CRYPTIC CAMPAIGNS

THE WORLD OF
TALES
FROM THE
CRYPT

THE WORLD OF TALES FROM THE CRYPT

CRYPTIC CAMPAIGNS

DESIGN
STEVEN BROWN & MIKE MONTESA

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL
GREG FARSHTEY

DEVELOPMENT AND EDITING
GREG FARSHTEY

COVER DESIGN AND GRAPHICS
THOMAS ONEILL

INTERIOR ILLUSTRATIONS
TIM BOBKO, STEVE GARCIA, RON KULP, BRIAN SCHOMBURG

MASTERBOOK/D6 CONVERSION
GEORGE STRAYTON

TALES FROM THE CRYPT

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome, kiddies! It's your old pal, the Cryptkeeper, here to share a few more morbid musings with you. It seems some of you still have some nerve left after our last little meeting and came back for more. That's all right, I like people who come back ... ah, but you weren't dead, were you? At least ... not yet. Hehehehehehehe!

We'll talk further, but first, a word from our sponsor. (Funny, I never had to do that on cable ...)

There are a lot of horror roleplaying games on the market today. Some classic favorites, a fresh crop of new entries, and a few that fall somewhere in the middle (*with a sort of dull thud*). What makes *The World of Tales from the Crypt* worth your time and money?

Like all horror games and fiction, *The World of Tales From The Crypt* is more about salvation than it is about damnation. The characters interact with people who are teetering on the edge of the abyss and attempt to pull them back (*or push them over!*) Virtue is rewarded and evil is punished (*but only on alternate Tuesdays*). The one point central to all *Tales From The Crypt* stories is: what goes around, comes around.

Many people will pick up this volume or the *Tales From The Crypt* WorldBook based solely on the recognition value of the Cryptkeeper. That is our hook ... the thing that gets you, the reader, this far. What will keep them (and you) coming back for more is the game itself. *Tales From The Crypt* is a horror game like none other. It does not limit itself to one view of the world, one ideology or even one set of occult beliefs. It is a game about the human condition. Wherever men are, in the annals of history, the far-flung reaches of the future or any factual or fictional place in between, *Tales From The Crypt* is there too.

That's right. Wherever people are growing the food they eat and planting their in-laws, I'll be there ... wherever there's a riot because the hardware store is out of quicklime, I'll be there ... I'll be in the way grown men men scream when they're terrified, and the way women shiver when they know hubby's home and he brought the axe. Hehehehehehe!

The sad part is, he really believes all that stuff. Sure, Tales From The Crypt *is about the human condition — critical, serious, stable ... dead. Hehehehe! What we're about is breaking out some pretzels, pouring out some soda, sitting around the kitchen table rolling dice, and leaving your best friends drooling, fear-fraught wrecks when you're through! And don't you forget it.*

He's making noises like he wants to talk again ...
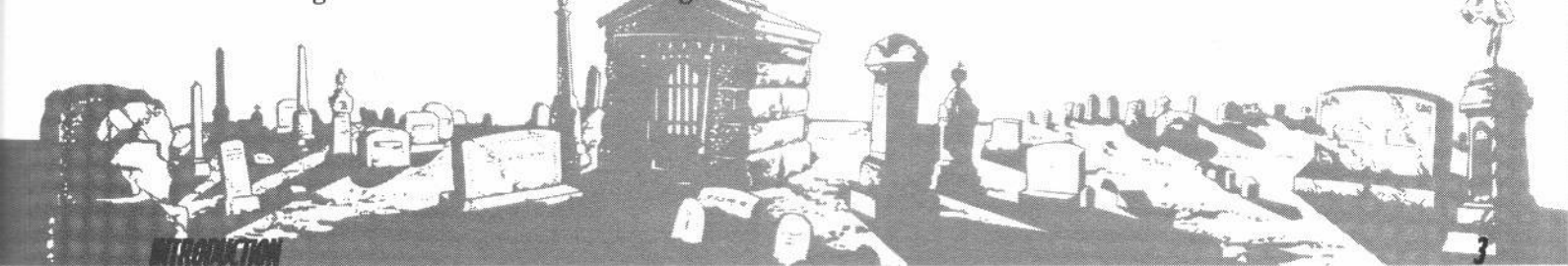
ABOUT THIS BOOK

Cryptic Campaigns is an aid to gamemasters running campaigns in *The World of Tales From The Crypt*. It contains advice on how to make your campaigns scarier, more interesting, and easier to manage. We also tossed in some optional rules, just for the heck of it, and a full-length adventure, *Check Out Time*.

But the most important thing this book has is me. If you really want to know how things work in the Crypt, I'm the one to talk to ... the chief corpse, the big bogeyman, the head horror. Hehehehe! I'll be clawing my way in now and then to make sure you don't get any silly notions about "being fair" or the "fun is in the slaying" ... um, I mean "playing.

(By the way, *Cryptic Campaigns* is a supplement to *The World of Tales From the Crypt* — you'll need the WorldBook and *MasterBook* to play.)
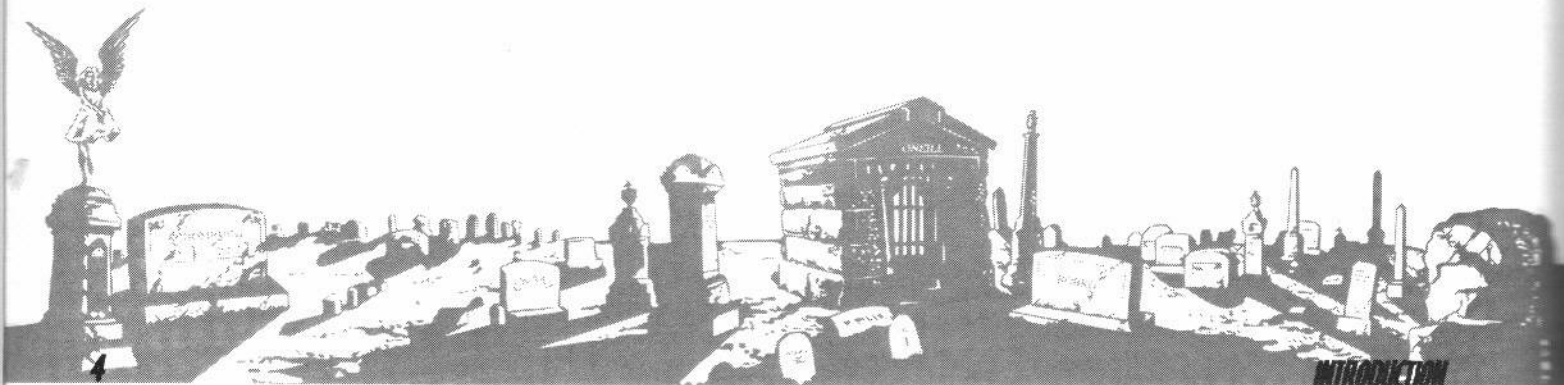
I
THE ONLY THING YOU HAVE TO FEAR...

