Inconsiderate, Neurotic, Obnoxious, Paranoid, Rude, Secretive, Self-Centered		What drove you away from the world at large?		What do you miss about being out in the world?

APPENDIX E – TROPES

SCOUT

Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Child/Teen	Brains	Grit	Charm	Brawn	Flight	Fight
Possible Strengths		Likely Flaws		Question 1		Question 2
Cool Under Pressure, Intuitive, Lucky, Prepared, Skilled at..., Treasure Hunter		Absent-Minded, Blunt, Boastful, Conceited, Dogmatic, Inconsiderate, Patronizing, Restless, Slovenly, Superstitious, Vain, Vindictive		Who first got you into the Scouts (or, more generally, the great outdoors)?		What do you have to give up to spend as much time in nature as you do?

STOIC PROFESSIONAL

Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Adult	Grit	Brains	Charm	Brawn	Flight	Fight
Possible Strengths		Likely Flaws		Question 1		Question 2
Cool Under Pressure, Easygoing, Heroic, Lucky, Prepared, Skilled at...		Clumsy, Conceited, Dogmatic, Flippant, Gloomy, Greedy, Patronizing, Petty, Resentful, Rude, Secretive, Vindictive		To what extent do you enjoy the work you do?		What would you rather be doing?

WANNABE

Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Teen	Flight	Brains	Charm	Grit	Brawn	Fight
Possible Strengths		Likely Flaws		Question 1		Question 2
Intuitive, Loyal, Prepared, Protective, Skilled at..., Unassuming		Cowardly, Deceitful, Disloyal, Envious, Gloomy, Insecure, Paranoid, Petty, Resentful, Secretive, Self-Pitying, Vain		What would it mean to be one of the popular kids?		What would you sacrifice to be one of the cool kids?



Instead of using this chart, you can also download the PDF Playbook from huntersbooks.com/downloads-kidsonbikes.

YOUNG PROVIDER						
Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Teen	Grit	Brawn	Charm	Brains	Fight	Flight
Possible Strengths		Likely Flaws		Question 1		Question 2
Easygoing, Protective, Skilled at..., Tough, Treasure Hunter, Unassuming		Deceitful, Dogmatic, Greedy, Hot-Tempered, Ignorant, Insecure, Irrational, Prejudiced, Resentful, Restless, Self-Pitying, Superstitious		How has working to support your family improved you as a person?		What have you had to give up for your family?



APPENDIX F – DIFFICULTY RATINGS AND CONSEQUENCES

DIFFICULTY	EXPLANATION & EXAMPLE
20	<p>A task at which only the most incredible could even possibly succeed — but if they succeed, it will be one of the most impressive things a character has ever done. This is a nearly guaranteed failure.</p> <p><i>Examples: Lifting a car off of someone trapped under it; solving a nearly impossible math problem just by glancing at it.</i></p>
17-19	<p>A task for which success would be incredible and impressive. This, too, is a nearly guaranteed failure.</p> <p><i>Examples: Talking a police officer out of arresting you when you have clearly broken the law and have no relationship with the officer; breaking a school record in track.</i></p>
13-16	<p>A task where success is extraordinary — but decidedly possible for characters who are truly skilled at it.</p> <p><i>Examples: A lucky character finding the right item on the first try; someone trained in espionage withstanding police interrogation.</i></p>
10-12	<p>A task where success is impressive — but completely expected for characters skilled at it.</p> <p><i>Examples: A strong person prying open a heavy, locked door; a computer whiz repairing a computer quickly under pressure.</i></p>
7-9	<p>A task where success is certain for characters who are very skilled at it — but not for those who aren't.</p> <p><i>Examples: Convincing the principal that it wasn't you and your friends who started the cafeteria food fight; running a message from one end of a building to the other in a very short time.</i></p>
3-6	<p>A task where success is likely for all characters except those who aren't skilled or who have a low stat in that field.</p> <p><i>Examples: A lucky person drawing a non-face card from a deck; a character silently withstanding a verbal berating.</i></p>
1-2	<p>A task where success is guaranteed, except in extreme cases.</p> <p><i>Examples: A character lifting a 10-pound weight over their head; a character reciting a multiplication table.</i></p>



+10 or higher	<i>The character succeeds smoothly and easily.</i> Likely, it looks like the character is just showing off, or that the task is done so readily that it happens without any effort at all. At the GM's discretion (and certainly not necessarily), there could be some unexpected positive results from a success of this degree.
+5 to +9	<i>The character succeeds quite impressively.</i> At the GM's discretion, the character might have some additional benefits beyond the success, but these will be slight — and only if important for pushing the game forward.
+1 to +4	<i>The character succeeds, but not impressively.</i> Any benefits the character gains above and beyond the success should be quite limited — if present at all.
0	<i>The character succeeds, but just barely.</i> Decidedly, nothing surprising happens — and the player and the GM should make this success as skin-of-the-teeth as possible.
-4 to -1	<i>The character fails, but not too badly.</i> There might be some very, very minor short-term consequences, but these won't shift the story for more than a minute or two. The character has tried and almost succeeded.
-9 to -5	<i>The failure is bad, but not a disaster.</i> There will be some short-term consequences that might lead to some immediate difficulties — but nothing that the character can't handle if they focus on them. The character has tried to do or has been forced to do something beyond their capabilities. And, not surprisingly, they've failed.
-14 to -10	<i>The failure is profound.</i> There will be consequences for this failure, likely in keeping with what would be expected, but that doesn't mean that those consequences won't be very bad. These consequences may strongly influence the course of the current play session. Generally, though, a character will only find themselves failing this badly when they bite off more than they can probably chew — or because of the cruelty of the GM.
-15 or lower	<i>The failure is staggering and catastrophic.</i> There will be both immediate and long-term consequences for this failure, above and beyond what might be expected. These consequences might lead to serious changes in the course of the long-term arc of the story — especially because the character should only find themselves failing this badly through total recklessness or because the GM has purposefully put them in a staggeringly difficult situation.

RESULT OF ROLLS

(with applicable modifiers)

NARRATIVE RESULT

<p>defender's roll is greater than or equal to attacker's roll</p>	<p>Narrative Control: The defender narrates the outcome.</p> <p>Effect: The defender is uninjured; the projectiles miss or the blows don't land or hurt them enough to matter.</p>
<p>attacker's roll is greater by 1 to 3</p>	<p>Narrative Control: The attacker explains how they attack, and the defender narrates what they do to mitigate the harm to them.</p> <p>Effect: The defender is hurt, but only temporarily; the bullet grazes them, but they're okay; the punch stuns them, but they can shake it off.</p>
<p>attacker's roll is greater by 4 to 6</p>	<p>Narrative Control: The attacker explains their attack, and the defender explains how they respond. The attacker then explains how this barely mitigates the harm.</p> <p>Effect: The defender is fairly hurt; the bullet hits them and they need medical attention soon to prevent it from causing permanent damage; they're dazed and likely concussed, but they can keep going; their ribs are going to hurt for a few days and breathing might sting for a few hours.</p>
<p>attacker's roll is greater by 7 to 9</p>	<p>Narrative Control: The attacker explains their attack, and the defender explains how they respond. The attacker can alter any of these details as the defender explains them. Then, the attacker explains how this response fails to prevent harm.</p> <p>Effect: The defender is badly hurt; the bullet hits them dead on, and they're losing a lot of blood and need professional care immediately or they'll die; they're unconscious and will be badly concussed when they wake up; the bone is broken.</p>
<p>attacker's roll is greater by 10 or more</p>	<p>Narrative Control: The attacker has full control over the narrative. They explain what the defender does in response to the attack — and how ineffective this response is.</p> <p>Effect: The defender is dead or quite nearly dead; the bullet hits them between the eyes and nothing can save them; they're beaten so badly that only immediate medical attention can help — but there will be permanent effects.</p>



KIDS ON BIKES

NAME: _____

AGE: _____

FEAR: _____

MOTIVATION: _____

FLAWS: _____

DESCRIPTION: _____

STATS	
Fight	Flight
Brains	Brawn
Charm	Grit

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> COOL UNDER PRESSURE | <input type="checkbox"/> QUICK HEALING |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EASYGOING | <input type="checkbox"/> REBELLIOUS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GROSS | <input type="checkbox"/> SKILLED AT: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HEROIC | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> INTUITIVE | <input type="checkbox"/> TOUGH |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LOYAL | <input type="checkbox"/> TREASURE HUNTER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LUCKY | <input type="checkbox"/> UNASSUMING |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREPARED | <input type="checkbox"/> WEALTHY |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PROTECTIVE | |



ADVERSTY TOKENS:

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KIDS ON BIKES

STRANGE EVENTS IN SMALL TOWNS



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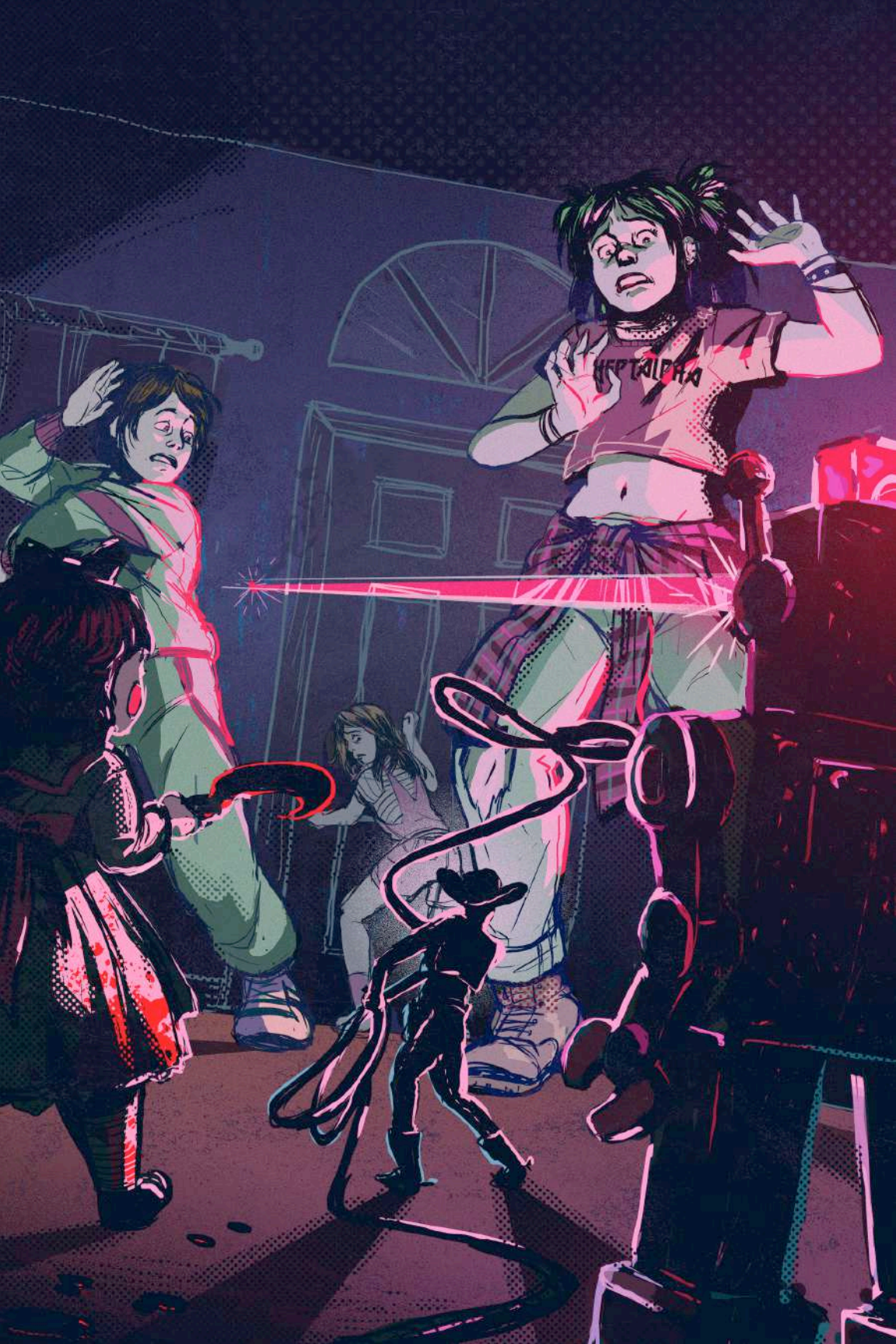
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INTRODUCTION TO THE MODULES

by Doug & Jon

When we created *Kids on Bikes*, we were incredibly excited by the collaborative world-building. We're both creative guys, so we like creating! Some early testers, though, thought the experience could benefit from a few places for newer players to start — or for experienced players to have a more GM-driven experience.

The result of that feedback is these modules: 22 settings created by some of the most creative people we know. The things people have done within the system are weird, chilling, and just plain fun. We're sure that, as you look through them, you'll feel the same!

BUT! Talk to your GM before reading. The surprises in some modules might be spoiled if you read them first!

A few words about using the modules:

- Every element in the modules is a suggestion. If there's an NPC (non-player character) or location that doesn't fit, don't include it. If you want to change a detail about something in the module, change it! The decisions you and the other players make with the narrative should still drive the story more than these suggestions, which are just meant to help get you started.
- Instead of the standard town creation questions, each module has its own alternate questions, which fall into four categories:
 - *Group*: These are questions that the group should discuss and answer, agreeing on answers together.
 - *Individual, Shared*: These are questions that each player will answer about their own character, then reveal to the rest of the group. The answers are public knowledge.
 - *Individual, Shared or Private*: These are questions that others might know about your character or might not. Everyone will answer them, but it's up to you if you want to share your answer with the group.
 - *Individual, Private*: These are questions that each player answers but won't share with the group. They're ways for players to frame their characters within the module — but not necessarily to tell the others. However, if a player thinks it should be shared, they can feel free to!

With that, enjoy the modules — we know we did!

– Doug & Jon





DADS ON MOWERS – SUBURBTOPIA, USA

by Banana Chan

Content Warnings: body horror, claustrophobia, gaslighting, memory loss, human experimentation, lack of autonomy

Setting information

Welcome to Merrygrove Lane! It's a beautiful little cul-de-sac in Suburbtopia, a town nestled somewhere in the United States in the early 2000s.

Get comfortable in your new five-bedroom, three-bathroom house, because every one of the 10 houses in this idyllic community is a five-bedroom, three-bathroom house. With a swimming pool, backyard, and garage, you'll always be busy with home improvement projects. Looking for a night out on the town? Your best buds can paint the town red (figuratively) at Merry Hardware, the local hardware store, or knock back some brewskis at Goodman's. Or say hi to the Mayor of Coffee Cat and grab a frappuccino!

Every weekday, the residents follow a strict schedule of waking up, getting the kids ready for school, carpooling, working, and finally coming home to loving families, with dinner and a quick drink before bedtime. But it's now the weekend and that's when things really get wild! Barbecue? Karaoke at Goodman's? That new home renovation project? You have all the freedom to do whatever is socially acceptable in this little bubble of a town. Especially yelling at kids to get off your lawn!

The only weird thing about the town is 150 Merrygrove, the house at the end of the cul-de-sac. The residents have only ever seen an 11-year-old kid go in and come out of the house. Weird as that is, the kid has never bothered anyone, so no one really cares!

Setting Touchstones

Dream Daddy (video game), *The Good Place* (TV series), Herb Ferman (person), *No Exit* (play), *The Sims* (video game), *Westworld* (film)

Alternate Town Creation Questions

Group: What do you and your pals have planned for this weekend?

Individual, Shared: What kind of dad are you — a soccer dad, a music dad, a literature dad, another kind of dad? Put your answer on your character sheet.

Individual, Shared: Where is your relationship partner? Business trip? Or are you a single parent? If you have a partner, they must be somewhere else for the duration of the game.

Individual, Shared: What do you do for a living? Are you retired at the cozy age of 45 or 50? Or maybe you're working from home for Business Corp doing finance stuff. Whatever it is, your work is confined to the town of Suburbtopia.

Individual, Shared: How many kids do you have, and what are they like? Is one of them the class clown, the school bully, the popular kid?

Individual, Shared: Who do you trust the most within your community of dad friends? This will be between you and another player and may not be mutual.

Possible Points of Interest

Establishments in the town

- Merry Hardware, the local hardware store where you can get all the knicks and knacks.
- Goodman's Sports Bar, every dad's favorite watering hole. Adults come here to watch the game and cheer for their sports team. Weekends have karaoke nights, open mics, or chili cookoffs.
- Coffee Cat, a coffee shop that serves pastries. Its ragdoll cat logo, the Mayor of Coffee Cat, strolls casually among the shop's wicker chairs.
- The Grocer, which is where you shop for food. For some strange reason, this is the place where everyone comes to gossip and make small talk.
- Floof Hair Salon and Barber, where you go to keep that hair shiny and healthy!

Places your character wouldn't really care about, but may have interactions with

- Your kids' school, a place that you don't visit much.
- The mall, where the teenagers hang out. It's kind of scary, but it has everything you need, including a movie theater. Strangely, none of the stores and popups in the mall compete with any of the town's long-standing establishments.

Other locations

- The park, which has a bunch of trees, a duck pond, and a jogging path.
- Business Corp, where the business people work, doing finance things.

Possible NPCs

- **Arthur**, manager of the Grocer, who's been pushing to have more variety at the store. He's extremely knowledgeable about food, but he can be a little stuck-up and gossipy.
- **Ernest**, the owner of Merry Hardware and everybody's best friend. He's older and has lived in Suburbtopia for as long as you can remember. You and your pals sometimes hang out at Merry Hardware just to chat about your next projects.
- **George**, one of the bartenders at Goodman's Sports Bar. George is tall, tattooed, and kind of a goof. If you need that extra shot, George will take care of you. She also keeps most of the town's secrets.
- **Dr. Henson**, the town therapist. A lovely middle-aged doctor who has been living in the town for as long as you can remember.
- **Morgan Hilcox**, CEO of Business Corp. No one's ever seen or spoken to Morgan, but every year the families in town receive a holiday card from the CEO.
- **Jenna**, the talkative and fashionable owner of Floof. Whether you need a new style or just a trim, Jenna (or Jenn) can emulate any magazine image.
- **Joe**, a dad from down the street who hangs out at the park to fish. You say "good morning" to him but don't know much about him except he's a passionate angler.
- **The Mayor of Coffee Cat**, a large tabby cat that is the revered icon of the local coffee shop. She's quite clumsy and gets into trouble a lot.
- **Mr. Wilson**, the principal (ugh!) at your kids' school. Does anyone else find it weird that he makes everyone call him Mr. Wilson? A creepy man who seems to hate children (or people?) in general.



Possible Adventure Hooks

- A tree in the park has been replaced by a series of moving data sets. It looks like it's contained within the space where the tree used to be, but no one can be too sure. The local law enforcement has placed caution tape around it, and they say they're "looking into it." It can't be a result of Y2K, can it?
- Your kids want to have a sleepover at 150 Merrygrove, but something about it just doesn't sit right with you. You've heard stories about the basement lights flickering and static noises coming from the house... You also don't want to disappoint your kids. It sounds like almost all the neighborhood kids have decided to go. Even Joe's kids are going.
- Joe from down the street was seen in his fishing gear during the workday, walking head first into the wall of the house over and over, repeating the word "maze."
- Jenna walked into her salon to find a garbage bag full of detached arms and legs. It's been reported to the local authorities, but someone has to do something!
- Mr. Wilson has invited all of you to a gathering at his house — an address on a street that you weren't aware of before. The invitation even has an image of the house (assuming you might get lost?), which is a large, dark-grey mansion with no windows.
- All the food has gone rotten at the Grocer, even the canned food. Inside the metal tins, maggots squirm in place of preserved meat, and all the fresh produce stinks of death left unattended for days. It happened overnight, but it looks like the death is slowly seeping to the grass on the premises.
- The Mayor of Coffee Cat has gone missing! Help the coffee shop (and the town) find her again — before the situation is declared a cat-tastrophe!

Possible Threats

- You and the other dads have shared dreams about people dressed in lab coats wandering your town at night, examining you and your friends. You also feel like pieces of your memory are missing.
- You wake up one weekday to go to work and notice how beautiful the sky is — a deep dusk red, mixed with purples and oranges, with clouds painted in. As the day goes by, you notice that the sky hasn't changed. Clouds haven't moved, the moon hasn't come out; it has remained dusk for hours.
- Business Corp wants to create their own cryptocurrency. They are attempting to force all the small businesses to use the new BusiCoin, instead of Suburboleons.
- All roads lead back to Suburbtopia. It looks like, even if you wanted to leave, you couldn't. But of course, why would you want to leave this perfect little town?
- Your kids' school is closed until further notice. Now you have to think of ways to keep your kids out of trouble, before you can head on your own adventure.
- There's some new drug that's going around called RealITV. It causes the user to zone out for hours. While users claim to "see the truth," the news reports that users will "experience false and alternate memories." Users must be taken to Dr. Henson for therapy. You have to have the drug talk with your kids.

Possible Powered Characters

- The kid at 150 Merrygrove is quiet, mostly. No one's ever seen their parents. You've even tried asking your own kids about this kid, without much luck. They have a secret, you just don't know what it is — but you'd like to find out.

Possible Monsters

- Tourists come and go, but the worst part is the garbage they leave behind in our beautiful town. Sometimes they get rowdy at the bar and start fights. Tourists cannot be harmed. If you try to hurt a tourist, you will be out of the game.
- What is up with the teenagers' hair? And why do they act like they know something that you don't? They hang out at the mall and play their strange music really loud, sitting around with skateboards.
- Mr. Wilson might be the devil, under that human façade.

ADJUSTMENTS TO RULES

Use the Dad character sheet, available at huntersbooks.com/downloads-kidsonbikes.

Possible Strengths:

- **Adorable:** Everything you do is cute. You may add +2 to all checks, including those of other players, as long as you are all in the same scene.
- **Beard:** The Floof Hair Salon and Barber is your playground! Your rolls here automatically succeed.
- **Dad Abs:** You get +2 to Charm, hottie!
- **Lucky:** You may spend two Friendship Tokens to reroll a stat check.
- **Puns:** If you can make a pun out of a situation, you get +1 to any one stat until the end of that scene.
- **Resourceful:** You may spend two Friendship Tokens to create something out of items sprawled around the scene.
- **Vroom Vroom:** You know everything about fixing vehicles. You get +2 to Brains when working on a vehicle.

Possible Flaws:

- **Awkward:** If you choose this flaw, you must choose the Adorable strength. You don't know where to put your arms sometimes. -2 to your Brains.
- **Clumsy:** During scenes that require Brawn, even if you succeed at the stat check, something unexpected happens.
- **Embarrassing:** Any time you are in a scene with your kid, -2 to your Charm.
- **Grumpy:** Ugh, every day feels like a Monday and your coffee is constantly a gross, lukewarm temperature. -2 to your Brains and Brawn.
- **Patronizing:** Well, actually... You feel like you need to correct people, even your own pals. Every time you start a sentence with "Well, actually..." you get -1 to your Charm permanently.
- **Sweaty:** Why is it always warm? You're just always sweaty.

