Little Fears

the role-playing game of childhood terror



the characters and events contained within are imaginary... yet every day real children experience horrors as terrible as what is depicted in this game.

we at key 20 dedicate this work to those lost, helpless children.

and we hope that you will remember them always.



little fears

the role-playing game of childhood terror

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by jason 1 blair

little fears

the role-playing game of childhood terror special thanks to

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For advice, input, and innumerable other things and all those who have shown their support

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little fears is a game of terror

it is also a work of fiction, some scenes, ideas, depictions, and references may be too harsh for the sensitive. while key 20 would recommend an age minimum for purchase, key 20 realizes that age is not an accurate gauge of maturity and/or sensibility, those who find the idea of violence toward or from children particularly disturbing are urged not to real this book, key 20 does not contine any acts of violence, especially toward children or the intro- and no approvalinor encour agement of such action should be inferred the key to horror is extremity as well as sublety, cracking taboos and exposing people to unsavory environments is integral to maintaining a horrific setting, treasure your children and keep them safe; there are worse to geven to be found down your street than in these pages

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THERE'S NO SUCH THING

AS MONSTERS

• intro metion

you may have forgotten them but they haven't forgotten you Somewhere, stowed in the far recesses of your mind, are all the memories of your youth. The first day you walked into school, your first birthday party, running around at recess and climbing the monkey bars, your first crush, memories of when you used to play out in the woods or in that abandoned building down the block... but deep down, in the furthest corners of your mind are other memories. Memories that aren't so happy. They're buried deep, but if you try really hard you may just glimpse them. Memories of other things. Things that used to keep you up all night with your blanket over your head. Things that used to scritch-scratch at your window and call you up from your bed. Things that used to make you cover your face with your pillow or yell for your mother or father to come rescue you.

Look hard, you'll find them.

Dear Diary,

March 3

Wow! I've never had a diary before. This is pretty neat! Can I call you Sarah? I've always wanted a friend named Sarah. Let's see. I should tell you my name, too. My name is Jenna, and this is my friend Bunny. Today is my birthday! Let me tell you about it.

Daddy came home drunk today, so I made myself a birthday party. Bunny and I ate peanut butter and jelly sandwiches in the kitchen. I wore a party hat, but Bunny told me he didn't want to. Then we got out the ice cream and made a little ice cream cake in a bowl. Bunny put a candle in it and we both sang "Happy Birthday". I think that Bunny sang too loud, because Daddy yelled at us to Shut Up. I don't like when he's drunk. He never used to get drunk when Mommy was still alive, but when she died, he's been getting drunk a lot. A lot of times I'm at home all by myself. Well, except for Bunny. He takes care of me. And now I have you, Sarah! I'm so happy that you will be my friend.

> Love, Jenna

Dear Sarah,

Something really spooky happened last night. I was lying in bed with Bunny trying to go to sleep. Daddy still hadn't come home yet. Suddenly I heard someone calling my name! It wasn't a very nice voice, though. It was all evil and dead. It gave me chills just hearing it. I got so scared, I hid under the covers and started yelling at it to go away. It started laughing at me. Then it started talking to me. I heard it say, "I will have you, Jenna." I couldn't take it anymore. I grabbed Bunny and ran out of my room. I tried to block my bedroom door with a chair but I don't know if it worked. I tried to stay up but I fell asleep on the sofa. Daddy didn't come home all night, but at least Bunny protected me. I'm scared, Sarah. I don't think that it was just a bad dream. I think that something is living in my closet and it doesn't like me at all.

Dear Sarah,

Today I made a new friend! I was playing outside with Bunny when a girl stopped to talk to me. She was really nice. She said that her name was Jessica and that her family had just moved in to a house down the street. I was so happy! We ran around and played on the swing set behind the school. I'm kinda jealous of her, though. Her mommy and daddy are happy and take good care of her. I wish that my daddy would come home more often and not be drunk all the time. He would know how to take care of that nasty monster in my closet. Bunny says that he will protect me, but he's kinda small to be fighting a monster. Don't tell him I said that. His feelings might get hurt.

I'm too scared to sleep in my room tonight, because of the monster, so I'm going to get my blanket and sleep on the sofa. Daddy won't care. I don't even think that he's coming home tonight. I'm so glad that I can tell you this, Sarah. You are my best friend.

March 5

March 9

Dear Sarah,

March 11

I hate my life! I hate it hate it! I'm hiding out here under the slide at the playground so that Daddy and the Monster won't find me. It's raining and I'm cold and I'm hungry and I'm scared, but I'm more scared to go home. *They're* at home. If I go home, they'll get me.

Daddy came home last night with a woman. They were both drunk. He was real mad to see me in the living room. He started yelling about how I always got in the way and how all he wanted was just to get laid (whatever that means) and he couldn't now, because I was in there. He started yelling and screaming and throwing things and I got scared, so I ran into my room and slammed the door. Then I remembered that Bunny was still in the living room. So I decided to sneak out really quiet, so that Daddy wouldn't see me and be angry. So I tiptoed out of my room and crawled along the floor towards Bunny. Then I saw Daddy and the woman on the sofa. It was pretty yucky. They didn't have any clothes on and they were touching each other and stuff. Yuck! Then Daddy saw me. He was really really mad. He slapped me across the face and yelled at me for being out of my room. Bunny tried to stop him, but that only made him madder. He picked me and Bunny up and threw us into my bedroom. Then he locked me in.

I started crying. Bunny told me that it would be okay, but he got all torn up a by Daddy and his insides were coming out. That only made me cry more. Then I heard a noise behind me. When I saw it, I started screaming. A monster was breaking my dollhouse into lots of little pieces! It looked at me and smiled. Then it started throwing my dolls at me. It ripped the legs off the mommy doll. Then it said, "I got your mommy, Jenna. I got your daddy. Now I'll get you." It picked up the rest of the dollhouse and dragged it into the closet. It said, "I will have you, Jenna." Then it shut the closet door. I was so scared that I started crying. I was crying even more when I realized that I had had an accident. Big girls don't have accidents! I grabbed my blanket and Bunny and I climbed out the window. And that's why I'm here now, under the slide. I want my Mommy, Sarah! She could fix this. I know she could! Mommy wouldn't lock me in my bedroom. Mommy loved me. My daddy doesn't love me. He hits me. I hate him! I hate him I hate him. But I don't want to hate him. I just want him to love me and say he's sorry and give me piggyback rides and make me dinner and tell me stories. Just like he used to. Why did he change, Sarah? Why is he so mean now? Why doesn't he love me?

I'm so tired, Sarah. So is Bunny. Will you stay awake and make sure that nobody bad hurts us tonight? I'm sorta dry here, under the slide. Maybe if I try hard enough, I can pretend that I'm back in my bedroom, just after Mommy has tucked me into bed and none of this has ever happened.

Will you sing me a lullaby, Sarah?



Dear Sarah,

March 12

I'm feeling much better today. I'm sleeping over at Jessica's house tonight. Isn't that exciting? I'm so happy, I could cry. But I should probably tell you what happened today.

I snuck back into the house this morning. Daddy was still sleeping. I didn't want to wake him up, so I grabbed a sandwich for Bunny and me to share. I decided to go for a walk so that I wouldn't have to be home when Daddy woke up. He gets these really bad headaches when he's been drunk, and he gets mad real easy. So anyways, I started walking and when I walked by Jessica's house, she ran out to see me. She was real upset and told me that I *had* to come inside and get cleaned up. Jessica's mommy was upset too. I think that she almost started crying when she saw me. Anyways, they gave me a nice hot bath, which made me feel all nice and clean. My clothes were all dirty, so Jessica let me wear some of hers.

We had so much fun today, Sarah. Jessica and I played dolls in her room all day long. Bunny didn't want to play, but we dressed him up in baby clothes and made him pretend to be the baby. I think he's mad at me, but he looked so cute! Then we had pizza for dinner and we all sat around the dining room table, just laughing. Jessica's mommy and daddy were both there, and they were so happy to have me with them. Even Bunny liked being there, even though he had to dress up in baby clothes. Then Jessica's mommy said that she talked to my daddy and he said that I could stay here tonight. Jessica was so excited, because that meant that she could stay up late with me and have a sleep-over. So we got into our pajamas to watch a movie. It was kinda scary and I didn't like it very much. It reminded me of the monster in my closet. When I told Jessica that I wanted to stop watching, she turned off the movie right away. She was so nice and friendly that I decided to tell her about the monster. I felt silly telling her, but she believed me. I was really surprised. Then she told me about the Monster that lived under her bed for a long time and about Closetland, where big nasty monsters live that sneak out at night and attack kids like us. She said that our parents can't see them anymore, because they're too grownup, and that us kids have to stick together. She said that she had fought off her Monster a long time ago with her glitter baton. Then she said that she'd let me have it, because she didn't need it anymore. I was really happy. The glitter baton even glowed special when she held it. Jessica says that it will glow really, really bright if there's a monster around and that the light will hurt the eyes of any monster that looks at it. She says that it will keep me safe. I gave her a big hug, and so did Bunny.

I'm so happy that I met Jessica. She's like the big sister that I never had. She's so pretty and smart. With this glitter baton, that mean monster will never bother me again.

Dear Sarah,

I can't cry anymore, Sarah. I've been crying so long that it hurts. And now I have to go away, and you can't come with me.

I should probably tell you what happened, huh? It might make more sense to you. Remember how I spent the night at Jessica's house? And she gave me the glitter baton? I wish that she never had. I came home so happy, because now I was going to be able to protect myself from the evil monster. So I waited all day long until it was my bedtime, because I was so excited. I *wanted* to see the monster now. I wanted to bop it on the head and yell at it to go away and leave me alone.

It started getting dark and Bunny got scared. He wanted to stay out in the living room, but I didn't let him. We needed to outnumber the monster. So we sat on the bed and waited. Bunny fell asleep for a little bit. Then, all of a sudden, the closet door opened. I could hear the monster breathing. It said, "Hello, Jenna." Then it jumped out of the closet right onto the bed. Bunny screamed and started biting it and I pulled out the glitter baton and started whacking the Closet Monster as hard as I could. Light came out of the baton and lit up the entire room as I hit the Monster with it. It roared really loud and rolled off the bed. It looked at me and hissed like a snake. "I'll be back, Jenna. I *will* destroy you."

I was so happy that Bunny and I danced a bit. We beat the monster! Everything would be okay now!

But when I got up in the morning and went to tell Jessica the good news there was a policeman at her house. Jessica's mommy was crying and her dad was really upset. Last night, someone slipped into Jessica's room and did bad things to her. I don't know what, because the policeman didn't tell me. Jessica was in the hospital. The policeman said that they were still looking for the person who did this to her but they hadn't found him yet. I started crying. I knew who had done the bad things to Jessica. The monster. And Jessica would be okay if she had kept her glitter baton. Jessica could have fought off the monster, but I had her baton and so the monster got her. It's my fault that Jessica's hurt now. I'm so sorry Jessica I'm sorry sorry sorry.

I ran to the playground and sat under the slide and cried. Then I figured what I had to do. The monster lived at my house, right? What if it came out one night and couldn't find me? It wouldn't hurt anybody else because it would be too busy looking for me. All of a sudden, I knew what I had to do. I came home and packed some clothes into my pink backpack. Bunny wasn't sure that this was a good idea, but he's coming anyways. But I wanted to talk to you, Sarah, because you have to stay here. I don't want Jessica and her mommy and daddy to think that I hate them. I don't even want Daddy to think that I'm mad at him. So I need you to stay and tell them that I'm running away because I love them all. I don't want the monster to get them. He wants me, so let him chase me. I'm quick. I'll be able to run very, very far, and I'll have the glitter baton to protect me. I even packed a lot of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, so that Bunny and I will be able to eat.

Don't cry, Sarah. It's better this way. And maybe, I'll find a mommy and daddy who love each other very much who will want me to live with them. Maybe the monster won't follow me there and we'll all be happy. Wouldn't that be nice? So don't cry, Sarah. Everything will be alright.

Right, Sarah?

Right?

11

LITTLE GRL LOST NEAR DIANGO RIVER

AUTHORITIES SPECULATE FOUL PLAY INVOLVED

PARENTS PLEA, BRING OUR DAUGHTER BACK

THERE ARE NO SUSPECTS AT THIS TIME

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, over 2,000 children are reported missing every day. In the year 2000 alone, there were 685,617 cases involving missing children entered into the FBI's databases. The two major categories under which they are filed are *Involuntary* (defined as "missing under circumstances indicating that the disappearance was not voluntary; i.e., abduction or kidnapping.") and *Endangered* (defined as "missing and in the company of another person under circumstances indicating that his/her physical safety is in danger."). It is estimated that every year over 28,000 children are taken involuntarily from the safety of the ones they love; over 108,000 children are listed as endangered.

The numbers fluctuate from year to year. Mostly they increase, with short periods of stagnation. Sometimes they even drop, but inevitably they rise again. Authorities theorize as to the cause. Parents cry out in anger, wondering how the world got this bad. They want to know: how can we prevent this? Where did this evil come from? The answer was right under their noses, but they couldn't see it.

If you want to know who it is, what it is, that is committing these crimes, that is influencing humankind to act is such cruel ways, you just need to do one simple thing.

Ask the children.

Just look deep into the victim's eyes. You'll see the answer on the flyer you get every week and toss away with hardly a cursory glance. You'll see it on the billboard at the post office. Just look deep into her eyes. It's been coming for a long time and she saw it a mile away. One-inch by one-inch blurbs buried on the back page of the daily paper tell the sad final tales of our young. Thirty-second spots shoved between a detergent ad and a talking dog selling the latest dotcom pleads for your help. But you sit there and impatiently flip through the channels awaiting your post-work amusement.

And every day more and more children are taken from our world and thrown into a horrible place we used to know all too well.

People struggle to find reason. Why my little boy? Why my little girl? The authorities send out notices. Highly paid professionals that spend their lives, day in and day out, looking but rarely finding. But, after the hunts are over and the hype has died down, the family has to come to terms with the fact that someone they love will never return. That the smiling face, pressed in a frame on a mantle, will be the only thing they have to remember their child by. They'll never see them grow up. Go to college. Start a career. A family.

When we hear about these tragedies on the news: the kidnappings, the abuse, the murders... we think of the family that's been ripped apart by this heinous act. The people who are left behind to wonder, "What if I hadn't worked late that day? What if I hadn't turned around in the parking lot for that split second? What if? What if....?"

We see police sketches of the perpetrators. We peer at them, try to figure out why. Why did they take the child? Where are they keeping her? What are they doing to her? We try to get into their minds and comprehend what drove them to commit such an atrocity.

And we think of the child, the victim of the crime. Because, believe me, more than the neighbors, more than the parents, more than the aunts, the uncles, the brothers, the sisters – they are the true victim of the crime. Just imagine – one second, you're safe by your father's side in the freezer aisle of a supermarket. Or you're on your way home from your best friend's house. Or out playing in the woods. Or maybe you've just been tucked in to sleep and are dreaming of what the next day will bring. The next second, someone has you. Their hands tight around your mouth, shoving you down. Into a car. Or an alleyway. You struggle, but your immature frame is too weak to break free. You are at your captor's mercy. At least, you hope, their only intent is capture. You scream... but no one can hear you.

REMAINS OF LOCAL BOY FOUND

AT HOME IN MCGOVERN COUNTY

SUSPECT STILL AT LARGE

I JUST TURNED MY BACK FOR A SECOND

ACCE 16

JUST ONE SECOND

AND WHEN I TURNED AROUND ...

HE WAS GONE

Our hearts go out to them, our thoughts and our hopes. We like to think they are safe, that they are with someone who will take care of them — even if that someone is not their family. We like to think that they will return safe, happy, and sound. But how many do? Some are found, true, but so many more are discarded in the woods or stuffed into the trunks of cars. Others are found in attics, basements, shallow graves, and abandoned buildings. And many simply vanish into the darkness, never to return.

There is a place you may have forgotten. A place that you once knew very well. It is home to all these things that tormented you as a child. Things you laugh at now that you're older. Now that you know better.

This place is ruled by a being known only as the Demagogue. It is the root, and product, of Fear. It is the shivers you feel rush down your spine. It is the cold air on your neck when you are alone. It is that moment of panic you feel when awakened in the middle of the night. It is the shadows from which evil steps, in all its many forms. It is the creaking of the wind and the scratching at your windowpane. By its side is the Tormentor, the Enslaver of children, he who keeps the machinations of this place going. Standing with them are the Seven Kings who serve the Demagogue, each one a lord and personification of mankind's vilest traits. They call to our darker sides and draw out the evil within us. Those feelings and desires, the ones we don't talk about with our parents, our friends, our lovers and loved ones. All the darkness we keep to ourselves. Each King has an army, those that do their bidding. Most are monstrosities, much like the Kings themselves, twisted and blistered caricatures. But some ... some of them we see everyday. At the bus stop, on the subway, in the store. Our co-workers and bosses. Even those we gladly let into our homes and, sometimes, those we share our homes with. All of them are at the beck and call of their wicked master. All of them thrive and burn with a single goal: the elimination of the Demagogue's only thorn - innocence. Especially the innocence of the young. They spend their days implementing our worst nightmares. The things we can't believe anyone would actually do, that anyone could possibly be capable of doing.

You have forgotten, haven't you? Such a place, full of pain and torture, a haven for monsters, does not fit into your sane, rational world, does it? But the children haven't forgotten. They know it waits for them, that it hungers for them. And they have given a name to their darkest fears, the source of all their pain. They call it Closetland.

It is... a child's Hell.

CARKNESS IS THE WINDOW

THROUGH WHICH THEY WATCH US



to be young again

Little Fears

Little Fears is not about the child as hapless victim, but the child as its own salvation. In a world of rational, mature thought, no one has time for the fanciful stories of the young. No one wants to hear that the Bogeyman really did steal the little neighbor girl in the middle of the night. Or that something really is lying in wait under the bed for the lights to go out. Authorities look to the family when a child shows up to school with scrapes and bruises. The family looks to the child's peers when the child comes home late from school, their clothes tattered and torn. In Little Fears you will play the part of children who must face an irrational horror that threatens their existence daily. Without anyone to turn to, the children must devise ways to save themselves from the horrors of Closetland. They must learn to survive in a hostile world where they are so very alone.

Imagine a world where you are hunted. Where things are going on that don't have an "acceptable" explanation. Imagine if no one believed you. If everything you said was chalked up as make-believe. You were told there were no ghosts, no werewolves, no monsters in your closet despite the fact there's one hiding there right now. You'd learn to become dependent on yourself. wouldn't you? Perhaps you would confide in a few close friends who had witnessed the same, or similar, things you had. Maybe you'd start to wonder how you could stop it. How you could help the girl down the street who was kidnapped weeks ago though no one's aware of the fact. Knowing that the thing parading as her actually has a much darker face, you wonder if you could find her? Could you save her? How would you do it?

Acting Like A Child

The biggest obstacle as a player will be assuming and maintaining the mindset and demeanor of a child. Most of us don't remember what it was like when we were 6 years old. Sure, we have memories of birthday parties and visiting our grandparents and maybe you remember your first day at school or holidays past but do you remember how you thought? How you reacted to things?

Unlike a barbarian from the frozen waste or a 26th century mecha pilot, you actually were a child and you might worry about trying to act young enough and trying to capture being an 8-year old just right. Throw all that aside. Approach playing a child like any other role. Instead of donning a space suit, you put on a school uniform five days a week. Instead of seeking out the Dragon Lord, you run from the school bully. Instead of devoting your life to finding a mystical weapon, you're happy if you find that ultra-rare action figure, Instead of fighting in a war, you play war, squeezing the trigger of a mock gun and making "kapow" noises instead of launching 30missile volleys at enemy spacecraft,

Before you attempt to fill the shoes of a child facing their nightmares made flesh, just fill the shoes of an average child.

Luckily, there are a great many resources readily available to you. Numerous movies center around child protagonists. Some of

To Be Young Again

them fit nicely into the Little Fears vein. From campy (where a group of school kids have to prevent Dracula from summoning all the monsters of lore to destroy the world) to serious (a 9-year old boy who sees the ghosts of the dead must fight through his fear to save his sanity). You can go even younger and watch the movies about the 6year old girl who is being hunted by a cult of fanatics led by the Devil himself. At the top of the age spectrum, we have that poor 12-year old girl who became possessed by the devil and had to be saved by men of God. Those movies alone can help you figure out certain aspects of your character. You can use them to pick up mannerisms or figures of speech for your character. Watch how they interact with adults and

other kids to remind you of how you and your buddies used to be.

But your research need not be limited to the horror genre. Your goal as a player, at this point, is to realize the basic concept of your character, so any movie, book, or other source that has children in a leading role will help you tremendously. Watch a couple episodes of children's programming. There are plenty of educational shows that can show you what kids are being taught in school (so you can better determine what sort of knowledge a child might pick up). This not only can facilitate the assumption of a child-like mindset but also give you a better guide when it come to separating player knowledge with character knowledge



Little Fears

(for example, if the GM questions whether your 11-year old would know that much about forensics, you can cite the show you saw it on and be able to defend your case). The important thing is to look beyond that which is peddled to children not yet of school age. The characters in Little Fears, more than likely, are going to have basic comprehension of the alphabet (the majority will be quite literate), science, math, etc. Obviously the younger the character, the less savvy they'll be but, unless your child is developmentally challenged, this basic level of education greatly increases the role-playability of the character.