Well, hello there, boils and ghouls! You're just in time to help me whip up some shepherd's pie. I've got the pie, I've got the shepherd ... now if I could just get rid of all these sheep! Hehehehehe! There's nothing like a good meal ... candlelight ... a soft dirge in the background ... maybe some finger food (I go for thumbs, myself) ... but my favorite feast is pure fear. Ah, delectable delirium, the nectar of nightmares, nothing can poison your palate quite like that. Gets me right here ... or is it here? ... well, it used to be there, but I haven't had anything there in years! Hehehehehe!

Time for a little more terrifying text ...

Fear.

That's what it's all about in any horror roleplaying game, but especially so in *Tales From The Crypt*. This is a game about the darkest parts of the human psyche. Fear of the unknown. Fear of the truth. Fear of retribution. Fear of fear itself. Watch any *Tales From The Crypt* episode or read any *Tales From The Crypt* comic and you'll see that the characters are always afraid of something. Sometimes this fear pushes them on to seek forgiveness, sometimes it paralyzes them into complete inaction, but most often it leads them even further down the path toward damnation.

In *The World of Tales From The Crypt*, it is important for the gamemaster to be able to pull the strings of his players; to push them to the heights of heroism and drop them to the pits of despair ... but most of all to scare the pants off them.

JUST WHO ARE WE SCARING, ANYWAY?

Tales From The Crypt is a game ... it is a scary game ... but it is just a game. We will be spending a large part of this chapter discussing fear and how to instill it, but exactly who are we trying to make fearful? Roleplaying games have two layers which gamemasters must concern themselves with ... the Character Level and the Player Level.

The Character Level is everything about the story: the locations, the plot devices, the abilities, the equipment, and, of course, the characters themselves. In other words, it is fictional.

The Player Level is everything else associated the game: the rules, the dice, the pencils, the table, the pizza, the noisy, nosy siblings, and, of course the people sitting all around you ... the players. In other words, it is real.

Creating fear on the Character Level is easy. The gamemaster describes a situation, the player rolls some dice, and a pronouncement is made: Jim the Detective is scared. The player controlling Jim makes him react in ways a scared person might, but there is no real fear here.
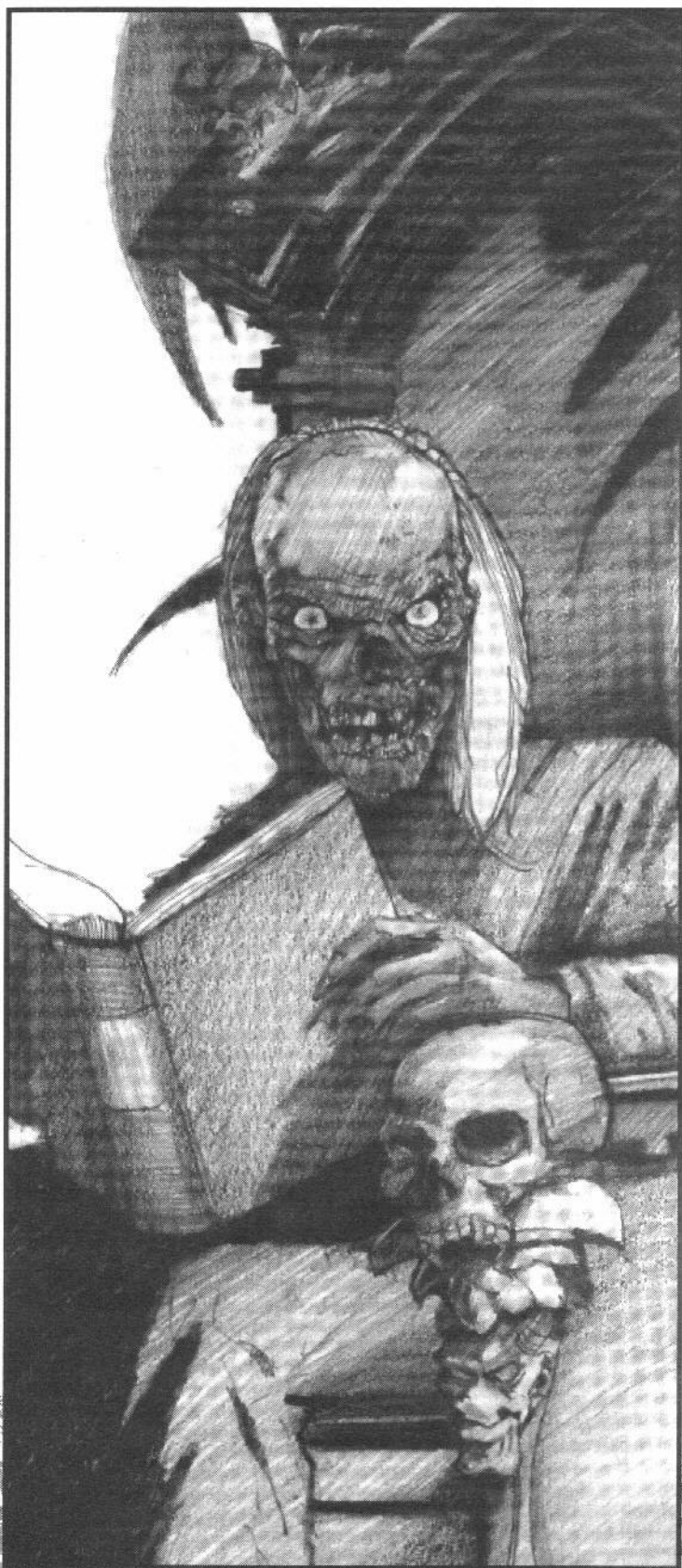
Creating fear on the Player Level is difficult. The gamemaster must not only describe the goings on in the Character Level, but also give them an immediacy that touches the players themselves; even though the events described are imaginary, the players can't help but look over their own shoulders ... just in case. The action happens on the Character Level, but the fear lives on the Player Level. (*Fourth floor ... ladies' underwear, notions and lotions, clubs and cleavers, white-lipped and trembling ...*)

There is a problem with this, and it is one that every gamemaster should examine before every game session. Anything that happens on the Player Level has repercussions beyond the game. Many of the ideas in this chapter suggest that you try new and innovative ways to bring fear to your games, but be sensible about what you do to generate fear in your players. Some guidelines to follow include:

Do *not* use anything which might cause actual harm to someone. Props and such are fine, but do not bring anything to the game which can cause serious injury. A realistic prop enhances play, a real weapon has no place in a roleplaying session.

Do *not* allow players to do something which might cause someone actual harm. Play-acting can add a new dimension of drama and tension to your game sessions, and good roleplaying should be rewarded. However, to paraphrase a legal truism, roleplaying stops where someone else's body begins.

Do *not* do anything to cause others undue mental anguish. Obviously you are trying to scare your players, but be sensitive to the fact that every individual has one or more taboo areas, objects or subjects that for one reason or another are too sensitive to be touched upon, even in a game. If you find one of your player's taboo areas (or know of one before play begins), do not use it in the game.