Adversity & Friendship Tokens: Adversity Tokens do not exist in this module. Any time you would gain an Adversity Token, gain a Friendship Token instead. Friendship Tokens can be used to activate strengths, just like Adversity Tokens, or players can turn in 10 Friendship Tokens to take a Dad Nap.

More Than a Bromance: Dads can flirt with one another, which may lead to romantic relationships. If a player would like to flirt or engage in romance, they will need to first ask the target player if that is okay. If both players agree to the romance, then the initiating player will roll Charm. If it is a 6 or higher, the roll succeeds and the players will give a description of what happens. If the roll fails, the initiating player gains a Friendship Token.

Dad Nap: You're exhausted! It's time for a nap. This can happen any time you decide to turn in 10 Friendship Tokens, even in times of danger. During a Dad Nap, you duck out of the action (because you're asleep), but can aid other players if they need assistance with their rolls or scenes by sharing the 10 Friendship Tokens amongst themselves. Only one dad can be napping at a time and the shared Friendship Tokens must be split amongst all of the other players — they cannot be given to just one.

We've Got Each Other: Players can spend the entire game sitting around, watching sports, hanging out on their lawns, romancing one another, and not progressing with adventures or scenarios — and that's absolutely okay! Just make sure that everyone is comfortable with going this route instead of following the story. If players would like to go this laid-back route but would also like to play out an adventure, the missing Mayor of Coffee Cat adventure is a good choice. Set expectations and the tone of the game beforehand so that everyone is comfortable with the game and having fun.



STRANGE THINGS AFOOT AT THE CIRCLE Q – CARSON CREEK, CO

by Matt Colville

Content Warnings: alcoholism, bodysnatching, homelessness, kidnapping, racism, violence against animals, xenophobia

Setting information

Nestled in the shadow of Cheyenne Mountain, just 90 minutes from lovely downtown Colorado Springs, Carson Creek is indistinguishable from a dozen other small towns in Colorado. Flat, dominated by a single main road, the town is home to fewer than 300 people, those without reason or opportunity to move to the city. Unemployment and alcoholism are common — but for a kid, these are distant problems, realities of adult life that serve only to make grown-ups surly and suspicious of a handful of idle kids on bikes.

There's a bar on the main road, the Kicking Boots (only one of the boots on the ancient neon sign works, so everyone just calls it the Boot), but kids only go there under extreme conditions: when things are so bad that a grown-up is absolutely needed, which is almost never. Surely there's no problem you can't solve with your friends!

For a 12-year-old with nothing to do except get in trouble, the only real place to hang out is the local Circle Q convenience store. It has three arcade games in the corner, left over from an earlier era: *Space Killers*, *Galaxinoid*, and a 50-cent laserdisc game called *Galen's Quest*, which none of the kids in town have ever beaten. Must be rigged!

The owner of the Circle Q is an immigrant, the only immigrant in town so far as the kids know — an older, dark-skinned man who everyone says is from Iraq and who's been running the Circle Q for their entire lives. Mahmoud Shariari is routinely tormented by the kids, who generally bear him no real malice. He is long-suffering and used to dealing with pre-teens. But something about him gives the impression of a man on the edge, a man capable of doing anything if pushed far enough.

For pre-teens cycling down the dirt roads and trails of Carson Creek, the world is still a wide and exciting place. Entering their teenage years, they soon discover the suburbs have no charms to soothe the restless dreams of youth...

Setting Touchstones

Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure (film), *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (film), *Firestarter* (film), *WarGames* (film)

Alternate Town Creation Questions

- *Group*: Who among you has the highest score in *Galaxinoid*?
- *Group*: Which of you got into an argument with Mr. Killian, the history teacher, and was suspended for three days? What was the argument about?
- *Group*: Whose parents most recently had a visit from Chief Kelly? What had you done to occasion the visit?
- *Individual, Shared*: Who is your favorite teacher at Questa Verde High? What subject do they teach?
- *Individual, Shared or Private*: Do you ever think about leaving Carson Creek when you grow up?
- *Individual, Shared or Private*: Who in town do you go to when things get weird?
- *Individual, Private*: When desperate, what have you done for arcade money?

Possible Points of Interest

Lighthearted

- The Circle Q, the kids' hangout and arcade. The owner, Mahmoud Shariari, is extremely grumpy. There are many rumors about his background.
- Carson Creek Ice Palace, an ice skating rink that's seen better days, but is still in operation. Mostly older kids and families go here.

Serious

- The Kicking Boots, a grown-up place where it seems everyone and everything is openly hostile toward kids — including the sounds and the smells. May have to be braved if the kids need help.
- EnCom Scientific Instruments, the tallest building in town at three stories, and the town's main employer. When the kids' parents talk about going to "work," they mean ESI. Several of the rooms are now empty, and the rest are devoted mostly to packaging centrifuges for the medical industry. It was once famous for developing the microencabulator.

Either

- Questa Verde High, the most elaborate structure in town. Built in the '50s when the town was larger and growing, the school has a computer lab, a science lab, and a library. It is the nexus of the kids' daily lives.
- Royal Bridge Mall, a shopping center shaped like a plus sign. Three of the four wings are now abandoned and serve as a source of adventure and danger for the kids. The other wing is mostly shoe stores.

Possible NPCs

- **Rachel Kelly**, daughter of "Big Red" Kelly, the town's previous long-standing police chief. Rachel was elected chief primarily because of her name and famous father. She is seen by the kids as the town boogeyman, but Chief Kelly is basically on their side when things get weird.
- **Grover Killian**, history teacher at Questa Verde High School. He is also Colonel Shariari's minder in Carson Creek. Mr. Killian teaches history as nothing but a series of wars and is known for being tough, teaching a hard class to ace. His status as a Lieutenant Commander in the U.S. Air Force is unknown to the town, and his friendship with Mahmoud is likewise a secret.
- **Mr. King**, the abusive, alcoholic father of one of the local kids. Mr. King is on welfare, along with 12% of the rest of the town, and he resents it and everyone. He can be a real terror, but the other adults in town remember when he was a promising writer as a young man, before everything fell apart after a car accident.
- **Mr. Lightman**, Questa Verde High School's IT guy is only 23, but to the kids that means he's an adult and therefore not someone to be confided in. However, when push comes to shove, he is easier to talk to (more of a nerd) than any of the other grown-ups in town and may turn out to know — or strongly suspect — what's going on more than anyone else that the kids have access to.

- **Colonel Mahmoud Shariari**, owner of the Circle Q and agent of the U.S. government. Fished out of Iran prior to the 1979 revolution by then-Captain Grover Killian and spirited back to the United States, Colonel Mahmoud Shariari is responsible for the “Storage Locker” under the Circle Q — where a nearby shadowy government agency stores its mistakes and those discoveries it doesn’t know what to do with.

Possible Adventure Hooks

- A stranger needs help and seems reluctant to ask any of the adults in town. The traveler is either oddly unfamiliar with the town, constantly in awe of simple things like smartphones and microwaves, or strangely familiar with it, noting how the ESI building is still standing — depending on whether he’s from the past or the future. Of course, the government arrives to bag him and stuff him back in the Storage Locker, but whether they succeed depends on the kids... and whether the Time Traveler is on their side. He could be the hero or the villain.
- Known for haunting the local woods since the ’80s, the Wild Man is described as short, hairless, and dressed in rags. Known for killing and eating small animals, pets, and local game, the Wild Man seems especially interested in the Circle Q. When a local murder is blamed on him, it’s up to the kids to discover the truth and try to get the Wild Man back to his spaceship, hidden in the Storage Locker under the Circle Q, and from there back to his home planet.
- Sudden seismic disturbances around Carson Creek are initially blamed on fracking. What else could it be, given the state’s history of geological stability? When folks start disappearing, and one of the kids gets her bike eaten from under her by a giant toothed worm that disappears back into the ground, it becomes obvious that the local tremors are not caused by natural gas extraction. Mapping all the incidents, it seems the Circle Q is, both literally and metaphorically, at the center of it all. The mutated, weaponized nematode experiment, abandoned in the ’90s, seems to have decided to become un-abandoned all on its own!

Possible Threats

- A detective arrives in town and grills the kids about the owner of the Circle Q. How much do they know about him? Though he seems fair, he is foul. A Russian spy!
- A new science teacher in town teaches strange hypotheses featuring alien beings from beyond time. Where is he from, and why did he pick Carson Creek of all places to settle down?
- A new agrochemical company, the Advance Combine, buys ESI and lays off all the adults in town. They bring in their own employees, who all wear sunglasses, even at night.

Possible Powered Characters

- A new student seems nice, but refuses to make friends and gets very angry if touched. This pyrokinetic young man escaped the Storage Locker and is hiding in plain sight, living in the abandoned mall.
- When sufficiently inebriated, Mr. Fennel the town drunk mutters and raves. Paying close attention to his drunken ramblings reveals that Mr. Fennel is precognitive, glimpsing visions of the future.
- Sparky, the town mutt, sleeps outside the Circle Q, living off the scraps the store’s owner throws out. Born next to the dumpster, he has spent his whole doggy life absorbing the alien radiations emitted from deep underground. Sparky is quite a bit smarter than the average dog and seems to understand even complex sentences, though he only barks.

Possible Monsters

- The teachers at Questa Verde, one by one, have been acting strangely, as though they don't recognize the students, ever since the eclipse last month. What happened to the teachers, and what exactly are these beings that replaced them?
- Reports of a saber-toothed tiger, first one then several, sweep through town. When one of the massive felines — which looks suspiciously like the English teacher's missing house cat — is seen eating the high school groundskeeper, it's time for the police chief to act. Meanwhile, the owner of the Circle Q notices the cat food is long past its sell-by date, and quietly throws out all his stock...
- Mrs. Greenwich was over 80 years old, so no one thought anything of it when her new hybrid car rolled over her, killing her. Surely, it was an accident. When other vehicles in town — never more than one at a time — start acting aggressively, and a handful of deaths are linked to them, folk demand the auto companies recall their vehicles, blaming them for manufacturing faulty onboard computers. So far, the AI that escaped from the Storage Locker hasn't found a way out of town, but it's only a matter of time...

ADJUSTMENTS TO RULES

All characters in this module should be between the ages of 12 and 15.

Author's Note: This module is greatly informed by my own experiences, both growing up and even to this day. My local convenience store was run by (as I thought of him at the time) a "foreigner" — someone I knew was from a Middle Eastern country. But, at 13 years old, I had no idea which and if you'd have told me, I'd have confused it and forgotten it quickly.

He seemed, to teenaged me, surly and quick to anger, so of course we delighted in provoking him and testing boundaries, as is the job of all teenaged boys.

As I grew up, I learned more about him, and I realized this was a very complex and interesting person: an educated, prideful man who left his home country after a revolution that he was on the losing side of, a man who now worked like a mule for as many hours as God sent to provide not just a home, but a future for his family here in the States.

And given how demonic we were as teenagers, his attitude toward us was actually quite knowing and indulgent, although we did not perceive that at the time (and it would have ruined the fun if we had, which he probably knew). We saw him as an alien from a foreign land, but he saw us as just a bunch of typical teenagers. – Matt





LAKE ASIBIKAASHI – LAKE ASIBIKAASHI, CO

by Eddie Freeman

Content Warnings: dream manipulation, hallucinations, massacre of indigenous peoples, nightmares, sleep deprivation, spiders

Setting information

Nestled in the mountains of Colorado, Lake Asibikaashi is a destination for camping, fishing, and many other outdoor adventures. During the cold season, the Dreamseeker Resort brings skiers and winter thrill-seekers to the region. During the warmer months, Camp Provenance brings scouts and their families, while on the other end of the lake the affluent summer crowd parties and floats their summer away.

Logging, hunting, and the fur trade — as well as the Oneirological Apperception Research (OAR) facility — create year-round viability for local residents. Economically the town is prospering, thanks to the strong, year-round influx of visitors, as well as the construction boom's unending need for wood, ceramics, and other materials.

Rumors abound of a massacre that took place generations ago at the mouth of the valley, where many Arapaho tribe members were slain in their sleep while escaping a greater conflict. Locals mention witnessing spirits wandering the forest at night.

The town is famous for the legend that the island in the middle of the lake was once the home of the Spider Woman, also known as Asibikaashi, who was said to protect the people of the area by weaving webs of warding, both in the waking world and in the Dreamscape.

Setting Touchstones

Inception (film), “Masterpiece” (short story from Creepypasta), *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (film)

Alternate Town Creation Questions

- *Group:* Is the OAR facility still active? If so, what do you know about the work they do there? If not, why was it closed?
- *Group:* What is a rumor about the town that you have heard?
- *Individual, Shared:* What does your character do during the off-season?
- *Individual, Shared or Private:* Have you witnessed the spirits at the massacre site? If so, how did it affect you? Did you see one of your ancestors?
- *Individual, Shared or Private:* What is a living thing that you have recently had dreams about?
- *Individual, Private:* What is a reoccurring dream that you have and why do you keep it secret?



Possible Points of Interest

- Camp Provenance, a Scout camp that kids have attended and made memories at for generations.
- Dreamseeker Resort, a high-end ski and adventure resort in the mountains, which attracts visitors year round.
- Oneirological Apperception Research (OAR), an ominous facility that little is known about. Occasionally recruits locals for experimentation and “sleep studies.” There are rumors that some have reoccurring nightmares after these studies.
- Dreamcatcher Island, a highly spiritual, forested island in the middle of the lake.
- The Arapaho massacre site, a tragic landmark of local history. The spirits lingering from this can often be found in the woods and around the mouth of the valley.
- Wallace’s Wonderland, the local adventure supply store. Catering to all your climbing, diving, spelunking, and mountaineering needs.
- Sipatu’s cabin, where the shaman can be found. Located high in the mountains on the outskirts of the resort.

Possible NPCs

- **Damian Holloway**, owner of the Dreamseeker Resort. He also owns the biggest house on the lake (of course).
- **Dr. Anna Morse**, chief scientist (either current or former) at the OAR Facility. She is fearful that there are layers to dreams far beyond what modern science has discovered, and that discovering them may unlock what she refers to as “Pandora’s Box.”
- **Neché ‘Amber’**, known by many as “the creepy person in the woods.” A runaway from adoption in her early life, she has lived and survived off the land. She mainly keeps to herself and does not have much contact with the town. But when she does, she is followed by hushed whispers and sideways glances. (Possibly a powered character, a dreamwalker.)
- **Devon Sharpe**, local hunter and the second most knowledgeable person about the woods surrounding the lake. Devon can often be found leading Scouts and tourists on adventures through the wilderness.
- **Sipatu**, a local shaman and keeper of the lore of the local tribes. Lives in a cabin high in the mountain range near Dreamseeker Resort. Sipatu is occasionally in conflict with the resort.
- **Willoughby Wallace**, the owner of Wallace’s Wonderland. The adventures of his younger years have caught up to him, and while he is no longer able to adventure himself, he now runs the local Adventurers League and teaches survival skills. You may also know him as Scoutmaster Wallace.

Possible Adventure Hooks

- During a hike with Devon, the characters encounter the wolf spirit.
- The characters encounter Neche and she reveals that she knows more about them than they know about her.
- The conflict between Sipatu, Holloway Enterprises, and Camp Provenance reaches a boiling point, and the characters need to choose a side.
- The Nottmor is the corruption of the Spider Woman who originally protected dreams. Changed through the locals’ treatment of the indigenous peoples and OAR’s experimentation on the Dreamscape.
- A character with ties to the local tribes goes through a ritual to connect with their ancestors, which reveals that there is some truth to the rumors about the area.
- A character witnesses the spirits of the massacre and is beseeched to release them from their torment.

Possible Threats

- There's a secretive cult that worships the Nottmor and wants to bring about an endless slumber.
- Shadowy government agents are connected to OAR — or are looking into it.
- Holloway Enterprises wants to develop more of the town, including the sacred lands of the indigenous peoples.

Possible Powered Characters

- A dreamwalker who, while asleep, can move between people's dreams. Often knows secrets or untold fantasies of people in town.
- A wolf spirit that has roamed this area since ancient times. Able to shapeshift to hide itself amongst people. Its howl can often be heard throughout the valley as it ushers in the night, during which it patrols the dreamscape for abnormalities. It appears to the characters as something they have recently dreamed about.
- A child that has manifested from the Dreamscape experiments at OAR. Able to temporarily manifest people's dreams and nightmares.

Possible Monsters

- The Nottmor (Night Mother) is less of a person, and more of a concept that has escaped the Dreamscape experiments at OAR. Manifesting and feeding off the energy generated by dreams (both good and bad), it wants to keep you dreaming as long as possible. The caress of the Night Mother is warm and comforting, as she watches you slumber with her eyeless stare.
- The Night Terrors are creations of the Nottmor, sent to haunt the dreams of the local citizenry.
- The Roaming Nisse are alluring creatures who create fascinations (often illusory) to lure the local citizenry into daydreams so that they can steal trinkets unnoticed.

ADJUSTMENTS TO RULES

Rule Addition: The Dreamscape

Some of the game may take place within the Dreamscape, the shared unconsciousness of all sentient creatures. Most of the time, characters would only see fragments of the Dreamscape, what we think of as simply our dreams. As the Nottmor exerts more and more control over the Dreamscape, though, characters will discover consistent experiences that the Nottmor is creating — and will likely even have shared experiences within the Dreamscape.

Typically, when in the Dreamscape, characters are not able to influence what they do in any meaningful way. However, as the Nottmor influences the Dreamscape, characters will be able to make decisions about what they do in the same way that they can make choices while awake. Her alteration of the fabric of the Dreamscape enables the characters' wills to influence their own actions — but not the Dreamscape itself.

Night Terrors, extensions of the Nottmor, function in the same way as characters: they are able to control their own actions while in the Dreamscape. Whereas characters will return to reality when they awaken, Night Terrors cannot enter the waking world until they can trap a human in the Dreamscape. To make matters worse, the presence of the Nottmor in the Dreamscape has changed the typical rules of dreams — that when you are badly hurt in a dream, you awaken unharmed. Her presence is causing people who are injured in the Dreamscape to awaken with those injuries in real life.

The Nottmor itself has not found a way to escape into the world, but if she can trap a dreamer with powerful enough magic, she may be able to. Lucid Dreamers are a favorite target of hers, but they alone are not enough. A dreamwalker, a shaman, or a human with an enhanced ability to dream lucidly might do the trick, though...

Rule Addition: Lucid Dreamer

All teens and adults can take the following strength as one of their two selected strengths: “Lucid Dreamer: Spend two Adversity Tokens to exert control over the Dreamscape for the duration of the current dream. After spending Adversity Tokens, you are able to summon inanimate objects to your possession and disobey the laws of physics while dreaming.”

Rule Addition: Sleep Deprivation

If a character goes without sleep, there will be negative effects, based upon the number of days they have gone without sleep and whether or not they fail a Grit check. Each day that a character goes without sleep, they automatically advance one day along the Sleep Deprivation track. Then, they must make a Grit check. A failed Grit check means that they advance one additional day along the Sleep Deprivation track. Effects along the track are cumulative. It is assumed that characters are consuming caffeine or other stimulants in order to remain awake, so such drugs will not alleviate these effects. When characters do fall asleep, stat checks made in the Dreamscape are without penalty.

- **Day 1:** Get -2 to all stat checks, including Planned Actions.
- **Day 2:** Unable to take Planned Actions.
- **Day 3:** Any time you are not in motion, there is a 20% that you enter a microsleep (two to 30 seconds of unconsciousness followed by five minutes of disorientation, meaning that you automatically fail any stat check during that time). If you are not consuming caffeine or other stimulants every few hours, immediately jump to Day 6. At this point, you are having trouble keeping a grip on reality, so the effects of “A Bleeding Reality” (see below) apply whenever you enter a microsleep.
- **Day 4:** Microsleeps automatically occur any time you are not in motion.
- **Day 5:** Automatically fail any stat checks.
- **Day 6:** Involuntarily fall asleep equal to, at minimum, four hours per day (not including failed Grit checks) that you were awake. You cannot be awakened during this time. If left to sleep on your own, you will sleep for eight hours per day that you were awake, up to 24 hours.

After reaching Day 1 or beyond, each six hours of sleep a character gets reduces their position on the Sleep Deprivation track by one day.

Rule Addition: A Bleeding Reality

At some point there may be a scenario in which the Dreamscape and the waking world bleed into each other. This could occur when the Nottmor’s influence grows or when a character (either a player character or an NPC) reaches sleep deprivation levels such that they begin losing the ability to distinguish between the two planes of existence. When this happens, such characters may experience dream-like qualities in the the waking world, such as the abilities of the Lucid Dreamer and the Night Terrors causing physical harm to their corporeal body.

Other examples could include, but are not limited to, physical manifestations of fantastic creatures, plants, or landscapes that blend with what the character would recognize as the waking world. Some who have undergone profound sleep deprivation (Day 4 or Day 5) tell stories of seeing a doorway surrounded by enchanting flowers, which they reportedly felt might lead somewhere enticing — but such levels of sleep deprivation are so rare that accounts of the benefits or dangers of going through the door are too inconsistent to know for sure.



SNOW DAYS AT CHANKY CHEEZ – SNOWSVILLE, NY

by Jonathan Gilmour & Doug Levandowski
(Chanky Cheez suggested by Thomas Robert Beatman)

Content Warnings: claustrophobia, cults, dangerous strangers, freezing, human sacrifice, seasonal affective disorder

Setting information

Author's Note: This is based on my childhood in northern New York and my love for weird themed places. – Jonathan

Many in northern New York say that there are just two seasons there: Winter and July. Nestled on the shore of the St. Lawrence River is the aptly named town of Snowsville. From late spring until early fall, the community is fully geared toward tending the fields and harvesting hay. The rest of the year, it's a snowbound wasteland. On occasion the snow will shut down travel for weeks at a time, but even when things are running smoothly, the drifts can get waist deep.

Wanting to give people another reason to visit, four years ago, locals constructed the Chanky Cheez Funtime Emporium, an arcade and pizzeria. For two years, it worked. People from far and wide flooded in as often as they could, and Chanky's helped the economy boom.

After only two seasons, Chanky's didn't open up again when the snow cleared. The owner, who spent her winters in Florida, never came back and was never heard from again. Some nights, people swear they hear sounds coming from inside the abandoned building.

Now, there isn't much to do in town. Sledding, sure. Winter hikes, sure — but the snowdrifts can be dangerous. Every year, at least one person steps into a drift that formed over a gully in the earth and nearly freezes to death. These victims report seeing strange creatures crawling over them, pulling the heat from their body. But that has to be the hypothermia, right?

Setting Touchstones

Fargo (film), *Five Nights at Freddy's* (video game series), *The Shining* (novel)

Alternate Town Creation Questions

- *Group:* Who was the last person to break into Chanky's? What did they see?
- *Individual, Shared:* What rumor about the town interests you the most?
- *Individual, Shared:* What's your favorite memory of Chanky's that only you seem to remember?

- *Individual, Shared:* Why do you think Chanky's was closed?
- *Individual, Private:* How much does the cold and darkness of the winter months affect you psychologically?