Now once you've achieved the mindset of your character, the trick is to maintain it. Joking and carrying-on are common and healthy parts of the role-playing hobby, it can help lighten the mood and oft times fits the personality of the character (Class Clown isn't a Quality for nothing) but when you're dealing with two delicate elements (playing a child and the horror genre), you really have to try to keep everything moderately serious and in-character to get the most out of the game. Not only does it help the GM in keeping the game focused but it helps your fellow players maintain their character's personality.

Childhood Q&A

Once you have an idea of your character's personality, it's time to give your character a more concrete form. This will involve a few different things. The first thing we're going to tackle is a questionnaire that you're going to fill out as your character would. The bulk of the questionnaire is located on the back of your character sheet (there are a few that we'll cover first that are on the front). It's set up to read like a story and can be used for just that. So get your questionnaire out and sharpen your number 2 pencil.

Tell Me About Yourself

These questions correlate to the sentences on the top of the front part of the character sheet.

What's your name?

One of the most important things to decide is what your child's name is.

What do your friends call you?

Just because your child's parents named them one thing, doesn't mean they'll be addressed as that. Whether it's an abbreviation of their full name (Jerry instead of Gerald, Sam instead of Samantha, etc.), their middle name, or a pet name like Stinky, Lefty, or Chubs, a lot of children have nicknames. Not all of them flattering.

How old are you?

Children in Little Fears range from 6 to 12. This is more important than you might think. As you'll see below, there are advantages and disadvantages to whatever age you choose.

Are you a boy or girl?

Simple enough: is your character male or female?

How tall are you? How much do

To Be Young Again

you weigh?

A six-year old averages about 3' 9" in height (add 3-5 inches per year) and 46 pounds (add 5-7 per year).

What color hair do you have? What color are your eyes?

You can simply decide this or roll a1d6 on the charts below.

roll	hair	1011	eyes
1-3	brown	1-2	brown
4	black	3-4	green
5	blond	5	hazel
6	red	6	blue

Please turn your character sheet to the back and continue.

Who are your friends?

Tell me the names of the friends that your child associates with the most.

Who is your best friend?

The others don't have to know but which of all his friends is your child's best friend?

Which adult can you always talk to?

Tell me the name (and relation) of an adult that your child can always count on for advice. Someone who will take them seriously no matter how preposterous the child's story may seem.

What do you want to be when you grow up? Why?

Does your child want to be a firefighter? Doctor? Superhero? Why do they want to be that?

Who is your favorite person?

His mother? His uncle? A friend or celebrity? What person (real or fictional) does your character think is the coolest person in the world.

What is the most special thing you own? Why is it special?

Tell me something that your child holds dear. Something that they would rather die than do without. Not just a passing fancy but something that is deeply personal to them. Tell me why it is so special.

What is your biggest fear?

Above all else, what is your child afraid of the most? It can be something fantastical (the creature that lives in the attic) or all too real (the *game* her uncle likes to play when he visits).

What do you do when you get scared?

When he can still feel the cold breath on the back of his neck and can't shut his eyes much less sleep, what does your child do? What does he do to protect himself from the creatures of the night? Does he pray? Does he try to think of a happy time in his life?

What do you do to protect yourself from monsters?

Is there any ritual or trick your child uses to protect herself from monsters? Does she wear a special piece of jewelry that has hidden magical powers? Do she surround herself with stuffed animals and dolls so that the monsters can't get to her?

Little Fears

What is your homelife like?

Does your child live with his natural parents? Is he adopted? How is he treated? Is he loved? Abused? Neglected?

Now that you have a personality down and have filled out the questionnaire, let's turn what you know of your character into game mechanics. Each character consists of three major elements: Stats, Virtues, and Qualities. We're going to examine each of these in turn. Muscle covers your character's physical strength, endurance, and resistance to illness. If your child likes to rough-andtumble, wrestle, or play contact sports, she probably has a high score in this Stat. If your character is a weakling or spends a lot of time sick in bed, this Stat would be low.

Hands covers your character's manual dexterity and is also used for hand-to-hand and most melee fights he may find himself

Stats

Stats determine the raw potential of your child. There are five stats that make up each child: Smarts, Muscles, Hands, Feet, and Spirit.

Smarts is a measure of your character's intelligence, book-learning, and creativity. Musical prodigies, science whiz kids, and the like would have a high score in this. If the character has been held back in school or is not too quick on the uptake, then his Smarts score would be low. Do not forget that Stats represent your character's potential. So your character could have a high Smarts but be held back because he was not challenged or has been discouraged against using it.



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in. If you see your child having good handeye coordination, he should have a good score in Hands. Adversely, if he tends to drop things and cannot catch an underhand pitch, then his Hands score won't be that high.

Feet represents your character's speed and agility. A child who is involved in gymnastics or ballet would have a good score in Feet. If your character tends to trip over air, then she would not have such a great score in Feet.

Spirit is a mixture of your character's willpower and his awareness of and attunement to his *Soul* (this is covered more under Virtues). Spirit comes into play when someone (or something) tries to intimidate or scare the child. Spirit is also tied to the Virtue *Fear*. As your child's Fear increases, his Spirit can suffer as well. A character who is very determined or feels very in tune with the divine forces (whether it's the Judeo-Christian God or earth spirits) would have a high Spirit. If your character is a push-over or feels very alone in the universe, this would be reflected by a low Spirit score,

Virtues

Each character has three Virtues, which represent the more intangible aspects of your character. They are Soul, Innocence, and Fear.

Soul reflects how much of her immortal soul the character still has. It is very possible for a child to lose her soul which, needless to say, can have drastic effects on her being.

Innocence reflects how pure the character is. In Little Fears, Innocence is defined as how open and accepting your character is. Sometimes someone who is Innocent can come across as naive and, in a way, that's exactly what he is. The more Innocent your character is, the less knowledgeable he is about "how the world works" and is more prone to flights of fancy. The more gullible and/or sheltered your character is, the more Innocence he would have.

Fear represents how much the forces of Closedand have gotten to your character (either directly or through more subtle and nefarious ways). The more Fear your character accumulates, the less stable she becomes.

The game mechanics and subtleties of the Virtues are covered in the next chapter.

Qualities

As was stated earlier, Stats are your character's potential. Qualities can inhibit or increase that potential, so don't let your Stats stop you from choosing certain Qualities. Qualities also cover a wide variety of other things, beside that which can affect your rolls, from pure role-playing bits to how other kids and adults treat your character. This is where most of your character's meat will come from. These lists are far from complete so feel free to confer with

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your GM on any others that cross your mind. Though Qualities can act as really good descriptors, the personality you chose in the beginning is really what will bring your character to life. Qualities should be used to enhance and fortify the concept you have for your character not hinder it in anyway. A good thing to keep in mind is that even though your character may act tough, they may well have a low Spirit or possess the Quality *Scaredy Cat.* These dualities are not uncommon in life and could fit nicely into rounding out your character.

Now that we've defined these aspects of your character, we're going to get into the mechanics of them.

Playaround Points

Each character gets 6 Playaround Points (PaPs).

Stats. All Stats are rated from 1 to 5. All Stats begin at 2 and can be raised or lowered to match your character concept. To raise a Stat, it costs one Playaround Point. If you lower a Stat, you get one Playaround Point (may be used for Stats, Virtues, or Qualities). Stats cannot go below 1.

Virtues. Soul begins at 10 and Fear begins at 0. For Innocence, consult the following chart.

Innocence may be lowered to reflect the life the child has been exposed to or raised to reflect how sheltered or ignorant the child is. It costs two PaPs to raise Innocence 1 point (may not go above 10) but lowering Innocence will only give you 1 PaP per point lowered (may not go below 2). Points acquired by lowering Innocence may be spent on Stats or Qualities. Fear may be raised a maximum of 2 points. Each point of Fear you take will give you 1 Playaround

Child's	Age	Innocence
6 years 7 years 8 years 9 years 10 years 11 years 12 years	old old old old old	8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Point. Soul may not be lowered.

Qualities. All positive Qualities cost one Playaround Point and all negative Qualities give you a Playaround Point (PaPs acquired this way can only be applied toward positive Qualities). The suggested maximum of Positive Qualities you can buy is 10, but this may be raised, lowered, or thrown out by your GM. The list of Qualities can be found below.

Things I like about me

These are your child's positive Qualities. Things they feel good knowing, being, or being able to do.

Fm Ambidextrous

Your child can use both hands with equal proficiency.
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I'm Artistic

Your child is able to express himself through the arts. Helpful when trying to express what exactly the monster looked like or how he feels about the new girl in his class.

I'm Athletic

Your child is a natural born athlete. She is probably in Little League and is, more than likely, the coach's pride and joy.

I know an Authority Figure

Your child knows someone in a position of power she can call in case of a problem. Her mom may be a cop, her dad may be a firefighter, etc.

I'm Big For My Age

Your child is growing up faster than those around him. He tends to be 3-6 inches taller than other kids his age.

I'm a Bookworm

Your character has done a lot of reading. Hence, she's acquired quite a bit of trivia and book-knowledge.

I'm a Charmer

Cooties don't bother your character. While most people shy away from the boys (or girls) in their class, your character's taken a liking toward them.

I'm Compassionate

Animals and very young children feel calm and secure around your character. Your child has a soothing effect on people and they tend to be able to open up to him. Your character usually makes friends very easily and people generally get a good feeling being around him.

I'm Courageous

Your child can look death in the face and laugh. Well, not really... but he has a better chance than most kids his age.

I have an Excellent Memory

Your character has a very, very good memory. She can usually recall anything down to the minute details.

I'm Faithful

Your child possesses remarkable faith. Because of that, she is not as cowardly around that which tests her will. The term Faithful does not just apply to Judeo-Christian faith. It can be anything in which your child believes whole-heartedly in, from this world or from beyond.

I'm the Favorite Child

Your character is his family's favorite child and they will believe him over his siblings.

I'm Fleet of Foot

Your child runs faster than most and can usually escape trouble because of it.

My family is Fortunate

Your child's family has money and all the luxuries that it affords.

I'm Guided

Children that are guided will often know things they normally would not know. As if the forces from beyond (both benign and

malevolent) are dropping tidbits of information into the child's psyche. Guided characters will often start to go places or will know something is true without knowing why. Comparable to Mouths of Babes (below), the difference being that Guided is geared more toward unconscious acts (your child getting out of their seat and wandering off without realizing it).

I'm Hearty

Your character does not usually get sick. She may have had the chicken pox, but she does not get many colds, tends to resist the flu, etc.

I have an Honest Face

Your child just has this thing about him that makes people believe him.

I'm a Horror Buff

Your child has seen all the movies and read tons of books on this stuff. Of course, what he's read and what is real may be two separate things.

I'm Internet Savvy

Your child knows her way around the web. Helpful for finding information and others to help her around the world.

I'm Lucky

Things tend to go your character's way. Optional rule: you may re-roll one bad roll per game.

I'm Multilingual

Your character speaks more than one

language. This also covers sign language and Braille. May be purchased multiple times, once per language.

I have an Older Friend

Someone much older (up to 10 years) likes your character and will do favors for her. You never know when you're going to need a car...

I'm Popular

Your child is among the most popular kids in her school, neighborhood, etc. and other children tend to look up to her.

I'm the Teacher's Pet

Yep... your character's that kid. Useful, though, when it comes to borrowing something from the school or getting a favor from the teacher.

I have Visions

Your character tends to see things from beyond this world that even the other children cannot. These visions may come in his sleep, daydreams, or when he's wide-awake. They can be visions of pleasant things, incidents yet to happen, or monsters hiding in human skin.

I'm a Whiz Kid

Your child learns fast. Real fast. Your child is in advanced classes or may have even skipped a few grades.

Things I don't like about me

These are your child's negative Qualities. Your child doesn't like to admit these things and usually doesn't feel too good about (but

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there are always exceptions).

I'm Asthmatic

Your character has asthma and cannot be outside or do strenuous activity for long without over-exhausting her lungs and requiring an inhaler.

I have a **Bad** Name

Your child's parents either do not like her or weren't thinking when they named her. Or the hospital may have recorded her name wrong on her birth certificate. It doesn't really matter how it. happened but until she gets old enough to file for a name change, your child is stuck being Harry Butts, Ima Pigg, or something else that can severely impact her social life.

I'm a Bully

Your character tends to pick on people and push her will onto classmates and the neighbor kids.

I have Butterfingers

Your child is such a klutz, they don't trust her with balloons.

I'm Chubby

Your character is a portly child. Add between 5 and 20 pounds to your Weight.

I'm the Class Clown

Your child is the troublemaker of his class and the teacher tends to single him out as the instigator when there is a ruckus.

I'm Clumsy

Your child trips over air... and hurts herself getting back up.

I need Corrective Lenses

Your character requires corrective lenses to see correctly. If he is without them, he will suffer a -2 to any Quizzes requiring the effective use of sight.

I'm Curious

Your child absolutely has to know no matter what stands in her way.

I'm a Bed Wetter

Your child... um. He tends to... well... he makes water in his sleep.

I'm the Black Sheep

Your character just does not fit in with his family and his siblings tend to be favored over him.

I'm a Delinquent

People see your character as a criminal and a bad influence around other children. Whether or not she actually is one is another story.

I'm Dependent

Your child cannot go anywhere without his older brother or sister there to protect him. He'll be in big trouble if he ever sneaks off by himself.

I'm Handicapped

Your character is, in some way, physically compromised. It can vary from being wheelchair-bound, to requiring crutches, to having severe scoliosis.

I'm Haunted

Ghosts seem particularly attracted to your child. Monsters also seem to be able to find her easier than others. She may have one spirit who has attached itself to her or she may have fleeting contact with a variety of different spirits.

I wear a Hearing Aid

Your character wears a hearing aid. If she is without it or it breaks down, she will incur a -2 to any Quizzes that depend on her hearing ability.

I'm a Heavy Sleeper

Not only does your child sleep through his alarm, he's been known to sleep through air raid sirens. Anyone attempting to wake your child up is fighting an uphill battle.

I'm a Light Sleeper

Feathers hitting foam wake your character up. She rarely gets a good night's sleep and is pretty groggy for a good part of the morning.

I'm Loud

Your character is just very loud. Everything they do: walking, talking, eating is done at decibels people find annoying.

Fm on Medication

Your child has been put on prescription medication. Without the proper dosage of medicine, ill effects will surface making it hard for her to function.

I'm Mischievous

Your character can't help but stick his nose in other people's business or do something because someone said he shouldn't.

I have a One-Track Mind

Once a thought pops into your child's head, it is the only thing he can think about.

I'm Phobic

Your child has a phobia. Be it darkness, cats, dogs, small spaces, or the number 13, when she is around it, she is gripped with fear. (Phobia should be something relatively common. If too uncommon, GM may not allow a point for this.)

I get Picked On

A bully has singled your child out as his number one victim. Your character cannot seem to escape him and dreads crossing his path.

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My family's Poor

Your child's family has less money than most and thus cannot afford to dress her in the newest fashions or buy her the hottest video games.

I have a Potty Mouth

Your character tends to use "colorful" language regardless of who is around to hear it.

I'm a Scaredy Cat

Your child is generally wary and jumps at shadows. She begins with a Fear score of 2 (players who purchase 2 points of Fear at character creation automatically get this Quality but receive no points for it).

I'm a Screamer

When your child is scared, his reflex is to scream. Long and loud. No matter how important it is to be quiet. If your character has this and fails a Fear Check, they will start to uncontrollably scream until able to be calmed down.

I'm Shy

Your child has a hard time confronting people and avoids situations where she would be the center of attention.

I get Sick Easily

Your character tends to get sick more than most kids. If anything is going around (such as the flu) he gets it and it tends to stay with them for a long time.

I'm Skinny

Your character is considered very under-

weight for someone her age. Subtract between 5 and 20 pounds from her Weight.

I'm a Slow Learner

Your character learns at a much slower rate than most children. He is in remedial courses or may have been held back a year in school.

I'm a Slowpoke

Your child just can't keep up with everybody else.

I have a Speech Impediment

Your child stutters, has a lisp, whispers, sounds like a frog, or speaks in some manner that makes it hard for people to understand her. It must be severe enough that people honestly can't make out what she's saying.

I'm a Square Peg

People just treat your child differently. He is often left out of birthday parties and is picked last in gym class.

I have a Tagalong

Your child can't go anywhere without taking her younger brother or sister with her. They tend to be annoying, get in the way and generally make her uncool.

I'm Unlucky

Sometimes things just don't work out right for your child. **Optional rule:** one good roll per game will be ignored.

Fm Whiny Your child complains about everything.

Playground Rules

Now that your character is done, we're going to go over how to use what you have on your character sheet. When and how to use your Stats, how Qualities come into play, and how you know when your character has had enough. The Virtues will be covered in the following chapter.

Tests & Quizzes

Whenever the outcome of something your child attempts to do is up in the air, you need to roll either a Test or a Quiz. The difference being that when no one is opposing your character (picking a lock, trying to find his Sunday suit in a messy closet, or trying to ride his bike over a steep embankment, for example) then you need to roll a Ouiz. The goal in a Quiz is to roll under your child's Stat. What Stat you need to roll under depends on what your child is trying to do. If she's trying to remember how to get back out of the woods, she'd use her Smarts. If she's trying to catch a ball, she would use her Hands score. Anything strength or endurance-related, she'd use Muscle and so on.

If someone *is* directly opposing your child (trying to get out of the way, pulling on the other end of the rope, or in some other way attempting to prevent your character from being successful), then you need to roll a Test. For a Test to be successful you need to roll *over* your opponent's Stat (in turn, they need to roll over your child's Stat). The Stat in question is dependent on what your child is trying to do and what his opponent is doing to try to prevent this.

The mechanic used for Tests and Quizzes is the same but the goal, as was just mentioned, is different. To roll a Test or Quiz, you need a six-sided die (d6). You then roll it and see what number ends up on top. Now, if have a Quality that can come into play, you roll another six-sided die. If the Quality is positive (something your character likes about himself) then you keep whatever dic is most beneficial (the lowest for a Quiz, the highest for a Test). If the Quality is negative (something your character doesn't like about himself) then you keep the worse of the two (the highest for a Quiz, the lowest for a Test).

A situation may come up where more than one of your character's Qualities apply. If all the Qualities are positive, add one extra die for each Quality and roll as normal (keeping the best roll). The same applies is all the Qualities are negative, add one extra die per Qualities are negative, add one extra die per Quality and roll (keeping the worst roll). If your character has **both** negative and positive Qualities that apply, calculate how many of each apply and subtract the lowest from the highest. The result is how many extra dice are rolled. If more negative than positive applied, roll per usual and keep the worst. If more positive applied, keep the best.

Going At It Alone

In a Test, whoever beats their opponent's Stat wins. If both beat their opponent's Stat, then whoever rolled highest wins. If both beat their opponent's Stat and they both **To Be Young Again**

rolled the same number, then both are successful or, if that doesn't make any sense, it is a stalemate and a reroll is called for.

Beth's character, Toni, is attempting to get away from James' character, Greg. Greg has a hold of Toni's shirt and is trying to drag her into the old house. Scared, Toni tries to bite Greg's hand so he'll let go. Toni has a Feet (since it is used for general agility checks) of 3 and Greg has a Hands of 4 (since he's going to try to move his hand out of the way). Toni doesn't have any Qualities that would really come into play, but Greg has Butterfingers. Beth rolls a six-sided die for Toni and gets a 5, success! Greg rolls two six-sided dice and gets a 4 and a 2, but since Greg has Butterfingers he has to keep the worse of the two, which in this case would be the 2. Toni sinks her teeth into his hand and, leaving

a cursing Greg behind her, she twists out of his grasp and bolts from the house.

Push Comes To Shove

Any conflict between two or more people is going to be handled the same as a Test or a Quiz. The only extra step is determining how much damage, if any, was inflicted. Most fights are going to be a Test, two kids scrapping near the monkey-bars during recess, a kid fending off a monster in the dark, and so on. But, if the person your child is attacking is unaware, unable or unwilling to fend off the attack, then there is no opposition and thus, you treat it like a Quiz.

Part One: The Conflict

Greg has caught back up with Toni and has managed to shove her to the ground. While she tries to get up, Greg picks up a large



rock and attempts to bring it down on her head. Greg rolls his Hands (trying to get over Toni's Feet score of 3, since upon spotting Greg's intent, she is now trying to scramble away from him) and, including the second die from having **Butterfingers**, gets a 6 and a 4. Despite the negative Quality, his 4 is successful. But Toni also gets to roll her Feet score to try to beat Greg's Hands score. She rolls a six-sided die and gets a 3. Greg drives the stone down on Toni's head. Now it's time to figure out how much damage Greg did.

Part Two: The Damage Done

When a hand-to-hand Test results in one of the opponent's taking damage, this is how you determine it. Subtract the number you needed to beat (the defender's pertinent Stat) from the number you rolled and add the weapon damage on to it. In the above example, Greg needed to beat a 3. Since he was successful with a 4, his *base damage* is 1 (4-3=1). The large rock he was using gives him a +3. That means Toni Just took 4 points of damage (1+3=4) from having that rock come down straight on her head.

Part Three: Taking The Hit

What Toni's player needs to do now is record that damage on the character sheet. Since Toni's Muscle Stat is 3, that means she can take 3 points of damage in each row listed (more on this later in the chapter), the hit fills up all 3 points in **fine** and the point left carries over to the next row, giving her a point in **sore**.

Part Four: Fighting Back

At this point the conflict reverts to part one and will cycle through until one or both of them either quits, passes out, manages to escape, or passes on.

Sticks And Stones

These are what will be used most in combat. This section covers the stuff your character will find laying around or have easy and open access to. Each of these weapons has a bonus listed next to it, this is the number added to the difference between your roll and the number you needed to beat (as described above). Not every weapon can be listed so use the above as guidelines when a situation comes up that the weapon in question is not listed.

