

THE GAME OF CHILDHOOD TERROR

BY JASON L BLAIR



Little Fears

NIGHTMARE EDITION

“When I was little, and I heard monsters, I would close my eyes super-tight—so tight I couldn’t see anything—and I would pretend that I was a bird or a butterfly. Something beautiful and free so then I could just flap my wings and fly away.

“But then I grew up, and I learned the truth about birds and butterflies. I learned what they really are.

“I don’t pretend that any more.”

- Cailey Myers, age 8

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Dedicated to
S, C, and G. With you in
my life, I have nothing to
fear.

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the game of childhood terror

Little Fears



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: Waking Dreams 7

Knowing Fear	8
Tone and Setting	10
A Game of Stories	11
What You Need to Play	12
Using this Book	13
The Nightmare Edition	14

Chapter One: It's All Just a Game 15

Part One: Play Basics	16
Part Two: Setting Up the Game	17
Part Three: Scenes and Rounds	18
Scenes & Scene Goals	18
Rounds/Turns	18
Part Four: Heart of the System	18
The Order of Things	19
When to Use the Dice	19
Rolling Dice	20
Success Dice	22
Good and Bad Traits	22
Passing and Failing Grades	23
Quizzes, Tests, and Exams	23
Part Five: Fighting	26
One on One	27
One Against Many	27
Part Six: Health & Damage	30
Taking Damage	30
Health Levels	30
Hands & Feet	31
Sticks & Stones	31
Deadly Weapons	32
Accidents Happen	34
Effects of Damage	34
Getting Better	35
Death & Dying	36
Part Seven: Virtues of Childhood	37
The Power of Belief	37
Keeping Your Wits About You	45
The Kid's Got Spirit	50

Chapter Two: To Be Young Again 53

Part One: Second Childhood	54
Part Two: Kid's Got Character	56
This is Me	57
Abilities & Traits	60

Part Three: What's Inside Counts	64
Belief	64
Wits	64
Spirit	64
Part Four: No Kid is All Bad	65
Things I Like About Myself	65
Things I Don't Like About Myself	68
Health	70
Part Five: The Safety of Objects	71
Stuff	71
Part Six: Tell Me About Yourself	73
Questionnaire	73

Chapter Three: Someone to Watch Over Me 81

Part One: The GM's Job	82
Part Two: Episode Design	84
Scenes & Scene Goals	86
Scene Introductions	88
What Do You Do?	90
Part Three: GM Characters	91
GMC Quick Stats	92
Target Numbers	92
Part Four: The Questionnaire	93
Part Five: After Each Session	95
Part Six: Customizing the Game	97
Scary Stories	97
Dark Faery Tales	97
True Horror	98

Chapter Four: It's a Big World Out There 103

Part One: Here and Now	105
When and Where	105
Life of a Child	105
Family	109
Part Two: There are Good People	111
The Light-Man	111
The Blue Angel	112
Mother	113
The Army of St. Nicholas	113
Part Three: Hand-Me-Downs	114
How They Work	115
Where They are Found	115
But What Does it Do?	115
When Stuff Becomes a Hand-Me-Down	115
Curses	116
Sample Hand-Me-Downs	117

Chapter Five: Behind the Door **119**

Part One: Crossing the Darkness	121
How They Get Here	121
How Kids Get There	123
Getting Back	125
Part Two: A World of Monsters	125
What Closetland Looks Like	125
Countless Pathways	126
Closet Monsters	127
Part Three: Scary Places	128
The Dollhouse	128
The School	129
The Playground	130
Mother's House	131
The Woods Behind Mother's House	131
The Chicken-Legged House	132
The Enchanted Forest	134
The Stump with the Door on Top	136
Part Four: Those Left Behind	136
Butterflies that Flutter By	137
Bunsworth von Hoppington	138
Part Five: The Black Bird Room	139
How You Can Find It	139
The Blue Room	140
Part Six: Making a Monster	141
Part Seven: Monster Rules	148
Using a Monster's Stuff	148
Weaknesses	148
Fear Tokens	148
How Monsters Die	150
Part Eight: Sample Monsters	151

Chapter Six: Spooky Stories **159**

Types of Episodes	160
Sample Characters	161
The Houses of Apple Court	165
Adventure Seeds	176

Note from the Teacher **179**

Play Sheets **182**

Top 3 Cheat Sheet	183
Episode Sheet	185
GMC Sheet	187
Monster Sheet	188
Belief Sheet	189
Character Sheet	190

INTRODUCTION: WAKING DREAMS



INTRODUCTION



Gregory dug in his heels, putting all 68 of his pounds behind them. The snow from last night crunched under his weight and soaked through the canvas of his secondhand shoes. He bit his upper teeth into his bottom lip and focused hard on the faint glint in the distance. The boy strained his ears to hear. Beyond the rush of the winter wind, the beast's distinctive growl was cold and clear.

The boy closed his eyes, putting everything he had into hearing the creature. He knew seeing it didn't do any good. Like chasing a springtime rainbow, your eyes only worked against you.

The growl turned into a moan turned into words on the wind. The boy's ear perked up as they caught the creature's threat.

"I'm gonna eat you, boy," the beast said.

The boy's breath caught in his throat. He fought back a cough as the chilly February air burned his throat.

"I'm not scared of you," the boy said, mostly for his own sake. "You're just a dog. Not a monster. Just a dog."

A howl in the distance. Gregory's eyes opened before he could stop them. The creature was on the ridge now, not a hundred feet from where the boy was standing. A clutch of bare trees stood behind Gregory. If he ran into them, it might be harder for the beast to find him. But Gregory didn't know these woods. He didn't know anything about where he was. He'd only opened a door and rushed out. He hadn't had time to think about where it might lead him.

The dog hadn't been just a dog then. It had been something else. Gregory wasn't sure why it changed when its skin hit sunlight.

"No," Gregory corrected himself. "It didn't change. It's just a dog."

"And you're just a boy," the beast replied.

Gregory swallowed hard. He could feel cold moisture on the rim of his eyes. His father always told him there was never a need for a boy to cry. Boys grew into men, and men had to be hard. Gregory wasn't so sure about that. He fought back the tears anyway.

"I'm not scared of you!" Gregory said, this time louder. "I'm not! I'm not scared of you!"

The black lips of the beast curled into a grin. Hot drool traced the jagged line of its misshapen teeth. Human eyes inset on a canine skull narrowed.

"Yes, you are," the creature said, mocking him. "After all, your fear made me."

Knowing Fear

The world is a scary place, especially for children. The world around them is strange, full of rules that seem to be always changing. There are so many things they can't do, they can't

say, they aren't allowed to talk about or see. The world to them is an open door leading to a room they can only enter in tiny steps.

The world they live in is full of rules but those rules are not their own.

But in their dreams, in their imaginations there are no rules. No boundaries. No curfews, no bedtime. They can play in the mud, dance in the rain, fly through the clouds. They are free from all the rules that restrict their daily lives.

These dreams give life to so many things: flights of fancy, fairy tales, and the distant realms only an untamed imagination can unlock. A vast world. A world full of doors.

Behind these doors are knights and princesses, high castles guarded by dragons, magic railways, young warriors with mystical creatures held captive in brightly-colored orbs, young wizards and witches whose daily drudgery is made tolerable because they are learning magic, not boring old math or history. It is a world where childhood has no limits and where the kids are kings and queens, superheroes, astronauts, and more.

But behind these doors, something else lies. Beyond the towering mystical spires that stretch toward the heavens, past the gruff and grumbling ogres whose rough exteriors belie their generous hearts, deep in the shadows, where the even the rats don't go, are monsters.

These monsters are born of fear, of belief, of the world to which children escape when the real world becomes too confusing, too confining, for them. When there is too much pain or frustration, the children twist those feelings inward, tying them into knots. And when the knots unravel, a monster is born.

These are not fictional, fanciful creatures. These are not make-believe menaces. These monsters are real. They are alive. They eat and breathe and claw and grab and scream into the wind. They hunger and hunt and track and kill. Their eyes glow red beneath the bed. Their dagger-like fingers scratch at the floorboards, peeling away soft wood with every scrape of a nail. They break toys and they break bones. They dirty up rooms and they dirty up minds. They shut the latches tight. They shatter windows and door frames. They whisper naughty little ideas into gentle minds drifting off to sleep.

Adults don't see them so don't believe they exist. Truth is, these monsters can only be seen by those who have the capacity to believe. By those whose minds are not caged by rational thought. But that doesn't mean we're all safe.

Though born of it, these monsters are not confined to the worlds of imagination. They have a home outside the minds of cautious children. It is a place of darkness, abandonment, loneliness, and misplaced trust. Empty playgrounds sit in perpetual darkness with swings that sway lazily out of habit while twisted vines pull the metal off the monkey bars.

Forgotten flags flap in the still wind. Shadows appear suddenly just on the other side of the window—then disappear just as quickly. Squeals of laughter dissolve into screams before all is replaced—suddenly—by silence.

In the emptiness of an old house, children hear it.

In the darkness under the bed, children see it.

It is the glint in a strange dog's eyes. The uneasy grin of a passing stranger. The space between a child's smile and his mother's heart.

INTRODUCTION

It is the shaking of tree limbs seen in a lightning flash. It is the old toy once thought missing that reappears out of nowhere—broken. It sits at the dinner table where a parent should be. It is the cackle of the schoolyard bully. It is the dividing line between childhood and adulthood.

It is the place you can't see once you've decided to grow up.

It is a place called Closetland. It is a child's Hell.

Things That Go Bump

Monsters take all sorts of shapes and forms. There are those who are tentacled beasts, with gaping maws and slavering jaws, clutching claws who attack without pause. There are those who hide inside other things: the possessed dog at the junkyard whose throaty howls ring out from miles away; the gurgling beast that lives in the sump pump whose burbling moans echo through the pipes; the cold-eyed stranger on the long walk home who glares at you with suspicion and threat; the dolly on the nightstand who refuses to sit up straight and who, you swear, giggles when the moon is just right; the grass around the gravestone that you feel wrapping up your ankles when you get too close.

Monsters often hide in plain sight. That is what makes it so easy for grown-ups to not see them, to dismiss the fanciful stories told by children, to tut-tut and hush-now whenever their young son or daughter tells them a story that goes beyond their belief.

Sometimes, even other children cannot see the monsters. Children who haven't the time to be children, who must grow up and harden their hearts to childish things. There are even some children who have already seen too many monsters and simply cannot stomach seeing any more.

Those Who Fight Back

But the monsters do not go unopposed. There are children who are strong enough, smart enough, brave enough, or simply foolish enough to stand against them. Sometimes these children are brave boys and girls—those who know the monsters are real and seek them out wherever they may hide—but just as often they are would-be victims who find their hidden resolve and manage, despite themselves, to stand against the monsters.

This game is about those children. Whether they are questing knights or just unlucky enough to be in a certain place at a certain time, they are all heroes. And you will tell their stories.

Tone and Setting

Little Fears Nightmare Edition is about people coming together to create spooky and compelling stories. It is a dark and fantastical game where everyday kids come face-to-face with monsters both real and imagined. It is up to the players to determine who those children are, what monsters those children will face, and how those stories will unfold.

No matter their history or environment, the characters are all heroes. They may be reluctant, foolhardy, naive, or timid, but they will all find their inner strength and the courage to use it. They have to, or the monsters will win.

The inspiration for the monsters can come from a variety of places. They can be creatures from myth or literature (such as vampires, yetis, trolls, harpies, Frankenstein's monster, or an evil sorcerer bent on world domination) or from your own wicked imagination (rules are provided so you can create any monster you dream up). You

can pull ideas from real world horrors that are “ripped from the headlines” (such as kidnapping or child labor) but, given that it’s not only a horror game but a horror game featuring kids as the main characters, always be mindful of your players—both their limits and their personal histories. No one needs to have a painful memory laid out on the table.

That being said, this game does touch on some dark matters. It is not done to exploit or trivialize those matters but to give meaning and contrast to the light. Even in the most dire circumstances, the most dreadful situations, there is hope. And it is that hope that the characters must cling to in order to push back the monsters and win the battle.

The assumed setting for the fiction and references in this book is modern day America but you are not required or confined to set your stories in the here and now. I’m writing from that perspective because it’s what I know but obviously there are children all over the world. And the struggles they face are unique to their region, political environment, cultural standards, media influence, traditions, and history. No matter the where, no matter the who, no matter the when, the themes and struggles in this game are both universal and timeless. I’ve personally run games in the 1980s (the era of my own youth), the 90s, and today. I’ve run games set in the rural country, the inner city, and the upscale suburbs. When building a scenario and creating characters, have in mind not only the when and where but the who, what, and why. Don’t worry about the how, that’s what the system is for. But all the rest is up to your group.

A Game of Stories

If you have never played a story game before, welcome. I’ve written this game in the hopes that both experienced and brand-new players will be able to read and understand the premise, setting, and rules with minimal studying or memorization. If you’re new to story games, here’s a quick primer to help you understand what’s happening in this book.

Inside this book, you will find a setting and a collection of rules that you and your friends will use to tell a story together. The premise, the basic idea, is that there are monsters only children can see and only children can fight. The players take the part of those children and they are the focus of this game.

It is called a story game because it’s both a storytelling device and a game. The main goal is to have a great time, to immerse yourself in fiction for a few hours, and connect and engage with characters and their struggles, setbacks, and triumphs. That’s the story part. There are rules as to when and how something will happen and who will succeed. That’s the game part.

You need at least two people to play this game. One of these people will be the game moderator and she will have a special job. The rest—and a group of three to four people is ideal in my experience—are called players. Players create characters and contribute to the story through those characters. Creating a character should be fun—and it is even more fun when all the characters are made together. These characters are called player characters or PCs because, as you can guess, they’re characters designed and controlled by the players. Every player should have a copy of the character sheet (found at the back of this book and also at www.littlefears.com) which will make creating a character faster and easier. Every character needs his own sheet.

One of the players is going to be the game moderator or GM. Her job is to help guide the story and also to portray the other characters, both human and monster, that

INTRODUCTION

are in the story. These characters are called game moderator characters or GMCs. The GM also has the responsibility of injecting the environment into the story. By that, I mean the game moderator has tools that help her respond to what characters wish to do. Throughout the story, the characters will be opposed, by other characters and by situations. They will face challenges and overcome obstacles. Otherwise, their victory or defeat lacks substance or meaning.

Imagine you're all making a film (this won't be the last time I draw parallels between the two). The players are the actors and they're portraying (in words, not actions) the characters in the film. The game moderator is the director, setting the scenes and putting certain player characters in the spotlight at certain times. Both the players and the game moderator will collaborate on the screenwriting. A player will speak for his character, improvising dialogue and deciding how his character will act in a variety of different situations. The game moderator will act as everyone who isn't a player character. The rules determine who acts and speaks at what time and what happens when characters disagree or act against each other. We'll get to the details of this in the next chapter.

There is no winner in this game though characters will be rewarded for doing well. The game moderator's primary duty is to oppose the actions of the characters and to test the decision-making skills of the players. The game moderator is not the enemy even if she does oppose the characters and control the monsters. Every person at the table shares the goal of telling a great story. They just serve different roles in accomplishing that.

Everything else you need to know about Little Fears Nightmare Edition can be found within these pages. If you have any questions, visit www.littlefears.com. You'll find contact information and further resources there.

Welcome to the treehouse. Now let's tell some scary stories.

What You Need to Play

In order to play Little Fears Nightmare Edition, you will need the following:

Basic Understanding of the Rules

What you should read is covered below, but having working knowledge of the basic rules and goals of play will save you a lot of time you'd otherwise spend flipping pages.

Pencil, Paper, and Dice

Every player should have a character sheet and everyone will need a pencil as well (or erasable pen). The game moderator will need copies of the monster and GMC sheets.

Every player (and the game moderator) will need some six-sided dice. These can be purchased anywhere, if you don't already have a sack full of them. Hit up the local hobby shop, board game store, or the party supply aisle of your local megamart to find them. As players will often be rolling dice at the same time, it's a good idea for everyone to have their own set. A supply of 8-10 six-sided dice per player is good.

Friends

This is a not a single-player game so having some friends to play with is essential. This game can be played face-to-face around a table or hanging out in a living room but can also be played online via chat clients such as Skype. Whichever way you and your friends are comfortable playing is fine.



Using This Book

This book is designed to tell you everything you need to know, in a manner that makes sense. Here is the rundown of what you will find within these pages and how to use that information.

The Chapters

This book is broken into seven chapters (including this introduction). The chapters are, in order:

Introduction: Waking Dreams

You're reading this right now (and it's almost over). This is an overview of the fictional world of Little Fears Nightmare Edition as well as the game elements you'll run into throughout the rest of the book. The other chapters delve into each in more detail.

Chapter One: It's Just a Game

Chapter One details the rules of play. Almost everything you need to know in order to play the game is in here.

Chapter Two: To Be Young Again

Chapter Two covers character concept and creation. It is designed to give the players everything they need to both create and portray a character with guidelines, advice, and examples along the way.

Chapter Three: Someone to Watch Over Me

This chapter talks about the game moderator and her role in the game. It has advice on constructing and running sessions as well as guidelines for customizing the game rules to suit different tones and settings.

Chapter Four: It's a Big World Out There

Chapter Four is the first of two chapters that detail the world of Little Fears Nightmare Edition. It covers the "real world" and has advice on using it as a character in the game. It also talks about those the children can call on for help, should their paths cross.

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Five: Behind the Door

Chapter Five is the second of the two setting chapters and is all about Closetland, the twisted reality that is home to all the things that go bump in the night. It covers what Closetland is like, how kids get there, and how monsters get here as well as some of the people and places found within. This chapter includes all the rules for making and playing monsters.

Chapter Six: Spooky Stories

This game is a toolset designed to help you tell your own stories with your own characters. This chapter has more information and advice on creating stories and includes a selection of pre-generated characters, a full scenario titled “The House of Apple Court,” and some adventure seeds to get your creative juices flowing. These seeds will also give you a starting point should a few friends show up and say, “Hey, feel like running a game tonight?”

What You Need to Read

If you are a player, Chapters One and Two cover everything you need to know. If you are the game moderator, you should read Chapters One, Two, Three and the last part of Five to get all the rules you need to know. Chapters Four, Six and the first part of Five have a lot of advice and ideas but are not absolutely essential to play.

Nothing in this book is off-limits. If you are a player who likes surprises though, it's better you avoid reading past Chapter Two.

The Nightmare Edition

If you played the original Little Fears, prepare yourself for a different take on the same premise. The Nightmare Edition uses a game system that incorporates familiar ideas but was newly built from the ground up. The world of Little Fears has changed drastically. Closetland still exists but is different than what was presented in the original edition. No matter the changes, Little Fears is still the game of childhood terror. The corebook you're reading right now is centered on campfire tales but there are a wide variety of stories to be told with this game and in this world.

Whether you are a fan of the original, someone giving Little Fears a second shot, a person new to the game (or new to story games in general), I hope you find a frightfully good time within these pages.

CHAPTER ONE: IT'S JUST A GAME



CHAPTER ONE



In this chapter, we'll talk about how Little Fears Nightmare Edition is played, how the game works, and all the rules you need to know. This chapter should be read by players and game moderators alike as it will take you through everything you need to know about how to run and play the game.

After you're familiar with this chapter, players can go ahead and read Chapter Two. That will give players everything they need to know for their part in the game. Game moderators should read Chapter Two as well so they can offer advice on character creation and help the group form a collective whole.

PART ONE: PLAY BASICS

A story game is unique in that there is no board or deck of cards like you usually find in a game. That is not to say this game does not require certain items and a basic understanding of particular concepts. Here are the basics with which you should become familiar.

Players and the Game Moderator

We defined players and the game moderator in the Introduction. Before a session begins, the group should decide who is going to be a player and who is going to be the game moderator. This chapter will go into detail as to the responsibilities of each so that everyone can get familiar before they decide. I find 2 to 4 players is an ideal number but there is no minimum beyond 1 and there is no maximum.

Of course, just because a person was game moderator for one session, episode, or season of the game doesn't mean she always has to be. But it will probably be easiest for the first couple sessions if the same person is the game moderator and the others are players.

Characters and Sheets

Each player will have his own character. For this, I recommend using the sheets at the end of this book or found online. The sheets will let you easily track everything you need to know about your character.

The game moderator has her own characters so she will need GMC sheets, monster sheets, and possibly the episode sheet for reference.

Dice and Tokens

The only type of dice used in this game are standard six-sided dice. You can find these in most game and hobby stores. If you don't have a game store near you, they are also sold near the playing cards in mass-market retailers and party supply shops. Whenever there is a reference to dice, it's always talking about the standard six-sided kind.

Tokens are also used in this game. The most you will need is ten per player and a stack for the game moderator as well. These don't have to be anything fancy. I recommend pennies (found in pockets, couches, and jars), poker chips (found near the dice at those mass-market retailers), or glass beads or stones (that can be found in craft stores).

Sessions, Episodes, and Seasons

Whenever your group sits down to play the game, that's a session. It usually lasts 2 to 4 hours. A session can cover a single conflict, resolve a personal issue, or a long sequence of events. What's important to know is that when we talk about a session in this book, it means that 2 to 4 hour span where the group is seated around the table.

When we talk about an episode, we're talking about a complete story, same as television. It's quite possible, and for some likely, that each session will cover an entire episode but that's not necessarily true. A single episode may span multiple sessions.

A season is like its television namesake: it's a bunch of episodes that feature the same characters and setting and are at least tangentially connected. They might be strung together by a recurring plot or enemy, group of characters, or they might share a location. Throughout a season, a character will change and grow from episode to episode and will likely resolve some major issue or challenge particular to him or the group.

PART TWO: SETTING UP THE GAME

Before the first session, the players and the game moderator should sit down and make characters. It's alright for a player to bring an established or already-made character to a game but it's important that the group is able to talk about the characters before the game begins. They should discuss how their characters know each other, establish relationships, and go over the premise of the episode.

Character creation can be a session all to itself or done right before everyone plays for the first time. Character creation is found in the next chapter but we'll discuss how parts work as we go through the system.

Player Prep

For each session, a player should have a character sheet. Along with the character, it's a good idea to have a pencil and own set of six-sided dice (ten dice should be fine).

Game Moderator Prep

The game moderator needs to do a little bit of work before each episode. She fills out the episode sheet and creates the characters she plans to use (GMCs as well as monsters). Advice and instruction on all this is in Chapter Three (GMCs) and Chapter Five (monsters). For each session, she will bring these to the table along with her own dice and a stack of tokens.

Assembling It

Once everyone has done their prep, there isn't a lot of set up to do. Each player should get out his dice and character sheet. The game moderator should get her episode sheet, GMCs and monsters, and her dice. It's a good idea for a GM to have blank GMC and monster sheets available in case she needs to create something on the fly.

At the beginning of the game, the game moderator gives each player a number of tokens equal to his character's Belief. With that done, let the game begin.

CHAPTER ONE

PART THREE: SCENES AND ROUNDS

As has been stated, Little Fears Nightmare Edition is a game where folks come together to tell a great story. Stories have characters and opposition and drama as well as structure. With this game, the players and game moderator tell a story through a sequence of scenes. The game moderator sets up the scene and sets in place the goal of the scene. It is up to the players to resolve the scene. Scenes that focus on time-sensitive tasks, such as combat, include rounds wherein each character acts once per round.

Scenes & Scene Goals

In this game, how the story unfolds is controlled (or at least heavily-influenced) by everyone at the table. The game moderator's job is to set the initial scene, have a basic framework for the entire story in mind, and help move the narrative along. The initial scene will be a few sentences or a short paragraph of setup or exposition. *"You arrive at the train station. It's well after midnight and the sky is heavily overcast. If it weren't for the occasional street lamp, you wouldn't be able to see anything at all. Everything is dark inside the station except for a small light—maybe a desk lamp—glowing softly in a room beyond the teller window. What do you do?"*

The player's job is to control and speak for a main character, devise ways to solve puzzles and problems, interact with others characters, confront the enemies, and help tell a story. In order for that to all come together as planned, the story plays out in scenes. Just as with a film or scripted television show, it isn't about meandering characters or pointless dialogue going far and leading nowhere. It's about drama and tension, active protagonists doing things, and characters acting and reacting to what's happening around them.

Rounds/Turns

Some actions call for a finely-focused way to deal with time. A single action can make all the difference in fighting and footraces, for example. For these types of scenes, we use rounds and turns. A round is when everyone involved in the scene gets an action. That action is done on the player's turn. In the story that's being told, the actions will probably happen simultaneously. But each action needs to be resolved separately and having everyone roll dice at the same time—especially against a shared opponent—can be confusing and more hassle than it's worth.

The easiest way to resolve these actions is to go in a circle. The player to the left of the GM goes first, with actions being resolved in order clockwise from that player with the GM going last, if she's involved. Once everyone has had a turn, the round is over.

The game moderator can use rounds as a means for adding tension to a game. By saying something such as *"The devil dog is hot on your heels. It knows you're in the treehouse and is running full speed towards it. You have four rounds before it gets to you. What do you do?"* This gives a sense of immediacy to the players' actions with a very real consequence if they don't get off their duffs and do something.

PART FOUR: HEART OF THE SYSTEM

Before we delve into the system, we need to speak briefly about characters. The next chapter is dedicated to creating them but since we'll be talking about them, here are a few good things to know.

Player characters have Abilities, Qualities, Virtues, and Stuff. Those cover your character as far as how he relates to the system. We will talk about each in more detail as they come up in this chapter.

Game moderator characters may or may not have all those things. For the purpose of this chapter, we will assume they are made and act the same as the player characters.

Monsters have these same elements as well though the names and functions of some of them are different.

The Order of Things

Here is a primer on the order and flow of this game that will help give context to everything you're about to read.

1. The GM sets up a scene. She includes atmosphere, mood, other characters, and implies the goal of the scene. She ends by asking the players, "What do you do?"
2. Each player says what his character is doing—including the GM!
3. When a character action causes conflict or tests a skill, a roll or "check" is made.
4. The check results in either success or failure on the character's part.
5. The result of the roll is described and incorporated into the scene.
6. Steps 2-5 repeat as the characters go about the scene.
7. When the scene is resolved, the GM sets up the next scene.

That is, in its purest state, how this game operates. Now, to the rules.

When to Use the Dice

When the outcome of an action can yield either dramatic success or dramatic failure, the game moderator should ask the player to roll dice. This is called a check and there are three different types that are detailed further in this chapter. Every action taken by a character has a chance for success or failure—even walking or writing on a blackboard—but a check is only needed when the task pushes a character's Abilities to the limit (such as leaping across a wide gap or racing a bike up a muddy hill) or when the task's failure would be just as dramatically interesting as its success (such as combat which could lead to character change or death).

Who Narrates What

We call anything that happens in a scene "narrative." The story part of this story game comes from the narrative. The ultimate goal is, were the game session transcribed, it would sound like a story. What needs to be addressed is who controls which part of that narrative.

The rule of thumb is that the GM handles narration for the world and her characters (including monsters) and each player controls narration for his character. After a successful check, for instance, the player would describe his character's success in accordance with the how well he rolled. (A high level of success allows for a grandiose description while a narrow success would mean the characters succeeded but barely.) This acts as setup for the GM to finish with a few lines of reaction from the world.

After a failed check, the GM begins the narrative describing how the character was bested. The player finishes the narrative with how his character responds to that failure.

CHAPTER ONE

Task vs. Conflict

There are two basic types of challenges: a task and a conflict. Think of a task as the battle and a conflict as the war. If two kids are fighting on the playground, every individual punch and kick is a task but the brawl itself is a conflict. One kid trying to outrun another: every few feet is a task but the entire race is a conflict. It's all a matter of scope.

In this game, you'll use the system to resolve both. You determine the appropriateness of which to use based primarily on pacing. If it's a tense scene and you want to stretch it out, resolve the individual tasks. If a kid is attempting to sneak into the school after hours to take a peek at his grades, you may want to resolve each task separately: getting inside; making his way through the halls; avoiding the janitor; getting into the classroom; picking the cabinet lock. In a movie, that would be a tense scene and there would be an obstacle every step of the way: the doors are alarmed; there are motion-activated lights; the janitor is jumpy and always has his eyes open for trouble; the classroom is locked; the cabinet is jammed—even after the lock is picked. This is a scene where each task has tension and failure could lead to as much drama as success would.

If you want a faster-paced game, you resolve the conflict. Using the above scenario, you'd have the player roll to see if they got the file. The other details would be left out or glossed over.

When it comes to choosing task versus conflict, remember that pacing and drama are the key points to consider.

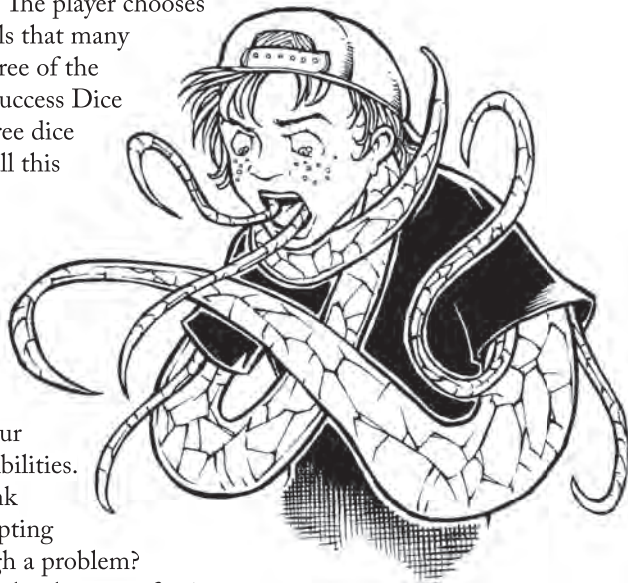
Rolling Dice

Whether task or conflict, all are resolved by rolling dice. There are three types of rolls in the game: Quizzes (unopposed rolls), Tests (opposed rolls), and Exams (sustained rolls). All rolls use the same foundation: The player chooses an Ability, adds a Quality, and rolls that many six-sided dice. The player picks three of the dice (usually the highest) as the Success Dice for the roll. The totals of those three dice are added together. Let's look at all this further.

Pick an Ability

Player characters have five Abilities: Move, Fight, Think, Speak, Care. Each states plainly what a character can attempt to do in any given situation. When you are asked to roll for your character, you pick one of these Abilities.

When choosing an Ability, think about what the character is attempting to do. Is he trying to think through a problem? Is he trying something athletic? Is he throwing fists?



Is he attempting to comfort a friend? Is he trying to convince his parents to let him stay out late? Anything a child can do falls under one of these five Abilities. The player gets a number of dice equal to the rating in that Ability.

So if your character has a Fight of 4, you get four dice. If he has a Think of 2, you get two dice. Whatever the number, grab that many dice and put them in front of you.

Hard Choices

If your character is attempting something that could conceivably fall under two or more Abilities, think about what the child is trying to accomplish. If he is at an archery competition, aiming for that little red dot on the target, using Move is a good choice. If he is lowering a crossbow loaded with freshly-sharpened wooden pencils at a bloodsucking vampire, use Fight. If you can't figure out a single Ability, either refocus what your character is going to do or pick the highest Ability of the ones that could apply.

Pick a Quality

Qualities define things a player character can do. Think of them as skills, hobbies, and talents all rolled into one. In play, it's likely that you'll choose a course of action that your child has some experience with or previous knowledge of or aptitude in. That only makes sense; it's something we all do in real life: We play to our strengths. I don't try to fly to the mall; I drive. You, as the player, will likely make similar choices for your character.

In this game, the purpose of those Qualities is not only to help define your character and give you a sense of who that character is but also to aid him during play. When your character has a Quality that is relevant to an action he is attempting, you add dice for that Quality to the Ability.

A Quality adds 1, 2, or 3 Dice to the roll (you'll know beforehand as this is decided during character creation). So when a Quality applies, grab that many more six-sided dice and put them with the ones you got from your Ability. You'll roll all of them together.

Hard (Quality) Choices

As with Abilities, there may be times when two or more Qualities apply to a situation. In these cases, you only get to add the dice for one of the Qualities. System-wise, the one you choose doesn't matter but it can affect how the success or failure plays out in the story.

No matter what you're attempting, you can only use one Quality in a single roll.

Rolling Just a Quality

There are instances, such as when a character's Wits has dropped low, where you may not be able to use one of your character's Abilities. In those cases, if the character has a Quality that applies, you may still roll the dice you get from the character's Quality, even if they are the only dice you roll.

If No Qualities Make Sense

There are circumstances in which the character will not have a relevant Quality. His options have dwindled, he's way out of his comfort zone, and he's being forced to improvise. From a dramatic standpoint, that's awesome. Though it does make life harder for the character.

If your kid does not have a relevant Quality, then you need to use just the Ability. It decreases your chances but, with open-ended sixes on the Success Dice, nothing is impossible. Of course, that doesn't mean it won't be highly improbable.

CHAPTER ONE

Success Dice

You've selected an Ability and a relevant Quality. You've collected the dice for them in your hand. Now go ahead and roll those dice. Whatever comes up, you will choose three of those dice to be your Success Dice. A higher number is better than a lower one, if you're looking to succeed (which I'll assume you are) so it's fair to say you'll pick the highest (unless a Quality works against you).

Pick three dice to be the Success Dice. If you have less than three dice in the roll, use what you have.

Any references to Success Dice apply to these dice only. Any other dice used in the roll are ignored.

Add the numbers on your Success Dice. What that total means depends on what you were trying to do. And that is what we will cover next.

Open-Ended Sixes

In every case, you reroll any sixes that came up and add that new number to your total. You can keep rolling as long as sixes come up but stop once any other number appears on the die.

EXAMPLE: *One bright Monday morning, your kid's teacher, Ms. McElroy, calls on your kid to deliver a book report. As a surprise to the class, she wants him to read it to the room. Unfortunately, your kid spent the weekend tracking down goblins that keep overturning the garbage cans on Monica Lane. He completely forgot about the book report! But you're in luck. Your kid has Speak (3) and the Quality "I read a lot +2" so he has a decent shot at bluffing this.*

No one's acting against your character so this will be a Quiz. The GM sets the Target Number at Average (9). You need to roll. (More information on Target Numbers is coming up soon.)

As the player, you pick up 5 dice (3 for his Speak, 2 more for the Quality) and roll them. They come up 1, 1, 3, 4, 6. The top three dice are the Success Dice so yours are 3, 4, 6. Adding them up, that's a total of 13. Success! Plus, you get to reroll that 6. You do and get another 6. Nice! That's 19 so far. And because that die came up a 6, you get to roll again. This time it rolls a 3. You add that to 19 and your total is now 22. Nice!

*Your kid not only manages to put together a report completely on the fly, he knocks it out of the park. Your kid delivers a collegiate-level dissertation on Herman Melville's masterwork *Moby Dick* that inspires jealousy in his peers and utmost respect from his teacher. She marks a big fat A+ next to your character's name in the ledger, barely able to contain the joy and pride she feels.*

Keep those dice handy though because I have a feeling that teacher will want a written copy of that "well-researched" report to share with the other teachers.

Good and Bad Traits

Each character has a Good Trait and a Bad Trait that is chosen during character creation. A Trait has an Ability and a condition or situation where the Ability is either better or worse for the character. These Traits affect any rolls made using that Ability where the condition of the Trait is met.

The Good Trait

When a character's Good Trait comes into play, the roll is made as usual but the player may reroll the lowest die if he so chooses. The player can then take whichever of the two numbers he prefers.

The Bad Trait

When a character's Bad Trait comes into play, the roll is made as usual but the highest die is removed before the Success Dice are chosen.

Passing and Failing Grades

"Success" and "Failure" tell you the basics: whether you did or did not do what you set out to. There are times when you need to know how well you did (or how much you failed) and for those instances we have Grades.

Passing Grades

For every 3 points over what you need (for every additional difficulty you would have beaten, essentially), you gain a Passing Grade. So, if you needed an Average (9) and rolled a 12, you got 1 Passing Grade. If you needed a 12 and rolled an 18, you got 2 Passing Grades.

Failing Grades

For every 3 points under what you need, you get a Failing Grade. If you needed an Average (9) and got a 6, you got a Failing Grade. If you needed a Near Impossible (18) and rolled a 9, you got 3 Failing Grades.

Final Note About Grades

You only gain a Passing or Failing Grade for every 3 points either above or below the Target Number, not a partial amount over or under. So if you needed a 12 and got a 16, you have a difference of 4. You get 1 Passing Grade for the first 3 but you don't get anything for the 1 point leftover.

Passing and Failing Grades are used with Belief, Health, and Weapon rolls to increase the amount of Damage (or Healing) that is done but we'll get into detail on that later.

Quizzes, Tests, and Exams

As mentioned above, there are three types of rolls in this game. The header above this paragraph tells us the types are Quizzes, Tests, and Exams. Let's look at each.

When Doing Something Alone

If you're rolling because you're attempting something that's potentially difficult for you to do, such as running up a steep wet hill or trying to hit a tin can with a rock from ten yards away, and no one is trying to stop you or work against you, you make an uncontested roll, which we call a Quiz. Quizzes are rolled against a Target Number set by the game moderator.

The game moderator sets the Target Number as one of the following.

EASY: 6

AVERAGE: 9

HARD: 12

DIFFICULT: 15

NEAR IMPOSSIBLE: 18

LEGENDARY: 21

Target Numbers can be tricky things as what one GM may see as an Average task, another may see as a Hard one, and so on. There's no fool-proof way to prevent this, unfortunately, but what can be provided are guidelines.

CHAPTER ONE

EASY (6): Most likely, the Easy difficulty level will be used if the character has no Qualities that apply to the task at hand but the task isn't that complicated. Essentially, a basic task attempted by someone with no experience would call for the Easy difficulty.

If the player character does have a Quality relevant to a basic task, he just succeeds.

The GM can also call for an Easy roll if failing an everyday task would have especially comedic or dramatic results in a given situation.

AVERAGE (9): Most tasks are going to carry an Average difficulty. This can be a mildly challenging task (such as riding a bike, swinging a bat, jumping rope) that is made more difficult by something else (such as riding a bike on loose gravel, swinging a bat at a curve ball, or playing Double-Dutch). Or it can be a basic task that is way outside the character's comfort zone (such as an 8-year old reading *War and Peace*).

This is the default Target Number so if you can't decide on a difficulty, use this one.

HARD (12): A task is Hard when it requires specialized knowledge or focus (such as advanced math or scaling a sheer cliff) or when attempting something that is Average but without the right tools or equipment, such as riding a bike with a loose chain up a hill.

DIFFICULT (15): One step up from Hard, something is Difficult when even someone who is highly skilled would have to put serious effort into doing it. If the player is attempting to do something Hard without the right tools or equipment, treat it like a Difficult task.

NEAR IMPOSSIBLE (18): This is a task that even a professional would have a very difficult chance at doing at all much less doing well. Only a select few can do this. Trying to do something Difficult without the right stuff makes it Near Impossible.

LEGENDARY (21): No one can calculate doing a Legendary task. These are moments of greatness that no one can really plan. No amount of training or know-how can truly prepare you for something Legendary. They just happen. Roll the dice and hope.

EXAMPLE: *12-year old Hugo is a tough kid, plays Junior Football during the fall and Junior Baseball during the summer. In this episode, he's been tracking down a possessed teddy bear. The demonic toy led him away from home, into a wooded park, and has managed to get inside the locked maintenance building by a river that cuts right through the north end of the park.*

After jostling the handle on the front door didn't work, Hugo dug through his pockets and found his trusty pocket knife. He's going to try to pick the lock. He's seen it on television a million times so he's pretty sure he can do it.

This is an unopposed roll so it's up to the GM to pick a Target Number. The GM decides this is a Difficult Task (15). Picking a lock is Hard to begin with and Hugo only has a pocket knife which is hardly the right tool.

Hugo has a Move of 4 and the Quality "I am Good with my Hands +2" That's a total of 6 dice. Hugo's player Joe rolls them and gets 1, 2, 2, 5, 5, 5. For Success Dice, he chooses 5, 5, 5 for a 15! Hugo manages to pick the lock and open the door.

When Opposing Someone

If you're rolling because someone is directly attempting to prevent your character from being successful at something, such as arm wrestling, a schoolyard brawl, or opening a door while another person pulls from the other side, this is an opposed roll or Test. In this case, you're trying to get a total on your Success Dice that is higher than your opponent's total.

Tests & Target Numbers

While there are preset Target Numbers such as those listed under Quizzes, the term “Target Number” also comes up in Tests. In the case of a Test, the Target Number is whatever the other character or monster opposing the character rolled. If a child is trying to outrun a Six-Legged Snake, the Target Number for that kid is whatever the GM rolls for that freaky reptile. For Quizzes, they’re set. For Tests, they come from rolls. But for any reason it may matter, both are considered Target Numbers.

EXAMPLE: *Angela’s character, Becky, was awoken in the middle of the night by some clanging in the neighbor’s backyard. She slips out of her bed, through the house, and across the lawn to try to get a glimpse of what’s causing the ruckus. From over the fence that divides her side lawn from the neighbors, Becky sees a dark furry humanoid with a long white stripe down its back digging in the garbage cans by the deck.*

Reflexively, Becky gasps. The creature stops. It cautiously turns around and locks its beady little eyes onto Becky’s. Without a thought, the girl runs away and the skunk-person chases after her.

In this case, the GM will be rolling for the skunk-person. Game Moderator Characters (or GMCs) and monsters are built a little differently than PCs but when it comes to rolls, they act the same. The GM will be rolling the skunk-person’s Chase (3) and a Quality (“It can run fast”). Since GMC Qualities always add 3 dice, the GM will roll a total of 6 dice.

Angela will be using Becky’s Move (2) and nothing else of hers really applies, so she’ll have to make do with two dice. Good luck, Becky.

The GM rolls her six dice. They come up 1, 1, 2, 3, 3, 5. The Success Dice are 3, 3, 5 for a total of 11. Angela rolls her two and gets 4, 6. That’s only 10—but Angela gets to reroll that 6. She does and rolls another 6! That’s 16 and she keeps on going. The next roll nets her a 3 for a total of 17. She made it with two Passing Grades even!

Becky manages to get a lead on the monster. Lucky girl.

When Someone is Indirectly Trying to Stop You

There may be times when you’re trying to do something that’s a one-person action but another is trying to distract you or do what you’re trying to do at the same time. Let’s say your character is attempting to throw a rock at a tin can about ten feet away. Someone else comes along and starts throwing rocks at that same tin can. Essentially, you’re each performing a Quiz but since you’re both trying to do the same thing it’s also a Test.

To resolve these, the GM should set a Target Number for each to hit the tin can. Given the distance, this would be an Average (9) task. Now both players roll against each other, like a Test. But a player must not only roll higher than the other, he must also beat the Target Number. If neither beats the Target Number, both their rocks whiff right past the tin can.

When Something Takes a Long Time

Some actions take longer than others, such as fixing an old bike, putting together a model train set, or breaking down a door that’s been rusted shut for ages. A sustained action such as those is called an Exam. Exams can be rolled as Quizzes (against a set Target Number) or a Test (against an opponent). What’s important for an Exam is the number of successes (including Passing Grades) you acquire and you will usually need

CHAPTER ONE

more than one roll to acquire that many. The number you need is determined by the game moderator using her own sense and the guidelines below.

If something is easy but takes a while, you need around 3 total successes.

If something is hard and takes a while, you need between 4 and 6 total successes.

If something is difficult and takes a while, you need between 7 and 9 total successes.

Failing Grades can take away from your Passing Grades total. A Failing Grade would be a setback (broken tool, screwed one part on before another, or temporary loss of light, perhaps). Also, it's rare that an Exam that will use both Quizzes and Tests but it is possible.

If your character is interrupted during an Exam, it's fair to assume the Passing Grades that have already been accumulated will remain with the project and the character won't have to start over. It's fair to assume it, yes, but a vandal may undo the work, weather may set you back, or what you were working on may have fallen over or broken and now requires even more Passing Grades.

EXAMPLE: *The interior of the maintenance shack is dusky grey. With the waning light, the inside is only getting darker. Hugo flips a switch but there's no power. After wandering around a bit in the unlit rooms, Hugo sees that the electrical wires in the power room have been cut. That dastardly teddy is one shrewd customer.*

Hugo has helped his dad fix lamps and he managed to repair his GameStation 2 controller by himself when it went on the fritz. This explains his Quality "I can fix electronics +3" But repairing all these wires is going to take some time.

The GM decides there are three separate clusters that Hugo will need to fix. Each cluster will need its own success. Hugo rolls his Think (2) and gets 3 dice for that Quality mentioned above for a total of 5 dice.

The GM sets the difficulty at 9. Joe, Hugo's player, rolls and gets 2, 3, 4, 4, 5. With 4, 4, 5 as the Success Dice, the total is 13—he makes it with 1 Passing Grade. The first success comes from beating the Target Number. That Passing Grade gives him another success. Two of the wire clusters are repaired. On the next roll, he should get the last one taken care of.

The thing about tackling a large task is the time it takes. If Hugo had slam-dunked with a success and 2 Passing Grades, he'd be on his way after that teddy monster. But he's losing precious time fiddling with those wires while the demonic plushie is doing who knows what.

Helping Out a Friend

Multiple people can contribute to an Exam. In the instance above, Hugo could have had a friend helping to rewire the lights in the shack. In that case, each player rolls separately for his character and the Passing Grades from the rolls are added together. And in this case, Failing Grades don't take away any successes from the effort. Having a friend helps speed things up and catch mistakes.

PART FIVE: FIGHTING

Fighting is about the primal will to live. So no matter how you're fighting—fists, feet, baseball bat, knife—you use the Fight Ability. There are a variety of Qualities that can come into play—and it's up to you and your group to determine which one is appropriate.

One on One

Fighting is resolved like any other action. If you are actively engaged in combat against one or more opponents, then the Fight check will be a Test. If the opponent (or opponents) are incapacitated, distracted, or otherwise unable to fight back, then the Fight check is a Quiz rolled against an Average difficulty (unless circumstances demand otherwise). It's possible for both of these to be used in a single fight. Suckerpunching a distracted opponent will be a Quiz but that whack across the back will likely draw his attention.

In fighting, characters can take Damage that may result in death or a situation where the character is no longer playable. All actions in a round are considered to be happening at the same time. So even if a character or monster technically died before his turn, resolve the turn first then move onto resolving his death after the round is over.

Adults & GMCs

Game moderators have the option of simplifying adults and other GMCs into a handful of Target Numbers. These are used instead of the GM rolling dice for the character. In this case, any attacks are rolled as Quizzes uses the selected Target Number for the character.

Monsters

Monsters have Abilities and Qualities just like player characters so the GM will roll dice against an attacking player in a Test. The power level of the monster (set by the GM when making it) determines how many actions it gets in a single round. The more powerful the monster, the more actions it gets.

One Against Many

There will be times when the sides of a fight aren't even. A pack of dogs has backed a lone character against a shed. A group of characters has surrounded the creature from the sewers. A bunch of bullies have decided to teach the new kid a few lessons. When the sides of a fight are uneven, these are the rules to resolve it quickly and fairly.

Let's Get 'Em! (Multiple Kids versus One Monster)

Given the odds, it makes good sense for the kids to band together against a single monster. When this happens, choose one kid as the main attacker. The player for that kid rolls a Test against the monster (Kid's Fight + relevant Quality versus the monster's Fight + relevant Quality). Resolve this and then remember what was rolled for the monster. All the other kids roll too (again, Fight + relevant Quality), using whatever the monster rolls in the Test as the Target Number.

If the main attacker is successful, add everyone's Passing Grades to the roll. The total of Passing Grades add extra Damage to the roll (see below).

If the main attack is unsuccessful, add 1 point to it for every Passing Grade. If you reach the Target Number, the attack is successful. Any remaining Passing Grades are still considered to be Passing Grades. If the main attack is unsuccessful, even after adding all the Passing Grades, then the monster wins.