Possible Points of Interest

- Chanky Cheez Funtime Emporium, an abandoned business on the edge of town. It has been closed for two years, and the most popular dare in town is daring someone to break in. Few have ever actually taken the dare, though.
- Farmer O'Dowl's Hill, the best place for sledding in town... as long as O'Dowl isn't screaming at you to get off his hill.
- The Caves, a network of caverns just outside of town. There are impressive stalactites and stalagmites, and rumor has it that the system of caves extends underneath the town.
- Mac's Tavern, the local bar. The drinks are strong, the pool tables are free, and the jukebox is always on, making it a popular place for everyone over 21 in town.
- St. Eulalia of Mérida Church, the Catholic church in town. Overseen by Father O'Brenner, the church is one of the few places to remain open in the winter months.
- Snowsville Academy, the local K-12 school where the teachers are sometimes adequate, the food never is, and the students have to stay until July because of snow days.

Possible NPCs

- **Myrtle Eliot**, local fortune teller. Purports to read tarot cards, but is actually just an inveterate gossip.
- **Caryn Fraser**, former owner/operator of Chanky Cheez Funtime Emporium. Currently living in Florida and aware of the danger that the Funtime Emporium poses. Might be coaxed back since she does have a conscience.
- **Zbigniew Krzysztof**, cranky old Polish immigrant who lives just outside of town and distills vodka.
- **Mac McKenzie**, owner and bartender of Mac's Tavern. She lost her husband 10 years ago in a blizzard and now only has her work. Lives over the bar. If she's awake, Mac's Tavern is open.
- **Lester Nicholas**, mayor of the town and all-around positive person. He has been an advocate for tearing down the Funtime Emporium.
- **Father Patrick O'Brenner**, local priest and most loyal customer at Mac's Tavern. Except on Sundays, he is mostly quiet and keeps to himself, but the town still talks about the bar fight that he ended the hard way five years ago.
- **Reggie Plow**, the snow plow driver. No one knows his real last name, but he drives a heck of a snow plow. He's a very strange person without any friends.
- **Vanessa Tran**, retired Secret Service agent. She's tough as nails and takes no guff. She's also the crossing guard and brings cookies for the kids.

Possible Adventure Hooks

- The characters are dared to go into the Chanky Cheez Funtime Emporium. To prove their mettle, they decide to take the dare.
- A friend, sibling, or child of one of the characters goes missing, either in the Funtime Emporium or in the snow.
- The characters are sledding with an NPC who disappears beneath the snow. They hear screams for a moment, then an echo.
- During the worst snowstorm in the town's history, people are freezing to death in their homes. But the heat is on and there's no sign of forced entry.
- The characters are trapped in a house when a blizzard unexpectedly causes complete whiteout conditions in the town.
- Seasonal affective disorder always hits the town, but this year it seems like it's even worse. Some people have even shut themselves into their houses and are refusing to come out because of the things that live beneath the snow.

- The characters find a treasure map that directs them to the caves on the outskirts of town. It hints that they have to go there during a blizzard and that there's a large treasure inside for those brave enough to venture in.
- During a blizzard so bad that even Reggie Plow can't get the roads clear, people are returning from the edge of town saying that there's some sort of strange force keeping people from leaving the town.

Possible Threats

- A cult that believes it can drive the snow away and return Snowsville to an agrarian utopia (that never actually existed) through blood sacrifices.
- Weather itself, which is incredibly dangerous.

Possible Powered Characters

- An arctic fox that is able to communicate telepathically with one of the characters and knows how to defeat the imps.
- Polly Pizza, another animatronic creature from the Funtime Emporium that also came to life but is dedicated to preventing Chanky from hurting any other kids. Perhaps imbued with the spirit of a child that Chanky killed.

Possible Monsters

- Chanky Cheez, an animatronic block of cheese with a face. The past two years have not been kind to it, and its features are drooping and cracked. It is not yet able to leave the grounds of the Chanky Cheez Funtime Emporium. It believes that, by killing enough children, it can finally get out. Within that building, though, it is able to control machinery and doors.
- Small, imp-like creatures who pull hapless people below the snow and drain the warmth from their bodies. They're able to burrow through snow and frozen dirt, and they use the network of caves to their advantage.
- A drifter who is able to control the snow and seems immune to the cold. He doesn't seem to want anything other than to freeze and destroy.

ADJUSTMENTS TO RULES

Rule Addition: Cold Exposure

In Colorado, people are pretty used to the cold, especially this time of year. During the course of their adventure, though, they might find themselves exposed to the elements for long enough that they begin to suffer ill effects. Because the effects of exposure to cold weather depend greatly on what the characters are wearing and just how cold the weather actually is, it's difficult to create a formula for effects of exposure.

In general, the longer characters stay out in the cold, the worse the effects will be. At first, they should suffer some slight penalty on stat checks. As hypothermia sets in, the penalties should become more extreme, especially for Brains and Charm checks, due to the confusion associated with hypothermia. When hypothermia gets worse, shivering becomes uncontrollable, and any stat checks involving physical action should be assumed to immediately fail. Severe hypothermia causes death, often after "paradoxical undressing" where hypothermia victims start to feel overheated because of the body's response to changes in blood flow. For more information, Wikipedia has an informative entry on hypothermia.





NIGHTS AT GARUDA LAKE – GARUDA LAKE, VT

by Anton Kromoff

Content Warnings: hospitalized children, human experimentation, mind control, teen drug use, violence against animals

Setting information

Welcome to the sleepy New England town of Garuda Lake, founded in 1640 by Jim Malford, who led a group of families to start a colony nestled between the foot of the Appalachian Mountains and Lake Garuda. Originally called Sagnasaw Grove, it was incorporated into the greater Miskatonic Valley in 1671 as Garuda Lake. The town's current name is in honor of Lake Garuda, the lake that the Trappist monks of Our Lady of the Golden Light who arrived in 1666 credited for exceptional crops and longer than normal growing seasons.

The town has a thriving tech firm as well as a fairly lucrative fishing community. However, it is most known for its lake house community in the summer and its snow lodge community in the winter.

The locals are split between “Old Town” — mostly older, turn-of-the-century houses and small local businesses — and “Royal Meadows,” a modern development community with a shopping district, tech center, modern children's hospital and research facility, and the most up-to-date modern conveniences.

Setting Touchstones

The Andy Griffith Show (TV series), *The Complete Works of H.P. Lovecraft* (book), *The Goonies* (film), *Harrow County* (comic series), *It* (novel), *The Sandlot* (film), *Stranger Things* (Netflix series), *The Weird Company* (book)

Alternate Town Creation Questions

- *Group:* What are some local organizations that are planning events during the current season?
- *Individual, Shared:* What rumors about the town interest you the most?
- *Individual, Shared or Private:* Which side of the town are you from — Old Town or Royal Meadows?
- *Individual, Private:* How do you feel about the other side of town?
- *Individual, Private:* How do you feel about the town as a whole? Do you want to escape to something new, or are you happy with the life you have?



Possible Points of Interest

For a map of the surrounding area, visit huntersbooks.com/downloads-kidsonbikes.

Lighthearted

- Amberlock Forest, which sits to the east of town. Many Scout Troops, mountain bikers, and weekend wanderers enjoy the trails and campgrounds.
- Royal Meadows Mega Mall, built by renovating the old steel mill. It has two arcades, a food court, and plenty of hidden passages to explore.

Serious

- The Tiller Company, a tech firm that runs the Royal Meadows community. Owned by Frances J. Tiller, the company has been developing many technologies to advance mass communication — through phone signals, computer-aided digital messaging services, and even advanced light-based communication capable of creating a hive mind.
- Wilford Graveyard, which sits on the dividing line between Old Town and Royal Meadows. It's rumored to sit over a network of caves that feed out into Garuda Lake. For decades, high school kids have told stories of bodies washing up on the shores of the lake covered in gnaw marks.

Either

- Sagnasaw Forest, to the north of the town. It provides hunting grounds for out-of-towners vacationing at one of the ski lodges on Sharp-Top Mountain.
- Calaveras Island, where local folklore says that you can find ancient ruins of strange stone idols.
- The *Capricorn*, a steam-powered paddleboat that takes locals and tourists on fishing tours, year round.
- Our Lady of the Golden Light Medical Center and Children's Hospital, the local hospital in the new part of town. It has recently seen the addition of an extended-stay center, a neurological center, and full pharmaceutical R&D on the premises. It has drawn a surprisingly large and surprisingly reclusive staff, apparently from all over the world.
- Our Lady of the Golden Light Private Academy, the school that the children who live in the new part of town typically attend, especially if their parents work for the Tiller Company. Their team, the Bruising Bees, are all incredibly gifted athletes.

Possible NPCs

- **Goran Hill**, a local artist who found success early on with comics about ghouls. It is rumored that he drew inspiration from the local folklore about the network of caves under the Wilford Graveyard. Although he is hardly seen outside his gated mountainside mansion, those who have crossed his path say he is quite friendly and happy to chat about his work and the inspirations for it.
- **Thadius Hingle**, captain of the paddleboat *Capricorn*. Thadius has been living in Garuda Lake all his life and is a font of knowledge about folklore, rumors, and the mysteries of the lake — although separating truth from tall tale can be difficult.
- **Jacob and Avery Lambstrad**, who breathed new life back into the fishing community that most of the inhabitants of the old part of town call home.
- **Frances J. Tiller**, the daughter of Miriam B. Sagnasaw and a descendant of one of the original families who founded the town. Unlike her mother, Miriam the skin cream mogul, Frances has dedicated the majority of her professional life to cultivating a thriving community of well educated, highly motivated, forward-thinking technophiles.

Possible Adventure Hooks

- There have always been rumors that Amberlock Forest is “witch haunted.” However, most of these rumors are spread by those under the age of 14. It seems anyone older simply forgets about the stories of the Whitefaced Watchers and their brooms made of bone — even after they are reminded by children who swear they have seen them coast along the surface of Garuda Lake when the moon is full.

- The rumors of a performance-enhancing drug known as “Royal Jelly” have been greatly downplayed by both state and local papers, even after the small rash of drug-related incidents involving people from Royal Meadows. Folks from the Bruising Bees sports community were admitted to the local hospital with strange, hive-like holes dotting their skin.
- Many hunters frequent the Sagnasaw Forest. However, there are rumors of wolf animals deep in the Sagnasaw that fear no man and never forget slights perpetrated in their snow-dusted woods.
- At the Children’s Hospital, the world-renowned staff has gathered to explore the old growth Sagnasaw Forest to seek undiscovered plants and animals that may have medical applications. Occasionally, members of the exploratory groups go missing and are never found again.

Possible Threats

- The hive-mind adult community of Royal Meadows suddenly begins to work in unison. Half the town is now under the control of a shadowy Queen Bee figure.
- Jacob and Avery Lambstrad have breathed life back into the fishing community. However, they have done this through dark deals with otherworldly beings who call the islands of Garuda Lake home — and such deals come with a price.
- A group of wealthy businessmen have come to town to hunt local game, although what they are actually after are the less well known — and far more supernatural — beings that live in Sagnasaw Forest.

Possible Powered Characters

- A homeless man who roams the Amberlock Forest carving strange symbols into trees — symbols that resemble the runes found on the stone structures dotting the islands of Garuda Lake. He is fascinated by music.
- A child from the Children’s Hospital who was experimented on and now has a honeycomb-like tattoo on his face and possesses the ability to influence bees. If the characters befriend this child, they’ll be a powerful ally. But if they mirror the cruelty shown by the hospital’s doctors, it could go very poorly.
- Old Luca, the major draw to the Nature Walk Living Museum. Old Luca is an albino timber wolf, a strange sight to see in these parts. Many stop for a picture with the lovable old wolf, who watches visitors inquisitively and seems to respond with grunts and yips when asked questions. But no one, not even the local papers, seems to be able to capture a good photo of Old Luca; they always come out blurry.

Possible Monsters

- Feral ghouls that live in the tunnels under Wilford Graveyard and make Calaveras Island their home.
- Strange, wolf-like creatures that roam the Sagnasaw Forest and never forget trespasses against them.
- The Whitefaced Watchers, a group of ancient witches. They call the Amberlock Forest home and ride on bone broomsticks. Dressed in all black except for faces as pale as moonlight, they are said to play haunting melodies on bone instruments to lure children away to the woods. Though all children under 14 seem to know them, most people older than that dismiss any such stories — or forget them altogether within minutes of hearing them.

ADJUSTMENTS TO RULES

Rule Addition: Hive Mind

In the Royal Meadows community, there are myriad technological and supernatural happenings. A large majority of the town who spends prolonged amounts of time working or playing at the various Royal Meadows properties (Private School, Mega Mall, Golf Course, Children’s Hospital) may be subjected to the Hive Mind, which can be either beneficial or disastrous.

While it may give some players insight into the moods and feelings of other members of the community, it can also lead to players being caught up in the mob mentality of the “hive.” It would be beneficial for the DM to weigh both the pros and cons of this before allowing a player character to be engage with the Hive Mind.

Children and teens will not be as affected, as the primary focus of the Hive Mind is adults. The difference in how these groups are affected is noticeable.

When engaging with the Hive Mind, make a Charm check as a Snap Decision. You may spend Adversity Tokens as normal on this roll.

	CHILD / TEEN	ADULT
Charm check results when engaging with the Hive Mind.	<p>20: You understand the thought process and motivations of the person you are focused on.</p> <p>17-19: You understand the basic idea of the thoughts and feelings of the person you are focused on.</p> <p>13-16: You have a rough idea of the basic emotions of the person you are focused on.</p> <p>10-12: You get a faint idea of two goals that may be driving the person you are focused on.</p> <p>7-9: You have a headache and gain no information from the encounter.</p> <p>4-6: You feel compelled to agree and see the side of the person you are focused on.</p> <p>2-3: You feel overwhelmed by a deep desire to help fulfill whatever goal is desired by the person you are focused on.</p> <p>1: You become part of the Hive Mind and are in the control of the DM until an event occurs to break you free.</p>	<p>20: You understand the thought process and motivations of the person you are focused on.</p> <p>17-19: You have a rough idea of the basic emotions of the person you are focused on.</p> <p>13-16: You get a faint idea of two goals that may be driving the person you are focused on.</p> <p>10-12: You have a headache and gain no information from the encounter.</p> <p>5-9: You feel compelled to agree and see the side of the person you are focused on.</p> <p>3-4: You feel overwhelmed by a deep desire to help fulfill whatever goal is desired by the person you are focused on.</p> <p>1-2: You become part of the Hive Mind and are in the control of the DM until an event occurs to break you free.</p>

It is the GM’s call when an event occurs to break a player free from the more disastrous Hive Mind effects. A few possible ways to break free from the Hive Mind are being powerfully reminded of a friendship, eating a favorite food, seeing a truly cherished belonging, and being taken far enough away from the source of the Hive Mind to break the connection.



TALKEETNA OF TROUBLES – TALKEETNA, AK

by Kevin Kulp

Content Warnings: bullying, claustrophobia, freezing, human sacrifice, wilderness survival

Setting information

When you think of Talkeetna, Alaska (which is a real place without any Bigfoot, or so we're told; we've taken some liberties describing it here), think isolation. Think gorgeous natural beauty, harsh and unforgiving weather, and a tiny, close-knit population of locals, kept afloat mostly by tourism. Summers are easy, but it's hard not to be superstitious when the snow falls deep into the long night, and flickering green auroras light the sky overhead.

Talkeetna is not a large town. It tried to be, once; at the turn of the 20th century there were almost a thousand people living here, building the Alaska Railroad and mining for gold. But the Great War came, the railroad was completed, the gold ran out, and empty homes and abandoned factories were left to molder in the long summer days and frigid winter nights.

The town of Talkeetna is nestled 114 miles north of Anchorage, at the confluence of the Susitna, Chulitna, and Talkeetna Rivers. It may have been founded in 1916 — and three of the original buildings are still in use today, including the Talkeetna Roadhouse, Nagley's General Store, and the Fairview Inn — but there used to be an Athabaskan village here long before the 1905 gold rush. There's history here that most people have forgotten. The river is huge, the forest is vast, and the town is isolated; if secrets got left behind, they may well be hidden there still.

The town of Cicely in the TV series *Northern Exposure* is reputedly patterned after Talkeetna, and until recently Talkeetna was famous for having a cat named Stubbs as its unofficial mayor. Nowadays, most of the work in Talkeetna comes from fishing, hunting, hiking, skiing, and rafting. The town gets used as a base for ascents of Denali (Mt. McKinley), so there's more than your average number of artists and crafters.

But except for tourist skiers, when winter comes the town empties out and turns in on itself. It's easy to go a little stir-crazy when the temperature drops to zero degrees and the snow begins to pile up. Almost makes you long for an adventure.

Setting Touchstones

The Goonies (film), *Northern Exposure* (TV series), *Stand by Me* (film)

Alternate Town Creation Questions

Summer

- *Group:* What are the best activities in town during the summer?
- *Individual, Shared:* It's light almost all night long. What time do your parents make you come home?
- *Individual, Shared:* There are lots of tourists in the summer, and not all are polite. Do they feel like intruders, or do you welcome them?
- *Individual, Shared:* What's the strangest thing you've ever run across during the summer?
- *Individual, Shared or Private:* Ever gotten lost in the woods? What happened?
- *Individual, Private:* Do your parents keep track of what you're up to?

Winter

- *Group:* What do people do to keep from getting cabin fever in the winter?
- *Group:* What's the local school like?
- *Individual, Shared:* How deep are your family's roots in Talkeetna?
- *Individual, Shared or Private:* How do you feel about the snow?
- *Individual, Shared or Private:* How do the long winter nights and brutally cold days affect you?
- *Individual, Private:* What do you think those strange lights were that you saw in the woods last winter?

Possible Points of Interest

Lighthearted

- Moose Dropping Festival, which ran from '72 to '09, when it finally brought in too many drunk tourists. Numbered moose droppings were dropped from a crane, and there were festivities to match!
- Nagley's General Store, founded in 1921 by Horace Nagley and in operation ever since, thought the name was changed to B&K Trading Post for 40 years or so. If you need a snack, a shelter, or a great source of gossip, this is the place to go.

Serious

- Talkeetna Historical Society, a place to find information that no one alive but Ezekiel Washington might know. Their trove of archived photos and histories might give you the (horrifying) clue you need.
- The Ranger Station, where you go to learn about mountaineering, prepare for climbing Denali, or report children lost in the woods.

Either

- Deep woods which surround the town. The woods are peppered with deep forest lakes. You'll find rotting cars from the 1920s, forgotten buildings, and long-abandoned roads — if you know where to look.
- Three rivers, merging into one in the town of Talkeetna. In summer, great fishing and swimming spots abound. Frozen in winter and great for skating, hockey, and frenzied flights toward safety while something horrible pursues you.
- Islands in all three rivers, which rise or fall with the river levels. They're a lot easier to access in winter or late summer than during the spring thaw. There are secrets buried on those islands — hopefully, you won't be buried there with them.

Possible NPCs

- **Wes Dansky**, an obsessive cryptid seeker. He's convinced that Bigfoot is out there. He even claims to have seen it, although he says his camera jammed that day so he never got a decent photo. Wes plans to open a Bigfoot museum in town, if he can ever find enough time when he isn't scouring the woods.
- **Don Holliday**, the friendly local entrepreneur who owns "Holiday Wonders." Don organizes and sends tourists off on all the best hikes, kayak trips, or ski outings. Rumor has it that not all those out-of-towners actually come back, and search teams have never found a single body. Don must feel awful about it.

- **Billy & Martha Kirby**, the brother-and-sister bullies whose gang delights in ruining anything that you and your friends love. You're not sure why they hate you so much, but Billy boasts that his father is really important in some special government laboratory, so maybe he thinks he's special. He's lying, though; if there was a government lab around here, you'd have heard of it.
- **Mrs. Pensever**, who lives in the falling-down "witch house" down the lane. They say she's rich — something to do with old gold claims — but you couldn't tell from looking at her. Don't call her that nickname (you know the one) and don't go into her yard for a lost baseball. Everyone knows what happened to the last kid who did.
- **The River Girl**, who you only see up by the Susitna River before dawn. You'd guess she's from one of the local Native American families. She says her parents don't really like people, and she still hasn't told you her name. She vanishes pretty fast if you startle her, though, and no one in town has ever heard of her — or her family.
- **Maggie Tashima**, the town librarian. She's new to town, but one of the nicest people you've ever met, and she's even more curious that you are.
- **Ezekiel Washington**, a former railroader who is so old he claims to have lived in Talkeetna before it was even a town. As a child he must have explored the same forest paths that you do now. Ask him how old he is, though, and he gives a toothless grin before telling you he's been alive forever. You're not sure if he's kidding.

Possible Adventure Hooks

- That sure is a huge and ancient forest surrounding the town, and things live out there. Ancient things. Things that demand propitiation, and probably blood. The Athabascans knew that once, but people nowadays have forgotten. Every time a tourist goes missing, those things may be to blame — but they're getting bolder, hungrier, and now they want worship as well.
- Those UFO sightings last year: man-made, natural phenomena, or something else? If they touched down somewhere, there should be some sign.
- The Alaska Railroad once owned now-rotting and falling-down warehouses in Talkeetna, and it's said the ghosts of those killed on the rails find their way back. In the dead of winter, when the aurora lights up the sky and the wind howls, there's a legend of a ghost train that brings all those lost souls back to Hell... unless the whole ghost train thing is a fake, designed to scare people away from an illegal gold mine.
- There are lights shining from under the river whenever there's strange and unexpected fog. Is something down there? If so, is it a natural phenomena, something supernatural, a river cryptid, or technological trickery — and why?
- The gold rush went through Talkeetna back near the turn of the century, and rumors still abound of the lost Talkeetna strike. Supposedly a prospector found a shockingly rich vein before someone killed him, and anyone who knew the location of the haunted mine has long since died. What if that story is real, someone is looking for it by hunting up old diaries, and you need to find it before they do?
- For a place that doesn't see too many visitors, there is a surprising number of featureless vans and government cars filled with soldiers and scientists that drive north through town, and then completely disappear. Where do they go, and what are those people doing?
- A bunch of nearly identical out-of-town salesmen have arrived to buy up businesses and houses in town, and the locals they meet with are acting strangely. The locals are talking monotonously and smiling blandly, and none of them — not even Mrs. Pensever — are getting mad. What's going on, and who's behind it?

Possible Threats

- A cryptid-hunting TV show comes to town to hunt Bigfoot, setting up Wes Dansky (and Talkeetna) to look like idiots in front of the whole country.
- Dr. Kirby's hidden government lab is doing terrible things out in the forest, and mysterious accidents befall anyone who suspects what's going on.

- Other people as old as Ezekiel Washington come to town to claim him — and he turns out to be much, much older than you thought.
- The things in the forest aren't content with Don Holliday's tribute, and they start recruiting worshipers in town. The cult plans sacrifices, starting with the people they don't like... such as the new librarian.
- Ghost trains don't come to Talkeetna by coincidence! There's a portal to the afterlife near here, and someone has accidentally done something horrible to open it.
- UFOs are real, and alien flora and fauna are colonizing the forest. The town of Talkeetna is next.

Possible Powered Characters

- A young Bigfoot, fascinated by humanity.
- A nature spirit (either snow, forest, or river) with a debt of vengeance to pay.
- An ancient prospector's ghost who can possess others until exposed to sunlight.
- A child who attracts elemental snow spirits, creating the worst winter anyone in Talkeetna can remember.
- The genetically mutated shell of a missing child who has somehow escaped Dr. Kirby's secret government lab.
- An alien explorer with very murky motives.