Do *not* host a session anywhere unsafe. Playing on-location is one of the best ways to give a game session the correct atmosphere, but do so within the bounds of common sense. Do not trespass, or go to places that are unsafe or where access is in any way prohibited or regulated.

Remember, fear may be the object of the adventure, but the object of the game is for everyone to have fun.

(*No, no, no ... the object of the game is for me to have fun! Whose Crypt is this, anyway?*)

THE CHALLENGE OF HORROR

There are basically two ways to scare people. One way is to surprise them. Just jumping out from behind a corner at someone is usually enough to make them leap back a foot or two. The scary thing is that it was unexpected. Any events, people or monsters (sometimes it's hard to tell the difference) can provoke the most basic, reactive fears if you are unsuspecting.

The other way to scare people is to use their imaginations against them. In *Tales From The Crypt* this is an important and powerful tool in the gamemaster's bag of tricks. When faced with the unknown, the human mind offers its own answers, filling in the blanks with the worst possible thing it can conjure. Often those imagined answers are more frightening than the reality. And in the end, the scariest part of any frightening situation is the time you had absolutely no idea what was going to happen next.

In *Tales From The Crypt,* the goal is more than just completing the adventure … the goal is to get scared, to experience horror. In a horror roleplaying game, the challenge the gamemaster faces is not only to provide an exciting and engaging adventure, but to have the players feel a real kind of fear or horror at the situations their characters find themselves in. This is no easy task. When people sit down to play a horror game, they expect bad things to happen. But they still want to get scared. If the session isn't scary, they may as well have played another genre; non-frightening horror games very quickly degenerate into parody, leaving everyone dissatisfied.

Why do people want to play a game to get scared? For the same reason they ride rollercoasters, go bungee jumping and watch horror movies: fright is an intense, thrilling experience when you know you are safe. The adrenaline rush and other physical reactions are real and, many find, quite pleasurable when you know (or are at least reasonably certain) that no actual harm will come to you. The problem is, once you have experienced the fright of a certain situation, it is never quite as frightening the next time.

Most people will react with fright when presented with a sudden shock . But after a while, this doesn't work anymore. They become desensitized. The movie method of having monsters burst out of the closet works once or maybe twice, but then the players will get used to you jumping out of your chair yelling, "Surprise!" It will become a simple matter for their characters to either level their guns and fire or just run away no matter what is leaping at them. They might be scared in that they want their characters to survive but it's not really fear. And since fear is the emotion you are trying to invoke, and they are trying to experience, your players will likely become bored.

Remember, roleplaying games are seen only in the mind's eye, not on a movie screen. Players need to be presented with ideas and descriptions that will allow their imaginations to paint vivid pictures of what's going on. Once this mental picture has begun to take form, the players' imaginations will create an atmosphere of fear on their own.

Horror stories are often about personal failings and flaws. To this end, in many of your *Tales From The Crypt* adventures you will need to get inside the character's heads to find out what sets them off … what they are really afraid of. This gives you and your players a lot of opportunities for developing and expanding the characters' personalities.

Of course, you don't always have to play head games with the characters. A good, straightforward bug hunt is always good for getting the adrenaline going and can provide as many shocks and scares as a psychological adventure. *Tales From The Crypt* allows you to take both roads. Either one, if done well, will provide your players with a terrifying roleplaying experience.

So how do you achieve this effect in a *Tales From The Crypt* adventure? How do you hold a mirror in front of the players' faces and get them to see the inner

demons you want them to? The following techniques apply to any genre of roleplaying, but for horror games they are particularly important.

BALANCE

When you are running a *Tales From The Crypt* adventure, it is important to remember to keep the characters off balance. This is a good way to intensify all the fearful elements of the story. When centered, calm and resolved, the characters will run roughshod over your pitfalls, monsters, and even your most twisted plots. They should not know what to expect next and should always be on guard.

Ironically, the first step to getting your players off-balance is to give them a feeling of calm, centered normalcy. Just as with sudden shocks, a feeling of everything being wrong, of constant uncertainty, quickly loses its effect. If nothing is ever as it should be, then how can the characters ever really be surprised? But once the characters realize that, at least part of the time, the world works exactly the way it should, then the players' sense of equilibrium can be upset in any number of ways.

How do you keep them guessing … ?

YOU CAN RUN, BUT YOU CAN'T HIDE

No matter what the adventure is about or what threat the characters face, you should make them realize that they are never truly safe. Whether it's a monster out to get them or their own consciences, if they are not vigilant, the bad guys will get them.

Make sure you enforce this, too. Whenever the characters get slack, hit them with something to wake them up. The bad guys are not going to slack off just because the characters do. They'll take every advantage they can get.

This will force the characters to try to stay aware all the time. Constant awareness is tiring. The characters will be ready for anything for a while, and you must be patient. At some point they will get tired or forget about their security and then you can send something after them. You may even want to wait a little longer, until they are completely satisfied that they're in the clear, before you go after them. A good time for this sort of thing is after a big action scene, or at the very end of the adventure. The characters will be thinking it's all over but, unfortunately for them, it's not.

There are other ways of keeping them alert. If they are tracking a murderer or some kind of monster, have the monster leave hints that it is pursuing them at the same time. Evidence of the creature's passing through presumed safe areas does a lot to shake people up and put them on their guard.

If your story deals with horror of a more personal nature, a character fighting his or her own urges, the character may be afraid to say or do anything that will trigger these urges. Needless to say, the character will likely go out of his way to avoid these triggers, so you will have to steer him into them. The best way to do this is to make the goal of the adventure difficult, if not impossible, to reach if the character doesn't try to face down his urges. For example, a cowardly character is put on the spot when the rest of his companions are incapacited or otherwise taken out of action. He has to be the one to face down the thing in the basement or else everyone dies.

CHANGING UP

If you constantly face the players with the same types of problems and threats they are going to get bored. Worse, they'll know what to expect and they will prepare for it. When that happens you won't be able to scare them anymore (in fact you may not be able to get them to want to play anymore). To avoid this you must vary your plots, settings, and themes from adventure to adventure.
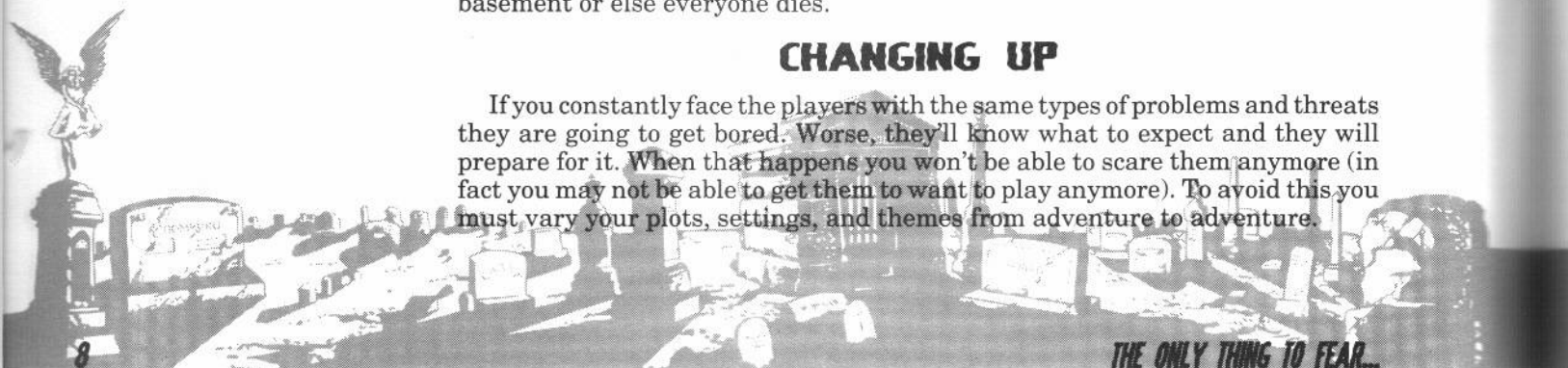
If you change things around every time you sit down to play, that will certainly keep your players guessing. But you can also throw them for a loop by running similar adventures for a while. You could run a couple of action-oriented monster hunts and then switch to a much slower paced, but more terrifying, story. Perhaps the sneakiest way to change things up would be to have several stories with disturbingly similar opening acts which develop into vastly different adventures.