EXAMPLE: *Jasper, Tony, and Evelyn have cornered a Living Doll in the basement of Evelyn's house. The strange creature stands four feet tall and looks like an artist's mannequin except for its*

CHAPTER ONE



eerily-lifelike eyes that dangle from strings where eye sockets would normally be. The trio attacks the Living Doll. The group decides that since Jasper is the one who spotted it and he was the first down the stairs that Jasper is the main attacker.

Jasper's player, Cole, picks up his dice. Jasper has *Fight* (3) and "I play football +2" for a total of 5 dice. The GM picks up dice for the Living Doll which has *Fight* (3) and no relevant Qualities.

Cole rolls 5 dice and gets 1, 1, 3, 5, 6. The top three dice are 3, 5, 6 for a sum of 14. Cole rerolls that 6 and gets a 4. The total for the roll is 18! The GM rolls her 3 dice and gets 2, 3, 6. That's a total of 11. The GM rerolls that 6 and gets another 6! That's 17 so far. The GM rolls the 6 one more time and gets a 2. That's a grand total of 19—the thing is winning!

Now Tony and Evelyn take their turn. Tony's player, Rob, rolls his character's *Fight* (2) but that's it (Tony's not a physical character). Rob rolls those two dice. The target is the Living Doll's roll of 19. The dice come up 3, 6. That's 9 so far! Rob rerolls the 6 and gets a 5. Not bad, but his total of 14 isn't enough to beat the doll's roll let alone net some Passing Grades.

Evelyn's player, Kylie, picks up her dice. Evelyn has a *Fight* (2), like Tony, but she also has "I'm a gymnast +2" for a total of 4 dice. She rolls and gets 4, 5, 5, 6. It's a night for sixes, apparently. Her top three dice are 5, 5, 6 for 16 so far. She rerolls that 6 and gets another 6. Added

to the 16, that's 22 now! She rolls the 6 again and gets a 5. That's a grand total of 27! It's an impressive roll that beats the Living Doll's 19 and nets 2 more Passing Grades.

Since Evelyn is supporting Jasper's attack—as he's the main attacker—the important part of her roll are the Passing Grades. Right now, Jasper has a total of 18 and the Living Doll has a 19. The first Passing Grade is added to Jasper's total. As Jasper's losing, it's just a +1. That brings Jasper's roll to 19 which ties—that's good enough! The extra Passing Grade remains a Passing Grade since Jasper's roll doesn't need to be increased in order to be successful.

When everything is said and done, Jasper, Tony, and Evelyn were successful with 1 Passing Grade.

Dog Pile! (Multiple Kids versus a Non-Monster Opponent)

When more than one player character is attacking a single non-monster opponent, you treat it the same as above—even if the game moderator is using simplified Abilities for her characters (detailed in Chapter Three).

I'm Surrounded! (One Kid versus Multiple Opponents)

It may happen that a child becomes separated from the group or wanders off to find the circuit breaker in a darkened house or gather some wood for the dying campfire and—all of a sudden—is ambushed by enemies. Or perhaps he charges ahead of the group to defend his friends from a pack of hideous beasts throwing caution and better sense to the wind. No matter the cause, the result is the same: some lonely kid is now facing down a whole bunch of bad guys all by himself.

Normally, something like this would result in the player rolling once for his character then the GM rolling for every opponent while the player sits idly. The following system resolves this entire scenario with each side making one roll.

If at least one of the GMCs was made using the character creation or monster creation system, do this: Roll this as a Test. On one side is the kid, using his Fight, presumably, plus any relevant Qualities. For the other side, pick a fully-made GMC or a monster as the main opponent. For every extra non-monster opponent, add 1 die to what the main opponent is rolling. For every monster opponent, add 2 dice. Rolls are resolved normally from there.

EXAMPLE: *A kid is surrounded by a pack of crazed devil dogs. The lead devil dog has a Fight of 4—savage little pup!—so the GM grabs 4 dice. There are 4 other dogs with the lead though and each one adds 2 dice to the roll, for a total of 8 additional dice. That rather average stack of 4 dice now becomes a handful at 12. That kid might want to think about running.*

If all the opponents use simplified Abilities, do this: Pick one with the highest Target Number as the main opponent. Then increase that Target Number by 1 point for every extra non-monster opponent and 2 points for every monster opponent.

EXAMPLE: *A kid is facing down the school bully who has three of his friends to back him up. The GM set the bully's Fight at Average (9). Normally, that wouldn't be a problem. But each of those friends of his bump that Fight up one point. So those three friends raise the 9 to a 12. The kid facing the bully needs to beat that number to succeed.*

If the kid was facing down the school bully and the bully had a monster on his side, that bully would add 2 points to his Fight of 9.

CHAPTER ONE

Big Ol' Mess! (Multiple Kids versus Multiple Opponents)

The best way to deal with multiple kids taking on multiple opponents is either to separate it into a bunch of one-on-one fights (where each is resolved separately) or merge the "Let's Get 'Em!" and "I'm Surrounded!" rules together. Here's how:

Pick a main attacker from the kids and a main enemy from the opponents. The main attacker and main enemy roll against each other (most likely a Test but could be a Quiz if the enemy is using simplified Abilities). The main enemy is going to add dice using the same guidelines detailed in "I'm Surrounded." Once the rolls have been tallied, every other kid rolls a Test against whatever the main enemy's total is. For every Passing Grade, add one to the main attacker's total until it is equal to the main enemy's score. Any Passing Grades left over remain Passing Grades and are used normally.

PART SIX: HEALTH & DAMAGE

Keeping track of your character's Health is important. Health is a gauge of your character's well-being. When he takes Damage, he loses Health which can make it harder for him to do things. If your character loses all his Health, he can become unplayable.

Taking Damage

When an attack is successful, someone or -thing is gonna get hurt. Damage is figured by adding one of the Success Dice (depending on what kind of weapon was used in the attack) to the number of Passing Grades. The person who was attacked ticks off that many dots from his Health. As each line of Health fills up, go onto the next. If enough Health is lost, characters will become more and more hurt and possibly incapacitated. When a character's Health drops a level, he suffers a penalty to any rolls he makes.

Health Levels

There are four Health levels. They are, from healthiest to most damaged:

I feel fine

The character is in top shape (or pretty close) and does not suffer any penalty.

I feel sore

When a character feels sore, he is at -2 to every roll. So after the Success Dice are calculated, subtract 2 from the total. That is the character's final score.

I feel hurt

When a character feels hurt, he is at -4 to every roll. After the Success Dice are calculated, subtract 4 from the total. That is the character's final score.

I feel cold

When a character feels cold, he is at -6 to every roll. After the Success Dice are calculated, subtract 6 from the total. That is the character's final score.

One Hit After Another

Dice penalties stack so if a character feels cold and he's using his Bad Trait, you drop the highest die from the roll and deduct 6 points from whatever total is left.

NOTE: Sixes are only open-ended for the purposes of determining success. When calculating Damage, sixes are worth 6 points, no matter if it's from Sticks & Stones or Deadly Weapons.

Health & Damage & GMCs

GMCs and monsters have Health and take Damage the same as kids. These rules apply for them as well as player characters.

Hands & Feet

When a child or monster attacks with its hands and feet—no weapons or claws or similar—then the only Damage done comes from Passing Grades. If a Quality was also used in the fight, add 1 more point for that. This extra point of Damage reflects the additional training or skill the person is using in the combat.

EXAMPLE: *Angela's character, Becky, and her brother, Tommy, have been captured by the witch Baba Yaga. They are currently being held in a large bin in the hag's pantry. Becky has managed to kick the lid open and escape. She tentatively cracks the pantry door to discover some mechanical-looking toy soldiers patrolling the hallway. One of them spots her and lunges.*

The toy soldier has a Fight (2) and the Quality "It can punch stuff hard" which gives it 3 extra dice since it's a monster Quality. As a counter, Becky will use her Move (2) and that's it. Her Good Trait, "I move well when I'm being chased" doesn't apply since it's lunging at her, not chasing her.

The GM rolls 5 dice for the toy soldier and gets 2, 3, 3, 5, 6. The Success Dice are 3, 5, 6, which add up to 14. The GM rerolls the 6 and gets a 3, for 17 total. Angela rolls just 2 dice for Becky and gets 4, 5. That total of 9 is not good enough. The toy soldier wins.

Since it's hand-to-hand fighting, the soldier takes that 1 Passing Grade and adds 1 more point since it used a Quality. That's a total of 2 points of Damage. The hard metal fist connects with Becky's head and sends her down. Angela fills in 2 dots of Health next to "I feel fine."

Hands & Feet & GMCs

When facing GMCs using simplified stats, the player rolls a Quiz. In this case, any Damage would result from failing that Quiz. In that instance, use the number of Failing Grades to determine Damage (adding 1 point of extra Damage if the GMC has a relevant Quality).

Sticks & Stones

When a weapon is used in fighting, the chance for greater Damage goes up. You determine the Damage done from a weapon blow by first figuring out what kind of weapon it is.

For a small weapon

If the weapon is a pocket knife, a small rock, or something similar to those, add the lowest Success Die to the number of Passing Grades and the sum is the Damage done.

EXAMPLE: *If, in the above example, the toy soldier was wielding a small blade, and had rolled the same result with 3, 5, 6 as its Success Dice, the Damage would have been the lowest Success Dice (which is 3) plus the number of Passing Grades (which was 1). The total would have been 4 points of Damage.*

CHAPTER ONE

For a large sharp weapon or blunt object

If the weapon is a sword, baseball bat, heavy stone, a punch or kick from an adult or a large monster, or something similar, add the highest Success Die to the number of Passing Grades in the roll to figure out Damage.

EXAMPLE: *Let's say the toy soldier was wielding a large stick when it attacked Becky. If everything else rolled the same, it would have had 3, 5, 6 as its Success Dice. For a large stick, take the highest Success Die (in this case a 6) and add the number of Passing Grades (which was 1). The total would have been 7 points of Damage.*

Sticks & Stones & GMCs

If a character is facing a GMC who might be wielding a weapon then the GMC is important enough to be given a full set of stats, not the simplified ones.

Deadly Weapons

In the world of Little Fears, children will mostly use the tools and weapons that are immediately available to them whether it's a bike chain they took off an old 10-speed or a hockey stick from the gym supply closet. It is very rare that a child will ever have access to a firearm but it is possible that a kid raided her father's unlocked gun rack in his truck or a boy's dad is the local sheriff who mistakenly left his holster hanging on the bedpost.

Guns should be used rarely, as much for thematic cohesiveness as anything but if a character in your game gets access to a gun (a character should never begin play with a handgun nor should he have ready continual access to one), the Damage done is as follows.

Double the highest Success Die and add the number of Passing Grades in the roll to figure out Damage. Add the Passing Grades after the Success Die is doubled; don't include the Passing Grades in the doubling.

EXAMPLE: *Let's meet Ashleigh Thomson, age 11. Her parents own a ranch in Arizona and Ashleigh's been helping run it since she was a toddler. She's a natural around horses, has one named Clementine that she has helped raise from foalhood. So when a glowing-eyed coyote creeps onto her family's ranch one night, there's nothing she wouldn't do to protect her friend.*

Ashleigh was spending some time with Clementine out in the stables, up far later than her parents would approve, when she saw the coyote's spooky yellow eyes bobbing across the plain.

Not wanting to wake up her parents, Ashleigh sneaks to the cabinet in the back and grabs her daddy's shotgun. She grabs some shot from the box next to it and loads in a round. Her daddy's never let her fire a gun but she's studied him do it hundreds of time. She's pretty sure she can land a shot—or at least scare the critter back whence it came.

By the time Ashleigh makes it back to the front of the stable, the coyote is right outside the double doors.



It's got its head down, eyeing her. Ashleigh, arms shaking, raises the shotgun to chest-level. She thumbs back the hammer and steadies herself. In the wink of an eye, the coyote makes its jump towards her. Ashleigh tenses, squeezes the trigger, and fires the shotgun.

The GM has her roll. Ashleigh has a Fight of 3 and the Quality "I am a cowgirl +3" so she'll have 6 dice to throw. The GM is rolling the coyote's Fight (2) and "It can take down prey quickly" for a total of 5 dice.

Karen, Ashleigh's player, rolls and gets 2, 3, 4, 4, 5, 6. The Success Dice are 4, 5, 6 which sums up to 15. Karen rerolls the 6 and gets a 3, for 18 total. The GM rolls and gets 1, 1, 3, 5, 6. The 3, 5, 6 comes to 14. The GM rerolls that 6 and gets a 1 for a total 15. Karen won the roll so Ashleigh lands her shot.

For Damage, Karen takes her highest Success Die, which is a 6, and doubles it for 12. She also has 1 Passing Grade (because her total was 3 higher than the GM's), for a grand total of 13. The coyote has 30 Health, dropped to 17 by that shot. It goes down hard. It thuds to the ground.

The coyote lies there whining and growling. Ashleigh, stone still, is transfixed by what just happened. Her parents, drawn by the sound of the shotgun, rush out from the house to find a bloody coyote and a traumatized little girl. Ashleigh's mom takes her inside while her dad finishes dealing with the coyote.

Deadly Weapons & GMCs

GMCs should rarely, if ever, use a gun against a child. Not only is there an unsavory element, it imbalances the game a bit. Guns, whatever kind they are, should only be used by the vilest monsters and the most desperate player characters.

Damage and Multiple Opponents

In the last section, we covered a bunch of instances where the sides of a fight might be uneven. For the purposes of calculating Damage for those types of fight, figure out which weapon being used has the highest Damage type (firearms are higher than large weapons, large weapons are higher than unarmed). Then use the highest appropriate die (highest of whichever die would be used for that Damage type, so highest top Success Die for large weapons and firearms; highest bottom Success Die for small weapons and unarmed fighting) from all the rolls made by anyone on the winning side to figure out Damage—even if the person with the most damaging weapon isn't the person with the highest die. Passing Grades are then added to that as extra Damage as usual.

EXAMPLE: *A couple pages ago, Jasper, Tony, and Evelyn took on a Living Doll. They came away successful, beating the Living Doll's 19 with 2 Passing Grades. Now it's time to figure out Damage. Let's say the most dangerous weapon being used was a baseball bat. That's a large weapon so it uses the highest Success Die. The highest Success Die rolled was a 6. That means the Damage done for the attack was 6 plus those 2 Passing Grades for a total of 8 points of Damage.*

If the most dangerous weapon being used was a pair of fists, then only the Passing Grades (plus any used Qualities) would have been used. There were 2 Passing Grades so that's the base Damage. When we look at the kids involved, two of them used relevant Qualities ("I play football" and "I'm a gymnast") so that adds 1 point for each. That's a total of 4 points of Damage done to the Living Doll.

CHAPTER ONE

Accidents Happen

Damage doesn't just come from getting into fights. A character can take a bad tumble down a rocky hill, go through some weak boards in an old mine, take a header off a bike that hits a pothole, fall off a rope ladder, or any number of things that are just plain poor luck or unfortunate circumstance. These situations should only arise as consequences from failed rolls called for during particularly tense or dramatic moments. A boy clutching the edge of a small cliff or a girl skateboarding through a construction site are good examples of a situation where a failed Ability roll could result in Damage to the character.

In a case where Damage might logically result, use the following guidelines:

A minor accident, a short fall, or a mild tumble

The character sustains Damage equal to the number of Failed Grades. If there are no Failed Grades, the mishap resulted in a scraped knee or similarly inconsequential injury.

A major accident, long fall, or a hard tumble

The character takes an amount of damage equal to the lowest Success Die plus the number of Failed Grades.

EXAMPLE: *Not to pick on Ashleigh, but we'll use her as an example again. In this case, we'll say she's riding a horse—not Clementine, but a new one. Her daddy is seeing if she can break it. He thinks it'll be good training for her.*

The GM has Karen, Ashleigh's player, make a roll to see how well Ashleigh can handle the horse. He suggests that Karen roll Move (3) along with "I am a cowgirl +3" for a total of 6 dice. Since this horse is kind of big and it's never done that well with a rider before, he sets the difficulty at Hard (12).

Karen rolls and gets 1, 1, 1, 2, 3, 3. The Success Dice are 2, 3, 3, for a total of 8. Ouch. The horse jerks its rear skyward then down again, hard, and Ashleigh can't hold on. She slides down its ribs and smacks her butt on the ground. A mild tumble, the GM reckons. She failed the roll by 4 points which is enough for one Failing Grade. The GM tells her to knock off 1 point of Health.

It's not terrible but it's enough to wound Ashleigh's pride and make her father reconsider whether his daughter is ready to tackle a horse alone.

Effects of Damage

Taking Damage changes things on the surface as well as deep below. It's the consequence of getting into harm's way, I guess.

System-Wise

Pay attention to those negative modifiers next to Health! They can be easy to forget but can make all the difference. When your character gets severely hurt, he is not as good as when he's in top shape. So remember, if you've taken Damage, reduce the total of the Success Dice by -2, -4, or -6 (depending on how hurt they are).

In-Game

Of course, that's all system talk. But your character doesn't live in the system, he lives in the game world so some effects are different. This will come as little surprise, but getting hurt *hurts* and people usually respond to it. Kids who are hurt become cranky, walk slowly, don't think as clearly, may become panicked or angry, and can go through a wide range

of emotions quickly. When your character gets hurt, work that into what he's doing. Play that into the kid's speech, mannerisms, and reactions. A kid who just took a shovelhead to the face isn't feeling that great or thinking that clearly. There's a definite acting component to story games and this is a good time to get into it.

Getting Better

As long as his Health doesn't reach zero, a character can be healed. There are two ways to do it: Time & Rest and Medical Care.

Time & Rest

Taking a break from the action is the most practical way to heal. By not getting into more trouble and not taking more Damage, a character regains 1 point of Health after a decent night's sleep or an extended rest. If your character's really hurt, it will take a lot of time to heal naturally but taking a break is fine enough for minor Damage.

Medical Care

If your kid has been fighting monsters or doing something similarly dangerous, chances are he is going to need something beyond a time out. Bed rest is fine for bumps and bruises but the best option, particularly if your character is really beat-up ("I feel hurt" or worse), is to seek out professional medical help.

Medical attention is rolled as a Quiz against an Average (9) difficulty. Once the roll has been made and the Success Dice figured, the character gets a number of Health points based on whether he got first aid or proper medical attention.

First Aid

If the player is receiving first aid (such as from a Nature Girl "Stay Healthy!" Pack or a similar kit), either the player or the game moderator makes the roll, depending on whether it's a player character or game moderator character tending to the wound.

If successful, the character receiving the first aid gets back a number of Health equal to the lowest Success Die plus any Passing Grades. There is no penalty for Failing Grades. A failure is just a failure.

Professional Help

If the player is getting medicine from a doctor or nurse, the game moderator rolls the dice (only GMCs will have the proper training to give professional medical care). If successful, the character getting the care gets back a number of Health equal to the highest Success Die plus any Passing Grades. As with First Aid above, there is no penalty for failure or Failing Grades.

EXAMPLE: During some other adventure, cowgirl Ashleigh was attacked by a giant bat that roughed her up for a total of 6 points of Damage. Ashleigh's friend Destiny knows a thing or two about first aid so she takes a look at it. Destiny has a Think of 4 and the Quality "I am a Nature Girl +2" (which is also useful for building campfires and tying knots) so she's going to roll 7 dice.

Kiana, Destiny's player, rolls those dice and gets 1, 1, 3, 3, 4, 6. The Success Dice are 3, 4, 6 for a subtotal of 13. Kiana rolls the 6 again and gets a 3 for a total of 16. The difficulty is 9 so she made it by 7 points which translates to 2 Passing Grades. Since it's first aid, Kiana takes the lowest Success Die, a 3, and adds her 2 Passing Grades to it. Ashleigh gets back 5 Health. Nature Girls aren't just about selling cookies, you know.

CHAPTER ONE

Death & Dying

Optimally, you'll play your character through a variety of scenarios where he'll face off against a variety of monsters and save the world (or at least small parts of it) and his friends and family along the way. But fighting monsters isn't easy and it's possible that your character will get in over his head and lose the battle and potentially his life.

It falls upon you, your GM, and the other players to not treat character death lightly. No character should just fall off the side of a rope bridge or slip in the mud and hit his head on a rock. That being said, foolish choices have their consequences and it's no one's duty to protect your character if he climbs into the lion's den at the zoo or convinces himself he can juggle knives.

When a character has lost all his Health, he is on the brink of death. While he may not die at that moment, in that scene, he will die very soon. The point is to make your character's death dramatic—a fitting end to your character. As a player, you may narrate the end of your character's life in whichever way you choose as long as it's fitting to the scene and tone of the game.

The character's death can be a physical passing or an irreversible change that removes the character from play. System-wise, death comes from taking Damage and losing Health. Story-wise, death can come from being unlucky in a fight, trying to save a friend who is in trouble, drinking a potion that some fairy gave you, getting trampled by a wild beast, or whatever your imagination conjures.

Health Hits Zero

When your character's Health reaches zero, the character is dead or is otherwise leaving the game permanently.

Physical Death

Aim to work your character's death into the immediate scene—most likely from the attack (or whatever) that took the last of the character's Health—but it may work better if your character holds on for a little while to deliver one last speech, finally make amends, reveal a long-kept secret, or something similarly dramatic.

Something Else

As an alternative to physical death, your character can change in such a fashion that he becomes unplayable. Perhaps he stiffens into a statue, dissipates into a cloud of smoke, bursts into a bunch of strange insects, or turns into a monster.

EXAMPLE: *Becky and her brother, Tommy, have just escaped from Baba Yaga's hut. The two are sneaking around the surrounding woods but are completely disoriented by the thick foliage. A sudden snapping of twigs sends the already twitchy Tommy running. Becky chases him but she just can't keep up. Tommy disappears somewhere in the woods.*

Becky is looking around anxiously when she hears her brother cry out. Following his screams, she finds Tommy bobbing in a raging river. Without missing a beat, Becky leaps into the water to save him. She struggles hard against the current and finally manages to reach the boy. By that time, his cries have gone quiet.

Just as she grabs her brother's limp arm in the freezing water, she is snared by the wiry claws of a river troll. A tussle ensues, and she is able to fend him off, but she's hurt in the process. The creature's furious scratching takes all of her remaining Health. Becky is going to leave play.

Angela, Becky's player, thinks that dying while saving her brother is a good ending for her character and she decides that, as her character was kicking at the troll and dragging her brother to safety, the beast dug its teeth into her ankle.

Angela narrates, "Becky screams in agony as her final kick sends the troll rolling back into the murky water. She was able to get her brother to the safety of the banks but she knows this is the last time she would ever see, or at least recognize, her little brother.

"The bite doesn't kill her. Instead, it transforms Becky into a hideous fish-girl. She will never be able to leave the river. The memories of her former life will fade into nothing. Becky checks to make sure her brother is breathing. She wrings out her dripping jacket before wrapping it around her brother for warmth. She then kisses his forehead and whispers "Goodbye." Her brother's eyes snap open and he looks at her, knowing something is wrong.

"She tells her brother that she loves him and to be safe. Then she turns to face the raging river. As she dives into the icy water, she feels the gills break open on her neck and her legs slowly fusing into a tail. She swims toward the deep end, trying to escape the light. Somewhere in the depths, the troll smiles."

Alternately, the player could have waited until later in that same session and come up with another reason for Becky's departure such as getting captured by a wild animal. Or, simply, Becky could have lost too much blood and died from her injuries.

PART SEVEN: VIRTUES OF CHILDHOOD

Virtues are the intangible elements of a character. It's the ability to remain calm when under pressure or surrounded by a room full of monstrous beasts. It's the power to believe in something because your heart says it's real no matter what your mind thinks. It's the spark hidden inside you that connects to all living things. It's the will to keep fighting, keep going even when you're so hurt you can barely move.

The Power of Belief

Belief makes the impossible happen. By believing in a spinning bottle, it will point you towards home. The line of salt you put on the floor will stop any monster from crossing it. Your teddy bear will protect you from the beast under the bed.

There is magic in Little Fears that goes beyond the monsters the kids will face. Children can tap into a kind of magic that stems from the love and hope they put into things that are important to them. If a child believes his cape will help him fly, it can. If a child believes her mother's spirit lives in an old book and can protect her, it will. If a child believes walking around the bed three times will ward off monsters, that's exactly what it will do. All it takes is a little faith and something worth believing in.

What Belief Is

There are a lot of things that separate children from adults. Some are obvious things, like height and facial hair, but the most important difference is something completely outside the physical realm: Belief.

As children become more aware of the "way things are" and "how things work," they lose Belief. As they grow up, they become more rational while the magic of the world, or at least their ability to see it and use it, fades away.

In this game, Belief is an internal force that children can use to call upon the magical, the irrational, and the supernatural in a fashion that most adults simply can't.

CHAPTER ONE

THE RULES: Your character has a Belief score between 1 and 7. At the beginning of every session, you receive a number of tokens equal to your Belief. These tokens can be poker chips, pennies, buttons cut from the eyes of old dolls, whatever you have laying around. If you want to get fancy, everyone can have his own color or type of token but that's not necessary.

During play, you can use Belief tokens to help your character do something, help someone else's character do something, hurt monsters, and a couple other cool things. With tokens, you will either risk them or spend them. When you risk a token, what happens isn't as grand but there's a chance you will get the token back (and maybe get some more). When you spend a token, what you get in return is greater, but that token is gone for the session. Let's break it down.

Belief is Magical

Anytime Belief is used, no matter if it's risked or spent, something magical takes place. The player has to work in something mystical or magical into his description. This should be something awe-inspiring, something that defies logic and puts into focus just what an amazing thing Belief is and what it's capable of doing.

Risking Belief

When risking Belief, you're putting your faith in yourself, a person, or a trusted object that's on the line. The upside is that your Belief has power and can help out in otherwise dire situations. The downside is that when Belief fails, when what you put your Belief in doesn't live up to your ideal of it, your Belief takes a hit.

To risk a token, you set it in front of you and say what you're doing with it. You risk a token during an action—yours or someone else's. When risking a token, you can:

Believe in Yourself

Closing your eyes and thinking, "I can do this... I can do this..." , remembering what your father told you about climbing trees ("One leg at a time, one arm at a time, keep your eyes toward the leaves not the ground."), and trash-talking the other person are all ways your character can pump himself up. By doing this, you give yourself an edge.

The Rules

By risking one token, you gain an extra die for your action. You can only risk one token for one extra die per action. You roll this die along with all the others you are rolling for that action.

EXAMPLE: *Hugo is being chased around the public library by a bizarre creature made of banned books. Up until this point, Hugo has managed to keep his distance but the beast is catching up. Hugo finds himself cornered with the only way to go being a flight of stairs. As he ascends, the steps elongate and some start to break apart creating two or three step-wide gaps. Eventually, he reaches a gap that's four steps wide.*

The GM calls for a roll. Joe, Hugo's player, says that his kid is going to close his eyes and do a leap of faith across the stairs. The whole time, he's going to recite a prayer his Ecuadorian grandmother taught him. He doesn't know what it means, but she would always tell him that it could give you superpowers. Hugo could use some right now. The GM likes that. Joe puts a Belief token

in front of him and grabs an extra die for his roll. If he's successful, he'll get the token back. If not, the token goes bye-bye.

Believe in Another

Putting a hand on someone's shoulder and saying "C'mon, man, you got this!", calling out "Hit it, Ricky! Knock it out of the park!" from the bleachers, or shutting his eyes real tight and whispering, underneath his breath so soft even he can barely hear it, "do it do it do it" are examples of one person believing in another. In this game, when you do that, you can help that person succeed in what they're trying to do.

The Rules

To believe in another, place one token in front of yourself and then take a six-sided die and place it in front of the player in whose character you're believing. The person rolls that die along with the others he or she is rolling for that action.

You can only believe in only one other person at the table at a time. One person can benefit from multiple players believing in him, meaning that person can get an extra die from one player, two players, or more. While being believed in by other people, the person can also believe in himself.

You can believe in yourself and another person during the same round.

EXAMPLE: *Let's use the same basic set-up as the previous example. In this case though, Hugo is racing up the stairs to catch up to his friends who have already gotten away from the banned book beast. As Hugo is racing up the steps, approaching that four step-wide gap, his friends start calling to him from the other side.*

The GM calls for a roll. Another player, Gabe, says his character Francesca screams, "You can do it, Hugo! Just jump! JUMP!" Gabe takes one of his tokens and places it in front of himself. He then hands a six-side die to Joe, Hugo's player. Joe will roll that die along with the others.

Believing in Stuff

One kid cracks his baseball bat against the creature's back, breaking its hard shell. Another clutches the locket given to her by a now-deceased aunt and the glow of the woman's love for her niece forms a defensive shield around the little girl. A third child recites a paragraph from an old book and the beast, only inches from the girl's face, shields its eyes as the words sear its skin. All of these children are believing in Stuff.

When you make your character, you will choose some things called Stuff and write down Stuff Qualities that make those things special. For example, your character may have a piece of Stuff that is a sports whistle your kid got from his dad. In order for that whistle to be worthy of being called "your Stuff" it needs to have something strange or magical about it. For the whistle's Stuff Qualities, you may put down "Hurts Monsters' Ears (Chase -1)" and "Always Calls My Dog, Roscoe, No Matter Where He Is." Not bad. So let's see how you would use that Stuff and its Stuff Qualities.

The Rules

You risk a number of tokens equal to its Rank of the Stuff Quality you wish to use. If you are using that Stuff in an action, such as throwing your favorite baseball at a monster's head, tightening your SuperGuy cape as you leap across the wide ditch, or running away from a rabid dog while you're wearing your favorite shoes, you simply resolve the Test, Quiz, or Exam as you would normally. If you succeed, you get the benefits of the Stuff Qualities. If you don't, the Stuff has failed you.

CHAPTER ONE

If you're using Stuff passively, meaning that your character is either unaware something is happening (or is about to happen) to her or your character is occupied or otherwise unable to act, then the player rolls Care and any relevant Qualities to see if the Stuff is working. If successful, it does. If it fails, it doesn't.

NOTE: You can believe in multiple Stuff Qualities in one piece of Stuff at one time but you cannot believe in more than one piece of Stuff at a time. You also cannot believe in someone else's Stuff for your own gain.

EXAMPLE: *Ashleigh's favorite thing in the whole world is her old puppy dog sweater. She's had it for years, it barely fits anymore, but she won't give it up. When Ashleigh was six, she was staying at a cabin with her parents when there was some electrical issue and the place caught fire. Ashleigh's room was the source of the fire and though she doesn't admit it to other people she thinks the sweater protected her from getting burned.*

On the character sheet, she has this sweater as Stuff with the Stuff Quality "-2 Damage". That means it will absorb 2 points of Damage if she gets attacked.

During a game, a greasy-eyed gremlin jumps on Ashleigh's back and starts clawing at her. Ashleigh's player decides to use that sweater in the attack as a kind of armor. To use the "-2 Damage" Stuff Quality, she'll need to risk 2 Belief tokens, which is the Stuff Quality's Rank.

Success & Failure

When a token is risked, the next thing to do is resolve the action. Roll as you would usually—a Quiz, Test, or Exam. Success and failure are determined normally but we're not done yet.

If the roll was successful:

Congratulations! Your character took a chance on something and it paid off. Return the risked token to your stack for use again later in the session.

If the roll was successful with Passing Grades:

Very nice! Your character put his faith in something and it not only lived up to the expectation but far exceeded it. It's must be more magical than he thought! Return the risked token to your stack and then get another token from the game moderator. You only get one token period, not one per Passing Grade. The Passing Grades are not lost by doing this; you will still use them for Damage bonuses and all that. This is a reward on top of the Passing Grades' usual function.

NOTE: A character can only have ten tokens at one time. Only the person who rolls the dice gets the extra Belief token. So if you believe in another, and that person succeeds with Passing Grades, you get your Belief token back but they get the extra one.

EXAMPLE: *Hugo is leaping across that gap in the crumbling library stairwell. Hugo is Believing in Himself in this scenario. Joe, Hugo's player, rolls and succeeds with 1 Passing Grade. Joe puts back the risked token and the GM hands him another. No matter how many Passing Grades Joe would have gotten on the roll, he'd only get one extra token.*

If the roll failed:

Sorry to hear that. The magic you character believes in didn't work this time. Huh. Maybe it's broken. You lose the token. That's why it's called risking them. You can give it to the GM or put in a "discard pile" to your side, doesn't matter. Either way, your character lost a little bit of Belief.



If the roll failed with Failing Grades:

Oh my. Your child believed in something and it not only didn't work, it completely failed. Maybe it's not just broken. Maybe magic's not as powerful as he thought.

If you failed with Failing Grades and you were not using Stuff, you lose the original token and another token as well. No matter how many Failing Grades there are, you only lose one extra token.

Only the person who rolled the dice loses the extra Belief token. So if you believe in another, and that person fails with Failing Grades, you lose your original Belief token but he or she loses the extra one.

If the person losing the extra token has no tokens, there is no penalty.

EXAMPLE: *Let's say Hugo didn't make the leap. In this scenario, his friend was Believing in him. In fact, Hugo not only fails, he completely botches the attempt. He need to meet or beat a Hard (12) difficulty and only rolled a 4. That's 2 Failing Grades. Hugo came up short and is now dangling from a loose step. Gabe, the player whose character Believed in Hugo, loses the token. But Joe, Hugo's player, loses a token for those Failing Grades. Even though there were two Failing Grades, he only loses 1 token.*

If you failed with Failing Grades and were using Stuff, you lose the original token and can—instead of losing a second token—lower the rank of the Stuff by one. When Stuff loses a rank, it also loses a Stuff Quality. If you like, you can simply lose the second token, it's your choice.

If you have no extra tokens to lose, though, you must lower the rank of the Stuff you were using.

EXAMPLE: *Ashleigh is jumped by the gremlin and it bites into her. Ashleigh's player, Karen, rolls a Test against the gremlin and loses horribly—3 Failing Grades. Those tokens she put up are both gone and she's going to lose a third. Instead though, Karen decides to lower "Protects me" from +2 to +1. Ashleigh's not so sure about that sweater anymore.*

That's risking Belief. Let's see what you can do by spending it.

CHAPTER ONE

Spending Belief

When you spend Belief, you get to do things you can't just by risking Belief. You can declaw werewolves, sprinkle a ring of salt around your bed that hurts monsters, and even find something brand new to believe in. The flipside of that is you don't get the token back. It's gone. But sometimes, for what you get back, it's worth the cost.

When you spend Belief, you do it immediately. You don't need to place the token in front of you, you can just hand it to the game moderator, put it in your discard stack, or whatever you have set up. You do this even if you may be rolling a Quiz, Test, or Exam along with spending that Belief. You spend Belief to do the following.

Believe in Something New

You have your Stuff and it is yours. But it is not all that there is in the world. You may find during play that your character forges connections with new toys or is given some strange object and told it has magical powers. Or you may discover a mystical object (also called a "Hand-Me-Down") that has Belief trapped inside it.

These are all something new. It's possible to believe in them as you do your Stuff.

The Rules

These new things act like Stuff so you treat them like Stuff. By spending one token, you can give the new thing a Stuff Quality. (You do this the same as when you first make a character. See the rules in Chapter Two.) You can spend up to three tokens to give an item three Stuff Qualities but no more than that.

You then use the new thing in whatever you were doing and resolve the Quiz, Test, or Exam per usual. The exception here is that if you succeed with Passing Grades, that "new thing" becomes part of your Stuff (and you would fill in the details on your character sheet). If the action fails, well, the new thing's probably broken. You lose the token, of course, but there is no other effect.

EXAMPLE: *Gabe's character Francesca has been chased into a janitor's closet by steel-toothed little buggers with big feet and gigantic glowing eyes. She doesn't know what they are but she's terrified. She can hear the things scritch-scratching at the door. One of them starts pounding on it and Francesca can see parts of the thin wooden door buckle. She panics. She looks around the room and sees four cans of cola sitting on a shelf. (She must have found the janitor's lunchtime stash.) Francesca remembers her dad telling her something about how cola rots teeth and eats metal. A light bulb goes on in her head. She grabs the cans of cola and shakes them furiously—like that time she passed a root beer to her stupid cousin Rhonda at Thanksgiving.*

Gabe says that Francesca going to spray the cola on the monsters to both rot their teeth and eat the metal. He gives the GM a token and says it will do +1 Damage to metal. Gabe and the GM roll and Gabe succeeds with a Passing Grade.

Francesca throws open the door and cracks the lids on the cola cans in total action movie fashion. She sprays them down and the creatures gasp and screech. Francesca empties two cans on them—each can doing 1 point of Damage to each creature. And, because of those Passing Grades, Gabe can add "Cans of Cola" to Francesca's Stuff. The GM asks Gabe to come up with a succinct way to describing the carbonated beverage supernatural powers and he writes "Eats metal +1 Damage". Very nice.

Perform a Ritual

Saying the Lord's Prayer before you open the door to a strange room, putting a teddy bear on each corner of the bed before your go to sleep, walking only on black tiles when crossing the floor, and counting to ten before swinging a bat are all rituals that are about using some routine, performing an action, or reciting a mantra in order to achieve some effect. When your character performs a ritual, he is creating intangible Stuff. It acts like Stuff, it's described like Stuff, but it's an action, not an object, that is important.

The Rules

To do this in the game, you perform the ritual first. If a roll is needed (to keep balance on a fallen log across a stream, to form a perfect circle of sesame seeds, to remember the exact wording of the Preamble to the Constitution), you resolve the roll first. This is the action from which the result stems. If the action fails, there's no need to keep going.

If the ritual failed, there's no foul. The person messed up and he can try it again.

If the ritual was successful, you get to give it Stuff Qualities—just like you do with Stuff. You have to spend one Belief token per Stuff Quality. This can be a Damage bonus to monsters, an Armor bonus to a character, or a weird effect. You can spend as many tokens to assign as many Stuff Qualities as you like but you only get new tokens by risking Belief not spending it so you'll probably want to reserve a couple, if you can.

The ritual lasts however long makes sense. If a ring of salt "Keeps Monsters Out" then it will stand until a non-monster breaks it or wind sends the little grains a-skitter.

EXAMPLE: *Ashleigh overturns a small bookshelf, scattering its contents across the library's shiny marble flooring. She arranges the fallen books in strange patterns on the floor. The GM asks her what she's doing and Karen, Ashleigh's player, replies, "I'm going to summon the banned book monster. I figure, these other books are its brothers and sisters, parts of itself. If they are threatened, the monster will come for them."*

The GM considers this and says, "Okay, but this monster is made up entirely of banned books. You'll need to work that in there somewhere."

Karen accepts, saying, "After Ashleigh has all the books arranged, she stands in the middle and recites the opening lines of Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer." The GM likes this and has Karen roll.

Karen uses Speak, since she's reading. The GM sets a Target Number of 9. It's the default and she sees no need to change it. Karen rolls and succeeds. It's only a matter of time before the banned book monster makes its way to her. Why she wants to attract the thing to her is anyone's guess.

The effect of this ritual is immediate but as long as the arrangement of the books is undisturbed then it stands to reason a second recitation from another banned book would have the same effect.

More Details on Rituals

A person can only spend Belief on a ritual in which his or her character participated. If there are multiple people involved in a ritual, each character needs to roll for their part. If anyone messes up, the ritual fails and the character must try it again from scratch. Spending Belief on a ritual doesn't give anyone extra dice but if you bring in a component such as candlewax or the hair from a brush or a map of downtown for both ambience, perhaps the game moderator will throw in a extra die. If the ritual fails though, that component is ruined and you'll need to find another to perform it a second time.

CHAPTER ONE

Give a Monster a Weakness

You've heard the stories: "Vampires can't come in unless they are invited." "Werewolves can't cross running water." "Ghosts can't leave the place they haunt." While these stories are well known, they are not fact. Yet.

Monsters can be incredibly powerful. So powerful that there doesn't seem to be anyway for a simple kid to harm them. But you can. Fear brought these creatures to life but your Belief defines them.

The Rules

By spending two tokens of Belief, you can give a susceptibility, allergy, aversion, or some other limitation to a monster. This is called a Weakness.

This should be done while or after the character has engaged the monster in some way—either fighting or being chased. Something should have happened to give the Weakness some meaning. It's usually best that these are done in the heat of the moment and not from a safe place miles away (such as the clubhouse or your grandmother's basement).

Weaknesses can't harm a monster directly, but they can limit what a monster can or cannot do. This is pretty powerful stuff but it also has a few limitations. You cannot give a Weakness that contradicts anything that's already been established. Weaknesses cannot be all-powerful or too generic such as "It dies if it breathes air!" Weaknesses have no game effect, only a story effect. Belief is a powerful thing but it only works on a small scale.

EXAMPLE: *As the banned book beast rounds the corner, Karen snaps her finger. "I've got it!" She says to the other players. Karen hands two tokens to the GM. "Ashleigh sees the banned book beast lumber down the hallway towards her when she notices that the creature is avoiding natural light. It's dodging the sunbeams coming in from the windows. Which makes sense since sunlight yellows pages."*

The GM accepts this and the two tokens and writes "Allergic to sunlight" as a Weakness on the monster's sheet.

Destroy a Monster

Monsters can come back from physical Damage. Sure, punching and kicking and scratching and biting them will send them packing for now but they'll be back. In order to destroy a monster, you have to go after its true power, what makes it scary: its Terror.

Terror is a monster's most important Virtue. It's not entirely unlike the Belief that kids have. Terror gives a monster some Stuff, just like Belief gives Stuff to kids, but it's also a sort of power gauge. Instead of physical Health though, it's much more powerful and more important to a monster. So important it can only be harmed by Belief.

The Rules

To destroy a monster, you have to destroy its Stuff first. Once its Stuff is gone, you can start picking away at its Terror. Once its Terror is gone, the monster is gone. For good.

To destroy a monster, spend one token and announce, "I use Belief to attack the monster" or something more fitting to the particular character and scene but make sure the GM understands what you're doing. This can only be done after a successful physical attack (from fighting or as the result of a Ritual or Stuff). This means it's really important for the Ability-heavy characters and Belief-heavy characters to work together.

NOTE: The attack doesn't have to result in Damage. It just needs to have succeeded.

If the monster has Stuff, the game moderator will decrease its Stuff by one point. If it has no Stuff, the game moderator then decreases its Terror by one point.

(As a player, you don't know what Stuff a monster has so you don't say which piece of Stuff you're attacking. Just say you are attacking the monster with Belief.)

There is nothing—NOTHING—a monster despises more than being attacked with Belief. With this attack, a child is asserting his own will on the monster. The kid's telling the creature what's what. Attacking a monster with Belief will have sudden and intense repercussions as the beast lashes out at the children. It will try some newfangled attack, call in reinforcements, or just go wild, flailing about and attacking everything in sight. If it can, it will escape. Monsters can handle death. Some of them are even used to it. Utter destruction is another story.

NOTE: Decreased or diminished Stuff stays with the monster no matter how many times it is reincarnated. Its Health regenerates but nothing else. What Belief is doing is here is damaging the myth of the monster, the stories and the fear that power it. This is powerful magic.

EXAMPLE: *Hugo rushes the banned book beast from behind and barrels into it full-force. With a successful roll, he knocks it to the ground. Ashleigh is in the fight as well. Karen, Ashleigh's player, decides that her child closes her eyes shut and starts reciting the titles of banned books. Since she's using Belief, she needs to work something mystical or magical into it*

Karen hands the GM a token and says, "With each title that Ashleigh remembers, a book goes flying from the beast and back onto the shelves. I'm using Belief to destroy the monster."

The GM likes that and accepts the token. The beast still has Stuff left so one of them will be reduced. Karen narrated some fun visuals into her descriptions but the GM isn't bound by that when reducing the beast's Stuff. The beast has "Hardcover Binding -1 Damage" as a Stuff. Reluctantly, the GM scratches that off. From here out, unless there are extraordinary circumstances, the beast will take the full brunt of any Damage dealt to it.

The beast screams and pushes itself off the ground, sending Hugo rolling. It sets its eyes on the little girl and rushes her.

Risking & Spending Limits

You can only risk or spend tokens for one effect per action (or, in combat, per turn). You must also have the tokens on hand when you risk or spend them. There is no such thing as going into debt on Belief.

Keeping Your Wits About You

Anything with a Terror rating is considered a monster whether it's a garden-variety gremlin, a neighborhood cat with a bulging eye and a limp, a reclusive old man in a dilapidated house on the corner, or a mystical beast from beyond the stars. Monsters use this Terror against children. In order to combat this Terror, kids make Fear Checks.

Fear Checks

Fear Checks are made either because a monster is trying to scare your character or because your character has taken significant Damage. A Fear Check should not be taken lightly. A failure will rob your character of an action which can allow a monster to get the drop on him and do some serious Damage.

CHAPTER ONE

A player may choose either Think or Care when making a Fear Check and he doesn't need to stick with the same Ability every time he rolls for that character. Plus, it's possible for a character to lose the use of Think and/or Care during play and it's handy to have a backup. As far as the system goes, you can use whichever you wish. The difference comes in how you'll narrate your kid's reaction.

Think About It

If you use Think, the child deals with the fear rationally. If successful, the character might think, "Okay, it's just a werewolf. It's scary but it can be defeated." If unsuccessful, the character may start screaming, "We're all gonna die!"

Care About It

If you use Care, the child is addressing the fear emotionally. If successful, the character might get a giddy grin on his face and get all agitated. If unsuccessful, the character may start sobbing or babbling incoherently.

Fear of Monsters

A Fear Check is made against a monster on three different occasions: the first time you meet it, if it changes form, and when it does its scary thing. A Fear Check is also made when a kid takes too much Damage. No matter the reason for the Fear Check, they are always made the same way. Below are the when, why, and how of making a Fear Check against a monster.

First Time the Kid Meets a Monster

The first time your kid meets a monster, you make a Fear Check. This will usually be the first time you see the monster but some are invisible, so it might be the first time your kid hears or smells the monster, or the monster may come up behind your character, so it could be the first time your character is in physical contact with the monster.



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If a Monster Changes Form

Some monsters have multiple forms (vampires may turn into mist or a bat, werewolves change from man to beast). Any time a monster changes into a new shape or a new form of some kind, any characters who see it must make a Fear Check.

When the Monster Does its Scary Thing

Monsters have a trick they can do that is so eerie, so unnerving, or so disgusting, that it forces a Fear Check every time they do it. Since this replaces any other action it may take, a monster usually doesn't just do this repeatedly. But if it is hurt, or on the verge of death, it may resort to this action as a last ditch effort to unsettle the kids and make a fast break. When a monster does its Scary Thing, any child who witnesses it must make a Fear Check.

Fear Check vs. Monsters

No matter why you're making a Fear Check against a monster, it uses its Scare (which is an Ability monsters have) and its "It is..." Quality. You use your kid's Think or Care and an applicable Quality, if you have one. This is rolled as a standard Test.

Fear of Death

Getting hurt is a scary thing, even for a tough kid. And getting really hurt is just that much worse. Every time a character drops a Health Level (from "I feel fine" to "I feel sore", for instance), you make a Fear Check. This is to prevent the kid from going into shock at just how real and deadly these monsters can be.

Fear Check vs. Damage

If you're making a Fear Check due to Damage, you roll Think or Care, plus an applicable Quality if you have one, as a Quiz against a Target Number that is determined by how hurt your kid is.

The base Target Number is Average (9). This is if you dropped one level. If your character drops more than one Health Level as a result of a single attack, raise the Target Number for every additional Health Level.

If your kid drops from one Health level, such as from "I feel fine" to "I feel sore" or from "I feel sore" to "I feel hurt," the Target Number is 9.

If he drops from two Health Levels, such as from "I feel fine" to "I feel hurt" or from "I feel sore" to "I feel cold," the Target Number is 12.

If he drops three Health Levels, "I feel fine" to "I feel cold," the Target Number is 15.

This is the only time you'll make a Fear Check as a Quiz. Though the Damage likely came from a monster, you're not making the roll against the monster but against your natural inclination to crumple or fold under pretty severe pressure.