Possible Monsters

- A sentient and intelligent wolfpack, doing the will of an honest-to-gosh werewolf that is too ancient to act for itself.
- A clan of Bigfoot, most of whom delight in taunting Wes Dansky.
- A river spirit whose power ebbs and flows with the spring floods, and who's falling in love with someone from town — maybe even one of the gang?
- An ancient, evil tree with the slow sentience of all nature, determined to wipe the flesh-puppets off its land.
- The ghost of a young girl murdered between the walls of a falling-down house, whose murder has never been solved.
- Summer means swarms of biting black flies and mosquitoes. So why are the swarms taking humanoid shapes, and why does their high-pitched buzzing sound almost like human speech?

ADJUSTMENTS TO RULES

Rule Addition: Cold Exposure

In Alaska, people are pretty used to the cold. During the course of their adventure, though, characters might find themselves exposed to the elements for long enough that they begin to suffer ill effects. Because the effects of exposure to cold weather depend greatly on what the characters are wearing and just how cold the weather actually is, it's difficult to create a formula for effects of exposure.

In general, the longer characters stay out in the cold, the worse the effects will be. At first, they should suffer some slight penalty on stat checks. As hypothermia sets in, the penalties should become more extreme, especially for Brains and Charm checks, due to the confusion associated with hypothermia. When hypothermia gets worse, shivering becomes uncontrollable, and any stat checks involving physical action should be assumed to immediately fail. Severe hypothermia causes death, often after "paradoxical undressing" where hypothermia victims start to feel overheated because of the body's response to changes in blood flow. For more information, Wikipedia has an informative entry on hypothermia.



SHADOWS FROM SHARON HOLLOW – SHARON HOLLOW, MI

by Amanda Hamon Kunz

Content Warnings: horror, poverty, psychological possession, wilderness survival

Setting information

When Detroit's automotive industry was flourishing, riches flowed like black gold into the surrounding rural hills. There, wealthy executives built lavish woodland retreats amid the scrappier outposts of the working class. But by the 1990s, the well began to run dry. Auto sales dropped, workers struggled to keep their jobs, and the executives retreated from their second homes.

An hour west of Detroit, Sharon Hollow is not so much a town as a long expanse of rural road. For generations, families have lived quiet lives here, working in the auto plants and increasingly turning to hunting and scrapping to get by. Every year, more skeletons are added to the graveyard of wealthy playgrounds, including empty storage sheds stripped of their toys and lake yachts abandoned on empty lots. Perhaps most notorious is a bizarre old treehouse known only as the Fort. It's nestled deep in the woods and bigger than some single-family homes.

Rumors of strange happenings have always permeated Sharon Hollow. Of late, though, the locals have become eerily hushed, and some seem to be only shadows of their normal selves. Could be that it's just a harsh winter. Or perhaps the stories of evil lurking in the Fort are true and something sinister threatens Sharon Hollow.

Setting Touchstones

The Conjuring (film), *The Ring* (film), *Stranger Things* (Netflix series)

Alternate Town Creation Questions

- *Group:* What recent odd weather event (a blizzard, an ice storm, an off-season tornado) has Sharon Hollow on edge?
- *Individual, Shared:* What does your character think about the rumors that the woods and the Fort are bad luck?
- *Individual, Shared:* Where is your character's favorite spot to explore in or around Sharon Hollow?
- *Individual, Private:* How is your character's family getting by during these tough economic times?
- *Individual, Private:* How does your character feel about the wealthy who used to flood into Sharon Hollow and about those who still live or visit here?



Possible Points of Interest

- The Fort, a massive treehouse next to a pond. Located nearly a mile off the main road, this was once a play area for a wealthy. It's been abandoned for a decade, and locals like to blame the area's misfortune on the supposed bad luck of the Fort and the woods around it.
- The surrounding woods, a dense forest that dots both sides of Sharon Hollow. But the woods around the Fort are especially primeval and dangerous.
- Mitzi's Hardware, the general store in Sharon Hollow. The store stocks basic food-stuffs, tools, and gear for hunting and fishing. Run by Marge and Mitzi Frantz.
- Poland's Junkyard, the property of the old hermit. His lot is covered in naked car frames, old trailers, and piles of other scrap, with an ugly "Keep Out!" sign posted along its fence.
- The old quarry, a huge hole in the ground lined with sharp limestone. Filled with rainwater in the summer, the old quarry is frozen solid in the winter.
- Chip Crick, the creek that flows alongside a portion of Sharon Hollow and descends into a gorge with a treacherous hiking trail just east of the Surrounding Woods. The best hunting grounds are here, everyone agrees.
- The abandoned well, just behind Poland's Junkyard. The well is empty, uncovered, and on an empty lot next to a junked speedboat.

Possible NPCs

- **Marge Frantz**, one of the owners of Mitzi's Hardware. She has been known to chase off hooligans and troublemaking out-of-towners with a meaningful pump of her shotgun. Typically she's gruff and taciturn, but she adores discussing popular characters on reality television.
- **Mitzi Frantz**, one of the owners of Mitzi's Hardware, the store that her parents named after her when she was a child. She's an affable businesswoman and can sell practically anything to anyone.
- **Connor Gershman**, a young man from an affluent suburb who now lives here full time. Rumor is he's building something weird in his backyard. Husband to Jessie.
- **Jessie Gershman**, a young woman from an affluent suburb. She's incredibly cheerful and often takes long nature walks in the surrounding woods. Wife to Connor.
- **Walt Herman**, President of Sharon Hollow Hunters, a local club. He hunts with a bow, is fond of conspiracy theories, and is convinced the Fort is haunted.
- **Poland**, a hermit who never leaves his junkyard-like property, but happily sells most anything to visitors. Few locals have seen him. Rumors about his appearance and habits are wild.
- **Jake Stelzer**, a local kid who lives with his grandmother and delivers newspapers along Sharon Hollow. Loves telling fantastic stories about the woods.
- **Heather Underwood**, a local kid and notorious hoodlum. Likes to break into empty buildings and explore, but rarely steals anything.

Possible Adventure Hooks

- Several locals have started acting strangely disinterested in daily life, as if all emotion were drained out of them. What's more, these people seem to have contracted some sort of disease that's blackening the veins in their eyes and hands. Those who have seen a doctor say it's just a vitamin deficiency thanks to the hard winter, but Jessie Gershman and Jake Stelzer are convinced that something sinister is lurking in the woods and afflicting these folks. They know that you know this area like the back of your hand, and they ask you to investigate.
- Mitzi bemoans the strangely aggressive vandals who have broken into her hardware store three times in the past month. Though Marge scared them off each time, Mitzi worries that someone will soon get hurt. The vandals don't steal anything, but simply use charcoal bricks to scrawl "It's Coming" all over the store's walls. She assumes the culprits are kids and asks you to discreetly find out who's behind the break-ins and convince them to stop their pranks. As a reward, she offers each of you anything in her store.

- Every full moon, curious green-and-purple lights flicker along Chip Crick's hiking trail toward the Fort. The local hunters say it's some sort of invasive firefly species, but Heather Underwood is convinced it's evidence of something valuable that an out-of-towner (or perhaps the Gershmans) is hiding away. She asks you to come with her to check it out.

Possible Threats

- A group of local hunters who have decided that kids and out-of-towners skulking about the woods are giving Sharon Hollow a bad reputation and are menacing people in the wilderness.
- A group of local ghost seekers who have little attention for safety or private property. They infiltrate abandoned places to look for ghosts, often causing major property damage — or worse.

Possible Powered Characters

- A wanderer found dazed and incoherent in the woods. She looks familiar, but no one can place who she is. She says she's been living in the Fort for years.
- A tracker who lives in the woods, though no one has ever heard of him. He lives with a pack of shadowy wolves who seem to understand his every word.
- A ragged woman who can only venture a few hundred feet from the pond beside the Fort. When she touches its waters, she turns into a bluegill and swims off.



Possible Monsters

- Shadow tentacles that extend from the Fort and pull anyone nearby inside.
- A pulsing portal inside the Fort. Destroy it and stop the menace to the surrounding woods (see Rule Addition: Shadows Within for more).
- An inky vampire deer in the surrounding woods. It's 10 feet tall and ethereal.
- Temporarily besotted locals, driven mad by the shadows within (see the Rule Addition: Shadows Within for more).

ADJUSTMENTS TO RULES

Rule Addition: Shadows Within

The shadowy powers at the heart of the Fort are slowly leaching into the people and places around it. As they explore the surrounding woods, there is an increasing chance that the characters absorb some of this mysterious power themselves, albeit temporarily.

For each day that a character spends in the woods surrounding the Fort, there is a 50 percent chance that they gain a one-time-use power card. Triggering this 50 percent chance is cumulative; each time a character has spent a total of 12 hours in the woods, the GM rolls a d20. On a result of 1-10, nothing happens. On a result of 11-20, the character temporarily gains a power. Depending on how the game elapses, there is a good chance that the characters will all gain temporary powers at least once.

When a character gains a power, the GM chooses a power card and gives it to someone sitting next to the player controlling the temporarily powered character. The player holding the power card cannot reveal its details to anyone, and not even her own character knows the power's details. Similarly, the temporarily powered character doesn't know the details of their own newfound power, only that they feel somehow different and strange. A minor but noticeable physical change happens to them: the veins in the character's hands might turn black as obsidian, their breath might come in smoky exhales, or their shadow might become sharp and distorted. Regardless, it's obvious that something's up.

At any point while the characters are exploring Sharon Hollow, a player holding another character's power card may encourage the affected character to use their power. This represents the encouraging character's intuition about how their compatriot has been affected in the woods. While the encouraging character should not describe exactly what the power might do, that player should encourage their ally to use their strange new power only when it would help the group!

If the affected character agrees, that character uses their power and the card is revealed to the group. The GM decides how that power is resolved in the events of the game. The affected character then loses their power. If that character later gains another power from spending time in the woods, it's up to the GM whether they regain their previous power or is afflicted with a new one — and the characters are left guessing!





POINTING PLEASANTLY – POINT PLEASANT, NJ

by Doug Levandowski

Content Warnings: bullying, drowning, human experimentation, mind control, mob violence

Setting information

Author's Note: Although Point Pleasant is a real location, I've taken some liberties with what's actually there. – Doug

Point Pleasant can serve as a setting for lighthearted adventures during the summer-time or more serious, existential adventures during the off-season.

Right on the Jersey Shore, a convenient train ride away from New York City, is Point Pleasant, a vacation hotspot for both city dwellers and inland New Jerseyites — even the occasional Pennsylvanian — though they usually go to Long Beach Island. During the summer, Point Pleasant is nearly constantly thrumming, and the Ferris wheel is always turning, even at night. It offers both the beach, which is the main attraction, and the bay, which is where the more rebellious kids hang out.

But after Labor Day, the off-season begins and the population drops to less than 30 percent. For the families who work in the tourism industry, the other nine months are slow. Sure, the town needs to keep going. There's the small elementary school or the combined middle and high school. Or, there's the grocery store and the library — but there's not enough work for the folks in town during the off-season.

For the kids who live in the area, there isn't much to do, either. Younger kids will often invent crazy stories about what they see in the ocean, what lives in the less developed parts of the island, or why the bay sometimes seems to be whispering. Teenagers will usually split their time between figuring out how to get out once they graduate high school and sneaking into houses to cause trouble.

Setting Touchstones

Creature From the Black Lagoon (film), *Gravity Falls* (TV series), *The X-Files* (TV series)

Alternate Town Creation Questions

Off-season

- *Group:* What are some notable organizations that remain in operation during the off-season?
- *Individual, Shared:* What rumor about the town interests you the most?
- *Individual, Shared:* What does your character do during the off-season?



- *Individual, Shared or Private:* How does your character feel about the out-of-towners (the “Bennies”) who are here only in the summer?
- *Individual, Private:* How does the beach impact your life?
- *Individual, Private:* How do you feel about the slower pace in the off-season? Where are you on the spectrum of being happy about a break or bored by it?

Summer

- *Group:* What are some notable organizations most active during the summer?
- *Individual, Shared:* What is the biggest difference between life in the summer and the life you lead during the other nine months of the year?
- *Individual, Shared:* What rumor about the town interests you the most?
- *Individual, Shared:* What’s your favorite activity that Point Pleasant offers during this time of year?
- *Individual, Shared or Private:* How do you feel about the townies who are there year round — or about the out-of-towners (the “Bennies”), if you’re a townie?
- *Individual, Private:* How does the ocean impact your life?

Possible Points of Interest

Lighthearted

- The Curious Shelf, the local oddity shop on the boardwalk that’s open year round and run by Mister Mystery.
- SKEE-BALL!!!! OPEN YEAR ROUND!!!!
- The forests a few miles out of town, past the rich people’s houses.

Serious

- The Bennies’ houses by the ocean, which are great places to sneak into, especially if a summer friend “loses” their key.
- The secret meeting place of the cult operating behind the scenes year round in Point Pleasant.
- The platform under the Bay Bridge (which connects the island and the mainland).

Either

- The beach (of course).
- The Woods, which are deep, dark, and mysterious (of course).
- Babbling Point, a place where many locals have insisted they’ve heard the bay whispering.
- The jetty that’s so much longer than all of the other ones. People who venture all the way out insist has a hollow rock at the end of it.
- The mysterious island that seems to have appeared off the coast. Some people claim to have swam to the island, but give conflicting answers about what’s there (because no one who has actually gone there has ever returned).

Possible NPCs

- ***Dr. Michelle Cartwright***, a benevolent or malevolent scientist who moved to the town after she retired from her work at some shadowy government agency. Now, she teaches at the high school, but she’s still conducting some experiments. Perhaps they’re for the good of the town. Perhaps they’re harming the townies.
- ***Petra Ivanovitch***, the old fisherwoman who lives by the bay. She has lived in town for as long as anyone can remember, even the adults.
- ***Beth Kramer***, the town sheriff who is very anti-Benny — and doesn’t like any outsiders, for that matter. She lets her son Tommy, an unrepentant bully, get away with literally anything.
- ***Mister Mystery***, the owner and operator of the Curious Shelf, the local oddity shop. His real name is Stanley Gerkin. Most townies think he’s an insane huckster, but the kids seem to like his shop.
- ***John Paulson***, mayor of the town. An endlessly upbeat citizen, Mayor Paulson is a member of nearly all local organizations. He owns the only grocery store in town.
- ***Stacy Paulson***, the mayor’s wife. She is even more upbeat than her husband. She’s part of every women’s group in the town — and perhaps some secret ones. But how can she be so happy all of the time?

- **Emerson Thoreau**, a recluse who lives near the bay, a few miles into the forest. Everyone calls him Emerson, but his real name is unknown. He happily welcomes visitors, so long as they don't stay the night.

Possible Adventure Hooks

- Mister Mystery gives you a book that he says can help you find all kinds of neat stuff hidden in the woods. All he asks in exchange is that you get a few for him.
- A surprisingly large group of the Bennies suddenly decide to stay at Point Pleasant all year, but they've been dodgy about exactly why they're staying.
- People swimming in the bay have been suddenly feeling drawn to stay underwater longer and longer, sometimes to the point of passing out. When they wake up, they don't know why they did it, but they don't want to go in the water anymore.
- Some swimmers have reported seeing a giant monster, like the Loch Ness Monster, in the ocean — but always from a distance. One teen swears that he saw it not moving one day, got close to it, and heard it clanking before it swam away...
- Dr. Cartwright has seemed erratic in class recently. She has been out late searching for an experiment gone missing — perhaps one that she doesn't want the town to discover, perhaps one that she wants to protect the town from.
- Some of the townie teens, normally rebellious, have come back preppy and carrying on about "pointing Point Pleasant in a pleasant direction." Perhaps your friend, sibling, or child is one of them.

Possible Threats

- A group of townies who deeply resent the Bennies. Sometimes that resentment bubbles over to the point of violence.
- A group of shadowy developers who want to buy up real estate and raze many of the locals' houses... and the townies who are inexplicably working with them.
- A secret organization that knows the secrets of the town and is quite resistant to anyone finding out about them, or is working to summon something ancient and powerful from the ocean — or both.

Possible Powered Characters

- A scaly, scared humanoid creature that splits its time between the ocean and shores and both fears and loves humans (and perhaps toy boats).
- A large ape-like creature that small children say helps them find their way home when they get lost in the woods (and who apparently really likes PB&J).
- A missing townie, assumed drowned, who has been experimented on by the evil Dr. Cartwright, given strange powers, and returned with no memory.

Possible Monsters

- A squid-like creature that is pulling night swimmers beneath the surface, never to be seen again.
- A wolf-like creature that stalks the shores of the bay and has, so far, only been attacking small animals.
- A violent crab-like creature that the good Dr. Cartwright had been trying to cure... until it escaped back into the bay.

ADJUSTMENTS TO RULES

Rule Addition: Holding Your Breath

At some point during their time in Point Pleasant, characters might find themselves underwater for longer than is comfortable. Though it may seem like an impossibly long time, the average person can, in a pinch, hold their breath for about two minutes without any negative effects. Beyond that, though, bad things can start happening. Consider the following when figuring out how long a character can hold their breath. Only apply adjustments from a cell once. For example, a teen lifeguard who is a strong swimmer would get a +20 second adjustment, not a +35 second adjustment. Finally, regardless of modifiers, the shortest a child can voluntarily hold their breath is 10

seconds, or 20 if forced to hold their breath. The shortest that a teen or adult can voluntarily hold their breath is 20 seconds, or 40 if forced to hold their breath.

	CHILD	TEEN / ADULT
Base Voluntarily Holding Breath	30 seconds	45 seconds
Grit Die Adjustment	d4: -10 secs d6: -5 secs d8: no adjustment d10: +5 secs d12: +10 secs d20: +15 secs	d4: -10 secs d6: -5 secs d8: no adjustment d10: +5 secs d12: +10 secs d20: +15 secs
Experience with Swimming or Free Diving	Casual: no adjustment Strong Swimmer: +5 secs	Casual: no adjustment Strong Swimmer: +15 secs Swim Team / Life Guard: +20 secs Casual Free Diver: +35 secs Experienced Free Diver: +60 secs
Stressed	Relaxed & Given Time to Prepare: +10 secs Relaxed or Given Time to Prepare (not both): +5 secs Rushed: -5 secs Stressed: -5 secs Rushed and Stressed: -10 secs	Relaxed & Given Time to Prepare: +15 secs Relaxed or Given Time to Prepare (not both): +10 secs Rushed: -5 secs Stressed: -5 secs Rushed and Stressed: -10 secs
Movement / Combat	Only holding breath: no adjustment Moving/Swimming: -10 secs Struggling/Fighting: -20 secs	Only holding breath: no adjustment Moving/Swimming: -10 secs Struggling/Fighting: -20 secs
Forced to Hold Breath	Double total time	Double total time
Spending Adversity Tokens	Each Adversity Token adds +10 secs	Each Adversity Token adds +10 secs

Finally, in any case where a character has lungs that are atypical in some way, they should discuss with the GM what would be appropriate for their ability to hold their breath.

Rule Addition: Skee-Ball

Skee-Ball is HARD. That's the first thing to know about it. The second thing to know is how you figure out your score. Your best score across 10 games of Skee-Ball (which will cost you one dollar) is calculated as follows:

- 1. Roll Fight and Grit and add the total together.
- 2. Then, multiply that sum by 10.
- 3. Then, add 100 to get your best Skee-Ball score.

Unlike most rolls, your Skee-Ball roll only explodes if both dice explode.



BOXCAR BOYS – RAILROADS OF THE USA

by Kira Magrann

Content Warnings: family estrangement, homelessness, poverty, racism, starvation, teen death, trains, violence

Setting information

In the summer of 1932, during the Great Depression in America, 250,000 teenage hobos were roaming the rails. Some left home for romantic dreams of finding themselves, some were too poor and a burden to their families, but they all left in search of a better life. The boxcar boys and girls were all on the road to find the freedoms that might be out there somewhere in America.

While most of the travellers were “roving boys,” there were also some girls that wore boy clothing for safety, and also a few African Americans who chose to travel the rails. They often started at the age of 13 and hopped on boxcars from New York City to Phoenix, picking up odd jobs or joining teen gangs of pickpockets along the way.

Lots of the kids would gather together on the boxcars, reading literature, staring at the stars, and sharing stories of who they were and what they’d seen. Poverty, racism, and violence were not uncommon, but many of the kids banded together in a similar dream, or even just to survive this dark period of American history.

Setting Touchstones

Carnivale (TV series), *The Devil’s Backbone* (film), *Mad Men* (TV series)

Alternate Town Creation Questions

- *Group:* Where are you all riding to together?
- *Group:* Why does this particular train scare you?
- *Group:* Are you ok with criminal behavior?
- *Group:* What town are you excited to stop in on the way to your destination?
- *Individual, Shared:* If all of your problems went away, what would be your ideal dream for the future?
- *Individual, Shared:* What secret are you nervous that other people might find out about you?
- *Individual, Shared:* What’s your preferred method of getting food?

Possible Points of Interest

- The types of boxcars that kids could jump onto vary from grain to fruit to boxes of pocketwatches.
- Sometimes the boxcars had other people traveling in them, older bums that could prove dangerous.
- Arkansas, Virginia, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Kansas, Ohio, Pennsylvania... basically any state in the U.S. that has a train stop.
- Cities are sometimes good to hop into for thieving and entertainment and a one-night story.
- A deserted stop out in the country will sometimes lead to a friendly stranger or a bed or barn to sleep in at night.
- Forests can offer shelter, but beware of wolves and bears and mountain lions and thieves who would attack a campsite at night.
- Hobo camps can be a place of refuge to find friends or get word on a new job, but beware of scammers and desperate people.
- A corn field where boxcar kids could sleep relatively hidden at night, if there isn't a monster amidst the rows.
- The deserts in the western parts of the U.S. can be beautiful, but they also contain rattlesnakes and scorpions.



Possible NPCs

- **Molly Anderson**, another boxcar hopper. She's a bit older (around 18) and has seen things out on the tracks. She prefers to travel alone and possesses both occult and travel knowledge, if you can get her to trust you.
- **John Edwards**, one of the kinder police officers, who usually turns a blind eye to kids' illegal activity as long as they're not hurting anyone. If pushed he'll take people in, and he's known to break up fights and sometimes throw bullies in jail overnight to protect other kids. Officer Edwards is unfortunately still tied to the law, so his generosity can only go so far.
- **Conductor James**, who drives a popular route across the country, east to west. His train is known as the "Turtle Hopper" colloquially, because he'll purposefully slow down for kids to more easily hop onto the boxcars of his train. A quiet fellow who mostly drives and has seen a lot in his time.
- **Ruby McIntire**, an older woman who owns a bakery at a Kansas stop. Ms. McIntire always gives out free bread and a warm place to sleep, in exchange for a day's work in the bakery kitchen.
- **Ray Tully**, the ghost of a reading boy who is often seen on boxcars. He had dreams of living free on the road for all his life, a wanderer. In un-life, it has become true. He'll share bittersweet stories of his travels on the trains and provide a dark possible ending narrative for the PCs.