Down & Dirty Fist and Foot
Muscle of 1 or 2: 0
Muscle of 3 or 4: 1
Muscle of 5: 2
Hand Ax: 3
Pocket Knife: 1
Kitchen Knife: 2
Pitchfork: 5
Small Rock: 1
Large Rock: 3
Large Branch: 4
Wooden Baseball Bat: 4
Aluminum Baseball Bat: 6

Playing With Fire

Okay, none of us like the idea of children and guns. In fact, most things in Little Fears won't even be affected by a gun. And characters in Little Fears should **never** ever

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start off with a gun. But sometime somewhere they may come across one. Firearm combat, like hand-to-hand, can be a Test or a Quiz. If the target is perfectly still, then roll a Quiz (against the child's Hands). If the target is moving, roll a Test (versus the Target's Feet). Remembering that, treat firearm combat the same as you would hand-to-hand.

Arms of Fire

Small Handgun: 10 Large Handgun: 15 Submachine Gun: 8 per round Shotgun (close): 30 Shotgun (Far): 15

It Hurts, Mommy...

Sometimes we get hurt really bad. And sometimes, we die. Right now, we're going to cover how you know how bad your child is hurt and what can be done about it.

I feel fine: when your character has yet to fill up this row of wounds, then she is still in top form.

I feel sore: when your character fills up the previous row and has moved on to this one, they have some minor aches and pains, but nothing too serious.

I feel bad: when your character has advanced to this stage, they are feeling the worse for wear. The head is throbbing, their muscles are stiff, and they should seek





medical attention. All Stats are at -1 (minimum of 1).

I feel dizzy: at this stage, your character is close to passing out from the pain. She can barely move or function properly, and had better get some medical attention. All Stats are at -2 (minimum of 1).

I feel nothing: when things have advanced this far, your child is on the brink. When all these boxes are filled, the child is dead.

Feeling Better

Children are amazingly resilient. In Little Fears, just like in life, the is a tremendous boon. Without any intervention, children head at the rate of 2 wounds a day provided they were not to the point of feeling **dizzy**. If a child is feeling **dizzy** or worse, he heads at the rate of 1 point a day until they are above feeling **bad** then he begins to heal, again, at the rate of 2 points a day.

Medical Intervention

While sitting at home, eating cereal, and watching cartoons is a good way to regain composure, it just doesn't cut it when the damage is severe. If the problem can be largely solved with first aid (any Scouts in the room?) then you're in pretty good shape. The degree to which you are treated is determined by how well the would-be paramedic rolls on a Smarts Quiz. For every point he beats his Smarts score by, 1 wound is healed. For example, if he has a Smarts score of 4 and they roll a 2, then your character gets 2 wounds back.

But First Aid only helps if someone can apply it in a reasonable amount of time (within a half-hour is good, an hour at



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most). Extensive medical attention will help even more. This can only be provided by someone who has the right knowledge and proper equipment (like a doctor in a hospital). For this kind of treatment your character will gain back 2 wounds for every point of difference on the Smarts Quiz plus an extra 2 wounds on top of that. The problem with seeking professional medical assistance is two-fold; any notably odd wound is all it takes for a medical professional to involve the police. The plus side to this is that they can't do anything to you without permission from your parents. The down side is that they can deem your parents at fault and take you away from them. The other negative to getting formal treatment is that this only heals the physical aspect, any emotional or spiritual damage is in your hands.

Gettin' Scared

Whenever your child is confronted with the supernatural, he must roll to see if she manages to overcome her fear or if she succumbs. This is called the **Fear Check**. The character must roll a Spirit Quiz to see if she can resist the horrendous intimidation of facing down a monster. Groggy from the impact of Greg's hit, Toni's vision began to focus again. Knowing there was something wrong with Greg, it wasn't until she saw him just then that she could sense the evil that was inside him. The dead look in his eyes as he raised the stone again sent chills down her spine. A large shadow rose from behind him, white eyes balancing in the darkness, Toni felt fear rising in her heart.

To see how Toni is going to react to this, she rolls a Fear Check. Toni's Spirit is 3, so she rolls a six-sided die and gets... a 5. Her fear has conquered her. Next, Toni rolls a d6 to see what she does. If Toni had the Quality Screamer or something similar, then she wouldn't need to roll. Besides rolling on the chart, Toni's player or the GM could decide what Toni does based on how she has reacted previously or whatever fits the story best. Since Toni has opted to roll, she does. Getting a 3, the GM consults the chart at the bottom of this page.

Tani does her best to scramble to her feet and run away. The GM decides that Toni should make a Feet check since she just took some damage. Beth does and succeeds. Toni is at her feet and rounding the woodshed as Greg and his shadow chase after her.

Don't be such a chicken

1:You tremble and stammer for a few minutes 2:You scream your head off inconsolably for a few minutes 3:You run away as fast as your feet will take you 4:Uh-oh... looks like someone had an accident... 5:You pass out and cannot be revived for 2d6 minutes 6:You are paralyzed for 2d6 minutes and gain a point of Fear



the virtues of childhood chapter two

In this chapter, we're going to talk about your child's Virtues: Soul, Innocence, and Fear. Soul is a tangible part of your child that can, in fact, be hurt, torn, destroyed, and even reborn. Innocence and Fear are two vital elements not only of **Little Fears** but any story of terror. Because of that, reducing them to rules or a game mechanic would not do them justice. This chapter will discuss these concepts and offer **guidelines** on how they can be used in the game. As always, your GM can filter these "rules" through her own creativity and judgement to facilitate the experience for her group. We're also going to cover Belief Magic, the ability children have of making the implausible plausible.

Soul

Your character's soul is the most important thing he has. Losing one's soul can not be compared to anything else. Having his very essence ripped from his body, your character will slowly die from the inside out.

Losing Soul

For the most part, your character will only lose Soul through magical attacks. Someone or something from Closedland will latch onto the child's essence and start drawing it away. The Bogeyman is the biggest perpetrator of this act; his greed for souls is insatiable. It is by losing their Soul that children become *Darkened* (explained later in this chapter).

Regaining Soul

Only through faith can a child get his Soul back. Not necessarily a Christian faith, mind you; but if the child does not have some connection to a higher power or benevolent entity there is no leverage point for the soul to heal itself. This is different than getting your Soul back, however, where you must find that which is pulling your Soul away from you. Regaining your Soul means you are actually tapping into your remaining essence in an attempt to heal it. And you can still be losing Soul while making efforts to regain it, putting your child in a spiritual tug-of-war.

If your child has the Quality Faithful, she can utilize it to regain her Soul by doing acts that are sacred to her faith such as prayer, uthing, or whatever will connect her to the object of her faith. What is important is that she makes a concentrated effort to reach that divine power and it is only through doing this that her Soul will begin to heal. As far as game mechanics, like most thing related to Virtues, the best we can give are guidelines. As a rule of thumb, for every week to two weeks of concentrated effort, children regain one point of Soul.

The Darkening

The tainting of the soul (known to the children as "the Darkening") is one of the most horrific things that a beast from Closetland can do to a child. When a child is "Darkened," his soul is slowly being

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consumed by the same fear that gave Closetland birth. The taint slowly starts to nip away at the child's being, weakening his mind, body, and soul. Physically, the child's skin starts to pale - slowly, at first. But as the Darkness spreads, his flesh will turn a sharp alabaster (this affects all manner of skin tone to pretty much the same degree). Mentally, the child's thoughts start to become scattered. He finds it hard to formulate a thought and often forgets what he is going to say in mid-sentence. Spiritually, the child becomes more susceptible to manipulation by Closetland. His soul, which initially struggled to remain in control, starts to give up, making the child a

puppet to the shadowy forces that abound. The onset of the Darkening is quick and painful.

A child starts to Darken when her soul score reaches 6. While she will start to become sluggish, despondent, and prone to erratic behavior at around 7 or 8; this is when it starts getting bad. This is when her eyes start to whiten at the pupil and her skin starts to become clammy. When it goes down to 4, the child is in severe danger. This means that more than half her spirit belongs to Fear. The child's skin is one shade from pure white and her eyes don't focus. Her speech starts to become slurred,



she will not be able to stop salivating, and her breathing becomes erratic and laborious. This is when the bad visions come. Shadows seem to stalk them and bright light can send searing headaches from temple to temple, the pain slowly crawling down the child's back. A slight echo in her voice makes the words sound as if coming from deep within her chest, rattling the lungs on the way up. At 3, a fever sets in which can reach as high as 106 F and it will not break. If the child is rushed to the hospital, modern medicine will try to treat her but the effort will be in vain. In fact, the drugs and tests they will give the child will only weaken her body and make it easier for the Darkness to take hold. At this point, the child is most certainly lost; the Darkening will start to claim the child on its own volition. While there is variance, the Darkening can usually claim a child's soul at the rate of 1 point per 48 hours. Time is of the utmost importance here because if the child's Soul reaches zero, she is clinically dead. While her body may seem to be functioning, her mind and soul are gone. The brain will become pudding and her organs a mixture of mush and dust. And her soul will begin to roam Closetland looking for a master to obey. After the soul hits zero, all physical stats (Muscle, Hands, and Feet) drop 1 point per hour, while all mental and spiritual stats drop immediately to zero. There is no coming back.

Cutting the Cord

There is only one way to rid someone of the Darkness; you must kill the source. The only way to do that is to stop whoever is drawing it from the child. It is said that there is a silver cord that connects the soul to the body. When the Darkness is creeping over them, some children save their friends by finding the diabolist and killing them. Most of the time, this requires a trip to Closetland where the conqueror must be faced and destroyed and the soul returned to the child. How this is done depends on who the perpetrator is. If it is a King, the children have a very daunting task in front of them. Facing a King directly is a fool's quest, the children will have to devise a plan to outsmart the King. Most Kings keep the souls they are stealing somewhere in their domain or one of their henchmen will have them what has been taken of the soul stashed away somewhere. If the thief is not a King, then opposing them directly is a possibility, though it will still be a harrowing ordeal. A soul is hard to find but easy to distinguish from anything else. Souls appear as swirling blue, ethereal constructs who bear but only a vague resemblance to the human form. Stealing the soul and returning it to the child in our world is the only way to save a Darkening child.

Innocence

Monsters love the innocent. And if your character has an Innocence of ten, they absolutely lust for his soul. However, while those with low Innocence are harder for the monsters to find (with some exception), protection is less likely to find and defend you when you are threatened. Children with low Innocence tend to be neglected by the members of the Divine or pure-hearted adults in favor of children who are purer. The Virtues of Childhood

Some retain their innocence into adulthood. These people are few and far between. More than 99% of the world loses its innocence at, or by, age 13. This is the natural degradation, the pure flux incarnate in a human being. But there are events and situations that can slow or accelerate the process. The irony is that though those from Closetland thrive on children's innocence,

they also strip them of it. This is why the monsters of Closetland find the younger ones to be so much better. The more innocent these children are, the more damage Closetland can do. While most creatures can affect even someone with minimal Innocence, some can only get the Chaste — the purest of the innocent.

Losing Innocence

There are many different ways that children can lose their innocence. Let us take a look at the most common.

Trauma & Abuse

The eyes of a child take in many things. Some of these things are happy, wondrous sights, while others burn their horrific images indelibly into the child's psyche. It is those things that can rob a child of her Innocence. Witnessing murder, rape, or war up close and personal can be traumatic to anyone, but they are especially damaging to a child. Acts they cannot rationalize, cannot understand... those are the things that scar a child and threaten her Innocence.

Physical trauma, such as physical or sexual abuse, is the quickest way for a child to lose her Innocence. Repeated abuse can rob a child of all her Innocence in a matter of weeks. The most damage occurs when the child is aware that what is happening is not



normal and is not healthy. If a child is convinced that abuse is a natural part of growing up, she will not lose any Innocence but instead will become prematurely Blind. However, repeated abuse of those that retain their Innocence is a grave enough act to bring about the wrath of the beyond.

It is difficult to translate abuse into game mechanics. A good guideline is to deduct a

point of Innocence per month of abuse if the attacks are infrequent. If multiple attacks occur weekly, then perhaps 2 or 3 points per week is called for. For mental trauma, I would say 1 point of Innocence every time a child witnesses such awful acts up close, no matter the time-frame.

Committing Horrendous Acts

The penalty is doubled when the child is committing the acts of abuse. Whether by their own volition or by force, double the penalty if the blood is, figuratively or literally, on their hands.

The inclusion of rules for abuse should not give the impression that abuse should be a part of your game. Abuse, while horrific beyond words, is included for reference and consistency. Use this very carefully and only with players you know can handle it.

Facing their Fears

Innocence can also be lost by gaining Fear. For every three points of Fear, one point of Innocence is lost. The energy of Closetland has started to eat away at the child and his purity is paying the price.

Growing Up

Finally, all characters lose one point of Innocence on every birthday until age 13.



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Then the Blindness sets in and there is no turning back.

Once Innocence is lost, it cannot be regained. You cannot unsee what you have seen or unhear what you have heard. Even repressing the memory to the far recesses of your mind is insufficient, it merely breeds false innocence.

The Blindness

What is it that happens a mere thirteen years after we draw our first breath? What inexplicable force pulls the fold over our eyes? What happens when we lose our innocence?

We become blind to the Fear, As children we are fully aware of what is really going on. We have looked evil right in the eye. Spit in its face. We saw those we love picked from their sleep and devoured whole by shadows. We have seen our parents panic, call the police, shush us for our bizarre, preposterous explanations, and then wait in vain for their baby to be found and returned. The next day, we wake up... and the world is that of an adult. Orderly, explainable, and rational. We now laugh and mock our younger siblings for their idiotic fears and talk of noises in the night. We scoff and poke fun at their silly superstitions and outrageous tales. The world makes sense. And there's no such thing as monsters.

The Vestal

There are two types of people who are Vestal: The Simple and the Virtuous. The Simple are those whose minds will not allow themselves to close. Society calls these people the retarded or the insane. Though their bodies may commit grievous acts, their minds remain open and clean; a perfect breeding ground for the Fear. Their bodies also act as perfect conduits for such creatures as Shades. These abominable creatures can quietly sneak in, do as they will, and then sneak out; the holder of the body none the wiser and the world easily explains it away as the heinous act of an "ill" person. The Virtuous are those that retain their innocence well beyond the normal 13 years. This can happen in a variety of ways. Some manage to stay out of the grasp of Closetland while others lead such sheltered lives as to think the crimes and attacks are a normal part of everyday life. Their sense of reality adapts to include these terrors of the night. Some Vestal, having finally surrendered, willingly give themselves to the dark masters in their older years. There is nothing - nothing - those of Closetland love more than an elderly innocent whose will is entirely theirs to command. While they will always love to manipulate children, those they can torment well into maturity are the ripest, sweetest fruit of all.

The Tainted

The Tainted are those who lost their innocence early on. Well before the age of 13, their mind seized up, and they no longer are harmed by the things that hunt and haunt. Some people might see this as a good thing: "We no longer see them so they can no longer can harm us, right?" Those that lose their innocence early on are not as

blessed as some would think. Their young minds are now locked in a world of rationality and science. They are deaf to the cries of their friends. They affect a forced maturity that will scar them until death, continually coiling around their soul in a protective shell of denial and impotence. And the monsters... they can still touch, still haunt the Tainted, still do that which they so love to do. But those who are Tainted won't know it. Just like an adult they'll start rationalizing it in their head. They may start to point fingers, dredge up diluted images, and throw accusations. It's a hard line to walk. It's even harder when you fall.

Fear

Fear is the heart of Closedand, It is their greatest weapon; the crippling means by which they can destroy a child. All the creatures of Closedand feed on Fear, its very walls are constructed of the tears of children so gripped by Fear they can't even function anymore. Their minds have split or built walls around their psyche, pushing the being that once was a child into the deep recesses and locking it away. Those that are lucky enough to know no Fear are the bane of the Demagogue and it works very hard on bringing those stoic few to their knees.

Gaining Fear

The most common way your character will gain Fear is by failing Fear Checks and then roll a 6 on the Fear Chart. But there are other ways to gain Fear. Some monsters will try to fill a child's entire body with crippling Fear, requiring a successful Spirit Quiz to not be overcome. If a child is ever possessed by a creature from Closetland, they immediately gain 1 point of Fear and an additional one for each day the creature stays in the child's body.

Losing Fear

Overcoming Fear is a hard thing to do. Some turn to faith. Having the Quality Faithful can help you regain your composure. You must concentrate on the object of your faith (preferably clutching a totem or icon of that faith) and use that to steel your will. There is no roll for this; this must come from the character.

Madness

People associate madness with a variety of causes: trauma, abuse, neglect, etc. In Little Fears, it stems from all those and more. Fear can harm a child in many ways, madness is perhaps the most direct and intense. Madness in the mundane world has been explained and analyzed to the point that it is an all too common occurrence and modern medicine never suspects that anything besides a simple chemical imbalance or repressed emotion could be the cause. Children know better - and they know those from Closetland love it when a child goes mad. Like a punchline closing the monster's joke. Not only can they wreak havoc and ravage the child, the grown-up definition of madness will become an excuse for any irrational behavior the child may exhibit. Any treatments the child is given will more than likely weaken them physically, making it harder for the child to

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fend off the monster's advances. After a child goes mad, it is only a matter of time until her soul is destroyed by Closetland.

Regarding the game mechanic of madness: when your character's Fear reaches 4, your child starts to become unsteady. At 5, your child will develop nervous shakes and speak in rambling, disjointed sentences. At 6, paranoia starts to set in. Your child becomes convinced that people are plotting against him. He can never be sure who is a friend and who is just playing a role. From this point on, all rolls no matter the Stat are rolled with an extra die and the lowest must be kept. Positive Oualities that are related to their personality or cognitive ability are ignored. The paranoia becomes amplified when your character's Fear level hits 7: He becomes certain that there are people watching everything he does. The teacher is sending signals to his classmates using intricate body movements and placement of chalk. She is organizing a rally. They are all organizing a rally against him. 8 is a dangerous place to be. Your child is almost fully consumed by Fear. He doesn't trust anyone, he can't think straight and no Spirit checks of any kind are allowed. At 8, all rolls no matter the Stat get two extra dice and the worst of the rolls must be kept. At this

point, your child will start to develop severe symptoms of Madness: delusions, violent behavior, or any extreme therein. 9 is the breaking point. Your child is as good as gone mentally. The symptoms are a lot more prevalent in his Madness and his paranoia is so tweaked he cannot communicate even the simplest sentences. At 10, your child is completely consumed by Fear and has gone insane.



The three most common psychoses that result from Fear are listed below: schizophrenia, manic depression, and multiple personality disorder. If a character seems to be heading down the path to madness, the GM should start to consider which type is likely to manifest in the child. Should the child never recover, they will become unplayable so use of this must be tempered with an even hand.

Schizophrenia

Characterized by the inability to differentiate between logical and illogical thoughts, what is real and unreal, as well as sporadic often dangerous behavior, schizophrenia is one of the most debilitating mental illnesses around. Children who develop this will find no cure in modern medicine. Though long, involved treatment can increase the child's ability to function socially, more than likely they will be remain ripe pickings for the evil things that brought them to this state.

Manic Depression

The child's mind swings between two polar extremes when manic-depression (also known as bipolar disorder) takes hold. The child's personality will start to sway on a mental pendulum. One minute they will be elated, over-confident, and spry only to collapse into a deep depression in which the dark forces run gaily and are free to reap havoc on their young one's mind and soul.

Multiple Personalities

Most of the time, the child will be his normal self only to have a separate personality suppress that mindset and run rampant. Sometimes, the personality is a child claimed by Closetland whose soul either found or was forced into a new shell while the original occupant was still there. Other times, a monster may dredge up the child's suppressed inhibitions and congeal them into a separate mental entity.

The Power of Belief

The teddy bear that will protect you while you sleep. The locket your mother gave you for your last birthday that she was alive to see. Things like that are used by children as ways to calm themselves or connect with the spirits of the dearly departed. But, through the power of belief, they can do so much more.

Belief, in Little Fears, can allow both the Divine Host and the monsters of Closedand to affect our world in ways they normally would not be able to. Belief is connected to Innocence, hence, the younger children can tap into the power more readily than the older kids.

A System of Belief

The magic of Belief is divided into two types: material and incidental. Both are invoked via a Belief roll. This is done by dividing your Innocence in half and using that as a Stat against which a Quiz is rolled (truncate any fractions). Since a lot of Belief magic is actually invoked after the child is attacked and a Fear Check is made, if the Fear Check was a failure then add an extra die to the Belief roll and keep the best result

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(just like you would with a positive Quality). In essence, the rush of fear the child felt combined with the threat upon her life make their need to believe that much stronger.

Material

Whether they surround themselves with

their dolls right before they go to sleep or use their father's old Army flashlight when going outside in the dark, a child is invoking protection and through their spirit and belief, this protection can find them.

Remember, though a player may know about the mechanics of Belief magic, the child they are portraying is just trying to tilt the odds of survival in her favor. No child actively tries to enchant her teddy bear, teddy bears protect children; it is just what they do. The players should keep this in mind when detailing what it is the child does to protect herself. These rituals should also be consistent with both the character (they may do

this every time they get ready for bed) or with the story or situation (the child feels so endangered after finding all her action figures with penny nails through their heads that she takes extra precautions).