Passing the Fear Check

If you pass the Fear Check, your character is fine. He can keep on doing what he was doing without penalty.

If you passed a Fear Check with Passing Grades, you gain a bonus equal to the number of Passing Grades to your next roll. So if you passed with 2 Passing Grades, you would add 2 points to the total of your Success Dice. The rush of adrenaline has heightened your character's senses, giving him a boost to whatever he does next (even if it's running away).

CHAPTER ONE

Failing the Fear Check

If you fail the Fear Check, your character is rattled. He loses an action and cannot react to the monster's next action. Effectively, he's in shock and it will take him a few moments to regain composure.

If you failed the Fear Check and gained Failing Grades: you also lose a point of Wits for each Failing Grade.

EXAMPLE: *As Hugo is sneaking around a junkyard, he unsettles a stack of hubcaps. The resulting clatter wakes up Baby, the junkyard's 90-pound, black-furred security guard. From out of the darkness, the dog rushes at him, barking furiously, flicking spittle and old food with every "rowf!"*

Baby has a Scare of 4. This is a seriously mean dog here. As a monster, it'll get its Scare plus its Quality "It is a dirty ball of muscle, teeth, and fur." That's a total of 7 dice. Hugo has a Care of 3 and nothing else that will come in handy.

The GM rolls those 7 dice and gets 1, 2, 4, 4, 5, 6, 6. That's a subtotal of 17. The GM rerolls those 6s and gets 1, 3 for a grand total of 21. That's a really high number.

Joe, Hugo's player, rolls his 3 Care dice and gets 4, 4, 6. That's 14 so far. Joe throws the 6 again and gets 1 for a total of 15. Not good enough. He missed it by 6 points which is 2 Failing Grades. Joe erases 2 points from Hugo's Wits. The boy is shaken pretty badly.

But It's Not All Bad...

If your character failed his Fear Check, it will take him a moment to regain his senses but when he does he may make risk a Belief Token for two extra dice instead of the usual one.

As with any other Belief Check, how or why Belief figures into the roll must be made clear to the group.

When You Lose Wits

The more Wits your character has, the more stable, generally cool and collected he is. But even the most hardened kid can lose it when facing a slaverling three-eyed beast that just crawled out from a sewer grate.

You'll notice on the character sheet there's a line that splits Wits down the middle. On the right side it says "calm" and on the left it says "scared." As long as you have points on the "calm" side, your character is doing fine. He may be getting a little antsy, a little twitchy but he's holding himself together. When you start losing points on the "scared" side, fear starts getting the best of your character.

When your character gets down to 4 points in Wits, your character loses the use of an Ability—chosen by the GM. This means you can't roll that Ability's dice for anything. If a situation comes along where a "turned off" Ability would be the best choice, you need to either figure out how to resolve the situation using another Ability or roll just using a Quality.

For every additional point lost, your character loses another of his Abilities, so continued exposure to horrifying conditions can mentally, physically, and emotionally paralyze your character.

Too Scared To...

When an Ability is turned off due to fear, your character is simply too scared to do something. You mark this on your character by marking the small circle to the left of the Ability. Here is what it means when your character is too scared to use a certain Ability.

Too Scared to Move

Your character is frozen in his tracks. He can't run, hold up a hand, or do anything physical (except punch, kick and scratch—which is covered under Fight). Otherwise, he's completely locked up.

Too Scared to Fight

Your character cannot struggle, grapple, punch, or kick. He just can't muster up the will to protect himself or hurt anybody.

Too Scared to Think

Your character is flustered, confused, and incapable of holding a thought. Any attempt to do so will result in nothing but a headache. He can't process information or come up with any ideas.

Too Scared to Speak

Your character is stammering, incapable of doing anything but babble or mumble to himself.

Too Scared to Care

Your character loses concern for the other characters or anything else and, in fact, may start yelling at or blaming the other kids for the mess they're in (provided they're also not too scared to Speak).

Too Scared to Do Anything

These stack! As you lose Wits, your character becomes too scared to use yet another attribute. When your character loses all their Wits and thus all their Abilities are turned off, he becomes inconsolable. All he can do is cry, yell, fall down, and babble. He's utterly useless to himself or the other kids.

EXAMPLE: *Let's say that in the above example with Hugo and the guard dog that Hugo started the conflict with 6 points of Wits. On the sheet it looks like:*

scared ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ | ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ calm

After losing those 2 points of Wits, it now looks like:

scared ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ | ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ calm

Hugo's become too scared to do something. The GM decides that Hugo is too scared to Move. Joe, Hugo's player, checks that little dot to the left of Move on his character sheet to remind him of that. Until Joe can regain enough Wits points, he'll have to rely on his Fight, Think, Speak, or Care to get out of trouble.

Calming Down

Your character isn't on a slow and inevitable road to madness. Wits that are lost can be regained through a couple means and, even if nothing is done directly, Wits will recover over time. Here are the ways your character can claw his way back to sanity.

Getting Help from a Friend

A character can be "snapped out of it" by another player through a Care roll. The helping friend rolls his Care and an applicable Quality against an Average (9) difficulty.

CHAPTER ONE

Getting Away from the Monster

After a monster is defeated, driven away, otherwise gone, or the character has been removed from its presence, the character may attempt to calm down by rolling Think plus a relevant Quality against an Average (9) difficulty. (If he is too scared to Think, he can use it for this roll and this roll only.)

Pulling Yourself Together

It's also possible for your character to use one of his Abilities to calm himself down while still in the presence of the monster. Your child can use Speak (to talk himself down), Think (to approach the situation rationally), or Care (to push through emotionally). Using the Ability alone (no Qualities), roll a Quiz against a Hard (12) difficulty.

Healing

If the Wits loss is due to Fear Checks from taking Damage, then healing (gaining back dots) will give the character a chance to recover some Wits. The character can attempt to collect himself by rolling his Think plus any applicable Quality against an Average (9) difficulty.

Regaining Wits

No matter which method is used, a success gives 1 point of Wits back to the character. The character also gains an additional point of Wits for every Passing Grade in the roll. A character cannot gain more Wits points than his starting Wits.

EXAMPLE: *Let's go back to Hugo in the above example. He lost a point of Wits on the scared side and, with it, the ability to Move. Destiny comes running up behind Hugo and is yelling "Run! Run!" but Hugo doesn't budge.*

It doesn't take long for Destiny to see that Hugo is terrified, glued to his spot. Knowing that they have to get out of there, Destiny tries calming Hugo down.

She says, "C'mon, Hugo, you can do this. You can. Just one foot in front of the other. It can't get you if you're running."

Destiny rolls her Care (4) and uses her Quality "I can speak nicely." The difficulty is Average (9). Kiana, Destiny's player, throws 7 dice and gets 1, 1, 2, 2, 3, 4, 6. The 3, 4, 6 give her 13. She rolls the six again and gets a 4 for a total of 17. That's a success plus 2 Passing Grades—that's worth 3 points of Wits.

Hugo was only down 2 points of Wits so that's all he can get back. But get them back he does, and his ability to Move along with it. Hugo snaps out of it and heads off with Destiny.

The Kid's Got Spirit

Spirit is your character's immortal soul. It's not common for your child's Spirit to be at risk but certain monsters and magic can do just that.

What Spirit Is

Your child's Spirit represents his immortal soul and how much of it he has left. A starting character begins with all ten points. In the fiction of the game world, you can think of your character's Spirit as the intangible part of his makeup. It's his conscience, his sixth sense, his morale, and his drive and determination all rolled into one.

Losing Spirit

Spirit can be lost due to certain attacks from monsters (listed specifically as “spirit draining”—a regular attack won’t sap a child’s Spirit). These attacks hurt a child’s Spirit instead of his Health. The top five dots are on the light side, the bottom five are on the dark side. Your child can lose five points of Spirit—half their soul!—before there are significant system-related effects.

Some monsters can quickly drain a character of his Spirit, consuming his soul. If your character starts to lose Spirit, acting sooner is far better than acting later.

When a character’s Spirit drops below 5 points, the child starts to darken emotionally. Much in the same way as a child who loses enough Wits loses Abilities, children who lose enough Spirit begin to detach from the world and those in it, slowly drawing into themselves until they enter a catatonic state.

The first five points aren’t just for show. Mechanically there’s no consequence but your character is starting to feel sluggish, weary, and apathetic, at least in trace amounts. These feelings intensify with each point lost.

Going Dark

For every point lost on the dark half of your child’s Spirit, you gain a negative to an Ability. These Abilities are set in a certain order; they’re not chosen by your GM. It goes like this:

When Spirit is at 4

Your child becomes **Mean**. He can’t seem to connect with his friends or the world around him. All rolls using **Care** are at -3 dice.

When Spirit is at 3

Your child becomes **Weak**. He can’t muster up the will to fight or defend himself. All rolls using **Fight** are at -3 dice.

When Spirit is at 2

Your child becomes **Lazy**. It’s hard for him to get off the couch, to feed or bathe himself, or do anything but spend all his time vegging out. All rolls using **Move** are at -3 dice.

When Spirit is at 1

Your child becomes **Quiet**. It’s hard for him to speak or communicate beyond the weakest whisper or groan. All rolls using **Speak** are at -3 dice.

When Spirit is at 0

Your child becomes **Confused**. His brain is now shutting down, relaxing him into a near-catatonic state. All rolls using **Think** are at -3 dice.

These stack! So as your character loses Spirit, more and more of his Abilities become affected.

Regaining Spirit

Any Spirit that is lost can be regained by reconnecting with one’s soul or by the care and guidance of friends. The road back is long and hard.

CHAPTER ONE

A Caring Friend

As with Wits, a friend can try to raise your spirits by comforting you and acting as a connection back to the world. The caring friend will use his Care and a relevant Quality against a Hard (12) difficulty. On a successful roll, the character being comforted regains one—and only one!—point of Spirit. A character can make only one attempt per session to Care for a friend with low Spirit.

Some Time Alone

A character can attempt to raise their own Spirit by rolling a Quiz using Care and any relevant Qualities against a Hard (12) difficulty. The same rules apply as above: A successful roll gives him back one point of Spirit. A character can attempt to raise their own Spirit once per session. (And, yes, if a character is Mean, his Care roll is at -3 dice.)

Playing the Dispirited

You don't want to spend the entire session moping but your character is not in the best way right now. He's becoming more and more disconnected from this world and may soon leave it. He's sluggish, doesn't respond to things like alarm clocks and barking dogs and ambulance sirens. You can affect an attitude of general malaise and distraction, if you like. The more you ham it up, the quicker the other characters may act to help you out of it.

And Those Are The Rules

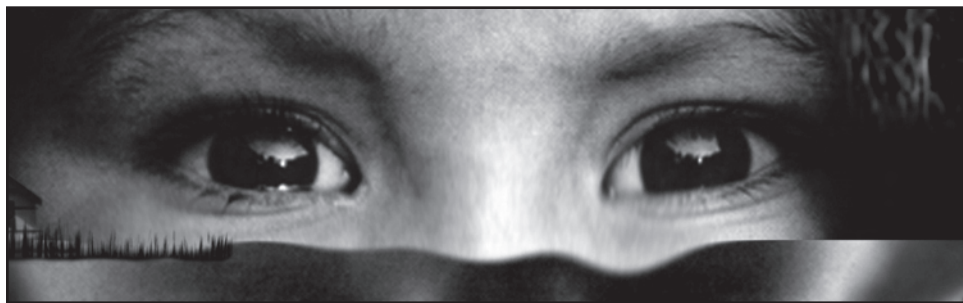
Whenever you have a question about game structure, how things work, or what rule applies when, check this chapter first. No one is expected to remember every rule in this chapter, just get the basics down (how and what to roll) and get a few games under your belt then you can introduce the other rules as you become comfortable with the system.

Alright, let's make some characters.

CHAPTER TWO: TO BE YOUNG AGAIN



CHAPTER TWO



The class who would get called on first. It was always the same no matter what.

"How about you, Suzanne?"

The bright-eyed young girl perked up with a smile. She stood up and addressed the class.

"She's such a suck-up," one of the kids next to Tyler whispered. Tyler shrugged.

"When I grow up," Suzanne said, very practiced. "I want to be a doctor. After seeing what my Aunt Gretchen is going through, I can't help but be moved to action."

The kid next to Tyler rolled his eyes and shook his head. Suzanne was the girl who always spoiled the grading curve, who also put her hand up, no matter what the question was.

Mrs. Danforth looked around the classroom. Her eyes landed on the boy next to Tyler.

"Donovan? And you?"

The boy straightened up. "I don't know."

"Well, think about it. What are you interested in?"

Donovan shrugged, big and showy. "I don't know."

"Alright," Mrs. Danforth said. "Well, think about it. I'll come back to you."

Another scan of the classroom. Tyler looked over the window, thinking if he didn't make eye contact with her, she wouldn't call on him.

"How about you, Tyler? What do you want to be when you grow up?" Mrs. Danforth smiled sweetly, as years of elementary school teaching had trained her.

Tyler shuffled in his seat, glancing over the faces of the other kids. Bobby wanted to be a cop. Soledad dreamed of being an ice skater. Madison said she gonna be president. Tyler chewed on his lip, stalling.

"Tyler?" Mrs. Danforth prodded as she stared down the nose of her glasses.

A boy in the third row snickered, starting a chain of muffled laughter throughout the room. Tyler stared at his feet.

"I dunno," Tyler answered, quietly. "I don't really want to grow up."

PART ONE: SECOND CHILDHOOD

Little Fears Nightmare Edition is the game of childhood terror. In this game, players take the role of kids aged 6 to 12 years old. These characters may start out as ordinary children but will, throughout the game, come to know and face monsters of all kinds. They will take on floating sheets that shriek and howl, bone-crunching wolfmen that bite and tear, and twisted monstrosities from the deepest nightmare realms of our psyche.

Throughout play, your characters will confront and destroy these monsters through ingenuity, luck, and their own inherent belief. These monsters are vicious, intelligent, and cruel—and your characters may not always win. Some of these monsters are born from

our myths and legends, the spooky stories we tell on stormy nights or around a roaring campfire. No matter their origin, they are all born from the same primal source: our own collective fear.

From early man, humankind has run from the shadows and the demons that exist in the far corners of its mind. Horrors we dare not name or speak for fear they will come true. In this game, these monsters are not only true but your characters will come face-to-face with them. These monsters live in a place called Closetland, wherein all the creatures that both adults and children dread exist. Every fear, every nightmare is alive and very real inside this dark realm.

They come to our world in search of various things. Some want only to play malicious games. Others are searching for toys and trinkets they lost centuries ago and are desperate to find again. Some just want children so they can be stewed in giant pots. They take many forms, some monstrous and some mundane.

But all are here because of fear. And only by removing that fear can you destroy them forever.

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff

In the years since the original Little Fears, other games featuring child protagonists have appeared on the market so it's very possible if you're reading this game, you've played some of them (if not the original Little Fears as well).

But if you haven't, the prospect of accurately portraying a child who is coming face to face with the terrifying and unknowable can be daunting. *What if my 8 year old sounds 12? Am I playing my 10 year old too dumb? My 6 year old too smart?*

Put all that aside.

Children are much smarter than most people give them credit. Though the younger ones may be limited by vocabulary and experience, one look in their eyes will show you that the gears in their heads are spinning a mile a minute. Just play your child as a character who is interesting, flawed, heroic, and active and you'll do just fine.

If you yourself are a child between the ages of 6 and 12 then you don't need me to tell you how cunning and complex you really are.

The characters in this game are all school age, from Kindergarten to 7th Grade, and if you know any school age children, you know just how precocious, inquisitive, and ingenious they can be. All characters will have at least a basic understanding of language (though may flub the grammar and spelling at times—but there are plenty of adults who do that as well), most can read though their vocabularies are just budding (it is assumed all characters are literate unless you decide otherwise for your character), and all children have a natural inclination toward pushing the boundaries of what they can do which will lead them on adventures (and sometimes earn punishment for going on those adventures, particularly late at night or if your character is currently grounded).

Of course, no matter how smart, how precocious children are, they are still confined by the boundaries of childhood. They have curfews, bedtimes, and homework to do. They deal with confusing feelings toward the cute girl in class, school bullies out to pound on them at recess, and an entire world built for people much older than they are. The world doesn't always make sense and, a lot of the time, they're simply going with the flow of the adult world, hoping they aren't left in its wake.

CHAPTER TWO

Considering children have at least an elementary (no pun intended) understanding of math, science, geography, history, literature, and the world around them—as well as complicated personalities!—you have everything you need to create a playable character.

What this chapter will do is help turn that idea into a playable character and that playable character into a compelling protagonist.

Finding Inspiration

There is a lot of inspiration for characters all around you. A lot of primetime shows have child characters (early seasons of *Two and a Half Men* prominently feature a very sassy preadolescent kid) and there are numerous films that do as well—a lot of which fit the Little Fears mold perfectly.

Classics such as *The Goonies*, *The Monster Squad*, and *The Exorcist* along with *Bless the Child* and *The Good Son* provide a wide array of protagonists within the age ranges of characters for this game. More recent films such as *The Spiderwick Chronicles*, *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Monster House*, *Zathura*, and *The Messengers* are also good sources of inspiration. Movies outside the horror/fantasy genre you can look into are *Catch that Kid*, *The Bad News Bears* (either version), *The Sandlot*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, *Stand by Me*, and *The Polar Express*.

On the television, you'll find episodes of the older series *Are You Afraid of the Dark?*, *Ghostwriter*, *Goosebumps* and *Eerie, Indiana* (the latter two are available on DVD) are great inspiration for Little Fears characters (and, for the game moderators, scenario ideas). There are also the afterschool shows on Nickelodeon, TeenNick, and PBS (*Fetch! with Ruff Ruffman* is a great argument against any who claim children are neither resourceful nor ingenious).

The reason I've listed films and television shows as reference is because the visual portrayals of these characters give an immediate, definable performance. You can actually see their mannerisms, hear the inflections in their voices, and look at their faces. It's easy to watch films and shows like these and find at least one character that speaks to you. Of course, there are also plenty of literary sources as well (upon which some of the aforementioned shows and movies are based), especially Young Adult horror and speculative series such as those in the *Fear Street*, *Scream Shop*, *Meet the Kreeps*, and *Fiendly Corners* series.

No matter where you find the inspiration for your character, lock onto it, grab a character sheet, and let's start making your child.

PART TWO: KID'S GOT CHARACTER

Creating a character in Little Fears should provide you not only with a collection of numbers and stats which are for game purposes—but motivations and goals that will push and pull at your character throughout play. That's the story part.

The first step we'll take will create the basics of your character; the second step will flesh that out and finalize the numbers of your character. This leaves the third and final step which will help build the world around your character.

Little Fears characters are best when not made in voids. They are best made communally by the group of people who will be involved in the adventures. The players should work on building a framework of relationships between the children who will

share in the horrific scenarios about to unfold. The characters don't have to like each other but they should all exist in the same world. They may live close to each other, all attend the same school, or one may be a cousin from out of town who is spending the summer at his aunt's farm, close to the other children. There should be a cohesiveness to the characters and also a camaraderie amongst the players.

With all that said, let's go through the process of making a character.

EXAMPLE: *As we go through each step of character creation, a new player, Angela, will make a character to help illustrate what we just discussed and provide a practical look at the character creation system in action.*

Groups, not Voids

Creating characters alongside the folks with whom you'll be playing the game really is the best way. Nothing builds camaraderie and a solid group foundation better than a shared character creation session where people talk freely about what type of character they want to play and what types of stories and adventures they want to see.

Players should talk about how each character knows each other and come up with a chain that connects them all. This saves a lot of time establishing the hows and whys of putting these kids together and setting them along the path. I find it to be invaluable, especially for first-time players and new groups.

This is Me

Before you do anything else, you'll come up with the concept for your character. This will inform every other decision you make about your character so choose a concept that intrigues and excites you. It should have some built-in fun and instant playability. After you have that, the next four things you need to decide about your character are their name, age, sex, and birthday.

Concept

Let's start at the beginning. All characters begin with a Concept: a short but sweet way of summing up your child in just a few words. Concepts are universal; they are the types we see repeated in films and television shows all the time. Aside from being the basis for how you create your character, the Concept will also be your character's first Quality but we'll get into that later. Some examples follow but they are by no means the only ones. Feel free to discuss new ones with your group.

Cowgirl

This kid was raised on the farm, around big animals, and knows how to rope, calm cattle, ride horses, and maybe even take care of a gun. Can easily be "cowboy" as well.

Jock

This is the kid who is always picked as team captain in gym class, coordinates the recess football game, wears the jerseys of his favorite athletes, and spends every summer weekend at the baseball diamond. His sports acumen also lends him a bit of fame and favoritism, especially amongst any junior varsity coaches.

CHAPTER TWO

Little Grown Up

This is the kid who can't wait to grow up. He hates being treated like a child and don't dare call him "kid." He's drifting away from his friends, who still enjoy being kids. His patience for hijinx and shenanigans is gone. Unfortunately, he's not accepted in the adult world either.

Natural Born Leader

This is the kid who's always the mastermind, the center of attention. Smaller kids wanna be him, older kids protect him in exchange for stuff. As the ringleader, his charm attracts other kids but also suspicion from adults. But his smile usually saves him.

Fanboy/girl

This is the kid who is totally into science fiction, fantasy, anime, manga, video games, and/or story games. He wears pointy ears or slippers that look like giant cat feet. He plays with big foam weapons or is always quoting lines from Lord of the Rings or Battlestar Galactica. This kid has an area of interest that he is really into.

Outcast

This is the kid who has a hard time fitting in with her friends. There's something about this kid that sets her apart: perhaps she's a younger sister trying to hang with her older sibling's friends, the clumsy kid who always tells outrageous stories, has a physical handicap, or speaks in some made-up language to himself in the back of the class.

Princess

This is the popular girl who always wears the coolest clothes, has perfect make-up, talks about boys and fashion, and what her big sister is doing and how jealous she is that her cousin gets to go to Paris over Christmas break.

Quiet Kid

This is the pensive, shy kid who keeps to himself. He probably does well in class, but doesn't particularly stand out. Doesn't play a lot of sports at recess (perhaps he reads instead). His quietness almost always leads to rumors about him or his family that are sometimes harmless jokes but sometimes nasty accusations.

Troublemaker

This is the kid who's always getting into trouble. Sometimes it's deserved (like when he pulled the fire alarm during the book fair) but sometimes it's not (Mrs. McGillicutty's cat really did get stuck in the mailslot all by itself). He has become the go-to kid when the teacher suspects foul play or trickery but also knows quite a few handy tricks for getting in and out of sticky situations.

Whiz Kid

This is the kid who always ruins the grading curve. She never walks away from a science fair without a blue ribbon and it's a lock she will represent the school at the state spelling bee. She's smart, which is handy, but also probably a little lonely which is a good reason for her to join a group.

EXAMPLE: *Angela is sitting down to make her first Little Fears Nightmare Edition character. Since her favorite movie is The Breakfast Club, she decides she wants to base her character on Ally Sheedy's seminal weirdo Allison. The kids in the film are a bit older than the characters in this*

game but the archetype that Allison embodies really knows no age. Angela chooses “Quiet Kid” as the concept for her character and builds from there.

Name

Your character’s name is what they are called by other kids (their friends, anyway) and is usually either what’s on the birth certificate or a diminutive form of that name.

If you’re stuck for a name, there are plenty of online resources (such as babynames.com) that have large name databases. You can even find names based on ethnicity or geographical region which can be especially helpful if you’re playing a character from an area or background whose names may be unfamiliar to you.

Age

This isn’t some throwaway factoid. Your character’s age determines their Ability points and their starting Belief. All starting characters in *Little Fears Nightmare Edition* range from 6 years old to 12 years old. There’s quite a development difference between those two extremes so consider them carefully.

The typical six-year old is not going to be as physically-developed as the typical twelve-year old so they won’t be as tall, strong, or athletic. They won’t have as wide a level of experience or exposure to films, music, culture, literature, and politics as a twelve-year old. But the younger the character is more “innocent” thus they are more capable of using Belief Magic (a mystical power used by the kids in the game to fight the monsters).

On the flipside, a twelve-year old is more physically and mentally adept and able but their ability to see and fight the monsters—at least when it comes to permanently destroying them—is fading fast.

Every other age sits somewhere along that line. The older the kid, the more physically and mentally able they are. The younger the kid, the more they can use Belief Magic.

But that’s just system-speak there. Socially, there is a world of difference between a kid who’s six and one who’s twelve. A six-year old is in kindergarten or first grade and is still acclimating to the social environment of school and the rigors of scholastic life. A twelve-year old is socially mature, likely in the top grade at their elementary school or have just entered middle school.

Socially, twelve-year olds sit on the cusp of adolescence and have the pressures that come along with that (especially if they hang out with older kids). A six-year old is less likely to belong to a group or clique beyond “Mrs. Stilson’s Class” or “the neighborhood”. A twelve-year old and a six-year old likely don’t have a lot in common but the events that will transpire through play, and the relationships the players devise, can pull even the most diverse groups together.

When making characters, everyone keep in mind the ages of their respective characters. It’s nice to have a mix and I find it better to have a couple 6-8 year old and a couple 10-12 year old with maybe a 9-10 year old in the mix. The more diverse the group, in my experience, the more dramatic things become.

If you do go with a varied mix, you really need to consider why they’re all together. Typically, a 12-year old and a 6-year old aren’t going to hang out together without a reason.

CHAPTER TWO

Mixed-Age Dance

The ages of the characters can naturally skew the tone and mood of the game, for darker or lighter. A group of 6-year olds witnessing a diabolical horror makes for a different story than a bunch of 12-year old seeing the same. The other consideration is what the strength of the characters will be. With all younger characters, you get less Ability, more Belief—more magic put in your hands and thus the game. With all older characters, you get less Belief, more Ability—a greater focus on solving things through reason and strength. A group of mixed-age characters strikes a balance between the two. No way is right or wrong on this. Do what you feel is best for your group and the stories you want to tell.

Boy or Girl

As far as the game system is concerned, there is no difference between playing a boy or playing a girl. You decide the sex of your character based on whatever archetype you think makes a compelling character. This goes on the third blank under Bio on the character sheet.

Birthday

Finally, you write down your child's birthday. This can be any day of the year you like. You can include the year he was born as well, if your game moderator has set timeframe for the episodes, but it's not necessary.

EXAMPLE: *Angela decides her character's name is going to be Rebecca Sue but everyone calls her "Becky." Becky is a 8-year old girl whose birthday is December 21st (Angela likes the idea of Becky always having to put up with combined "birthday/Christmas" gifts).*

On the character sheet, it looks like this:

My name is Becky. I am an 8 year old girl. My birthday is December 21st.

Abilities & Traits

Abilities are the core of your character. There are five of them in this game: Move, Fight, Think, Speak, Care. Together, they form the skeleton of your character, from a system standpoint. You assign points to each Ability and you have a number of points determined by your character's age. On the character sheet, these go under the "This is what I can do" header. Each Ability starts at Rank 1 and you get your character's Age in points to increase them. One point buys one Rank. Abilities have Ranks from 1 – 6. A higher number means the character is better than it.

The Five Abilities aka "The Verbs"

Here is a description for each of the five Abilities along with examples of when they are used.

Move

This Ability covers anything related to sports, sleight of hand, flexibility, manual dexterity, or speed. Use this if your child wants to perform the disappearing coin trick, steal second base, pop an Ollie, or simply run really fast (probably from something with fangs).

Fight

When all that can be said is said and all the thinking has led to a dead end, it's time to lay down some smack. This Ability covers punching, kicking, biting, hairpulling, low blows, and whacks with a baseball bat. It is also used for feats of strength (such as heaving a large rock) and anything involving a weapon (even a ranged or "sport" weapon).

Think

Anything involving smarts, perception, or memory uses this Ability. Whether it's doing research for a paper due yesterday, trying to figure out the combination to a locker, forging a parent's signature, remembering who was fighting whom in the Spanish Civil War, this is the Ability to use.

Speak

This Ability covers any skill related to speech. When your child needs to bluff his way into somewhere, con his way out of somewhere, deliver a questionably-researched book report, motivate his friends to keep up the good fight, really drive home a scary campfire tale, or just flat out lie, this is the Ability they use.

Care

This is the Ability that deals with connecting to other living creatures (or ones that are close enough to living to count). Anything involving the emotional connection between two living things uses this Ability but it can also be used for any object the child has a strong connection to: a baseball glove, a teddy bear, a blankie.

EXAMPLE: *Since Becky is 8, Angela gets 8 points to buy her Abilities (with each Ability starting at 1). As a Quiet Kid, Angela reckons Becky isn't that athletic but she's pretty tough and spends a lot of time drawing and reading. Angela add 1 to Move, 2 to Fight, 2 to Think, 1 to Speak, and 2 to Care.*

In the end, Becky has a Move of 2, Fight of 3, Think of 3, Speak of 2, and Care of 3.

Becky isn't that coordinated or eloquent but she can tussle, she's pretty smart, and she cares a lot (though she's likely not obvious about any of those things given her quiet nature).

You Take the Good, You Take the Bad

The five Abilities—and the scores you put in them—give a basic overview of what your character can and cannot do, generally speaking. But there are exceptions to every rule. A kid who is an eloquent speaker may never be able to tell his grandmother "No." An athlete may be good at every sport except hockey. The smartest kid in class may be completely stumped by basic bike repair. In this game, your character has these in the form of Good and Bad Traits.

On the character sheet, you'll notice the following:

GOOD: I can _____ well when _____.

BAD: It's hard for me to _____ when _____.

These are the Good and Bad Traits of your character and help in making your character someone with as much quirk and skill, as much contradiction as fact.

Your Good Trait

This is a situation in which your character shines in an area he's usually pretty dull. It's the one area in which he's Smart, or the one physical activity where he shows coordination, the one time when he can stand up and throw down.

CHAPTER TWO

In the first blank part of the line, write down one of your two lowest Abilities. On the second blank part of the line, write down an instance, situation, environment, or condition in which he's good at that Ability.

Your Bad Trait

This is the flip of your Good Trait. It's the situation where your normally- or well-skilled child has trouble. A lot of smart people are horrible spellers, for instance. Some professional football players can't dance.

In the first blank part of the line, write down one of your two highest Abilities. On the second blank part of the line, write down an instance, situation, environment, or condition in which that Ability fails him.

NOTE: The situation of the Trait doesn't need to be extremely detailed, but it should be a condition that a) can actually come up during play and b) isn't extremely common or ridiculous.

If you need help or want ideas, some sample conditions (both Good and Bad) follow.



MOVE

I can Move well when I'm scared.
 I can Move well when I know where I am.
 I can Move well when I'm running.
 It's hard for me to Move when I don't know where I am.
 It's hard for me to Move when handling small objects.
 It's hard for me to Move when I'm scared.

FIGHT

I can Fight well when protecting a friend.
 I can Fight well when the person is smaller than me.
 I can Fight well when it's a monster.
 It's hard for me to Fight when they're bigger than me.
 It's hard for me to Fight when I'm outnumbered.
 It's hard for me to Fight when I'm really hurt.

THINK

I can Think well when I have time to concentrate.
 I can Think well when it's about math and science.
 I can Think well when I need to solve puzzles or problems.
 It's hard for me to Think when I first wake up.
 It's hard for me to Think when I'm distracted.
 It's hard for me to Think when people are staring at me.

SPEAK

I can Speak well when I really know what I'm talking about.
 I can Speak well when using my native language.
 I can Speak well when I'm comfortable around the audience.
 It's hard for me to Speak when I'm nervous.
 It's hard for me to Speak when I'm around girls.
 It's hard for me to Speak when I'm in front of a crowd.

CARE

I can Care well when it's about animals.
 I can Care well when a friend is making a mistake.
 I can Care well when someone is hurt.
 It's hard for me to Care when I'm angry.
 It's hard for me to Care when people treat me bad.
 It's hard for me to Care when others don't.

When you can't think of what to do in a situation, you can use these two Traits as guideposts. In short, play to your character's strengths and try to avoid their weaknesses (or use either to dramatic effect when you can).

EXAMPLE: *Angela decides that even though Becky's no marathon runner, she can beat feet when it's a matter of life or death. So Angela writes the following for Becky:*

I can Move well when I'm being chased.

For the Bad, she decides that even though Becky's smart, she is really shy (the root of her quiet nature) so she writes:

It's hard for me to Think when people around me are being loud.

CHAPTER TWO

PART THREE: WHAT'S INSIDE COUNTS

There are times when your child will be tested beyond their Abilities, when monsters will attempt to twist and turn the child using strange magic or sheer terror. This is where your child's Virtues come into play.

Belief

Your character's Belief is determined by his age. The younger your character is, the greater his capacity to transcend rational explanations—and the greater his need to believe. The older your character, the more accustomed he is to logic, rational cause and effect, and the ways most adults think.

Your child's Belief is equal to 13 minus the character's Age.

EXAMPLE: *Angela's character, Becky, is 8 so she has a Belief of 5. Angela writes 5 next to Belief on the character sheet.*

Wits

Your child's Wits represents his general level of anxiety or calm as well as how able he is to withstand and bounce back from sudden frights and exposure to the bizarre. Wits are an important part of your character as they will be called into play when facing monsters or the unknown.

On your character sheet, Wits looks like this:

scared OOOOO|OOOOO calm

Your character's Wits score is equal to his Think + 4, giving a range from 5 to 10.

Fill in that many dots (in pencil, you may have to do some erasing during play).

A kid with a high level of Wits is calm, collected, and can stand up to some pretty scary stuff. It takes a lot to shake this kid. He keeps it together when things are hectic and isn't too fazed by most monsters. This kid takes things in stride.

A kid with a low level of Wits is jumpy, generally nervous and worrisome. He is the worry wart of the group who is always pointing out potential danger and constantly telling folks to "be careful." It doesn't take much to send this kid running. It's likely that a kid with a low level of Wits has some kind of nervous tick or habit such as biting his fingernails or tapping his thumbs together. This kid is always poised for something to jump out of the woodwork.

It's important to note that your character can lose Wits during play (but we'll cover that later).

EXAMPLE: *Becky has a Think of 3 so she adds 4 to that and gets 7. That is her Wits score. Angela crosses off that many dots, starting from left to right. Becky's Wits looks like this:*

scared O O O O O | O O O O O calm

Angela does this with a pencil since her character may (and likely will) lose Wits (at least temporarily) during play.

Spirit

Your child's Spirit is both how much of his soul he has left (usually all of it) and can also act as his connection to it. Normally, this is safe as not much in the day-to-day can really hurt your soul. But certain monsters with certain attacks can.

On your character sheet, Spirit looks like this:

dark OOOOO|OOOOO light

All characters begin with a Spirit of 10.

Knowing that, you can see that all starting characters are full up to the word “light” on that scale. If your character loses Spirit, he can slide toward “dark.”

EXAMPLE: *Becky has a fully-intact soul. Angela draws a slash (in pencil) through all ten dots. It looks like this:*

dark ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ | ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ light

PART FOUR: NO KID IS ALL BAD

What defines your character beyond his Abilities, beyond his Virtues, are his knacks, talents, and learned skills. In this game, these are lumped together as Qualities. Qualities define your character by describing his strengths and weaknesses as well as by listing his more prominent skills. Qualities come in both positive and negative varieties. We’ll cover each.

Qualities have a Rank associated with them. Positive Qualities range from +1 to +3. The higher the number, the better the kid is at it and the more prominent it is in the kid’s life. Negative Qualities range from -1 to -2. The lower the number, the more severe it is and the more it holds back the kid.

Things I Like About Myself

Positive Qualities are things your character likes about himself. Or, at the very least, they are things he’s good at. These are written in plain language, as your child might say it. A positive Quality will usually begin with “I am...” or “I can...” but, with one exception, it doesn’t have to. You can use “I know...” or “I have...” if you like. Or even “My family...” or “My brother...” if you want to address your kid’s relationship with a family member and how that benefits him.

Your character starts with four or five positive Qualities: one main Quality at +2 and two Qualities related to that one at +3. These +3 Qualities are aspects of the main Quality that the character is particularly good at. After you’ve decided those, you may choose one more Quality at +2 or two more Qualities at +1 each.

In a Nutshell

First, choose a main Quality for your character that begins “I am...”. This is the one line summary of your character. When you started making your character, you picked a concept. If you can’t think of anything else, you can use that. You can also try to find a new way to say it or pick one aspect of the concept that really appeals to you. You can think back to those shows, movies, and books that were mentioned and pick a classic archetype from there. And these are archetypes, no doubt. So have fun with it.

Once you’ve decided on a main Quality, pick two other Qualities that are related to it. Usually, the main Quality is a job, role in the group, or general description of your character and the two Qualities under that one are the skills, knacks, or talents used in that job, role in the group, or that are part of that general description. These are extensions of that main Quality and have to be related to that. Later on, you’ll be able to describe your character beyond this core summary.

Sample main Qualities and related Qualities follow. Feel free to use these, customize them, or make your own.

CHAPTER TWO

More Than Just Modifiers

Qualities are not just for game use. They help players characterize their kids and get into their shoes. Qualities don't have to benefit or penalize a roll in order to come into play. A kid who is asthmatic might occasionally take a hit off his inhaler (great way to punctuate a heartfelt scene) and a troublemaker will naturally tend toward the more devious course of action even if no roll is being called.

I am an artist

Your child has a knack for the visual or written arts. She may paint still life, write poems, or put together cool little picture books for her parents.

SAMPLE RELATED QUALITIES:

I paint nice things.

I write poems.

I read a lot.

I make stuff with clay.

I am the big kid

Your child is larger than his peers. This is usually a combination of height and girth. With this, your kid is probably pretty imposing on the playground.

SAMPLE RELATED QUALITIES:

Other kids are scared of me.

I'm strong.

I'm really tall.

I hit like a brick.

I am a class clown

Your child is always ready with a joke, a funny story, or tall tale and is known to interrupt serious moments with wild behavior (much to the annoyance of the adults around).

SAMPLE RELATED QUALITIES:

I have lots of friends.

I'm good at thinking fast.

People tend to like me.

I make stuff up all the time.

I am a Cowgirl

Your child was raised on a horse farm, or spends lots of time on one, and has learned the tricks and skills of raising, feeding, and grooming animals.

SAMPLE RELATED QUALITIES:

Horses like me.

I can throw a rope.

My parents own a ranch.

I work the stables.

I am the small kid

Your child is the runt of the group. Like it's opposite, this speaks to both his height and his weight.

SAMPLE RELATED QUALITIES:

I have friends who stick up for me.
People underestimate me.
I can get into tight spots.
I'm pretty scrappy.

I am a smart guy/girl

Your kid is the whiz of the group. He probably has a few key areas of interest but his general intelligence is applicable to a lot of situations.

SAMPLE RELATED QUALITIES:

I'm good at science.
I've won the State Spelling Bee.
I know a lot about rocks and dirt.
I'm going to build rockets when I grow up.

Other Qualities

Once you've chosen your main Qualities and two related Qualities, you pick one or two more (your choice). These don't have to be related to your main Quality and probably shouldn't since these help to round out your character. Think of these as what your character does in his free time, maybe, or perhaps even a positive Quality that's beyond his control (such as one that stems from family).

NOTE: You could easily use some of these as main Qualities above and expand them with two nice related Qualities. Nothing here is off limits for that, as long as your group is okay with it. On the flipside, you can also use any of the main or related Qualities above as other Qualities (as long as they're unrelated to whichever main Quality you chose).

I am brave

Your child walks right into dangerous situations without a thought. He laughs at scary stories, stares monsters in the face, and always has great "one time, on a dare..." stories.

I am curious

Your child has a natural curiosity and always wants to figure out puzzles, find out how things work, and soaks up trivia.

I am cute

Your child has a sweet face, dimples, a winning smile, or some other adorable feature that causes folks to like her.

My parents like me best

At least in your kid's mind, he's the child his parents like best—way more than his brothers and sisters.

I am popular

The whole school—maybe even the whole town!—knows your kid. This is usually a good sort of recognition—they may be the star of their Little League team or the neighborhood's paperboy—but it may also be the bad kind (if your kid is a troublemaker).

I am the teacher's pet

Your kid is the one who is always called on to help pass out homework, complete the problems on the board, and can generally do no wrong in the teacher's eyes.

CHAPTER TWO

I build things

Your child has a natural talent for constructing things, whether it's a remote-controlled truck, a house of cards, or a tree fort.

I remember stuff

Your child has an excellent memory and has no problem remembering facts, figures, people, and places.

I can speak two languages

Your child can speak two languages. Considering his age, it's likely your child is being raised in a bilingual household (and the older family members may only speak one language and your child has learned the other from friends and through school).

I'm a good swimmer

Your child is at home in the water and is a strong and fast swimmer.

I tell stories

Your child can spin yarns, spit tall tales, and spout epic poems with the best of them.

I know how to use a computer

Almost every kid in the modern era knows how to use a computer but with this your child is exceptionally skilled at it.

When Good is Bad and Bad is Good

There may be times when your "Good" Quality works against you. It's nice to have a family with money when you want a new toy or you get to go Mouse Land USA – The Mousiest Place in the World but when you're hanging out with kids who are looking to take out their frustration with the next rich brat that comes along, that kid won't be in a good spot. And being shy may work against you when you have to talk to the big, imposing desk sergeant at the police station but it'll help you meet a body thief looking to take over the life of the most outgoing girl in the school.

Things I Don't Like About Myself

Negative Qualities are things the character doesn't like about himself, that get in his way, hold him back, or otherwise act against him. They may not be something the kid has control over—or that stem from the kid in the first place (such as family situations).

These follow the same structure as the Qualities above and usually begin with "I cannot..." but you can phrase it how you like.

Them's the Breaks, Kid

Each character begins with one -2 Quality and two -1 Qualities Below are some sample Qualities for you to look over. You can use any of these or come up with your own.

I have a stupid name

Maybe his parents thought it was cute at the time, were honoring some longstanding family tradition, wanted something unique, or were just oblivious. Your child might be named Harry Butts, Ima Hogg, or Dhingus Dherby. Whatever the name, it's nothing but a constant source of pain and humiliation.

I wear glasses

Your kid has really bad eyesight and has to wear prescription lenses to see well.

I'm clumsy

Your kid trips over his own feet and hits his head on the way back up. He can't seem to cross a room with getting a carpet burn (even on hardwood floor).

I get in trouble a lot

Your kid has a natural talent for delinquency. He can find trouble (or make some if none's available) just about anywhere, anytime.

I see scary things

They may or may not be real, but your kid gets flashes of horrific events, ghastly apparitions, or other disturbing images that seem to pop up at the most inopportune times.

I talk like a sailor

That's what his mother tells him but the kid has no idea what she's talking about. Your child can't seem to control his impulses when it comes to using words from the more colorful end of language.

I get confused

Your character has trouble processing a lot of different information at one time or handling overly complex instructions. He's probably okay if he takes things one step at a time but he needs someone there to guide him.

I don't fit in

The kid's an outcast. He just doesn't fit into social groups of any sort.

I just don't care

Your child withdraws from the world and has a hard time connected with other people.

My family's poor

Your child's family has less money than those of his friends. They cannot afford the latest fashions or the hottest video games and other kids give him grief for it.

I have trouble breathing

Your character has asthma or some other respiratory issue that makes running around or doing other strenuous activity uncomfortable and possibly life-threatening.

EXAMPLE: *Angela goes back to her concept for Becky as a "Quiet Kid" when thinking about what Qualities to give her. For the main Quality (which she gets at +2), she chooses:*

I am an Artist +2

For the related Qualities, which are all at +3, she writes:

Who likes old paintings +3

Who reads a lot of poetry. +3

For her other Qualities, she takes two of them at +1 (instead of one at +2):

I can do math +1

I speak two languages (Spanish) +1

Now she chooses the negative Qualities for Becky.

People don't trust me. -1

I am really shy. -1

Angela feels this helps really flesh out her character and cements who Becky is as the quiet member of the group.

CHAPTER TWO

Clashing Qualities

There are obviously conflicting Qualities listed here that would make no sense for one character to have. Selecting Qualities all comes down to common sense. One kid can't be Big for her Age and Small for her Age or Shy and the Class Clown. When building a character, aiming for an archetype—playing to your initial concept—is always a solid idea.

What if a Quality Contradicts an Ability?

That can happen. Your character may have a Fight of 2 and take "I am Tough." This can seem contradictory—wouldn't a tough kid be good in a fight?—and, in a way, it is but what this means is that your child's behavior or environment is compensating for or working against your child's inborn traits. From a system standpoint, this means you can balance your kid so he's kinda good in general—but unless you take a Quality that builds on a high Ability, your kid will never reach his full potential in his given talents (like a natural athlete who never tries out for sports).

Health

Your character can take a certain amount physical Damage before he is too wounded and beaten to keep going. We call this the character's Health.

There are four levels of Health: fine, sore, hurt, and cold. Each level has its own line of dots. Those dots tell you how much Damage in each Health level your kid can take before suffering a penalty. Each Health level ranges from 5 dots to 10 dots.

Your character has a number of dots in each level equal to his Fight or Care plus 4. Fill in that many dots in each Health level on your character sheet. As you take Damage, you'll lose Health, and erase points from each line.

Fight or Care?

You choose whichever of those two you like as the Ability. They work the same, the difference is how you see your character. A kid using Fight + 4 is physically tough and can take the pain. A kid using Care + 4 is tenacious and has a high will to live.

Health Levels

Each Health level is a gauge of how your character is feeling. As each level is filled with Damage, your character feels worse and worse.

I feel fine

At this level, your character is in top shape. He may have taken a punch or two and may have minor scratches and scrapes but he has no serious injuries.

I feel sore

At this level, your character is battered and bruised. He might have a pain in his side, a slight limp, or a swollen eye. No matter the form it takes, the Damage is enough to give him a -2 to his Success Dice total. When you're adding up the top three dice, subtract 2 from their total.

I feel hurt

At this level, your character has taken a beating. His body aches, he's bleeding, and he's having a hard time staying on his feet. The total on all Success Dice is at -4.



I feel cold

At this level, your child is on the brink of death or permanent change. Things are foggy and it's hard for him to concentrate or defend himself. After you roll, subtract 6 from the total of the Success Dice.

EXAMPLE: *Angela can use either Becky's Fight or Care to determine her Health. Since Becky's Fight and Care are both rated at 3, it doesn't really matter as far as the numbers. But what does matter is how Angela views her character. What keeps Becky going? Is it her own physical strength or is it her strength of will?*

Angela decides that, underneath it all, Becky's tenacity—her sheer will—is what keeps her going. Becky's Care (3) plus 4 is 7 so Angela fills in 7 dots next to each Health level. Angela puts a line after the seventh dot as a marker. As Becky takes Damage and loses Health, she'll erase dots but she'll know that her maximum Health for each level is 7.

I am fine: ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ | ○ ○ ○

I am sore: ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ | ○ ○ ○

I am hurt: ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ | ○ ○ ○

I am cold: ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ | ○ ○ ○

That Becky is a pretty strong kid.

PART FIVE: THE SAFETY OF OBJECTS

Aside from the internal stuff that makes up your character, he will also have Stuff, items of great personal importance that can help him in the game. Most items your kid carries around and has access to can be assumed and will no game value—nothing as far as the system is concerned. The kid simply has them and that's enough. There's no need to sweat whether your kid has pants or a flashlight. If it makes sense, he has it. What we're talking of here are items that your child has a deep connection with.

Stuff

A character gets a number of points equal to their Belief to give effects to all his Stuff. Effects are bonuses, penalties, or neat powers that an object gets from your child's belief in it. Each piece of Stuff must have at least one effect. Each effect is rated from 1 to 3.

CHAPTER TWO

Multiple points can be put into a single effect to boost what it does. Any effect you give a piece of Stuff will likely do one of the following:

Give a bonus to an Ability

Your Stuff may give a boost to one of your five Abilities. In this case, for every point you put into the item, you gain that number in bonuses to a specific Ability. You can simply write Fight +1 or Think +2 as an effect or elaborate with “Lets me do karate (Fight +1)” or “Gives me Dr. Neuron’s Superthink Ability (Think +2)”. However you phrase it, make sure the bonus can be easily discerned from it.