The plots in horror stories are often fairly straightforward: here's the threat, run away or destroy it. There are certain twists you can give these plots to liven them up. If it's a monster hunt, have the monster be a friend of theirs (in a werewolf or vampire story for example) or even one of the characters themselves. If the characters can empathize with the thing they are hunting, the anguish and pain is doubled when the time comes to destroy it.

In a one-on-one situation with just one player and the gamemaster, the character is the monster plot is a good one. The realization of who the monster is should come slowly. There should be evidence of the facts but it should be introduced subtly at first. Only later, when the clues all seem to point inward, should the real situation become clear.

The final kicker to the change up category is the odd coincidence. This works with any of the situations described above. When the change of pace is discovered, or suspected, by the characters, supply them with an odd coincidence which explains the whole situation from their original line of thinking. Make them reevaluate the theories they have already dismissed. They should never be certain of the truth until after the case is solved … and even then they may never be 100 percent sure.

For example, the character is a homicide detective investigating a series of murders. The clues at the scenes of the crimes have so far led nowhere. The gamemaster should lay plenty of trails for the character to follow, and she may even be led to believe she knows who the killer is. However, after the next murder, a witness gives a description of the suspect that is surprisingly close to the character's appearance. The character may not pick up on this at first, but that's okay. Later she wakes up feeling like she's got a bad hangover, but doesn't remember drinking anything the night before. Depending on how sharp the player is, you could also say there are some spots on her clothes that look like blood. How much to reveal is up to you, and how fast you want the character to suspect what's going on. At the scene of the next murder, our investigator enters the scene with the forensics team and, before anyone else sees it, notices her own wallet lying on the floor of the victim's apartment!

You can take it from there. The detective is put on the spot and must decide what to do next. Is she the one committing the murders? Is someone trying to frame her? The next step is up to her.

FISH OUT OF WATER

A great way to keep the characters off-balance is to put them in situations for which they are not adequately skilled or equipped. Not having the proper tools to handle a given situation makes people very insecure. When the situation is potentially dangerous, panic is not uncommon. In such a tight spot, once the characters realize that they are out of their league, the fear will come down on them like an anvil.

Characters whose skills lean heavily in one direction, combat for example, are generally not prepared for other tasks like investigation or technical skills. This works the other way of course, with non-combat-oriented characters suffering in a fight. Characters who are jacks of all trades usually have their skills spread so thinly that, although they can attempt most types of actions, they are reliable at none. So force intellectual types to take on physical challenges and make fighters use their brains. It only takes a quick glance at the character sheets to know what everyone is weak in.

Now, you may be saying that's hardly fair. And you know what? You're right!!! But who ever said life, let alone a roleplaying game, is fair? And in a game where the characters are at the twisted mercies of the Cryptkeeper ... well, if they don't *expect* to be treated unfairly then they will not live long enough to learn their mistake.

When the characters are skilled but under-equipped, there should be something lying around that they can be put to good use, but it should not be immediately apparent. They must look beyond the surface of the items at hand, discard their assumptions about its uses and find new ones before it is too late. Everyone has seen at least one horror picture where all the characters can lay their hands on are torches and kitchenware, and somehow they manage to survive. With some imagination, the characters can surely cobble together what they need. It may not be very professional looking, and it might possibly fail to work (always at the moment they need it most), but it's better than nothing. And just thinking of it will give the players a sense of accomplishment, which may be enough to keep their spirits high even when their characters are dying by the truck load.

YOU CAN'T TRUST ANYONE THESE DAYS

When the characters have their backs to the wall and nowhere to go, they will turn to their friends. Of course, your friends are the ones who can hurt you the most, and if you can't trust them, who can you trust? Having a trusted buddy sell them out is a great way to upset and shock the characters (if not make them really bitter and vengeful).

There will be many gamemaster characters that the characters meet in each adventure. Some will be trustworthy, others will not. Suspicious characters will make it a rule not to trust anyone, but human nature is such that people want to find someone to trust. Give the characters someone they can count on, someone who comes through for them time after time. Whoever this gamemaster is, you'll have to figure out a motive for him early on. Is his intention to use the characters right from the start? Or does he actually like and respect the characters? In the former case, it will be much easier to have that non-player character betray them, since he was planning it all along. In the latter case, there must be some kind of pressure brought to bear to force the betrayal, otherwise it won't be believable. The gamemaster character's family or loved ones could be threatened in some way. Money, while generally a good motivator, is usually not enough to get someone to sell out a true friend. But if it is, the betrayal is much more keenly felt.

You can also make the characters suspicious of themselves. Self-doubt is a great way to ruin the most steadfast of characters. When characters make a choice, there should be some question about the repercussions of what they are doing. Besides whatever solution the characters are trying to achieve, there should be a down side to any action they take. For example, making the characters choose between themselves and their friends. They will get the result they desire, but it will destroy the lives of the people who have helped them through their struggles. If that's too easy, make a character choose between his conscience and his own life. He can succeed at the task before him, but only if he violates his most sacred beliefs.

Another good way of sowing self doubt is to make the characters fight fire with fire. That is, in order to combat some great evil, the characters must sink to that level.

You can also make the characters in a group suspicious of each other. This can lead to a lot of confusion and chaos, not to mention bad feelings among the players, so you have to be careful. If the group is tightly knit and they suspect that one of their number is a traitor, everyone is going to be pretty edgy about it. If or when the betrayal comes, the characters are likely to drop anything else they're doing to take their anger out on the double-crosser.

When you use any of these methods of undermining the characters' trust in each other and the world around them, try to make it a part of the overall story. That way, when things blow up there will be some logical basis for it, other than simply messing with the players' heads.

Again make sure you vary the pattern so the characters can never be sure who is being straight with them. As with the sense of balance as a whole, if no one is ever to be trusted, it will be very difficult to catch the characters in this trap.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

One way to make sure the characters are off-balance and stay off-balance (making them more susceptible to shock and horror) is to denty them time to think when the pressure is on. Believe me, there is nothing like a dwindling time constraint to make even the most experienced roleplayer freeze with indecision.