I recommend that the GM roll at the time of "initiation" (i.e., when the teddy bears are lined around them) instead of the



player. The player should roll after the charm (or what have you) is "activated." For example, if a player's child is very attached to her Ragamuffin Rhonda doll and a monster burst out to attack her, the GM would roll a Belief Quiz and, if successful, Ragamuffin Rhonda could very well grow to eight-feet tall and charge the monster. From that point on, however, the player would roll for Rhonda's attacks. This leads, of course, to the question of what Stats to use for Rhonda.

When something material is activated (such as Rhonda or a teddy bear or a bunch of Gung-Ho Joe action figures) that can inflict personal, physical damage on a monster from Closetland, all physical Stats (Muscle, Hands, and Feet) are equal to half the child's Innocence (any fractions dropped). Smarts and Spirit are equal to the child's Smarts and Spirit, however. Also the protector rolls two dice for any Test or Quiz and while any Qualities the child has based on her physical ability (such as Fleet of Foot or Butterfingers) will not come into play but any Qualities based on her mental or spiritual capabilities (such as Multilingual or Guided) will.

Incidental

Little rituals (such as circling the bed three times before climbing in) or mantras (reciting the Lord's Prayer whenever you hear something moving around your room) can, even without a direct physical object, bring about protection. Whenever a character does these things, the player should make a Belief check. If successful, any monster wishing to do the child harm has to make a Spirit Test against the child's Innocence divided by half (one of the rare occasions that a monster will need to roll, but we will cover that later). Keep in mind, though, for anything involving holy symbols, prayers, or anything of a religious nature, the child must have the Quality Faithful to be successful. (With some exception, they may be holding the cross because their deceased father taught them to do it and they're calling on his protection, not a that of a higher being.)

Incidental magic also allows a child to do things that don't work for others but that the child has no reason to believe won't work for her. A child may have ordered a pair of X-ray specs from the back of an Awesome Man comic book. Six weeks later, when they arrive the child can actually see through things with them. However, this sort of magic is tentative and frail. A Belief roll for this type of magic is required and it is best if the GM makes the roll. Should it ever fail, the item won't work again. Kids are amazingly obstinate, though, so if the player can come up with a pretty good reason why their kid thinks it didn't work ("X-ray specs don't work when it rains, duh!") then, heck ... let them have it. Let them enjoy their youth.

The Downside

Like I said, Belief allows both the good and the bad to influence a child's life. Now, we are going to cover the bad. Remember "step on a crack, break your mother's

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back?" Well, some kids believe in that and Closetland's going to find a way to exploit that belief. So, if a child happens to step on a crack (or maybe jump up and down on one after being grounded), the GM should roll a Belief check. If it succeeds, their mother may just slip on the newly mopped kitchen and have herself a nasty fall.

The Loss of Innocence

Under the Innocence stat on the character sheet are ten boxes. Every time Belief magic "fails" (the teddy bear can't stop the Closet Monster, the Doppelganger is able to shred your "suit of armor," the X-ray don't work, etc.) the player checks off one of the boxes. When all ten boxes are filled in, the child loses a point of Innocence. She is slowly starting to realize that sometimes these fanciful things just don't work and more rational thoughts start to dominate the way she thinks, making her less naive about how the "real world" works.

A Final Note On Belief Magic

Belief is a powerful thing. But on a very small scale. It is not a huge, catastrophic force, though such things may happen as a side effect. It only allows the forces of good and evil to do so much. It, in no way, can affect the entire world directly or on a large scale. Unless, of course, the kids got together and concentrated their effort...





chapter three keeping the kids in line

How much of a story can you tell with **Little Fears**? As much (and as many) as you want. Compared to epic-fantasy or space opera role-playing games, whose genres are fortified with a few centuries of reference material (books, tv-shows, movies, etc.) and are readily open to the idea of continuing adventures, it may not seem like you could do much with **Little Fears** once you've completed a game session or two. Well, that's just not true. Approach **Little Fears** as if it weren't a horror game. You're simply telling a story about the lives of a group of children in an everyday world.

They go to school, deal with the bullies at recess, come home, do homework, help with chores, they get silly, they play games, they wake up before the birds every Saturday morning, grab a bowl of Fruity Sugar Squares and watch a six-hour dose of animated goodness and toy-line tie-ins. Well... that may not seem very exciting to role-play but it is what's going on when the monsters are not around. But, just as roleplaying a barbarian chopping wood and cooking mule isn't that exciting, it is those moments - when the everyday is shucked away and something new and strange finds the character - that make role-playing what it is. How does Little Fears do this? How does it remove the repetition of the characters' lives and make a story that is dramatic, exciting, and compelling? Closetland. The world that exists next to ours. Filled with every horror imaginable and its fangs just dripping with anticipation of its next young, innocent victim. A child can be confronted many times by a different monster or the same monster who is hell-bent on destroying this particular child. Or the characters may end up in Closetland trying desperately to get out or at least stay away from the things lurking just around the corner.

Many people approach horror not as a singular genre but a sub-genre that needs assistance from another element. Maybe the kids have to investigate why all the cats in the neighborhood are disappearing (detective horror) or maybe they're being held captive in Baba Yaga's kitchen as she fattens them up for dinner (survival horror). This isn't necessarily a bad way to approach **Little Fears**. Isn't that how most genres are treated? For example, can you just have fantasy? Or are you playing adventure fantasy? Or political fantasy?

Just approach Little Fears as you would any other game and you'll find a lot of stories can be told. In the last chapter, we have provided some story hooks and guidelines to show you different approaches a GM can take in utilizing the information found in these pages. Each scenario consists of a general idea and then details different approaches you can take in using that idea.

Once Upon A Time...

Bedtime stories, that sweet pill taken by children nightly to hull them into the land of slumber. Stories of knights and maidens, puppies who get lost, and trains that find

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their inner strength. They are tales of courage, of hope, of finding a part of you that went unnoticed, of good conquering evil. They are not entirely unlike the stories you are about to tell. Yes, you. The one reading these words; you who must face your players with their character sheets in hand and imaginations at the ready and help them into a world that is filled with stories of every stripe; dark and mysterious, hopeful and haunted, horrific and unforgiving. What kind of story will you tell?

Faery Tales

Little Fears fits itself into the faery tale mold nicely. Faery tales are generally dark to begin with, just read a book of the Brothers Grimm, and the monsters in these tales are strange and uniquely sinister. Think of the tale of two Dutch children who get lost in the woods and come across a shack wherein a crone, feigning kindness, tricks the children in for "lunch." Or the story of the peasant girl on her way to help her ailing grandmother who is tempted (and later tricked) by a wily creature of the forest. Faery tales can take place in olden



times or can be easily modernized. With faery tales, it is the *tone* that is important. Faery tales flow and the evil is slowly revealed. The baddies always try to hull the children into a sense of security before springing their true form on them. Generally short and focused on a single story, faery tales can make for great one-shots or stand-in games.

Scary Stories

Scary stories differ in that the sense of wonder prevalent in faery tales has been replaced by insecurity. Scary stories are designed to make players jump and think twice before going into that dark room. Most book, movies, and television programs marketed as "horror" or "suspense" fit the scary story mold. Players should feel isolated, weak, and outnumbered. There needs to be a way out, no matter how obscured, that will eventually lead through the tunnel and into the light. The children are in danger, but abstractly so. The origin of the fear remains inhuman, in both action and flesh; far removed from "real life."

True Horror

By removing certain more fantastical elements and adding some humanity to the story, you move from the relative safety of a scary story into the clutches of true horror. But true horror succeeds only on two conditions. The first is that the terror brought forth must reach through the character and into the player. By making the player uncomfortable, the character will have no choice but to carry over that discomfort. The second condition is there must be no safety net. No easy way out, no mystic fix-all. If the characters are going to get out alive, they will have to fight toothand-nail to do so. The characters (and possibly the players) will come out of it scarred. They most certainly will be forever changed; no one will ever be the same person they were just the day before. True horror pulls no punches and is not for everyone.

So Many Choices

Once you have decided what kind of story to tell, the next thing to figure out is how you're going to tell it effectively. Horror is a tough genre to run and the more help you can get the better. Here are some suggestions for creating the right atmosphere and surroundings for your **Little Fears** game.

Know Your Players

Knowing your players can cut both ways. It is great (at least within the focus of the game) to be able to dredge up past horrors and deep emotional scars but you have to know what your players can and cannot take. A kind GM plays down to the lowest level of tolerance. If one member of your groups is very sensitive to graphic violence and detailed depictions of gore - leave it out. But, on the other hand, if you and your players don't mind something a little darker... knowing your players will help immensely. Know what phobias or sensitive subjects they have, break their taboos, bring them face to face with what they hate and fear most. If a member of your group is particularly sensitive to anything horrific involving children (in any capacity), you're

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all set. But, at the risk of repeating myself, this approach should be something everyone agrees to and knows beforehand they'll be getting into. Springing the horror of child abuse on some unassuming player who spends \$200 a week on psychiatric counseling to overcome the memories of abuse is just cruel. You're a grown-up, you should know better.

Setting The Mood

After you've decided how intense you're going to run the game, the next trick is keeping the mood consistent. If you choose to tell a Faery Tale, then the darker mood isn't necessary, though consistency is still essential. The only trick here is to not let your players forget they're playing a game. Keep distractions down to a minimum. Some chit-chat may be allowed, since it isn't so essential that a joke or cheesy



remark will ruin a 40-minute build-up. However, such things can ruin a game you want to be a little more terrifying, such as a Scary Story or True Horror. The higher you set the horror bar, the more integral a consistent and tense mood is.

Most GM's wish there was a cure-all for players goofing off, a magic formula that would keep everyone focused and serious... but if there is one, they're hiding it from me. If you want some advice, let me pass along what I've learned: horror is a tough genre to run and not keeping the tension building can be daunting. Especially True Horror, which is more focused not on finding fear in a situation but finding fear inside a person. This can be so hard that it discourages some from even attempting it. But, since I'm a terror buff, I find that if it can be pulled off it's worth its weight in platinum. To achieve this though, you need to learn a few tricks. First off, ignore any non-game comments you can. If a player keeps disrupting the game use it as carteblanche to throw something really bad at their character. A cheap trick, but it can work on squelching the humor.

Secondly, create the mood all around if possible. Throw on some ambient music and dim the lights (not too dim - unless everyone has glow-in-the-dark dice). Both are cliche, true, but just because they're



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over-used doesn't mean they aren't effective. In Little Fears, since the players are portraying children in a world of horror, you have some other nifty (and mostly inexpensive) options. If you have any old toys around, set them up throughout the gaming area (if you can stop the other players from messing around with them). If one of the players' characters is very attached to a doll or teddy bear, have them bring one to the game with them. Some of the things the characters may do in the game, the players could do also. For example, if the characters are sitting around playing Candyland - bring out a copy and set it up. Playing a board game in character can lead to some great role-playing. And while the players get into the board game, maybe forgetting for a moment about the nasty world that awaits them - maybe something reaches up from under the table and pulls one of them down (in-game, of course, I don't advocate actually pulling your players under tables). On that note, when I say the players can imitate what the characters are doing, use a liberal amount of common sense here. They shouldn't go hunting monsters in the woods wearing pajamas with feet and Lazer Tag gear. Explaining to a group of campers that you're just "playing a game" could be a bit awkward. But simple things as those things stated above and anything else you or your players can think of can help greatly in setting both the mood and a child-like mindset which will enhance your enjoyment of Little Fears.

Who's Telling What?

If you've GM'ed before, you probably have your style down pat. But I do want to cover how Little Fears was written with regard to the roles of not the characters but the players. Little Fears was written in the mindset that the players are just important as the game-master when it comes to telling a story. It puts the GM in the spot of making the world come alive and portraying everyone (and thing) in it that isn't being guided by a player. But this doesn't mean the GM holds the entire rope; the players have a lot of slack to pick up. Little Fears is written with the belief that the GM should be open to the suggestions and improvisations of the players and the players should be the same with regard to the GM. Together, everyone works to build a great story. The game-master is there to throw in adventure seeds and provide some interaction and the players are there to pick up which seeds they like and interact as well

But there's still someone at the table we haven't talked about: the dice. Those allimportant, unbiased arbitrators of fate. Funny-looking polyhedrons whose sole responsibility is to decide whether you did or whether you didn't. Should what they say ever get in the way of telling a good story, ignore them. Or just don't ask them at all.

I don't meant to tell you how your group should play Little Fears. Just to make clear, in case certain points such as when die rolls are called for or why things were

done how they were done, you are able to change things to better suit your particular group and style of play.

The Questionnaire Revisited

The real impetus behind including a character questionnaire is two-fold: to find out some basic information about the characters and to provide Closetland with some information to use against them. Some of the questions are listed below along with hints on how the Kings of Closetland will exploit these to their own diabolical ends.

What's your name?

If a monster knows a child's name, it will be that much easier for them to gain the child's trust. Children are raised to be cautious of strangers but if the person they don't recognize knows their name... is that person really a stranger?

What do your friends call you?

Knowing this will allow a monster of Closetland to not only get close to the child, but feign even greater familiarity. Particularly useful if a Living Doll or Shade were to take over the child's friend.

Who are your friends?

Nothing is below the monsters of Closedand, especially using one of his friends to get to a child. They need not even put the child's friend in actual danger. Just suggesting it can be enough to get a child to do the monster's bidding.

Which adult can you always talk to?

Again, this has to do with familiarity – a monster's greatest weapon. Approaching a child under the facade of a trusted adult is a favorite amongst the Kings, especially the Defiler.

Who is your favorite person?

A lot of the time this person will be a celebrity, sports figure, or anyone a child might idolize. The words of an idol can carry more weight than the words of a parent or favorite teacher. This knowledge can also be used to sucker a child into getting into a car (*Hey*, *Timmy*, *we're going to see <insert idol here>*, *wanna come?*).

What is the most special thing you own? Why is it special?

This can come into play two different ways. On one hand, a monster could steal the item and hold it hostage unless the child comes and gets it back. However, Belief magic can also come into play here. This question establishes one item that the child has a very strong bond with. So strong that it might come in handy during times of struggle. If it's a teddy bear or action figure, the child's fear may "activate" the toy or if it's a locket given to them by or a picture of a deceased relative, the spirit of that dead relative may come and protect them. This is assuming, of course, that the item is with them when the child is attacked.

What is your biggest fear?

The applications of this are obvious. If a monster really wants to scare a child, this is

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the best way to do it. The character has already stated what they are afraid of the most (whether it's a creature, person, object, or situation), so as a GM you have carteblanche to implement this into your story.

What do you do when you get scared?

This is another question where Belief magic can into play. Usually the child has a ritual (prayer, reciting a mantra, serene visualization, etc.) that, if he is truly scared, can protect them. It is for things just like this that Belief magic exists — the little things children do when they feel scared, desperately hoping that it will work.

What do you do to protect yourself from monsters?

Another way to implement Belief magic into a game. Unlike the little, almost subconscious things children do when scared, this question deals with specific things they'll do when they know there's a monster just waiting for them to close their eyes or stop paying attention so they'll be caught off-guard (circling the bed three times before climbing in, sleeping with their head at the foot of the bed, walking only on the black tiles at the supermarket, etc.).

What's your homelife like?

If the child's family life is abusive, chances



are the Kings have already invaded that child's life.

The above should give you ideas on how to use the answers to the questionnaire in your game. Expand on the guidelines above to your heart's content. Just remember that Closetland will use anything it can get its hands on to get to a child.

All Grown Up

With all this talk about children, we haven't dedicated any time to those that make them possible: the adults. Adults are an important tool for a GM. Not only can they supply a perfect foil for the children (imagine a child trying to explain why he nailed his closet door shut to his parents) but adults are also perfects vessels to use as adversaries (as you'll see in the next chapter, the Kings love to use adults in their wicked schemes).

The Family Way

Families are the first society that a child is exposed to; and what odd little societies they are. Composed of their own rules, traditions, and structure, making a family seem real in **Little Fears** will not only add to the overall realism of the game but can be a great exercise in character growth. A character's family may never be the spotlight of a game (they may not even show up at all) but it's important that a character's family feel realistic. Below are some tips on accomplishing just that.

Reactions

Children usually can't stay out all night hunting down monsters without some parental figure getting worried. So when they do catch their child outside at two in the morning claiming that Dracula chased them there... how do they react? Are they scolding? Sweetly condescending? Chiding? This not only depends on the age of the child but the relationship the child has with their parents. Make sure this correlates to what's on the character's questionnaire (if they live in an abusive household, chances are the child is going to be facing a belt when they get inside).

I am serious...

Parents convey seriousness by addressing the child by her full name, using certain body language, and so on when they're upset with their child. They might have the child "look into their eyes" when they think the child might be fibbing or they want to make sure the child knows that they aren't kidding around. So when a child comes running into the house to his mom saying that the old man next door is eating kids, the mom might respond, "Look at my face. I am sick and tired of your outrageous stories!"

Secret Handshake

One step parents take in ensuring their child's safety is to come up with code words for their child to listen for when speaking with someone they don't know. So when the man in the car rolls up beside Susie and says he's a "friend of the family," Susie might pipe up with "What's the password?" If the man doesn't respond correctly (usually a word that won't come up in normal conversation like "macaroon" or
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"Piccadilly") then Susie knows not to get into the car with him.

Authority Figures

Aside from her family, a child comes across a wide variety of other adults on a day-today basis: school teachers, police officers, crossing guards, librarians, and so on. All of them adults, all of them blind to the truth. And those with power can prevent children from doing what sometimes must be done. But using these authority figures can be complicated. Obviously, nothing should come easy to the characters - struggle and conflict are important parts of storytelling but throwing a cop at them every time they turn around can end up frustrating the

players to the point where the game ceases to be something they want to do. A lot of doors are closed to children anyway, mostly by family and authority figures (curfews, mandatory school attendance, etc.) so you have to temper their use with playability.

Rationale

The thickest dividing line between a child and an adult is rationalism. Children have Innocence, which allows them to see things going on around them that most grown-ups cannot. This is because the adult mind is closed to that which doesn't make sense. The more rational-minded an adult is the more narrow-minded they can be,

This rationalism not only makes them blind



to the horrors going on around them, but a lot of other things as well. This is how the monsters of Closetland can do what they do and get away with it. Someone finds a little boy strangled in his bed - someone must have broken in. If they can't figure out how the person could have gotten in then someone in the house did it. The dad knows he didn't so he starts to suspect his wife. The mom knows she didn't do it, so she becomes suspicious of her husband. The rational adult mind can conceive a multitude of scenarios to explain a monster's crime. And since those of Closetland will often use adult bodies to do their dirty work, this just reinforces it.

Rules for Grown-Ups

Whether they are under the influence of a King or just trying to stop the children from accomplishing a task, a time may come when a child and an adult will square off. Since that is a possibility, as a GM you need to know how to handle the situation. The first thing you need to know is that adults have the same five stats children do using the same one to five scale. The difference is that adults roll two dice instead of just one. Also like children, adults have Qualities (though not necessarily the same ones). Treat them as you would if dealing with a child, rolling an extra die and keeping the appropriate one.

We've included three very general templates that you can augment as necessary for those times when you need stats for an adult.



Babysitter

The babysitter template can also be used as a child's teenaged sibling or Older Friend. Useful for bumming rides from or as a pseudo-adult confidante (if they can be trusted). Babysitters are a favorite amongst the Kings since the main focus of their job is to be alone with children.

> Smarts: 3 Feet: 3 Muscle: 3 Spirit: 4 Hands: 3

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Officer of the Law

This template can be substituted for a security guard, crossing guard, or firefighter. The police are one the few strangers children are raised to trust. Police can be near impossible to convince, however, which means children will have to come up with a pretty convincing story to get them in-

volved. Smarts: 3 Feet: 3 Muscle: 4 Spirit: 3 Hands: 4





Teacher

Teachers have a near-daily presence in a child's life. Often seen as an adversary, they can actually be quite helpful having not only access to school equipment but nearunlimited research and reference resources.

> Smarts: 5 Feet: 3 Muscle: 3 Spirit: 3 Hands: 3



The Divine Host

They are the whispers in the wind that guide children from harm and the kind stranger who grabs them right before they walk into the path of an oncoming car. They are the benevolent force that blesses the young and the deliverer of visions both light and dark. The children know them as The Divine Host. Barely detectable, they alter our lives and shift our energies down certain pathways. With children, these guardian angels can be a bit more direct. At times even assuming their true form or by stating plainly what they are and why they are there. The origins of the Divine Host are unknown but it is believed that they are a wild manifestation of hope that came into existence much like Closetland was created by fear. Some groups of children have even given them names, creating mythologies that spread around the globe. Maybe one day the Host will grow strong enough to close the doors to Closedand forever. Keep in mind that players have to be able to make mistakes and the angels can't save every child. Instead, use them to drop subtle hints and to manipulate odd coincidences. They are especially useful if you decide to run a Faery Tale as their presence can translate to anything such as a friendly lumberjack to hear the child screaming to a facry godmother who knows where the key to the attic is hidden. The one thing guardian angels certainly cannot do is directly oppose a monster of Closetland. Closetland is far too powerful and not only would the angel meet a swift and unpleasant fate but the power of the angels as a whole would suffer from the loss.

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Man's Best Friend

It is believed that animals possess a bit of the Divine in them as well. That somehow the Demagogue captured a group of guardian angels and locked them in feral forms. This is especially evident in dogs, whose naturally heightened sense of smell and ability to see the monsters make them great monster-sensing agents. They can even sense monsters that have taken human form and many seemingly unprovoked attacks against humans can be credited to that. Though all but the largest, most ferocious animals would fall easily at the hands of a monster, dogs will fight to the death to protect a child they care for. Children must be careful, though. There's no telling a normal dog from a creature of Closetland that's taken the guise of one.