Give a bonus to Damage

Just like above, this is a bonus but to Damage instead of an Ability. As an effect, “Damage +1” and “Lets me hit really hard (Damage +1)” both work.

Give a penalty to an opponent’s Ability

Instead of giving your character a boost to one of his Abilities, this affects one of the monster’s Abilities. Monsters have Fight, Grab, Chase, and Scare as Abilities so use those when naming the effects (or use a more flowery descriptor, if you like).

Give a penalty to an opponent’s Damage

Essentially, this effect would make the Stuff act as armor. The number in this effect would be taken off any Damage to the kid.

Have a weird/cool Power

The effects don’t need to be directly related to the system. It’s fine to give a piece of Stuff an effect that is more story-based such as “Grows really big” or “Blinds monsters.” Qualities like these are good because their use is easily understandable and they can be worked into a story without a lot of fuss.

Mix & Match

A single piece of Stuff can have a mixture of Qualities. A superhero cape may give “Move +1” and “Damage -1”.

These items have game value but how they are personal to your character goes beyond system. It’s what makes them special to your character and how your kid’s Stuff is different than others. Your character may have shoes that give them a +2 to Move—and your best friend may have shoes that give the same bonus. But when your shoes are activated, they sprout little wings that makes your character lighter than air. While your friend’s shoes shoot flames that rocket them across the room.

Remember that you can have any number of Stuff, as long as you have the points to buy the effects, and that no effect can have a rating above 3.

EXAMPLE: *Angela’s character Becky is 8 years old so she has a Belief of 5. That gives her 5 points to put into Stuff.*

Angela’s player decides to give Becky a Necklace her aunt gave her for her sixth birthday. Becky says this necklace glows when monsters are around. She puts 3 points in it. She also has a Purple Compass that will always point toward home. She puts 1 point in that. Finally she has Big Green Galoshes she loves to wear even when it’s not raining out. She puts down 1 point under that. Angela’s put down the points now she needs to turn those points into effects.

Angela's already stated that the necklace glows when monsters are around. So she writes "Glow when Monsters are Around." She builds on that by writing, "Can blind monsters if they get too close." She needs one more effect so she writes "Protects her from monsters." Nice, this means it projects some kind of a field that absorbs Damage from monsters.

For her compass, which she says is a cheap plastic one that came in a "Fun Time Explorer Pack" along with a canteen and a tiny flashlight, she already has the effect stated; she just needs to write it plainly. She puts "Always points home." Finally, for the rain boots, she puts "Don't slip in rain or mud." That means she should be able to run up muddy hills or slide across a rain-slick rooftop with ease.

On the sheet, it looks like this:

Necklace (aunt gave me)

Glow when monsters are around 000

Can blind monsters if they get too close 000

Protects her from monsters (Armor +1) 0 00

Purple Compass

Always points home 000

Big Green Galoshes

Don't slip in rain or mud (Move +1) 000

PART SIX: TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

The last step has no numbers, no dice rolls, and no dots to slash. This is simply about your character as the kid he is. Think about his homelife, his friends, his hobbies, his personality, his fears, the pressures around him, how he does at school, whether he's picked on constantly or loved universally. After all the system work is done, you probably have a good idea of who your character is. Now it's time to bring it home.

Questionnaire

On the second page of the character sheet is a Questionnaire. The questions help you explore your character a bit more and further cement the idea of the character in your mind. Answer these questions from your character's point of view.

People and Things Close to Me

The first batch of questions is about people and places your character knows.

My best friend is...

This is someone about your character's age that is his best friend. It can be another player's character but it doesn't have to be.

The one grown-up I can trust is...

Write down the name and relationship (uncle, sister, friend, teacher, etc) of someone over age 16 who will believe your character, no matter how outlandish the story, even when no one else will.

Once I lost...

Write down an item that your character used to love, was very close with or had a strong emotional connection to, but that went missing. This is something the child hasn't seen in a long time. The reason it's lost could be due to the child's negligence, an accident, or, in the case of a living creature, it may have run away.

CHAPTER TWO

SAMPLE ANSWERS:

A magic quarter

My dad's binoculars

My sticker collection

My dog, Speckles

My favorite Kung Fu Terrapin action figure ("Rembrandt")

My Sally Secret journal (with VoxLox technology)

It was special because

Why did your character care about that item so much? What made it stand out from everything else the kid has?

SAMPLE ANSWERS:

It always came back out when I put in a coin machine.

My dad let me use them to explore the woods.

I had hundreds of stickers in it.

He was my best friend.

It was a gift from my brother.

I wrote all kinds of personal stuff in it.

Scary Things

The second batch has to deal with fears, monsters, and getting scared.

The one place monsters can't get me is...

This is your safehouse, an area or structure that can't be tainted by monsters. It must be a small definable areasuch as a patch of bare earth in the woods—no larger than a house.

SAMPLE ANSWERS:

My treehouse/fort

My dad's workshop in the basement

My family's church

My mom's old station wagon

My aunt's house

The local library

The one thing monsters can't touch is...

This is a sacred item that belongs to your child that monsters can't steal, break, or taint. This is never a piece of your Stuff—Stuff is too powerful for monsters to touch.

SAMPLE ANSWERS:

My Nature Girl Survival Pack

My tool belt

My baseball cap

My signed soccer jersey

My totally sweet bicycle

My trusty old canvas high-tops

I don't go near...

Name a person, place, or thing that is of this world that your character believes is haunted, demonic, or otherwise under the control or ownership of a monster.

SAMPLE ANSWERS:

The crossing guard...
The really old lady in the pink house...
The junkyard down the street...
The house on the corner...
The broken down bus in the woods...
The abandoned corner store...

...because...

Why doesn't your character go near that person, place, or thing? What about it so scary?

SAMPLE ANSWERS:

...because he eats the neighborhood cats.
...because she bakes poisonous cookies.
...because there's a really huge mean dog there.
...because my friend Steve saw a ghost there.
...because you can hear screams coming from it at night.
...because an old lady died there.

My biggest fear is...

What scares your character the most? Is it a monster? Or something all too real? This can be the bully who waits for him after school or what will happen to him when he parents get divorced. It doesn't need to be rational or something that would scare anyone else. The best fears are rarely either.

SAMPLE ANSWERS:

Spiders—or anything with too many legs!
Falling asleep and never waking up.
The tree outside my grandparent's house.
Something bad happening to my mom.
Getting kidnapped like that girl in the news.
Giant rats eating my face.

A Little About Me

Here are a few questions about how your character sees himself.

The thing I like least about myself is...

Name the one thing about your character he likes the least. This doesn't have to be tied to any Qualities, Abilities, or Traits the character has—this can be anything the child is ashamed of. This thing doesn't have to be rational but it does have to be something the kid beats himself up about.

SAMPLE ANSWERS:

I am jealous of other kids.
I can be mean for no good reason.
I'm fat and other kids pick on me.
My brother always makes fun of me and I can't stand up to him.
I broke up my parents' marriage.
I'm not good at sports.

CHAPTER TWO

The thing that always gets me into trouble is...

This is your character's "risk factor." This is a temptation, an addiction, an obsession, a weakness that threatens to overwhelm your character whenever they are near it.

SAMPLE ANSWERS:

I do what others tell me to do.

I have a wicked sweet tooth.

I'll do anything on a dare.

I can't stand up to authority.

I'll do anything besides my chores.

I like stuff that's shiny.

When I get scared, I...

How your character reacts to scary situations tells a lot about him. This is your character's "no time to think gotta do something oh man omg oh no oh no oh no" reaction. When your character is convinced that creatures are just one inch away in the darkness, just a hair's breath from grabbing his ankle and pulling him into oblivion, and the fears overtake him, what does your character do? Don't worry about rules on this, think about something you imagine your character doing while nervously exploring a creepy old house when a floor board creaks or while waiting in the cold dark woods for your friends to return and he suddenly hears a dry twig snap in the distance.

SAMPLE ANSWERS:

Snap my fingers.

Curl and uncurl each finger on my left hand in a pattern.

Scream like my head is on fire.

Sob uncontrollably and apologize for everything bad I've done in my life.

Pee a little.

Breathe so loud and slow that it sounds like a walrus speaking a foreign language.

Let's see how all of this comes together to build a profile of a character.

EXAMPLE: *Angela goes over the Questionnaire and fills in the following:*

My best friend is Tina Renee Fuller.

The one grown-up I can trust is my stepdad, Don.

Once I lost my mom's favorite earrings.

It was special because they belonged to my grandmother who died.

The one place monsters can't get me is the attic of my house.

The one thing monsters can't touch is my copy of The Velveteen Rabbit.

I don't go near Jackson Park because there a lot of scary birds there.

My biggest fear is getting pulled under the water.

The thing I like least about myself is how shy I am.

The thing that always gets me into trouble is I don't listen to my mom.

When I get scared, I close my eyes and hum the theme from my favorite show.

From those eleven statements, we've learned a whole lot more about Becky.

Tell Me About Your Family

Your kid's family—or lack of a family—is a big part of his life. Let's take a moment to consider this by writing a brief paragraph about your home life. This paragraph should include or address the members of your family (how many brothers and/or sisters you have; your parental arrangement—are you parents divorced? Do you have a stepfather/mother?), your living arrangement (which family members live with you? Are there other family members you don't live with? Are there non-family members who live with you? Do you split your weekends between your parents?), your family's social standing (are they poor? Are they typical suburbanites? Do your neighbors not like you or your family?), and how you feel about your family (any members you don't like? Or like more than others?).

If you're stuck on this, use the following sample paragraph as a guide. Replace the words in the brackets as you see fit and leave out any sentences that don't apply to your character.

I live in a [dwelling] with my [parents/grandparents/foster family]. I have [#] brothers and [#] sisters. I also have [an estranged parent/divorced parent] who lives in [city/state/country]. My [relative] died and I miss them a lot. I also have [pets]. Oh yeah, and [non-relative or distant relative] lives with us too.

You can elaborate on any of the above (such as saying which of your sibling are older/younger than you are, or by giving them names). This is the time to lay down some foundation as to what your character's immediate surroundings and influences are.

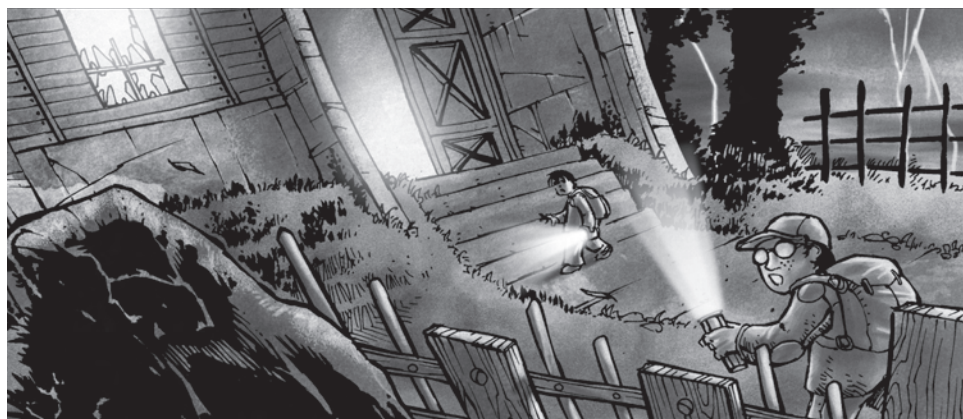
EXAMPLE: *Angela writes:*

I live in a house with my mom, stepdad, and brother, Tommy. I also have a dad who lives in Michigan with his new wife, Susie. They are expecting a new baby. My grandmother died and I miss her a lot. I also have a dog named Charlie who likes Tommy more than me.

Goals

Now that you have done all this work on your character, you should have a good idea of who this kid is. The next step is figure out what this kid wants.

A Goal is something your character wants to do in his life. It can be to prove something to himself or someone else or just because someone dared him. What it shouldn't be is easy—even if it's sounds easy, it should be hard for that particular kid. Completing Goals helps your character grow (both in the fiction and in the system).



CHAPTER TWO

Every character begins play with two Goals. One is a short-term Goal and the other is a long-term Goal. Short-term Goals may be completed in a couple sessions. This is something immediate and accessible to the kid. Long-term Goals are harder and may take several episodes if not a whole season. This is an ache the kid can't numb, a calling that the child can't ignore.

A Goal should begin with the words "I want to..." and they should be phrases in such a way where it is the kid getting the job done.

Usually, the kid's own insecurities and anxieties are blocking him from completing his short-term Goal. With a long-term Goal, there's usually something larger and harder to surmount in his way.

NOTE: Goals tend to be separate from the plot of the episode. A Goal, especially short-term, will likely be accomplished when the character's attention is on something more pressing or a Goal may need to be met in order for the child to save the day (game moderators take note!).

SHORT-TERM GOAL EXAMPLES:

- I want to get over my fear of the dark.
- I want to find the courage to speak to Renee Mickelson.
- I want to jump the gorge on my bike.
- I want to score a touchdown when we play football at recess.
- I want to buy my mom the best Mother's Day gift ever.
- I want to build a treehouse.

LONG-TERM GOAL EXAMPLES:

- I want to find my real dad.
- I want to save my brother from the monsters.
- I want to get my sister to like me again.
- I want to make enough money to replace the bike I left on the bottom of the gorge.
- I want to stop my friends from fighting all the time.
- I want to break up my sister and her stupid boyfriend.

Finally, A Secret

This isn't on the character sheet. This is separate. On a scrap sheet of paper, tell the game moderator something about your character—a crime they committed, an embarrassing habit, some juicy and scandalous secret—that would crush your character if anyone else found out, even if it's really rather mundane or benign.

Do not let the other players know this secret.

EXAMPLES:

- I still wet the bed.
- My first name is really "Hildegard."
- I killed a cat once.
- I sleep with a nightlight on.
- I stole my friend's favorite toy then lost it.
- I know where there's a real monster.

EXAMPLE: *For Becky's secret, Angela decides that her character is really jealous of her best friend, Tina, who is really popular and outgoing. A few weeks ago, there was a really nasty ru-*

mor floating around about Tina. It made Tina so upset she broke down at lunch and went home for the rest of the day. Becky spread that rumor.

Making a Good Character

The goal of all this—from concept to name to numbers to the answering of these questions—is not only to create a character you find interesting and engaging but also one who will make an active, considerate protagonist. You are creating kids who are characters in a story and they should be designed for that purpose. They are strong and flawed, have troubles but also hope, and will ultimately, no matter the odds, continue to fight.

No Passive Characters

You are making heroes, one of the few kids in the world who is willing to fight the monsters. Your character can't spend all his time in the corner of the room, being aloof and distant. He has to hook into the action, engage in the plot, and use his skills to help the others and keep things going.

Create a Character Who is Good at Something

It may be a 4-point Ability or a high level of Belief or an inventive Quality or two but your character should be good at something. Every character should bring something to the group and, from a system perspective, this is how it is expressed.

Consider the Other Characters

Try to create a well-rounded group of kids with complementary abilities and strengths. If you're creating your character at the same time as the other players, everyone should discuss concepts and the role that each kid will serve in the group. If you're coming into an established group, find out about the other characters and see if there is a niche your character can fill.

All the great ensemble casts are comprised of characters whose personalities, skills, weaknesses, and quirks work together to create a whole that is greater than its parts.

Being a Good Player

When you have multiple folks coming together to create a shared fiction, a cooperatively-constructed story, there is a certain amount of tact and technique that should be observed by everyone at the table. These are mandates to ruin anyone's fun but ideas and ideals to keep in mind in order for everyone to have a good time playing the game.

Act More than You React

Characters react, of course, but they also act. As a player, you need to put your character into the thick of the action. You need to put them in harm's way

Don't Hog the Spotlight

There will be times when your character is the hero—kicking butt, taking names, chewing bubble gum—but there will be times when your character serves more of a supporting role. For the game to remain interesting to everyone, the spotlight must be shared. This isn't always practical. There will be times when a character naturally steps into focus—such as when a relationship comes into play—but even then the burden of the storytelling should be shared.

CHAPTER TWO

Play To Your Character's Strengths

When you made your character, you made decisions about what your character's strengths are, what he's good at. When in doubt, play to your character's strengths. If your kid is the brain, think through the problem. If your kid has connections, call in favors. If your kid is a troublemaker, it's time to devise the ultimate boobytrap.

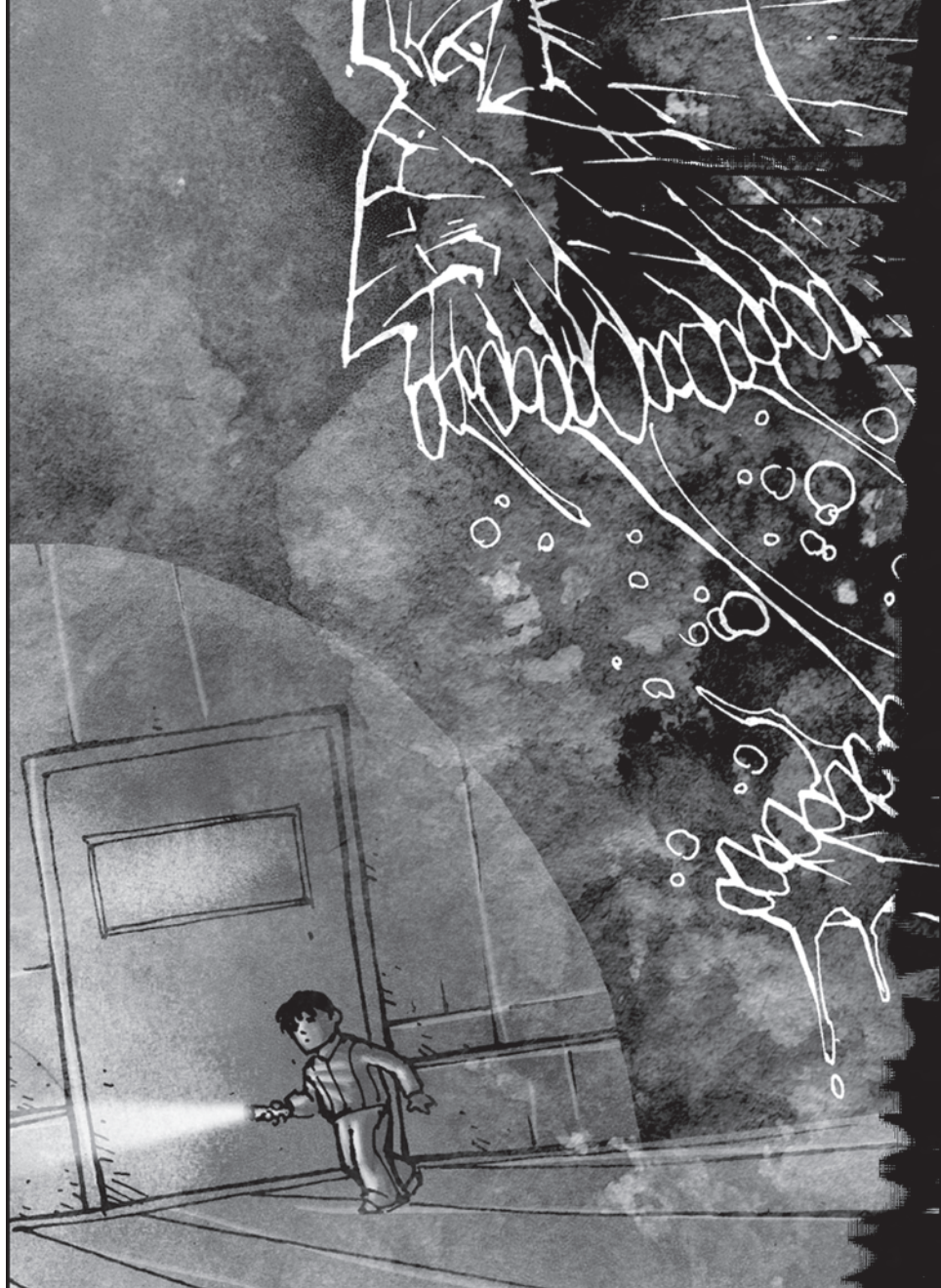
Serve the Story

As has been mentioned, you are portraying a character in a story and if the story goes limp that affects everyone. If you find yourself in a situation where you feel your character "wouldn't do this" then discuss the situation with everyone at the table. Having your character walk away could be played for great dramatic effect so do it in service to the fiction, not in service to your character.

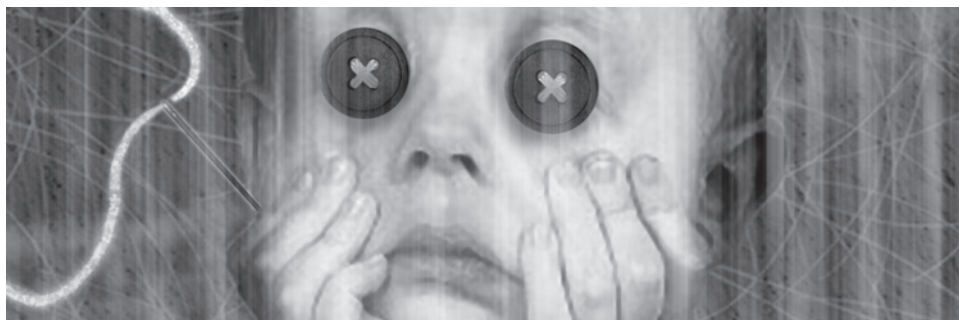
Characters Created

That's everything that goes into making a character. But there's one more person at the table: the game moderator. Let's take a look at her role in all this next.

CHAPTER THREE: SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME



CHAPTER-THREE



When it comes to playing this game and crafting a story, the game moderator's job is an important one. You shoulder a lot of responsibility as the game moderator but Little Fears Nightmare Edition is designed to run quick and smooth for both players and the game moderator. If you take on the duty of game moderator, you're in for a wild ride. Seeing players immerse themselves into a story you conceived, to fight a monster you created, to interact with characters you dreamed up is incredible. It's the same high a writer or director or musician feels when someone connects with their work but your audience is right there. You're sharing this experience together. It's really cool.

PART ONE: THE GM'S JOB

Below is the basic list of everything you need to do as game moderator. I know this may look like a lot but some are done only once and each can be incredibly rewarding and run. We'll run through them here and then touch on others later in the chapter.

Bring Group to Consensus

Before the session, preferably when everyone comes together to make characters, discuss the game with your players to see what they're looking for. Be direct: ask how scary they'd like to go, what type of stories they'd like to tell. What influences and source material are they looking at? Is there a line of books, a movie, or a television series they can point at and say, "Yeah, something like this."? It's a good idea to get everyone on the same page from the get-go as to avoid session-breaking and uncomfortable discussions later.

Design Episodes

Without something to do, a session will fall flat. The game moderator must lay down some basic structure in order for the game to get off the ground. We cover this in greater detail later in this chapter.

Guide Character Creation

The best way to build a cohesive group is for everyone to create characters together. That's not always possible but being able to openly discuss character concepts, ideas for Qualities, forge Relationships, and build that baseline together is invaluable.

Players won't always know what type of character they have in mind so be free about offering suggestions. Look at the other player characters and see where the gaps are. Does the group need a strong kid? A book worm? A charming leader?

Create GMCs and Monsters

As with how to episode design, this is covered in this chapter and the next but it's in this list for easy reference and because it's an important part of the GM's job.

Guide Play

Set those scenes and know when to end them. Keep the pace where it needs to be. Slow it down if things are going too fast and speed things up if they drag out. The section on guiding play is later in this chapter.

Help Players When They're Stuck

Characters get into trouble. That's what they do. It's not your job as GM to get them out of trouble. If anything, your job is to get them into even more. But it is your job as GM to help the players out when they're stuck. Really, it's everyone's job but it will often be you who sees a player struggling to come up with options for a player to get their character out of a jam, figure out a clue, or come up with some snappy retort.

If you see a player struggling, don't hesitate to talk about it. Say, "What are you thinking about?" or ask if everything's clear. Since this is a game where folks are collaboratively telling a story, there are going to be times when something you say or something a player says isn't as clear as what is in your or his head.

Help Players When They Disagree

There are going to be times when one player wants to do something that runs contrary to another player. If an amicable settlement can't be reached, go to the system. If one character is adamant about one course of action and a second character is dead set on another, then make it about the characters—not the players. It's perfectly alright for characters to split up, go their separate ways, try different things. And disagreement amongst characters can make for great drama but don't let it escalate into anything personal. Be open, be honest, and try to work through problems together. Remind players that everyone is at that table for the same reason.

Interpret Rules

My hope is that everything in this book will be crystal clear and there will never a contradiction or unclear word found within these pages. But my history tells me otherwise. If a rule is unclear, or you interpret it different than I intended, or if you discover an exception not covered in this book, or if you and another player disagree on a rule, or if two or more of your players disagree on a rule, you make the call. That's your right as game moderator. I hope it never comes to that, and everything flows smooth as ice, but in case of emergency, you're the one who breaks the glass. Make a call based on your experience and what makes sense to you. Serve the pace of the game and the fiction you're creating first. After the session, hit the online forums or the Little Fears website to see if you can find a clarification on the ruling. But in the heat of play, use your best judgement.

Portray the World and the People

This is probably the best part of being the game moderator. The players have their characters and that's all well and good but the game moderator has the rest of the world. You act as the parents, the brothers and sisters, the teachers, the neighbors, the cops,

CHAPTER THREE

the firefighters, the librarian, the guy who runs the drycleaners, the couple who own the corner market, the smug-mouthed bully, the bashful kid who's crushing on your player's character, and, perhaps best of all, you play the monsters.

I consider this the reward for all the hard work you have to do. Since you create the framework and premise of each game, you get to pick and choose what type of monster you'd like to use as a character—and you'll likely play a wide variety of them. The appeal of the horror genre has always been the monsters and this time you get to create and portray them.

Reward Play and Goal Success

Finally, after each session, you reward the players for how well their characters did and what goals their characters accomplished.

And that's the basic rundown on what you're here to do. Let's look at some of these in greater detail.

PART TWO: EPISODE DESIGN

The biggest part of the game moderator's job is crafting the framework for the stories that will be told. This game is about kids fighting monsters but that can be interpreted a number of ways. The game can be about pint-sized investigators hunting down strange creatures, with the kids following trails of clues, catching glimpses of their objective, and perceiving puzzle pieces as the whole slowly comes together. Or it can be about preadolescent monster hunters who stomp through the neighborhood, spritzing vamps with holy water and unraveling mummies. Or it can be about normal, everyday kids who are dragged into a web of monster-fueled conspiracies.

This game is not an emulation of real life. When designing episodes, think of television, think of movies, think of books. Drawing on real life can be great but don't be restricted by it. Inclusion of the mundane should serve as contrast to the bizarre.

The episodes included in this book are all built using this model so if you have any questions as to how all this comes together, you can refer to those to see all this in context.

What To Do Before the First Session

Sit down with your players and discuss what type of story they'd like to tell. Do they want something campy and fun? Or something that will make their skin crawl? Do they want to see something really scary? You should know going into the first session what the expectations of everyone are. This will help you determine the level of magic and realism in your game (as well as any appropriate rules tweaks you may suggest). It will also help you when you start drafting out episodes.

Making It Up as You Go Along

All that we're going to talk about in this session is built on the assumption that you're going to come to the game session with a prepared story structure. While that's what I recommend, it's not absolutely necessary. When we talk about scenes and goals and GMCs, the ad-libbing game moderator will have to do this stuff on the fly. Some experienced game moderators prefer to do it this way. It's a matter of personal preference and experience. If you're just starting out in story games, I recommend using the episode sheet, structure, and advice herein.

The Episode Sheet

We've provided an episode sheet in this book and on the website for your use in helping draft episodes. You don't need to use this sheet but it's a good resource and definitely worth doing if this is your first time running the game.

The episode sheet has sections bearing headers the same as those below. Let's look at each one in turn and talk about it.

Premise

Write a paragraph describing the basic setup of your episode. Be sure to include the Three Ts: Time, Town, and Tone. Time refers to when the story takes place: the decade/year, season or holiday. You can be as specific as Thanksgiving 2009 or as general as Summer Vacation in the 80s. Town means the geographical area in which the game will take place. This can be a general location such as "Small Town America" or "The Suburbs", a city such as "Vancouver, British Columbia" or "Plano, Texas", or even smaller such as "The House on the Elm Street Cul de Sac" or "the Valley Ridge Subdivision." Whatever you choose, the player should get a sense of who else might live there and what might be around. Tone gives the players a reference point from which they can draw inspiration. It also gives a good guideline as what is expected from them and what they can expect from you as the game moderator. Tone can be "Campy," "Fantastic," "Dark," or any other quick descriptor that fits. Further in this chapter, we'll talk about three distinct Tones in Little Fears Nightmare Edition as well as ways the game can be tailored to better match what you and the players want out of the game.

The premise is especially important for players to know when creating characters, so even if you don't know all the specifics about the episode, clue the players into these three things as soon as you can. The earlier they know, the more time they can consider their characters and their contribution to the story. The premise needn't be pretty or prosaic. Facts are what we're after.

Inciting Incident

There is always something that tips off the characters that something is just not right. If they are new characters, this will probably be what draws the players from their normal, safe world into one filled with shadows, nightmares, and creatures under the bed. For established characters, this will be what draws them into this particular story.

First Scene

This is where the episode will begin. The first scene lays out where each character is and what they're doing. This is what you will say to your group to set the tone and the premise of the episode. It's your job to set the stage and this is your chance to do it. This will lead the players to the Inciting Incident and kick the story off right.

Antagonist

This is the monster or monsters that are doing whatever it is the kids need to stop. This is the root of the problem, the big baddie. The characters may meet the antagonist repeatedly throughout play or only in the later part of the story. It all depends on what type of story you want to tell and how you want to pace it.

CHAPTER-THREE

Middle Scenes

Now that you have the inciting incident, first scene, and antagonist, it's a matter of connecting the dots. If you like, you can sketch out five or seven other scenes that tie that first scene to the final confrontation with the antagonist. Your players will invariably follow a unique path but it can be handy to have a basic roadmap.

When constructing the middle scenes, which will be the bulk of gameplay, keep in mind some of these classic story beats.

False Victory

The characters have done it! They've faced the monster and taken down the beast. Only they didn't really win. The thing they thought was the main bad guy is only an underling and the real trouble has just begun.

False Defeat

The characters come so close to winning when—OH NO!—sure victory is ripped from their grasps. Or so they think. A false defeat is that point where all hope seems lost. The bad guy is going to win and there's nothing the characters can do to stop it, which is the perfect time to come up with that plan so crazy it just might work.

No Way Out

The characters are backed into a corner, surrounded by the enemy, and there is no way out! This is usually set in a tight space such as a classroom, small bedroom, or treehouse but a kid can get backed into any corner (literal or figurative). This is the point where it really seems like the good guys are going to lose and it forces players to think creatively and on their feet.

Big Reveal

This is a scene where the characters discover some big secret or come face-to-face with the true threat. What's important here is scale. A "big reveal" should be big; otherwise, it's just a reveal.

Plot Twist

Everything the players thought was true is a lie! This is especially helpful if you had a big reveal planned but the players picked up on it early in the session. With a plot twist, it's important to really shake things up and pick one or two key "facts" and turn them on their heads.

Other Characters

These can be henchmen that serve the main villain, prominent adults the children will likely run into, or other kids who could figure into the plot. You don't necessarily need to do anything more than jot down their name and a brief sentence about them. If you feel they warrant it, then make them as full GMCs or monsters.

Scenes & Scene Goals

Scenes should open dramatically and end on a satisfying note. If your players start the scene in the clubhouse and then decide to walk the twelve blocks to Jimmy's house, there's no need to go through the lengthy march across suburbia. The game moderator should look for an organic conclusion to the scene, a natural beat, and then end the scene. Unless

something is going to happen during that walk, or it serves some other purpose, cut to a scene where the players are just approaching Jimmy's house (or inside Jimmy's house).

A scene is defined by its goal. The different goals should be shuffled for the sake of variety as well as drama. Constant action can be mindnumbing and tension without payoff can leave the players unfulfilled. Here are some scene goals for you to consider. While the game moderator will use these when constructing scenarios (covered in Chapter Four), the purpose of a scene can change based on player input so it's good for everyone to consider the types.

Dramatic Scene

This is one of the most common types of scene in films and television shows. Dramatic scenes are about character interaction, dialogue, and emotional conflict. This is about characters coming head-to-head with each other of themselves. It can be an awkward conversation between a shy boy and the cutest girl in his class, a grey-faced girl explaining to the principal why the school's policy against the use of fireworks is totally unfair, or a kid trying to convince his mom to let him go the Pumpkin Festival on his own this year instead of taking his stupid little brother like he always has to. The focus is all on the characters. Put something at stake—a budding romance, a possible school suspension, or social freedom—and let the drama commence.

Spotlight Scene

A spotlight scene is a scene that is focused either on a single character (player- or game moderator-controlled) or on a specific item or subject. All eyes are on that person or thing. It can be a magic billiard that rolled under the couch your older sister and her boyfriend are cuddling on, a waistcoat-wearing rabbit who just stole a character's grandfather's watch, or a meeting behind the school during sixth period. What's important is that there is one thing on which all the characters are focused and that there's an obstacle to be overcome in getting to that thing. Finding a way to reach under that couch without arousing suspicion from your snotty older sister and her meathead boyfriend, chasing after a rabbit before it makes it down its hole, or coming up with excuses to get out of class ("There must be something going around, Mrs. H, I have to go to the bathroom too.") are all about seeing what each character comes up with as a solution to the problem.



CHAPTER THREE

Investigation Scene

If a scene focuses on characters looking around an area or gathering clues, it's an investigation scene. This type of scene often bridges two other types of scenes. For instance, a Spotlight Scene may be all about characters chasing down a kid on a bike but instead of catching him, the kid leads them to a shack. When the characters arrive, they see the bike laying in the lawn and the rotten wood door of the shack open a crack. When they decide to go into the shack, we have an investigation scene. The players are looking around, trying to figure out where the kid went. If they find him, this may lead to a Combat Scene, explained below.

Combat Scene

The third type of scene is all about the action. The goal of this type of scene is to harm, delay, or put an end to something (hopefully a monster). Combat scenes leave a lot of room for all types of actions. In *Little Fears Nightmare Edition*, your players can use physical weapons such as baseball bats and sharpened jacks but also magically-powered items as well. Plus the characters can set traps, perform rituals, and just about anything else they can conjure.

NOTE: All these scenes result from and rely on each for purpose, context, and fun. Some scenes are long, drawn-out affairs, others are quick and dirty. In any given session, you'll have lots of scenes and do lots of things. It's a big part of what makes playing a story game such a fun experience.

Pacing

How you string together the different types of scenes determines the overall pacing of the episode. The particular of the scene is a big factor as well but, generally speaking, Spotlight and Combat Scenes are going to have more action and immediacy than Dramatic and Investigation Scenes. Keeping this mind can help guide your hand when putting down the barebones of an episode.

Scene Introductions

It's a good idea to include a mystery or goal within your introduction of a scene. It doesn't need to be grand or directly stated. Introductions set up the place, time, and mood of the scene. They are the establishing shot of an area. Talk briefly about the immediate environment, anything particularly noticeable happening around them, and sprinkle an objective in there as well. Something out of place or that would catch their attention the moment they get there. Something that would gnaw at their mind as being out of place. It should also relate to the goal of the scene. Let's look at some examples.

The basic idea here is that your character has made plans to meet his friends, Bobby and Rudy, at the famed Halloway House. There have been rumors of some strange noises coming from inside the place. The three kids split up to gather supplies before convening at the old estate. It's raining and your character has hiked his way through the woods and across the subdivision to his house.

Dramatic Scene Opening

You quietly open the door and walk inside your house. You do your best to close the door without making a sound. You take off your muddy boots and set them gently on the floor mat.



You don't want to leave a trail across the freshly-vacuumed carpet. From the kitchen, you hear your mother cutting something—vegetables probably, as it's almost dinner time. You were supposed to be home 30 minutes ago. As you sneak your way toward the bathroom to wash up, your mother yells from the kitchen, "Where do you think you're going, young man?! You get in here this instant!" What do you do?

This is an example of a Dramatic Scene introduction. Let's say your character fails to smooth things over with his mom and he's been sent to his room. He can't come out until he's called down for dinner.

Spotlight Scene Opening

You only came home to grab a flashlight and a hammer and now you're imprisoned in your room. You're supposed to meet Rudy and Bobby at the Holloway House in thirty minutes. Even if you left right now, you'd be five minutes late at least. If you don't make it, you know you'll never live it down. You're on the second floor of your house. Your mother is downstairs in the kitchen, cooking dinner and keeping an eye on the door. What do you do?

This is an example of a Spotlight Scene introduction. Let's say your character makes it to the Holloway House. Bobby and Rudy are already waiting there.

Investigation Scene Opening

You meet your friends outside the Holloway House. Bobby's standing by the root cellar. Rudy's already busted the lock with a pair of his dad's bolt cutters. Bobby gives you some crap about being late. "We were gonna go in without you," he says, chuckling. Rudy throws open the cellar doors and starts down the steps. "Enough talking," the older boy says. "Let's check this place out."

CHAPTER THREE

This is an example of an Investigation Scene introduction. Let's say the characters look all around the inside the house. Nothing sticks out except for a padlocked door underneath the stairwell that leads from the ground floor to the second level. The kids manage to open the door and go inside.

Combat Scene Opening

The harsh light dangling in the center of the room is almost blinding. As your eyes adjust, you can tell immediately that the room is much larger inside than it could possibly be in the real world. The door behind you slams shut and seven deadbolts flip into place, each one sounds like a gunshot. There's a scraping sound in the far dark corner. A yellow eye opens, glowing even in the shadow. A growl, the scraping of chain against the stone floor, and the creature steps into the light. It's six foot easy, has big back feet and long yellow teeth like a rabbit. Which may well be what it once was. It coils back, like it's going to leap at you. What do you do?

This is an example of a Combat Scene introduction. It sets up an opponent (who may or may not be the main villain) and thrusts that opponent at the characters.

The story will continue from here, scene by scene. Each scene stemming from the actions of the characters and the requirements of the story. What happens depends on whether the characters defeat the beast, somehow calm or tame it, or simply run away.

Of course, the goal of all this is to sew these scenes together into a grand tapestry of fiction that is engaging and terrifying and ultimately satisfying to everyone involved.

Scenes & Locations

A scene can happen entirely within one location but the two are not synonymous. Within one location, such as a public library, you can have a scene take place on its steps, at the reference desk, in the periodicals room, and in the janitor's closet. On the flipside, a single scene can start in the janitor's closet, lead out into the computer stations, roll into the mystery section, and out the front door (a chase scene comes immediately to mind).

What Do You Do?

It's probably the most important question that a game moderator can ask. It's also the perfect way to end a scene introduction. Because this game is almost entirely about what the characters do. There's no need to obscure that or be subtle about it. You set up the scene, give the characters a place and a goal, and then it's all about what they do and how you react to it.

Guiding Play

This game is comprised of three basic elements that will pop up again and again. When we talk about scenes and goals, and we talk about players portraying their characters, we're talking about all this with three driving elements in mind. Again, this game is about moving things forward and creating an atmosphere.

Driving Story

Foremost, what's happening at the table should tell a good story. That, above all else, is key. How a character acts, when and where enemies and opposition pop up, the goals of a scene are all about driving the story forward.

Driving Threats

The second most important thing are those enemies and that opposition. They need not be overt and in-your-face. The expectation of an enemy can be incredibly dramatic. Characters having to deal with the aftermath of something the enemy did is great drama. Characters being affected by what an enemy has done makes for a fantastic character arc and ties us into the third driving factor.

Driving Character

While story and the plots and machinations of the enemy are very important, we can't overlook the character. Players should try to act and react as their characters in a consistent manner. The ideas and viewpoints of the character should influence the threats and the story and are something the game moderator should keep in mind as the scenes fold out. A player saying "My character wouldn't do that" can sometimes break a good story but it may in reaction to the game moderator not considering what scene and what goal make sense for the characters.

All in all, it's about cooperation. If each person keeps an open mind, focuses on those three elements, and does their job at the table, the story should come together very well.

PART THREE: GM CHARACTERS

Now that you have an idea of the episode, have filled out the sheet, and thought about how each character can fit in, it's time to create the other characters in the story. (Monsters are covered in their own chapter and include a bunch of pre-generated baddies for your use.)

The GM has two options when it comes to any kid characters she may control. The GM takes the time to write up the GMC as a full-fledged character or use an alternate method we'll get into in a moment.

Using the player character creation to make game moderator characters is fine for recurring characters such as the school bully, a player character's younger brother



CHAPTER THREE

or sister, or a best friend. But for background characters or those created off-the-cuff that a player characters happens to challenge or threaten, here's a quick and easy guide to making game moderator characters on the fly.

GMC Quick Stats

For simplified GMCs, you can use the following method. This is especially handy when creating these characters in the moment

Name

GMCs still need a name, something you can call them to differentiate them from everyone else in the world. This can be a proper name or a description of what they are, such as "Mall Security Guard" or "Head Librarian."

Description

Write down three statements that describe the GMC. Think about their function in the story, their job in the world, and what will make them compelling as someone that needs to be overcome. These act as the GMC's Qualities.

Weaknesses

GMCs also have 2 points of Weakness. They either have two Weaknesses at Rank 1 or one Weakness at Rank 2. A Weakness is a condition or environment for which they have a soft spot or that somehow puts them at a disadvantage.

EXAMPLE: *Let's write up a babysitter. The non-family member given authority over a child always makes for good drama. First thing we do is name her. "Missy" sounds like a good babysitter name to me.*

The next thing to do is describe her. She's a babysitter so I want to describe her in a way that plays to that fact and also makes her a bit of a threat. I write down: She has a Keen Sense of Hearing, Is Short-Tempered, and Is Pretty Cute. These touch on something she can do (hearing), her personality (short-tempered), and her physical description (pretty cute). If you can't think of a way to describe a GMC, use those three to get ideas.

For Weaknesses, I give her Boy-Crazy (1) and Curious (1). If something involves cute boys her age or something out of the ordinary, it's hard for her to restrain herself. She's a classic babysitter.

Target Numbers

Instead of rolling a Test against a GMC, the players roll a Quiz against a Target Number. For kids, the Target Numbers will range from Easy (6) to Hard (12). The default Target Number for a child acting against another child is Average (9). Anything over should be used sparingly. For adults, the Target Numbers will range from Average (9)

MALL SECURITY GUARD

DESCRIPTION

Can smell trouble
Doesn't trust kids
Has a bum knee

WEAKNESSES

Likes talking "cop talk" with kids (1)
Has an eye for cute moms (1)

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

DESCRIPTION

Knows a lot of words
Is suspicious
Is near retirement age

WEAKNESSES

Sucker for sweet talk (1)
Likes kids who show ambition (1)

to Difficult (15), with the default being Hard (12). Higher difficulties can be used if the conditions of the scene favors the GMC or if you want to give the players a real challenge.

Think of your GMCs as obstacles—especially the adults!—and you’ll start to see where this can come into play.

EXAMPLE: *Brett is trying to sneak out of his house. He made a plan with his friend Eduardo to meet at the creek at dusk. Unfortunately, his parents are out bowling and they hired our girl Missy to babysit. Missy is really strict and if Brett gets caught, that’s it. She’ll probably bolt his door shut or tie him to the bed or something. But Brett needs to get out.*

Brett sneaks down the stairs and can hear Missy chatting on her cell phone. He catches words like “totally” and “oh-em-gee” and the name “Darrell” comes up a lot. Whatever. Brett sets his eyes on the prize. He needs to sneak past Missy in the living room and make his way out of the back door in the kitchen before he’s safely out of the house.

But Missy has a “Keen Sense of Hearing.” Since Missy’s considered an Adult, the default Target Number is Hard (12). The GM decides Missy’s the type who expects her young charge to pull some kind of stunt so she ups the Target Number to Difficult (15). Ouch. Brett reminds the GM that she’s on the phone, obviously distracted. The GM concedes and lowers the difficulty back to Hard (12).

Brett’s player rolls Move (3) and uses the Quality “I take karate +2” since he’s being all stealthy. Five dice are rolled and come up 2, 3, 4, 4, 5. The top 3 dice are 4, 4, 5 for a 13! Brett manages to sneak past his babysitter and make it outside.

Sample Simplified GMCs

Below are a few sample GMCs that use the simplified rules. You can use these as-is or modify them for your own purpose.

Weaknesses and Target Numbers

If the characters play to this weakness when attempting something, the Target Number goes down a number of levels equal to the rank of the Weakness.

EXAMPLE: *Instead of sneaking past Missy, Brett could have chosen to create a distraction. Let’s say he opens his bedroom window and chucks a baseball at the aluminum shed in the backyard. With a strong enough throw and enough baseball, Brett creates enough noise to pique Missy’s curiosity (Curious being one of her Weaknesses).*

Brett has to roll here. This time though, the goal is to attract Missy’s attention. He’s rolling Move because he’s doing it by lobbing balls at the aluminum shed to do so. His Move (3) and his “I take karate +2” Quality (since it can help focus his aim and his strength) give him a total of 5 dice. The Target Number would normally be Hard (12) but Missy Rank 1 Weakness lowers it one level to Average (9). Brett rolls and gets 1, 1, 2, 3, 5. The Success Dice are 2, 3, 5 which add up to 10.

Brett waits until he sees Missy walk into the backyard to investigate before rushing downstairs and out the front door.

PART FOUR: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

When your players made their characters, they each filled out a questionnaire. The goal of the questionnaire is two-fold. The first is to strengthen the bond between player and character. By answering the questionnaire in the character’s voice, it helps flesh out the character and put the player into the kid’s shoes. The second goal is to give you, the GM,

CHAPTER THREE

ways to push and pull at the characters on a personal level. You can use their answers to lock in on character motivation, lead them into trouble, or help them out if they've dug themselves too deep a hole. Let's revisit each of those questions and see how you can use the answers in play.

The Public Questions

The public questions are the ones that are on the back of the sheet. We'll cover those first. It's possible for other players to know the answers to each other's public questions which is

People and Places Close to Them

Monsters love to use the places a child knows against them. The more familiar a child is with a person, place, or thing, the more the monster can corrupt it.

My best friend is...

Nothing's beneath a monster. It doesn't even have to put the child's best friend in danger. By suggesting it will hurt his best friend, it calls the child to action.

The one grown-up I can trust is...

As with the best friend, the threat of harm against a grown-up can drive terror straight through a child. A child will go above and beyond to protect the grown-up he cares about, even walk straight into harm's way.

Once I lost...

Nothing is ever truly lost, just misplaced. If a monster finds the object, it can lure the child into danger with it, especially if the monster knows why it was special to the child. **It was special because...**

Trust me, the monster knows why.

Scary Things

Monsters will always try to use the things that scare a child against him.

The one place monsters can't get me...

There is no safe place from monsters. Children believe there is though and that can give them power. This works for and against the child. Monsters will try to use the place as a lure—by threatening it directly or indirectly or by using it to spring a trap.

The one thing monsters can't touch is...

If a monster can get its hands on something, it can corrupt it. It may be hard for a monster to get a hold of this object but it will keep on trying. Monsters love a challenge.

I don't go near...

Then push them towards it. Put something the characters treasure or need in a place one or more of them won't go.

My biggest fear is...

Monsters looking for the easy way to scare a child will cut straight to the heart of the matter. The child's biggest fear should be reserved for a dramatically powerful moment. Use it as the climax for a long arc where the kid has gone through a lot of turmoil and strife. Give it power, give it impact.

A Little About Them

The last two parts deal with the child directly.

The thing I like least about myself...

Monsters love to make kids feel bad. By exploiting something a kid already doesn't like about himself, the monster has an in towards that end.

The thing that always gets me into trouble is...