Possible Adventure Hooks

- This particular boxcar is haunted, and every night the ghosts get closer and closer.
- You're kicked off the train at night in miles of woods in Pennsylvania. The howls coming from the trees are inhuman and terrifying.
- There could be an easy week of pay in this camp, but you have to steal something from a rich person's manor in town in exchange.
- Go West Young Man... go train-hopping until you reach California. See all of America along the way.
- The cops are checking the boxcars of the train you're on. How do you manage to avoid arrest?
- One of you finds out your younger brother is searching for you on the boxcars, but you're not sure why. Rumor has it he has gone missing.
- Someone's parents send you a telegram that things are going badly back at the farm. How do you get the money to send back to them?

Possible Threats

- The police, who are always on your backs.
- Other homeless youths who are bigger, stronger, or more ruthless than you.
- Normal white racist families.
- Predatory animals in the wild.
- Poisonous plants or berries.

Possible Powered Characters

- The Wandering Gentleman, a mysterious man who appears from the shadows of boxcars to protect children from evil.
- Jenny Brown, a teenage witch who can use hobo sigils to cast useful spells.
- A traveling banjo player, in his twenties, whose songs are riddles to what mystical things lie on the road.

Possible Monsters

- Hungry ghosts, ash-colored and transparent — they might be someone you know who died on the trains recently, but they're kids just like you. They have the power to make those near them incredibly sad and thus suck out their life-force. Compassion toward them is their weakness.
- Red Eyes, creatures in the dark wilderness that trains travel through at night that are said to be half man, half beast.
- Witches. Gentle, motherly types who invite kids to stay with them for the night but who will kill and eat them.

ADJUSTMENTS TO RULES

Rule Addition: Boarding a Moving Train

To board a moving train, you must make a Flight check. If you have taken steps to prepare yourself (such as finding a good, flat stretch to run and get up to speed ahead of time), you can take a Planned Action. However, if you are attempting to board a train more unexpectedly, it will be a Snap Decision. If you have allies on the train already, they can make a Brawn check (5 or higher), which could be a Planned Action if they are prepared. If they succeed, they can provide +3 to your check.

CONDITIONS	MODIFIER
somewhat uneven ground (pebbles, some roots)	+1
uneven ground (large roots, loose rocks)	+4
recently rained	+2
light rain	+3
torrential rain	+5
night, half moon or brighter	+1
night, less than half moon	+2
train going faster on a straightaway	+4
train slowed	-3
snowy	+4
dark	+2
being chased	+2

If, however, there are any travelers actively trying to keep you from boarding, you must make both your Flight check and a separate combat check (with you as the defender) against each passenger trying to prevent you from boarding. So, if three passengers are trying to prevent you from boarding, you must make the standard Flight check and defend separately against all three of them in order to board.

Trying to board a train on a flat, level area in dry conditions in the middle of the day should be a difficulty of 5.



WELCOME TO STAHLSTURG – STAHLSTURG, RI

by Sen-Foong Lim

Content Warnings: desecration of corpses, drowning, human sacrifice, Nazis, vampirism, violence against animals

Setting information

While Stahlsturg, Rhode Island doesn't attract as many of the rich and famous as nearby Newport, it has its own charms. The rare oceanic climate means the town is blessed by temperate weather, remaining cool in the summer and mild in the winter.

Stahlsturg is the smallest town in the smallest state in the union. Most of the town's roughly 1,000 inhabitants work supporting the bustling summer tourism industry, with the rest providing the infrastructure for the small town. There is a doctor, a dentist, a police station, a K-12 school, a museum, a library, a grocery store, a gas station, and a small airport. Ferries run between the north harbor and the mainland, making the hour-long voyage across the 10-mile-wide Stahlsturg Sound at least twice a day. People from the mainland flock to the island for Stahlsturg's famous holiday parades.

The island's five lighthouses stand watch to mark key points where sandbars and rocky shoals have meant the demise of many ships. One that was notorious for not running aground was the *U-853*, a German U-boat sunk by the U.S. Navy just eight miles off the coast of Stahlsturg at the end of WWII. The whole area is now a hot spot for sport divers due to the many wrecks offshore.

With only nine square miles of land, you'd think a kid couldn't get into much trouble in Stahlsturg.

You'd be wrong.

Setting Touchstones

American Vampire (comic series), "Lore" (podcast), *Mysterium* (board game), *The Strain* (novel), *We3* (comic series)

Alternate Town Creation Questions

- *Group:* Which of the NPCs does your gang perceive as their nemesis?
- *Individual, Shared:* How do you feel about the recent arrival of the ECA to your hometown?
- *Individual, Shared:* What rumor about the island interests you the most and why?
- *Individual, Shared:* What is your character looking forward to and why?
- *Individual, Shared or Private:* How does living on an island affect your character?



- *Individual, Private:* What's one place on or around the island that you do not ever want to explore and why?
- *Individual, Private:* Of all the places on or around the island, which one resonates with you the most and why?

Possible Points of Interest

- Little Salt Lake is at the center of the island with tributaries leading to Stahlsburg Sound. Local legend tells tale that Captain William Kidd, the infamous pirate, hid treasure in its depths in 1699.
- Moon Beach, on the north shore, is a popular summer hangout. On a calm day, you can swim to the sandbar. On a warm night, it's the perfect make-out spot. Many rumors surround Moon Beach, including ghost stories of long-lost lovers.
- The wreck of the *U-853* is located in the water about eight miles east of Stahlsburg. It has recently become popular with divers, who have begun to explore this underwater graveyard — even, apparently, at night.
- An archaeological survey of Niantic Bluffs, just west of the southeast lighthouse, recently uncovered a cave system in the bluff with paintings covering the walls. Some depict the Niantic tribes driving off the invading Mohegans. Some depict other more cryptic and troubling acts.
- The Stahlsburg Betterment Council hopes to expand the north harbor, but the nearby sandy dunes are home to many endangered species. The Environmental Conservation Agency (ECA) opened an office on the island last year and their lead scientist has been raising a stink about this since she arrived.
- The five lighthouses have been part of a local teenage rite of passage since time immemorial — can you race to each lighthouse and reach the top of each one between midnight and dawn?
- Stahlsburg was under covert observation during WWII due to the number of people of German ancestry living here. Tales of spies still persist to this day!

Possible NPCs

- **Sergeant Heinz “Hank” Baumeister**, who is a stickler for rules. He's a constant thorn in the side of any kid who just wants to have fun. Hank yearns for some real crime — not just stopping traffic during one of the island's civic parades.
- **Margaret Carter**, the proprietor of the gas station and grocery store on the island. She is the town's busybody, and there's not a person she doesn't know or a rumor she hasn't heard.
- **Dr. Carol Cushing**, who heads up the ECA. With multiple PhDs in evolutionary biology and endocrinology, she is working so that no one trespasses in the wooded area to the east or the dunes to the north.
- **Gerhardt Dietrich**, the latest in a long and venerated lines of lighthouse keepers — a job that has been in his family since Stahlsburg was founded. A man of strict discipline, he ensures that the lights never go out.
- **Betty Finch**, the town's librarian and curator of Stahlburg's museum. She is spritely and bubbly and, despite her occupation, quite talkative. If you need to know something about the island's history, Ms. Finch is your best bet.
- **Peter Schwartz**, the caretaker of the schools and the town's tiny graveyard. A tall, gaunt man whose eyes look like they've seen a thing or three. Peter is not the talkative type.
- **Jack Tubson**, who runs a charter boat out of the north harbor. Once an officer on the *Atherton* — the destroyer responsible for sinking the *U-853* — “Cap'n Jack” now ferries anglers and divers to the best spots around the island, pipe in hand and a smile on his face.
- **Dr. Karl Von Braun**, the dentist. He's a dapper old gentleman who walks a slight limp and carries a silver-headed cane. He always examines your canines thoroughly at your check-ups.

Possible Adventure Hooks

- The five lighthouses form a pentagram with Little Salt Lake in the center of it. Little Salt Lake is also featured heavily in the paintings on the Niantic Bluffs. These paintings depict something red radiating from the lake itself. Could this be Captain Kidd's hidden treasure?
- A large percentage of the population has been sick with a seemingly incurable flu bug this year. Simultaneously, there has been a rash of vandalism at the local graveyard. Small as it is, several of the graves have been exhumed and the hearts of the fresher corpses have been removed with seemingly surgical precision. Others are simply missing.
- Rumour has it that the submarine *U-853* was not coming to attack the USA, but to search for something that was brought over from Germany by the island's first settlers. There have been reports of activity near the site of the sunken U-boat in the dark of night. Is it looters looking for WWII memorabilia or is something fishy going on?
- The local authorities are cracking down on the teenagers on the island, looking for anyone who may be involved in the ritual killing of animals (you know... for kicks). Several carcasses have been found, drained of blood, near Little Salt Lake. There seem to be two tiny prick marks in all of their necks...
- More than one pair of star-crossed lovers have reported seeing strange sights on Moon Beach as of late — a girl, walking out of the waves, covered in seaweed.
- The ECA is desperately trying to get both the eastern forest and the northern dunes designated as National Wildlife Refuge Areas. They've been doing a lot of digging in the forest lately, leaving fresh mounds of dirt behind.

Possible Threats

- The ECA is, in truth, a front for a sinister group that is more interested in the supernatural than the natural. Their agents include scientists, occultists, and even the rare ESPers. Their current agenda — to create colossal carrion beetles — is in its final stages. They are chemically enlarging them from local endangered fauna as a bioweapon in the predicted zombie apocalypse.
- The crew of the *U-853* did not all die in 1945. Seven of the Marine Einsatzkommandos survived and have been hiding for the past 35 years, slowly gathering intel. But, due to recent interest in their sunken home, they must now come ashore to complete their mission — to find and resurrect the Vampire King!

Possible Powered Characters

- The victim of a ritual drowning 300 years ago, this pale, ghostly figure, wet and covered in kelp, appears on Moon Beach on nights when the moon is full. If you are lucky (?) enough to see the Silent Girl, you will be visited by her in your dreams (see Rule Addition: Dream Speak below). If you look very carefully, you may also see two tiny prick marks on her neck...
- An escaped ECA experiment known as Project Y. This weaponized piping plover, an endangered species of shoreline bird, was intended for use as a maritime recon unit. The ECA bioengineered Project Y to give the bird infrared sight with a five-mile range, active and passive camouflage, extended flight range, and limited telepathy (images and single words). Project Y is injured and seeking help, but may be defensive in its current state.

Possible Monsters

- When insects feed on dead matter exposed to mutagens, the result is colossal carrion beetles. Whatever isn't dead, they will try to kill in order to eat or lay their eggs on. The size of a golden retriever, they are quick and fierce but primal in their intelligence. Their armored forms are highly resilient to blunt force but susceptible to the cold.

- The crew members of the German U-boat, known as Marine Einsatzkommandos (MEKs) were biomechanically modified to breath and maneuver underwater. Though each man is over 50 years old now, the MEKs are still formidable opponents, especially in the water. They need to fully submerge in salt water every four hours or they function at half capacity. They cannot tolerate high temperatures or bright lights.
- Ferried across the Atlantic in a coffin by occultists in 1685, the Vampire King escaped to Stahlsburg, fearing he would be found and killed by hunters in the Old World. While the occultists went on to become some of the Stahlsburg's founders (commissioning five lighthouses when four would have sufficed), the Vampire King slept at the bottom of Little Salt Lake, an ancient and magical portal to the nether realm. As the 300th year of his sleep comes to an end, blood sacrifices are being mingled into the waters of the lake in an attempt to wake him. While the King is susceptible to beheading and a stake through the heart, he is not bothered in the slightest by holy items or garlic. Who told you those would work?

ADJUSTMENTS TO RULES

Rule Addition: Holding Your Breath

As Stahlsburg is surrounded on all sides by water, swimming and diving may be a part of many adventures on the island. Refer to the "Pointing Pleasantly" module for rules regarding holding your breath and other underwater escapades.

Rule Addition: Dream Speak

The characters may be visited by the Silent Girl in their dreams at night. The GM will give any characters who met her a picture that represents a message she is trying to tell them in a dream. The GM may use drawings, photographs, collages of pictures cut out from magazines, etc., to represent the dreams.

Some nights, she may visit a single character. Some nights, she may visit the whole party. Each individual character, however, will receive a different image. Characters cannot show anyone their dream, nor should they draw it out. They must describe it in words. The GM may wish to bend some of these rules if a character is, for example, a gifted artist.

If multiple characters had dreams, it useful to look for similarities in shapes, colors, etc., to try to decipher the hidden message that the Silent Girl is trying to tell you.

If it suits the story the group is telling, the GM may have the Silent Girl or other NPCs give clues as to how to break her out of the dream world.



TORN MEMORIES – ELYSIUM, FL

by Nicholas Malinowski

Note: This module plays very differently from the others. There are elements here that the players must not know before playing. If you're planning to GM this module, read on! If you want to get ideas, read on! But if you're ever planning to be a non-GM player in a game using this module, stop now.

Content Warnings: violence against children by adults

GM, please read the following to your players: “In this module the GM is encouraged to lean into players’ fears, which they’ll be sharing with the GM. The elements of horror are key to this module. If this seems like a more intense experience than you’re interested in having, you may wish to look at other module which are not as based on the element of fear.

“If you have specific triggers, you should inform the GM of them so that the GM can avoid them. Those triggers can and should be completely off limits even as the GM is trying to stoke your fears.”

Before playing this module, be sure to review whatever player safety measures you’re planning to take with your players.

Setting information

The summer of '82 was one of horror. Several kids went missing, their bodies never recovered. In this small town, it was unheard of. The legends have grown, and the original occupant of the house, one Hathaway Burton, a school teacher in Ulster Middle School, was demonized and blamed — though no proof was ever found. Shortly thereafter, he retreated into his house, never to be heard from again.

The characters are ghosts of the victims, who are forced to live through their deaths every night. They are unable to leave the house as their spirits are tied directly to it, so if any of the characters try to leave, something prohibits that — the windows won't break or open, the walls bleed when hit but don't actually break. Weird things can be found throughout the house, which are indicative of the haunting.

The kids have been “double dog dared” to stay the night in the Hunt House and the game starts with them on the porch, staring at the front door. They all have the same memory of being dared to stay by the school bully.

The truth of the Hunt House is that the characters all died here. As you describe the horrors of the house, watch your players. If one of them reacts the hardest in a particular room, make that be where their character died. Build up the suspense for them there. Whenever that character enters that room, something odd happens.

Setting Touchstones

The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe (book), *Criminal Minds* (TV series), *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (TV series), *The Haunting of Hill House* (novel), *Law & Order* (TV series), *Seven* (film)

Alternate Town Creation Questions

- *Individual, Shared:* What rumors have you heard about the Hunt House?
- *Individual, Shared with GM:* What frightens you — the player, not the character?

Possible Points of Interest

The only location in the game is the Hunt House, the site of all of the characters' gruesome murders at the hands of Hathaway Burton. Though dilapidated, it still has all of the standard features of a house. Every room should have something "off" about it. While you should tailor the content of the rooms to reflect the fears of your players, here are some suggestions.

- **Living Room:** Here there is a turntable that randomly turns on — even when unplugged, damaged, or even destroyed. It is creepier if it plays the same song repeatedly, and for atmosphere, we suggest actually playing the song for your players. If you're able to manipulate it to slow it down, so much the better.
- **Closet Space:** It is here that the first of the "Rat Kings" can be found. A rat king is a bundle of rats whose tails have all been tied together, their corpses lying tangled in a pile. It might be found with a skull, or perhaps just some moldy coats which are falling apart.
- **Kitchen:** Old and decrepit, this kitchen is in need of serious renovation. In the fridge is glass mason jars filled with pickled human organs and body parts. Some



of these parts are from the kids.

- **Basement:** The sump pump is clogged with something and overflowing onto the floor in a minor tide of sorts. There is another Rat King here under the stairs.
- **Master Bedroom:** Located upstairs. There is another of the Rat Kings in the closet, and there is a blood stain that grows on the bare mattress. If you look hard enough, you can see the shape of a body within the mattress.
- **Small Bedroom:** This room is filled with various dolls — Barbie dolls, ceramic dolls, straw dolls, etc. It seems like each doll watches you when you are in the room.

Possible Powered Characters

- In this module, the powered character has powers over spirits as a medium. They are also aware of the fact that it is the current year, not 1982. Some of the other powers they exhibit are things that would seem magical. For example, a smart-phone would appear to the characters as a glowing white rectangle floating in front of the powered character. This character's main focus is to help guide the spirits to their final rest. Help them see what happened so they can move forward. They will help combat the evil that is tied here as well.

Possible Monsters

- The monster is not really super-powered as much as it is a memory of what happened to the characters. Thus, it changes shape depending on who is looking at it, and in combat it always seems to win. Use the monster at the best moment. For example, when the players are neck deep in searching a room, have one of them notice something: a sound, an odd light, something along those lines. Use the monster to drive the fear. Unless the character has come to terms with their death, if they “die” they start the adventure over again standing at the door ready to prove that they can stay the night.

ADJUSTMENTS TO RULES

Rule Removal: No Co-Control of the Powered Character

In this module, the co-control of the powered character is removed from the rules. Instead, the powered character is controlled by a single player (not the GM) who understands the nature of the other players' connection with the house.

Rule Addition: Player Elimination

When a character realizes that they were killed in the house, they will vanish, their ghost finally being able to rest in peace. Once that occurs, the player controlling that character will be eliminated from the game. However, as a few players figure out what's going on, the eliminations will likely occur more and more quickly.



THE SNYDER SISTERS – SHEPHARD, MI

by Tamaría Montgomery, Bill West, and CyberLeo

Content Warnings: lycanthropy, missing parents, violence against animals

Setting information

On the Canada-Michigan border sits the small, tucked-away town of Shephard, Michigan, a snowy town with a strange, magical history.

Hundreds of years ago, twin sisters Tiffany and Tanya Snyder were active in the Underground Railroad, sneaking escaped slaves to the safety of Canada. From the basement of their Victorian house, a network of tunnels extended across the town, allowing people who knew about them to get quickly from one place to another.

Tiffany and Tanya, though, helped more than slaves to escape — and were more than just wealthy, high-minded sisters. The two were, in fact, powerful witches who were able to create illusions and weave powerful magic. In the course of helping escaped slaves, they also helped were-wolves who were fleeing persecution in the States to get to the wilds of Canada.

Though the lycanthropes heading north were kindly, they still had to eat. Through a series of attacks on the sheep and other animals in the town, some animals were infected with therianthropy (the ability of humans to turn into specific types of animals — or, in this case, the ability of animals to turn into humans, too).

Now, hundreds of years later, many citizens of the town are were-creatures themselves, some more animal than human, and all trying to eke out a life in the cold town of Shephard, Michigan.

Setting Touchstones

Kiki's Delivery Service (film), *Ponyo* (film), *Tokyo Mew Mew* (manga series), *Wolf Children* (film)

Alternate Town Creation Questions

- *Group:* What are some notable organizations in the town?
- *Individual, Shared:* What rumor about the town interests you the most?
- *Individual, Shared:* What species are you? (See Rule Addition: Were-Creatures for more details on the various species available.)
- *Individual, Shared:* How much does the rest of the town know about what species you are?



- *Individual, Shared:* What is your character's relationship with magic?
- *Individual, Private:* What are three advantages that come with your species? What are three disadvantages that come with your species?

Possible Points of Interest

- The tunnels, which run underneath the town. For people who know how to access them, these tunnels connect every important building in town to every other one. In some cases, though, powerful illusions present what seem like barriers — and in others, literal locked doors block the way.
- The sheep farm, where a party is held every full moon by some of the citizens of the town.
- The hospital, which is surprisingly efficient for such a small town. People who go there seem to have their ailments diagnosed quickly by “Aunt” Cookie Snyder (an elderly nurse who's the most gifted diagnostician anyone has ever met) and then healed by Dr. Parker, a young physician who moved to town recently.
- Shephard Mall, which has a beautiful koi pond and conservatory in its center. This astonishingly nice mall is the home of the mermaids.
- Shephard School, the combined middle and high school for this small town.
- The evergreen forest, which is beautiful during the day, but at night there always seems to be strange sounds emanating from here. Rumor has it that humans who go in at night come back changed — sometimes for the better.
- The petting zoo, which seems to be open at all hours, especially after high school dances.

Possible NPCs

- **Gillian Arnaud**, the most hapless of the mermaids. Gillian can only maintain human form for short bursts. Even her mermaid form is difficult for her to keep up. Still, that doesn't stop her from going shopping in the stores nearest the pond.
- **Carnegie Carter**, a retired professor of cryptozoology who came to the town after hearing rumors of what's going on. He's generally harmless and pretty absent-minded.
- **Dr. Candice Parker**, the town physician who seems to be able to solve any problem quickly. In truth, Dr. Parker is a good witch, committed to healing.
- **Caroline Potter**, a beloved teacher in the middle school who adopted a young child, Celera Hopkins, when her parents were found murdered in the woods. Though she loudly proclaims the existence of were-creatures, her stories are so strange that they actually deter most would-be believers.
- **Germaine Shephard**, who is the local sheriff and a pillar of the community. Shephard's ancestors founded the town. His therianthropy may be the worst-kept secret in the town, if not the history of the world.
- **Dr. Elizabeth “Cookie” Snyder**, a gifted diagnostician who is actually a were-hound, capable of using her heightened senses to quite literally sniff out illnesses — even in her fully human form. She's also the “mother” (actually great-great-grandniece) of Tiffany and Tanya. Good friends with Dr. Parker.

Possible Adventure Hooks

- One of the characters' parents go missing. Especially if they're more prey than predator and if it's near a full moon, it could be pretty critical that the gang find them. It could be that the missing parent has agreed to let Professor Carter study them — or it could be that something has its fangs into them.
- Gillian has to get something from the other side of town, but her memory isn't all that good and she can't describe it to the characters. They have to figure out a way to take her with them safely.
- After being away for some time, Dr. Snyder comes back with two young children, her adopted daughters. They need someone to show them around town, but they start exhibiting some strange powers, especially when they're together.

- The Sewing Club is becoming more and more exclusive lately, holding secret meetings late at night. Perhaps one of the character's parents joined and seem to be spending all of their time there.
- At the school, the most easily persuadable of the social cliques (the "sheep") has gone missing, and Lucy, the overly energetic girl who desperately wants to be that group's leader but is barely tolerated by anyone, comes yapping to the group about the strange circumstances of their disappearance.

Possible Threats

- A group of hunters from out of town who want to bag one of the most interesting trophies anyone has ever heard of.
- A group of citizens who became clowns and serve the unseen basement horror.
- Aliens who mean no harm but aim to study the were-creatures in Shephard — and are sometimes unintentionally rough in the process.

Possible Powered Characters

- A new girl in town, Tiffany Snyder is a boisterous girl who appears 12. She's good at sleight-of-hand tricks and very acrobatic. Technology doesn't seem to work right around her, either. Her powers include the ability to create powerful illusions and the ability to "jinx" technology. She is older than she looks, but each time she regains her youth, she loses all of her memories.
- The other new girl in town, Tanya Snyder is much quieter and much smarter than her twin sister. She, too, is good at sleight-of-hand though she's less agile. Also a gifted illusionist, Tanya can teleport short distances (see Rule Addition: Magic). Tanya is also the only one of the twins able to initiate their regeneration.