During action scenes, when things are moving fast, there is no time for carefully planned actions. The character must act, and act now. Anytime the action goes to combat rounds, don't give a player too much time to think or discuss what to do. If he is taking too long to decide what to do, give him a countdown. Hold up your hand and say, "Five … four … three … two … one!" If no action is taken by the time you finish the five count, treat it as though the character just stands there dumbfounded. "The monster decides it likes the way your friends smell and decides to sit down to lunch." As the alien horror is snacking on the characters, their players will be screaming at their shell-shocked friend to "Do something!!!"

Even when things are not being handled in split-second rounds, the timing of events is still important. You have to make sure that certain events in the adventure happen at the right time, especially if the characters are to have any chance of reacting to them. Important or climactic events must have a build-up. Sometimes it is more frightening to draw things out, make them take longer than they should, just to force the characters to wait and ponder what could possibly be waiting for them in the depths of the cave they've entered.

Remember, you are trying to keep them off balance. Never let them become comfortable with the pace at which events are happening. Constantly speed up and slow down the action so that the characters have no idea whether they should carefully examine the hallway or run out the front door as quickly as they can.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE CONFUSION

If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs, and blaming it on you … you're swinging a mean axe, baby! Hehehehehehe!

It is quite possible, especially in action scenes, for the characters to miss something. You can slip things into play when they're not looking. Make secret *perception* checks for each character, because someone might notice. Be fair (*just this once*): if their roll succeeds, give a note with the information on it to the player and let her decide what to do. The other players won't know unless she tells them and her description may not be very good (thus causing more confusion). Pass notes to the other players too, notes that don't have any real info on them, just things like, "Don't say anything, fold this up and stick it in your pocket." This will go a long way toward creating confusion among the players.

If everyone is running around like chickens with their heads cut off, you must be careful not to let things bog down. Don't lose control of the scene. Keep things moving at a steady pace, with the bad guys doing whatever they're supposed to do, and allowing each character to do what he wants when it's his turn. The idea is to not let the players argue over what to do, thus slowing down the game. There is a problem that has to be dealt with *now*. Any evaluations of individual performance can come later, assuming everyone survives.

PARANOIA — OR IS THAT SOME OTHER GAME?

With all the generally bad things that happen to their characters, the players will eventually become suspicious of nearly anything you, the gamemaster, say. Again you can use this to your advantage. By merely mentioning something in a scene that stands out, the players will instantly read some significance into it and likely end up chasing down leads that get them nowhere. After some time is spent running around on wild goose chases, the characters (and the players) will be exhausted. When they are, that's when you get 'em!

IMAGINATION: YOUR OWN WORST ENEMY

In the absence of any facts, the human mind always makes up its own answers. They may not be rational, they may not be consciously believed but they are still there, affecting our decision making. In *Tales From The Crypt,* using the player's imaginations against them is probably the most powerful fear-inducing tactic at your disposal. To that end, what techniques can you use to really send chills up their spines?

Build up the suspense. Lead the characters astray. Let them think they have it all figured. Supply them with half-truths. Any or all of these techniques will intensify the horror in your stories.

THE BLOODY HOOK

The "hook," in roleplaying parlance, is the event or reason that the characters get involved in an adventure. When the characters bite, you begin to reel them into the plot. Of course, in *Tales From The Crypt*, the hook is also the the thing that sets them up for disaster; at the same time it pulls them into the plot, it pushes them towards the precipice.

The bait for the hook is often money; the characters are hired to do a job (private investigators for example). This is usually effective but sometimes the characters won't take the job for any amount. You can also make the bait some kind of personal interest (like the kidnapping of a character's friends or family). And, of course, you can always get them into the situation simply by having the Cryptkeeper drop them in (*aren't I a handy ghoul to have around?*)

The hook for a horror game has to be something that stirs the imagination right from the start. Crime is commonplace. And murders are a dime a dozen. A murder with some ritualistic overtones will increase the characters' interest. Even better is a murder case that starts out normally, then gets more and more twisted as the investigation proceeds. Although they may start out investigating because someone is paying them to, as the plot twists and the clues become more enigmatic, the characters will find themselves working harder and harder, taking a personal interest in the solution. Money may have gotten them started, but they will soon be pushing themselves into places and situations that no amount of money would ever tempt them to.

Another good hook is otherwise normal people doing really weird things. (*You know, the sweet little old lady down the street chops the mailman to pieces; the neighborhood pharmacist poisons half the town; a girl actually* wants *to go out with you. Hehehehehe!*) Present the characters with a normal citizen, perhaps a gamemaster character they are familiar with, doing something inexplicable or accused of a monstrous crime. Watch how quickly they become engrossed in the investigation.

Perhaps instead of the murder being the work of just one sick individual, the whole town is involved. As the characters investigate what seems like an ordinary homicide, more and more people are implicated, and the hook will sink deeper as the characters realize what is going on. Have characters that at first

appeared to be totally innocent be the ones most deeply involved. When the characters try to press people for more information, they find themselves being turned away. And the helpful folks in the quiet little town all seem to have a brutal gleam in their eyes as the characters walk down the street. Can they be trusted? They can't all be involved ... can they?

SLOW REALIZATIONS ARE THE BEST REALIZATIONS

This goes along with the section on Timing. The goal or threat in most of your adventures should not always be very clear, at least at the start. In some cases, the goal may not become apparent until just before the climactic scene. The reason for this is simple: if the characters know what's going on right from the start, they will be more prepared, more confident and not nearly as easily scared.

This is not to say that you shouldn't give the characters something to focus on, only that each short term goal should be part of a larger, more sinister, puzzle. Unless the characters periodically step back to take stock of things, they often won't realize that different events are related. When they begin to get a sense of the big picture, the fear will set in. By the time the players realize that their characters are in way over their heads, it's too late to back out.

As you increase the depth of the story slowly, you are also building tension. If you do it right, you'll have your players chomping at the bit to find out what happens next and, at the same time, covering their eyes for fear of what it will be.

For example, the characters are investigating a seemingly meaningless series of robberies. Small curio shops are being broken into, but the most valuable pieces are being passed over in favor of what can best be termed junk. At first, these are relatively non-violent crimes, until someone tries to stop the thieves — and gets torn apart for his troubles. What's driving these robbers?

Little by little, the crimes become more bloody, more bizarre ... until the characters finally realize that when all those pieces of "junk" are joined together, they form a powerful arcane artifact. And worse, while they've been hunting the thieves ... the thieves have been hunting them!

As each level of the story is reached, you should keep giving the characters more clues as to what's really going on to keep them hooked. There are more direct ways to keep them going, however, if they decide to just give up (in this case, the threat from the thieves. The only way to be rid of them is to get to the bottom of the whole thing.) And in

extreme cases, the Cryptkeeper himself will lend a claw to keep the characters involved.