Hand-Me-Downs

Hand-me-downs are not just oversized clothes that are given to children to grow into. These hand-me-downs are sometimes corrupted but always mystical items that find their way into the hands of the innocent. Items such as those listed below can help save a child or put them in danger. It is from such items as these that the myths and legends of the young are born. There are many more than those listed here so feel free to invent your own.

Nava's Sceptre

Nava was a Russian immigrant who came to America in 1923. Her family did not have much (and died with even less) but the one thing they did have (which had

been passed down for generations) was a sceptre which was said to have been forged by ancient gods. Measuring in at over 8 inches long and weighing almost 3 pounds, the sceptre is topped with the gold visage of a long-fanged serpent. When the serpent's head is pressed down, a blinding white light shoots from its eyes burning any evil spirit within 12 feet of it. The burns do 1d6 burn damage every round the creature is exposed to it. Pressing the head down again will release the effect.

Brass Ring

This plain brass ring, when slipped on a child's finger, makes his hand hit like steel. Any damage dealt to someone with that hand does three times the normal damage (determine Fist damage as normal then multiply the result by 3).

Dorothy's Doorknocker One of the few Charms that can actually act as a gateway to the



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nether-realm. The exact origins of the knocker are unknown, the only distinguishing mark is the name "Dorothy" elaborately etched into the brace. The doorknocker is pure silver and weighs about 8 pounds. To use Dorothy's Doorknocker, place it against any door (it will automatically adhere itself) and knock three times. If the door is opened within 10 seconds after the first knock, the door will no longer lead to the den or the bathroom... but the ethereal house of evil that is Closetland.

Charm Bracelet

Seven golden charms dangle from this bracelet. Each one has the capability to turn back the clock 10 seconds. When invoked, however, the golden charms turns silver and the bracelet misplaces itself for another child to find.

Tying It Altogether

The hardest thing as a GM is taking all the elements we just went over and bringing them together into a compelling, involving, and terrifying story. It is also, to be cliche, the most rewarding.

The main thing is to not feel that you must use everything in this section in your game. Pick and choose the elements you want and mold them to fit what you and players look for in a good story. Everything in here is presented as a loose framework so that you do not feel confined by the rules. The single most important thing to remember as a GM is that everything is subject to what the story demands.





chapter four behind the door

Born from the screams of the first child, Closetland is home to all fear. Inside its walls, the horrors of mankind dwell. Sins taken flesh, abominations of soul, wretched kingdoms and their twisted inhabitants. If you know nothing else of this world, know this: every fear, every nightmare, every scary little thought that pops into your head manifests in Closetland. Ruled by a being known only as the Demagogue and fueled with a long-standing hatred of the innocent, this world captures our thoughts, our dreams, our lives and distorts them into twisted mockeries and obscene caricatures. There stands under the Demagogue seven kings, aspects of Closetland's decadence given form and power over the lives of our children. No one knows what true power they hold and to look upon them is to witness Evil made flesh. They, their armies, and those that found their way over are the reason your children should be afraid of the dark. Their actions have killed good people, destroyed families, lives. No amount of torment is enough. Satisfaction can only come from destroying all innocence. Every ounce of purity is a nail in Closetland's heart. It will stop at nothing to end its own suffering. Even if it means destroying every child in the world.

How do they get here?

The Closet

The sound stopped as soon as I opened my eyes. I looked around the room and didn't see anything. But then... I heard the noise again. It was a kind of rattling sound. My dog paked his head up and jumped off the bed, sniffing around for something. The noise got louder and I heard footsteps coming from somewhere. Roscoe must've found something 'cause he started to growl and get all irritated. I mustered up enough courage to turn on the light but I still couldn't see anything out of the ordinary. Roscoe started barking his head off and running around the room. I heard my dad yell for us to be quiet and all of a sudden the noise stopped. Roscoe was still barking though and I



started to get really scared. Then another noise crept up, kinda stretchy-sounding. There was some talking too, but I couldn't make out what was being said. It just sounded like mumbling. I held my knees up to my face, too scared to scream, as the stretchy-sound – it sounded like a really big rubber band that had been stretched really, really tight – got louder and louder and louder. Then the door to my closet flew open this huge bug-eyed creature came running right at me!

The monster that children should fear most is actually many: The Closet Monster. There is not one Closet Monster but, in fact, millions. Each one unique in size and design, each one with the ability to manipulate children through a variety of means. Physically, they can use their bearish strength or their lightning speed to overpower the child and drag them, kicking and screaming, into helf. Mentally, some can control the child's thoughts and actions using highly tuned telepathic powers. Emotionally, the monsters can convince the child that they're not loathesome creatures from beyond but a close friend or family member. They can disguise their bodies, their voices, almost anything to appear exactly like someone else. Some can even affect children spiritually, breaking their will and turning them into subordinate drones. The Closet Monsters can use any door that leads to a small, dark place that no one habitually resides in. Look in your closet. Does that description fit?

The above is the more direct way for monsters to seek out their prey. And while

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that route is most commonly used by Closet Monsters, any monster can walk that long path up from hell into our world.

The Second Skin

I was walking home from Brittany's house like I always do after choir practice. I had gone about two or three blocks when the sky made this crackling noise, like that noise the computer makes when you get online that's kinda like radio static but not really. I looked up 'cause I thought it was about to rain - which was weird because it was supposed to be like 85 and sunny all week. I had walked a few more blocks when I noticed that all the houses were different. I mean they were the same but... different. Like Mrs. McAllister's dogs weren't outside and there were no cars in any of the driveways. But I didn't really think too much about it until I got half a block from my house and the road stopped being road. It was all dirty and rocky like those trails we had to hike in Nature Girls. I couldn't see my house anywhere. Then I heard these screeching sounds and these big, black birds were everywhere. I mean EVERYWHERE. I freaked and ran back the way I'd came but the road was totally gone. There was just this trail. Then all the houses started to fade out except for this old cabin-looking place. Then the cabin, it stood up. Just stood right up on these two big sticks and started to run after me. I swear, I never ran so fast in my life.

There are times that the reality of Closetland overlaps ours. Its influence is so great, that it becomes a second skin, laying itself on top of the world we know. This can be done mass-scale or a child may find

themselves walking home and see all the houses on their street go grey and dilapidated as a lone, black car crawls to a stop beside them. Or some kids may be camping in the woods and find that the trail back home just goes in a circle, then they hear footsteps crunching toward them. Whenever this happens a child is alone or in the company of other children but there are never any adults in sight.

It is not known if Closetland is actually invading our world, or if it has just invaded the child's mind. Since there are no witnesses outside of the children this happens to, it can't be said for sure. So how do they get out? Sometimes, what is happening around them fades away. Other times, the children talk of what they had to kill to get out. But of the mos times..never get out,

Shadows

Dewey and I were supposed to be home before dark but the park was twenty minutes away on bike and by the time we even noticed the sun was going down, we wouldn't have made it anyway. So we shot a few more hoops before heading out. Going over the tracks, Devey's bike threw a flat so we decided to just walk our bikes home. We figured, we could use that as an excuse, y'know? We were going past the plaza on Brigham, near Carnegie, the one by the Jif-E-Mart when Dewey heard this noise, it was kinda like a cat, coming from the alley next to Patterson's Video. So Devey's looking down there and I come up behind him. Neither of us could see a cat, so Dewey puts his bike down and takes a couple steps in. I told him we should just go, we were gonna get reamed

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anyway for being late, no need to make it any worse. But Dewey's giving me this "just a sec, I think I see it" line. He took two more steps in when these hands came out of the freakin' wall. They just grabbed him by his jacket and started dragging Dewey into the shadows. I ran over and reached in to save him but – well, just look at my arm. That's where all these cuts came from. Dewey's leg was still sticking out so I grabbed it but whatever it was on the other end was strong – real strong – and there was no way I could hold on. Then all of a sudden, Dewey was gone. Dragged right into the freakin' darkness.

Another way that the monsters of Closedland make their way over to our world is through absolute darkness. Natural shadows are ready portals for the various boggans and baddies that hunt the innocent. Those that travel this route tread haphazardly as the monster can never be sure where exactly they'll end up or exactly where they will return to. Unlike the intertwining pathways that the Closet Monsters use, shadows just seem to connect with no real rhyme or reason. But for those who hunt strictly for the thrill, the shadows are a reliable, if unpredictable, avenue to use.

Belief

As we touched on in a previous chapter, the power of Belief cannot only bring about a child's defense but his downfall as well. This type of Belief is special, however, as it is not limited to a single child or even a small group of children. This type of Belief comes into play when all those scary little campfire tales get told one too many times or when an urban legend gets told to the wrong impressionable youngster. Whenever a lot of children believe in something, a story, a legend, or even some strange ritual, it can become real. And usually this manifested terror will not rise up in Closetland... but in our world. It will not just be something that kids tell tales about anymore but a living, breathing nightmare.

Crossing the Darkness

Ashley had found an old doll of her sister's and some of her mom's candles, big ones. Ashley's mom said they were for special occasions only but we didn't know where any others were and, besides, this seemed like a pretty special occasion. I took out some hairs from a hairbrush of Ashley's sister's I had found and tied it around the doll's hands and feet. Ashiey shoved some more down the doll's shirt for good measure, which made the doll look like one of the women in those magazines my brother reads. I told Ashley that and we both giggled a bit. But things got serious again pretty fast.

I read the book that we found in my grandmother's closet again to make sure we had everything. We did, for the most part. We were only missing -

"We need blood," Ashley said. She sounded like a teacher, all serious and matter-of-fact.

I had a serving kit in my Nature Girls' sack, so I got it out. "How much do we need?" She didn't know for sure. "The more the better, I guess."

"Is it okay... if it's one of ours? I mean, shouldn't it be your sister's blood?"

Ashley shrugged. " I dunno. But – " She paused for a while then grabbed the sewing kit and pulled out the needle. "I think it should be mine. You know, 'cause we're sisters and we have the same blood and all."

"Okay," I breathed a sigh of relief. "That makes sense."

Ashley pricked her finger and a little bubble of blood came out. I set the bowl under her finger and Ashley squeezed a few drops into it. "Does it hurt?"

"No." She made a face, "Well, maybe a little."

I lit the candles with my dad's lighter and placed them in a circle. I made sure to put some newspaper under them so the wax didn't get on the carpet. We both breathed in really deep. I was trying really hard to concentrate on what we had to do. Ashley was putting on a band-aid as I dimmed the lights down real low. We sat with the candles and stuff between us. We both breathed in again. I looked outside through the darkness at the full moon.



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"When are your parents coming home?"

"They're at a party. They'll be gone all night." "Well," I propped the book up, already turned to the incantation. "I guess we should get started then."

Ashley looked right in my eyes and I could see that she was just as scared as I was. "Yeah," she said. "I guess we should."

For whatever reason, sometimes a child wants to get into Closetland voluntarily. It may be to save a friend of theirs or retrieve their favorite stuffed animal. It may just be to see if it can be done. Well let me tell you: yes, it can.

A lot of folklore gets passed around the clubhouse about how exactly one goes about doing this. Some posit that by spinning themselves around in the dark a hundred times and then calling out the name of a dead witch a doorway will open into the nether realm. Others put forth the theory that by dipping your feet in pig's blood and standing on your bed you will get sucked into Closetland. Some even say that on the night of the full moon you can get there just smashing a mirror exactly at midnight.

Childish fancy? Have you learned nothing yet? Crossing over into Closetland works along the same line as something else we covered just a few chapters ago: Belief. Most of the time, the ritual is just schoolyard hocus-pocus. But if the child believes it will work – I mean, really believes – then it just might. Other times, the ritual is legit. There are ways to transcend the darkness whether you think it will or not.

And back again...

Getting back from Closetland is thrice as hard as getting into it voluntarily. It is said that one door always leads out of Closetland. One door. Out of a nigh-infinite number of doors. Not the best odds. However, when a monster of Closetland is killed, its energy stays around for a few scant seconds before being reclaimed by the Demagogue. While it hovers over the body it once inhabited, that dark energy is a gateway out of Closetland. But time is not on the children's side here. Anyone wishing to return home must walk through the monster's soul and out into the mortal realm. Of course, where in the mortal realm they will end up is anyone's guess. Know this: there is a second, one split second, that the child is actually inside the soul of the monster and should the Demagogue reclaim that soul while a child is inside... that child will never be heard from again.

There are a few other ways that children can get out of Closetland. The most popular being through the looking glass. Not every mirror in our realm leads in. However, most mirrors in Closetland lead out. The exception being Titania's Hall of Mirrors; they lead to much worse places than home. Another way to get home is by being led out by a lost spirit. One of the many disembodied souls that are forced to call Closetland their home. Some have the

ability to find weaknesses in Closetland's reality and create *holes in the wall* for children they become particular fond of.

No matter how you get out of Closetland, you're not guaranteed a safe and luxurious return. Because you're not guaranteed that you'll end up where you began. You may have been dragged into Closetland through your closet but when you find your way back you may be outside or maybe across the street. You may end up on the other side of the world.

Looking around

So, you know how to get in and you know how to get out but, you wonder, what's it like while you're there?

I like the way you think.

Closetland is a world of fog and shadow. Of darkness, pain, and sorrow. Its appearance reflects this exactly. While the physical structure of Closetland is under constant change, the denizens and central structures are always there. You won't find a map of Closetland. And even if you did it would be invalid the minute you picked it up. Instead, let's concentrate on what you are likely to see there. The most common inhabitants you will find are the wandering souls of lost and deceased children. Not just bad children but any child that lost their life because of a King's machinations and wickedry. Most are completely oblivious to the world around them, going through the motions of the life they left behind. Others

can be lucid for brief periods but never for too long. But a few are completely cognizant of their situation, they are just powerless to change it. You will also find those whose bodies and minds roam free but whose souls are lost somewhere deep within. Unable to resurface without their souls (for they would die immediately) they instead take to helping any hapless child who unfortunately makes their way into this child's hell. Some of these children have been lost for decades, others centuries. There are many children lost in Closetland in one form or another, most of whom will never see home again.

Aside from those that never intended to be in Closetland, you have its natural denizens, referred to by most as "monsters." When describing them, you need such a general term for each one is unique; different sizes, shapes, and abilities. The most powerful of which is the Demagogue. At his side is Branxis the Enslaver, general of labor and chief torturer of Closetland. Standing beside them are the Seven Kings.

The Demagogue

The oldest and most powerful of all those who call Closedand home, the Demagogue is the initiator, the grand instigator of the war against innocence. Many wonder why it is Closedand despises the young so, and only the Demagogue knows the answer to that question. The other simply know that they must destroy the purity of children – a command they do not dare question. Every monster lives in fear of the ever-present

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Demagogue, who is aware at all times of the goings-on of his world. Only the Kings have even a semblance of privacy, something the smarter ones know is as false as the Bogeyman's smile. The Demagogue rests in the heart of Closetland in the deepest, darkest domain and though his presence is always felt, he is never seen. Should he need to interact with someone he sends Branxis, his most loyal servant, to do his bidding. The Demagogue keeps such a remote presence that of the children who know of Closetland, very few have heard of him. Because of this, most of the credit for the torment inflicted on children goes to the Bogeyman. A credit the Bogeyman gladly accepts.

Branxis the Enslaver

In Closetland, Branxis controls the Labor Camp. He and his generals engineer the construction and expansion of the Demagogue's kingdom. His laborers are the broken shells of children forced beyond what their young bodies are capable of until discarded or, should they overcome their youthful handicap, promoted into half-demon Enforcers, the watchdogs of the Labor Camp.

Branxis is also the Demagogue's number one informant and confidante. He is considered to be more powerful (both physically and politically) than any of the Kings. Though this has yet to be put to task. But it is no question that one day one of them will rise up to test the Enslaver. May the dark forces help any who try.





The Seven Kings

Despite his power, the Demagogue is not who the children fear. He is too far removed, too distant to be concerned with that, as has been said, most aren't even aware of him. No, it is those that make their everyday life a living hell that the children are afraid of. These are the Seven Kings. Each an embodiment of one of the seven founding Aspects (a name by which they will often refer to themselves) of Closetland. They rule their charges with uncompromising diligence and ferocity. Rarely do the Seven Kings leave Closetland, though. Preferring to send one of their many soldiers to do their bidding. But it always the Kings who are pulling the strings.

What's So Scary About The Kings? Physically the Kings are pretty unnerving if not downright repulsive. Even the Defiler and Rael-schol, who look mostly human have unsettling features. But that is not what makes the Kings something to be feared. It's really how they use their power and influence in the world that causes so many children to fear even hearing their names. Each is lord over a certain energy that resonates out of Closetland and into the hearts and minds of humankind.

The strength of each King is governed by how influenced we are by their energies. While no King is ever more powerful politically in the eyes of the Demagogue, if you were to gauge each one's power based on which of their sins in which we most indulge: the pendulum is in constant swing, each having their moment on top.

The primary way the Kings exploit this ethereal bleed is also their most diabolical: possession. While having children stolen in their sleep by a hired hand is effective at a more widespread abolition of the world's Innocence, something more direct - something that makes headlines - is a much more effective way at furthering each King's cause. The Kings can make even the most willful person break their convictions and do the dark deeds commanded them. Most of the time, the person won't even remember doing it. Or they will have faint impresstons or dreams of something happening but the visions they have is of an act they cannot fathom doing to a child. So they convince themselves it is just a bad dream. Every time a person is used by a King, a seed of their evil is planted in that person. It becomes easier every time that same person is used to make them do what the Kings command. In fact, after enough possessions, the person will start to do those horrific things without the guidance of a King. Which perpetuates the energy... and brings more power to the King.

Behind the Door

The kings are beings of such vast power that they can control a near infinite number of subjects — be it their own legion, mortal adults, or other children — without strain. And the kings likes to alternate between those they manipulate. Focusing strictly on adults to do their work becomes boring just as utilizing only children to attack other children or lash out against authority grows into a repetitive game. You can never tell who they will use next, but the Kings are always furthering their end. Strengthening their aspect in the hierarchy of Closetland, stealing control away from others so they may share in the Demagogue's glory. It is a timeless contest of push and pull where children are not only the ultimate prize but the ultimate casualty as well.

When using the Kings, it is important to remember that their influences provide the motivation but not necessarily the act itself. For example, most people might consider a kidnapping to be motivated by greed but a child may be taken as a replacement for a child the kidnapper lost (envy), to be a focus for the kidnapper's anger and control (wrath), or for more diabolical purposes (lust).



A trickle... and then a downpour. The rush of ebony wings blots out the sky. All focused on a single perch. The mass descends into the woods. Veins of black course through the browning foliage, the ravens' red eyes light up and they sight their gaze on you. You take a step back, adrenaline clouding your thought. Another step, then two. Your muscles moving on their own, you turn to bolt. Three steps and you fall. Sudden weight on your back makes it impossible to move. You open your mouth to scream and gloved claws cover it. Warm breath in your ear: "Hush, child... I am all you have now."

Some say the Bogeyman has existed longer than Closetland itself. That the Bogeyman is more powerful than the Demagogue himself. These things are mostly said by the Bogeyman. Unparalleled in his fanaticism and megalomania, the Bogeyman has captured more children than all the other Kings combined. He has lorded over his domain for as long as anyone can remember. His reputation as a frenetic and blood-thirsty monster is so well-known that among those in the know, the Bogeyman is blamed for more crimes against children than even the Closet Monster. But the true nature of the Bogeyman is a bit harder to pinpoint. There is the maniacal side, the side that wears grotesque masks and prances around Closetland stealing children from the other Kings but... there is another side that emerges when the mask comes off. A cold and calculating side that is the real reason toying with the Bogeyman is one of the biggest mistakes anyone or anything can ever make. Fully aware of the power each King possesses at any given time as well as how influenced mankind is by their aspects, he uses every advantage he can exploit to further his foothold as successor

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to the Demagogue (a position the Demagogue would be surprised to hear exists). The Bogeyman is so tactical and astute that he can move about our world and Closetland without even the Demagogue realizing where he is or what he is doing.

The Bogeyman commands an army of innumerable size. His minions are called, simply, the Bogeys. Featureless creatures of shadow, the Bogeys move freely about our world able to strike almost anywhere at anytime. They can blend into the darkness behind a door, the blackness under your bed, or even your very shadow. The Bogeys fold their willowy form over their victim, consuming them in darkness; acting as a portal directly into the Big Blue Room, the main chamber of the Bogeyman's domain. Once there, the child will be brought before the King of Greed.

The Bogeyman's Big Blue Room is the inner chamber of a much larger construct known as Black Bird Castle. In the castle, are countless rows of gilded cages, each housing large and menacing ravens. Their screeching and clattering echoes throughout

The Bogeyman

Closedand. Each bird is the body of a child transformed. It is from twisting children's souls that the King of Greed creates his Bogeys. According to childhood lore, if you can reunite the right Bogey with the right black bird, the child can be saved. It is also said that if a child were to release one of the black birds, it would ascend in the form of a vestal white dove to its final resting place.

Being the Bogeyman

Despite being possessed of two minds, the Bogeyman shows only one face when a child is brought before him. One of manic evil, of grand ideas and fanciful fury. Spewing threats and tales of the outlandish torture that awaits his young charge, the Bogeyman is more bark than bite. While he has no qualms about ending a young person's life, his methods are more swift and succinct than his braggadocio leads on.

The Bogeyman rarely uses humans as his servants, preferring to send his Bogeys instead. But on that rare occasion that he does reach his claws into a human's psyche, the person is a puppet in the truest sense of the word. They sound like ; the Bogeyman, act like the Bogeyman, and, if the possession is long-term, will start to dress and look like the Bogeyman.