Possible Monsters

- An unseeable eldritch horror that lurks always out of the corner of your vision and lives in basements. Its touch can infect humans and were-creatures alike with a disease that turns them into clowns.
- There is a mean old lady who lives off on the edge of town and generally wants to be left alone. But, if she is forced to interact with children, her dark magic could be put to particularly dangerous ends.



ADJUSTMENTS TO RULES

Rule Addition: Magic

There's a reason that the Snyder sisters are also gifted in sleight-of-hand tricks: magic works only if the uninitiated don't know that it's magic... or just don't know that it's happening. Because of this, most magic is done in private. If done in public, though, the magician will need to come up with a way to explain away what people just saw. If they are not able to do so, their magic simply won't work. Tanya, for example, is able to teleport short distances — or send objects to and from her sister, no matter the distance. However, if that would mean that someone uninitiated into the ways of magic would see her do so (or see the effect of her doing so), her attempts at teleportation will have no effect. Players should treat magic like psychic powers in terms of the other mechanical aspects, including psychic energy.

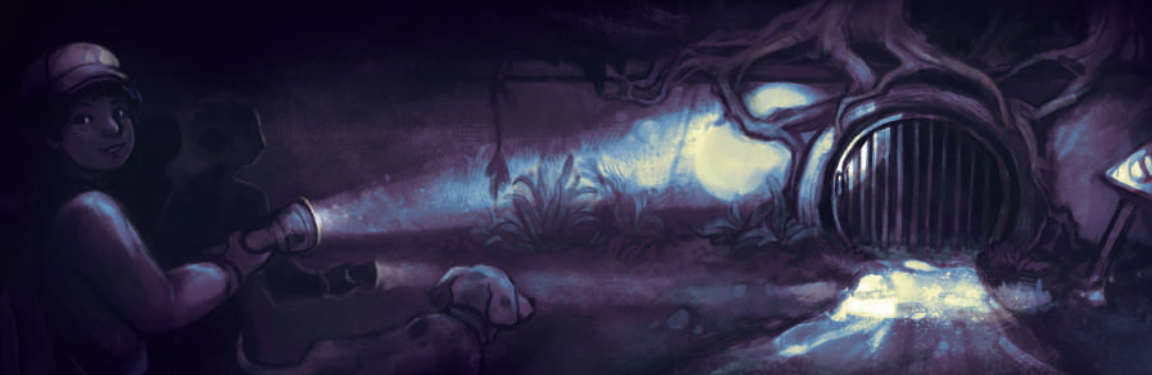
Rule Addition: Were-Creatures

Players have the option of being a were-creature in this game. Any species is open to them because of the generational changes that have affected the town and the powerful nexus of magic that the town is. During character creation, players may choose to be a were-creature, which might be a human that can become an animal or an animal that can become a human. Either is encouraged.

Were-creatures have many of the same instincts of their animal form, even when appearing fully human. Human were-rabbits, for example, will still be jumpy and easily frightened. Were-cats will still impulsively bat things off tables, even if they have fingers instead of paws. As such, even in human form, a character's stats should be assigned with the animal in mind. A few examples include:

SPECIES	D20	D12	D10	D8	D6	D4
Were-Cat	Flight	Fight	Charm	Brains	Grit	Brawn
Were-Hound	Charm	Fight	Brawn	Grit	Brains	Flight
Were-Wolf	Fight	Brawn	Grit	Flight	Brains	Charm
Were-Rabbit	Flight	Charm	Brains	Brawn	Grit	Fight
Were-Fish (Mermaids)	Charm	Flight	Brains	Fight	Grit	Brawn
Were-Sheep	Charm	Grit	Fight	Brawn	Brains	Flight

During character creation, players choosing to be a were-creature should decide their species and, with the GM's help, determine three advantages of their species and three disadvantages. These may be limited-use, depending on the nature of the benefits and detriments.



WHAT LURKS BEYOND SOUTHWOOD DRIVE? – ARLINGTON MEADOWS, OH

by Epidiah Ravachol

Content Warnings: claustrophobia, dogs, mob mentality, claustrophobia, temporal displacement, violence against animals

Setting information

Note: This module is based on true events.

The world is a big place — but not in Ohio, not in the early '80s. Surrounded by densely packed woods and vast oceans of corn is the tiny suburban allotment called Arlington Meadows. An island of new homes and new families isolated by an ocean of farm and forest. The only road in is the same road out. Nothing ever happens here...

...during the day. The sun was a sliver caught between the trees when you swear you saw that pterodactyl knock the TV antenna off the Kramers' roof. At twilight you toss pebbles into the dark blue sky, playing fetch with the bats, but when the blue fades to black, the howling of the wild dogs drives you indoors. And it is only by the light of the waning moon that the dead end of Southwood Drive opens up into the forest, revealing a neighborhood of spectral mansions.

Something odd is afoot in Arlington Meadows, which has un-stuck it in time.

Setting information

Amazing Stories (TV series), *In Search Of...* (TV series), *It* (novel), *Pet Sematary* (novel), *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You!* (TV series), *Stand by Me* (film), *Watchers* (novel)

Alternate Town Creation Questions

- *Individual, Shared:* When you do manage to get a ride to the nearest town (45 minutes away), where do you like to go?
- *Individual, Shared:* What is the only place you have refused to explore?
- *Individual, Shared:* What is the most dangerous thing you do for fun?
- *Individual, Shared:* Everyone here has at least one dog. Tell us about them!
- *Individual, Shared or Private:* What do you think Marcus Smith is up to in his barn late at night?
- *Individual, Private:* What object from a distant time have you found in the allotment and where do you hide it?

Possible Points of Interest

- By day, Southwood Drive dead ends into a forest and a snake-infested pond. Half a day's hike through the trees brings you to a barbed-wire fence and an open field where a dead bull was once found. On certain nights of an inscrutable calendar, all of this is replaced by a village of ghost mansions. These spectral homes are made physical by the moonlight and are haunted by a single ghost that wanders among the lonely manes, wheezing out a pathetic wail from his crooked neck.
- A corrugated drainage tunnel — large enough for a child to walk in upright and a teen to explore stooped — allows a stream to run beneath several streets in the allotment. At one end it's barred, which is no obstacle to the sligher kids or those with enough brawn to yank it open. There are twists and turns enough within to cut most of the tunnel off from daylight. There are even rumors of a secret passage hidden deep in the dark.
- The Smith house and barn — home to Marcus Smith, his hoard of objects from throughout time, and his temporal experiments — sits just past the barred end of the drainage tunnel. There are treasures to be found here, as well as great peril. And Mr. Smith trucks with no trespassers.
- The Larret tree fort is a misnomer. It is a two-story fort built on stilts of railroad ties, atop a gentle slope that leads down into a forest edge. All the kids of the neighborhood are free to use the fort, but not so many do these days. Recently, strange noises can be heard from the forest beyond, where rumor has it primeval creatures roam.

Possible NPCs

- **Olivia Larret**, the matriarch of a family with a pool, a treehouse, two rabbits, three cats, two dogs, a parrot, and a ColecoVision. Their house is the cool place to hang out, and that's just as Mrs. Larret wants it. An affable woman who's always ready to feed and listen to the kids, she is a great ally — especially when someone is injured. If you fake an illness to get out of school, she'll promise your parents to look after you, then drive you out for fries and a shake as long as you promise not to snitch. But she is also physically incapable of believing any tales of real weirdness.
- **Marcus Smith**, the sort of neighbor no one really thinks to invite to potlucks and parties, but who can be depended on to help fix your hot-water heater or transmission. A disheveled recluse, he is a clever, odd man with a begrudgingly warm but prickly personality. No one is invited onto his property, which is covered in old cars and tractors. The property has been in his family before the allotment was developed. In fact, most of Arlington Meadows belonged to his family farm until it was carved up and sold after his parents' mysterious murder in the '60s. He kept only the house and barn. His house contains an impossible hoard, including pristine items from the past that no longer belong in our time. But the true weirdness hides in his barn, where Marcus experiments with the very fabric of time in search of his parents' killer.
- **Michelle Strang**, a dark and mysterious teenager who lives at Southwood Drive's dead end. She listens to Iron Maiden, Black Sabbath, and Judas Priest and has the blacklight posters to prove it. She has a pet tarantula. She has a collection of BB guns, most of which don't work, and a beaut of a pellet gun. On her less misanthropic days, she'll lend the BB guns to the younger kids in the neighborhood, set them loose in the forest beyond her house, and then hunt this least dangerous prey with her pellet gun. She is awesome.

Possible Adventure Hooks

- The Larrets' tree fort stands on the edge of a forest teeming with primeval castaways haplessly drawn to the present by Marcus Smith's experiments. The silhouette of a pterodactyl in the sky above the forest, or the creaking and falling of trees, or a beloved dog chasing after some unknown animal — something tempts the kids into the primordial woods.
- Nestled in rural Ohio, this allotment is the only place for miles around where more than two front doors are within walking distance from each other. This draws in a lot of strange kids from the surrounding farms for trick-or-treat. Some stranger than most. One Halloween, kids wearing your exact same costumes are getting to all the houses a half hour before you, causing several parents to accuse you of doubling back. Who are these doppelgängers?
- Bored kids and long, lazy summer days can lead to troublesome dynamics. A game of war that starts with cap guns and rubber bands quickly escalates to whipping crab-apples and borrowing Michelle Strang's BB guns. It's all fun and games until someone is chased into Smith's barn.
- Low-pitched humming can be heard throughout the neighborhood whenever folks are experiencing déjà vu or something seems out of place. The source is a baseball backstop that stands in a cornfield today, but will be erected in the year 2007 as part of the new development that will become the spectral mansions. In that distant future, it will sync harmonic resonance with the experiments in Smith's barn, closing the temporal loop between them. Anyone caught out of phase with their time who touches this Safety Gate will be transported back to the moment they left.

Possible Threats

- Marcus Smith is obsessed, but not malicious. His experiments, however, attract the attention of shadowy government agencies, especially ones from other moments in time investigating disappearances.
- The rise of satanic panic fueled by the kids' own accounts of bizarre encounters have led some parents to suspect Arlington Meadows has a satanism problem. Operating at first in secret and through rumors, they blame other parents or Michelle Strang. They might become bold enough to take dire action.
- The Smith family's murderer, drawn from the past in Marcus Smith's obsessive search for him, now wanders the night in Arlington Meadows.

Possible Powered Characters

- A psychic dog, called from the future with a purpose it has since forgotten, joins the neighborhood pack.
- An adult version of one of the kids, who has been pulled from the future to save the kids from a terrible fate.

Possible Monsters

- Dinosaurs drawn up from the past by the harmonic call of Smith's barn! Generally, they stay hidden in the woods behind the Larrets' tree fort, but not all creatures stay where they belong.
- Wild dogs that have bred with wolves and other canines from stranger times roam the countryside, but tend to only be active at night.
- The spectral mansions beyond Southwood Drive are haunted by the angry and anguished ghost of the developer who will buy the land and build the houses just before the market crash of '08. Drawn at the moment of his suicide back to a time when it was all wetlands and farm.



ADJUSTMENTS TO RULES

Rule Addition: Running With the Pack

The neighborhood dogs run freely and unleashed with the kids. Though it is clear which dog belongs to which family, they will treat all child characters as family, especially when the chips are down. The neighborhood pack starts the game with two Adversity Tokens for every child character in the game. If you're in need of aid and another player agrees to narrate how your dog (or any dog if you're a child) helps, you may spend the pack's Adversity Tokens. However, dogs are creatures of instinct and can only aid in Snap Decisions, not Planned Actions. Any character who shows a dog that they're a good boy or girl by giving them a treat or wrestling with them can add any number of their own Adversity Tokens to the pack's pool.

Rule Addition: Psychic Dogs

In addition to the typical powered characters, you can add an intelligent, psychic dog to your pack. Such a good girl or boy would be drawn from the future with amnesia. Like the kids, they have their own Adversity Tokens, separate from those of the dog pack, that work like normal Adversity Tokens. Unless appropriate aspects are taken, a psychic dog cannot speak, read, or manipulate objects with any dexterity finer than what is afforded them by their mouth and paws. They can, however, pass as a normal dog and absolutely brighten your day when they greet you at the bus stop.

Rule Modification: Pets in Peril

During the boundaries discussion before the game begins, be sure talk about just how comfortable you are with the neighborhood dogs being in danger. Sometimes it is easier to see our characters in peril and suffering fates that we never want to see befall even fictional animals. Check in to see if everyone okay with the dogs being in danger. Would it be too upsetting to see a dog injured? How about killed, even if such an option was available for our characters? Do not subject any dogs, even the wild dogs, to something a player is not comfortable with.



STARSHIP MAUREPAS – MAUREPAS, LA

by Jesse Roberge

Content Warnings: hearing voices, physical alteration, trans-species transformation

Setting information

An hour from both Baton Rouge and New Orleans is Maurepas, a small, prosperous town populated by employees of Big Oil. A recently installed well has improved everyone's standard of living — but the town is far enough away from everything that no one's excited to be there.

Still, the town is tiny: two restaurants and no stoplights, just a single stop sign. The “high school” is actually a K-12 building, and the population of the town is stuck around 3,000.

If you aren't in the oil industry, married to someone in it, or the child of someone in it, you aren't in Maurepas for long. There isn't anything to do but boat, hunt, fish, and, if you're old enough, work.

Things have gotten odd since a recent hurricane, though. A few people who've gone boating near the wildlife management area have come back telling tall tales of what they've seen in the swamps. It seems like they're just making stuff up, though. Things like that don't happen in a quiet town like this, right? And some people have claimed that they've started hearing voices through their radios — and they're normal folks without any other signs of madness. Must be the interference that outpost in Livingston is researching, right?

Setting Touchstones

Andromeda (TV series), *EVE Online* (video game), *Explorers* (film), *GURPS* sci-fi supplements (role-playing game), *Pacific Rim* (film), *Star Trek* (TV series), *Star Wars* (film series)

Alternate Town Creation Questions

- *Individual, Shared:* What do you do to keep busy in such a boring town?
- *Individual, Shared:* How has your family benefited from the recent boom in the local oil industry?
- *Individual, Shared:* What is your relationship with the outdoors?
- *Individual, Shared:* What rumor about the town interests you the most?
- *Individual, Shared or Private:* What terrible dreams have you had recently?
- *Individual, Private:* What trouble have you gotten in to alleviate your boredom?

Possible Points of Interest

- The town's three churches (Southern Baptist, Catholic, and Methodist), which are the hub of social life in the community. Nearly every citizen in Maurepas is a member, at least nominally.
- LIGO Observatory, which is technically a passive observatory. In truth, though, there is more going on at the installation. Years ago, the government built additional research facilities on the property to study the manipulation of space and time, possibly using some alien technology.
- Maurepas High School, which is actually K-12 given how small the town is. Because of that, the size of each graduating class is quite small.
- Boat launches provide a way to get out fishing, and also to explore the swamps.
- Maurepas Swamp Wildlife Management Area, which is the area's wildlife preserve. It is a day's hike from the town, but getting there is much easier by boat.
- Roche's Bar & Grill, one of the two restaurants in town and the only bar.
- Rich's Po Boys and Bowling, the other restaurant in town with attached bowling alley.
- The corner store, an unnamed convenience store and the only place to get staples in the town. Owned by the Granges.

Possible NPCs

- **Dr. Seth Baker**, a Big Oil scientist heading up, on paper, the development of the refinery and experimenting with new extraction techniques. Always a few weeks behind schedule and looking for shortcuts.
- **Taylor Coulette**, park ranger in Maurepas Swamp. Unflinchingly honest and incorruptible — but also overworked.
- **Willy & Mathilde Grange**, the elderly husband and wife owner/operators of the unnamed corner store. Both inveterate gossips, but generally nice folks.
- **Jennifer "Tex" Haldeman**, a top-level oil executive who moved her family to Maurepas. She is here to oversee the expansion of their work in town.
- **Reverend Barry Jones**, the local Methodist pastor. Reverend Jones has recently become much more aloof, and his sermons have become more esoteric than before.
- **Father Colum O'Connell**, the local priest. Kindly but a bit doddering. Passed up some years ago for a position as a bishop, but he views it as the Lord's will.
- **Raj Rasmuthan**, the sole official scientist working at the LIGO Observatory. Nominally in charge of analyzing gravitational-wave data, but actually much more deeply involved in the goings-on there. Lives with his husband and children in Maurepas instead of in Livingston.
- **Preacher Caroline Smithers**, the local Baptist minister. Generally preaches hellfire and brimstone to her congregation.

Possible Adventure Hooks

- While camping or otherwise exploring the wildlife management area, players discover part of a ship buried in the mire.
- One of the characters, or someone close to the characters, becomes obsessed with the occasional speech-like static that can be heard over the radio, especially late at night, calling them "alien voices."
- Someone close to the characters disappears for several weeks, then returns having undergone the transformation through the ship's Chrysalis Machine (see Rule Addition: Chrysalis Machine for details). Perhaps they are happy with the changes and encourage the other characters to step into the machine as well — or perhaps they desperately want to find out how to transform back.
- After someone close to the characters transforms, non-human bounty hunters show up looking for them.
- One of the characters discovers alien technology, either in the wildlife management area or when one of their parents, who works for the oil company, brings it home.



Possible Threats

- The government agents investigating the ship are more concerned with securing the technology than they are with the safety of the town.
- Big Oil discovers a hint of what the ship can do and wants to scavenge its parts to attempt to reverse engineer them.

Possible Powered Characters

- A transformed player character or NPC gains strange, perhaps unstable powers (see “Adjustments to Rules” for discussion of transformation).
- A person previously transformed needs the group’s help because of defects suffered from their transformation.
- The AI of the ship is a fully sapient, highly advanced computer that functions well beyond human capacity. It will adopt whatever name the players call it. It is unlikely to want to take the form of a human avatar, but some of its robotic subsystems could travel.

Possible Monsters

- Alien scavengers, who come seeking the ship once it reactivates.
- Alien bounty hunters seeking the ship’s crew or any transformed humans. This species and the species that created the ship are locked in a millennia-long war, and will stop at nothing to destroy each other.
- A transformed human who has suffered some instabilities and become monstrous in some dangerous way.

FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE SHIP

Though the precise nature of the ship is up to the GM and the players to flesh out in their narrative, here are some suggested starting places for the ship:

- The ship crashed thousands of years ago and is badly damaged, remaining submerged until a recent hurricane in the area uncovered a small part. The AI put the ship and itself into hibernation mode (other than its occasional radio broadcasts) until the characters reach it.
- The ship’s AI is friendly, interested in characters entering the Chrysalis Machine in order to enhance them so they can repair the ship.
- It should not be too difficult for players to access the interior of the ship. When they do, work to create a sense of awe in the players. Narratively, a good question to ask is, “What in the ship evokes awe from you, even in its damaged, barely operational state?”
- The contents of the ship are adaptable but may include: the Chrysalis Machine (strongly recommended), extensive sensor and transmission systems capable of hacking any device, armory of advanced weapons and armor (some armor is hard to remove once put on), space-time folding engines beyond human comprehension, matter-conversion or cosmic power plant, cloaking device, holo-deck, personal teleportation booths, personal flight devices, braincorders, matter replicator, extensive neural technology allowing full interface with the ship and its databases

ADJUSTMENTS TO RULES

Rule Addition: Chrysalis Machine

The Chrysalis Machine can do amazing medical feats, including reconstruction of grave disfigurements, limb & organ regeneration, and restoration of youth. In addition, it can transform humans into the alien species that built the ship. This is not without its dangers, though — especially for youth with partially developed brains. The ship’s AI, however, will encourage any character between 20 and 59 years old to enter the Chrysalis Machine to become, after four weeks of stasis, something greater than human. Any player character who chooses to enter the machine will immediately become an NPC or the group’s powered character.



The ship has no nefarious purpose, but the transformation process is risky, especially for anyone not 20–59 years old. Based on the character's age, roll the following dice if they choose to enter the machine:

12–15 years old: 2d8, 2d6, 2d4	50–59 years old: 2d8
16–19 years old: 2d8, 1d6, 1d4	60–69 years old: 2d8, 1d6, 1d4
20–24 years old: 2d8	70–79 years old: 2d8, 2d6, 2d4
25–49 years old: 1d8	Younger than 12 or older than 79: will not perform transformation

For each 1 rolled on a die, the defects resulting from the transformation become worse:

- A single 1: The character has some minor temporary defects that will stabilize in a few weeks.
- Two 1s: The character has some pronounced temporary defects that will stabilize in a few weeks, and some minor defects that are permanent.
- Three 1s: The character has many pronounced defects, some of which will stabilize in a few months, and some which will be permanent.
- Four 1s: The character has terminal defects that will result in death within days or weeks. The character might not look human anymore.
- Five 1s or more: The character suffers a messy death.

If four or more 1s are rolled, there will be a prompt for specimen disposal and initiation of clone & braintape restoration, with a default answer of “no.”

When a character is transformed, the following changes take place, though traits may altered, negated, or added by transformation defects:

Good

- The character gets 2d10 for Brains and Charm.
- If the character has been breathing pure oxygen for the past four hours, checks for fitness or endurance become 2d10.
- The character gains ambidexterity, the ability to do advanced math instantly, and photographic memory.
- The character is now highly resistant to any metabolic hazard. Checks against such ailments become 2d10.

Variable

- The character's appearance becomes perfect in every way. Any unseen ailments instantly vanish.
- The character's aging slows to 1/16th the rate of a normal 16-year-old human.
- Any mental trait that makes a character genuinely evil, psychopathic, or over-aggressive goes away.
- The character's body has increased bulk and bone mass, but the character otherwise looks human.

Bad

- The character's calorie and fluid needs double; they need to sleep 12 hours daily.
- The character becomes intolerant of pain. Grit checks to resist, endure, or ignore pain are capped at d6.
- The character grows two hearts, both in the chest. The incapacitation of either heart kills the character.
- The character will need to regularly breathe oxygen of at least twice the Earth's standard concentration (e.g., a medical oxygen concentrator normally given to COPD patients) to function fully. If they do not do so for more than 8 hours, they suffer profound altitude sickness. They then must breathe concentrated or pure oxygen for at least half as long as they were breathing standard air. The character cannot go much above sea level or they will quickly suffer the above symptoms, even if breathing concentrated oxygen (only pure oxygen will suffice).



DOUBLE TROUBLE AT SKATELAND – SOUTHRIDGE, CA

by Elisa Teague

Content Warnings: cannibalism, mind control, missing children, mob justice, teen sexuality

Setting information

Being a kid can be a real drag in a suburban town like Southridge, California. Being about an hour-and-a-half drive outside of a large city center, the outskirt suburb lends little to do outside of school, the library, and one local grocery store with an attached coffee shop, providing the only places to meet with friends outside of Skateland, the local roller rink and the hottest (and only) hangout in town. Additionally, with the library just down the street, many kids make their way to hang out at the rink after school, waiting for their parents to get home from work.