You'll find that the characters often won't connect all the clues or will make false assumptions. In the example above, the characters might think the robberies are just petty thefts and the murder an aberration. Go ahead and let the characters believe whatever they want. A character who thinks he's got the case solved will only be more shocked when he finds out the truth.

LEAVE ROOM FOR SPECULATION

Gradual realization of what's going on will build tension, but working right along with that will be the player's imaginations. In the absence of any hard facts, they are going to come up with their own ideas. This is probably the best way to create a sense of fear and terror in your adventures. Some of these ideas may even be worse than what you had planned.

For example, we have a night watchman in a downtown department store. The store is old and huge, filled with unknown storage areas and passages. Our watchman must make his rounds throughout the night, a simple job but there are some parts he hates. Our friend has an active imagination and he always feels like the mannequins are watching him. He crosses the floor quickly, heading for the stairwell. This is the part he hates the most. The stairwells are pitch black and all he has is a flashlight. As he goes from landing to landing his mind is racing, telling him there's nothing around the next turn. Or is there? Probably not … but he breaks into a cold sweat every time he comes this way.

When describing various scenes, certainly discuss everything they ought to know, but don't go into more detail than is necessary to outline what the character can see. This will prompt specific questions from the players, whose minds are working overtime jumping to conclusions. Give them a frame for the scene, but make them ask about what's on the canvas.

As the players are discussing what's going on, if they come up with something wonderful (or terrible, as the case may be) that you hadn't ever thought of … go ahead and use it if you can. Prove them right once or twice and they will think they've got you figured out. The next time it happens, tweak their idea in some way that makes it even worse and they'll really be in for a shock. The horror exists only in their minds, but your job is to turn their own minds against them.

From the standpoint of creating horror, subtlety is always preferred. Give the players something to focus on that appears perfectly innocent and add in the evil and corruption later. In the adventure, give hints and clues to the true nature of this evil and at some point the characters will realize who the real enemy is. The appearance of normalcy will leave a lot of room for speculation. Was it really the devil that made him kill those 25 people and sprinkle them over baked goods? Or was he just in search of a new taste treat?

SHOCK TREATMENT

While an impending sense of doom is good for creating fear and tension over time, there is nothing like a quick shock to break the tension and make everyone's hair stand on end. Movies of all genres rely on the shock technique and you can take a big cue from this.

However, overusing this effect gets boring very fast. If you are constantly having things jump out at the characters, the choice of whether to fight or run away becomes an automatic reaction. The purpose of a shock is to scare the characters into momentary inaction.

Timing and variety are the keys to creating effective shocks:

Timing: Timing is the most critical, and difficult, part of properly using shocks in an adventure. Basically, you want to pop something on the characters when they are not expecting it. However, even if they think they are ready for it, a shock can still be effective.
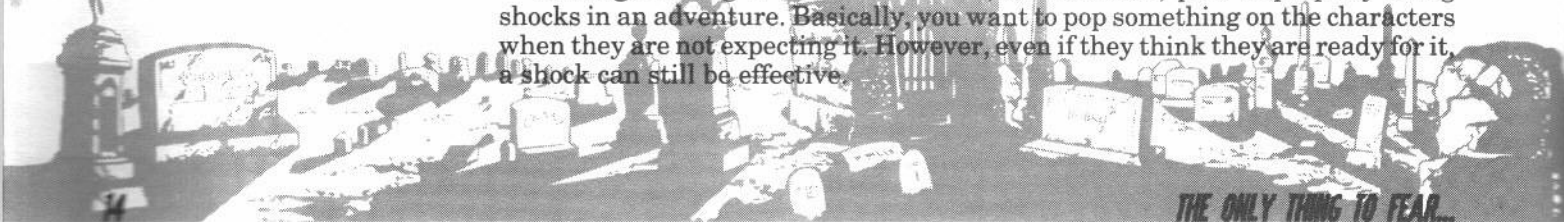
Build up the shock by letting the characters know that something is out there, waiting for them, and it could show up at any second. Give them the feeling that their worst nightmare is about to take shape and confront them. But from where? What does it look like? What can it do? If you leave hints and clues to these questions, the characters will assume the worst and the fear will build up. Sometimes it is far more frightening to show them glimpses of the horror awaiting them, rather than let them see it directly. Then hit them with a sudden appearance of the horror!

Or not. You can build the tension to a breaking point, then when the characters are ready for anything, back off and release the tension (the noise they heard was just a cat, the door was blown open by a strong wind, the corpse in the bed is really just a pillow and balled-up blankets). When they breathe a sigh of relief and have relaxed just a bit … then the monster leaps into their faces. This is called a false crescendo and it's also used a lot in movies.

Simple "pop out of the closet" type shocks are easy to set up but still require you to get the timing right so that the characters aren't expecting them. It may take some time for you to get used to your players enough to have a good feeling for when they are or aren't expecting to get blind-sided. When you get your timing down, though, you'll be able to pull off these shocks without almost no trouble. As always, be sparing in your use of this technique.

Variety:

The other side of a successful shock is variety. Being able to read your players well enough to surprise them at will is one thing, but if the thing that catches them off-guard is a known quantity, then they will hardly be shocked. Take, for example, when your mother comes in the room and you don't hear her … you are surprised when she touches your shoulder, you possibly even scream, but you aren't truly frightened. On the other hand, if you feel a hand on your shoulder, then turn and see a hulking stranger, you'll scream and run, maybe even crashing through a window and plummeting 15 stories to your death!

The first time a homicidal maniac leaps out at a character he panics. The second time he loses his cool. By the fifth time, no matter how unprepared he was for the attack, he gasps audibly and fires four rounds into the lunatic's chest. However, if he has absolutely no idea what will be leaping out at him, he will panic twice; once from the fright of being taken unawares and once from the shock of seeing exactly what it is that has surprised him.

The next section deals with perhaps the only thing more frightening than having no idea what is coming … having an excellent idea of what is coming and being dead wrong!

BAIT AND SWITCH, SICKEN AND DIE

Often, we are shocked because reality is completely different from what we expect. If you can lead your characters to believe that they are looking for something other than what you actually have in store for them, they will be much more frightened by it when the time comes.