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I don't know how it got this much out of hand. I can't even control it anymore. It's taken over my life. I'm just glad no one ever hears me puking up. They just wouldn't understand. No one ever thinks twelve-year olds have anything to worry about. Especially not this. She's so skinny, they say. But I'm so fat. They're just being nice. I just want people to like me. No one likes a fat girl... no one. But it's okay. I'll be okay. I just need to lose ten more pounds. Ten more. I'm almost there. Just ten more pounds... if I don't eat anything for the next four days, I should be fine. Just ten more pounds... and then I'll be fine...

Titania was not born of darkness nor was she cast from earth for crimes against humanity. Titania was a creature of light, one of the purest in the world. Titania was the queen of Arcadia, the land of the faery, and gave mankind the gifts of mysticism, astrology, and philosophy. She loved mankind. She dedicated her life to giving them a sense of wonder, frivolity and joy. But when the Null came, it devoured her home and her legions of faerykin, rippiing Arcadia apart and leaving Titania alone. With no home and no followers, the youthful Titania started to age and dic. Deteriorating rapidly, Titania was approached by Branxis. The Enslaver gave Titania a proposition: eternal beauty and a thriving kingdom if she would be the Demagogue's paramour. Facing obsolescence, Titania accepted. But neither Closetland nor the Demagogue were kind to her. The unspoken clause in the deal was that the only way she would remain vibrant and young for all eternity was by bathing in the blood of the innocent. Desperate, Titania did everything she was told. Disgusted not only by the atrocities she was forced to perpetrate but by the brutality she was subject to witness, Titania

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began to die again. But this time, is was her soul that began to deteriorate. The kingdom she was promised was not a verdant wonderland filled with creatures of gentle mischief but a cold and arid expanse of craggy stone run amok with wicked goblyns and nefarious redcaps. After millennia on her throne, Titania is a hollow husk of what she once was. Her influence in our world is an unconscious act. Her goblyns and redcaps invade our world and steal our children, making sure Titania is kept young and strong. For if she dies, the new Arcadia dies with her. And if Arcadia dies, they die as well.

The souls of those who lost their life to keep Titania young are captured inside her Hall of Mirrors. Should you look into one of her mirrors, you will see the soul as the child it once was, its hands pressed against the inside of the glass, begging and pleading for help. Some say that by breaking the mirror you will set the child free, others claim that would only destroy the child for good. The truth behind how to set those souls free is known only by the one who was forced to create those mirrors. And Titania hasn't spoken in over 4,000 years.

Titania king of pride

Being Titania

Actually, there is not much to being Titania as she never possesses anyone and is in control of her domain only in name. But her influence remains strong, still being fed from that rash decision she made so long ago. Those that fall under her influence will become as spiritually catatonic as Titania, refusing to listen to any who tell them they are fine the way they are. Only listening to that negative voice inside their head that insists looking good is worth any price.

With Titania in her current condition, the goblyns and redcaps run the entire show. Goblyns are gnarled little creatures with dark greenish skin and twisted, jagged limbs. Very single- and simple-minded, they speak their snappy orders in gruff and throaty tones. Skinny, pale imps whose bright costumes gave them their name, Recaps are hyperactive psychopaths who would eat a child whole as soon as look at him. They are both disgusting creatures whose mode of transportation from their world to ours is quite unusual. So unusual, in fact, they are the only ones who use it. Clocks. More often than not, goblyns and redcaps will come into our world through grandfather clocks and large, hanging wall clocks. Any chronometer of substantial size is an open doorway for the Arcadian menaces. Some believe this is a trick left over from the old days, one often employed when Arcadia was still a thriving wonderland.



There's this girl, Jessica Allman, in my class. She's ten years old and already she's showing. I am so jealous of her. All the older boys are always talking to her. And her mom always takes her out to get make-overs and, of course, she's always talking about it... No one even sees me. No one would even notice if I was dead. I bet they would if Jessica wasn't around anymore... I bet, I bet if Jessica was ugly no one would notice her. Spoiled rich, little... I bet if I cut up her face, that people would like me then. People would notice me then. I bet if I burned her so bad that you couldn't even recognize her that then I'd be popular. Yeah... I'm gonna burn her pretty little face right off...

Unlike most of the other Kings, Rael-schol has never known much outside of Closetland. Though the Demagogue made many attempts at creating malevolent children of his own, Rael-schol was a rare success. Rael-schol originally worked for Branxis, torturing and working children to the bone. But something changed inside Rael-schol. In a petulant act of defiance, he ventured to our world and saw children in their natural state. Playing, laughing, running free... he began to resent the Demagogue for creating him in an adult body, for creating him at all. He longed to experience the sensation of youth, the feeling of joy and carelessness. His eyes had never looked at the world with wonder and awe, only contempt. He had never been seen as young, sweet, and perfect. A new feeling arose in Rael-schol: jealousy. His jealousy quickly turned violent. The intensity of his envy began to spill out into our world. The force of his influence hit so fast and so hard, that despite the rage that still burned in Raelschol against his father, the Demagogue gave him lordship over it. Thus a new King was appointed.

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Rael-schol has decorated his flesh in twisted homage to childhood. Across his back is a checkerboard, the numbers one through twelve are tattooed on his hands and feet. Various scars and inkings run around his skin. But despite his appearance, he has the ability to make a child feel at ease around him. In turn, Rael-schol's violent nature is quickly pacified when in the presence of a child. Children almost pity him when they see the longing in his eyes. But Playtime does not last long as Rael-schol cannot fully subdue his inner rage. His jealousy becomes too much for him to handle and if he cannot be like that child, he makes sure the child cannot either.

The fire of Rael-schol's envy burns so hot and his want for being a child runs so deep that he collects the faces of those he captures, keeping them on a large, stone wall behind his throne. Still possessed of spirit, you can still hear their voices faintly pleading for help and see their faces contorting in pain. Some still shed tears of blood, others are still in such a state of horror that they can only quiver, the pain of what they felt

Rael-Schol

still on their faces. At times, Rael-schol has been known to don one of the *masks* and parade the width and breadth of Closetland in sick celebration of childhood.

Rael-schol has no name for his domain. Merely an indistinct, run-down tenement building overrun by various creatures and vagrant monsters, its master too preoccupied with the jealousy he feels. Rael-schol's throne and wall of masks covers the expanse of the tenement's roof, a place Raelschol spends most of his time.

Being Rael-schol

Rael-schol is not only at ease around children, he's in outright awe of them. He will let children prattle on and on about anything they feel like talking about. Listening intently, Rael-schol will later use whatever it is the child has talked about (the things she's done, the places she's been, the people she's met) in his fantasies. Musing over them as his destroys the child, peeling their skin mask from the bone. He'll pretend to be that child, experiencing what she experienced, trying to feel as that child felt. But it is the recurring failure to feels as they do that will drive Rael-schol to direct the anger he feels toward his father on the child. Thus, another mask finds its way onto his wall.



Damn kids. Always getting into my things... I told them a thousand times to stay out of this room. Did they listen? Hell no. Next time I see them I'm going to kick the living shit out of them. They can't obey a simple fucking order. None of 'em. Dumb bastards... that's it! Where are they? Kyle! Were you in this room? Don't lie to me, boy, everything's moved around. I told you and your dumbass sister... don't smirk at me! C'mere! You wanna smile? I'll give you something to smile about! How about this? Huh? Don't you start crying on me, baby! Are you a baby? Huh, are you a little fucking child? Don't even try to run away, boy! The more you fight, the worse you'll get it!

When Titania failed in her duties as paramour to the Demagogue, Branxis sought out a proper replacement. After centuries of searching, he had all but given up when he found the scourge of the fallen Babylon; the child-eating demon known as Lamashtu. Vile beyond description and deep in the throes of madness, Branxis brought his find to his master. The Demagogue not only approved but promoted Branxis from his status as mere King. Feral and unfocused in those days, the Demagogue molded his new bride into the charming and brutal King she is today. Lamashtu influences mankind to succumb to uncontrollable and misdirected rage. She is the mistress of abuse and the princess of neglect. Any child who's felt a rib snap or arm break from coming home late or not doing the dishes, any child who has looked into their parent's faces and saw eyes thirsting for blood staring back has felt Lamashtu's touch. She loves abuse for the sake of inflicting pain; no rhyme nor reason - just pain. Brutal, unbridled pain and suffering. Lamashtu keeps children around her domain as pets and easy recipients of her aggression. No King is more blunt or condescending than Lamashtu. She is on no King's good side mostly due to the obvious favoritism prided on her by the Demagogue. Even when Lamashtu did the unthinkable, the near impossible task of slaying a fellow King, the original Defiler an act the other Kings are sure, if they had committed would have ended in their destruction — did she get anything more than a slap on the wrist. That moment marked the first and only time that Branxis questioned the Demagogue's devotion.

Lamashtu's domain was built to mimic a church of ancient Babylon. Surrounded by ornately decorated statues, mounds of gold, stained glass, and jewels, Lamashtu's throne sits at the center, an odd construct of rock and bone. Around her, captured children obey her every command or risk facing her oft-used lash.

Lamashtu

Being Lamashtu

Lamashtu is a mother, a teacher, a seducer, and the object of a child's puppy love affection. Lamashtu has the ability to dredge up calming discomfort in children, making a child terrified at looking upon such a monstrosity yet oddly calm, as the child starts to feel at ease with the fact that he will soon die. Speaking calmly and clearly, Lamashtu will subject the child to her mind-bend ing verbal and physical torture. Her voice will start to get louder and faster until she becomes a screaming, venomous hag, and the child is broken, laying limp at her feet. The mood of those Lamashtu controls (and she loves to possess and influence humans for she likes to watch as much as participate) can swing even faster than the King's. The puppets she prefers the most are those that the child has a predilection toward. The more comfortable the child is around them, the more the child trusts them, the more unexpected and devastating the outburst will be. After Lamashtu's influence is gone, most people are reduced to tears recounting what they have done. This amuses the King immensely.



Lazy child. I come home from work everyday and this place is a mess. I remember school. School isn't hard. She could help out around here. What?! Where do you think you're going? No, you're not. Not until you clean up your... what?! You come back here. You come back here right now! Come.. back... here... Stop! Stop crying! You want smacked again? Do you? Fine! Is this what you want? I don't care if it hurts! It should hurt, you lazy sonofabitch! Get in here and clean this house before I give you something to cry about! I work hard, you know! I don't need this from you! Now get your ass back inside and clean! I want this place absolutely spotless or I'll beat you so hard, you won't be able to stand!

Spawned from the seed of the Demagogue and grown in the womb of a demon of Babylon, Kabaelza came into the world screaming. Raised by monsters without an ounce of concern shown by his parents, Kabaelza's body grew far beyond normal proportions but his mind never did. Petulant, self-centered, and possessed of a temperament fitting a two-year old, Kabaelza is the pampered, bratty bastard of Closetland. He stomps around his pen screeching his orders. Everyone obeys, fearing the wrath of his father. The Demagogue fills Kabaelza's home with "playmates," children that have lost their usefulness to the other Kings, in hopes of quelling his child's anger or at least directing it toward someone besides the other monsters. But no playmate lasts long before Kabaelza has not only their spirit, but their body, broken at his feet. Soon after, Kabaelza will become bored again and crying for more attention.

Kabaelza's domain sits at the bottom of a volcanic pit. On the floor, iron spikes and rocky crags jut out toward the dark sky and pools of bubbling lava boil over sporadically. The pit's high sides prevent anyone from escaping; a safeguard intended not only for the playmates but the King of Sloth as well. In the center is Kabaelza's throne, Children whose minds have been turned to mush by the gears of the terrible machine that is Closetland sit shackled to the throne and, possessing no will to resist, have no choice but to obey the King's orders. Fortunately, Kabaelza is not smart enough to demand anything too complicated from them but, unfortunately, his warbled babbling can be incomprehensible leading the servants to guess at what it is their master desires. If Kabaelza does not get what he wants, a loud and obnoxious temper tantrum will follow.

Kabaelza influences sloth in mankind. This not only means that he encourages people to indulge in lethargy but to push others into their servitude. This influence can be as isolated as leaving the care of a newborn in the hands of her eight-year old sister while their parents spend the night at the local bar or as wide-spread as third-world sweatshops putting six-year olds to work in rickety mills

Kabaelza

and on machines that are no more safe than an unattended chainsaw. People who are subject to such influence tend to become angry if not outright violent when those they expect to do their work fail at the task. This is not to say that a parent getting angry at a child for neglecting something as simple and fair as household chores is the work of Kabaelza but a parent who beats a child black and blue for not feeding the dog is feeling the energy that King of Sloth-puts out (a carry-over effect that was inherited from Kabaelza's mother - the King of Wrath).

Being Kabaelza

Kabaelza thinks and acts like a mentally disabled child. He is never satisfied and does not understand why. He only knows that he's unhappy and thinks that everybody else's job is to make that unhappiness go away. Kabaelza either cannot or will not listen to anything contrary to his way of thinking and will not put up with disobedience for long without getting worked up into one of his tantrums. The person responsible for upsetting the King of Sloth should get away from him or she will find herself answering to Kabaelza's mother.



Kabaelza's influence is entirely subcon-/ scious though as the King is neither smart nor externally aware enough to direct it. His mental limitation also means he's incapable of directly possessing human beings. The minute I entered the house I felt sick. Poor Simmons lost it two steps in. The place was a mess. Ash and soot caked the floor, the windows were blacked, and the air was thick with the lingering scent of death. We caught a blood trail in the kitchen. It circled through a side room, through the bathroom, and up some stairs. Donovan spotted the burnt dress crumpled in the corner. We found the man gorged, unconscious on the floor. Browning blood all over his clothes. His eyes were glass, his skin pale and puckered. There wasn't much left of the child... poor girl. Most of her was in his gut.

Cast from the village of her youth, Baba Yaga made her home on the outskirts, feeding off the sparse animals that lived there. One day, her isolation was broken by an intruder - a young girl who had gotten lost on her way home. Feigning hospitality, she invited the cold and scared little girl into her home. Ignorant of who this kind, old lady was, the girl agreed. Once Baba Yaga had gotten the young one into her home, she struck the little girl across the back of her head and skinned her alive. Baba Yaga devoured the child's flesh and made tools of her bones. This act of wickedry inflamed the crone's hunger for tender, human flesh. At night, she would sneak back into the village and kidnap children for her next meal. She would make the meat last a day and then venture out again the next night. All the while, her appetite grew. Soon, one child a day was not enough. She began to steal two or three a night, devouring them in less than a day's time. With each bite, her hunger became harder to sate. The village, having finally caught on to who was behind the disappearances, sent a search party to her house. Inside they found the old crone sitting atop a chair made of

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human bone, a freshly skinned boy boiling in her hearth. Furious, they decided to burn Baba Yaga alive. Touching torches to her home, they watched the flames consume the rotting wood of the old cottage. Inside, they heard the crone cursing them, swearing revenge upon all the children of the world. Swearing that one day, man would know her hunger. That all would feast upon the flesh of the young.

At the far end of Closetland, stretches a length of dying trees and songless birds called "Butcher's Forest." In the heart of this wood, sits a house set atop the legs of a large bird, this is the home of the gluttonous crone known as Baba Yaga. Inside her house, you will find a den of torture like none you can imagine. She calls it the Kitchen. Hanging from hooks, stuffed into jars, or boiling on the stove, you will find the remains of the bodies of countless children.

Knowing gluttony is one of mankind's biggest weaknesses, she will use every trick in her book to use it against us. From inspiring humans to cannibalize their young, to feeding unwanted babies to animals, and to poisoning the food we give

Baba Yaga

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king of gluttony

our children. She swore long ago that we would know insatiable and unholy hunger. She's making good on that promise.

Being Baba Yaga

Those she influences can vary widely in personality. One can rarely tell if someone's a Glutton by seeing them walk down the street. The skin of those that indulge in the cannibalism of children for extensive periods of time will grow pale, almost alabaster, and their eyes will become bloodshot, though this is more from being under Baba Yaga's control than the indulgence itself.

Baba Yaga is a very short-tempered and crotchety hag who is prone to fits of yelling, banging her ladles against pots and pans, and being generally loud and controlling. She loves to intimidate her victims, usually by keeping them tied up in pots next to cauldrons of furiously boiling water or oil. But she is not one to just play games with the child and will not hold them captive for days (unless it is to fatten them up). Generally those that are caught are meant to be food and will be eaten within a matter of hours. The man's bright eyes dulled. His baby blues flickered grey and focused in on the supple, virile flesh around him. He could smell their innocence and joy. Its sick sweetness coursed through his being, igniting long-buried desires. Sweat surfaced then trickled down his neck, making his skin uncomfortably moist. His heart skipped then the pulse intensified, filling his ears. The innocence, the naivete became repugnant. Consuming. He felt the heat build in his loins. He wiped the sweat from his lips as the children went down the slide. Cleared his throat and loosened his tie as his desire found the swings. The boy was young. Very young. And unattended... he was perfect. Young and beautiful and perfect...

Arguably the most disgusting of all the kings, the Defiler's particular aspect is usually the one that children feel most powerless against. The Defiler feels strongly in his cause, each act he instigates self-perpetuates as those who were once handled in his callous manner handle others in return. Unlike the other Kings, who prefer to use monsters and minions in their game, the Defiler acts alone. Extending his energy into mankind, he twists us into his fleshly marionettes and forces us to dance on his sick stage. With his coercion, networks of pedophiles and pederasts exchange everything from pictures via the Internet to arranging meeting places to try their fancies on new blood in person.

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The master of persuasion and of gaining one's trust, his ability to skillfully seize control of a situation is unparalleled. To him, using someone the child already knows and trusts is a routine exercise of power. While he still, quite often, does that the Defiler loves a challenge. The Defiler loves nothing more than turning a quiet, reserved, and good person into the epitome of earthly perversion and then slowly having them search out the perfect prey. Carefully eyeing the schoolyard, the day-care center, or the supermarket until the ripest and most beautiful specimen is found. Then isolating them, talking to them, getting them to tell him their name and take his hand... soon making them the next 30second spot on the evening news. A process that requires time and the slow corruption of both the assaulter and the assaulted.

The Defiler's domain is known as the Playground. A cold and grey expanse set behind a huge, dilapidated schoolhouse. All the recess favorites are there: swings, monkey bars, slides, even metal animals on springs. You will see children playing there; their faces joyless, their eyes dull and refusing the focus, still they mimic play. The schoolhouse doors are chained shut and it is rumored that inside is where the Defiler resides and where most of his dominations take place. That when a child is subjected to the Defiler's touch, they actually leave our world during the act and are transported here, where the Defiler watches his puppets dance.

The Defiler

If you incorporate the Defiler into your game, be prepared for the consequences. Easily the most controversial and disturbing of all the Kings, make sure your players can handle the fact they may be coming face-toface with the King of Lust. More than likely, if they do meet him, it will be through one of his puppets. These "shells" always have one tell-tale sign that lets children know the Defiler is pulling the person's strings; the person's eyes turn stone grey. The soft speech and comforting demeanor they affect can lure even a distrustful child into obeisance by breaking their will to resist.

Being the Defiler

Role-playing a person under the Defiler's influence is a daunting task for any GM. The person should be played soft-spoken and always looking for a weakness in the child. The Defiler twists the words that children say to his own benefit. Never condescending, he will get hostile and possessive if provoked. The Defiler will always keep his ultimate goal in the forefront of his mind.





The Children of Pain & Suffering

While nowhere near as powerful as the Kings, the children of pain and suffering are just as feared. Not only because they are very active in the destruction of the young but because they have no qualms about going after other monsters. They kill for the thrill, they scare for the fun of it, and they torment and destroy because that is what they love to do.

Oliver Happiness Gone Bad

Oliver is the representation of all things happy gone bad. Often possessing the bodies of birthday entertainers and circus performers, Oliver finds joy in reducing happy, excited children to tears. Oliver is the tamest of the Children as he would much rather leave the child alive and return to torment them than do any actual physical damage. His clown visage is a terrible one whose bloodshot eyes peer directly into a child's soul, drawing up things they would rather not remember.

Oliver loves to use manipulation as his attack. Winning a child's favor and getting them to trust him unconditionally, Oliver will then begin to draw off their mind, creating a customized nightmare guaranteed to scar the child for life.



Behind the Door

Helter & Skelter The Twin Terrors

Helter and Skelter have a fondness for twins for they too shared a womb of pain for nine long months before tearing themselves free. Helter and Skelter are as close as a brother and sister can possibly be, sharing everything and everyone equally between them. Helter and Skelter never fight, they never argue, and constantly finish each other's sentences. They are like-minded to the point of being one soul split into two bodies. The telling difference is the execution of the torment they inflict upon their victims. Skelter is the conniving, manipulative one who loves to break a child's spirit and convince them that what she wants to do to them is the best thing in the world and the child would be a fool not to want it. While Helter relies on intimidation and the razor sharp edge of his butcher's knife to get the "little brats" to shape up and see things his way. More often than not, they will employ both techniques guaranteeing they shall not hungry that night.



Patchwork The Dollmaker

Growing up, Patrick McNichol was constantly tinkering; tearing apart and rebuilding anything he could get his hands on. At the age of 8, Patrick fell ill and was put in the hospital. Having never been to a hospital before, Patrick was quite terrified at the thought but his fears were quelled by his parents' assertions that everything would be all right. But after a few days, Patrick's parents stopped visiting and he sat in his room alone for weeks. Then doctors started coming to see him. Everyday, a doctor would come in, remove pieces from Patrick's skin and put different colored patches in their place. Whenever Patrick asked why he was simply told, "We're making you better, Patrick. You want to be better, don't you?" This went on for months, without contact from Patrick's parents or anyone aside from the doctors. He would always ask for his parents but was always told they would be "coming soon."