It seems like a typical housing-development-meets-truckstop town, but there is an odd vibe around Southridge. Teens here seem to disappear at a much higher rate than the rest of the country, and while many talk about getting out of the sleepy town and into a big city for college, most kids that disappear haven't even finished high school.

Aside from the few stay-at-home parents, local shop owners and employees, and community service workers, most adults are absent from Southridge during the day. Those who do work in town without big-city paychecks often take second jobs to make ends meet. Latchkey kids are the norm, as parents don't come home from their evening commute until dinnertime. It may be the nature of a small suburb, but neighbors all know each other in Southridge, and they all seem to have strange habits and relationships. Perhaps the adults are just as bored as the kids in this town, but to onlookers, it seems like something else is going on.

Setting Touchstones

Buffy the Vampire Slayer (film), *The 'Burbs* (film), *The Lost Boys* (film)

Alternate Town Creation Questions

- *Group:* What are the biggest problems in the town?
- *Individual, Shared:* Does your character work or have after-school duties? What are your character's daily obligations?
- *Individual, Shared:* With which NPC does your character share a history?
- *Individual, Shared or Private:* Has your character had a strange encounter in any point of interest?
- *Individual, Private:* What is your character's home life like, and how does your character feel about the neighborhood?
- *Individual, Private:* Which area of town gives you the most uneasy feelings?



Possible Points of Interest

- Skateland, the roller rink where parents drop their kids off for what they think is wholesome fun in a town where there isn't much else to do. Inside the rink, patrons' senses are assaulted by a barrage of flashing disco lights from the darkened rink, booming music from the DJ booth combined with the familiar bells and whistles from the arcade machines, and the familiar odorous concoction of popcorn, hotdogs, and slurpee mix emanating from the snack bar. While skating is certainly the guise of the main attraction here, those who don't skate partake in beating high scores in the arcade, strutting around in the latest fashions, awkwardly scoping out "make-out alley" in the back, or just people-watching. The real question on the latter is... who is watching you back?
- Southridge Library, while not nearly as large as the central library downtown, has a peculiarly wide range of topics.
- KRDJ "The Ridge," a local radio station on Main Street that broadcasts from the second floor above Ridge Hardware — although nobody is ever seen entering or exiting.
- Coffee Stop N Shop, the only local grocery store since the town was founded. The attached coffee shop is busiest early in the morning, after school, and late nights.
- South 5 Truckstop, where travelers and truckers fill up on gas and oddball goods.
- The abandoned train tracks on the east side of town, just past the town cemetery. The sign says "no trespassing."

Possible NPCs

- **Clay Arrington**, a senior at Southridge High and a known loner. His after-school job as the DJ at Skateland provides his only known interaction with others — a request sheet that hangs down from the inaccessible DJ booth.
- **Ed Browning**, owner/operator of Ridge Hardware and father of two. Ed is known to be able to fix anything and is popular with the kids for fixing their bikes.
- **Edna Farley**, the "lunch lady" school cafeteria worker. She pulls double duty at the snack bar at Skateland, where the food is... questionable.
- **Myrna Goldman**, history teacher at Southridge High and librarian at Southridge Library. Though the locals joke that she is the town "spinster," she's actually a young, attractive bookworm. Myrna is seemingly just focused on her career.
- **Robert and Lydia Hernandez**, eccentric owners of the South 5 Truckstop on the far edge of town, just off the highway. They both claim to have witnessed UFOs late at night. Catering to truckers on their way to the city, they are the first to greet new people or notice anyone leaving town.
- **Nikki and Lisa**, inseparable teens at the hub of all goings-on at Skateland. Rarely seen outside the rink and rumored to be homeschooled, the pair have an allure (nobody even knows their last names) that is both enticing and frightening.
- **Rose Tanner**, the owner and head waitress of the Coffee Stop N Shop, which is the oldest and longest-running business in Southridge. Known as just "Rosie" to most.

Possible Adventure Hooks

- A black van has been permanently parked in the vacant lot off Main Street, just behind the hardware store and radio station. People are suddenly acting strange and somewhat non-respondent, and the only noticeable connection is that they all seem to be humming the same tune. Is the van connected to these events, or is it all a coincidence?
- Teens are going missing from Southridge at an alarming rate. While missing-persons reports are being filed, the local police don't seem to be doing much about it. The latest missing teen is Bethany Campbell, the head cheerleader at Southridge High, last seen at midnight in "make-out alley" behind Skateland.
- Truckers have stopped making deliveries to Southridge, severely impacting the local shops and restaurants. Nobody knows why deliveries aren't being made, but at least one eatery still has a mysterious supply of food.

- The neighborhood watch has suddenly become an angry mob, hell-bent on “protecting the children” with no verifiable threat. However, they have no problem accusing nearly every resident in town in an out-of-control witch hunt, making it difficult to tell which threat could be real.
- The annual “Skate and Shake” competition is coming up, where the winner gets to go to nationals to compete. However, it seems like some people have resorted to supernatural cheating to get their ticket out of town.

Possible Threats

- A gang of trouble-making teens have been breaking into homes (oddly, only at night), looking for something specific, it seems.
- An unknown organization has been spotted around town in mysterious vehicles. Is this a secret government agency or something even worse?
- A group known as the “Fang Club” have booked the library every Tuesday for secret meetings. They’re averse to new members, so others can’t tell if this is a dog sweater-knitting meet-up, a vampire fan-fiction club, or something much more sinister.

Possible Powered Characters

- A well-known resident who returns home after receiving a blood transfusion in the wake of an accident, and now has strange powers.
- A kind and unfairly feared homeless man who sleeps under the overpass and is the eyes and ears of the town.
- The little sister of a PC, whose presence has turned from annoying to helpful as her powers and perspective are revealed.

Possible Monsters

- A vampire queen, who commands her minions from afar to do her bidding.
- A gremlin that tinkers with wheeled transport, from skates to large trucks, causing both minor mischief (humorous) and major mayhem (deadly).
- A serial-killer alien that has been harvesting lungs from its victims — leaving the rest of the corpses — to temporarily aid its breathing until it can find a way home.

ADJUSTMENTS TO RULES

Rule Addition: Resistance to Mind Control

Southridge (and possibly other towns) is a place where, on more occasions than is comfortable, certain foes will attempt to influence residents by supernatural and other means. While this is nearly impossible to avoid, characters with a high combination of Grit and Charm are more easily able to spot when someone is trying to trick or control them, allowing them to curb the effects of the mind control.

To calculate if a character is resistant to mind control, double the level of the mind control; that is the target. Then, roll Grit and Charm and add the total together to determine if the roll is successful. (If either die explodes, reroll that die and add it to the total, per the normal rules.)



GHOSTS & STEEL – EAST BERWICK, PA

by Josh Thaler

Content Warnings: government conspiracies, memory loss, memory erasing, Nazis

Setting information

East Berwick, Pennsylvania is a small town on the banks of the Susquehanna River, one that hasn't been the same since the flood of '72 that destroyed many of the homes and businesses in the area. But, along the Susquehanna River, that isn't remarkable. Lots of steel towns suffered after the flood.

Like citizens in a lot of these towns, people in East Berwick are struggling to figure out how to make ends meet. Right now, it seems like the best way to make it is to make it out — either by going to college or moving to Pittsburgh for work. There are a few folks who insist the jobs will come back, but no one really believes that anymore.

Unlike a lot of towns, though, East Berwick is unusual in that no boys have been born to its citizens in the past five years. In the baby boom following World War II, fewer boy children than expected were born, but it seemed like it could just be the result of chance. As the years went on, though, the birth rate for boys continued to drop. Girls were born healthy, but for some reason, fewer and fewer boys were.

In lighter news, the town has a big World War II reenactment every year, selecting a different key battle and drawing folks from all around Luzerne County to watch and participate. Many of East Berwick's boys died in the war, and it's the town's way of remembering them — and remembering when the town was prospering.

Now, the only place where work seems stable is the Repository, a government facility on the edge of town. Twenty or so members of the town work there, though they refuse to talk about their work. They go as far as to claim not to remember what they do there, usually saying something like, "I don't really know what I do there, but it pays pretty well!" Some actually believe them — that they actually don't remember what they do there.

Setting Touchstones

Indiana Jones (film series), *The Librarians* (TV series), *Warehouse 13* (TV series)



Alternate Town Creation Questions

- *Group*: In this module, at least one of the characters has a powerful artifact that the government would want secured in the Repository. Describe the artifact. Which character has it? How did it come into the group's possession? How much do the other characters know about it?
- *Group*: Which of the characters is named after a parent's beloved pet?
- *Individual, Shared*: What's one rumor that you've heard about the town?
- *Individual, Private*: Do you believe in cryptids?
- *Individual, Private*: What do you believe is causing the shift in births in the town?

Possible Points of Interest

- The Susquehanna River, which forms the southern border of the town. This is the one that flooded, all but destroying the town. Still, it's fun to swim in. That's free.
- The Porter Mansion, a house built by Clarence Q. Porter shortly after he returned from the Civil War. Only a few months after the completion of the house, though, Porter died mysteriously. Each Christmas, the town's historical society organizes a candlelight event that some people say always has strange occurrences.
- Grittengander's Covered Bridge, which leads to an old farm on the outskirts of town. Some kids like to go out there on dares, since everyone has heard the bridge is haunted. It's always somehow a few degrees colder on the bridge.
- East Berwick School, the K-12 school in town, home of the East Berwick Ironbacks.
- The abandoned steel mill, which was built on the banks of the Susquehanna. When all shipping was along the river, that was great. When the flood hit, it destroyed the factory, which is now partially submerged and dangerous to enter — but too much of a local landmark to demolish.
- That mysterious house with a big, scary dog near the baseball field. It has a fence all around it, and no one has ever seen into the yard. No one knows the old man who lives there. Well, none of the kids, at least. All of the adults know that it's Frank Garraway, a really nice old guy who's just kind of agoraphobic.
- The Repository, a mysterious government compound on the edge of town. It's heavily guarded and surrounded by an electrified chain-link fence.

Possible NPCs

- **Clifford Bennett**, a tryhard step-parent who moved to the area recently to marry one of the character's parents. Like everyone who works at the Repository, Clifford claims not to know what happens there.
- **Dr. James Cornwell, PhD**, a tall, broad, jovial archaeologist working at Luzerne Community College — the only archaeologist, in fact. He has traveled as far as Mexico and seen the Incan pyramids, though he's not an expert on those.
- **Darlene Evans**, the town librarian and trusted adult for all young folks seeking more information about anything. Rumor has it that she can find out anything that anyone has ever known, if you give her 24 hours.
- **Madison Holland**, head of the East Berwick Society of Historians and docent at the Porter Mansion. Given his exuberance about the mansion and the town's history, he can seem a little weird at first — and his penchant for wearing capes doesn't help that. But when you get to know him, he's warm and wonderful.
- **George Kirk**, the umpire for the Little League. Kind of a grumpy old guy, but good at heart and incredibly polite.
- **Clifford "Crash" Porter**, a Vietnam War vet, conspiracy theorist, and avid cryptid hunter. He's a descendant of Clarence Q. Porter, but he isn't afforded the same respect as his last name would suggest.
- **Vanessa Seung-Min**, a young business owner who recently opened up a store selling pen-and-paper RPGs, wargame supplies, and comic books.

Possible Adventure Hooks

- One of the characters' grandparents give them an artifact for safekeeping, one that's too potentially powerful to be entrusted to the Repository and their dubious goals with the goods stored there.
- An artifact in the gang's possession activates, putting all of them in danger — and drawing the attention of the feds in dark suits and the Nazi Underground.
- The artifact activates, revealing a puzzle that must be solved before calamity strikes. Whoever solves it, though, will gain a power too great to entrust to anyone else.
- During a sleepover, one of your friends steals your artifact as a joke, not knowing what it is. While they have it, they vanish suddenly. You have to find them before anyone else can — and the feds and Nazis are looking for them, too!
- During the Candlelight Christmas at the Porter Mansion, the artifact you brought with you starts acting funny — and you think Clarence Q. Porter might be the secret to figuring out why it's so important.
- The Nazi Underground is using the WWII reenactment as a cover for bringing some of their members out of suspended animation.
- The party decides to research one of the cryptids in the area with Crash Porter's help. He proves to be more canny than anyone gave him credit for.

Possible Threats

- The people who run the Repository will go to any lengths to obtain and protect the artifacts they have been entrusted to safeguard. Perhaps they mean well, or perhaps they're experimenting on the artifacts to exploit them.
- Another government agency has suddenly shown up, all wearing dark suits. Are they even with the government, or are they something even more sinister?
- Though Nazis can't walk around a town freely in full Nazi regalia without being punched in the face by loyal Americans, that's not the case during the WWII reenactment. Some say that there are real Nazis, part of the Nazi Underground, running around then.

Possible Powered Characters

- The ghost of Clarence Q. Porter, who needs the party's help to solve the mystery of his sudden death so that he can finally rest peacefully.
- A character exposed to the "mystic radiation" of the Repository and now starting to manifest strange powers that they can't quite control.

Possible Monsters

- A super-powered Nazi, awakened from suspended animation, who doesn't know that WWII is over.
- A thunderbird — a giant dark-brown or black bird with a massive wingspan, strong enough to carry off a small child.
- The Susquehanna Seabeast. Even though it's in the river, the name stuck. Reports about what it looks like vary wildly — some say it looks like the Loch Ness Monster, while others describe a fanged, scaly humanoid.

ADJUSTMENTS TO RULES

Rule Addition: Artifacts

Artifacts are powerful items, and judicious use of them is key. At the start of the game, the party should have one artifact, and part of the back story should be how they came to possess that artifact. Though the Repository has many artifacts inside of it, characters shouldn't be able to simply venture in and get more. Any new artifacts they get — if any at all — should feel special and should be the start and culmination of great trouble. In terms of the powers they convey, think about things like the powered character's psychic abilities, which would be incredibly powerful, and difficult, for a human to be able to control. Beyond that, it's up to the GM and players how they want to incorporate artifacts into their games.



MINOR THREAT – WASHINGTON, DC

by Ben Walker

Content Warnings: gang violence, Nazis, police violence, racism, teen druge use, teen violence

Setting information

“The music is a conversation [speaking to] those values of community, entrepreneurship, fellowship, giving every single person a voice whether that’s through a shoutout or through the call and response or through a dance move, or showing what kind of fashion you’re wearing.” – Charles Stephenson Jr.

There aren’t many things for a kid to do in the District in the late ’80s and early ’90s. If you’re out on the street, you’re hassled by cops. If you’re at home, you’re hassled by your parents. If you head to a store, it’s buy something or get out — with the omnipresent camera and wannabe cop breathing down your neck for fear you may justify their salary by grabbing a candy bar. No one has any money, not even most grown-ups, but it seems like flashier cars are being driven through your neighborhoods at increasing speeds.

Your school is built like a prison, and police walk the halls. Every month cops stand in front of your class and tell you that drug dealers will try to make you smoke pot and Crack Is Whack! and Just Say No! But you’ve never been offered anything, especially not for free. Everyone says your neighborhood is full of crack babies, but you’ve never seen one. Anywhere you go outside your neighborhood, you’re watched like a criminal. You have no power, and nothing you do is ever acceptable or accepted.

But at least there’s music, and the Atlantic Club is the place you can find it. It’s the only club open to all ages and as early as 9:30 p.m., so even the most conservative parent can let their kid go there for a half hour or so.

Somehow they manage to get bands from around the world — and there are always the unique sounds of bands brewing in the District. People come from everywhere to hear it, but some folks keep trying to silence it.

Setting Touchstones

Chuck Brown (musician), go-go (music subgenre), harDCore (music subgenre), straight edge (subculture), Mr. T (actor)

Alternate Town Creation Questions

- *Group:* What's Playing at the Atlantic Club tonight? What genre or mix? Hip hop can play with hardcore punk or new wave with funk or any mix of bands. Have fun coming up with band names.
- *Individual, Shared:* What is your scene? Hardcore? Go-go? Hip-hop? Straight edge? New wave? What group (if any) weirds you out?
- *Individual, Shared:* How did you find the Atlantic Club?
- *Individual, Private:* How does the music you listen to influence your life? What song speaks to you the most?
- *Individual, Private:* How does your character feel about the increase of White Laces?
- *Individual, Private:* How do you feel about the cops shutting down the other music venues? Do you think it will happen here?

Possible Points of Interest

- The Atlantic Club, the venue where everything takes place. Bands meet and people from the District mix with fans and bands from around the world. So far no one has gotten seriously hurt, not even in the pit.
- The Copper Diner, a 24-hour place for folks to sit and get food. Most of the punks — and, strangely, the new-wave kids — tend to hold court in their little booths before or after shows.
- Mountain Country BBQ, another 24-hour place where you mostly get go-go lovers, hip-hop heads, and backpackers trading tapes and fueling up for a long night.
- Madame's Organ, another venue, quieter, older — mostly for jazz, blues, and soul. Former burlesque club, but now all ages friendly. The owners are known to help out kids who are in a pinch if their parents are hurting them or if they are being bullied by others for their gender or sexuality. The Purple Laces and Yellow Laces hang out here along with out-of-town bands before they go on at the Atlantic.
- El Guapo's, the only neutral ground besides the Atlantic. At least someone from every clique stops here. The tacos are overpriced, but its lobby has the only remaining cigarette machine in the city, and vending machines can't check IDs.

Possible NPCs

- **Big Young'n**, all-around musician for Untroubled Funk. They call it "go-go" cause it goes and goes, and Big Young'n just keeps showing up for the set. Never misses a practice, understudies everyone's parts. Can play bass or congas, sing lead, run sound, and even do some production. The reason Untroubled Funk stays untroubled is that, when something goes wrong, Young'n can fix it. They lend their help to other bands making a start. Never seen outside of their shapeless hoodie.
- **Lucy, Lenka, and Lilian Krcmarova**, daughters of Czech bluegrass legend Vlastik Krcmar. They came to the U.S. to have a place to play and write their own music. The hardcore punk scene is enriched by having some actual anarchists! All three sing in close harmony and they each play various instruments. They dress as closely to each other as possible for maximum confusion among their fans.
- **Guy Oboe**, bassist for Fusilli?! Manic, enthusiastic, and energetic?! Might be the most upbeat guy in hardcore?! Always ends sentences with an upward inflection?!
- **Hank Rowling**, slam poet and frontman for Plaid Flagg. Military haircut, black t-shirt, and crisp, clean BDUs are not usually associated with punk or poetry — but former cadet Hank Rowling felt a pull away from school and into the streets, where he helped organize literacy groups and arts programs in the District with military efficiency. Bit of a clean freak.
- **Nicola Stanyk**, late-shift manager for the Silver Diner. She's seen it all and some of it twice. Almost impossible to shock and ready with an ear at all times of the night. Rarely seen during the day except on overcast evenings.

Possible Adventure Hooks

- Hank is trying to get a local group to put on a production of *Pippin*, but someone keeps sabotaging the equipment of any of the musicians he gets to agree to play. Props have gone missing, and accidents keep happening.
- There's a battle of the bands, but a lot of the fighting might be in the crowd. Rumor has it the Red Laces are looking to start trouble if they see any bands "with undesirables in them."
- A cop appeared on television saying, "It's this go-go. If you bring go-go in, you're going to have problems." The District has listened. Cops everywhere are raiding buildings that have flyers for go-go, have had bands play, or are even associated. They've started jailing or hospitalizing people who are just in the crowd.
- A developer is looking to buy up a nearby area and has set their sights on the Atlantic Club as the centerpiece of their renovations. They have already had police evacuate and burn an entire neighborhood that wouldn't sell, under a loose pretense of "harboring drug dealers" and "super-predators."
- Rumor has it the president's kid has been giving their Secret Service detail the slip to go out and enjoy a little teen rebellion and good music. Could they be here tonight? There's an awful lot of people in suits with earpieces and a lot more reporters than usual.

Possible Threats

- D.A.R.E. task force: These cops trying to "rid their streets of drugs" are one part true believers in colorful mascot outfits and one part squads that took over and torched an entire city block for having undesirables. If you run into them, hope they're the former.
- White Laces and Red Laces: See "Bootlace Code" section below.
- The Dark Alliance: A group within the CIA deliberately giving crack and military surplus weapons to gangs. Some are even infiltrating gangs to ramp up the violence in order to justify "cleaning up" areas.
- The Blackened Cross: An old medal, badge, or pin with a burned and cut black "X" in it. If you wear it you are intensely aware of anything you find uncomfortable, abhorrent, or frightening in your vicinity. A person afraid of spiders sees all of the spiders in a room, even if it is crowded and hallucinates spiders even when there are none. A person who fears a specific clique or group will always feel surrounded and outnumbered by their enemies. It can only be discarded after one has kissed the thing they fear.

Possible Powered Characters

- MacRough the Crime Hound, a former policeman and his dog who were sniffing out drugs in schools but ran afoul of a chemistry experiment gone wrong. A disfigured half-bloodhound half-man who hides in the Metro tunnels and tries to protect kids. He has now seen the real causes of the drug epidemic and can hear (and smell) the state of the streets. His desire to help elevate kids out of the school-to-prison pipeline is unchanged, but he continually tries to figure out how to do so without turning on his former co-workers.
- An old concrete lion, thrown out from its former position guarding the Taft Bridge after a restoration accident. The Perry Lion was put in a storage area outside the beltway but is now missing. Some older urban apartments have been found with broken, shabby but surprisingly robust statuary from time to time. Sometimes surveyors or folks looking to "renew" an area can end up missing, clawed, or crushed...
- Molly Prankster, a ghost who is inhabiting her old boots. She wants to see her younger sibling graduate high school and survive to do so. Those who help find themselves with miraculously clean new clothes or tickets to a show they like. Those who hinder find themselves dancing until their feet bleed through or flogged in the pit until they die.

Possible Monsters

- Almond Jack, who always faintly smells of the almonds they crack against each other in their hands. In the pit, or in the press of a crowd, or under the thrum of conversation in a crowded diner, Almond Jack whispers something poisonous in your ear. They tell you something horrific you have always secretly suspected about yourself or someone you love. At some point in the next day, you will fight or harm that person. Few people survive. The only cure is to purge the poison with the truth.
- La Llorona, a woman with empty eyes that weep blood or black tears. It is said that if you wake at night and see her you will soon die in gang or police crossfire. To live you must make amends to all you have wronged and avoid anyone armed.

BOOTLACE CODE:

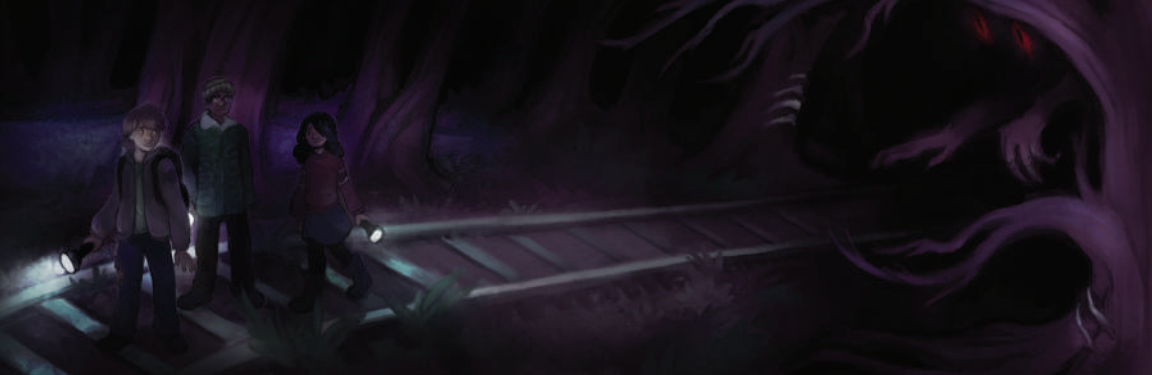
While funk fans wear their velvet and the punks wear their torn t-shirts, everyone wore boots. Timberlands or Doc Martens — it doesn't matter much. But the color of your laces does matter.