This is your carrot to dangle in front of players and get their characters into trouble. Every child has something they can't resist. This is a surefire way to draw a character to action. A game moderator should never force a character down a certain course of action but nudging is perfectly fine. And the player chose this for his character.

When I get scared, I...

If you like, you can have the character do this when he drops below five dots in Wits instead of turning off an Ability. And it doesn't just have to be the fifth dot but any of the five dots on the "scared" side of Wits. Try to use this at the best possible moment, like making a character Scream when everyone else is dead quiet.

And, yes, this would—at least temporarily—override a turned off Ability that would make it impossible. So if a character has "When I get scared, I sing my favorite song", you could have him do that even if pervious Wits loss turned off Speak.

The Character's Secret

No cruel prank, evil deed, lie, betrayal, or deception goes unnoticed by Closetland. For every secret, there is a monster that knows it. They are not above using the secret to blackmail or coerce a character into doing something.

PART FIVE: AFTER EACH SESSION

At the end of each session, there are two important things you must do as the game moderator: take notes and reward players.

Take Notes

You should jot down any important information you need or can use to create the next session or episode as soon as you can. This is especially important when you end a session in the middle of an episode.

Reward Players

Leading a character towards growth and change is part of the fun of playing story games. In Little Fears Nightmare Edition, the characters grow and change in three ways: fulfilling goals, contributing to the story, and having a birthday.

Character Goals

During character creation and at the beginning of the session, each player wrote down two Goals for his character. If he fulfills the Goal in a session, he gets a reward.

When a short-term Goal is met or fulfilled during the session, the character gains 1 Playaround Point.

When a long-term Goal is met or fulfilled during the session, the character gains 2 Playaround Points.

CHAPTER THREE

When a goal is met, erase it from the sheet. The player must choose another to fill its place at the beginning of the next session.

Story Contributions

Every player should contribute the story, and will through his character, but players who really sell an emotional moment, come up with a brilliant plan, or land a solid hit on a monster that drove it away or knocked it down gain 1 Playaround Point.

These can also be awarded during play (and can make keeping track of them much easier).

Spending Playaround Points

Playaround Points are spent in the following ways.

BY SPENDING 5 PLAYAROUND POINTS, YOU MAY:

Increase a positive Quality by 1 Point (may not exceed a Quality rank of 3).

Gain a new Quality at +1.

BY SPENDING 8 PLAYAROUND POINTS, YOU MAY:

Decrease a negative Quality by 1 Point.

Happy Birthday

Everyone has a birthday. As the GM, it can be fun working a character's birthday into the session. If you're running a lot of episodes, be mindful that the birthdays of the characters fall in order (unless you're telling episodes out of chronological order).

If a character has a birthday during the session, the player does the following at the end of the session:

Decrease Belief by 1

Losing Belief is part of growing older. The player lowers his character's Belief by 1 point on every birthday.

Increase an Ability

The upside to that is your character is more capable physically. The player adds 1 point to one of the character's Abilities.

When a PC turns 13

When a 12-year old character turns 13, he starts along the path of unplayability. Now, there's no need for the player to hand over his sheet then and there and walk off to the sunset. A player character who turns 13 can still be played for a little while, say an episode or two. On a PC's thirteenth birthday, increase an Ability by one point per usual. Instead of dropping Belief though, the rule is this: The player character keeps that 1 point of Belief but can only use it to Believe in the other characters, not himself.

Those are the in-game effects. As far as stories go, 13-year olds don't see the Monsters as clearly as the younger kids and aren't as likely to be targeted by them. The 13-year old starts to forget adventures he had that involved Monsters or anything magical. One day, he will wake up having no memory of real Monsters at all.

The player should work the character's exit from the group, his "growing up," into the story naturally. Eventually, he will have to make a new character. But if done well, the ending of his previous character will be touching, bittersweet, and part of a great story.

PART SIX: CUSTOMIZING THE GAME

You may be intrigued by this game and want to tell stories about kids fighting monsters, but be unsatisfied with the level of magic and/or realism in the game. While I urge you to play a couple sessions of the game as written, so you can get a feel for the way things work in their default state, you have a couple options when it comes to adjusting the game to a level of realism or fantasy that your group prefers.

If you wish to adjust the level and the power of magic in the game, discuss it with the players first. This should be decided together so that everyone comes to the game with the same expectations and can create characters appropriate for the type of story that will be told. I break it down into three types: Scary Stories, Dark Faery Tales, and True Horror. Let's talk about each.

Scary Stories

Scary Stories are the default. The rules presented elsewhere in this book are designed with Scary Stories in mind. These types of stories have a generous dose of the weird or fantastic and are good for a jump-fright or two. If you want to tell a story in the style of R. L. Stine's *Goosebumps* series, you're good to go. No adjustments need be made.

Dark Faery Tales

For a possibly lighter, more fanciful game, along the line of Grimm's Fairy Tales or Alice in Wonderland, you can dial up the magic and wonderment a few ways. For Dark Faery Tales, you can create characters the usual way though you may wish to steer players toward more fantastic Qualities for their characters.

Faery Monsters

When making monsters, create them using the rules as usual. The difference comes in play. In a Dark Faery Tale, for a monster to be destroyed, the players must deplete a monster's Stuff first, then its Terror, then its Health. In that order. For this, physical attacks that would normally result in damage to Health, are effective against Stuff and Terror as well—so any attack works. You may also wish to rule that Belief does twice the damage it usually does.

Faery Magic

There's magic in a Scary Story, certainly, but it needs to be turned up a bit in order to capture the true tone of a Dark Faery Tale. You have a couple options for doing this so you can fine-tune your Dark Faery Tale to the exact level you're looking for.

Option 1: Double Belief Tokens

The easiest option is to double the amount of starting Belief tokens. Instead of one token per rank in Belief, give your players two. This is pretty drastic and will likely lead to a lot of magic being bandied about but it's easy to do and can be fun for a lighthearted game.

Option 2: Remove the Limit

Another option would be to remove the limit of ten tokens at a time. While this won't yield an immediately more magic-filled game, it leaves the possibility for the slow accrual of power that can be released in a fantastic finale.

CHAPTER THREE



Option 3: Fewer Lost Tokens

Risking Belief only results in a loss of tokens if there are Failing Grades and then only one token is lost. This allows for more experimentation.

Option 4: Free to Use Stuff

Stuff doesn't cost anything. With this option, players can bring in the power of their Stuff whenever and wherever they like without restriction.

You can mix and match the options above as well, if you like.

NOTE: Giving players more Belief or removing the restrictions on Belief can cause the system to seriously favor the younger characters. Older characters won't have as much of an advantage when it comes to Abilities which will likely put the focus of the actions on the younger kids using Belief (even if that Belief is to bolster the rolls of the older characters).

True Horror

These games are based on stories that are ripped from the headlines and can deal with more serious issues surrounding children. Abduction, work camp, juvenile delinquency, and broken homes are all things that can be dealt with under the True Horror banner. This style is certainly not for everyone—and the more unsavory elements needn't even be addressed—but there are options for dialing the fantastic and creating a darker, more realistic game.

True Monsters

Depending on how far down you want to dial the mystical aspect of the game, you may wish to cut out using Terror. When doing this, monsters are made the same way as usual (so they can get their Stuff!). The difference comes when characters fight the monsters. If there's Belief (or diminished Belief) in your game, ignore the monster's Terror stat and only worry about its Health. Once that's gone, the beast is dead.

True Magic

A high level of magic or fantasy can break the True Horror mood in no short order. If your group is craving a dark game, it makes sense to dial down the Belief. Below are some options for your group. Feel free to use them or come up with your own.

Option 1: Belief Lasts an Episode

Currently, the rules state that a player is given a number of tokens equal to their Belief every session. To dial it down, change it so that a player is given a number of tokens equal to their Belief every episode for a small adjustment. This way, their pool of tokens would only refresh every time a story is completed. If your games have been covering an episode every session, you can stretch it to every two episodes.

Option 2: Belief Lasts a Season

To dial down the magic significantly, only give a player a number of tokens equal to their Belief every season. That way, their pool would only refresh every 6-8 episodes and they would have to use their Belief very sparingly.

Option 3: No Rewards

You could also not reward players an extra token for getting Passing Grades when they risk Belief. When you do this, Belief will only spiral downward with no way to fill it up.

You can also combine options 1 or 2 with option 3 for an even greater reduction in the magic level.

Option 4: No Belief at All

It is also possible to remove Belief and Belief magic from the game entirely. This is obviously the most drastic option as it puts the younger characters at a severe disadvantage.

NOTE: This can significantly affect the younger characters in the game. By removing or lowering the effectiveness and recurrence of Belief magic in your game, you can negatively affect the impact they have on the fiction of the game. Part of the appeal of playing younger character is access to great Belief magic. If your players are all portraying characters aged 10 or more then this isn't much of an issue, of course.

A Final Note

Now these are all system changes you're making and are certainly not absolutes. You can run the game using Scary Story rules but set it smack dab in the middle of a Goblin Market. Or use the True Horror adjustments to tell an adventure tale such as *The Goonies*. You could use Dark Faery Tale rules to construct a diabolical tale of a child-eating tooth fairy. If you're looking for a certain flavor for your game, feel free to experiment. What I'm providing are rules tweaks and default "settings" for those tweaks but they're certainly not the only options.

PART SEVEN: SOME GM ADVICE

As the game moderator, you have a fair bit on your plate. It can seem overwhelming, especially if you're new to story games. If you feel overwhelmed by what you have read here, I offer the following advice (which seems to work for me).

Learn by Doing

Not everyone learns a game by reading the rules. Games are made to be played—this one certainly is—so if something doesn't make sense to you, bring out the dice and tokens and play it out. Even if no one else is around, go through the steps on your own and see what happens when the system is in play, not just on paper.

Start Simple

There's no need to use every single rule in this book in your first session (or in every session). Start simple, with characters and basic rolls, and integrate new rules as you become comfortable with the system.

Ask the Rules

The rules are designed to help and guide everyone. If you come across a situation where you don't know if the character should be successful, roll the dice.

Favor the Players

If you don't understand a certain rule, or if using the rules gives you an unclear result, rule in favor of the players. In the instance of a tie between a player character and a GMC or a monster, the player character is successful.

Don't Resist Change

Your scenes will not always play out the way you imagine them. And I believe they shouldn't always. Your job as the game moderator is to draft setups and have an overall story goal and structure in mind. But this is a shared narrative, collaborative storytelling, and the players have a say in what happens. They'll be acting on the fly, reacting to what you set up, and you should do the same in your reactions.

If something breaks the fiction of the game, then you should talk with the player (or all the players) about what happened. The hope is that this won't happen since everyone agreed upon the premise and tone before the game began but it might. If a player wants his character to do something that fits within the premise and tone, never tell them they can't. Either allow it or roll the dice. The system can say no, that's part of its job but the game moderator has other things to do.

Goal Switching

You may set up a Combat Scene that the players turn into a Dramatic Scene. You may set up an Investigation Scene that the players turn into a Combat Scene. You may set up a Spotlight Scene that doesn't excite the players and they have their characters go do something else.

This happens. It's a part of collaborative storytelling. As the game moderator, you have a couple options.

Talk to Them About It

If it's a common recurrence, you may need to talk about it with your players. It could be there was some fuzziness regarding premise or maybe what the players now want doesn't line up with what you want. Open and honest communication is the way to go here.

Let Them Lead

I say "let them" not because doing so is a generous selfless act on your part but because it contrasts with the next option. You may find that the episode you had in mind isn't as interesting or engaging as the direction the players are taking it. In this case, you need to improvise and follow their lead. This will require an adjustment phase where you're reacting more than acting but eventually things should settle and you'll find your bearings.

Draw Them In

If the players don't want to fight the creature, have it fight them. If they don't want to engage the GMC at the center of the dramatic scene, have the GMC engage them. The situation could have come about because you were unclear in your introduction and the players weren't clear on the motivation for the scene. In this case, you may need to get things moving in the scene faster than you originally intended.

Disengaged Players

When everyone sits down together to play out a story, things can go off the rails if one of the players isn't contributing at the level of the other players. It's each player's responsibility to get his character involved but that doesn't mean you're powerless if he doesn't. The best option is to talk to the player about the issue and find out what you or the other players can do to engage that player again.

Above All Else

Have fun. And help everyone else at the table do the same. As the game moderator, a lot falls on you but I hope this setting and this system inspire you to shoulder it.

Next, let's step outside and take a look at the real world.





**CHAPTER FOUR:
IT'S A BIG WORLD
OUT THERE**

CHAPTER FOUR



Soledad waved the thin beam of the flashlight around the interior of the abandoned house. “This is the place.”

Tyler squirmed a bit, wrinkling his nose at the thick musty stench. “It smells like old people.” Madison shushed him, pushing her way past. “This is where Mother lives, show some respect.” Tyler cocked an eyebrow at the girl. “Your mother lives here?”

“No, dummy,” Madison shook her head. “Mother lives here.”

The boy shrugged. “Ooooookay.”

Madison let out a frustrated groan. “Don’t you know anyth—”

“Quiet,” Soledad scolded. She focused her flashlight on a small grey box in the corner of the room. Its lid sat askew, half-broken on its hinges. The older girl motioned to Madison and Tyler. They glanced at her. Soledad nodded the beam at her find. The shadows in the old house ran from the light. The three approached the box, carefully.

Tyler knelt down slowly to inspect the box. His left knee popped so loud it made Madison gasp, filling her lungs with dust. She tried to hold her breath but the coughs fought their way out. She doubled over onto the hardwood floor. With each cough, a fire roared in her chest. Her exhalations sent even more dust and dirt into the air. Tyler told her to stop it, a little too loudly.

Soledad opened her mouth to quiet them. But a clanging in another room stopped her. She turned, taking the beam of light with her. Tyler grabbed for the small box in the darkness before helping Madison to her feet.

The box was heavy, metal probably, and was covered in a half-inch of dust. He felt around the outside; his fingers brushed against two small moons attached to the back.

“This place is creeping me out,” Soledad walked slowly to the outside door. “I think we should go.”

Madison choked on the last of her coughs. She took a few quick puffs of her inhaler and shook her head. “We can’t,” she said with held breath. “We have to find her. This is the only clue we have.”

Tin echoes—soft, mechanical notes—rose from the box in Tyler’s hand. Soledad froze. Madison stopped breathing.

“What is that?” Her voice quivered.

“It’s a...music box.” Tyler brought the object into the light. “See? It’s just a music box.”

“What did you do?” Soledad’s voice squeaked.

Tyler shook his head. “Nothing.”

The stairwell to the right of the front door shook. Just a rattle, at first, it soon shook so hard a

few of the steps cracked. The chandelier above them swung, unsettling a cloud of grey powder that rained on the children.

"Oh gross," Soledad spat it out. She wiped the back of her hand against her mouth.

Madison screamed as the door beside her slammed shut. As it opened again, a thin crooked line of light pushed through the cracks. It pulsed like a heart beat, warm and inviting. It sounded like one too.

"Oh my god," Tyler's jaw went slack.

Madison's lips trembled, trying to hold the word back. The door opened inward, slowly, with a soft creak. The children could see something beyond the door. A figure in the light. Warm. Blue.

Soledad's eyes went wide. Her heart raced. Her mouth, dry, parted. She could barely speak the word that pushed its way out. "M-Mother..."

PART ONE: HERE AND NOW

What you may not consider, especially if you're well out of childhood and/or have no young children, are the things that impact a child everyday. This section is a primer on what the world is like for a child: environment, activities, and routine. This is a child's world.

When and Where

As was mentioned earlier in this book, the default time and place for this game is modern-day America. References are built off that assumption. But nothing in here depends on that time and place, especially if you and your players don't live in America. Some groups will prefer to play games set in their own childhood where they might have the best frame of reference. It could also be fun to set a game in Victorian London, possibly during the time of the Whitechapel murders. The Great Depression is another intriguing time for a game given the squalor and struggles that surrounded the average child. Running a game where the group of kids are all settlers in a Hooverville has great potential for horror and adventure.

Life of a Child

A child's life can be incredibly full with school, sports, sleepovers, and such eating up the hours. Pair that with an early bedtime and a stack of homework and it's a wonder kids have time to fight monsters. Let's take a look at the everyday things in a child's life starting with school and ending with summer vacation.

Schedules

Schedules are a huge part of life. A child's life is impacted the schedules of adults and the reverse is also true. A child may have to go to day care before school because his parents work early (or work late) and may have to go to after school care for the same reason. There might be extracurricular activities such as a sport or band practice (or swim class or a Nature Scout meeting or an older sibling's choir recital or play production) that fill up the evening.

An adult's schedule is just as impacted, of course, with leaving ten minutes earlier in the morning to drop off the kid at day care and rescheduling work meetings so she can make it to the kid's baseball game. But this is about the kids so let's focus on them.

CHAPTER FOUR

School Days

School is a huge part of a child's life. Most are in elementary school with days that last from around 8 in the morning until 3 in the afternoon. Class takes place in one classroom with library and media time, gym class, recess, and the like break up their day.

Kids spend six or seven years in elementary school, starting with kindergarten. School starts around age five and, as it is the child's introduction to formal education, it can set the pace for the rest of the child's education.

The type of school a child attends has a big impact on what he's learning, who his friends are, and what types of school-related activities are available to him. Descriptions of the various types of school follow.

Uniforms and Dress Codes

More and more public schools in the US require uniforms. Those that do put the bill for such uniforms in the family's pocket. Uniforms are either carried by a store in the area or ordered through a supplier. The family also has to mend or replace the uniform should it become stained or torn.

While most schools don't require uniforms, most public schools in the US have a dress code. These guidelines address skirt length, neckline depth, permitted slogans and images, and rules for how damaged the clothing is allowed to be.

Some schools institute a set of rules for supplies such as clear backpacks and pencil cases but those tend to be for middle and high schools.

There are schools who are fairly lax on the enforcement of these guidelines and only take issue in extreme cases or follow a "three strikes" policy. Stricter schools, especially religious or private schools, are not beyond punishing or sending a child home if his uniform is not up to standard.

Private School

There are all kinds of private and experimental schools in the world. The most common are preparatory academies (usually for the children of those with stature and means) and those who adhere to a more open (some say natural) curriculum such as the Montessori-style schools.

Religious School

Despite the name, religious schools are usually open to children of any faith (or non-faith) and teach a variety of secular subjects as well as the theological. These schools tend to be regimented with mandatory uniforms, morning prayers, and services observed for all the major religious holidays.

Homeschool

Parents choose to teach their children at home with increasingly regularity. The curriculum is still fairly regulated and follows a set lesson plan. Organizations exist that are dedicated to the purpose of aiding homeschooled kids and their parents.

Middle School

The older characters will likely be in Sixth or Seventh Grade which places them in Middle School or Junior High (the former consists of Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades while the latter consists of only the last two). These grades are a big change from the

elementary years and act as a bridge to high school. The curriculum is more formalized with days broken into 6 to 8 periods. Recess is gone, replaced by study hall, and the homework load increases dramatically. This is also the time when kids pair off into cliques, have their first crushes, and start along the path of adolescence (and all that entails).

Advanced Placement

Elementary school generally tests for advanced placement around Third or Fourth Grade. Qualified kids spend part of their school day or week in a class dedicated to wider concepts and ideas. This usually puts them in line for advanced classes later in school.

Special Education

Kids with learning disabilities, physical handicaps, or disorders such as autism or Asperger syndrome may be placed in a special education class (or dedicated facility, if there is one in the area and the parents can afford it). There are usually municipal or county-based assistance programs and, depending on the child's situation, he and his family may work with an advisor or social worker who attends classes alongside the child.

Teachers

Kids learn to identify teachers as an authority early in their educational life (though they can split from this later, starting around middle school). Teachers serve as a counterpoint to parents and that sometimes causes tension between the two. It's not uncommon for a child to turn to a teacher in times of need or crisis especially if the trouble is rooted in the homestead.

As a child enters middle school or junior high, the number of teachers they have increases and the time spent with each individually decreases so the bonds are not as universally strong. A child in those grades tends to bond with a teacher of subjects he particularly enjoys or has a high proficiency for. (And it's not uncommon for preadolescents to develop crushes on a younger teacher—favorite subject or not.)

Extracurricular Activities

There are a variety of activities beyond (though sometimes connected to) school that fill a kid's life. These extracurricular activities happen after school or on the weekends and can take up multiple slots in a kid's calendar.

Sports

A lot of kids play organized sports sometime during their childhood. There are a lot to choose from, with gymnastics, baseball, basketball, and football being very common. Some sports programs adhere to a no-win/no-loss policy that focuses on participation and "fun." (Parents tend to have conflicting viewpoints on the merits of that.)

Bands

Childhood is a great time to learn an instrument and the musically-inclined tend to do so then. Most elementary schools have a music, band, and/or choir program. Private lessons are another possibility, particularly if the kid is driven or shows an aptitude for music or the parent really wishes the child to develop a musical talent.

Nature Scouts

The Nature Boy and Nature Girl Programs are focused on skill development, integrity, and independence. This usually comes from camping trips, fundraising, and selling cookies.

CHAPTER FOUR

Other Groups

There's an activity for pretty much any interest: chess, science, astrology, gaming, monster hunting.

Sleepovers

One night sleepovers coincide with school. As kids make new friends and struggle for independence, the sleepover is a natural confluence. These serve as great setups for adventures (whether one kid staying the night or a large outdoor tent event, such as for a birthday) since a bunch of player characters will be at a single location.

Vacations

School's great for learning, making friends, and having recess but there's nothing like a vacation. Here are some different situations in which kids get a break from school.

Breaks

There are two major school breaks: Winter and Spring. Though the numbers have been rubbed off, these coincide with Christmas and Easter and usually last 2 to 3 weeks.

Snow Days

While winter can be the bane of an adult's existence, for a child, a massive overnight dump of the cold white means one thing: a snow day! These unexpected days off can mean a day of television, video games, hot cocoa, sledding, and snowmen or 8 hours spent in daycare while the parents are at work. Grandparents, neighbors, or older siblings may be called into babysitting duty for the younger kids as well.

Some school districts have "Hot Days" when the outside temperature spikes to a level that is considered unsafe.

The downside to these nice little breaks is that the additional time is tacked onto the school year. Either days are added to the end, minutes are added to the remaining school days, or a mixture of both.

Lazy Days of Summer

The longest scheduled break comes in June and disappears in September: summer vacation. Ah, the warm sun, the trips to parks and campgrounds, and hours upon hours of nothing to do gives kids plenty of time to explore and get into trouble. In this game, it's a great time to set adventures that take place away from the kids' homes or when you don't want the structure of school to rear its head.

For some kids, summer vacation means daycare or trips to a relative's house while the parents go to work.

Going to Camp

Younger kids will likely go to a day camp. These run for about six to eight hours a day with the kids being signed in and out by a parent. The kids spend their nights at home. These camps can last from three days to a couple weeks.

Sleepaway camp is an option for older kids. These run about two to three weeks and the kid spends the entire day onsite. Sleepaway camps usually have a theme or focus, such as nature, sports, or band camp. The kids sleep in bunks, usually split boy/girl. Some camps are single gender but will have a sister camp across the pond for co-ed events.

Family Vacation

Let's not forget the good old family vacation. These cross-country trips to a cabin in the woods, or a theme park, or out-of-state relatives are always lots of fun (or are the first ten minutes). Family vacations are great for introducing player characters who will only be around one episode (the cousin of a player character or another kid at the theme park). They also serve as ideal locations for monsters that wouldn't fit in the kid's neighborhood (such as a swamp beast living in the Amazon River Ride or a woodland-dwelling creature for those kids on vacation from the city).

Family

Families come in all types. The nuclear family still exists but it is certainly not the only option. Some families are huge sprawling beasts with multiple generations living under one roof. Some are two people against the world. As the saying goes, family ain't what it is but what it does. To a child, family is the first society he will know. Its traditions and stability will inform his development in ways that may not be fully understood until well into adulthood.

Family is a big part of most kids' lives. Portrayal of almost all the people in it falls upon the GM.

Parental Units

No matter the structure, there is a chain of authority within the household. For a child, this is likely his biological parents (or similar). For some, the authority may be shared with older generations so decisions are made together. Or the grandparents may even have veto power over the parents' decisions. Children get used to what they're raised around. Sometimes, they'll find it strange to be around families of dissimilar make-up.

When we talk about parents, we're talking about those older members of the household who directly impact the child's life. Aside from school and friends, the most pervasive influence on a child—those who directly impact the kid's schedule, locale, and habits—are the parents.

Brothers and Sisters

Ah, the bane of every child's existence. Or the best friend he'll ever have. That's the thing about brothers and sisters: it seems the relationship you have with them is always changing. A lot of this depends on the ages of the kids.

The tunnel of adolescence can be a long road for a younger sibling. One day, his older brother or sister is roughhousing and playing like anyone else, and the next the older sibling doesn't have time for him and has other friends, other interests, and other stuff to do. Adolescence not only changes the person going through it, it can change the dynamic of the family. Player characters with older siblings may feel like the only kids in the family.

Younger siblings are notorious attention stealers. A player character who suddenly has a baby brother or sister will find himself cast from the spotlight. In return, he may invest more time in his friends or withdraw into himself and spend his days doing solo activities.

No matter how many siblings and their ages, a kid with brothers and sisters can find it hard to stand out and feel like he's getting the attention he needs. Kids are social creatures, though. If they don't find love and status in their families, they'll find it somewhere else.

CHAPTER FOUR

Steps and Halves

A kid can have parents who divorce and the now-separated parent marries a person who has her own kids or marries a person and then has brand-new kids with her. The dynamics of this vary, depending almost entirely on the kids involved, but it can really complicated and make for great drama.

Traditions

People often speak of traditions in regard to holidays but traditions go beyond that. Going to church every Sunday is common for some kids. Going to a family's house every Wednesday and having that family for dinner every Monday may be a tradition. Some houses have Family Game Night (perhaps they're playing this game!). There are long-standing traditions children learn from their parents who learn them from their parents and so on and "new traditions" that parents institute in effort bring families closer together.

Protective Measures

Families establish measures to protect children from code words used by those picking up the kids from school or specific meeting times and locations while at the mall.

Bad Parents

Without delving into the murky depths of child-rearing theory, I think it's safe to say there are parents who probably shouldn't be. Not every kid lives in a home that provides warmth, protection, and food. Not every kid lives in a home with parents who stay home at night instead of running off to clubs or to get high. There are kids who live with the constant threat of abuse and neglect. There are kids in every city, every state, every country that are left to fend for themselves. A player character may be among those children, if the group allows.

Portraying bad parents can be hard for a GM and uncomfortable for the players. When a giant bat swoops from the sky, digs its claws into a child's shoulders, and then lifts it off into the sky, there is a buffer there. The wall that separates "human" from "monster" can be as tall as you need it. But when a parent—a human being—is attacking, yelling, or threatening a child, you enter a whole other realm.

The safest route is to not include bad parents in your game. But if they are relevant to your story, or even integral to it, then do your best to know the limitations of your group. The most sensible advice—and most obvious—is to play them just at or below your players' comfort level.

Other Kids' Parents

In most places, it is assumed the child will respect the customs and guidelines of a friend's parents, especially if spending the night or attending a birthday party. Weird traditions and strict religious or atheistic practices may squick a parent who is raising her child in a contrary manner. In turn, this can cause strife between the kids or at least make it hard for the two to get together outside school.

Parents and Monsters

Parents don't see monsters. There are two reasons for this. Parents are rational creatures. That rationality blocks any trace amounts of Belief they may still possess. It's not that

IT'S A BIG WORLD OUT THERE

parents are all hardened, super-serious drones—there is passion, imagination, wonder—but there is no room for the idea that there are monsters trying to hurt kids. Are there other people trying to do that? Yes. Awareness of that is enough to drive some parents crazy but actual, spooky-ooky monsters, with big teeth, claws, and birdheads for faces is too bizarre a concept.

Monsters are repelled by high amounts of rationality and low amounts of Belief. Monsters find being in that environment is extremely uncomfortable. Some feel it like an itch underneath their skin; for others, it's harsh static in the air.

Older Kids

When we talk about adults, we're including those in their late teens as well. But there are those between the ages of 13-15 that we haven't discussed. These are the older kids and here is what makes them special.

An older kid still has a tiny bit of Belief inside him. It's not much, and it's nothing he can use himself, but he can unconsciously Believe in someone for whom he cares deeply, such as a crush, a best friend, or a younger brother or sister. An older kid can only Believe in other people, not himself or anything else.

Gamewise, this means an older kid GMC can give one Belief token to help a player character out as long as that character is someone he cares about. An older kid can do that once per episode.

PART TWO: THERE ARE GOOD PEOPLE

Children are not alone in their fight. There are those born of hope, despair, and need that are able to aid, however slightly, in a child's time of need.

The Light-Man

He has a vaguely humanoid shape: an upright body, four limbs that end in vaguely hand- and feet-like objects, and something that someone at a distance might construe as a head but beyond those general features, he has no real physical details. Even calling him a "him" is attributing more to his form than he shows. Still, the most persistent and far-reaching stories say it's a "him" so the Light-Man's name was born and it has stuck.

True to that name, the Light-Man is a creature of pure light. Imagine a person made out of glow sticks and you're on the right track. He's so bright that you can't make out any features but the soft yellow light that either completely covers him or shines from within him. The color and brightness of his glow changes depending on his mood and whether he feels threatened. The Light-Man shows empathy by glowing a soft blue. When afraid, his luminescence turns harsh red. When confused, he may turn a pulsing green.

The Light-Man never speaks—and possibly can't—but will shake or nod his head or make broad gestures if it needs to communicate with the child. He often appears by walking through a wall, as if casually coming through the door of an adjoining room. But there is no door and there is not necessarily an adjoining room. There is also no rhyme or reason to his appearance. He shows up and goes away for reasons only he knows.

He Eats Darkness

What he leaves in his wake is a cluster of glowing objects that look sort of like insects. If left undisturbed, they will burst into nothing before a second is up. If a child manages

CHAPTER FOUR

to cup one or two of these creatures in his hand, he can use them to fuel lamps, start a small fire, or light a candle. They make a soft buzzing but, like their master, have no other features.

Despite how it seems, the Light-Man and his little creatures do not create light. Rather, they eat darkness. If you put enough of these creatures in a room long enough and keep them from bursting into nothing, they will eat the darkness out of every corner.

The Blue Angel

Belief saved the Blue Angel's life. It's a bit of a relic, really, born from now-antiquated ideas that angels and demons live among us and influence our lives. The Blue Angel, like the monsters, is a creature brought to life by Belief. Unlike monsters, it is not born of fear. By hope it was born and by hope it will die. It's been centuries since a large group of people believed in real-life angels and demons. The waning Belief drained the Blue Angel of its power, bringing it to the brink of extinction.

An article in a newspaper changed all that. A reporter, while pursuing a story about homelessness in southern Florida, caught word of some of the myths circulating amongst the children. There were lots of stories being told by those in shelters or sharing common homes but the most widespread and persistent was the one about a glowing blue lady. The idea was that this angel was locked in a battle with the devil. The devil was after children's hope and the lady was protecting it.

That lady was the Blue Angel.

The weakened creature was fighting to protect the children but it wasn't the devil it was fighting. Well, not the devil they talk about in Sunday School anyway. It was a monster dreamt up by a story spreading through one of the shelters. The monster was stealing ideas from sleeping children and putting them into the minds of dogs. In turn, these ideas were agitating the dogs who don't have the capacity to act upon these ideas. Driven crazy, they would rush into traffic, causing accidents and getting killed. The Blue Angel was attempting to stop the beast and end its reign of terror.

The Blue Angel was losing the fight and it wasn't until all the kids who gathered to observe held hands and wished really hard that it was able to gather its strength and drive the beast away. This gave the Blue Angel a new lease on life and it is more powerful now than it has been in centuries.

It Protects the Weak

The Blue Angel's purpose is to protect the weak. This means children, small animals, the infirm, or mentally incapacitated. When a monster is preying upon the weak, the Blue Angel is able to fight the beast on behalf of the children. Its strength is neither infinite nor inexhaustible and it always rests for a very long time between battles. It also reserves its strength for large battles, not minor conflicts. This has led to some skepticism about the Blue Angel but it doesn't mind. It knows its strength, no matter what others say.

It?

The Blue Angel can appear as a man or a woman, a boy or a girl, a snake or a lion, or whatever it wants but whatever its form, it has no anatomical gender and doesn't associate itself with one. It will answer to "he," "she," or whatever kids call it (unless it's a bad name). It refers to itself in the first-person.

Mother

A being of pure emotion, Mother inhabits areas in which a child has suffered long illness or passed on. Commonly spotted in century houses, hospitals, and nurseries, Mother can focus her strength to take physical form. The more sorrow held within the building's walls, the more solid she can become. Her corporeal form varies from a

In those places with the faintest traces, Mother will possess objects to communicate with children. She may direct a child through a haunted hospital by flashing the fluorescent lights or causing phones to ring in sequence, creating a trail. She may take over a fireplace and form words in the smoke or the fading embers. She can take over televisions, piecing together snippets from various shows to give advice or deliver a warning. If none of those are available, she may drag a penny across the dusty floor to scrawl a ghastly message.

It is unknown if Mother was ever actually human and is tied to this earth by a loss she suffered personally or if the collective grief felt by parents who have lost children to accident or illness manifest in her.

In the darkness, if you stand very still and hold your breath, they say you can hear Mother weeping, her sobs echoing off the old walls. On quiet nights, in places of great sorrow, some say you can hear her say the name "Daniel."

She Opens Doors

Any place Mother inhabits can act as a gateway to Closetland. Mother has the power to create an entrance through any standing portal (a gate, a doorframe, a cupboard) though she cannot control where in Closetland the child will arrive.

The Army of St. Nicholas

Not everyone stops believing when they turn 13. Some retain an inkling, a faint memory of some dark truth to the world. For some, this leads to creative pursuits, trying to tap into that hunch, that itch that there is something else in this world. For others, the presence of childhood phantom leads to a twinge of anxiety and unsteadiness. In extreme cases, the haunting memories of monsters and strangeness too much to bear, the person is driven toward insanity. But there are those who find peace, have a truce with the fact there are things they almost remember yet will never fully understand. Some of those people realized there are others out there and came together to share information, collect child testimonies, and gather evidence. They call themselves the Army of St. Nicholas.

The network does not have global influence or power but they have secure chat channels and websites dedicated to archiving memories, dreams, and testimonies about monsters. They are an earnest grassroots bunch who has a sincere interest in filling in this gap in their collective memory. Some members claim there is a main headquarters, an old office or abandoned storage, that has a stockpile of artifacts, writings, and photographs that support the existence of monsters but this has never been confirmed amongst the general Army.

Members

Anyone who remembers the monsters has the potential to be a member but not everyone who remembers is. The group is not well known despite evidence it's been around for centuries, if not longer. Prior to the mid-1900s, the Army existed only in local

CHAPTER FOUR

pockets, the neighborhood “kooks” and “weirdos.” Nowadays, the Army is made all the more powerful by the sharing of knowledge that is possible in the modern era.

There is speculation that not every member is legit. It’s common for older members to treat new ones suspiciously until credibility has been established. (Though each member has his own definition of “credible.”)

A lot of new members are grown-ups who remember meeting a Nick as a kid and have sought the Army for personal reasons.

Interaction with Kids

Members rarely approach children about monsters as it would be far too easy for that to be misconstrued as something improper. There have been members in the past who were later tied to child exploitation and that isn’t something the Army has a tolerance for. Members who cross the line are immediately shunned and reported to authorities.

It’s accepted that some of the members are likely federal plants, making sure the Army isn’t some kind of child exploitation ring. Let’s face it, any group of adults who talk about “remembering monsters” and “needing to protect the children” is going to draw suspicion. The powers that be in the Army hierarchy embrace the inclusion, citing it gives their cause “legitimacy and keeps the undesirables away.”

Members and Monsters

Members can’t see or fight the monsters themselves but monsters don’t necessarily disappear around them, like they do most adults. That little tiny spark of Belief inside each member is enough so monsters aren’t immediately repelled by their presence.

What They Do

The Army is a great resource for kids, if a member can be found. Nicks have access to data that tracks the movement of certain monsters by description and may have information on how a monster has been defeated in the past.

Nicknames

Members of the Army like to remain anonymous. Some because it’s cool; others because it’s practical. Some like the distance between their public life as an accountant, office clerk, or product manager. The online founders are known by variants of the name “Nicholas.” Nico, Nikki, Nick, Nikola, and Nicho have a near-mythical standing amongst the Army. Due to this early tradition, members are sometimes referred to as “Nick” or, collectively, “Nicks.”

PART THREE: HAND-ME-DOWNS

When Stuff is lost or goes missing—perhaps dropped while fleeing a monster or left behind after a family move—the Belief inside stays with the object. If found by another child, it can be used by them. That’s how an item becomes a Hand-Me-Down. When we talk about Stuff here, we’re primarily talking about other characters not player characters. A player character’s Stuff can become a Hand-Me-Down in play and we’ll cover this later.

How They Work

From a system standpoint, Hand-Me-Downs work just like other Stuff and characters use their Belief to power them as usual. As far as the story goes, the difference is that the

character doesn't have an emotional investment in the object. This isn't the character's Stuff, it's something that some other kid loved and held dear in some other place or at some other time. How the child and object became separated will likely never be known by the kid who finds the object. When a character finds a Hand-Me-Down, it's just another object (and he may not even know it's a Hand-Me-Down).

Hand-Me-Downs don't come with an expiration date; some are decades if not centuries old. Some antiquated objects leave modern kids scratching their heads ("What's a fire poker?") but that doesn't take away from the power of the object.

If your character finds and decides to keep an item, you can include it under Stuff on the character sheet. Be warned though that some Hand-Me-Downs may be cursed and a character won't know until he uses it.

Where They Are Found

Hand-Me-Downs have a way of hiding themselves away. Perhaps that's how so many of them remain undiscovered for 150 years or more. They also have a tendency to appear in the strangest places. Hand-Me-Downs can be discovered in abandoned houses, in the woods, on bus seats, in attics, or anywhere anything is found, really. Imagine a scene where a girl finds a doll that used to belong to her grandmother. The thing was stowed in a steamer trunk where it sat forgotten in an attic for 60 years. The girl shows the doll to her grandmother who has fond memories of playing with the doll but nothing else. The older woman has completely forgotten the true power of the doll. The granddaughter, though, senses some deep-seated power within its porcelain skin. The power has passed to another generation, a true Hand-Me-Down.

But the Hand-Me-Down doesn't need to be literal and doesn't need to be anything more than a child and an object being in the same area at the same time.

But What Does it Do?

Hand-Me-Downs don't come with instructions (well, not usually but I suppose they certainly could if a kid wanted to leave a helpful tool for another child) but children have a knack for intuiting the item's purpose or special power. When a player character gets a Hand-Me-Down, have the player roll a Care Quiz against an Average (9) difficulty.

If the roll fails, the child knows it's a Hand-Me-Down but not what it does. If the roll fails with Failing Grades, the kid is oblivious to the fact anything's special about the object.

If the roll succeeds, the character has a hunch about the object. He'll know basically what it does. As the GM, you should tell the player what it does in a general sense. If the roll succeeds with Passing Grades, the character knows exactly what the Hand-Me-Down does. Tell the player the Stuff Qualities for the object.

When Stuff Becomes a Hand-Me-Down

A character's Stuff can become a Hand-Me-Down. Simple separation from the object—leaving it on a bed for ten minutes, putting it in a safe spot for days on end, or burying it in the backyard for the summer— isn't enough. There is an emotional detachment that happens, an abandonment. What a seven-year old plays with usually doesn't interest a ten-year old.

CHAPTER FOUR

For game purposes, the player removes the Stuff from the character sheet. The player needs to make a decision: put the Belief into something else or simply leave it be. If the player decides to put Belief into something else, the Belief is drained out of the Stuff thus it doesn't become a Hand-Me-Down.

If the character simply leaves it, the Stuff is left to be found by someone else. As it is used and passed from child to child, it will gain its own mythology and reputation as word of the object spreads.

Curses

Don't spread this around too much, but some Hand-Me-Downs are cursed. These items will function normally but there will be some negative side effect any time they are used.

How, when, and why Hand-Me-Downs become cursed is unknown. Perhaps the child's love for the object becomes twisted when the item is separated from it. Perhaps there is a brief moment of weakness when Stuff is removed from the kid who believes that leaves it vulnerable to monster attack. As a GM, you can decide whether or not a Hand-Me-Down you're bringing into the game is cursed. A player character's Stuff can become cursed as well. If you like, roll 1d6 when the child's Stuff becomes separated. On a 1, the item is cursed. You can choose the curse yourself, if you like, or pick from any of the following options.

Bright Light

The object has built up some kind of electrical charge. After the Hand-Me-Down's effect goes off, it emits a flash of intense white light. This strikes the character who used the Hand-Me-Down blind for a few minutes. Only the kid using the item suffers the effect even if other kids are right next to it.

Ghost Eyes

While the object is active (while its Quality is in effect), the character sees spirits walking all around and through them. The spirits speak to the child but it's always a language the child doesn't know. In fact, it may not even be a human tongue. The spirits disappear when the Hand-Me-Down's effect fades or stops though sometimes their words tend to linger in the air.

Bad Belief

The Belief inside the object has gone sour. When the item is used, it delivers a mild shock as tainted Belief courses through the user. The character loses 1 point of health + 1 more point for every Passing Grade made in the roll to use the Hand-Me-Down.

Creepy-Crawly

Insects cover the user's arm as the item's power is in effect. The bugs don't hurt the child, just course around his arm and they disappear immediately after the effect is gone.

Smokefeet

The wearer's feet smoke and smolder as the Hand-Me-Down's effect goes off. If the effect takes a long time, the kid's feet will start to burn. The smoke will become thicker and denser. The feet will get hot enough to become extremely uncomfortable but the burning doesn't do any damage.

Control and Ownership

If a Hand-Me-Down is reunited with its original owner, control of the object reverts to that child. The original owner's Belief is what gave the item power. It's what elevated the object to the level of Stuff. That bond will always be strongest. This means the Hand-Me-Down will not work with the child who found it if the original owner is in the immediate environment—unless it is being used to protect that original owner. A kid can relinquish control over a Hand-Me-Down to another child. No roll, no rules.

Sample Hand-Me-Downs

Below are some sample Hand-Me-Downs for your game. Use these as-is, change them to suit your game, and of course make your own as well!

Bad Bunny

This raggedy rabbit looks better than it smells but that's not saying much about either. This plump plush bunny was probably pink once but years of dust and grime have turned the color of its coat into a mottled mess. Half of one ear has either been torn or chewed off and the stuffing has become lopsided giving its face a rather surly expression.

So while this bunny isn't much to look at it, it is still a useful tool against monsters. When thrown at a monster, the bunny latches onto the creature's face and chews furiously at it, temporarily blinding the beast in the process. This only lasts a few seconds until the monster is able to rip the rabbit from its face so it is best used as a distraction to let the kids escape.

Stuff Qualities

Blinds monsters temporarily

Charm Bracelet

Seven charms dangle from a thin silver band. They are simple shapes: heart, star, circle, square, triangle, diamond, and cross. Each grants a wish to the kid who Believes in it. The catch is that the name or shape of the charm must somehow be incorporated into the wording of the wish.

One kid can only use one shape (thus one wish). When the shape is used, its shiny silver surface dulls to flat grey. The kid can then pass it to a friend or leave it behind. Once all charms have been lost, they reset and the Hand-Me-Down becomes lost again to be found some other day by some other child.

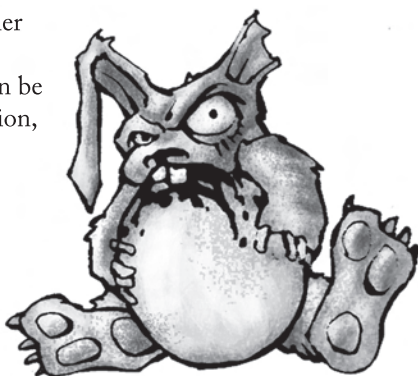
No charms can be added to it and no charms can be taken away. Despite its seemingly flimsy construction, it's incredibly solid.

STUFF QUALITIES

Grants 1 Wish Per Charm

Dorothy's Doorknocker

The name doesn't come from the original owner, as far as anyone knows, but from the name engraved on the doorknocker's elaborate



CHAPTER FOUR

faceplate. This is one of most powerful Hand-Me-Downs known to exist. This simple iron doorknocker has the power to open a door to Closetland any where at any time. When placed flat against a surface, the doorknocker bonds to it. A quick tug will cause it to just let go. But if the child clangs the doorknocker three times and then pulls it slowly, a door will open. If the doorknocker is placed against an actual door, then the door will open to lead into Closetland. If the doorknocker is placed against the floor or some other flat surface that is not a door, a glowing line about the size and shape of a front door will appear and the surface will open magically.

STUFF QUALITIES

Turns Any Flat Surface into a Door to Closetland

Gold Ring

This unassuming gold band has no markings or decoration. To the casual observer, it would just look like a dirty ring (it has a habit of getting itself buried in dirt). A child who puts the ring on his finger will discover that this plain band packs quite a punch.

STUFF QUALITIES

Fight +2

Damage +2

Stuff of Ages

As kids' toys become cheaper and more expendable, they don't last as long as the wooden and metal toys of yesteryear. It's less likely a child's action figure from 2009 will be used by another kid in 2034 but there is Stuff from the 1950s that can still be used by kids today.

And That's The World

Or at least part of it. There is much more to the real world in Little Fears Nightmare Edition than what is presented here. My hope is that this chapter inspires you to make it your own.

Now, let's talk about Closetland.



CHAPTER FIVE: BEHIND THE DOOR

CHAPTER FIVE



All three spoke at the same time. "One, two, buckle your shoes." In slapdash unison, the three young boys knelt down and tied their shoes. A harsh scratch cut the silence as the youngest adjusted his Velcro straps. The oldest, and tallest, looked at his friends.

"Okay, three, four, shut the door." With a collective shove, they set the door into its latch.

"Five, six, pick up sticks." They each reached into a canvas bag that just two hours earlier they were filling with thin branches from behind the middle child's shed.

"Seven, eight, lay them straight." They did so: Thirteen sticks lined in a row, as straight as they could make them. The air was thick with nervous energy. Dustin, the middle boy, shivered a bit then straightened his back. Joe, the youngest, looked at the other two for a signal. Alex, the oldest, steadied himself and stared at the closet door's round, ornately carved handle.

The two younger boys glanced at each other then turned their eyes toward Alex. The silence hung for a good five minutes before Alex's long draw of breath broke it.

The boys readied themselves. Each placed a finger on the handle of the closet. Alex finished the spell. "Nine, ten, let it begin...." With some effort, each boy pulled on their piece of the handle. The door wrenched open with a groan. Something on the inside was opposing them, pulling the door the other way. Darkness spilled from the crack in the door jamb. Joe bit his lip and puffed out his cheeks, trying to hold the scream inside him.

Slowly, the cries of trapped children lilted from inside the closet. The volume waxed and waned and finally hit an uncomfortable pitch, this gave the monster on the other side strength.

"What do we do?" Dustin whispered through gritted teeth.

"Just...keep...pulling," came Alex's reply, so the trio did. Joe's fingers slipped a few time but he held as best he could. The screams continued from within, never dipping below a dull roar. Alex was glad his parent's were downstairs, away from the noise.

The door jerked suddenly as the monster found more strength. It seemed to Dustin that the door never bothered to move either way more than an inch. He could feel whatever it was beyond that door trying to suck them in. He planted his feet and arched his back, giving the door a good hard tug.

Alex did some quick breaths, like his brother does before a wrestling match, and lowered his stance. "C'mon, c'mon," he repeated under his breath.

It was Joe, the youngest and slightest, who couldn't hold on any longer. He tried, truly, but his wiry pale fingers slipped one time too many to be of any use. The little boy felt the handle slide just to the tip of his middle finger. As he let go, he belted out, high and terrified. Suddenly, the

door burst open, filling the room with darkness and the screams of a thousand terrified children. The two boys holding onto the door landed on their butts as the resistance suddenly disappeared.