Especially when dealing with monsters of myth, it's difficult to get the characters looking in the wrong direction, so mislead them by making their quarry differ in some way from what the legends say. For example, the group is off hiking in the mountains and members of their party start disappearing. At first they find clumps of fur and claw marks, evidence of some kind of animal, possibly a wolf or bear. After a few more disappearances, some scattered body parts, and a few oversized footprints, they're now convinced it's a Yeti. So let
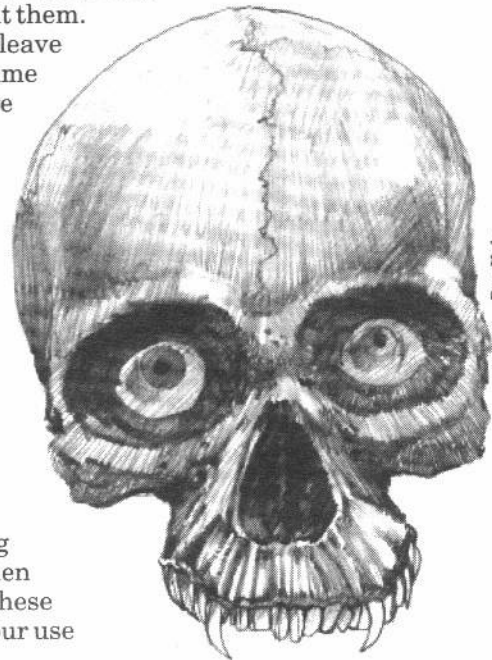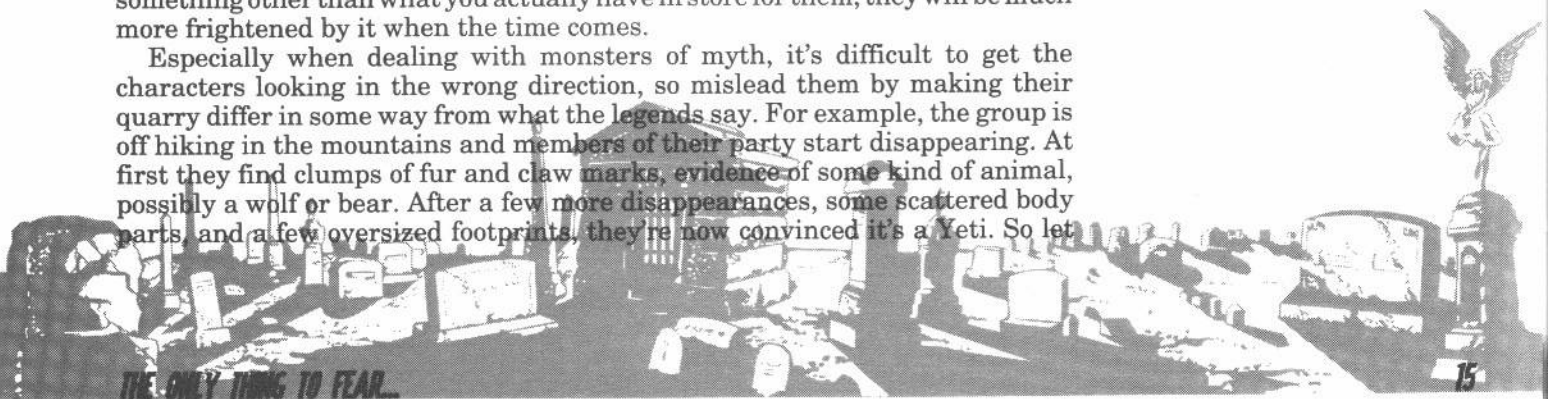
them run around looking for one — won't they be surprised when the full moon turns one of them into a werewolf?

You can of course make the "monster" something totally different than what they expect. As an example, the characters follow a grisly trail of evidence that leads them to the serial killer'shouse. They rush in expecting to come face to face with some kind of psychotic killing machine but find only a scared looking little girl. There's no sign of their suspect and they start talking about what to do next. But no one notices the odd gleam in the girl's eyes or the wicked looking knife behind her back. You can vary the leads and such enough so that the characters never really know what exactly to expect. Sometimes they may be totally accurate in their assumptions and conclusions and then discount them themselves!

A terribly sneaky and unfair trick is to write an adventure with one opening but several possible endings. The "monster" could be any one of several villains you've pre-generated. Allow the characters to investigate and come to a conclusion of their own, then pick one of the other endings so that you know they will be surprised when the shock comes.

DESCRIPTIONS ARE MURDER

Your narrative will go a long way towards putting a feeling of horror and fear in your adventures ... or completely ruin the mood. Nothing kills a person's willingness to accept and imagine the scenes you're presenting like flat, dry narrative.

In a horror game, your words are what is going to paint pictures in the players' minds of the situations their characters are in. They must put the smell of the room in their noses, the gloom of the fog in their eyes. You've got to get the players to believe that you're talking about a real scene if you want their characters to act appropriately. If your narrative also sparks the player's imaginations to go to work filling in the bits you don't describe, then you've really got something.

When you are describing a scene, you should always include obvious or easily noticeable things. You don't have to get into terribly specific detail; the players will ask questions when they want more information about something and most settings are familiar enough that people can easily picture what's there. For many settings a sketchy description, telling a little bit about everything, is better.

For example, the characters have come to the supposed hideout of the evil Spider Cult, a warehouse on the docks. When they first see it, don't say, "You see an old warehouse with a lot of junk scattered around outside." Try for a little more color and try to stoke the players' imaginations and hidden fears a little. "You see an old warehouse squatting in the dim light. There are a surprising number of cables and powerlines coming from the building. The shadows that they cast make them almost look like webs. A single light glows through a broken second floor window and you can hear faint chanting in the stale, dockside air."

Okay, now you've got them interested, and hopefully, a bit edgy about going in. They decide to enter, but the inside of the warehouse is not what they expected. It's like a big cave. When they go in, you'll blow any tension you've created by saying, "You're in a 50' by 100' cave." Try this:

GM: You walk in and it's warm and humid inside and there's a smell like rotten meat. The floor is soft and wet. Your flashlight illuminates sharp looking objects on the floor and ceiling.

Player 1: (starting to freak) "Whoa! Are we inside a mouth?!"

GM: When you look more closely at the floor you see that it's mossy. The sharp objects are stalactites and such.

Player 2: (relaxing) Oh, okay, just a cave.

GM: You notice the ceiling seems to be getting lower.

Players 1&2: Aaaaaah!

Adjust your descriptions so that the players will have enough to work with, but not so much that they are completely certain of what's going on.

When you describe other characters, of course, describe how they are dressed. Also describe any accessories that they are wearing or carrying if those items would normally stand out; large rings, or gaudy jewelry for example, or an unusual item like a cane.

Be sure to characterize their personalities too. One faceless thug is just like any other in a fight, but when you get up close and start talking to them, they're all different. Major characters should have their own distinct traits. If you can manage a passable accent or imitate characters from movies, try that. If you can't do voices to save your life, at least give the characters traits that stick in the players' heads. A slick fence may wear expensive tailored suits and always be pretending to be busy, for example, or a cop the characters know may chain-smoke like there's no tomorrow. Little quirks like these will help to give a little more personality, a little more reality, to gamemaster characters. And the more real the characters are, the more involved the players become in the story.

HOUSE OF DARK FORESHADOWS

Foreshadowing is a common literary and cinematic device used to hint at something that is coming later on in the story. Often it is something symbolic like a gathering storm, a black bird, or some other kind of omen. Occasionally it is the presentation of unimportant characters acting out a scene that will be repeated later involving the major characters.

It's not always easy (or appropriate) to foreshadow everything in an adventure, but for some things it can be very effective. Epic events like wars, disasters and such can be foreshadowed. For events like these the portents can be things that everyone can see; refugees fleeing from troubled lands; slight tremors days before the big quake. Similar techniques can be used to foreshadow the effect a new gamemaster character will have on the characters' lives; he arrives mysteriously during a terrible thunderstorm; her last protectors died in a fiery train wreck; the doorbell rings just as a trusted friend dies in his bed.