Having finally gotten all better, Patrick was quite fond of his multi-colored skin. He walked around the hospital showing everybody how much better he had gotten. A portly old woman dressed in rags gave him the name Patchwork and he's been using it ever since. Still in the hospital awaiting his parents, Patchwork occupies himself making dolls for the doctors which they all love tremendously. Patchwork has boxes full of spare parts in his hospital room. Patchwork isn't sure why some of them look like children he

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used to know but figures it must be just a coincidence. Whenever he runs low, the doctors go out and get him more parts. They plan to keep Patchwork busy for a long, long time.


Behind the Door

Rules for Monsters

We've just covered some of the most powerful monsters in all of Closetland. But, with rare exception, they utilize others to further their ends, staying behind the scenes plotting their diabolical schemes. But now we're going to get into the monsters that children have a much better chance of coming face-to-face with in our world. Creatures they may have to square off against and even have to kill.

So how is this done? Well, it's up to the children. The philosophy behind this is since all monsters are manifestations of fear, only overcoming that fear will destroy the monster. In other words, any time a child attacks a monster, they roll a Quiz. Not a Test. The goal being to overcome their own inadequacy and fear. So if a monster goes to attack little Danny, Danny has to roll a Feet Quiz to escape it. If Danny fails, the monster hits. To an outside observer, it would look as though the monster got the best of Danny. But since the entire scene rested on the roll Danny made in actuality, it was Danny's failure that allowed the monster to connect its punch and had nothing to do with the monster's ability. If Danny were the one initiating the attack, he merely has to overcome his own inadequacies (as represented by the number he must roll under) to be successful.

Don't construe this to mean a monster won't attack unless attacked first. Werewolves can keep kids so busy just trying to dodge their claws the child cannot get an offensive move in edgewise.

What about wounds?

Even though monsters lack stats, any weapons they use still do damage. Listed in their description are the relevant modifiers for any weapons the creatures may employ.

Do they die?

This leaves the question, when is a monster dead? To put it simply – when the child figures out how to kill it. A lot of monsters have vulnerabilities (werewolves die if silver gets in their bloodstream, vampires die if wood is driven through their hearts). The monsters of Closetland, no matter how "real" they might be, are merely temporary manifestations of fear (with the exception of the Kings). So if something happened to bring Closetland to its knees, all the monsters would disappear.

So is a monster ever really dead?

When a monster dies their body dissipates, sending a vortex of fear back to Closetland and back into the hands of the Demagogue who will simply create more monsters. The only way to truly stop Closetland is to eliminate fear. Since that is the only way to destroy Closetland, it is pretty obvious how it has managed to not only survive but grow stronger each generation.

The Closet Monster

Up through the darkness, the monster slinks and trumbles its way to the final destination. Calculated footsteps slowly encroach upon their egress. It encounters a smoggy, dimly lit hallway. Far on the other end, a shaft light creeps in from the outside world. Already the creature can hear the child laughing. Playing just on the other side. It begins the last mile of its trek and reaches the door just in time to hear the innocent's parents tuck him in for the night. The parents read a story about a bunny and kiss the child on the forehead. They make sure to leave the door open just a crack and check to see if the baseball player night-light is working. "Goodnights" are exchanged and the room turns to blue with a flick of the switch. The monster waits for the child to fall asleep. It loves to see the surprised look on their faces. Finally, a soft mewling comes from the slumbering morsel. It opens the folding doors, hesitating as a cat wanders in and then leaves after a cursory tour. One final check around the room... and the monster lunges.

Even more than the Bogeyman, the Closet Monster is responsible for more hostilities than any of its contemporaries. However there are many different Closet Monsters, each one unique. In fact, the only trait they all share is their preferred method of travel. The Closet Monsters are very effective and they work no King. They answer only to Branxis and the Demagogue. Closet Monsters are so prolific and so good at their job that it was their presence and activities that gave Closetland its name.

Closet Monsters, as a group, have a wide variety of tricks they use to lure, persuade, fool, and force children into the world of night. Singularly, each Closet Monster usually excels at one attack and sticks with it. Some very popular tricks employed by the Closet Monsters are listed below. To resist, a child needs to roll a successful Spirit Quiz. If the roll is successful, the tricks poofs harmlessly into the air. If it the child fails, they just managed to upset the most powerful legion of monsters in Closetland.

A Thousand Eyes

This ability allows the Closet Monster to hypnotize a child into doing whatever the Closet Monster desires. Closet Monsters tend not to be more instinctual than bright (though are certainly exceptions), so *whatever they desire* usually consists of "come here" or "shut up." They employ this by staring directly into a child's eyes and speaking at: incantation in their strange and guttural native tongue.

Beddy-bye

With this, a Closet Monster can make a child fall into such a deep sleep only that particular Closet Monster can wake them. Should something happen to that Closet Monster, or should the Closet Monster forget about the child, the child will never wake up.

Control

One of the most powerful weapons a Closet Monster can use is the ability to levitate, throw, shatter, and implode anything within its sight. Usually, only the most powerful Closet Monsters have this ability. This is rarely used against children directly, since

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they are worth so much more alive than pulverized.

Mother's Masque

This ability allows the Closet Monster to appear as someone the child knows. If the Closet Monster uses this, they cannot step entirely out of the darkness. For if they do, the illusion immediately drops.

Shroud

With this, the monster has the ability to

cover the child completely in darkness. Seeing anything becomes impossible and the sheer density of the blackness makes it difficult for the child to breathe.

Tangleweb

Using this, a Closet Monster can cause a child to become entangled and rendered motionless in just about anything: a blanket, a pile of clothes, kite string, etc. It's believed that nothing has to be there at all and the child could become ensnared in the thin air.



Body Thieves

Body Thieves are those that can take over a child's life. They can look, sound, and behave just like anyone they wish. They exist to create links from Closetland to the real world. Once in place, they can be utilized to lure children into places and positions they wouldn't normally find themselves. To be in the company of a body thief is to be in the direct line of danger.

Living Dolls

Patchwork's creations are the pride and joy of Closetland. Of course, the poor dollmaker doesn't realize what his creations are used for. Living dolls, in their natural form, look like hodge-podge children. Constructing of randomly assembled bits and spare pieces, when they enter our world their body becomes an exact duplicate of any child they choose to mimic. Their physical transformation is quick but the mental and emotional change is much slower. Living dolls are only employed if the fate of the original child is to suffer in Closetland. Only after the target child is seized will a living doll begin to develop that child's personality and memories. After a while, there will be little if any difference



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between the original child and its dark replacement. The change-over becomes so fully realized, even dogs are oblivious to the ruse.

Shades

Shades are living shadows confined to darkness until they can find a new body to inhabit and slip their way in. When a shade does find a suitable shell, it will slide in and slowly expand, working its fingers into the child's soul. After they become fully settled, they cast the child's old soul into the world. Damning it to become a shade itself.

Doppelgangers

Doppelgangers are spirits who have the ability to create a human shell and twist it to look like anyone they wish. Their true form is a gelatinous mass of flesh, whose multiple arms and eyes writhe in odd symmetry. When they first come into our world, they choose a simple form (such as an animal) until they can isolate a child and steal their form. Left with the duty of getting rid of the original, doppelgangers usually choose to cast them into Closetland but the more malicious go straight for blood.

Worms

The oddest of the body thieves are the worms. Squirming in the soil right beneath our feet, in groups of thousands, the worms can come together, forming the rough shape of a human child. But for the transformation to be complete, the worms need the one thing they cannot emulate: the child's eyes. Only after ripping them from their natural sockets and placing them in their newly formed home can the worms move on to their next order of business: getting rid of the child.



Everyday Monsters

Just as the Kings are more prevalent in a child's life than the Demagogue, these are more prevalent in a child's life than the Kings. Some work for the Kings, some directly against, some do it for sport, some do it to satisfy some deeper mean, and some do it just to hear the screaming. These are the creatures who pose the most direct threat against the children. They are the messengers, the kidnappers, the torturers. They roam our world under cover of night. They are the creatures you hear about at summer camp; the ones that stalk children on a "night... just like tonight." The ones that send you screaming out of the woods, the ones that make your heart race.

Ghosts

When a child dies whose soul has been so tainted by Closetland they cannot ascend yet have were never claimed by the darkness, they remain in our world as disembodied spirits that people know as ghosts. Most ghosts are more curious than anything else, only lashing out if provoked. Still retaining impressions of their former self, any child willing to listen to a ghost can hear the tale of its life. Some children believe that all ghosts want are someone to listen to them, to heed their warning of the deeds of Closetland. But the actions of those ghosts who are purposefully malicious keep that notion from spreading too far.

Ghosts retain a translucent, vaguely humanoid form and tend to emit a high-pitched wail when they move. Should a child come in direct physical contact with a ghost, they will start to age at the rate of 1 year per 10 seconds of contact.

Monsters Under The Bed

Though they are almost as notorious as Closet Monsters, Monsters Under The Bed are malformed creatures whose long arms jut from their furry bodies at odd angles. Should a poor child dangle his feet over the side once the room goes black, the Monsters will make a grab for them. If successful, they will drag the child under and into Closetland. These monsters strong arms are capable of dragging over four hundred pounds into the darkness.

Mummies

Fists 2

These are not the heavily-wrapped Egyptian myths you are used to. These mummies are children whose flesh has been turned into strips of brittle bandages and cursed to roam the earth for eternity. Mummies are quite intelligent though they cannot verbalize due to the thick rot that begins to take over their insides. Mummies are particularly vulnerable to fire. In fact, they can only be permanently destroyed by flame.

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Poltergeists

The spirits of those who died serving Lamashtu, poltergeists are ghosts stripped of their ethereal shroud and reduced to pure manifestations of anger. Unlike ghosts, who may or may not be inherently destructive, demolishing the residence to which it is tied is a poltergeist's only means of expression. Wild and frenzied, poltergeists can remain docile for weeks before they violently outburst. Capable of leveling homes should they choose to do so. The longer the poltergeist lies dormant, the more active and destructive the poltergiest will be when it awakens.

The Thing In The Walls

Ever hear strange creaking coming from the walls as you try to drift to sleep? Sometimes it is just the house settling but other times, it is one of these. These monsters start off quite small but soon spread their tendrils throughout the entire house allowing them easy access to anywhere a child might be. If one of these things gets hold of a child, it will drag them through the wall and into Closetland. The child will then find herself at the mercy of the Great Thing, an enormous conglomerate of flesh and limbs, who will turn the child into a new Thing before sending it back into our world to do its



work.

Vampires Bite 5 Claws 3

Not the well-dressed Romanian royalty most legends refer to, these vampires are twisted monstrosities who large, malformed heads hold long, glistening fangs just waiting to be sunk into some poor child's neck. Their bony claws are as sharp as knives and are used to hold victims still while the vampire sates his dark thirst. Children who are Faithful can keep vampires at bay by brandishing any symbol indicative of their faith. A successful Spirit Quiz on the part of the child will drive the vampire back away. But if they fail, the symbol is powerless to stop the bloodsucker from having its way with the child. If a child manages to drive a wooden stake into a vampire's heart, it will die instantly. Another vulnerability vampires have is natural light; any exposed flesh the light touches will instantly turn to stone.



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Werewolves

Bite 4 Claws 5

One of the oldest, most widespread legends is that of the werewolf. Normal men and women who, upon the rise of the full moon, become feral beasts who stalk mankind in search of prey. Werewolves are incredibly fast and will strike ferociously without regard for their own safety. Werewolves tend to seek safety in the woods or any place removed from man, though have been known to follow their prey wherever they may run. Possessed of low Spirit, werewolves are cautious and guarded in front of other monsters and are not to flee if attacked by one. Werewolves are particularly vulnerable to silver bullets. So much so one successful shot will drop them for good.

Yeti

Fists 4 Feet 6

The Yeti goes by many names - Bigfoot. Skunk Ape, Sasquatch, the Abominable Snowman... all are a little different (mostly due to climate and level of exposure to civilization) but deep down they are one and the same. The Yeti will not attack unless provoked, preferring seclusion to the company of humans. While they will bite with their huge jaws and oversized teeth, they are not meat-eaters and often will help a child before harming one. But their frightening appearance makes it hard for children to trust them.

Zombies Fists 2

These are the spiritless bodies that wander your basement and attic while you sleep. Born of fear, they are relatively weak in comparison to the other monsters. Physically, they resemble your typical B-movie zombie. If ignored, they will eventually go away (usually after an hour or two) but if provoked they will attack like the mindless undead they are. Swinging blindly, emitting a low, rumbling growl as they do so. Very rarely will they wander into a room that someone is in. Most likely, they will be found by a child investigating the noise these clumsy monsters make.



chapter five spooky stories

Figuring out what to do with **Little Fears** can be a daunting task. Especially if you're not sure how subtle you want the horror to be or exactly how one uses the Kings in a game. In this chapter are a selection of scenarios designed to give someone new to **Little Fears** some ideas on what exactly you can do with all the information in this book. These are not fully realized scenarios by any means but hopefully will get your brain filling with ideas for terrifying tales to slip the characters into and maybe shake them up a bit. The first scenario is the fullest, while the others are comprised of three elements: the hook, the bait, and the resolution. The **hook** can be used as a set-up for a new scenario or it can be thrown into the lives of characters who have experienced the evils of Closetland before. The **bait** will give you suggestions on how to get the characters involved. The **resolution** offers three different explanations as to what happened.

Believing is Seeing

An innocent boy unleashes a legendary terror on the children of a small town.

Preface

Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, and the Tooth Fairy are all mythological beings that children want so much to be real. They marvel at the thought of a long-bearded elf dressed all in red sliding down their chimneys every winter, leaving wondrous gifts around a gaily decorated tree. They find delight in the thought that a winged sprite will come to them in the night to exchange fallen teeth with shiny, new coins. Adults have made these and many other tales comforting for children. And as much as the children truly want to them to be flesh and blood beings, they still wonder, "Maybe they aren't real."

Some stories children are told, however, are a completely different animal all together. The basic concept is the same, but a different reaction is sought with this type of tale: Fear. Whether it is told around a campfire,

a parked car, or a flash-lit tent, an eerie mood is set and a tale of terror is spun. Legends originate in a variety of ways and are passed from friend to friend with just enough truth to make them plausible. And every town has its legend, just as it has a town drunk, town gossip, the town floozy, and the town historian. So what town would be complete without the town secret? Sometimes, it's not even a secret at all but something the entire community knows and just wants to forget. Something the adults never speak of, something you won't find referenced in the local paper. What keeps these legends going are the tales told by children to out-scare one another. Younger siblings listen intently as their older brother or sister spins the yarn of the man with the hook hand who lived in the ahandoned garage at the corner of Baker and 4th or the dentist who used to put dog teeth in his patients' mouths and how it would turn those patients into feral man-beasts. Funny how children think about the Easter Bunny and doubt but when told these tales of terror they can't help but think, "Maybe they're real ... "

Spooky Stories

In the quiet town of Oldsten, a young autistic child is going to give a local legend a wake-up call.

The Story

"It was thirty years ago when Old Man Tyler bought the Junkyard over on Quarter Street. Y'know the one by the old Jif-E-Mart. They say he kept it up real good, though. He took in just about every car that came in, too. Old Man Tyler fell in love with a girl name Janet Sweeney, the daughter of the town's richest family. After they got married, they had a child. His name was Tobey. They lived in the house right next door to the junkyard.

"One night, Old Man Tyler got a call to pick up this wreck on the other side of town. So he took the wrecker and went to the scene. Leaving Janet and Tobey all alone. While Old Man Tyler was out, some guys broke into the house and attacked them. They dragged Janet and Tobey kicking and screaming into the middle of the junkyard. They tied Tabey's hands and feet together and then each one took turns doing stuff to Janet. Bad stuff. Really bad. No one knows how many men were there, but she was almost dead when they were finished. Tobey kept screaming and screaming, so one of the men put him in a metal box, so no one could hear him screaming. And then, one of the guys bumped a suntch. That was when they realized they had put Tobey in the crusher. But by then, it was too late. The last thing his mother heard was the tearful screams of her five-year old son being crushed, then the men cut her from ear to ear.

"When Old Man Tyler came home and found

his wife and child dead, he went crazy. That's why no one goes over there. They say if a kid wanders into the junkyard, Old Man Tyler will grab you and put you in the crusher because if he can't have his kid back, no one can!"

The Subjects

Information on people pertinent to the story.

Old Man Tyler

Everything in the tale is true up to when James Tyler came home the night of the murder. James found a blue letter "O" stuck on a jagged piece of fence. A few days later, he saw Paul Meyer, the son of Oldsten mayor Geoffrey Meyer, walking around - the letter from his varsity jacket missing. James knows it was Paul and his friends who came in that night but every time he approached the authorities, he was shooed away. They mounted an investigation but no one was ever tried. Afraid to confront Paul or his very influential father, James let it go. James Tyler has lived his whole life in hell. He has since closed the Junkyard and spends his days toiling in the yard, never speaking a word. The only contact he has had in the past 12 years is with Kyle Grossman, who delivers Old Man Tyler his groceries. James Tyler is not at all mean, he is simply mourning and waiting to die.

Paul Meyer

The now 29-year old son of former mayor Geoffrey Meyer. Paul works the night shift in the local paper factory. He is married

and has one stepchild. Paul remembers that night vividly, the nightmares of it still haunting him. Paul hasn't slept through the night since the murders. Every time he drifts to sleep, the night replays in his head.

Donald Riossi

One of the assailants who violated Janet Tyler. Donald is also the one who put Tobey in the crusher. He ended up killing himself and a single mother and her two sons, five years ago, when in a drunken haze he rammed his truck into their station wagon.

Kyle Grossman

The 16 year old grocery clerk who has been delivering Old Man Tyler's grocery for years. Kyle knows of the tale, but refuses to believe in it.

Billy Grossman

The six-year old autistic brother of Kyle. Billy barely speaks and does nothing except sit in a corner of his family's house and stare at the wall. When his older brother's friend, Nate, told Billy the story of Old Man Tyler, Billy took every word as truth. He lives each day scared to death and terrified to Old Man Tyler. Every time Billy closes his eyes, he sees the crusher and poor Tobey Tyler being squashed alive. His sleep is plagued nightmares, the most common one depicting Billy as the assailant who is murdering poor Janet Tyler.

The Summoning

The tale of Old Man Tyler has been passed around for almost a decade. Each time it gets told, more fear is fed into Closetland and when Billy Grossman heard the tale, it was the intense rush of fear that swept though him that pushed it over the edge. A surge of fear and belief rushed through Closetland the day Billy heard the tale and has been getting stronger every time Billy has that dream. Because of this surge, the crusher has come alive and the ghost of Donald Riossi has been doing its bidding; snatching children who get too close to the Junkyard and feeding them to his fierytongued master.

Getting the Characters Involved

The characters are the children of the men who attacked Janet and Tobey that fateful autumn night. The only two men who were there that night who cannot be fathers to the characters are Paul Meyer and Donald Riossi. One of the children will discover that his father has a shoebox of newspaper clippings detailing the murders and the ultimately fruitless investigation that followed, as well as a picture of himself and Janet Sweeney at a party, holding hands and being quite friendly.

The Crusher

The crusher is a huge iron beast whose metal jaws can crush a car into a four foot cube with ease. Lying dormant during the day, at night the crusher comes alive. Its large maw filling with flame, it seeks out the men – and the children of the men – who broke in that fateful night twelve years ago.

Tobey Tyler

The entity that Billy has called up from

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Closedand is the ghost of Tobey Tyler. After Tobey died his body was claimed by a band of Bogeys to take back to their master, the Bogeyman. Lamashtu, however, intercepted the Bogeys and claimed the child's soul as her own. Nurturing the feeling of helplessness and rage inside the young soul, Lamashtu created a twisted and demonic servant who wanted nothing more than revenge. When Billy heard the tale, Tobey started to remember what had happened to him and came back to our world to extract that revenge. Tobey is also in contact with Billy and keeps trying to get Billy to find Paul Meyer for him. Billy is absolutely terrified at this thought and can barely function anymore because of it. It was this contact that caused Billy's autism to manifest.

The End

Tobey will not rest until he has exacted revenge on all those who killed his mother.

Tidbits

Here are some ideas you can use in this adventure. None of them are mandatory so



feel free to disregard or tweak them as you see fit.

Billy Grossman has taken to drawing blue circles all over the walls. If someone can just get Billy to say why.

The nightmare Billy is having is the same on that keeps Paul Meyer up nights. Somehow, Billy's fear has established a connection not only with the vengeful spirit of Tobey Tyler but Paul Meyer's psyche as well.

The grave of Donald Riossi was recently vandalized. All the dirt has been upturned and his body is missing. Some speculate Donald has returned from the dead as a servant of the crusher.

Tired of all the years of torment, Paul finally broke down and told his wife what he had done. After she left him, Paul turned to hard drinking and has not reported to work in days. Instead, he stays inside, a loaded revolver always at his side as he contemplates what he has done and convinces himself of the only way to make restitution.

Old Man Tyler's house is a shrine to his family. Inside you will find numerous pictures, paintings, and newspaper clippings detailing everything that happened that night.

Truth or Dare

A simple get-together takes a turn for the worse.