They couldn't see into the closet; only hear the cries. The darkness that was spilling from the crack now circled the boys. Joe was trembling, scared that his weakness allowed someone—something—into the room. After a few tense seconds, Alex stood. Dustin followed, helping Joe get to his feet.

The darkness continued to creep up the walls of the bedroom, enrobing the boys' legs in black. It made their first tentative steps difficult but they plodded through. It took three small steps to get to the opening. Alex looked at his friends and flattened his lips.

"We ready?"

Dustin nodded. Joe did the same.

"Alright."

Together, they walked into the pitch, into the wall of screaming nameless faceless children. Despite their fear, despite what they knew was just waiting for them in the darkness, none of the three jumped when the closet door suddenly slammed shut behind them.

PART ONE: CROSSING THE DARKNESS

Closetland sits next to the real world like a fidgety child leaning against a parent at church. It can't help but shift, slide, and agitate its neighbor. Born from our own fears, Closetland is forever attached to our world, overlapping in some ways and dominating in others.

But the worlds in question are not our concern. No, this game is about the things that live in those worlds: the children of the real world and the monsters of Closetland. If the two never met, there might be a lot of suspense but there wouldn't be payoff. Monsters make their way into our world and kids make their way into Closetland through a variety of means.

How They Get Here

Monsters invade our world in a variety of ways. We're going to look at those ways and how they appear in play.

Cracks in Reality

Reality shifts and settles like an old house. And like an old wooden frame, it will creak and groan with the effort. Most folks don't see it, don't notice it. They're distracted or



CHAPTER FIVE

focused on something else entirely. The shifts are subtle anyway; you might not notice them if you were staring right at them.

When reality shifts, it's like a ripple in a puddle. It's quick and over before you know it but it still happened and when it did it created a slight temporary tear between our world and Closetland. Monsters can both enter and exit our world through these tiny rips.

How That Looks

Nigh-invisible shifts in reality doesn't really help you much if you can express it to the players. In the fiction of the world, this means the monster seems to appear from nowhere. Imagine a dark room by a busy highway. At night, hundred of cars pass by, shining their headlights through the windows. As each light glides quickly across the wall, it upsets the darkness of the room. It is within that darkness, between the light, that the monster steps. One second it's there; another it's gone.

Any kids around might feel like they have become distracted, that things went fuzzy for a split second like they were pre-occupied or nearing sleep, and then there is a snap where everything is brought back into focus.

Bad Dreams

Sudden frights are uncontrolled bursts of fear, like a firework exploding in the sky. Nightmares are like firecrackers strung together, popping and exploding in rapid succession. All this noise and excitement can draw a monster to it. Nightmares act as a temporary one-way door for monsters to enter our world.

How That Looks

It looks like smoke escaping a bottle. The monster is being pulled through the nightmare from Closetland to our world and will materialize next to the sleeping child.

Nightmare Trap!

I can imagine kids using dreams to set a trap for a monster. They have a friend who is being plagued by nightmares. The kids stay over the friend's house, waiting for him to fall asleep and call a monster to them. It would be risky for the kids but it could also pay off big time.

Second Skin

There are places that have been abandoned, become corrupted, left to rot, or have accumulated bad vibes to the point where Closetland starts to overlap. It's like a sweater so threadbare you can see the t-shirt worn underneath it. Kids will often stumble into Closetland by not paying attention to where they are going, inadvertently stepping from the relative safety and comfort of our world into the horrifying realm of monsters. But sometimes Closetland moves over the area like storm clouds, casting a grey pall over reality.

This isn't technically Closetland, but seepage from that world into ours, like how a river isn't the ocean but flows to it. These areas can lead deeper into Closetland though as we'll discuss in a section below.

Since it isn't Closetland proper, there is an invisible boundary between their world and ours that most monsters cannot cross. This would seem to make these places safer but these second skin areas can appear impossibly long (a kid took fifty steps in but must take

a two hundred to get out) or the entrances and exits have moved to a place other than where they were. The second skin has a way of playing tricks on people.

How That Looks

This is usually subtle, like the woods that slowly darken or the crowded hallway that empties out little by little but it can also be immediate like the noisy lunchroom that gets suddenly and startlingly quiet. Once the kids have made the transition, the feeling of creep and dread is unmistakable.

Kids may find people and dogs and birds and everything else that would normally be in that area. But sometimes those things are noticeably absent. Sound might be altered so that it's muted or echoes unnaturally. Colors may seem washed out. Closetland is not our world even at those times when it looks unsettlingly similar.

Mirror, Mirror

Sometimes the differences in the areas where Closetland overlaps our world can only be seen in mirrors. A kid might be going about his day, same old routine, and then catch a glimpse of something strange in the mirror: perhaps a painting that hangs askew on the wall in the background or the shade of red on his backpack is a little darker or his new clean shirt looks grungy and torn. Some Monsters can use mirrors to enter our world as well.

Through the Front Door

Then there's the good old direct approach. Sometimes monsters don't have time for subtlety and just kick down a door and stomp their way through. This door doesn't have to be a closet door, though that's the classic choice. Any fixed portal will do: front door, back door, cupboard door, car door, medicine cabinet. The darkness created by a closed door is powerful magic and it's to that darkness that the many doors in Closetland connect.

How Kids Get There

Monsters come to the real world all the time. Kids getting into Closetland is another matter. Aside from trying to find out a way (there are no manuals on this stuff—but there are notes scribbled on notebook paper), few kids are crazy enough to willfully walk into the land of monsters. Though sometimes kids do become desperate enough. When a trail of clues ends at the closet door, when all other avenues have been exhausted, or when a beast beats a hasty retreat through a cloud of smoke, sometimes you have to bring the fight to the monsters.

Rituals

There are as many ways to get into Closetland as there are stones in the playground if rumors are to be believed. Children invent all sorts of ways to transcend our world and enter the land of monsters. Most of these take the form of rituals.

The specifics of the rituals are limited only by imagination and the tools at hand. If kids are looking for a friend, they often incorporate something personal to that child into the ritual such as a favored toy, the one book report he got an A+ on, or an iconic piece of clothing. Hair from a brush wrapped around a doll or action figure seems a popular choice as well.



These are performed the same as any other ritual with the end result being the children are transported to Closetland. This would most likely be a second skin-type transition but could also be through a door or crack in reality. Don't do it through induced nightmares though. Trust me.

Rituals only last a little while—the more effort put into them, the longer they last—and are always one-way. So kids will have to find another way out.

Following a Monster

Children can also get into Closetland by following a monster. Perhaps not the safest or brightest move, it is a possibility. The particulars of this depend on how the monster is returning to Closetland. If going through a crack in reality (the sudden disappearance method), the kid would have to be in really close proximity to the creature when it goes back (holding onto the monster isn't necessary or advisable).

If the monster is going through a door, the kid has as long as the door remains open to get through. (Monsters have a special touch so that all doors will open where they want to go in Closetland). The exception is if the monster gets too far away from the door (say 20-30 feet) since the magic doesn't seem to extend that far.

Second Skin, Again

Just as monsters can come into our world through a second skin, kids can get to Closetland that way too. There are almost always doors, holes in the ground, or some other way for kids to make their way to Closetland proper through the second skin.

Imagine a kid walking home from a friend's house early one Saturday morning. He has his bedroll tucked under his arm, maybe he's munching on a toaster pastry. His path leads

him through the community park. It's nothing fancy: a big stretch of green grass, a sand pit with some swings and a jungle gym. He is just past the bike rack when he hears the swings squeak behind him. Not how swings usually squeak, this is louder and there's some sort of rhythm to the way the four swings are slightly off from each other.

A cool wind lifts a flurry of leaves off the ground and whizzes them by the boy's face. It's early October, nothing unusual about that but there is something decidedly strange about the cut the dry leaf etches across his cheek. The sting causes the boy to gasp. He cups his hand over the thin line of blood. Dawn turns the color of dusk, like the turning of a dial, and the boy realizes something is wrong. He can hear growling on the wind, guttural and low. Something is hungry.

The boy runs toward his house, which he can see on the other side of the park. The trundling of invisible footsteps follows him. The boy can hear breathing. It's ragged and gasping but also determined. Blood beating against the inside of his ears, the boy works up to full sprint. Having left the bedroll and pastry in his wake, the boy runs to his house and pushes on the front door. He slams it behind him, relieved to be inside his own home.

But why was the door unlocked? His dad is fanatical about locked windows and doors. And who moved the furniture? And who broke the kitchen window?

The door he opened was a portal from the real world, which was under the influence of second skin, into Closetland.

Getting Back

Closetland is a terrifying place and no sane kid wants to stay there long. Getting into Closetland is a cakewalk compared to getting back out. There are only a few ways.

An Open Door

Seems obvious but most of the doors into Closetland are one-way. You open them again and either see a wall or just a different part of Closetland. It can be tricky finding a door that leads to our world especially since they tend to be doors that no one has used to enter Closetland for a long time.

Find a Friend

There are people inside Closetland that can help children get out. These are discussed further in this chapter but they exist. And it's a good thing they do.

Not Rituals

For most things, rituals will work—even in Closetland. For getting out, though, rituals don't work.

PART TWO: A WORLD OF MONSTERS

Closetland. The name itself sends shivers down the spine of any child who has seen it, seen the monsters that come from it, or glimpsed the pain and desolation of its darkest corners.

What Closetland Looks Like

The areas of Closetland are as varied as those of the real world. There are cities and suburbs, forests and plains, deserts and lakes. The biggest difference between Closetland the real world is how empty, abandoned, lifeless everything appears. It is a world where

CHAPTER FIVE

all hope has been replaced by apathy and fear. Every corner is dangerous. Every room is a habitat for monsters.

Shadows of Reality

A lot of places in Closetland look like places the kids know: their schools, their neighborhoods, their local library but details about the places are off. The color is washed out, the blacks and whites are starker, the sound is wrong. The smell is wrong. It's not necessarily for the worse but it's wrong, it doesn't match the smells and sounds you know and expect. The quiet is quieter, the loud is louder. Sometimes the shadows fall at an angle contrary to where the light is shining.

These places are particularly chilling because of what they get right. Details mark the place as unmistakably familiar: yesterday's homework assignment scrawled in yellow chalk on the corner of the blackboard, the patch over the screen door where your cat's claws got stuck last summer, the stain on the floor from when you were creating your masterpiece with the art set you got for Christmas.

Closetland is like a darkened photograph of your hometown. Distant, familiar, but not exactly how you remember it.

Plain Strangeness

Bizarre touches mark the landscape of Closetland. You may see a hopscotch board drawn on a passing cloud. Or you might discover a beach without sand just countless yellow fingernails. A bell may ring in the middle of a desert. There are no rules in Closetland other than those the children and the monsters make. Remember that. Physical law is generally observed but sometimes it takes a holiday.

Myriad Traps

Take a step on the wrong patch of grass and you might find yourself down the rabbit hole. Turn the wrong door knob and get a jolt of electricity up your arm that will knock you on your butt. Closetland is full of traps from the humiliating (buckets of cream cheese balanced precariously on doors) to the dangerous (a payphone that will burn your hand if you press any buttons) to the deadly (a trip down a playground slide dumps you into a pit of spikes). Nothing can be trusted here so always exercise the utmost caution.

A Land of Nightmares

Busted doors hang precariously on their hinges, open just enough to see dark shimmering stains on the paneling beyond. Babies scream in the yellow nursery but they do not move, they do not blink, they do not breathe. As still as dolls, their pained cries drown out all other noise. Some places in Closetland seem almost scientifically engineered to creep you out.

But there are places, darker than the inside of your eyes, which are not so subtle as to be called creepy. These are horror houses of gore and mayhem. Full of all the violence and junk that parents never let children watch (but they do anyway). These are places that are not talked about. They are seen and they are survived. But they are not talked about.

Countless Pathways

We've discussed Closetland in general but now let's take a look at some areas in detail. Since the geography of Closetland is fluid and contradictory there is no point in telling

you where these places can be found. They simply are found. And, if fate and the monsters will it, you will find them.

A Hundred Million Bajillion Doors

Well maybe not that many. But there are a lot. Doors of all kinds exist in Closetland, even in places where having a door makes no sense. There are doors behind bookshelves, under couches, on ceilings, inside other doors, and of course on plenty of walls.

Children can get lost forever in Closetland's jumble of countless paths and intersections. The kids call these places "the hallways." This is no rhyme or reason to their appearance. You might turn a corner and find yourself in the middle of one. These hallways are a maze of dead ends and intersections that go at strange angles and sometimes change direction when you turn around. Each wall has at least one door and some have a door next to a door next to a door as far as you can see. You either have to fumble your way out or get lucky and open a door that leads to somewhere else in Closetland in order to escape.

And One Key

Rumors of the key are as old as Closetland itself. How it goes is this: There is supposedly this key, forged by someone—some say a child, others say a monster—that can open any door in Closetland. Not only that, the door will open to the child's home. Some say the key is this massive gold thing as long as your arm and as thick as your foot. Others say it looks like those old-timey keys with the big round end and the boxy teeth. Some kids say the key isn't really a key but a book or poem, a fire axe and even a dog. The stories vary, the details change. Some claim they've held it, used it, put it somewhere safe.

But the key doesn't exist. Seriously. Kids shouldn't even waste their time looking for it.

Closet Monsters

The beasts that patrol these hallways, calling hapless children from their sleep into Closetland, are the appropriately-named Closet Monsters. These creatures come in a variety of shapes and sizes and use a variety of devious tricks to lure children.

Closet Monsters work directly for the big guy, the King of Monsters. They do not answer to any other authority and don't really seem to have the ability to think or act for themselves beyond basic survival. Still, these creatures can be cunning in their task. And their task is to capture children.

They do this by entering a child's room, usually late at night, and snatching the unsuspecting kid from his bed. They usually grab him, sheets and all, and drag him through the closet door and into the world of monsters.

If a child is awake, the Closet Monster will either try to subdue the child with a mass of web from its fingertips or trick the child by pretending to be someone he knows, such as a favorite uncle or a long-lost aunt.

If the kid is sleeping, then the Closet Monster will either pounce on him like a startled cat or quietly grasp the kid's bare ankle and give a sharp tug, pulling the boy behind it like a backpack with a broken strap.

Every Closet Monster has its preferred method and its specialty. They say no two are exactly alike. Most kids only ever see one though.

CHAPTER FIVE

PART THREE: SCARY PLACES

Closetland is a vast place full of any landscape or building that can be imagined. Whatever you dream can be and whatever you fear will appear. It is a place of limitless possibility and reach. Here are some of the many people and places you will find in Closetland.

The Dollhouse

The kids call it “the dollhouse” but it doesn’t really look like one. They call it that because of what can be found within it.

The dollhouse looks like a sort of hospital, a doll hospital maybe. It’s white and clean and the exterior walls are smooth and shimmery, almost like plastic. From the outside, it seems to have three floors—it has three floors of windows anyway—but inside it’s much bigger. It looks like any other hospital, with numerous beds and waiting rooms and a cafeteria full of empty vending machines. The floors are characteristically dull and the bandages are all yellowed even in the package. It has a funny smell, like ammonia and blueberries.

Staircase That Was But Isn’t Any More

There are doors on every floor that all bear the same blue placard on the wall next to them. It says “Staircase. Use in case of fire.” While there has never been a fire, there one day might be, and the fact the doors are always locked is a bit of problem. Each door has a vertical window, about three feet tall and six inches wide. Through it, you can see the staircase plain as day.

And it is not pretty. The banister has the color of bone and is wrapped in a sharp-looking wire like what’s wrapped around country fences. Thousands of shiny black eyes stick out of the steps and they will all turn toward you if you look at them. Sometimes, if you press your ear really close to the glass, you can hear footsteps like a horse walking across a parking lot.

Access the staircase likely exists but if another kid has found it, he hasn’t said anything. Thankfully, the elevator works.

Living Dolls

There are hundreds, if not thousands, of these mish-mashed boys and girls all over the dollhouse and they are how the place got its name. The parts are scrounged from whatever is laying around. Some living dolls are wooden, like marionettes, and they move like birds learning to walk. Other dolls are a hodge-podge of mechanical bits and pieces and walk around like robots in those old movies. Most of them look human but some are large birds, some have human bodies but animal heads or wings or a tail. They often have disproportionate limbs, obviously from two different sources. Some are partially melted or have deep gouges across their chest.

Patchwork, the Dollmaker

There isn’t much in this hospital worth noting. There aren’t a lot of people, and there are no ambulance sirens blaring or machines beeping in far corners of the hospital. But there is a room and there is a patient. The patient is a boy. The boy’s name is Patrick. The kindly nurses with the big black eyes and the very tall doctors with the very long hands call him “Patchwork.” He is the lucky boy who gets to make all the wondrous dolls.

Before he got sick, Patrick spent his time making stuff. He would make just about anything: model ships and planes, woodcraft kits, remote controlled cars. But when he got a fever, his parents rushed him to the hospital. He remembers clearly one of the doctors—from back before they were all so tall and had such big hands—saying that Patrick might never get better. One night, while Patrick lay cold and sweating in his awful metal bed, he was visited by a new doctor. The boy knew it was a new doctor because feathers flew from this doctor's neck whenever he turned around too quickly and that never happened with other doctors. The new doctor also had a screechy high-pitched voice. The doctor said he had special medicine that would fix Patrick up lickety-split. It would put Patrick to sleep and when he woke up he'd be all better.

And it worked! The next morning, Patrick felt great. The first thing he asked to do was call his parents. The new doctors—and there were a lot of them—told Patrick his parents were very busy but they would come pick him up as soon as they could. The doctors suggested to Patrick that he make things while he waits, like he did before he got sick. Patrick thought that sounded like a good idea and set about making toy friends. He usually puts together a couple a week but he never gets to play with them. The very tall doctors always come and take them away, replacing the old empty boxes with new boxes full of new parts.

Patrick doesn't know how long he's been waiting but it seems like a really long time. One time, he made dolls that looked like his mom and dad but this made birdman-doctor so angry that he yelled and screamed and he broke the dolls over his knee and told Patrick to never, ever do that again.

Lonely Bits

The truth is that the Monsters scavenge all the bits and pieces from broken toys in our world, collect them into boxes, and bring them to Patrick so he can make these dolls. Once the dolls are made, the doctor-Monsters put something inside them that makes them come alive. Patrick doesn't know what it is but he could find some of it, maybe he could build a friend. It gets awfully lonely in the hospital.

The School

It seems obvious there would be a school in Closetland. School is a big part of a child's life and the source of a lot of his fear and anxiety. It is only appropriate that such a place exist in the world of monsters.

The most unsettling part of the school isn't its faded exterior or empty hallways, which are standard in Closetland, but the school's uncanny ability to mimic whatever school the child attends. If kids from two or more different schools step into it, it looks like each kid's respective school even if both kids are standing right next to each other.

The school bell rings every day at noon, signaling lunch. At that moment, the halls are filled with the specter-like images of hundreds of kids racing to their lockers. The lockers all open and slam shut as if guided by the ghosts' hands. The sound of so much clanging metal is painful.

This happens again at 3 o'clock in the afternoon as the ghost-children race from their classrooms to the waiting phantom buses. Once the buses are full, they take off, evaporating into thick white smoke as they do so.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Principal's Office

No matter what the principal's office looks like or where it is located, it always has a bright red door on one of the walls. When a child opens the door, he will see his own principal's office. If he steps through, he will suddenly appear in the real world office. If it's during school hours, he'll probably have some explaining to do.

In the principal's office, there are pictures of a rotund man with no hair and beady little eyes. He always has a deep scowl on his face, usually directed at a child or underling in the photo if not the viewer himself, seemingly dissatisfied by everything in life.

Principal Higgins

Unseen, only heard, the Principal's bellows of "IN-SUH-BOR-DI-NAY-SHUN!" echo through the halls, punctuating by the slap of a wood paddle against soft flesh. Kids have spoken about the ghost of the Principal twisting ears, dragging kids down the hall by their shirt collars, shoving them into corners, and threatening to call the parents if the child continues to "MIS-BUH-HAVE!"

It's unknown if the Principal is the man in the photographs around the office or who gave the Principal the last name of Higgins but whoever did must have had an awful time at school.

The Playground

Behind the school, the playground sits seemingly untouched for generations. The metal is stressed and rusty, the animals on springs don't bounce much anymore, and the grass everywhere is at least a foot tall.

A metal fence separates the playground from the school parking lot. Despite the emptiness of the school, there are always cars there, parked at odd angles and in various states of disrepair. When the buses appear, they do it in this lot.

Monkey Bars

The most prominent feature of the playground is the massive set of monkey bars near the middle. All the other features encircle it, almost as if paying reverence to the goliath. Some of the monkey bars have thick spikes on them which make scaling difficult (if not impossible). There is a dome in the bottom middle of the monkey bars whose concrete floor has a fly paper-like film on it that will ensnare any child who steps on it. The child must pass a Move Quiz of Hard (12) to break free. The floor also acts as a trap as the dome becomes completely solid, filling the gaps between the bars with thick block glass. A kid has two chances to escape before he is trapped. Each block can take 12 points of damage before breaking and the damage must come from a weapon.

The Kicking Kid

Watch your head! Tales are told of a malicious kid with a buck-toothed grin who kicks phantom soccer balls with incredible force. The kid can materialize anywhere on the playground and the balls appear with him. He cackles before every kick, giving kids one chance at dodging. This should be a Move Quiz against a Hard (12) difficulty. If the child fails to dodge, he takes lowest Success Die plus Failing Grades in Damage.

Mother's House

We talked about Mother in the last chapter and how she can visit places in our world that are full of pain. While a lot of the kids think she lives only in the place they talk to her, Mother's home is deep within the heart of Closetland. When Mother visits a place in our world, she uses the second skin method of connecting to it.

Mother's actual home is a small two-story house on the edge of an expansive set of woods. The house sits on about a half-acre of patchy grass. An old fence outlines the yard and forms a barrier that no monsters seem to be able to cross. The front gate opens to a stone path that, in turn, leads to a step-up porch where a dark front door awaits.

The specifics of the interior change but the doors always open into a large room with a fireplace. A long set of stairs leads to the second floor. Beyond that, the number, placement, and types of room can change.

The only other structure in the yard is a shed in the back. Mother keeps it locked but maybe if you ask her nicely she'll open it for you.

The Fire Door

The roaring fire is just a facade. It gives off heat and light but that's only an illusion. The fire will not burn anyone who touches it and, in fact, kids can walk right through it. Beyond the fire is a door that Mother keeps hidden from all the nasty monsters in Closetland. It is a door that will lead a child home but Mother cannot direct a child to it, the strange magic of Closetland forbids it, so a child must discover it on his own.

Mother or Monster?

It could be argued that since she lives in Closetland and was born from pain and fear that Mother is a Monster. She may well be. If she is, she's the best Monster to have on your side.

The Woods Behind Mother's House

The woods stand like assembled guardians beyond the back gate of Mother's house. If you stand on the edge of the back yard, you can see twelve great trees, their bark like stone, standing like assembled guardians at the gate. A path starts a couple steps beyond them which leads into the woods proper. It's not a laid path but a natural wearing of the ground caused by the rough passage of travelers.

Trees of all kinds fill the woods. Oaks stand next to redwoods next to sequoia next to yew next to palm. Rumors of a talking baobab tree are persistent though the only evidence of it is a sketch drawn a hundred years ago.

The woods behind Mother's house was born from the fear of isolation and of being lost. Once you go more than twenty or so feet, the canopy becomes so dense that hardly any light passes through the thick overlapping of the leaves. Oddly, there is still plenty of light under the canopy to see your way around the trees. Just don't lose sight of where you came from. These impossibly long woods have a way of swallowing you up.

There are very few landmarks. The hodgepodge of trees makes it hard to pinpoint exactly where you are. An astute Nature Boy or Nature Girl could probably mark a trail or take note of specific bark patterns but they repeat too often for this method to be entirely

CHAPTER FIVE

reliable. At best, it will lead them to the edge of the woods. They will be able to see the outside world but the protective trees will bend together to keep in children.

The Path Less Taken

Despite the instinct to do so, don't walk the path. Staying on the path will loop you around endlessly. To make your way out of the woods, you have to follow the sounds of the birds. There aren't many birds heard—and even fewer seen—but the faint twitters and twirls get stronger and more frequent as you get closer to the middle of the woods. In the center, is the way out.

The Big Old Hole

In the middle of the woods is a clearing about fifty feet in diameter. The grass in the circle is flat, like something stomped each blade into the ground. In the very center, about three feet in diameter is a hole. If you peer over the edge of the hole, you'll see a pinprick of light seemingly way way way down in the middle of the earth. Bricks and clumps of dried mud litter the ground around the hole, like maybe there had been a well there once upon a time.

It's big and it's dark and if you want to you can throw yourself down the hole. But I wouldn't advise it.

Because the hole is not the way out.

The Chicken-Legged House

No, once you're more than a couple steps into the woods, the only way out is to find the house. This isn't Mother house; this house is really more of a shack. It's ten by ten foot, has no decoration on its bare cabin walls, and wanders the woods atop giant chicken legs. To get out of the woods, you have to stowaway on the house. Either get inside or grab onto a leg. Careful of those legs though, they have a mean kick.



The best place to hop aboard is the clearing. The house jostles and shakes too much as it pushes its way through the woods to get it there. Climbing a tree along the edge, crawling along one of the outer branches, and leaping onto the shack's porch is a popular choice.

Once you're on the porch, you're halfway home. You just need to ride it out. The house will eventually crest the tree line, giving you enough time to jump out of the woods. It'll be a hard landing so tuck your knees into your chest and try to hit the ground rolling.

Inside the House

There are only three rooms inside the house: a main room, a sleeping chamber, and a pantry. In the main room is a hearth on which a giant cauldron perpetually bubbles, filling the entire house with the sickly-sweet smell of overripe vegetables and undercooked meat.

The sleeping chamber houses a simple bed, steamer trunk, and coat rack. Filthy linens hang over the side of the bed, covered in ominous stains.

The pantry is the real horror show. Wormy slabs of uncertain meat sit in the corner, powdered with some sort of caustic preserving agent. Freshly-trapped woodland creatures dangle from hooks on the ceiling. Their keening cries can turn your stomach. If you listen hard enough, it almost sounds like they're pleading to escape. The rest of the shelves house things you would expect to find in a pantry: jars, sacks of food or things that were once considered food.

Just don't look in the potato bin.

The Root Cellar

When the hut lowers itself to the ground at night, it folds its legs up under itself. To any casual observer, it would look like nothing more than any other old, rundown hut. There is even, strangely enough, a root cellar that appears near the back of the house. The cellar door is locked but not overly so and could be broken by a strong child. Inside is a room, not very big, that looks like it was carved right out of the clay. Hidden (and hidden well) in the room is a chicken egg, the heart of the house.

If the egg is taken from the cellar, into the outside world, the hut is paralyzed. The interior remains the same but its signature chicken legs remain folded underneath it. If left immobile long enough, the legs will take root, eventually becoming stuck to the spot. To this day, no one has made it very far with the egg. It usually doesn't take the keeper of the house long to hunt it down.

If You Have the Egg

The egg is the true power of the house. If a child has it in his possession, he can get out of the woods. The trek is still impossibly long, due to the nature of the woods, but it can be done. I wonder what would happen if the egg was dropped into that hole in the center of the woods? Take note that this is no ordinary chicken egg, it's hard as stone and the color of old milk. It can't simply be cracked or broken.

Baba Yaga

All of this may sound easy enough: find the house, steal the egg, and get out of the woods. And it might be, if not for the lady of the house. A crone from folklore, Baba Yaga is the squat and plump caretaker of the house. It is her duty to feed and protect it from outside threats. That means children.

CHAPTER FIVE

The house needs fuel to live. It needs to eat. And it prefers fresh, sweet meat. The cauldron is where Baba Yaga cooks its food and the potato bin affixed to the floor in the pantry is its mouth. If you lift the lid on the bin, you'll see row upon row of gnashing teeth and a long lizard-like tongue dripping with spit. Baba Yaga pours each bubbling meal into its mouth which it eagerly chomps and digests.

In return for her work, the house gives Baba Yaga eternal life. As long as she is gone no longer than a full cycle of the moon, Baba Yaga is immortal.

Baba Yaga needn't be present in order to know something is wrong with the house. The two are linked together fully, each capable of reading the other's thoughts and emotions. She knows when the house is scared or has been hurt. She will find any child who harms the house.

When a child has hurt her home, Baba Yaga wastes no time in chasing after him. She rides atop a giant wooden spoon like a witch on a broom. If she's away from the house, she returns in a flash. If a child has pocketed anything from the house, she can track him through that.

She can and will enter the real world in her pursuit—so no place is safe—and her method of retrieval can be somewhat messy.

The Enchanted Forest

There is another set of woods, bigger than the other, which is actually an enchanted forest. Unlike most of Closetland, the trees are tall and beautiful. Their bark is rich brown and their leaves are a vibrant green. Blue birds chirp and sing amongst its trees and the whistles of unseen workers echo from the forest's outlying mines.

On the edge of the forest is a range of hills. Atop the tallest, stands the biggest castle ever dreamed. Its shimmering stone walls are rich in minerals and outlined in gems seem to catch the faintest hint of sunshine and turn it into the most gorgeous radiance.

Carved steps lead the way up to the castle. There must be hundreds because kids are always exhausted when they get halfway up, making the last stretch a real chore. But if you make the ascent, you are in for a treat.

The Castle of Many Mirrors

The castle is beautiful. Each corner of its four walls end in towers with gigantic spires. Surrounding those walls is a magnificent garden with a rose of every color in constant bloom. As you pass through its iron portcullis, you enter the great room. Its walls are draped in crimson heraldry with purple and gold accent. Its floor is polished stone and so are the walls. Countless mirrors line every room in the castle.

But the mirrors do not act like ordinary mirrors. Some show reflections of how a child will look when he is older. Others show how the person will die. There are those that seem to have people inside them, going about their lives completely unaware. And there are those that have children trapped inside, possible victims of the castle's sinister secret.

It's hard to say just how many rooms are in the castle but there are many chambers, bedrooms, a couple ballrooms, servants quarters, kitchens, formal and servant dining areas. Expansive stone staircases lead from one level to another and everything is immaculately clean and intricately decorated.

Everything, that is, but the back room.

The Marble Room

In the very back of the castle, hidden from the sight, is very small door made of very hard wood. Anyone casually passing by might think it was used by a small adult or perhaps some short mythical creature—which is exactly who uses it. Most children can walk right through it; some will have to duck though it might not be worth the trouble.

The room smells incredibly foul, like manure and rotten leaves. Thick pulsing vines twist and scale their way around the barren floor, up the plain walls, and to the ceiling. They are anchored somewhere deep beneath the castle and sprawl through the stone walls like a nervous system to the rest of the house. Which is exactly what it is.

In the center is a throne, upon which the most beautiful woman you have ever seen sits, staring blankly at the door. She is the heart whose magic and beauty is pumped through the house like blood.

Queen Titania, Bright and Fair

She is so beautiful and looks so young that one would never suspect her age is measured in millennia. She is rooted into her prison throne by vines so thick no normal weapon can sever them before they heal again.

Once, she was known as Titania, Queen of the Fair, and she ruled Arcadia with her husband, King Oberon. But the monsters of Closetland invaded the fair realm. Born of mischief, the mystical tricksters did a good job at thwarting the monsters but the brute force of the terrible beasts eventually overcame them.

The monsters slew Oberon in front of his queen and dragged Titania into Closetland. Her dutiful redcaps and goblins, once her attendants in the fair realm, followed her. They have become twisted by Closetland's dark magic into feral malcontents whose penchant for mischief has turned into a hunger for mayhem.

Titania was to be brought the ruler of Closetland as a bride. But she refused, spat in the King of Monsters' face, and declared her undying hatred for the beast. She threatened to end her own life because she knew that through her Closetland could use fairy magic.

The ruler of Closetland ordered her to be taken away, locked inside a stone castle forever. The redcaps and goblins were bound to her, ordered to make sure she never escaped or harmed herself in any way. That was very long ago. Titania's lordship over nature called the vines to her. They attached like leeches and slowly bleed her magic into the castle and, through the castle, into the surrounding forest. She is the source of the Enchanted Forest's beauty.

Titania soon fell into a catatonic state. She does not move, does not blink, does not speak. Her eyes are like windows to rooms recently gone dark. There is a suggestion of light within but absolutely no proof of it.

She has gone dark and her magic has as well. The monsters have yet to figure out how to use it.

Every solstice, her attendants bathe her in a noxious mixture of manure, mulched greenery, and innocent blood. You can guess where they get that last ingredient. The disgusting scrub keeps her forever young and eternally beautiful.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Stump with the Door on Top

Somewhere, in the thick of the forest, an unassuming stump sits amongst a beautiful, flower-filled clearing. The stump is six feet wide and just under four feet tall. The top is cleanly cut, as if a single stroke severed the now-absent tree from its base. To most anyone who passes by, it looks like nothing more than that.

But for a child who finds the special key within the castle, and brings that key to the stump, an ornate red door can be seen sitting atop its flat surface. The door is a good eight feet tall and comes to a gently pointed peak. Leaves are carved into the surface of the door—which is identical, no matter which side you're looking at.

The door is fixed to a twisted frame that looks like tree bark but glisters like gold. On either side of the door is a keyhole. On one side, it appears on the right; on the other, it appears on the left.

When the key within the castle is placed in the one on the right, the door will lead to wherever the child needs to be. (This doesn't mean the child will necessarily end up where he wants to be.) When the key within the castle is placed in the one on the left, it will lead the child to the person who needs the child the most.

The door also has a tricky habit of switching which side the locks are on thus reversing the above.

Goblyns and Redcaps

The protectors of the castle, and keepers of its fair mistress, are two vile types called goblyns and redcaps. Goblyns are squat creatures and look like a bulldog squashed with a pig. Its square body jostles atop two stubby legs. Its fat bodies jiggle with every effort. They speak guttural nonsense that is understood only the redcaps and their queen. The have pronounced underbites with flat, uneven teeth that stick out so far they often get caught on their flat porcine noses.

Redcaps are about twice as tall and half as thick as goblyns. Their arms and feet are spindly like spider legs and end in oversized hands and feet. They have a severe hunch that downplays their height and their ribs are clearly visible underneath their leathery skin which makes them appear malnourished. They get their name from the floppy crimson hats they wear. Some redcaps have stringy black hair that falls over their eyes and runs down their spine. Their long faces have even longer noses that are bumpy with warts and almost always running.

The redcaps and goblyns keep the Enchanted Forest clean of unwanted visitors. When they sense children (or other monsters) in the area, they will hunt them down in packs. The goblyns attack the legs while the redcaps go high, often latching onto an invader's face.

If the unwanted guest makes it to the castle, the redcaps and goblyns cannot attack them or kick them out. The castle is very close to Titania, its power source, and even in her catatonic state she has command over its four walls. Children are safe here but they should be careful for every second spent inside gives the goblyns and redcaps that much more time to grow in numbers and guard the exits.

"Butterfly? Really? It sounds so girly." Jake said the last word in disgust.

"Hey!" Natasha scolded the older boy.

Jessica nodded. "Yeah, and also only boys are knights. Whoever heard of a girl knight? I wanna be the opposite of a knight."

Kendra gave her a confused look. "What's the opposite of a knight?"

After a few seconds of thought, her face beamed. "A princess!"

"A princess?" Jake threw back his head and rolled his eyes.

"A princess isn't the opposite of a knight!"

Jessica shot him a smart look. "Then what is?"

"UGH!" Kendra stomped past her. "We're not getting into this. You don't want girly, we got 'Knights.' You want girly, we got 'Butterfly.' There! Perfect! Now let's shut up about it."

Jake gave Natasha and Jessica a look. "Okay, fine."

The two girls slumped their shoulders.

"Whatever," Natasha said.

Jessica shook her head. "Fine, but if anyone asks I'm a butterfly princess."

PART FOUR: THOSE LEFT BEHIND

Closetland is not all monsters, despite the rumors. There are others who live and fight within its strange boundaries. Some of them lived in our world once, long ago (some much longer than others). These are perhaps two who are the most storied.

Butterflies That Flutter By

They only appear in calm places, away from monsters and other distractions. They appear briefly, sometimes only a shimmer or two, and they bring much-needed sunshine to Closetland's darkest places. They are the butterflies, Closetland's greatest mystery.

Pumpkin-colored monarchs, darting hawkmoths, translucent blue gossamers, and numerous other varieties of butterflies cluster toward Closetland's grassy regions. Long-dead flowers bloom in their presence (and quickly die when away from it) providing much-needed variance to Closetland's almost-universally drab environment.

One cannot predict when or where these butterflies will appear but they are a magical sight when they do.

The Butterfly Knights

The butterflies are beautiful and precious and need protecting. That is where the Butterfly Knights come in. This ragtag group of children has no training and little organization but each member brings something special to the group. Some are great at setting traps for monsters, others are good at coming up with plans, there are those with high levels of Belief, and those with fists like rocks. Every knight has a purpose.

The group was founded by a boy named Kendra and to this day he is its leader. All recruits must be approved by him. He chooses the method of initiation (a test of strength, a quiz to challenge the recruit's intelligence, or something like that) and he decides who gets in and who doesn't. The group is fresh enough that very few challenge Kendra's authority but there are always those who mutter and stir up trouble.

Currently, the Butterfly Knights number just under a couple dozen though they are usually only spotted in groups of four to six.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Butterfly Knights track sightings, take down monsters who threaten the butterflies, and try to make sense of what they are, where they come from, and where they go.

The Boy Named Kendra

Other kids waste no time teasing Kendra about his name. He mostly just shrugs off comments but will stand up if some kid pushes too far. Kendra's mother was really sick when she had him and she died just after he was born. He was told by his grandmother that everyone thought he was going to be a girl so his mother set her heart on that name. Kendra's mother picked the name out of a book and she told her mother that was the only name she wanted for her child.

When the baby came out a boy and the mother passed away almost immediately after, care for the child fell on the only living relative: the grandmother. She honored her daughter's wish and named the boy Kendra.

Kendra is a tough kid, has a sharp mind, and is good with his fists. He appears to be about 12 years old but sounds to be years older. He has a kindness and a wisdom in his eyes you just don't see in every kid. He formed the Butterfly Knights to help protect the butterflies. He doesn't know where they came from but he knows they need his help.

Bunsworth von Hoppington

There are rumors of a rabbit, over five feet tall, who can lead lost children out of Closetland. All a child has to do is grab his left ear and hold on. When that is done, "Bunny" must lead them toward freedom—if he can. Folks say he speaks with a muffled accent, fretting over a missing girl named Jenna. She went missing some time ago and seems to be trapped somewhere inside Closetland. If Bunny can be found and his story heard, perhaps some kind child will be able to help Bunny find his missing girl and return her to the real world.

Bunny is considered a rumor because he has rarely been seen. What has been seen are the large rabbit prints all over certain areas of Closetland. There may be little proof of Bunny but those prints are pretty convincing.

The Girl Named Jenna

Rumors of a girl named Jenna go beyond Bunny's plight. Some kids say Jenna has the key to most powerful anti-monster weapon in Closetland. Others say she is actually a monster pretending to be a child, luring kids to their doom. And some say she's being held captive with countless others in the Black Bird Room.

Children in Closetland

Children choose to stay in Closetland for many reasons. For some, too much time has passed and they are afraid of the world that awaits them. For others, they are still searching after what they came in for. And for those like the Butterfly Knights, they have found a greater purpose in Closetland than they ever felt in the real world.

A lot of kids have gone into Closetland and come back out over the years. There have been considerably more who have gone in than come out though. The Butterfly Knights account for some of them but not nearly all. Some are missing, like Karen. They are probably hidden away in the far corners or lost in one of Closetland's diabolical traps or deceptive environments. Some are gone forever, fallen victim to a Monster they just couldn't escape.

PART FIVE: THE BLACK BIRD ROOM

Now we come to the darkest room in all of Closetland. It is the heart of madness, the seat of fear, the room that every child dreads.

How You Can Find It

It does not attempt to hide itself though, like any room in Closetland, it is rarely in the same spot for long. Like so many rooms, it begins with a door. In this case, it is a red door. It has a plain brass knob that is terribly marked by scratches as if some clawed thing keeps trying to open it.

First, There's the Smell

It smells like a dirty pet store. Most kids have to cover their noses and mouths to avoid gagging. Past the door is darkness, the smell is the only proof there is something else here.

Followed by Scrapes and Caws

As you enter, the hollow echoing of your footsteps gives way to the sound of the birds. The shrill caws, the scraping of claws against metal, beaks biting and bending the tines can drive you to your knees. The floor is covered in bird poop, broken jewelry, dirty pants and shirts, and feathers the color of midnight. The ceiling is lined with black iron cages. Inside each one, is a bird.

It is impossible to count how many birds are in this room. They are two to three times the size of a normal bird. Each one trapped in an ill-fitting cage. They fight to get out but the lock never gives and the tines they break always mend in a matter of seconds.

Each bird is pitch black, from beak to tailfeather. Some have anklets wrapped around their feet, others have bracelets around their wings, necklaces around their throats. There are birds with broken eyeglasses dangling from their cages. Each black bird is a child lost to Closetland. Those children who get lost or fall into one of the place's many traps or are captured by monsters and dragged to the black bird room.

When the ruler of Closetland touches his finger to a child's forehead and says the magic words, the process is already beginning. Next, he places the child in its cage. Over the course of a few days, the child is turned into a black bird by Closetland's dark magic. As the child transforms, the soul slowly leaves his body. Once out, the King of Monsters catches it and twists into a being called a Bogey.

If the child's soul can be found and brought to the black bird with seven days, the child can be saved. But every day, each bird looks more and more like every other bird. It can get very hard to tell them apart.

Then, Silence

At the far end of the black bird room is silence. Looking back from there, you can still see the bird's agitated rattling and mute mimics of a caw but you hear nothing. It is as if something in that part of the room is pushing away the noise so that all you can hear—all anyone can hear—is the sound of your breath.

The Sealed Door

In this part of the room is a blue door. You can tug, you can pull, you can kick, you can run a car into it at a hundred miles per hour, but unless the person inside invites you, you're not getting in.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Blue Room

Like a present with a present, the blue door open into a vast room whose cerulean walls pulse like a heartbeat. In the middle is a chair. There is nothing fancy about this chair other than the person who occupies it.

This is where the Bogeyman sits.

The Ruler of Closetland

His claws stick out like daggers, his fingers all ashen skin and twisted bone. His cackle cuts to the bone. He is called the King of Monsters. He is the ruler of Closetland. But children know him by another name: the Bogeyman. And Closetland is his home.

The Bogeyman is an odd bird. He has two faces: one is a maniacal, bloodthirsty tyrant who stomps around like a malevolent cartoon, demanding others to do his bidding, and telling every child in the world they should tremble at his feet! This side of the Bogeyman wears a grotesque mask made from bird bone and feathers.

The other side of the Bogeyman is softer and more menacing. He speaks in a cold, lifeless tone. This side is calculating, cruel, and direct. This side isn't manic, it's steady and deliberate. This side is unmasked though the Bogeyman's face doesn't look that much different from the masks he wears.

Both are to be feared, if for different reasons.

Children would do well to avoid the Bogeyman at all costs. While he has his chair in the Blue Room, he is not at all confined to it. Instead, he can be found anywhere in Closetland. The Bogeyman is brash and cocky enough, no matter which personality he's using, to toy with children instead of going immediately for their throats.

The brash side will construct elaborate schemes to ensnare children while the calm side will lay subtle traps that guide the child to his doom. Most kids don't know they're being led into his clutches until they are already there.



PART SIX: MAKING A MONSTER

Anything in Little Fears Nightmare Edition can be a monster. What is important is not its origin; it can be as mundane as a mailbox or as fantastical as a bird-headed woman. What is important is that children are scared of it and that fear must be overcome if the children are to succeed.

With this logic, it can be said that the scary old man down the street is a monster, as is the local junkyard's guardian pit bull. Something need not be supernatural or otherworldly in order to be a monster; it simply needs to be feared. Monsters are powered by myths—and the terror those myths generate—and a monster without a legend is just no monster at all.

Your Worst Fears Given Life

You can find inspiration for monsters from countless sources. Folklore, mythology, old horror movies, your own nightmares, or from the pages of all the excellent (and even not-so-excellent) horror books, comics, and websites out there make good resources.

No matter from where you draw inspiration, the goal of monster creation is to take your idea for a creature and break it into a handful of descriptions and stats for use in your game. Like player characters, monsters have a fair amount of plain language in their description. Since this game does not use a set list of Qualities or Stuff Qualities, it can be hard to pick out what's important about the monster, what will matter during play.

My advice is to stick to the highlights. Choose a few things that are iconic about the monster. Don't worry about cramming everything about a creature into its description. When using monsters in play, stick to those things you included on its sheet. If they were important enough to stand out when you made the monster, they're good enough to use when taking on kids.

And a monster doesn't have to be a slaving, ferocious beast! It could be the sweet neighbor girl who's actually a demon-summoning sorceress or it could be an object such as a doll or, as you'll see in the next chapter, an identity-stealing article of clothing. Read on, to find out how.

EXAMPLE: *As we go through monster creation, we'll create a monster step-by-step to help explain what everything means and to give you ideas. For this example, we're going to make a Mutant Fish.*

Monster Parts

Monsters have a Summary, Abilities, Qualities, Virtues, and Stuff just like kids. Monsters also have Weaknesses, but those are added during play and not defined now.

The first thing you will decide about the monster is its basic rundown: What it is, how powerful it is, and what makes it scary.

Summary

The summary is the quick and dirty snapshot of the monster. The first thing to do is write a quick paragraph about the monsters. You can touch on its origin, how it attacks kids, or why it's here. Just a few words can help solidify the monster in your mind and make the rest of this process that much easier.

CHAPTER FIVE

What It Is

On the monster sheet, you'll see the following: "This [blank] is [blank] Monster." The first blank is its name; the second is for how powerful it is.

First thing, give the monster a name. More than likely it won't be anything as individual as "Lucas" or "Stephanie" but may be singular such as "Bog Monster" or "Roadside Strangler." It could also be generic like "Vampire" and "Werewolf."

How Powerful It Is

There are three types of monsters: Regular Monster, Scary Monster, and Big Bad Monster. As you go from left to right, each level is more powerful than the last. The same monster or type of monster can be made at every level. It's perfectly fine to have a Regular Vampire and also have Scary Vampires. Just build them separately.

A Regular Monster

These are the run-of-the-mill monster that most kids will likely face. Ghosts, werewolves, most Closet Monsters, swamp people, goblins, and redcaps are good ones.

A Scary Monster

These are tougher monsters. They're scarier and more menacing. If there's a group, they are the leader. We're talking about the big goblin, the head vampire, the alpha wolfman, the lead ghoul of the bloodsucking horde. Scary Monsters always add an extra die to any roll they make.

Big Bad Monster

These are the scariest, most bone-chilling beasts to break out of Closetland. If you see them, run. Fast, far, and right now. This isn't a vampire, this is Dracula. This isn't just any ghost, this is the one that sucks little blonde girls into television sets. Big Bad Monsters always add two extra dice to any roll they make.

What Makes It Scary

"This monster is scary when [blank]" is very important. Werewolves are scary when they howl at the moon. Zombies are scary when they call out for "Braaaaaaains." Monsters under the Bed are scary when they clutch at your dangling feet. This is why kids are scared of it—so make it good.

The name is just what kids call it or maybe what appears in old books or songs. The type determines how much of a threat it is. The monster's "scary thing" describes a situation in which the monster can invoke a Fear Check (see Chapter One for more information).

What It Wants

Every monster wants something. This want drives it into action and gives it motive. This want can be an obvious need such as a mummy that wants its scarab necklace back or it can be so secret perhaps even the monster doesn't know. A ghost that isn't aware it died may have "It wants a proper burial for its body" written here. This want can be sinister such as "It wants to eat a child!" or not such as "It wants someone to answer its riddle."