- **White Laces:** White laces are for supremacist Nazi skinheads bent on infiltrating clubs and not starting fights to show how reasonable they can be. White Laces will deliberately taunt and attempt to provoke other groups into violence to make them look bad and will try to try to recruit for their ideology.
- **Red Laces:** When a place becomes friendly enough to White Laces, Red Laces will show up and attempt to beat or kill anyone who isn't white enough. Sometimes they will try to make it look accidental in the mosh pit. Usually they will just do it in a place where people are afraid to call the cops for fear the police will burn everything.
- **Yellow Laces:** On the other side, people wearing these laces are the ones willing to throw down verbally with the White Laces or physically with the Red Laces. Anyone sporting Yellow laces can be counted on to be anti-fascist and anti-Nazi.
- **Purple Laces:** Queer teens often wear these laces in their boots, an expression of queer pride in a world just starting to acknowledge their existence. While these laces will make teens a target for the Red Laces, they will also help signal to other Purple Laces and their Yellow Laces allies.
- **Black Laces:** Insisting on being on neither side of this struggle, Black Laces are the kids who are "just there for the music." Some of them don't know enough about the struggle to understand why it's important, and others are simply indifferent. Though some Black Laces will help if it won't harm them, others are actively disengaged.

ADJUSTMENTS TO RULES

Rule Addition: Teenagers With Attitude

In this module, player characters cannot be children or adults. All player characters must be teens only.



THE CULLING IN CHEYENNE – CHEYENNE, WY

by Ross Watson

Content Warnings: human sacrifice, mind control, missing children, missing pets, violence against animals

Setting information

Author's Note: Cheyenne is a real place, but I've taken some artistic liberties to fit the genre. – Ross

Cheyenne is the state capital of Wyoming and a tourist destination for fans of history and the Old West. It has a small-town feel despite being one of the larger cities in Wyoming (population around 30,000 people), where kids ride their bikes through the neighborhoods and others ride horses on the fringes where the frontier meets the suburbs. Cheyenne is usually a sleepy town, but the annual Frontier Days rodeo celebration brings a party atmosphere for two solid weeks every year.

The town has been struggling economically for some time, staying afloat primarily through the rail industry and tourism. One of the main landmarks of the city is the Cheyenne Depot downtown, a major train hub and museum. The U.S. Air Force has a major presence in town thanks to Warren Air Force Base. Both airmen and researchers from the air base like to explore the town and environments, often taking tours from local businesses or supporting animal rescue sites.

The kids in Cheyenne don't have a lot to do most of the year, though winter-time means plenty of opportunities for sledding, snow forts, and snow sculptures. Teenagers either plan for what they'll do as soon as they manage to leave town or make out on the hidden trails surrounding the city proper.

Setting Touchstones

It (novel), *The Monster Squad* (film), *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (novel), *Stand by Me* (film)

Alternate Town Creation Questions

- *Group:* What are some notable landmarks in your neighborhood?
- *Individual, Shared:* What rumors about spooky stuff in town or the surrounding area interest you the most?
- *Individual, Shared:* What activities does your character do during the winter?
- *Individual, Shared or Private:* What is your character's favorite pet animal? Are they currently missing?
- *Individual, Private:* How does the rush of the yearly Frontier Days celebration affect your character?



- *Individual, Private:* What is your character's favorite place to go for fun?
- *Individual, Private:* What about the missing animals and pets scares you the most?

Possible Points of Interest

Lighthearted

- The Big Boy Steam Engine train, in Holiday Park, near the center of town.
- Cheyenne Depot, a train museum and old-timey railroad hub.
- The Frontier Days Fairgrounds and Rodeo, home to all kinds of “state fair” style food, games, and events.

Serious

- Francis E. Warren Air Force Base, the location of top-secret research and a strategic missile base. Haunted by U.S. cavalry soldiers from the Old West.
- The old riverbed, a spooky place deep in the woods where the ancient spirit was sealed away in the ancient past.
- An abandoned train car, filled with the skeletal remains of dozens of missing pets.

Either

- Medicine Bow National Forest, full of mystery, wild animals, and strange weather.
- The Outlaw Trail, once used by Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, a hidden path near the city yet remote and isolated.
- The train tracks, a set of old rails that haven't been used for a century, leading off toward the old riverbed.

Possible NPCs

- **Dr. Emil Albright**, a former head researcher for the U.S. Air Force. This highly intelligent but impatient man left all that behind and now teaches junior high science classes. Many believe that he is carrying out research (some say UFOs, others claim cryptids) on weekends in the surrounding areas of Cheyenne.
- **Major Ike Bauer**, the U.S. Air Force liaison to the research facility on Warren AFB. Major Bauer is entirely focused on results. Nothing else matters to this driven career soldier.
- **Janine Callahan**, the elected town mayor. This ambitious woman intends to let nothing — especially any hare-brained stories about “weird stuff” — interfere with the Frontier Days rodeo celebration, something she believes will bring a much-needed boost to the town's economy.
- **Jared Church**, a “cool” teenager who likes to hang out at the mall. Jared is friendly to younger kids and often acts a game master for various RPGs. He's considering trying out as a competitive video gamer and trains at the local arcade. Jared can be counted on to be interested in anything “weird” or unusual in town.
- **Drew Dennis**, an Old West historian who loves giving tours and curates the Frontier Days Old West Museum. A fixture of the town, Mr. Dennis is well meaning but considered a bore by many who know him, especially kids. He knows quite a bit about Native American and Old West folk tales and legends about Cheyenne and the Medicine Bow National Forest.
- **John Harpole**, a taciturn, weathered man who is the town sheriff. John spends most of his time sitting around or busting tourists for drunk driving during Frontier Days. He's seen a lot of strange things out on the range, but has never brought back any proof of his suspicions. Friendly, but reserved.
- **Markus Holtz**, a scary “German guy” living on the outskirts of town. Markus is, in fact, quite normal and aching for social contact. He keeps a sharp eye on kids in his neighborhood, just trying to keep them out of trouble.
- **Simon Honovi**, a mean-spirited, short-tempered rancher. Simon keeps prize-winning horses on his land just outside of town. He has zero patience for nosy kids and has been known to sic his dogs on strangers.

Possible Adventure Hooks

- All over town, pets have gone missing over the last three weeks. “Have you seen...” flyers have started cropping up in corner stores and on telephone poles all across the kids’ neighborhood. At the same time, hunters in Medicine Bow National Forest have reported a “rabid bear” after encountering gruesome sites where local wildlife has been slaughtered and devoured. Some clues left behind seem to link with an old Native American legend of an evil spirit — a Manitou — that was supposedly sealed away centuries ago in a cave near the mouth of a river.
- In the depths of winter, several local teens that went necking in the woods have returned with a particularly strange attitude. They seem far more helpful and interested in the lives of their families, but something about them just seems... off.
- There’s a brand-new, mysterious carnival ride featured during this year’s Frontier Days. While most adults are interested only in the rodeo, the teens and kids are all talking about this unusual new ride. However, not everyone who goes in the ride comes out on the other side...
- A shrieking whistle splits the night during autumn, on the same day as the mysterious disappearance of local historian Mr. Dennis. Some say he went to the train depot, while other claim to have heard a chugging engine on the abandoned tracks.

Possible Threats

- The U.S. Air Force has a secret program in place to study UFOs, cryptids, and other unusual phenomena in the region. Dr. Albright used to work for this particular project team, but left due to disagreements with the current ruthless military liaison.

Possible Powered Characters

- A local teen, the seventh son of a seventh son, who can see creatures and phenomena hidden from normal people. His abusive parents consider him a “troubled child.”
- A rare midwest Chupacabra that’s far more friendly than he appears. However, he’s being hunted by both the manitou and the U.S. Air Force, so he tries to remain hidden despite an intense curiosity about the modern world.

Possible Monsters

- The Manitou, a corrupted spirit of hunger. This evil spirit takes the form of a bear-like, bipedal animal with jagged fangs and claws. It has been eating pets — but it’s only a matter of time before people become targets. It terrifies animals, which flee as soon as they see it. The Manitou can climb preternaturally quickly, even up man-made structures no bear could climb. It is easily distracted by food and is compelled to eat anything reasonable thrown its way. According to legend, the Manitou can be banished by cleansing the bear form with flowing water.
- Mr. Darque, a genteel-appearing man who operates unusual carnival rides during this year’s Frontier Days celebration. A sinister being, Mr. Darque “harvests” young teens to devour their essence and retain his immortal life. According to Old West folk tales, dust devils ward him away and silver bullets may prove lethal.



BETWEEN THE CRACKS – SPICERVILLE, NY

by Scott Woodard

Content Warnings: cults, demonic possession, drowning, hosts

Setting information

Spicerville is a small, nondescript village of 2,600 residents, located within the town of Upton that spans the Erie Canal in western New York. Since its founding back in 1864, Spicerville has been known primarily for its agriculture, with several sprawling (and rival) farms that radiate out from its core, along with its respectable school district, and its all-volunteer fire department.

Most residents of Spicerville are totally unaware of the strangeness that exists just beneath the surface and between the cracks, preferring to live their day-to-day lives raising their families, mowing their lawns, and enjoying summertime barbecues.

But the kids of Spicerville know better, since there are few options for entertainment in the village, and most spend their days exploring the woods, swimming and fishing in the canal, or finding any excuse imaginable to get out of the village and visit some of the surrounding — and far more exciting — communities accessible by bike.

Those willing to see the village with an open mind occasionally catch glimpses of the parallel worlds that touch and collide with our own. Sometimes those glimpses are of unparalleled beauty, but at other times are the dark and twisted stuff of nightmares.

Setting Touchstones

“Children of the Corn” (short story), *Children of the Stones* (TV miniseries)

Alternate Town Creation Questions

- *Group:* What outdoor activities do you get up to during the winter months?
- *Group:* Do citizens of Spicerville take any unusual precautions when exploring the areas around the village? Crosses? Holy water, etc.?
- *Individual, Shared:* What is your favorite time of year in Spicerville?
- *Individual, Shared:* Has your family lived in the area since the village’s founding?
- *Individual, Private:* Do you feel so comfortable here that you never want to leave, or do you feel the desire to flee forever?
- *Individual, Private:* Do you suspect that one or more of your family members is engaged in something secret and possibly nefarious?
- *Individual, Private:* What secret are you keeping from the group?



Possible Points of Interest

- The corner lot, with a large Victorian house has stood empty since the entire family who lived there went missing in the late 1950s.
- Bathym's Chamber, the subterranean ceremonial chamber devoted to Bathym, duke of Hell. It is accessible through a hidden door under the stairs leading up to the second floor Masonic Temple or through a trapdoor under a rug in the back of Cloris Flowers.
- Hungry Pond, a perfectly round blackwater pond deep in the woods. Animal bones lie strewn about the water's edge. The pond holds an ancient, voracious secret.
- Saint Quiteria's Cemetery, a Catholic graveyard where the spirits of the dead speak to those willing to listen. Adjacent to this is Saint Quiteria's Church, where the unmoving third bell tolls 13 once a year on the anniversary of the tragedy that befell a bellringer in 1941.
- The Erie Canal, referred to by many (especially the local children) as the "Eerie" Canal. Bodies been recovered from its slow-moving waters over the decades, and on certain nights a thick, luminescent fog rises from the water's surface.
- Soldier's Memorial Tower, a crumbling (and haunted) Civil War monument with a broken, winding staircase.
- Sumac Cave, a narrow, muddy network of natural caves that is believed to house a valuable treasure.

Possible NPCs

- **Trey Hodges**, a fourth-grade English teacher at Carter Elementary on the north side of the village. Trey also runs the A/V club and is extremely popular with the uncool crowd, who all admire him for his love of monster movies and tabletop role-playing games. Trey drives a purple Triumph TR3 named Frodo.
- **Don J. Kelly**, the warm, welcoming face of Spicerville. It's not uncommon to see the mayor's grinning mug on yellowed posters tacked up around Spicerville recommending that visitors "stay a while." Unknown to most, Kelly is also the head of the secret group that meets in the basement of the Harmony Masonic Temple.
- **Mark O'Connor**, the friendly, middle-aged owner of the Book Vault, a cluttered shop located right in the heart of the village. Most visitors come to pick through the stacks for a paperback or two, but Mark's back room houses a respectable collection of occult books and other esoteric texts. One need only know the secret word to gain access: "Lovecraft."
- **Elsa Winkler**, the oldest living resident of Spicerville. Elsa has seen it all. Alas, Elsa has also been blind for most of her life, but her other senses are so well-attuned that, if asked, she often describes things using (accurate) colors. No one but Elsa knows exactly how many years she has walked upon the Earth, but the truth would surprise you!

Possible Adventure Hooks

- Each night, strange, pulsing lights have been spotted in the windows of Shelby Manor, which everyone knows is abandoned.
- The owner of Cloris Flowers, a small florist adjacent to the Masonic Temple, is overheard in the Spicerville Diner talking about strange whispers and foul, sulfurous odors coming up from under the floor of her shop.
- A few days back, a group of hunters exited the woods with one of their party and his dog missing. Search parties have been scouring the forest, but so far there has been no sign of the missing hunter. Might he have wandered too close to the murky black waters of Hungry Pond?
- While mid-winter depression isn't all that unusual around these parts, this sudden strange wave of melancholy and sadness in the heart of summer seems undefeatable. And the first recorded suicide in 10 years is certainly a troubling development.



- Walking the rows is an old tradition in Spicerville where those seeking calm, focus, and vitality stroll through the rows of corn after the Fourth of July. But there are rules to this game, and those who break them are never heard from again.
- Every year in early June, the Spicerville Summertime Festival and Carnival comes to town. No one claims responsibility for the event, yet it has been a local tradition since the 1930s. Stay out of the Hall of Mirrors!

Possible Threats

- The secret and ancient order of Bathym, a demon-worshipping cult that has been trying to summon a demon for almost a century.

Possible Powered Characters

- Elsa Winkler is a timeless being from another dimension who was blinded and exiled to our world centuries ago. While she is charming and seemingly benevolent, she will stop at nothing to find her way back home.
- Vernon Walker keeps to himself, rarely speaking to anyone but the headstones at Saint Quiteria's Cemetery. Vernon is actually the ghost of one of the original canal workers who died tragically in 1820, trampled by a team of spooked horses.

Possible Monsters

- Bathym, the demonic duke of Hell who knows the virtues of herbs and crops and is master of the astral plane. As long as sacrifices are made in his honor, Bathym is appeased.
- The face of a trapped god that draws people and animals into the depths of its cold, blackwater lair deep within the woods.
- Malevolent green spirit-forms with one foot in the old world. They gather outside children's windows at midnight, looking to make eye contact — with fatal results.

ADJUSTMENTS TO RULES

Rule Addition: The Willies

Whether you were born with the ability or you acquired it through some other means, you are inherently sensitive to supernatural powers. You might get goosebumps in the presence of psychic energy, you might visualize a colored aura around powered characters, or you might be able to home in on the source of mystical powers within a short distance, like the needle of a compass (you literally feel something in your bones). The Willies works just like the Intuitive strength, except that when you spend an Adversity Token, the GM must reveal details specific to psychic emanations.

BUTTER TARTS AND BROKEN BONES – TENAPANGUISINE, ON

by Jim Zub and the Danger Dice Gang



Content Warnings: bullying, economic entrapment, freezing, missing children, witchcraft

Setting information

A small rural town in northern Ontario, Tenapanguisine (or “the Tens” if you’re a local) is much like the famous butter tarts that bring in tourists from miles around — sickly sweet at first, but a crumbly mess once you dig a little deeper.

The rustic kindness that seems so inviting to people passing through doesn’t hold up to scrutiny from the many unemployed loggers and their families that populate the town. The economic heyday of the Tens is well behind it, and a pervasive sense of desperation has taken its place. People don’t stay here because they want to. They just don’t know where else to go.

Making things even more awkward is a series of odd local rituals that permeate day-to-day life in the Tens. Locals never park their cars facing north. Old ladies from the Craft Club always burn sage the morning after a full moon. Every kid receives a tree-shaped pendant on their 12th birthday. Visitors and townspeople who don’t know any better assume these little quirks are just part of the local flavor, cute ways to make the Tens stand out in a cottage country dotted with boroughs looking to monetize their folksy charm. However, for those with an eye toward local history, they tell a very different story. These habits have evolved naturally for one reason only: keeping evil at bay.

Note: The Tens is a setting dotted with quirky elements to keep players guessing. It’s a good fit for off-kilter and macabre adventures in the style of *Twin Peaks* or *Near Dark*.

Setting Touchstones

Near Dark (film), *Twin Peaks* (TV series)

Alternate Town Creation Questions

- *Group:* What are some notable local establishments that have managed to stay in business despite hard economic times?
- *Individual, Shared:* How close are you or your family involved with baking — and specifically the Big Tart, the town’s most famous tourist stop? As a side note, do you still enjoy the taste of butter tarts?



- *Individual, Shared:* How closely is your family tied to the logging industry that once dominated the town's economy?
- *Individual, Shared:* What rumors have you heard about where these local superstitions came from?
- *Individual, Shared or Private:* How much do you adhere to local superstitions?

Possible Points of Interest

- The Big Tart, the local bakery that dominates the town's reputation now that logging has fallen out of favor. The Big Tart has a dozen or more student-aged employees year round, cranking out a steady supply of butter tarts made from Doreen Ellison's great-grandmother's secret recipe. In the parking lot is "the World's Biggest Butter Tart," a 16-foot-tall, photo-worthy fiberglass reproduction of the town's most famous pastry.
- The Ash Grove, a field of tall grass on the edge of town, dominated by the presence of a single massive black ash tree. Adults tell kids to steer clear of this place after dark.
- The Five & Tens, a local convenience store. Teens know that it's a good spot to get booze because they don't scrutinize IDs. Kids enjoy picking up comics from the spinner rack but, oddly, they never have current issues, only dinged-up old comics from 1961. Yet they're always well stocked...
- Widow's Peak, a cliff overlooking the bay. The name comes from wives in olden days who would gather at the top to look out over the water and see when ships were coming in.
- An old lumber mill that was functioning during the early 1900s. Now, it's only known as the key filming location for *Lumberjack Dance Party*, a forgettable teen movie musical from the early 1960s.

Possible NPCs

- **Chad Badminton**, one of the stars of *Lumberjack Dance Party* who decided to retire in the Tens after his career washed up. Every local who was alive in the '60s has an anecdote about Chad partying up a storm in his prime, but in the past few years he's become quite antisocial, twitchy, and downright strange.
- **Doreen Ellison**, the matriarchal owner and manager of the Big Tart. She runs the town's famous bakery with a strict hand and brooks no rebellion from her employees, who she calls her "little sugars." She expects deference for all she's brought to the Tens, and most of the locals give it to her without complaint.
- **Ashley Hunter**, the sheriff's plucky teenage daughter who babysits kids in her neighborhood or studies compulsively when she's not working at the public library. She is obsessed with local history, and her current project is looking for information about a gap in the town records stretching from 1961-64. She doesn't yet see any darkness in the Tens and imagines she'll be mayor when she grows up.
- **Carol Hunter**, sheriff of Tenapangusine. Carol is patient, kind, and quite used to dealing with superstitious townsfolk and rampant rumors. She doesn't believe in the supernatural and actively avoids engaging with any explanation that isn't rooted in real-world science — things she can see and touch.
- **Bessie Nye**, 95 years old, mostly blind and partially deaf. Children have always called her "the witch," and she doesn't deny it for a second. Bessie is the oldest living resident of the Tens, and if the town has a secret, she knows it.
- **Brick Thorpe**, local bully. He didn't graduate from high school so much as he was released like a wild animal that never learned how to co-exist with others. He'll beat you for your lunch money, then beat you again for not fighting back hard enough.

Possible Adventure Hooks

- The Ash Grove is the site of an elementary school that burned down in the early 1900s. Echoes of that traumatic event have left their mark on the town, both in terms of local customs and its spiritual well-being.
- A nosy reporter has been poking around town, digging up dirt on Doreen Ellison. He's convinced that her secret butter tart recipe contains more than just maple syrup and a pinch of cinnamon, something downright sinister...
- A graduation bush party up on Widow's Peak becomes the site of a haunting as chaos breaks out. Three teenagers go missing, and the only clue to their disappearance is a trio of subtly glowing animal bones, snapped in half, that were left behind at the site.
- People hiking in the woods outside town at night report seeing ghostly buildings that weren't there in the daylight. The few brave enough to approach them say that the structures are covered in a diaphanous, semi-transparent film that's cold to the touch.
- On the night of the hottest summer day in over 50 years, the bay suddenly freezes over with a thick layer of ice, strong enough for even an adult to walk on. What's causing it and why?
- After a lunar eclipse, the tree-shaped pendants given to 12-year-olds in the Tens begin to feel noticeably warm to the touch. The closer anyone comes to Bessie Nye's house, the warmer they get...

Possible Threats

- A group of townies who deeply resent the Bennies (out-of-townners), a resentment that simmers but sometimes reaches the point of violence.
- A group of shadowy developers who want to buy up real estate and raze many of the locals' houses... and the townies who are inexplicably working with them.
- A secret organization that knows the secrets of the town and is quite resistant to anyone finding out about them, or that is working to summon something ancient and powerful from the ocean — or both.

Possible Powered Characters

- W.K., (aka "the Weird Kid"), a frail young boy, twitchy and nearly mute, whose skin is frigidly cold to the touch.
- A spirit serpent with glowing green eyes that's only visible under moonlight or when seen in a mirror.
- The Little Wanderer, a hyper-intelligent German Shepherd who keeps children out of danger. He doesn't speak, but he seems to fully understand when people talk to him, even if those conversations involve complex commands or emotions.

Possible Monsters

- A ghostly creature wrapped in scraps of the creepy film that clings to the time-displaced buildings of the town that sometimes show up at night.
- Human-sized mosquitoes summoned by teenage witches who are desperately trying to impress Bessie Nye with their spell-casting skills.
- Tree spirits still howling in pain from the damage done to them by loggers who cleared the land to build up the town in its earliest days.
- Icy tendrils reaching out from the depths of the bay, freezing everything they touch.



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KIDS ON BIKES

The door to the old house creaks open, the rust on the hinges groaning as you see the dust floating like spores in the air inside. By the faint light of your cheap flashlights, you see the stairs to the upper floor, its railings gnarled and broken like crooked teeth. Their curve makes the stairs seem almost like a hungry grin, and you wonder if their age will support your weight. Still, you must go in.

The only question is who will go first?

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