The Bait

Remember those childhood sleep-overs? You know, a group of friends getting together to gossip, gorge themselves on pizza and pop, watch the late show, and, of course, play games. Nine-year old Shelley McDonnel and her closest friends waited anxiously for every other Friday night when they would have such get-togethers. Their parents loved them, too; except when it was their turn to host the event. One of Shelley's (and her friends') favorite games was Truth or Dare. Their games consisted of the usual array of embarrassing stunts such as ordering ten pizzas for the elderly couple next door and calling that cute boy at school (which always ended with the dared girl slamming the phone as soon as she heard his voice). This Friday night, the party would be at Shelley's house.

The girls were always excited to stay at Shelley's house because she lived down the road from Anne Harbor Cemetery. Late at night, the girls would lean far out the upstairs window of Shelley's bedroom and peer out at the large, wrought-iron fence and the macabre expanse of stone that lay beyond it. The girls would try to out-spook each other, telling outlandish stories of the possible goings on behind its heavy gates. The girls always talked about venturing into the moonlit cemetery but when push came to shove, all of them would chicken out.

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This particular night, with the slight chill of the mid-October winds, the trees half-bare, and the harvest moon aglow in the cloudless sky; the temptation was just too great. Shelley's best friend gave her the ultimate dare – go into the cemetery and stand on the grave of Crazy Joe Dade, the man who opened fire in the middle of the Main Street Parade five years earlier and fatally wounded four children and two adults before turning the gun on himself. Much to the surprise of her friends, Shelley accepted the dare.

Two of the girls stayed in Shelley's house to cover in case her parents woke up and decided to check in on the girls. The other girls accompanied Shelley to make sure she went through with the dare. The girls watched as Shelley walked through the cemetery gates and slowly made her way to Crazy Joe's grave. Hesitantly, Shelley walked up to the headstone. Looking around, she saw the two girls watching her and waved at them. The next thing the two girls knew, Shelley disappeared. The girls were frantic, how could she have possibly vanished right before their eyes?

The Hook

The most obvious way to get the players involved is for them to each play one of the girls at the sleep-over. If the players' characters are of mixed-genders, the players could also choose to play one of Shelley's siblings or a neighbor child who happened to see the girls head out toward Anne Harbor. Or all the girls could be changed to boys as it would take very liberal parents to allow members of the opposite sex to come over for sleep-over. Other possibilities include characters initiating a search for Shelley or finding themselves involved in the search by choice or not.

What happened?

So how does this story end? Below are three possibilities for you to consider. Choose which one you like best or use one of your own devising.

Visitations

Shelley McDonnel remains lost. For two weeks, the whole town was involved in a search for Shelley but with no luck. Although obviously devastated, Shelley's parents and friends began to come to terms with the fact that she may never be back and begin to start going on with their lives. Then Shelley's best friend starts having dreams. Dreams of a translucent Shelley with sad, tearful eyes calling out to her from the beyond. Shelley keeps trying to tell her something but her voice is muted and distant. Far in the background, strange creatures are running to and fro. Every time, one of them grabs Shelley into the mists, her face lingering for just a moment before disappearing into the fog. Could Shelley be trying to contact her best friend from beyond? Is it possible to get Shelley back? Could the dreams be a warning from a higher power or a clue to her whereabouts? Or is it simply a manifestation of the best friend's subconscious spawned from the guilt she feels for giving Shelley that fateful dare?

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Unholy Appetite

Just when the girls at the cemetery were about to give up on Shelley's return, they heard a rattling sound coming from behind them. When they turned around, they heard a very loud "BOO!" Both girls screamed and jumped back, but then leapt for joy when they realized that the source of their fright was Shelley. Relieved, they escorted her back to the house and confirmed that Shelley had, in fact, gone through with the dare. None of them really thought about the night at the graveyard again until, about a week later in the school cafeteria, they sat amazed as Shelley scarfed down three trays of food. As days went by it seemed as though Shelley's appetite became more and more difficult to satiate. She also seemed much quieter and not as happy or full of life as usual. She wasn't even excited about next sleep-over. They got really concerned when, one weeknight as they were hanging out at the local playground, they witnessed Shelley coming out of the woods with what ap-



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peared to be blood on her hands and around her mouth. When her friends questioned her, she acted as though she didn't see them, burping contentedly as she walked past them. Her friends decided they must find out what is going on. What had happened that night at the graveyard and what was it Shelley had eaten out in the woods? What... or *who* would Shelley eat next and why?

The Sacrifice

Deciding to investigate, the two girls wander into the cemetery. After searching for about an hour, the only thing find two things: Shelley's half of a *Best Friends* necklace and a bag of chalky, grey powder. One of the girls remembers a story she heard about a cult that was supposedly kidnapping children to sacrifice to the devil. But they both knew that just a story. Besides, they didn't see anyone else here... and that is when they start to hear chanting far off in the distance and see the light of a boufire just down the road...

Hide And Go Seek

A little boy goes to bed one night and is gone the next morning.

The Bait

Nobody's exactly sure when, or how, it happened. All that's really known is that Jimmy Sackett's parents tucked him in Thursday night, all safe and snug, right at nine o'clock exactly- his weekday bedtime. When Stan Sackett checked in on his youngest son at midnight, on his own way to bed, Jimmy was sound asleep, curled up under his favorite blanket and hugging Mr. Teddy tightly.

The next morning, his mother went to wake him for school- and discovered that he was gone. Frantic, she woke her husband and told him what happened. Phoning the authorities, a search is set in motion. Days later, there is still no sign of Jimmy.

The Hook

There are any number of reasons the players could be involved in this adventure. The most obvious would be for the individual in question to be the sibling of one of the PCs who heard something coming from Jimmy's room last night, or possibly a classmate at school. Depending on ages of the PCs, Jimmy could even be a child one of them babysits on weekends to pick up some extra cash to get that Power Grrl action figure they've wanted so badly.

Alternately, perhaps Jimmy is just the latest in a somehow-unnoticed (by the adults) trend of disappearances that our intrepid herokin have decided to investigate?

The Morning After

What happened to Jimmy? You tell me.

He Returns

They search and they search, but they do not find... weeks pass, and neither the police, nor the children themselves, can really find what happened to Jimmy. Ru-

mor even begins to circulate that perhaps he's become one of the truly unlucky ones, the ones who unfortunate enough to have wandered into Closetland.

And then... Jimmy reappears.

Wandering down the side of the road, eyes glazed, jaw slack, refusing (or unable) to speak, dirty pajamas torn and stained with blood, scratchmarks covering his body, half of Mr. Teddy trailing stuffing and being dragged along behind him. It's posited that he had been attacked by a sexual predator, but there's no evidence of it during the physical examination, and nobody is anxious to put the child through more trauma with extensive psychological testing. After a few days, he begins to recover somewhat, but still seems withdrawn and quiet - not at all the bright, cheery child who disappeared. He tells a story of seeing lights outside, and carefully sneaking out of the house, only to get lost in the woods. Details are fuzzy, but the story seems to make sense, and is, somehow, generally accepted. After two weeks, Jimmy seems to have mostly returned to his usual self. All seems to have returned to normal ...

...or has it? Is it possible that the Jimmy that's returned is, in fact, a doppelganger? What motives could it have... and, if it *is* a doppelganger... what happened to the real Jimmy? Closetland's a big, scary place, with plenty of places for a scared child to be hidden, or worse...

Down the Drain

There is a reason nobody has found Jimmy yet. Nobody has thought to check the septic tank.

A closer inspection of the Sackett's house would reveal a few discreet spatters of blood in odd places and a strangely malformed pipe running up into the toilet.

Eventually, the children discover the truth – there is something unwholesome living in the septic tank out back of the Sackett house. It always frightened Jimmy – the rumbling, the depth of it the one time he watched the sanitation workers clean out and rake the gravel beds that lay at the bottom of the deep, deep hole. And, of course, there was Halloween last year, when the neighbor kids had played a prank on Jimmy, telling him that they had heard someone calling his name from down below.

He had had nightmares for weeks afterwards – and those were just the ones he was sharing with the family. In truth, the nightmares had never stopped. Dreams of some strange, misshapen thing hiding down there, something that could stretch itself through the pipes, something that could steal little boys without a trace...

The group eventually pieces this together, perhaps remembering Jimmy's fear and, if a sibling is in the group, noticing the blood splatters, and following it to the distorted pipe. They know what they have to do – confront the abomination. Through what-

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ever means they have at their disposal, they do so, and they vanquish it, and while Jimmy's still dead, perhaps, for now, they rest a bit more easily... until another kid in school confides that he has heard a strange sound coming from the sink...

Dark Dreams

Despite the efforts of local authority, it is eventually one of the group who finds the telltale clue. A bit of stuffing, seen caught in the brush in the woods behind the house. Further investigation (either by the police, or by the children), reveals Jimmy's naked, badly beaten body, hidden under a loose tree stump the police either never noticed or did not bother to check. When confronted with this, the father seems rather defensive... then breaks down and confesses. He's not sure why he did it... he's not even sure when. He just has these broken, fragmentary images of a scared Jimmy crying as he is violated, beaten, eventually strangled... and then he woke up, lucid, horrified at what he had done to his youngest son.

The body had to be hidden, nobody could know... and if the children confronted the father with this, or confided in him, instead of going to the police, Stan will be so horrified at what he has done that he cannot just go along peacefully. The Defiler's claws having reached deep within, the father decides he needs to silence those who know once and for all.

The Carnival

An end of year field trip ends in tragedy.

The Bait

Ah, June 6th. It is the best day of the year for the children at Parbrooke Elementary School. After all, it is the last day of school. And although one might normally expect the classrooms to be full of boisterous children revelling in the joy of year-end pranks, the children of Mrs. Applewood's fifth grade class were even more excited than usual. This year, their town was hosting the Glenville carnival for the very first time, and Mrs. Applewood thought it would be a great idea to end the year by taking all of her children (at least, those whose parents had signed the permission slips) there for the last day. So at ten o'clock, all of the children and their teacher boarded the big vellow bus and took the ten-minute drive down Middleberg Road to the fairgrounds. The sixteen children were counted off into groups of four at the main gate, each given explicit instructions to stick together and watch each other closely. Mrs. Applewood informed them they had to back at the main at 2 o'clock on the dot. At 2:05, three of the four groups were safely aboard the bus. Mrs. Applewood waiting another ten minutes and when the other four children had still not shown up. Impatient, Mrs. Applewood went out to look for them. With the help of the fairground security team, she scoured the carnival. But after looking for over half an hour, there was no sign of the children

The Hook

There are two ways to take this scenario, putting the players either in the shoes of the four missing children or a group of friends who decide, after the police and parents fail to find anything, to go out on their own. Perhaps of one them saw the group going toward a particular ride or some other insight into what happened to their friends.

Where have they gone?

What happened to those four children who were seen just a few hours before?

The Devil's Cauldron

The last thing the children remember before getting in line for the Devil's Cauldron was talking to the clown. He seemed really friendly. He danced and juggled and made them each a balloon animal. It was the clown who suggested they get in line for that ride.

"It's the best ride here!" He told them. "I bet you kids are the only ones in your whole class who are brave enough to go on it! I promise, you'll never forget this day for the rest of your life!"

He was right, the ride was great. They all got into the round, yellow chamber with red flames running up the circular wall. They laughed as it started to spin and shrieked as the ground gave way under them, the force of the ride clinging them to the wall. The children couldn't wait to tell the clown how much fun they had and as soon as they were on solid ground, they went out to find him. Only... they couldn't find him. In fact, they couldn't find anyone else they knew. Realizing it was almost two o'clock they started to head toward the gate only to find it closed and the sky starting to get dark. When they turned around, the carnival was gone. All that was left was the barren field of an empty fairground.

Where did the carnival go? Is this a manifestation of Closetland? Who was that clown and, if they could find him, could he tell them how to get back?

The Haunted House

At five to two, the children decided that they best get back. Mrs. Applewood hated tardiness. Stuffed with cotton candy and sugared popcorn, they started toward the gate. They all wished there was time for one more ride. As the children passed the Haunted House they saw that there was no line. Figuring the ride couldn't be that long, they could surely fit it in before getting back on the bus. So they got into the rickety car with glee and through the house they went. In the middle of the ride their car stopped and the dim lights there were above them slowly faded out. Feeling the cold, clammy hands of something grab them, each child was pulled out of the car and into the shadows. When the lights came on, the ride finished. And an empty car departed the haunted house.

Trapped within, the children are doomed to replay each nightmarish scene over and over as each vehicle filled with happy

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Spooky Stories

carnival-goers passes by. They children hope that someone they know will take a ride through and recognize them.

The Hall of Mirrors

One of the first attractions they just had to check out was the Hall of Mirrors. Winding down the maze, the children slowly became separated from each other eventually meeting back together in the center. Trying to figure out how to get back, one of the children decided he was tired of it and broke one of the mirrors. Looking in, they saw the people walking by staring at them and making faces. Making faces back, the people would giggle at them and move on. Trying to walk through the broken glass, one of the children came out of the mirror right next to it. All of sudden, wicked and twisted little creatures started coming out of the mirrors and began stuffing them into sacks. Trying to fight them off, the children were soon overcome and dragged into the lair of the King of Pride as sacrifices to keep her young.



i wish that i was invisible

that way,

no one could see me

no one could touch me

everyone would just leave me alone



A Note From The Teacher

So I wrote this game about kids fighting werewolves. It was a simple game scratched on some scrap paper during lulls at this third-shift factory job I had. By the end of my shift, I had three and a half pages (and a character sheet). I scribbled the title "Small Fears" on top and went home. Dying to try it out, I called my buddy Mike to see if he was up for it. He was, so I picked him up and headed back to my parents' house where Mike, my brother Scott, and I sat in the basement and gamed. Since all three of us grew up in the early-to-mid eighties it seemed only logical to set the game in that time-frame. The four-hour session was rife with childhood references, bad jokes, and general "being a kid" mayhem. We had a blast. Afterwards, I filed those pages away and forgot about it.

Well... not entirely. Since before that day and up until (and hopefully after) now, I've been designing games. Some are fully realized (though rarely written down) worlds and others are collections of loose pages, floppy disks, and napkins. I have acquired quite a collection of *almost-games*. About a year and a half ago, I decided to stop going through the motions and put out a game. For real. A real game. An honestto-goodness book with art and a cool character sheet and everything. But which game would get the honors?

I decided to lay out the most promising ones and see which of them spoke to me. Which one really wanted to be made? I thought on it for a bit; comparing what I had with what was already out there. Finally, I made up my mind. I extended my hand toward this game about – but at the last minute, I grabbed those three little pieces of paper (and the character sheet) and looked at them. Less than five minutes later, I was scribbling ideas, furiously adding meat to this game where people played children... Children? That question alone almost killed this project numerous times. Who would want to play children? I mean, it's fine for a house game but game books take money. Would it pay off? I constantly hear the argument that role-playing is about being something great, something you can never be in real life. Something larger than the life we're given. But this game, this game about kids fighting werewolves wanted to be made.

The first thing I did was expand the scope. These kids weren't just going to fight werewolves but all manner of beast. Vampires, zombies, bogeymen, closet monsters... Bogeymen? Closet monsters? Everything started to change.

Huh. What if the Bogeyman was real?

Huh. What if? What if there was a whole world that was hunting children and the only hope those children had were themselves? What could that world possibly want from kids? Omnipresent evil that attacks without cause is pretty overdone so I told myself I had to come up with a reason.

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What do children have that adults don't? It hit me immediately — Innocence. That sense of wonder and awe that makes childhood so wonderful in hindsight. And that was just it, wasn't it? In hindsight. We're looking back through mature eyes, that's the only reason childhood seems so great. We had forgotten how it really was. We'd forgotten about the monsters and bullies. The tales we'd hear and the terror we'd feel. It was right in front of my face — the memories of childhood were a lie.

Well, I'd need a name for this place, this den of evil. Something that not only evoked an ominous tone but reflected the idea of childhood fear. Closetland. Wow. What a great name! What a great fu- hey, wasn't there a movie called Closetland?

Well, almost. The movie's name is Closet Land. Two words, not one. And it's a great film. If you haven't seen it. I highly recommend you do. Warning — it's a hit artsy and there aren't any explosions or mid town car chases but chances are, if you're reading this book, you're okay with that. Anyway, back to the game.

So I had a better idea of what this game was going to be about. Now I just needed a name for it. Small Fears? That had to go. Something dark, something cool... Hmm. Little Fears? Well, it was better than Small Fears. I'd come up with something better later.

I was fortunate enough at the time to work with some pretty creative people. A few of whom were into gaming. So during an eight month hiatus from work (oh, we showed up, clocked in, sat at our cubicles, and got paid — we just didn't do anything), Little Fears evolved. The idea of this council, this gathering of evil things got stuck in my head. Ooh, and maybe an even more powerful thing that kept Closetland alive... yeah. Yeah, this was going to work.

And then something changed. Somehow, Little Fears got serious and, in turn, the horrors got more real. I started reading articles on incest, child abuse, missing children, child murders... and Little Fears got even more serious. My whole world became absorbed in the evils we - yes, we - inflict upon the young. As a society we shove them in the background and force their maturity or we shelter them to the point of arrested development. My god... I read more articles, more statistics. Saw more photos, more tortured faces. Watched more documentaries. More and more, Little Fears became very, very serious. And very dark. So dark and depressing and dripping with very real, very human evil - it was utterly unplayable. It had become a journal of a game designer slipping further into the abyss and a bad one at that. I put it away. That was it. I had given it my shot. But I couldn't do it. I couldn't make Little Fears.

Perspective is a good thing. A great thing. One of the most important things in an artist's life. I had put Little Fears down but only literally. I would still lie awake at night thinking about it. Seeing the faces, rereading the articles in my head. Then I took a

step back. Then a few more. I had concentrated Little Fears too much. I needed to recapture some of that lost magic. That mystical element. But I needed to dim the lights on it. Add some of the sinister and real evil of the world. And when I combined the second draft with the third — I had a game again.

Throughout this whole time, of course, various systems came and went. From rolling pairs of mixed dice against GMgenerated difficulty numbers to poorly devised (and derivative) dice pools that were plain embarassing. In the end, I decided I wanted something simple. Something reminiscent of a board game and with the help of Jocelyn Robitaille and Chris Fedak one night in IRC, the mechanic was realized. The Qualities had always been there, usually providing bonuses to rolls but the concept of adding an extra die really appealed to me. After that was worked out, I played around with various character creation methods. The result, obviously, being what's detailed in these pages. But the one sticking point in the system came when it was time to flesh out the monsters. Giving the monsters concrete stats, even with the standard "change at will" disclaimer, just never felt right. These were monsters. Huge, terrifying manifestations of fear. Pain personified. They shouldn't boil down to a handful of numbers. Thus the idea that children had to devise a way to defeat the monsters was born. That they had to overcome themselves to overcome the monsters - after all, that is what Little Fears is about.

Incorporating all this into the pages I already had was the next daunting task but I set out on it and many months (and headaches and missed hours of sleep and cancelled appointments and neglected family members and friends) later, here it is just a few hours before this book goes to print and everything has come together.

Before I go, I'd like to recognize some people who were integral to the evolution and completion of Little Fears. So integral that a simple name-dropping on the credits page doesn't do them justice. To Greg Oliver, whose initial response of "Well, to be honest, J ... I wouldn't play it" just made me work harder. If you stop by and see Key 20 at a convention, Greg will be the one dressed as the Bogeyman running demos. To Adam Weber, an original Key 20 conspirator and damn fine poet. May your further adventures down the road of life make everything you have been through worthwhile. You're my brother, man, and I love you. To Tim Miller, who is keeping the indie spirit strong with style. May Six Gallery Press continue to put out uncompromised work. To Paul Jessup, you obnoxious throwback. Your imagination makes it hard for me to think I'm doing anything original. To my brother Scott, you have more to give than you are putting out. Greatness awaits you, come claim it. To Paul Clawson, the man who can turn putty into art. I can't wait until people see how you gave that all important third dimension to the Kings. To Seth Ben-Ezra, who went above and beyond the call of duty to support Little Fears and was always

there to listen to me ramble during any number of my notorious "designer breakdowns." All the while dealing with working on his own Dark Omen Games. To all the artists, whose outstanding work helped breathe life into these pages. These people put up with way too much for what I was paying them. To Julie Hoverson, a woman too busy for her own good. To Beverly Poole (the one and only Amory Withers) who proved that ten-year olds are smarter than we give them credit for. To everyone online that has shown support through email, forum posts, chatroom banter, and by visiting our website, thank you for making me feel welcome. To Shelby Mallow, who puts up with me far more than

can be expected and still manages to inspire me. Here's to a lifetime together. To my mother and father and my Aunt Eva, who don't always understand what I'm doing but support it anway. And, finally, to you.

Because, while Little Fears is a playable game, it is not a complete game. Far from it. And without you, it never will be. You need to add your own characters, your own monsters. You need to tell your own stories. And until you've told them all, Little Fears will never be done.

Have fun. And sleep tight.

Jason L Blair



MAYBE ONE DAY

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The second second

ALL CHILDREN WILL BE FREE

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RIAKEPL

- DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

IN THIS PLAY GROUND

- BIKE RONG AND SKATE

NOT ALLOWED N PLAYER

- FOOD AND GLASS CONTA

ALLOWED ON PLAY EQUIP

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I hang out with

I know no matter what, I can always talk to

When I grow up I wanna be a

because

but_______is my best friend.

My favorite person is

I have a ______ and it's special because

My biggest fear is_

When I get scared, I_

When I know monsters are around, I

What's your homelife like?

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Remember when you were young and you were afraid of all those things that went bump in the night?

Ever wonder where they went?

Little Fears

-the role-playing game of childhood terroryou're not scared, are you?