On the sheet, put this on the line that says, "It wants [blank]."

EXAMPLE: *Before I do anything else, I write that quick paragraph. This is what I come up with:*

This fish has been spotted in the small lake near Gollagonsa Park, a nature retreat the kids often visit. The place is little more than a glorified swimming hole but it's what the kids have so they use it. Well, they did use it until rumors of this fish started to spread. Now, only the brave dare go near the water.

Now, let's branch that out a bit further.

"This Mutant Fish is a Regular Monster. It is scary when it splashes really hard in the water."

The splashing may well be all that anyone's ever seen of the fish, but that's enough for tales to spread and for fear to grow (which is what gives the monster its power.)

Now, we give this fish a reason it's suddenly attacking kids. This mutant fish is tired of the mess its swimming hole has become. As more and more kids visit, the more soda cans, chip wrappers, and other junk gets left. And let's not forget what some full-bladdered youth leave in its water. The fish is sick of that so let's put, "It wants its swimming hole cleaned—and kept clean!"

Wants & Fears

It may seem strange that a creature born of fear would want something other than simply to be scary. Fear gives birth to Monsters but isn't necessarily enough to drive them or even sustain them. Monsters develop wants sometimes as a side effect to the fear that gave them life or in addition to the fear that gave them life.

Abilities

Monsters have four Abilities. As with kids, these each answer the question "What do you want to do?" Monster Abilities range from 1 to 6 with the number of Ability Points determined by how powerful the monster is. Unlike kids, the Abilities begin at zero not one.

When looking at the Abilities, think beyond just the physical part of the monster. For instance, a ghost doesn't have a body so it might not make sense to give it Grab. But you might use this score to gauge how well a ghost is at using garden hoses, lamp plugs, or bedsheets to ensnare kids who try to get away. You might wonder why a disembodied head that hypnotizes other kids would have a Chase score? But you might use this to determine how quickly it can disappear and reappear around a room. Have fun with this and think of ways to use these Abilities in a non-traditional fashion.

If you decide not to put points in a certain Ability for a monster, you can leave that Ability at 0 and spend the points to make the other Abilities more powerful. You don't have to assign each point, if you don't want to. You have the freedom to take and give extra points as you see fit. It's your monster. Build it how you like.

Fight

Whenever a monster is in a tussle, trying to punch or claw some kid, or hurling a stone at his head, use this Ability.

Grab

Anytime a monster is trying to subdue, tackle, hold onto, or otherwise contain or capture a kid, use this Ability.

Chase

A child's natural inclination is to run from harm. And harm's natural inclination is to run after him. That's what this Ability is for.

CHAPTER FIVE

Scare

This Ability is used in Fear Checks to terrify children. The higher this score, the better the monster is at scaring kids and the harder it is to get rid of permanently.

Ability Points

The monster's power determines how many points you have to put into its Abilities.

A Regular Monster has 10 points to spend on Abilities.

A Scary Monster has 15 points to spend on Abilities.

A Big Bad Monster has 20 points to spend on Abilities.

EXAMPLE: *The Mutant Fish is a Regular Monster so it has 10 points to spend on its Abilities. Keeping in mind that it's a fish, we'll allot the points like this:*

Fight: 3

Grab: 1

Chase: 4

Scare: 2

This says that the fish, with a Chase of 4, is most likely to swim quickly after any kids that get near it. That Fight of 3 is nothing to sneeze at. It probably corners kids against rocks and thrashes against them. It doesn't have a high Grab because it can only really lock its mouth on a leg or maybe wrap its tale around a thin arm and even then it can't do it very well. Its Scare of 2 is low but that's okay. Not all monsters are legendary, I guess.

Qualities

Monsters have Qualities, same as the player characters. These Qualities describe what it is, what it can do, and what it cannot do.

A lot can be assumed with these Qualities, just as with the kids. You likely won't give points to every single thing a werewolf can do but knowing that "It is a man that turns into a wolf" tells you quite a bit, as does "It can hunt down its prey in the dead of night." You can be as poetic as you like but they need to express a Quality that means something.

Monster Qualities Rules

The top two types of monster Qualities always add three dice to any roll in which they apply. The last type of Quality takes away three dice from any roll where it factors into the action. As with kids, a monster can only add in one Quality per action.

What the Monster Is

For this, state something that describes the monster in a general sense. Nail down what the monster is. This Quality gives a quick snap shot of what the monster is. The sample monsters have examples of this.

You will add this Quality to almost every roll the monster makes. This should inform its actions as much as possible. This Quality adds three dice when applicable.

How Many?

All monster types get one of these.

What the Monster Can Do

For this one, put down a skill or capability the monster has. Think of this as the tactic the monster will rely on when nothing else works. This can be a way that it hunts, a creepy trick it does to unnerve people, or a means it has of "expressing" itself.

When a first type of Quality doesn't apply, this most likely will. As with the type of Quality above, it adds three dice to any roll.

How Many?

Regular Monsters get one of these. Scary Monsters get two of these. Big Bad Monsters get three of these.

What the Monster Cannot Do

For this one, list something that the monster is incapable of doing. This should be something that works against the monster and could also come into play during the game. This Quality removes three dice from whatever the monster is attempting.

This Quality trumps the other two! Even if other Qualities apply, you use this one.

How Many?

All monster types get one of these.

EXAMPLE: *Here's the first chance we have of describing the meat of this mutant fish. Let's figure it out by taking each item one at a time. Since this a Regular Monster, it only gets one Quality each.*

"It is a giant catfish." That's not bad but let's try to get more out of it with "It is a giant man-eating catfish." Alright! That gives us an idea of its size, a good descriptor (it wants to eat!), and what kind of fish it is.

"It can leap out of the water." Oh-ho, now we're getting more into why it's a threat. If it can leap out of water, it doesn't have to wait for kids to go swimming—they just need to get close—and it also insinuates the fish can probably live outside of water for a little bit longer than most fish.

"It cannot see well in the daylight." So this thing swims in the deeper water during the day and comes closer to the surface at night. That's probably why most folks haven't seen it.

Virtues

Monsters aren't notorious for being virtuous creatures. In keeping with that, they only have two Virtues: Health and Terror.

Health

Monsters don't have Health levels or penalties like kids do. They're either fighting, chasing, scaring, and grabbing with all the gusto they normally possess, or they're not doing anything.

A Regular Monster has a Health of 30.

A Scary Monster has a Health of 40.

A Big Bad Monster has a Health of 50.

Terror

Terror is a measure of how scary a monster truly is. A monster's Terror can be attacked with a child's Belief. Think of it like "Health" but not for a monster's physical body but for its ability to frighten people.

A monster's Terror is equal its Scare plus highest other Ability.

EXAMPLE: *Our mutant fish is a Regular Monster, so its Health is 30. Its Terror is its Scare (2) plus its highest other Ability which is Chase (4). That gives it a Terror rating of 6.*

CHAPTER FIVE

Stuff

Finally, monsters have Stuff. These are the weapons it will use against the kids. A monster's Stuff is going to give a bonus to one of its four Abilities, give a penalty to one of a child's five Abilities, give a bonus to the Damage it does, provide armor of some kind, or have some weird or scary effect.

As a child's Stuff is determined by his Innocence, a monster's Stuff is derived from its Terror. A monster's Stuff has effects as well with each effect ranked from 1-3. Effects are broken down into specific details that give bonuses and penalties or describe a power it has.

When deciding on a monster's Stuff, ask yourself what makes this monster scary and how it hurts kids. Does it have a raspy voice? Does it float three feet above the ground? Does it have six-inch claws that glimmer in the moonlight?

What Monster Stuff Can Do

Monster Stuff is a whole lot like the Stuff player characters have and follows the same rules. The big difference is that monsters do not pay any tokens to use their Stuff.

Give a Bonus to an Ability

You can simply write "Fight +1" or "Grab +3" or describe the bonus in greater detail. When the creature uses that Stuff, it gets a bonus to its total from the Success Dice.

Give a Penalty to a Kid's Ability

Again, just like making a character, its Stuff may penalize a kid's Ability. If you're making a man who was merged with a bumble bee, perhaps it can shoot honey at the kids which gives them a -2 to Move or a hypnotic gaze may give a kid a -1 to Think.

Do Extra Damage on an Attack

For every point put in this Stuff, a point of damage is added.

Decrease Damage from an Attack

This makes the Stuff essentially a form of armor. For every point in this Stuff, remove a point of damage done from the attack.

Describe a Weird/Cool Power

Perhaps your monster has the power to hypnotize or makes its voice seem as if it's coming from somewhere else. These don't necessarily have any system value (though they can) but they at least give the monster something really cool or creepy to do.

Take on Another Form

Some monsters can change their shape. If your monster can do that, give it this Stuff and give it a relevant rating, such as a Move bonus or Fight bonus. There is no need to roll for this transformation

Drain Spirit

This is a special Quality that some monsters have. When you give a monster this Quality, write it like any other (for example, Spirit -1) and pay 1 point for each level of Spirit draining it is taking. When the monster uses this Quality, instead of doing any physical Damage from an attack, you can choose to do that Damage to the kid's Spirit.

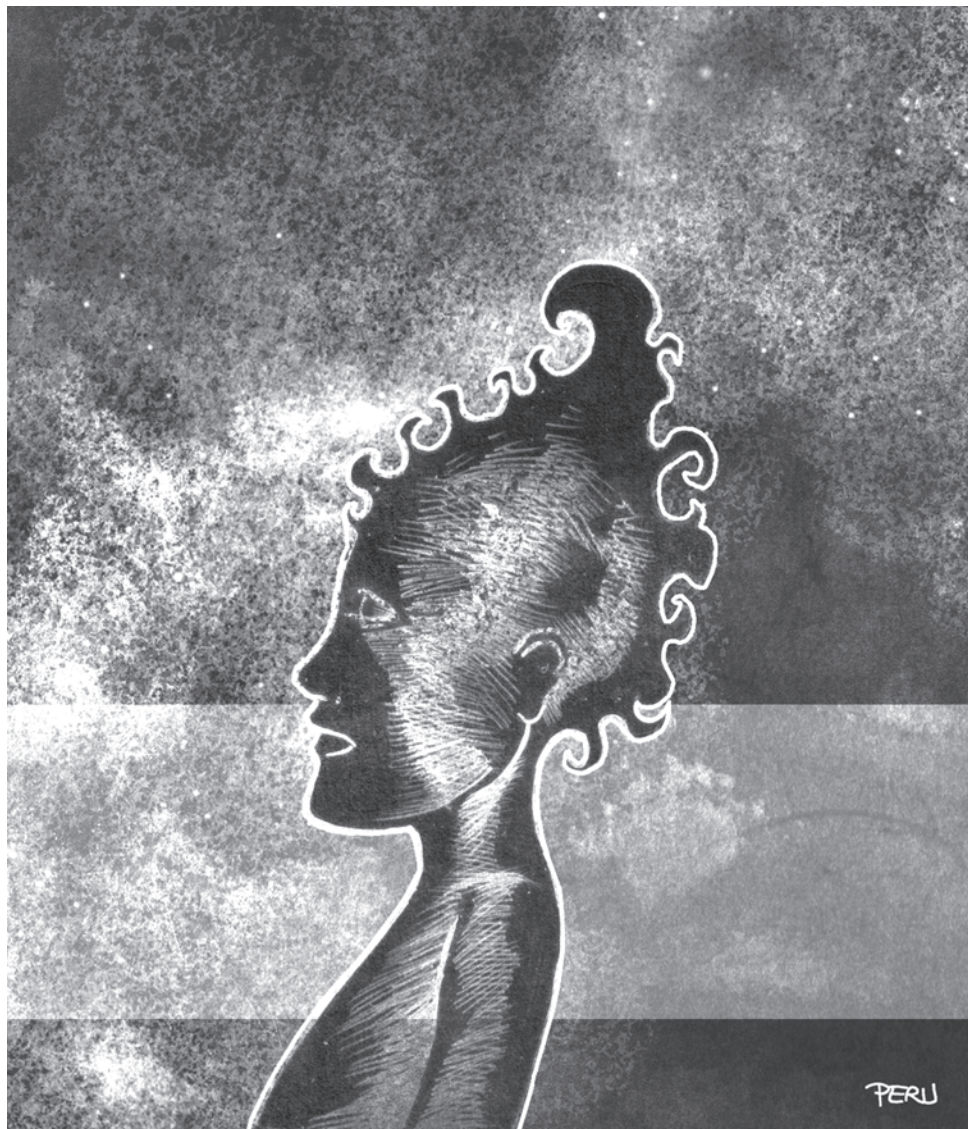
As you can guess, a monster with a Quality that drains 3 points of Spirit doesn't need to hit a kid that many times before all his Spirit is gone. Because of this, children need

to steer clear of these monsters. A Spirit-sapping monster is also a powerful tool so, as a game moderator, you have to use these sparingly in order to get the greatest effect.

Speaking of effect, Chapter One talks about what happens to a child as he loses Spirit. If you like, you can replace this effect with one of your own, such as with Body Thieves (see the last section of this chapter for the example).

EXAMPLE: *Our mutant fish has a Terror of 6 so we have that many points to spend on its Stuff. What Stuff could we give a fish that really makes it a formidable foe?*

My first thought is long misshapen teeth—like an uglier, meaner angler fish. I decide to put 2 points into its teeth which gives me 2 points to spend on giving these teeth some heft. I decide



CHAPTER FIVE

they give our fish's teeth a "Gnarly Snare (Grab +1)" and "Poisonous (Damage +1)." Each point in the effect costs a point of Terror. It looks like this on the sheet:

Long sharp teeth 00

Gnarly Snare (Grab +1)

Dripping with Poison (Damage +1)

It uses those teeth to latch onto kids and drag them into the murky depths. The extra damage is just icing on the mildewy cake.

I have 4 more points to spend on Stuff so I decide to give it Hypnotic Eyes with the effect "Mesmerizing" at 2 which I use as a penalty to Think. I also give it Thick Scales with the effect "Hard to Puncture (Damage -2)." Here's what it all looks like on the sheet:

Long sharp teeth 00

Gnarly Snare (Grab +1)

Poisonous (Extra Damage +1)

Hypnotic Eyes 00

Mesmerizing (Think -2)

Thick Scales 00

Hard to Puncture (Damage -2)

So this mutant fish leaps out of the water, hypnotizes kids so they're momentarily stunned, grabs them in its teeth, and drags them down into the water. If kids get too close to it, and it doesn't want them to, it starts beating them with its large tail. Not a bad monster for a first session, I reckon.

PART SEVEN: MONSTER RULES

Monsters obey most of the same rules as kids. In this section, we'll discuss a few particulars and expand some of things we have covered in other chapters.

Using a Monster's Stuff

Monsters never have to pay tokens to use their Stuff and there is no limit as to how many times they can use their Stuff in a session. A monster may only use one piece of Stuff in a single action though (but get the benefit of whichever Stuff Quality they like).

Weaknesses

On the monster sheet included in the back, you'll see an area called "Weaknesses." When players give Weaknesses to a monster, as described in Chapter One, you record them here.

Weaknesses do not have game effects but they do have story ones. This means that Weaknesses will not change how many dice a monster rolls but as the game moderator you have to ensure that the monster does not break the rules once Weaknesses have been established.

Fear Tokens

We've talked before about Fear Checks: how they are made, who makes them when, and what the side effects of failed ones can be. But we haven't talked about the monster side of these checks.

When a kid fails a Fear Check, the monster becomes more powerful. The sudden rush of terror, anxiety, and adrenaline feed monsters and make them even more powerful. For every Failing Grade in a child's failed Fear Check, the monster gains a Fear token.

If multiple kids failed Fear Checks, the monster gains a Fear token from every Failing Grade.

Fear tokens stay with the monster throughout play so they are not discarded, only spent by the GM during play.

What Fear Tokens Do

Fear tokens are like Belief tokens but there's no risking a Fear token, only spending one. The GM can spend 1 (and only 1) Fear token a round, to do any of the following:

One More Swing

Monsters can be especially good at fighting. While everyone normally gets one attack per round, you can spend 1 Fear token to allow the monster to take another attack. The monster cannot spend a Fear token on that attack.

Get an Extra Die

Fear gives the monster that extra burst of energy. You can spend 1 Fear token to give the monster an extra die for any action it is attempting.

Damage Bonus

Fear can also make a monster particularly ferocious. You can spend 1 Fear token to add +3 to Damage on an attack.

Force a Wits Check

You can spend 1 Fear token to do its scary thing and gain more Belief. This Fear check may fail though and leave the monster down 1 token.

Regain Health

Physical damage doesn't mean as much as it used to when it comes to monsters. You can spend 1 Fear token to heal 3 points of damage.

Deflect Belief

When a child spends Belief to reduce a monster's Terror, you can deflect that by spending 1 Fear token. The child still loses his Belief token but the monster doesn't lose any Terror.

Hurt a Kid's Chances

You can spend a Fear token to remove one die from every character's check that round. When this is done, every player with a character in the vicinity of the monster rolls one less die than he normally would for the next action he takes against the monster (directly or indirectly).

Escape

By spending a Fear token, the monster can disappear in a puff of smoke to fight another day. If this is done during an attack, no Damage is done to the monster.

Whose Fear is it Anyway?

It doesn't matter. The Fear tokens go the game moderator to do with as she sees fit. The Fear token generated by one Monster can be used by give a bonus to another Monster. Fear that's good for the goose is good for the gander, as they say.

CHAPTER FIVE

How Monsters Die

There are two ways for a monster to die: physically (which means it may come back) and permanently (which means it won't). There are three ways to accomplish this. Let's look at each below.

Physical Death

When a monster's Health reaches zero, its physical body is destroyed. It will die in some suitable fashion and give the kids a hard-won victory. But the kids shouldn't spend too much time congratulating each other as physical death for a monster is only temporary. While the monster's current physical form may die, people are still afraid of it. This Fear can (and most likely will) bring it back. Maybe not in five minutes, or five hours, or five days, but it will. And it probably won't think too kindly of the kids who ruined its last body.

No More Terror

The second way takes long but has a much greater reward: the permanent destruction of the monster. A character does this by spending Belief. First, the character reduces all of the monster's Stuff to zero and then he starts chipping away at the monster's Terror (the specific rules for which are in Chapter One). With its Terror reduced to zero, no one fears it anymore and it is powerless. The monster is gone forever, its Terror destroyed by Belief.

This is the big dramatic ending for the monster and should be played up like the climax of a film. The monster explodes into a thousand shards of light, melts into a gelatinous puddle, is pecked to bits by birds, is torn apart by the wind into nothing but dust, or obliterated in some other grand fashion.

Getting What It Wants

Sometimes killing the monster is not the best option. The angry ghost tearing apart of the old house on the corner may simply be the spirit of a girl who has been trapped there since her death 150 years ago. The werewolf may only be hunting because its monster instinct demands it while what it really wants is to be free of its curse. That mutant fish only wants clean water in which to swim. That's not too much to ask.

By taking the time to find out what a monster wants and, if it's not crazy to do so, giving it that, the characters free the monster, rather than destroy it. This can lead to some heartwarming scenes where the girl in the house is finally free to run down the tunnel of light into her family's waiting embrace. The hunter who was bitten so long ago no longer has to fear the cycle of the moon (and swears off eating meat forever). The mutant fish can swim happily in clean water once again.

When a monster gets what it wants, the monster part of it dies. This doesn't mean something violent or gory happens but something transformative, something that changes the monster into something else. The devil dog turns into a harmless little puppy. The mutant fish turns into a regular old catfish. The killer statue falls to the floor with a thud; its once-animated body reverted to an ordinary marble sculpture of Abraham Lincoln. The werewolf turns into a man wearing a torn shirt and jeans. The ghost girl turns into a beam of light. The last thing you see is her smiling face and her little hand waving goodbye as she mouths a silent "Thank you."

Of course, not all monsters deserve such happy endings. Some want to gobble fingers and make a necklace from baby teeth and, even if you they did get those things, they would only turn into something worse.

Monster Death and Meaning

As with character death, this should be dramatic. This is the climax, the big deal, the whole reason the kids ran away from home, braved the haunted forest, entered Closetland, and risked their lives to save their friend/seek revenge/confront the Monster. Make it worth all that trouble and the players will come back for more.

How a Kid Becomes a Monster

In Chapter One, we talked about player character death. One of the options is for the character to die in the traditional way where his heart stops beating, his eyes stop moving, and his lungs stop breathing. The other way is for the character to change, to become something else. When a player chooses this for his character, the game moderator has the option to turn that character into a monster. Here is how you do that.

Writing the Summary

Based on how the player described his character's transformation, give the kid-monster a name and a scary thing. For what it wants, check the character's Questionnaire. Find something on there that will motivate the monster, such as finding that lost item or returning to its safe spot.

Abilities, Virtues, Stuff

Add the character's Belief to its two highest Abilities. That is how many points you have to spend on the kid-monster's Abilities. These are bought the same way as always.

The kid-monster's Health is equal to the character's Health all added together plus 10. If a character had 7 points in each of the four levels of Health, all of those levels would be added together for a total of 28. Adding 10 to that, the kid-monster's Health would be 38.

From there, you figure its Terror and Stuff the same as usual. Add the kid-monster's Scare to its highest other Ability to get its Terror and then use that Terror to buy Stuff. You figure Stuff by looking at what the kid turned into and what a creature like that might have. If you're stuck, look at the Stuff the character had prior to his transformation. Drawing parallels between what the kid once used to defend himself and what the kid-monsters uses now can lead to really inspired results.

And You're Done

You now have a quick and easy monster to use against the characters. A monster that was once a sibling, a best friend, and a trusted monster-hunting companion, no less.

PART EIGHT: SAMPLE MONSTERS

The rules detailed above give you the tools you'll need to make your own horrific creations. In the interest of getting you up and playing as quickly as possible—and also to give you a bit more insight into what kinds of monsters this system can make—some sample monsters are included. These are monsters that you can slip into an existing campaign or use for a one-shot session.

CHAPTER FIVE

This ZOMBIE is a Regular Monster.

One night, some kids were being rowdy in the local cemetery. They were spraypainting markers, peeing on graves, and swinging big aluminum bats like golf clubs at some of the headstones. A couple of the headstones were destroyed which upset the occupants greatly. That night, a few of these shambling horrors pulls themselves out of their graves to terrorize those kids and any others that got in their way.

It is scary when it gets back up after being knocked down. It wants its broken headstone fixed or replaced.

Abilities

Fight: ØØØØØØ
Chase: ØØØØØØ
Grab: ØØØØØØ
Scare: ØØØØØØ

Virtues

Terror: 6
Health: 30

Qualities

It is a rotting corpse.
It can take a punch.
It cannot enter sacred ground.

Stuff

Tough Skin ØØ
Hard to Tear (-2 Damage)
Foul Stench ØØ
Choking Cloud (Think -2)
Cold Grasp ØØ
Like a Vice (Grab +2)

This VAMPIRE is a Regular Monster.

This bloodsucking prince of darkness rises from its crypt every night to feed upon the blood of the innocent. Always on the hunt for the freshest, sweet ichor, the vampire prefers to draw sustenance from the necks of the innocent.

In human form, it is dressed in a fine suit, complete with high collar and cape. But it can also turn into a bat or a floating cloud of mist in order to avoid damage

It is scary when it gets back up after being knocked down. It wants its broken headstone fixed or replaced.

Abilities

Fight: ØØØØØØ
Chase: ØØØØØØ
Grab: ØØØØØØ
Scare: ØØØØØØ

Virtues

Terror: 7
Health: 30

Qualities

It is a fang-faced bloodsucker.
It can smell your blood.
It cannot go out in sunlight.

Stuff

Yellow Eyes ØØ
See in the Dark
Hypnotize (Think -1)
Change Forms ØØ
Bat (Move +1)
Mist (-1 Damage)
Big Bite ØØØ
Holds You in Place (Grab +1)
Sharp Fangs (Damage +2)

This GHOST is a Regular Monster.

Archibald Frederickson was a troublemaker. One night, he was playing in an abandoned house when the floorboards gave out from under his feet. He fell to his death in the expansive house's stone basement. His body was buried by a mountain of debris and has yet to be found.

Still a troublemaker, he lures other children inside so he can play tricks on them. The ghost is bound to its home but draws people in by flickering lights and calling to them from just beyond the door.

It is scary when it shakes the walls. It wants a proper burial.

Abilities

Fight: ØØØØØØ
Chase: ØØØØØØ
Grab: ØØØØØØ
Scare: ØØØØØØ

Virtues

Terror: 7
Health: 30

Qualities

It is the ghost of a boy.
It can possess objects.
It cannot leave the house.

Stuff

Possessive ØØ
Hard to Tear (Scare +1)
Flying Objects (+2 Damage)
Change Forms ØØ
Outline of a Boy (Scare +2)
Grip of Death
Like a Vice (Grab +3)

This MUTANT FISH is a Regular Monster.

This fish has been spotted in the lake near Gollagonsa Park, a nature retreat the kids often visit. The place is little more than a glorified swimming hole but it's what the kids have so they use it. Well, they did use it until rumors of this fish started to spread. Now, only the brave dare go near the water.

It is scary when it splashes really hard in the water. It wants its swimming hole cleaned—and kept clean!

Abilities

Fight: ØØØØØØ
Chase: ØØØØØØ
Grab: ØØØØØØ
Scare: ØØØØØØ

Virtues

Terror: 6
Health: 30

Qualities

It is a giant man-eating catfish.
It can leap out of the water.
It cannot see well in daylight.

Stuff

Long sharp teeth ØØ
Gnarly Snare (Grab +1)
Poisonous (Damage +1)
Hypnotic Eyes ØØ
Mesmerizing (Think -2)
Thick Scales ØØ
Hard to Puncture (-2 Damage)

CHAPTER FIVE

This REDCAP is a Regular Monster.

These red-topped rascals protect Queen Titania. They patrol the Enchanted Forest, keeping it free of annoying creatures such as children. They have cat-like teeth, large bobbly heads, and oversized hands and feet at the end of their wire-thin arms.

Originally, these mischievous pucks were troublesome but not vicious. Closetland's dark magic has changed them into beasts.

It is scary when it flashes its teeth and hisses. It wants to leave Closetland get back home.

Abilities

Fight: ØØØØØØ
Chase: ØØØØØØ
Grab: ØØØØØØ
Scare: ØØØØØØ

Virtues

Terror: 6
Health: 30

Qualities

It is an oddly-shaped trickster.
It can leap really far.
It cannot leave the Forest.

Stuff

Teeth Like a Cat ØØ
Hurts like Crazy (Damage +2)
Horrible Breath Ø
Hard to Breathe (Move -1)
Big Hands and Feet ØØØ
Hold You Still (Grab +3)

This GOBLYN is a Regular Monster.

Squat and slow, the goblin is the redcap's complement in almost every way. Goblins wobble as they walk and they do it slowly. Redcaps will often set up traps to snare victims for their goblin friends. Goblins also carry a bag of spears they throw at targets with deadly accuracy. They may be slow but goblins are vicious and can clamp down with their big flat teeth hard enough to crush bone.

It is scary when it bellows its thundrous warcry. It wants to have enough food so that it will never get hungry again.

Abilities

Fight: ØØØØØØ
Chase: ØØØØØØ
Grab: ØØØØØØ
Scare: ØØØØØØ

Virtues

Terror: 6
Health: 30

Qualities

It is a vicious little warrior.
It can hit a running target.
It cannot leave the Forest.

Stuff

Big Flat Teeth ØØØ
Latch On (Grab +1)
Crunch-Crunch (Damage +2)
Foul Stench ØØ
So Very Loud (Think -1)
Bag of Weapons
Little Spears (Damage +2)

This CLOSET MONSTER is a Scary Monster.

The Closet Monster is one of the most widely-seen and -known Monsters of Closetland. If you ever need a Monster who can show up anywhere at anytime, the Closet Monster is a good one.

Closet Monsters are fun to make and use because they travel the darkness that connects all closed doors. As a group, they have a variety of tricks they use. Singularly, every Closet Monster tends to prefer using only one or two of the tricks listed below.

These tricks are Stuff, same as any other Monster, and they can be used by any Monster you wish but I like to keep them especially for Closet Monsters.

Some Common Closet Monster Tricks

A Thousand Eyes

This allows the Closet Monster to hypnotize the child into obeying simple commands. They must stare directly into the child's eyes when giving the command.

Beddy-Bye

With this, the Closet Monster can make the child fall into a sleep so deep it may take them days to wake up.

Control

With just a thought, the Closet Monster can lift objects and throw them across the room. The Closet Monster can also cause objects to implode, shatter, or glow eerily.

This lumbering hulk stomps through Closetland in its methodical pursuit of children. It prefers to lull children to sleep, throw them over its shoulder, and bring them back its room of cages. It then trades them to the Bogeyman for coins, precious gemstones, and silver.

It is scary when it flashes its bright red eyes. It wants shiny objects.

Abilities

Fight: ØØØØØØ
Chase: ØØØØØØ
Grab: ØØØØØØ
Scare: ØØØØØØ

Virtues

Terror: 8
Health: 40

Mother's Mask

The Closet Monster can appear as someone the child knows and trusts. Part of the Closet Monster must remain obscured by darkness for this to work.

Shroud

A shroud falls over the child, enveloping them in darkness. The dark is so thick, it can be hard for the child to breathe.

Tangleweb

This causes the child to become ensnared by just about anything: a blanket, clothing, kite string, shoelaces, or even the thin air.

Qualities

It is a big grey giant.
It can hold onto squirming things.
It can throw really hard.
It cannot go outside in our world.

Stuff

A Thousand Eyes ØØØ
Shroud ØØØ
Big Big Hands ØØ
Like a Vice (Grab +2)

CHAPTER FIVE

This LIVING DOLL is a Scary Monster.

Made by Patchwork, these creatures wander the halls of the Dollhouse looking for children. When they find one, they will attempt to talk to the child, often saying thing only someone close to the child would know (such as a nickname or about the recent death of a pet). The living dolls range from a hodgepodge of strange elements to things that almost look human. And being human is exactly what a living dolls wants.

It is scary when it says something that it shouldn't know. It wants to be real.

Abilities

Fight: ØØØØØØ
Chase: ØØØØØØ
Grab: ØØØØØØ
Scare: ØØØØØØ

Virtues

Terror: 10
Health: 40

Qualities

It is a mish-mash of broken parts.
It can catch up with you.
It can sense your emotions.
It cannot be Cared about.

Stuff

Clacking Joints ØØØ
Sound Scary (Scare +3)
Hollow Eyes ØØØ
Hypnotize (Think -2)
Make You Cry (Scare +1)
Comforting Voice ØØ
Makes You Trust It
Made from Doll Parts ØØ
Hard Plastic (-1 Damage)

This BODY THIEF is a Scary Monster.

This creature has no body of its own. Instead, it possesses others. It is a spirit that takes over the bodies of hosts. It can possess a worm, a dog, or anything it likes. In this form, it is of a kid, around 8 or 9 years old. Though the body thief is much older than that.

It is scary when it gets back up after being knocked down. It wants its own body forever and ever.

Abilities

Fight: ØØØØØØ
Chase: ØØØØØØ
Grab: ØØØØØØ
Scare: ØØØØØØ

Virtues

Terror: 8
Health: 40

Qualities

It is almost just like you.
It can predict what you'll say.
It can sound like you.
It cannot live long outside a host.

Stuff

Change Forms ØØØ
Young Kid (Chase +1)
Rat (Move +1)
Dog (Fight +1)
Weird Stare ØØØ
Choking Cloud (Think -2)
Makes You Feel Ill (Move -2)
Angry Voice ØØ
Crush Your Dream (Spirit -2)

This BABA YAGA is a Big Bad Monster.

The protector of the chicken-legged house and a crone from ancient folklore, Baba Yaga is a cannibalistic witch and hunter. She chases children on a giant wooden spoon, weaving in and out of the dense trees like a spry animal.

It is scary when it lets out its piercing cackle. It wants a prize to take back to the house.

Abilities

Fight: ØØØØØØ
Chase: ØØØØØØ
Grab: ØØØØØØ
Scare: ØØØØØØ

Virtues

Terror: 10
Health: 50

Qualities

It is a shriveled-faced hag.
It can find you anywhere.
It can fly really fast.
It can shriek like the devil.
It cannot resist a fair trade.

Stuff

Clawed Hands ØØØ
Tight Grip (Grab +2)
Cut Deep (Damage +1)
Shrill Voice ØØ
Chilling Cackle (Scare +2)
Giant Spoon ØØØ
Hunts You Down (Chase +3)
Glowing Eyes ØØ
See in the Dark
Finds Weakness (Damage +1)

Door Closed

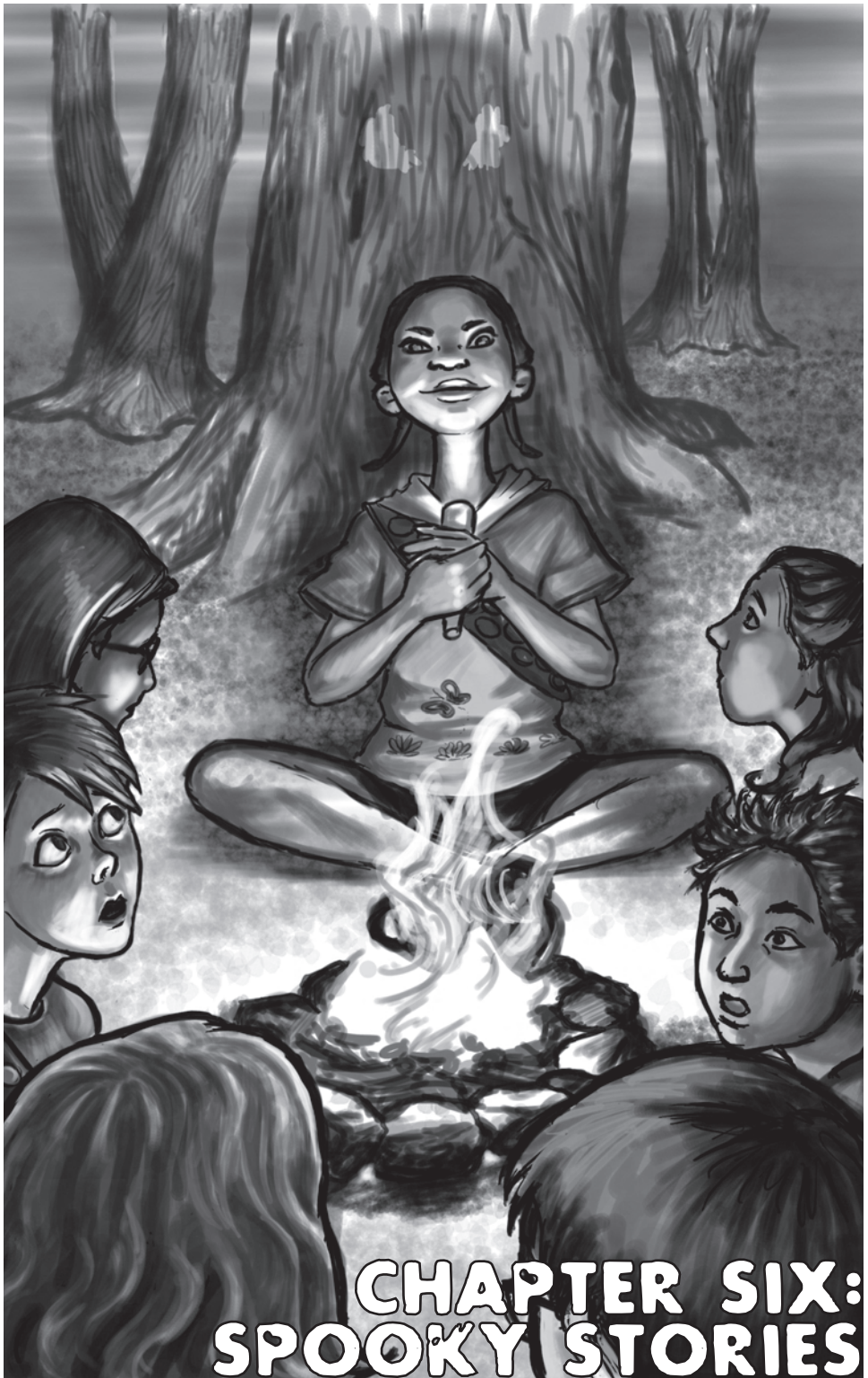
At least for now. As you've read this book, you've come to know the game system, the characters, the game moderator's responsibilities, the real world through the horror-tinted glasses, and now the dark realm of Closetland and its Monsters.

The next thing to do is to put this all together which is what we'll do next.

Once upon a time

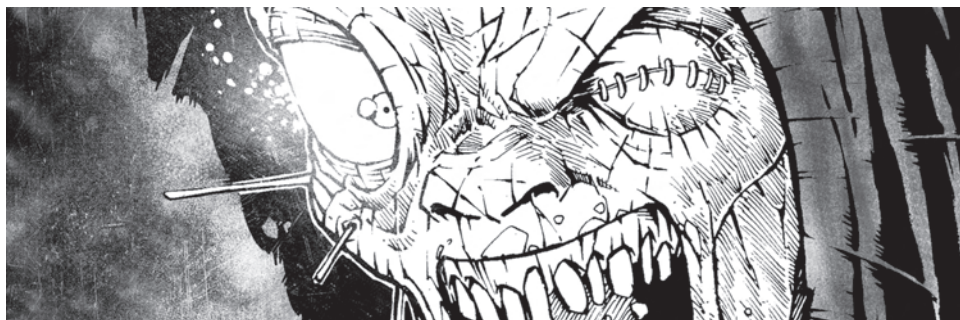
At this very spot

On a night just like tonight



CHAPTER SIX: SPOOKY STORIES

CHAPTER SIX



This is what it all comes down to: telling stories. We've gone through the rules, learned how to make characters, talked about the game moderator's role in this, seen the world, met the Monsters, and now it's time to put all this together into a storytelling experience you won't forget.

Included in this chapter are some sample characters, a complete episode, and some adventure seeds to get you started. More episodes will be made available at littlefears.com.

The episode, titled *The Houses of Apple Court*, includes a summary, inciting incident, and the plot-intensive scenes that lay out the backbone of the story as well as the GMCs and Monsters. Players and game moderators are encouraged to add their own scenes, introduce new elements and characters, and make the stories their own. For first-time players, though, you can run through all the scenes in order until you become comfortable with collaborative storytelling and you are ready to improvise scenes and create episodes of your own.

The adventure seeds come after the full episode. These are brief synopses intended to give you a starting point from which you can flesh out entire episodes of your own.

Earlier in this book, we discussed the different types of scenes, how to introduce them, and how to transition between them. You'll see this come into practice here as each of the full scenarios walks you through the plot and hooks the scenes together.

Before we get to the sample episode and characters, let's talk briefly about the different types of episodes there are in *Little Fears Nightmare Edition*.

Types of Episodes

There are three basic types of episodes in this game. Each of these not only sets a style for the episode but the tone and general goal as well. While this entire game can be simplified into "children fighting monsters" the episode type helps expound on that and give the game moderator another tool in her belt for conceiving and designing episodes for her group.

Adventure

An adventure episode is about exploration, about overcoming environmental traps and hazards while getting from Point A to Point B. The characters will interact with GMCs and Monsters with the goal of finding a place or a person or reaching a destination.

Adventure episodes usually play on a larger scale with a lot of different environments and areas. There are lots of traps, promise of treasure (or other reward), and interesting and often dangerous people found along the way.

Investigation

This type of episode is about finding clues and piecing them together into some larger picture. The goal is the same as adventure really but it's about decoding brain teasers and puzzles rather than traversing harsh environments.

The clues can be out in the open but encrypted or hidden away and need to be unearthed. Clues will invariably become harder to find or decipher as the investigation goes.

Investigation episodes can take place in a single location, an isolated place, or a small area where the clues are hidden and must be unearthed or they can take place across a series of related places.

Survival

An episode centered on survival is all about kids making it out of some place alive. The children are trapped or somehow confined and there is something or someone trying to keep them there. Not only that but that someone or something poses an immediate danger to the children.

This type of episode is all about tension. It's about outside forces closing in, cornering the characters and forcing them to think on their feet. There must be reminders of that danger. The reminders can be subtle (spooky noises, rattling windows) or obvious (the Monster appearing and threatening the children directly) but the characters must be reminded that acting quickly and acting correctly could be the only thing that saves their hide.

Mixing Types Together

Most episodes are probably going to touch on all three of these types and not fall entirely within a single category. There can be a lot of overlap between Investigation episodes and Adventure episodes where the character must travel to exotic places in order to find clues to carry on. Kids might be held captive inside a house by an angry spirit. In order to escape, they must uncover the clues that will lead to a way to appease the ghost. When types mix, one usually wins out as the dominant type with the other types being secondary.

Sample Characters

Learning any new game can be daunting. You're not only learning when and how to roll and read the dice and play the tokens but with a story game like this you have to learn how to make player characters, game moderator characters, and Monsters. You may not be sure exactly what type of character to make, or maybe you don't have the time to make characters, or maybe a new player dropped into a game where everyone already has characters. And sometimes you just want to focus on one thing: learning the game.

To help ease you into the game, six sample characters are included. Everything has been provided but the Questionnaire. Simply copy the details to a character sheet and you're good to go. If you want to answer the Questionnaire and put down some goals, I highly encourage it but for the purposes of learning the game, it's not entirely necessary.

There are six characters included here: three boys and three girls, ranging from 12 to 6 years old.. Let's meet the kids.

CHAPTER SIX

Stanley Harbecker is an 11 year old boy.

Stanley has never been one for strange tales of far-off weirdness. He's much more down to earth than that. He spends most of his time thinking about real world stuff like math and science not flights of fancy. His main interest is space and he hopes he doesn't get as tall as his dad so maybe he can visit the space station someday.

Abilities

Move: 000000

Fight: 000000

Think: 000000

Speak: 000000

Care: 000000

Virtues

Belief: 2

Wits: 9

Spirit: 10

Health

fine: 0000000000

sore: 0000000000

hurt: 0000000000

cold: 0000000000

Qualities

I am a Smart Kid +2

I can read well +3

I love science +3

I have a good memory +1

I'm tall for my age +1

I wear glasses -1

I'm not that strong -1

Traits

I can Move well when I'm running away from animals.

It's hard for me to Think when I'm around cute girls.

Stuff

Mathbook 00

Helps Him Think
(Think +2)

Shelley Rosenthal is a 12 year old girl.

The most popular girl in school, Shelley is used to getting her way. And that's only right since, y'know, she deserves it. She's pretty and smart and a good friend but she also has a habit of acting older than she is and ditching her younger friends for older ones. She's 12 going on 25, that's for sure.

Abilities

Move: 000000

Fight: 000000

Think: 000000

Speak: 000000

Care: 000000

Virtues

Belief: 1

Wits: 9

Spirit: 10

Health

fine: 0000000000

sore: 0000000000

hurt: 0000000000

cold: 0000000000

Qualities

I am the Boss +2

I am very popular +3

Kids listen to me +3

I have a lot of friends +1

I'm really pretty +1

I have a bad temper -2

Traits

I can Move well when I think something is going to hurt me.

It's hard for me to Think when I'm angry.

Stuff

Special Glasses 0

See Important Things

Caleb Campbell is a 9 year old boy.

Caleb is a simple, quiet kid who loves comic books and the outdoors. He spends his time riding horses and sketching superheroes. Given the choice, he'd spend his life outside, reading a stack of comic books, and talking dreamtalk about the future. He's a big kid and a gentle soul who often comes to the defense of weaker kids.

Abilities

Move: ØØØØØØ
Fight: ØØØØØØ
Think: ØØØØØØ
Speak: ØØØØØØ
Care: ØØØØØØ

Virtues

Belief: 4
Wits: 7
Spirit: 10

Health

fine: ØØØØØØØØØØ
sore: ØØØØØØØØØØ
hurt: ØØØØØØØØØØ
cold: ØØØØØØØØØØ

Qualities

I am a Tough Kid +2
I can fight okay +3
I can take a punch +3
I read a lot of comics +1
I like the outdoors +1
I take my time doing stuff -2

Traits

I can Speak well when it's about superheroes and comic books.

It's hard for me to Fight when the other kids are smaller.

Stuff

Multi-Tool ØØ
Hurts Monsters (Damage +1)
Picks Regular Locks
Comic Books ØØ
Inspires Him (Think +2)

Jesse Albright is a 9 year old girl.

Don't call her Jessica. That is way too girly for this dirt bike-riding karate master. Her mom keeps trying to shove dolls into her hands but Jesse has no interest in playing house. Not when there are mudpits to jump. She also has a wicked head for figuring out how things work.

Abilities

Move: ØØØØØØ
Fight: ØØØØØØ
Think: ØØØØØØ
Speak: ØØØØØØ
Care: ØØØØØØ

Virtues

Belief: 4
Wits: 8
Spirit: 10

Health

fine: ØØØØØØØØØØ
sore: ØØØØØØØØØØ
hurt: ØØØØØØØØØØ
cold: ØØØØØØØØØØ

Qualities

I am a Thrillseeker +2
I love riding bikes +3
I'm not scared +3
I'm good at fixing stuff +1
I take karate lessons +1
I talk too much -1
I forget homework -1

Traits

I can Speak well when I'm talking about bikes or bike riding.

It's hard for me to Think when I'm taking a test.

Stuff

Karate Outfit ØØ
Helps Her Fight (Fight +2)
Bike Pads ØØ
Protects Her (-2 Damage)

CHAPTER SIX

Mikey Rubrecht is a 7 year old boy.

Mikey is so quiet that he finds it hard to tell people how much he doesn't like being called Mikey. He likes the name Michael but it's his father's name too so his parents started calling him Mikey and he's never spoken against it. He loves video games and playing sports.

Abilities

Move: ØØØØØØ
Fight: ØØØØØØ
Think: ØØØØØØ
Speak: ØØØØØØ
Care: ØØØØØØ

Virtues

Belief: 6
Wits: 6
Spirit: 10

Health

fine: ØØØØØØØØØØ
sore: ØØØØØØØØØØ
hurt: ØØØØØØØØØØ
cold: ØØØØØØØØØØ

Qualities

I am a Jock +2
I play baseball +3
I throw really hard +3
I speak German too +1
I love puzzles +1
I am very shy -2

Traits

I can Care well when it's my older brother Tommy.
It's hard for me to Fight when my dad is around.

Stuff

Baseball Bat ØØØ
Hurts Monsters (Damage +2)
Hits Stuff Far
X-Ray Specs ØØ
Can See Monsters
See Through Walls
Compass Ø
Always Points Home

Darla Olson is a 6 year old girl.

Six-year old Darla is the runt of the bunch. But what she lacks in size, she makes up for in attitude. This little girl doesn't like to be excluded from big kid activities and will push her way in--wanted or not.

Abilities

Move: ØØØØØØ
Fight: ØØØØØØ
Think: ØØØØØØ
Speak: ØØØØØØ
Care: ØØØØØØ

Virtues

Belief: 7
Wits: 6
Spirit: 10

Health

fine: ØØØØØØØØØØ
sore: ØØØØØØØØØØ
hurt: ØØØØØØØØØØ
cold: ØØØØØØØØØØ

Qualities

I am a Bossy Kid +2
I speak my mind +3
I'm not scared of adults +3
I am cute +1
I'm small for my age +1
I have a temper -1
I get bored easily -1

Traits

I can Fight well when someone makes fun of me.
It's hard for me to Speak when I'm embarrassed.

Stuff

Doll ØØØ
Keeps Me Calm (Care +2)
Tell Me Stories
Pink Sneakers ØØØ
Run Fast (Move +2)
Never Slip on Ice
Magic Wand ØØ
Distracts Monsters (Chase -2)

This tale of trouble in suburbia is called...

THE HOUSES OF APPLE COURT

The newly-renovated homes of the elegant Apple Court subdivision are stunning. But things are about to get ugly when strange events bring tension amongst the children in the area to a boiling point.

Opinions differ as to who's responsible and if the characters don't find out the truth a lot of innocent people are going to pay the price for crimes they didn't commit.

Who the Characters Are

All the characters are children who live in the suburban development called Apple Court. It's a well-to-do neighborhood, full of some privileged (and some overprivileged) kids. Most of the kids attend a private academy and all know each other both from living in the subdivision and school.

Inciting Incident

The kids become aware that something is wrong when all their electrical and electronic devices start going haywire. Their GameStations start skipping and shutting down mysteriously. Cell phones drop calls and dial numbers at random. Microwaves, blenders, and ceiling fans turn off and on even when they're not plugged in.

Kids started noticing things going weird last night, Friday night, with even more strangeness this morning: all the televisions in the entire subdivision turn on but are completely black. This has forced even the most reclusive kids outside, into the sunlight.

GMCs

Here are some of the main GMCs the characters will meet in this scene:

Janie Holbrook, 12.

She is the ruler of the neighborhood and has the attitude to match the title. Younger girls flock to her like bees to their queen. She loves to humiliate her hangers-on. Some of her favorite tactics include sending them to get her an orange soda (her favorite) while wearing a pig mask or pressuring younger girls to ask older boys for a kiss. If her mPod3 was working, she'd be inside where it was cool but without music to drown out her parents' constant bickering, she doesn't want to step foot into the place.

Derel Powers, 12.

If Janie is the queen, Derel is the king. He is much kinder than she is though and acts as a mentor to the younger kids. He's not that good at school but he's great at sports and is almost always seen with a There is a major game between two of his favorite baseball teams this afternoon. Derel doesn't think the television or radio will be on which saddens him at first. That sadness will slowly boil into anger as the day goes on.

Garret Powers, 9.

Derel's younger, smarter brother. Garret is way into science fiction and general weirdness. If the characters need to know some obscure or trivial fact, Garret is the man.

An all-day Trek Wars marathon is running today on SciFy—including the never-before-broadcast network pilot with the British guy as the commander before they recast him with the Australian guy. They are also premiering a 2-minute trailer for the upcoming Trek Wars movie: *Trek Wars 7: War Among the Stars*. Garret is really bummed.

CHAPTER SIX

Douglas Turnblatt, 11.

Big, dumb, and thick as a stump, Dougie is a thug. If the televisions were working, Dougie would probably be spending the day playing his brother's M-Rated shooters while his mother flirted with the pool cleaner or watched foreign movies in her bedroom and sobbed.

Billy Culpepper, 10.

No one in this development is struggling but the Culpeppers are among the more modest home. Billy is a quiet kid, keeps to himself, but that's due as much to the fact kids don't talk to him as his nature.

Stephanie Winters, 6.

The Winters are the newest family in Apple Court. They have an older kid, William (15), who just left for military school. Stephanie speaks with a faint lisp, a trait the other kids often tease her about.

The Scenes

The following scenes cover the basic plot of the episode.

Scene #1

The story begins with the kids of Apple Court mingling on a warm summer morning. It's Saturday and instead of watching cartoons or playing video games, the kids are outside, leaning on bikes, talking in hushed tones and eyeing each other suspiciously. Everyone's just lazing about. A couple younger kids might be drawing on the sidewalk or jumping rope but most of the assembled kids are feeling pretty apathetic.

This is a Dramatic Scene. Let the characters interact with each other and the other kids. Establish who hangs out with whom, the hierarchies that exist, and get a feel for the major players.

After the characters mingle a bit and get to know some of the other kids in the development, Billy Culpepper will run out of his house saying "Hey, it's on! My TV's on!"

Every kid perks up at this and together they rush into Billy's house.

If anyone checks, Billy's television is the only one working in the subdivision.

Scene #2

Billy's house is one of the smaller, plainer ones in the development. The Culpeppers are not particularly well-liked by the more established families around and that prejudice has bled into the children. There will be kids watching Billy's television that haven't stepped foot in that house or said one word to the boy in years.

There will be so many kids filed into Billy's house that the characters are free to move around unnoticed. A couple kids will bring in coolers of juice boxes and soda cans. A party is starting to take shape.

This is an Investigation Scene. The goal is to figure out why Billy's television is working.

The characters are free to move about as they wish. Off the family room, where the television and everyone else is, is an office. Up the stairs is a large kitchen with a dining area and a formal living room. The top floor has three bedrooms and a bathroom. Two of the bedrooms belong to Billy: one where he sleeps and one full of toys (most of which are from when he was younger). The master bedroom has its own bathroom and is as clean as a museum.

The basement of the house, accessible through stairs off the family room, is full of stuff. There is a chest freezer, pantry, washing machine and dryer, a treadmill, and lots of storage bins clearly marked “Winter Clothes – Billy” and “Xmas Decorations.”

All the wiring for the house runs through the basement. Observant kids will notice there are scratches on the wooden beams that criss-cross the ceiling, almost as if something was climbing on them. They’re bigger than cat or dog claws and, besides, the Culpeppers don’t have any pets. They’re also far bigger than any chipmunk, squirrel, or even skunk or raccoon markings that the kids have ever seen.

There is a small hole (about three inches in diameter) dug into the basement wall, next to the fusebox. You can see and hear the outdoors through it. The hole wasn’t cleanly drilled either. It looks like something burrowed its way in or out.

At the end of this scene, the kids hear a bunch of disappointed “Aaaw!” and “Oh man!”-type comments from upstairs.

Scene #3

Back in the family room, Billy’s television has gone out. The other kids are noticeably upset. Tension in the room is high, and getting higher. A couple kids are saying mean things about Billy like, “Figures Welfare-Boy’s television would crap out.” and “I’m tired of this ghetto anyway.”

Dougie, the neighborhood bully, is in a particularly foul mood. One of the characters may notice him pocketing DVDs or video games off Billy’s shelf. If anyone calls attention to Dougie, he’ll throw it back in the accuser’s face. If caught red-handed, he’ll come up with some lame excuse like “I was just looking at it!” before slapping it back on the shelf and storming off.

This is a Dramatic Scene all about cranking up the tension the neighborhood kids are feeling. Let the characters run into a couple kids who are on the verge of becoming hostile, physically violent. Maybe the PCs see one kid shove another on the way out the door or a smaller kid slug a bigger kid on the shoulder for seemingly no reason.

At the end of the scene, a kid cries out, “Hey! Hey! The power’s on at the Winter house!”

Scene #4

Through the picture window at the front of the house, the kids can see the warm, comforting glow of a 46” flat-screen television. The Winter girl, Stephanie, is parked in front of it but she’s barely watching it. Her babysitter, Janine (15), is plopped on the couch next to Stephanie, watching some lame kissy-face movie.

The group of kids has become a mob, pushing their way into the house. Stephanie doesn’t protest but Janine surely will. The older girl will do her best to kick them out but the sheer number of kids, none of whom are listening, will force her to relent. Defeated, she stomps upstairs.

The older boys take over the television set immediately and turn it to their favorite cartoon, Exo-Armor Action Squad. Some of the younger girls will congregate towards Stephanie but she isn’t interested in playing. Instead, she’ll seek out someone to talk to.

A player character who has been friendly and reasonable in her presence is the likely candidate. Stephanie’s the type of girl who will just talk about anything: the weather, the fact it’s summer, that her birthday is coming up, how much she wants a pet and wouldn’t a

CHAPTER SIX

horse be a great pet or maybe a chinchilla ooh but never a chicken, or the green kid with the funny hair who moved into the neighborhood.

If pressed for more information on the green kid, Stephanie knows the following tidbits. She doesn't know where the kid lives but she sees him running across the Turnblatt's lawn every once in a while. He dresses in a large blue jacket and big boots that occasionally fall off his feet when he runs. She only heard him speak once. He yelled "KIT-KAT!" at a neighbor's fat tomcat before running away from it. He must have had a cold because his voice was all scratchy and deep.

If the player characters try to see what Dougie Turnblatt knows about the green kid, they won't be able to find him. If he overhears them asking, one of his friends says Dougie went home to "drop a loaf."

If anyone looks around, he will find another of those burrow holes in the basement, near the fuse box just like before.

This is another Dramatic Scene to introduce the player characters to Stephanie and drop the hint about the green kid. Stephanie's the only one who has seen him and doesn't have any information beyond what was listed above.

There will be a ruckus outside that will draw the attention of some of the kids indoors and, likely, the characters as well.

Scene #5

Outside, Dougie Turnblatt is standing over Garret Powers. The younger boy is splayed on the ground, hands up defensively.

"Admit it!" Dougie yells at him. "Admit it!"

"I don't know what you're talking about!" Garret says, on the verge of tears.

Garret's older brother, Derel, will come outside at this point. When he sees that thug of a boy standing over his brother, Derel grabs a hockey stick and rushes Dougie.

If the player characters don't intervene, Derel will beat Dougie until blood is drawn. Derel is crazy protective of his younger brother but once blood comes out of Dougie's nose, the older boy will stop. Dougie—visibly shaken by the beating—will rush off to his house.

If the player characters get involved, they have two basic options: talk Derel down or physically stop him.

It's possible the player characters could take Derel's side and go after Dougie along with him or rush Dougie themselves. If both the characters and Derel go after Dougie, Dougie's friends will jump in. If they rush Dougie alone, Derel will do his best to get them off the boy so he can get his shots in.

Either way, at the end of the conflict, Dougie will be running home with his tail between his legs. Derel will immediately tend to his brother who is more shaken than actually hurt. Derel will ask his brother what the ruckus was about but Garret will just say, "Nothing." Derel appears dubious of this brother's answer but lets it go.

Garret will sulk off to his backyard.

An important note to give the players is that there is a weird mist in the air. It's very faint but it's strong enough to make things look a little blurry when the sun hits it.

This is a Spotlight Scene as it's all about Garret. Namely, it's about finding out why Dougie was threatening Garret in the first place.

If the characters follow Garret, they'll find him on the swings of the play unit behind his house. If the player characters pressure him, he'll get angry and go into the house. If they're nice to him, sympathizing and asking nicely, Garret will reveal why Dougie pushed him down and was threatening him. But only after everyone pinky swears. If anyone in the group refuses to do so, he won't say a word. If they do, he'll tell them his story.

A couple days ago, Dougie cornered Garret at school and threatened to beat him. Dougie has a crush on Janie Holbrook, the self-proclaimed queen of the neighborhood, but Janie likes Garret's older brother, Derel. Dougie told Garret to get his brother to back off Janie and if he didn't, Dougie was going to pound Garret. Garret told Dougie that he couldn't stop his brother from liking whoever he likes. Dougie lifted his fist to sock Garret in the eye but, thinking quickly, the younger boy struck a deal. If Dougie let him go, Garret would give Dougie his brother's limited edition Tony Falcon mPod3. Dougie took the deal.

The transaction happened Friday night. But for some reason, the mPod3 Garret gave him isn't working. What everyone saw this morning was the fallout from that: Dougie accused Garret of giving him a broken music player and was just about to pound him into the dirt when all the other kids showed up. It's obvious that Garret couldn't very well tell his brother this since it was Derel's mPod3 in the first place.

If asked, Garret knows nothing of the green man but has heard noises coming from Dougie's backyard the past two nights. He reckons it was just raccoons getting into the trash.

When the characters get back to the other kids, they'll see that their attitudes are getting worse and worse. Kids are calling each other bad names which are getting worse and worse. It seems everyone is so busy being mad about the power and the increasing heat that no one even sees the strange green kid running behind them all.

Scene #6

The green kid looks just like Stephanie described him, dressed in that oversized blue jacket and floppy boots. Funny thing is that you can't see his face. It's his hands and legs that tell you something is off about this boy's coloring. As the characters follow him, the green kid will lead them through a winding route all around the development. There really is no rhyme or reason to his route. He doesn't know the kids are following him unless they go out of their way to make themselves noticed.

This is another Spotlight Scene. The whole point is to follow the green kid and see where it leads. After he snakes his way through most of the subdivision, he will lead those that follow to the shack behind the Turnblatt house. The kids will arrive just in time for the kid to disappear behind the door.

NOTE: If the characters manage to corner the green kid, they will discover quickly that it's no kid at all but a gangly green creature with wild eyes and huge yellow fangs. The green kid is feral and will pop claws out of his fingertips and leap at the characters, ready to fight. But he will only do this if the characters don't leave him a way out.

If the characters corner and kill the green kid before he gets to the shack, his body will dissolve into bubbling dark green goop. A tiny light will then ascend from the mess and whisk off back to the shack.

CHAPTER SIX

Scene #7

The next step is for the kids to check out the shack.

It's fairly large—15x15 feet—but is also mostly empty. Some shovels, rakes, and other yard tools hang on the wall. Mostly-bare utility shelving lines the back wall. Parked in the corner is a neglected riding lawn mower. A blue tarp that probably covered the lawn mower once takes up most of the floor. Underneath the tarp is a small hole, about three inches across. It looks an awful lot like the hole in Billy Culpepper's basement. If the kids lift up the tarp, they'll see the hole plain as day.

This is an Investigation Scene. The characters should look for clues as to where the green kid went. There are two windows in the shack but they are locked shut and unbroken. There isn't really anywhere to hide either. Did the green kid go down that tiny hole? If so, how did he do it?

Exploring the shack will uncover two important clues: The red toolbox on the utility shelving is full of little statues—almost like chess pieces or those figurines grandmothers have in glass display cases. The blue jacket and big boots are stashed under the lawnmower.

Once these are discovered, or as soon as the kids head out of the shack, they will hear Dougie Turnblatt yelling, "AGH! NO! STOP!" somewhere near them.

Scene #8

If the characters didn't see what the green kid really looks like before, they will now. The green kid is wielding a small tree branch like a sword, chasing Dougie Turnblatt around his own backyard. Aside from the stick, it's wearing a pair of dirty underwear. It looks pretty much human but with mottled green skin and a ridge of tiny fins up its spine. This is no green kid; this is a gremlin!

Dougie will be too freaked out to notice the group came out of the shack. He'll just scream a "OH MAN!" and run behind the group as soon as he can. The green kid will turn to follow him, brandishing the stick at the kid. Its words are hard to understand and it's already agitated. In the hand not grasping a stick is a small figurine.

Dougie will profess not to know what the thing is or why it was chasing him. While the first point may be true, the second is not. The truth is that Dougie had just come out of the bathroom when he heard a noise in what used to be his father's study. The boy opened the door to see what was happening and discovered the green kid tearing the place apart. The desk chair was overturned, papers and documents were strewn all over the floor, and books were shredded. As soon as the green kid spotted Dougie, it freaked out. Without thinking, Dougie picked up an umbrella that was next to the door and took a swing at it.

That was a mistake. Dougie immediately dropped the umbrella and ran. The green kid chased him, found a stick of its own, and was doing to Dougie what the boy was trying to do to him.

This is a Combat Scene. The green kid isn't ignoring Dougie just because he jumped behind the other kids. Instead, it will attack the entire group.

If the characters fight the gremlin, they're on their own. Dougie, the big baby, has run around to the front of the house. If the group doesn't want to fight, the only real move is to follow Dougie.

The gremlin will try to keep the fight localized. It doesn't want to get too far from the shack. The gremlin has three main attacks: a bite (which can latch onto kid with its big ugly teeth) and a swipe (with the gnarled claws that pop out of its fingertips). The creature is acrobatic and will jump around, from kid to kid, attacking with reckless abandon (possibly even hurting itself in the process).

If things start to go bad for the green kid, up to four others just like it will run out of the shed. If anyone is around to see it, they will claw their way out of that tiny hole in the bottom of the shed. The gremlins can stretch their bodies really thin to get in and out of places.

If a character has an electronic device or sparkly metal toy on him, the gremlins will try to take it during the fight.

Either way, they will find themselves back amongst the rest of the kid of Apple Court where things have gotten noticeably worse.

Scene #9

If the characters fought the gremlins, they might be looking pretty beat up. They'll fit right in. The kids of Apple Court have broken into yelling matches and fights. Not only have the kids gone crazy, the electronics and appliances have too. Televisions are flickering on and off, garage doors are opening and closing on their own, and the transformers on the power poles are shooting off sparks. Soon after the characters get there, a couple car alarms go off without reason.

Some big kid took a swing at Garret Powers and is now getting beat up by Derel. Janie Holbrook, queen of the neighborhood, is screaming at some little girl about not putting enough ice in her drink. Dougie is dragging Billy Culpepper around by his underwear.

If a character checks out the houses, he'll notice they all have those three-inch burrow holes.

The thin mist from before has turned into a fog.

The characters must decide what to do about the kids. They can try to calm everyone down but it would take a lot of Care Tests to do so. Plus, every time one person calms down, another kid gets even more agitated.



CHAPTER SIX

This is a Investigation Scene. There is obviously something wrong with the kids. So far, the only clues are the gremlins, the burrow holes, the mist, and those statues.

Aside from their frequency, there's nothing strange about the burrow holes.

Now that it's thicker and more visible, the kids can follow the mist. If they do, it will take them back to the shed where the mist goes right down into the hole. The little statues are all around the hole as well but there's something wrong with them. There are teeth marks all over them. A couple have their heads bitten off.

It's about then that the kids hear the low rumble of something growling underneath the hole. Before the kids can react, a giant gremlin bursts from the ground. Twice the size of the other gremlins and three times as ugly, this beast is raring for a fight.

Scene #10

This is the finale. The King Gremlin is ready to throw down but, as the kids will find out if they run, it can't leave the shack. The other gremlins were hatching this beast, stealing paperweights and figurines to feed it. The mist is coming from the beast, like some hate-fueled funk. For whatever reason, the player characters have yet to be affected.

If the kids don't do anything, the kids of Apple Court will rip themselves apart. Something has to be done about this Monster.

Kill the Gremlin

This would be the obvious choice. Taking on the King Gremlin directly will be a bit of a fight. The best option is to distract the King Gremlin first. While ferocious, this gremlin will quiet right down if shown a strange-looking electrical device, especially if it sparkles. He will become transfixed, unable to resist tinkering with it. If the kids rig up some kind of trap with lots of flashing lights and circuit boards, that may be enough to take it out.

Otherwise, kids, put up your dukes.

Calm it Down

The other option is to find some way to calm it down. This can be done by giving it what it wants, which is enough little trinkets and collectibles to fill its belly. Once it's full, it'll toddle off to some other place.

The trick is for the PCs to figure out what it wants. If they leave the shack, it will claw at them menacingly for a while but will eventually give up and just start pacing the floor. Every once in a while it will crunch on some of the remaining figurines. It moans happily while it eats. Bits of painted glass and brass tinkle to the floor every time it smacks its lips. Occasionally, it lets out some putrid gas which makes the mist even thicker.

If this tips off the player characters, it's just a matter of gathering up enough things to sate its hunger.

Beating the King Gremlin will cause it to melt down into a goopy puddle just like a regular gremlin does. Calming it down will send it on its merry way. However the PCs do it, the fog will quickly thin out and the kids will return to normal. Bruised and confused, but otherwise okay.

The weirdness with the power, a side effect of a gremlin being in the proximity of electrical devices, will go away as well. Everyone's televisions, appliances, and garage doors will work normally once again.

That's the Scenario!

I hope you enjoyed it and have fun running your group through the story. More episodes will be made available and will follow a similar format.

If you want a darker take on this story, you can make the gremlins more openly hostile. They can steal spray paint and vandalize the houses, bikes, and cars left on the street. They can also bust windows, set fires, spread garbage all over the street, or set tripwires and other traps that could potentially hurt the kids.

Whatever trouble they make, it should be something that can be pinned on another kid. Turning the kids of the neighborhood against each other is the key to create a tense atmosphere.

The Houses of Apple Court GMCs

Below are the simplified GMC write-ups for the six major GMCs in the scenario. After them are the write-ups for the regular Gremlins and the King Gremlin. Photocopy the pages at the end of this book (or download and print copies from littlefears.com) then copy this information over to those sheets.

Depending on how you wish to run this episode, some of the GMCs may be worth writing up as full characters. If so, use the information below and what's presented in the scenario (along with your own ideas) to flesh out the characters.

GMC

Name

Janie Holbrook
12 year old girl

Description

Queen of the neighborhood
Really cute
Mean to younger kids

Weaknesses

Crushing hard on Derel ØØ
Vain to a fault ØØ

Ø Child: Default TN is 9

O Adult: Default TN is 12

GMC

Name

Derel Powers
12 year old boy

Description

Total jock
Comforting voice
Protective of his brother

Weaknesses

Hot-Tempered ØØ
Kinda oblivious ØØ

Ø Child: Default TN is 9

O Adult: Default TN is 12

CHAPTER SIX

The Houses of Apple Court G M C s, cont.

G M C

Name

Garret Powers

9 year old boy

Description

Small for his age

Really smart

Full of useless knowledge

Weaknesses

Doesn't stick up for himself ØØ

Sucker for sci-fi stuff ØØ

Ø Child: Default TN is 9

O Adult: Default TN is 12

G M C

Name

Douglas "Dougie" Turnblatt

11 year old boy

Description

Mountain of a kid

Likes Janie Holbrook

As dumb as he is big

Weaknesses

Acts before thinking ØØ

Gets jealous easily ØØ

Ø Child: Default TN is 9

O Adult: Default TN is 12

G M C

Name

Billy Culpepper

10 year old boy

Description

Knows more than he should

Doesn't trust many people

Keeps to himself

Weaknesses

Secretly craves attention ØØ

Ø Child: Default TN is 9

O Adult: Default TN is 12

G M C

Name

Stephanie Winters

6 year old girl

Description

Quiet kid

Surprisingly strong

Doesn't trust many people

Weaknesses

Speaks with a lisp ØØ

Misses her brother ØØ

Ø Child: Default TN is 9

O Adult: Default TN is 12

This GREMLIN is a Regular Monster.

These little menaces are wreaking havoc throughout Apple Court in search of some tiny statue. When excited, angry, agitated, or nervous they make electronic devices go crazy. They turn on and off quickly, letting out sparks, or getting really loud and really quiet.

Four of these creatures have invaded the neighborhood.

It is scary when it makes electronics go really crazy. It wants its rock back.

Abilities

Fight: ØØØØØØ

Chase: ØØØØØØ

Grab: ØØØØØØ

Scare: ØØØØØØ

Virtues

Terror: 6

Health: 30

Qualities

It is a green-skinned menace.

It can make electric stuff go crazy.

It cannot be Cared about.

Stuff

Green Skin ØØØ

Thick as Leather (-2 Damage)

Can Hide in Foliage

Big Yellow Teeth ØØ

Really Strong (Grab +2)

Crazy Sharp (Damage +1)

Odd Aura Ø

Dogs Avoid Them

This KING GREMLIN is a Scary Monster.

This is the leader. His hair sticks up like the tines of a crown and the other gremlins seem to follow his lead, hence the nickname.

It is scary when it shakes its head and cackles. It wants to fill its belly with sparkly objects.

Abilities

Fight: ØØØØØØ

Chase: ØØØØØØ

Grab: ØØØØØØ

Scare: ØØØØØØ

Virtues

Terror: 8

Health: 40

Qualities

It is a crazed little beastie.

It can clear a lawnin .

It can scream like a angry cat.

It cannot leave the neighborhood.

Stuff

Bigger Yellower Teeth ØØØ

Even Stronger (Grab +2)

Crazy Sharp (Damage +1)

Glowing Eyes ØØØ

Freezes in Place (Move -2)

See in the Dark

Angry Voice ØØ

Clears Your Head (Think -2)

CHAPTER SIX

Submitted for your approval...

ADVENTURE SEEDS

You can use the following ideas to create your own full-fledged episodes.

That Suits You

A kid discovers her grandmother's old coat in the attic of her house. The minute she puts it on, she starts acting strange, using old-timey slang and calling everyone "kiddo." She also mentions something about going to the world's fair—whatever that is. An old photo of the grandmother as a young girl shows an eerie similarity between the two. As time goes on, the girl starts acting stranger and stranger and she refuses to take off the coat. But she lets slip a secret, some horrible thing her grandmother did, that could be the key to banishing whatever is in the coat that is possessing the young girl.

Alieneighbor

New neighbors are moving in across the street. Typical set-up: a mom, a dad, a brother and sister. They even have a dog. They seem nice enough even if they do speak in mechanical voices and greet others with "Hello, human." One day, the kids discover a strange-shaped disc in the family's garage along with boxes of radio equipment. The next day, strange lights appear just above their house. Even weirder, lights appear higher in the sky, almost like the house is talking to something way up in outer space. Could the new family be scouting out the neighborhood for alien masters? Are the neighbors aliens themselves? Are they preparing for some sort of invasion?

Got No Soul

A neighbor kid wakes up to find a note that says a monster stole his soul while he was sleeping. The kid freaks out and recruits the characters to help him find the monster and get his soul back. But when more and more kids—including one of the characters—wake up to similar notes, it becomes apparent things aren't what they seem. Perhaps this monster isn't stealing souls at all. If not, who is this Monster and what is it really after?

The Freaks at Freak Elementary

One morning, a popular kid shows up wearing bizarre clothes and an even stranger haircut. The next day, more show up in similar fashions and with weird haircuts—a couple kids even have glow-in-the-dark contact lenses, tongues like snakes, and gills on their necks. All these kids speak to each other in a garbled language in hushed voices like they're planning something. All of this isn't just some fad, these are real mutations. The whole school is turning into monsters!

Dark Highway

The weirdest thing has been happening. In the middle of the night, a two-lane road has been appearing in the bedroom of the one of the characters. It just shows up, full of traffic and noise. Ghost-like cars and truck whiz by the bed nearly clipping the poor kid. It only lasts for a second or two before everything disappears. The first night, the kid thought it was a dream. But after the second, third, and fourth nights, the kid is positive something really messed up is happening. Perhaps if the kid can rally his friends and find a way on the dark highway one of these nights, they can see where it leads and maybe find out why it keeps showing up in the kid's bedroom.

Sitting Mantis

The characters' parents have hired a new babysitter, Matty, who is proving to be a real terror. She's trashed the place, locked the kids in their rooms, and has been on the phone with people almost the whole night. One of the kids peeked out of his room and saw Matty starting to change into some kind of giant insect. The PCs have to find a way to take care of the babysitter before she has their parents for dinner—and them for dessert!

I Scream Man

A strange new ice cream truck has come to the neighborhood. The truck's colors are weird and the ice cream doesn't taste right. But the Ice Cream man has given more than half of it away. The terrible secret is that the Truck is really a monster, looking to harvest the local kids as new ingredients. If the kids can't figure out a way to stop it, or to free the kids hypnotized by the music that pervades the neighborhood, their friends are doomed.

Tick Tock Clock

The huge old grandfather clock has been chiming weirdly for a week or two—it rings when people try to talk, it clatters in the middle of the night, and it'll chime four tones at nine o'clock and ten tones at one o'clock. The past few days, the kids can't help but feel that they're being watched when they pass by. Truth is, an attention-seeking little beastie has moved into the clock and is trying to be noticed by the kids—but they keep ignoring it! Tonight, the clock has decided it's time to be a little more direct. It transforms—sprouting short legs and iron-tipped claw hands. It's late and everyone's sleeping but soon they'll be screaming. The clock may be slow but it's really tough and it has a few hours to kill.

Sticky Putty

One of the kids has found a new toy, a weird blob of rubbery goo that stretches and bounces and seems to do almost anything. The only drawback is that there's always a tiny bit left behind. And, once the lights go out, the toy has a mind of its own. The bits come alive and start hunting the kids. Finding them, it binds them in ropes of slime or plasters them to the walls. Worse, it can stick to skin, turning the kids into putty-covered monsters.

Cannibal Cove

The counselors at Camp Heyawonna have a secret spot they sneak away to at night to mess around and get away from their young charges. To keep the kids from invading their spot, the counselors invented an outlandish story about cannibal spirits and crazed former counselors that inhabit the area. The story took root in the minds of the younger camp kids and now those cannibal spirits are real—and they're hungry!

It Has No Name

A hideous old monster has slithered out of Closetland. Once a powerful creature, it has since faded into obscurity. Tired of being forgotten, it has taken upon itself to remind the children why they should fear it. A legless and scaled mass of bone and teeth, a shadow of its former self, it scuttles about, looking for new victims. The more children it terrorizes, the more powerful it will come. And power is exactly what it wants.

"What's with all the butterflies?"

"Hm?"

"The butterflies. Look at 'em. They're all over. Where do they come from?"

"Remember when I told you about the black birds?"

"I think so."

"How black birds were the souls of children who died in Closetland?"

"Yeah."

"Well, butterflies are the souls of children who died in your world."

"So every kid who dies turns into a butterfly?"

"Not every kid. Just the ones who weren't loved."

"And they all come to Closetland?"

"They do."

"But there are so many of them."

"I know."



So, it's been a while.

I first released *Little Fears* in 2001 and the experience spoiled me. It became apparent early on that I had tapped into something special, something unique. For a little game about kids fighting monsters, released as the d20 boom was still building, *Little Fears* did very well. Not only professionally but personally as well.

I say the experience spoiled me because *Little Fears*' early and quick success made me complacent. I didn't strive as much as I could have and I didn't work as hard as I should have and I feel poorer for it. I broke commitments and strained friendships because of it. If nothing else, those failures have helped shape my commitment and resolve in correcting that mindset within myself.

I first started talking about the Nightmare Edition back in 2002 or 2003. While the original game was receiving great critical acclaim and steady sales, there were valid concerns and complaints about the original.

There were a few attempts to get a second version off the ground but most never made it past the concept stage. It wasn't until 2007 or so that I started to get really serious about doing a new take on the original concept. I wrote some fiction, some mechanics and ideas, and mapped out what would and wouldn't be in the new edition.

Over the next two years, I considered a lot of different systems. I brought in Caz Granberg as a systems guy and sounding board. We had worked together on his game, *Covert Generation*, and we learned that we're a good fit when it comes to hashing out ideas. We went through a handful of popular systems in an attempt to create something that worked for what I had in mind. This went on for a while but eventually petered out. Nothing was working. The systems worked but they didn't have the feel I was looking for and didn't capture what I wanted the new edition to be.

I had all but given up on the game when I hit upon the core of the system while working on an unrelated project. Initially, I was scrounging together notes for an old demon-hunting game I had worked on about seven years ago. I was mostly interested in the setting and spent most of my time reviewing the material I had on that. I read everything I had on the setting and character and was ready to put the notes away then I decided to give the system a once-over. Almost immediately, they ignited something in me, and the core of the Top 3 System started to take shape.

NOTE FROM THE TEACHER

The game slowly fell into place after that. Qualities and Belief were the last systems to be finalized—and took many attempts to get right. Once again, Caz gave a big assist in this department. He was the one who pushed for the Monsters to be able to use Fear.

And here I am, seven months after I started, putting the finishing touches on the book. It's surreal to see this finally take shape. Less than a year ago, I was skeptical the game would ever see print. Now, I'm writing this note about how this whole thing came to happen.

There are a lot of reasons why I did a second edition. I did it for the fans, who were always there through the years of broken promises and false starts. I did it for my family, who have followed me along my journey as a game designer. I did it for myself, because it's been a long time since I've felt like I accomplished anything. I've spent the past three years spinning my wheels, doing for others, and I wanted to do something for myself. I did it for Little Fears, which may sound a big strange. The original was a flawed masterpiece, my first foray into game design and publishing. I learned something new every step of the way, from art direction, to technical writing, to layout, to printer specifications, to the publisher's side of retail distribution, to conventions and the press. I feel like the game that changed the course of my entire life deserved a new life. Not just a fresh coat of paint, but a revitalization. I have learned a lot about games and design since 2001 and I wanted to use that to create the definitive version of my very first game.

The original Little Fears introduced me to a lot of great people in and around the gaming industry. Many of whom would later become dear friends, co-workers, and co-conspirators. In recent years, I haven't made it to many conventions so I haven't seen most of them in the flesh for a very long time. I hope to make it to a few conventions soon and reconnect with my friends, to roll dice and knock back a few drinks like we used to back when.

There are a lot of people who helped in a lot of ways in the getting this book from my head and into your hands. I would be remiss to exclude them though I'm sure I'll forget one or two. I apologize sincerely if so. I'll do what I can.

Matt McElroy was a persistent fly in my ear about getting a new edition out and I mean that in the best way possible.

Caz Granberg was a supporter and co-conspirator who went above and beyond with the big assists when I needed them most.

Veronica V. Jones is one of my favorite artists to work with. She saved my illustrative bacon in the original game and once again with the Nightmare Edition. She is the heart of Little Fears Nightmare Edition.

Jonathan Tweet asked me a simple question back at GenCon 2004 that changed how I write games from that point on. I wrote the examples in this book with his question in mind, always trying to answer, “What can I do with it?” as clearly and as often as I could.

Shane Hensley, Matt Forbeck, George Vasilakos, Rob Boyle, Eddy Webb, Tim Gerritsen, Ed Lima, Leanne Buckley, and the many other game industry friends I have made. You have been very kind to me over the years and I have never—and will never—forget that. Your support and friendship these past eight years has been invaluable.

My parents, who have always encouraged me to follow my dreams. Sometimes freedom is the best gift you can give a child.

My wife, who has believed in me and put everything on the line so that I could pursue my dreams. I have no way to repay the debt I owe to her. My hope is that the sacrifices she has made, the investment that she entrusted in me, will one day pay off.

My children, who are constant reminders of why dreams are important, and why pursuing them is doubly so. Of everyone, perhaps my daughter is the happiest this book is finally done. We can now get back to all that video game-playing that I owe her.

The fans, who stood by me, supported me, encouraged me, and bugged me every single time I needed it. I'd like to especially call out W. Alexander, who worked the Yahoo!Group like a madman, making sure folks were welcomed, encouraging discussion and rallying support.

It took a long time to get this book done but I feel it was worth it. Had this book been written a couple years ago, I don't think it would be half as good as I feel it is today. I hope you all agree.

It's late, and this book needs to be put to bed.

Good night, everyone. Sleep tight. And bite the bed bugs back.

Jason L Blair
September 2009

PLAY SHEETS

The following pages contain the sheets for use in the game. You can photocopy the them, download printable versions from www.littlefears.com, or create your own. If you do, I'd love to see them!

Cheat Sheets

This is the system at a glance. All the basic rules are presented here for quick reference if a questions comes up in play.

Episode Sheet

As discussed in Chapter Three, the GM can fill out an Episode Sheet for every episode. This helps provide a snapshot of what's to come by laying out the key scenes for an episode, the major GMCs that will be encountered, and the Monsters that will be fought.

GMC Sheet

This sheet is for simplified GMCs. You can fit four to a sheet. At the bottom, you can check one of the two circles to keep track of whether the GMC is a kid or an adult (and thus whether the default TN is 9 or 12).

Monster Sheet

You can use this sheet to make Monsters. If you use one of the Monsters included in this book, transfer the details to a copy of this sheet.

Belief Sheet

Players can use this in play as both a cheat sheet for what they can do with Belief and a place to keep their Belief tokens during play. This can help easily separate the held Belief tokens from the risked ones.

Character Sheet

Players use this sheet when making their characters. The game moderator can use this sheet for her fully-statted GMCs.



Basic Roll

- Pick an Ability
- Add a Quality
- Roll that number of six-sided dice.
- If no Qualities apply, roll just Ability.
- If an Ability can't be used, roll Quality.

Success Dice

- Add the top 3 dice together.
- *Re-roll 6s and add to the total.

Good and Bad Traits

- GOOD:** Reroll lowest die and keep highest of two results.
- BAD:** Drop highest die.

Passing and Failing Grades

- PASSING:** Every 3 points over what is needed equals 1 Passing Grade.
- FAILING:** Every 3 points under what is needed equals 1 Failing Grade.

Quiz

When doing something alone.

- Easy: 6
- Average: 9
- Hard: 12
- Difficult: 15
- Near Impossible: 18
- Legendary: 21

Test

- When opposing someone or something.
- Highest of the rolls wins. Ties between PCs and GMCs go to the PC.
- When someone is indirectly opposing you.

Highest roll over the set Quiz Target Number wins.

Exam

- When something takes a long time.
- Roll as Test or Quiz until enough successes are acquired.
- Something is easy but takes a while:
1-3
- Something is hard and takes a while:
4-6
- Something is difficult and takes time:
7-9

If someone is helping, all successes are included.

Fighting

Any Test where Damage may result.

One on One

Resolve as Test.

One Against Many

- Multiple Kids vs One Monster**
- Main Kid: Fight + Quality
- Monster: Fight + Quality
- Other Kids: Fight + Quality
- Add Passing Grades to Main Kid's total.
- Multiple Kids vs One GMC**
- Same as above.

One Kid vs Multiple Opponents

- Kid: Fight + Quality
- Main Opponent: Fight + Quality
- For every GMC: Add 1 die
- For every Monster: Add 2 dice
- Resolve normally
- Multiple Kids vs Multiple Opponents**
- Main Kid: Fight + Quality
- Main Opponent: Fight + Quality
- For every GMC: Add 1 die
- For every Monster: Add 2 dice
- Other Kids: Fight + Quality
- Add Passing Grades to Main Kid's total.

Health Levels and Penalties

- I feel fine: No penalty
- I feel sore: -2 to every roll
- I feel hurt: -4 to every roll
- I feel cold: -6 to every roll

Damage

Hands & Feet Damage

- Damage equal to Passing Grades
- ...& Simplified GMCs
- Damage equal to Failing Grades

Sticks & Stones

SMALL WEAPON: Damage equal to Lowest Success Die + Passing Grades

LARGE WEAPONS: Damage equal to Highest Success Die + Passing Grades

Deadly Weapons

Highest Success Die x 2 + Passing Grades

TOP 3 CHEAT SHEET PAGE TWO

...and Multiple Opponents

Highest weapon type used + all Passing Grades

Sixes in Damage

Sixes are not open-ended for the purposes of determining Damage. They are worth 6 points.

Accidental Damage

Minor accident, short fall, mild tumble:
Damage equal to Failing Grades

Major accident, long fall, hard tumble:
Lowest Success Die + Failing Grades

Healing

Time & Rest

NIGHT'S REST: 1 pt of Health

Medicine

FIRST AID: Lowest Success Die + Passing Grades

MEDICAL CARE: Highest Success Die + Passing Grades

Death & Dying

When Health = Zero, the character must leave the game.

Fear Checks

May use Think or Care

Fear of Monsters

First time you meet a Monster

If a Monster changes form

Monster does its Scary Thing

Monster: Scare + It Is Quality

Standard Test

Fear of Death

Health drops a level, roll a Quiz

Dropped one level: TN of 9

Dropped two levels: TN of 12

Dropped three levels: TN of 15

Passing the Fear Check

Passed: No penalty

Passed with Passing Grades: Add

Passing Grades to very next action

Failed: Rattled, can't act for one round

Failed with Failing Grades: Lost 1 point of Wits for every Failing Grade.

If Failed, you may risk 1 Belief token for 2 extra dice instead of usual 1.

Losing Wits

When Wits drops below 5, character loses use of 1 Ability temporarily for every point of Wits below 5.

Calming Down

HELP FROM A FRIEND: Care + Quality Quiz against TN of 9.

GETTING AWAY FROM MONSTER: Think + Quality against TN of 9.

PULLING YOURSELF TOGETHER: Speak, Think, or Care + Quality against TN of 12.

HEALING: If from Damage, Think + Quality against TN of 9.

REGAINING WITS: Success gets 1 point of Wits back + 1 additional for every Passing Grade.

Losing Spirit

Lost due to Monster Spirit Drain attacks.

Going Dark

SPIRIT IS 4: Child is Mean. All Care rolls are at -3 dice.

SPIRIT IS 3: Child is Weak. All Fight rolls are at -3 dice.

SPIRIT IS 2: Child is Lazy. All Move rolls are at -3 dice.

SPIRIT IS 1: Child is Quiet. All Speak rolls are at -3 dice.

SPIRIT IS 0: Child is Confused. All Think rolls are at -3 dice.

These effects stack!

Regaining Spirit

A CARING FRIEND: Care + Quality against a TN of 12. Success gives back 1 point of Spirit.

SOME TIME ALONE: Care + Quality against a TN of 12. Success give back 1 point of Spirit.



EPISODE SHEET

Episode Title: _____

Season Title: _____

Summary: _____

Inciting Incident: _____

Scene #1: _____

Scene #2: _____

Scene #3: _____

Scene #4: _____

Scene #5: _____

Scene #6: _____



EPISODE SHEET

Episode Title: _____

Season Title: _____

Scene #7: _____

Scene #8: _____

Scene #9: _____

Scene #10: _____

GMCs: _____

Monsters: _____

Possible Resolutions: _____

Little Fears

NIGHTMARE EDITION

G M C S H E E T

G M C

Name

Description

Weaknesses

OO

OO

O Child: Default TN is 9

O Adult: Default TN is 12

G M C

Name

Description

Weaknesses

OO

OO

O Child: Default TN is 9

O Adult: Default TN is 12

G M C

Name

Description

Weaknesses

OO

OO

O Child: Default TN is 9

O Adult: Default TN is 12

G M C

Name

Description

Weaknesses

OO

OO

O Child: Default TN is 9

O Adult: Default TN is 12



MONSTER SHEET

This _____ is a
_____ Monster.

It is scary when _____

It wants _____

Abilities

Fight: OOOOOO

Grab: OOOOOO

Chase: OOOOOO

Scare: OOOOOO

Qualities

It is _____

It can _____

It can _____

It can _____

It cannot _____

Health

OOOOO|OOOOO

OOOOO|OOOOO

OOOOO|OOOOO

OOOOO|OOOOO

OOOOO|OOOOO

Terror

OOOOOO|OOOOOO

Weaknesses

Its Stuff

_____OOO

_____OOO

_____OOO

_____OOO

_____OOO

_____OOO

A Regular Monster: 10 Ability Pts * Health: 30 * No extra dice

A Scary Monster: 15 Ability Pts * Health: 40 * +1 Die to Actions

A Big Bad Monster: 20 Ability Pts * Health: 50 * +2 Dice to Actions

Qualities are always worth 3 dice

Download a full-sized copy of this Monster Sheet at www.littlefears.com

HELD

RISKED

Risking

Believe in Yourself

By risking one token, you gain an extra die for your action.

Believe in Another

Place one token in front of yourself and then take a six-sided die and place it in front of another player. The person rolls that die along with the others he or she is rolling for that action.

Believing in Stuff

You risk a number of tokens equal to its Rank of the Stuff Quality you wish to use.

Success & Failure

If the roll was successful:

Return the risked token to your stack for use again later in the session.

...with Passing Grades:

Return the risked token to your stack and then get another token from the game moderator. You only get one token period, not one per Passing Grade.

If the roll failed:

You lose the token.

...with Failing Grades:

If you were not using Stuff, you lose the original token and another token as well.

If you were using Stuff, you lose the original token and can lower the rank of the Stuff by one. Or you can simply lose the second token, it's your choice.

Spending

Believe in Something New

By spending one token, you can give the new thing a Stuff Quality. You can spend up to three tokens to give an item three Stuff Qualities but no more than that.

If you succeed with Passing Grades, it becomes part of your Stuff. If the action fails, you lose the token but there is no other effect.

Perform a Ritual

Perform the ritual first. If a roll is needed, resolve the roll first. If the action fails, there's no need to keep going.

If the ritual failed, there's no foul. The person messed up and he can try it again.

If the ritual was successful, you get to give it Stuff Qualities. You have to spend one Belief token per Stuff Quality.

The ritual lasts however long makes sense.

Give a Monster a Weakness

By spending two tokens of Belief, you can give a susceptibility, allergy, aversion, or some other limitation to a Monster. This is called a Weakness.

Destroy a Monster

To destroy a Monster, spend one token to reduce its Stuff by one point. Once Stuff is gone, Terror gets reduced.

This can only be done after a successful attack against the Monster.



CHARACTER SHEET

This is Me!

My name is _____.

I am a _____ year old _____.

My birthday is _____.

Abilities

- o Move: ØØØØØØ
- o Fight: ØØØØØØ
- o Think: ØØØØØØ
- o Speak: ØØØØØØ
- o Care: ØØØØØØ

Virtues

Belief _____

Wits

scared ØØØØØØ|ØØØØØØ calm

Spirit

dark ØØØØØØ|ØØØØØØ whole

Traits

GOOD: I can _____ well when

_____.

BAD: It's hard for me to _____
when _____.

Qualities

I am _____ +2

_____ +3

_____ +3

_____ +

_____ +

_____ -

_____ -

I feel

fine ØØØØØØØØØØØØ

sore ØØØØØØØØØØØØ (-2)

bad ØØØØØØØØØØØØ (-4)

cold ØØØØØØØØØØØØ (-6)

Goals

_____ .00

_____ .00

My Stuff

_____ .000

_____ .000

_____ .000

_____ .000

_____ .000

_____ .000

Playaround Points

ØØØØØØ ØØØØØØ



QUESTIONNAIRE

My best friend is _____.

The one grown-up I can trust is _____.

Once I lost _____.

It was special because _____.

The one place monsters can't get me is _____.

The one thing monsters can't touch is _____.

I don't go near _____ because _____.

My biggest fear is _____

The thing I like least about myself is _____.

The thing that always gets me into trouble is _____.

When monsters are around, I _____.

My Family is _____

THE NIGHTMARE'S NOT OVER!

In fact, it's only just begun. Watch for more episodes and expansions to the game of childhood terror online and in finer bookstores!

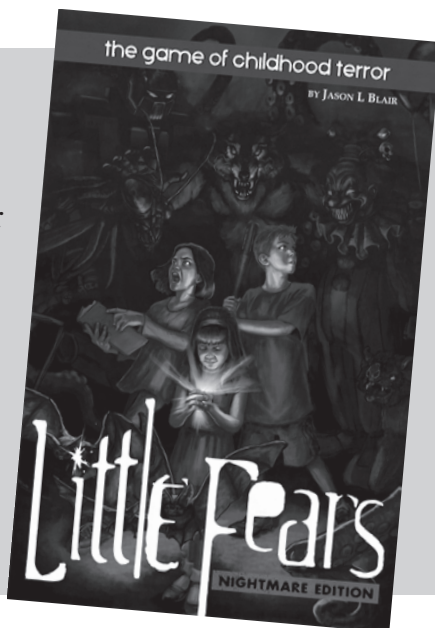
New Episodes!

The *Campfire Tales*, *Ever After*, and *Headlines* series of adventures include full episodes for use in your games.

Scheduled for 2010:

The Fears of Others
Fiction anthology.

Behind the Door
Closetland revealed.



For the latest information on
Little Fears Nightmare Edition
books and supplements
go to *littlefears.com*!

THE MONSTERS ARE HERE!

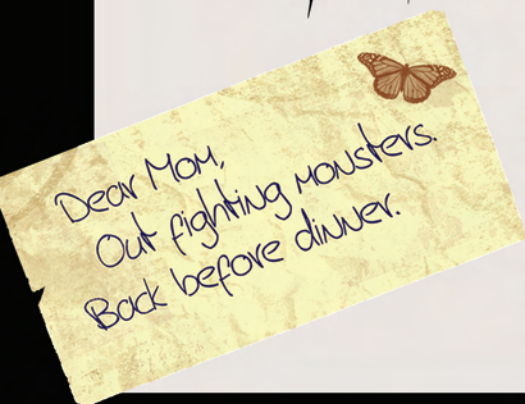
The critically-acclaimed game of childhood terror is back!

Monsters are real and they hunt children like you from the shadows.
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No adults can help you. No one else can save you.

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pages. Find your courage, fight the monsters, become a hero.

Completely reimagined, with an all-new system,
LITTLE FEARS NIGHTMARE EDITION
is the definitive version of the classic game.

YOU'RE NOT SCARED, ARE YOU?



LITTLE FEARS NIGHTMARE EDITION is a story game for two or more players. This book teaches you all the rules to make your own heroes and monsters so you can tell terrifying stories of your own. All you need are some pencils, some six-sided dice, some friends, and your imagination.

For product information, news, and previews,
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