Foreshadowing can also be used to warn a character of his or her fate. This will require some thought to pull off and you should try to make it something so subtle that only the fated character would notice. A dream in which the character's fate is predicted is good for this. You could also use some other symbolic event or say a word (or phrase) which has specific meaning to one player to indicate that the events taking place now have a deeper significance for the characters than is immediately apparent. Again, you will have to tailor these to fit the individual situation and character.

SCREAM DREAMS

Dream sequences are very effective in roleplaying games and can be even more effective in a horror game like *Tales From The Crypt*. Dreams can be used to make a character realize certain things her conscious mind is unaware of, impart information, relive key moments of his life, experience his deepest fears, or even act as conduits for the supernatural. From a roleplaying standpoint, dream sequences are an excellent way to help the players understand their characters.

An important thing to keep in mind when doing a dream sequence is that dreams are rarely straightforward — the images don't usually mean what they seem to on the surface. You should use lots of symbolism and comparative images. For example, don't show the exact image of a character's destination, show a place where the character has been before which is similar. Don't show the face of the villain, have him be represented by some other character or monster the characters have faced in the past.

If your intention is to use the dream as a means of giving the character some
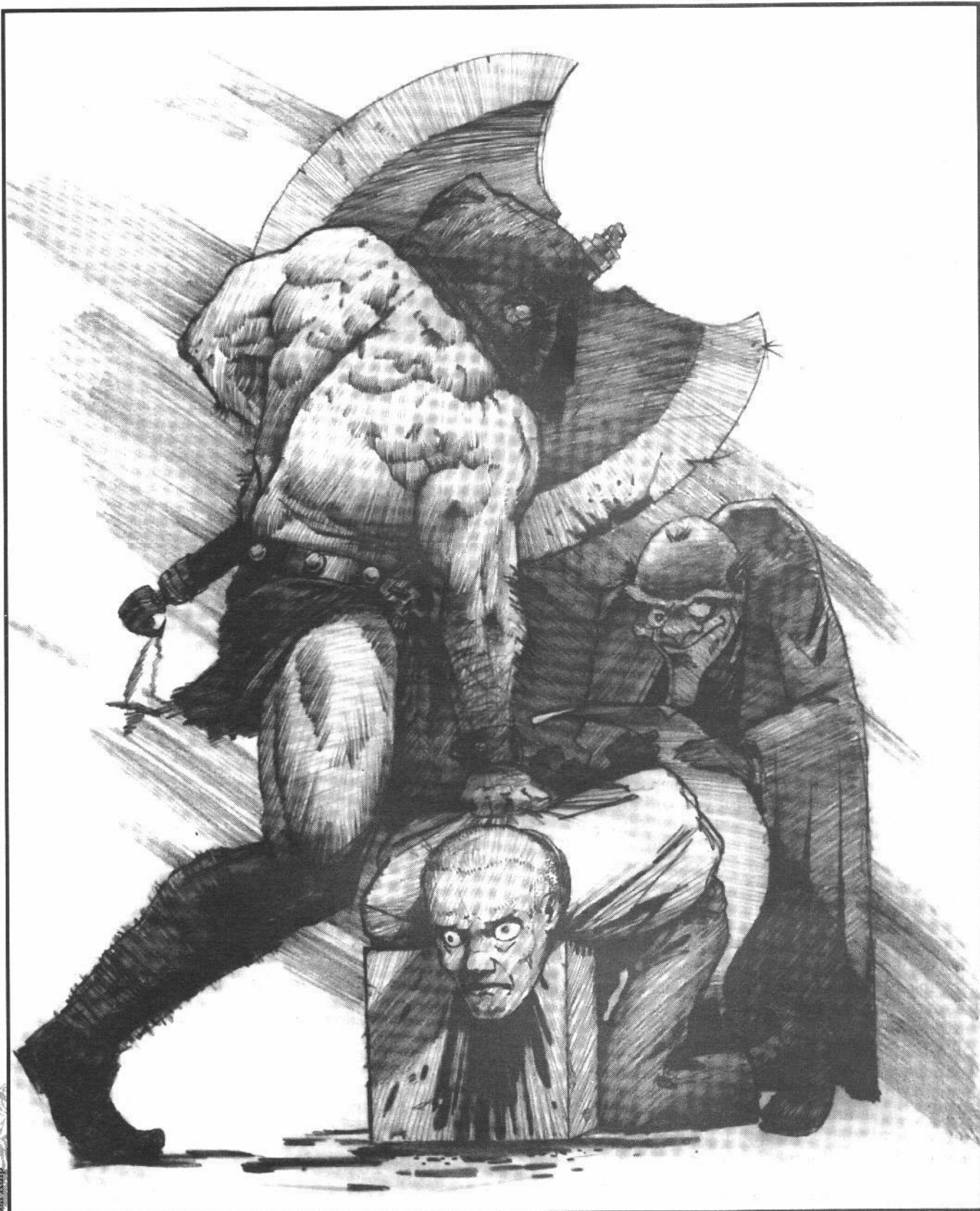
information, never have someone just appear and tell the character what to do. The dream should have a series of symbolic images that, when interpreted, gives the character the hints she needs. Of course, the character's interpretation may be completely wrong, but you can always send her another dream to correct the misconceptions. Don't ever let dreams become direct glimpses into your plot, keep them mysterious and sometimes nonsensical

It's generally a good idea to wait until a few game sessions have passed before you use a dream sequence with a character. You need to tailor each dream to the individual character's psyche and it will take a while for you and the player to get a real handle on who the character really is. Once you have some idea of what makes the character tick, you can focus on certain psychological aspects like suppressed guilt, rage, fears or other hidden feelings.

When you run a dream sequence, it should be one-on-one with you and the player. Send the other players out of the room. If you don't want the player to know it's a dream, start by saying something like, "The next day," or, "A few hours later ..." This may or may not be very effective if the dream is surreal, but if it is more realistic then the player will likely not be aware his character is asleep until really strange things start happening. When the dream is over you can wake the character up and bring the others back into play.

Since dreams are very personal you may find that players are unwilling or uncomfortable about sharing their character's dreams with the other characters. If they do try to explain their dreams there will be a lot of room for misinterpretation and mistakes. Be ready to exploit and develop whatever ideas the players come up with.

THE GOSSAMER VEIL

There is a lot you can do with dreams in *Tales From The Crypt* aside from just using them to get into the characters' heads. They have an ever-changing relationship with reality. Sometimes they show scenes of the past, other times they show glimpses of the future, and occasionally they cross the boundary and intrude on the real world. Whole adventures could be run inside someone's dream, or dreams could manifest themselves in the real world. You could even flip back and forth between the real world and dreams so often that the characters aren't sure which is which!

For example, a character who feels guilt over his brother's death may have dreams where he was the one responsible for the accident that killed his brother. The dream is recurrent, and the character keeps going to see an analyst to calm himself down. Then finally one day he wakes up to find that the dream has become a reality and he really was responsible for his brother's death ... or is he still dreaming?

A CLASH OF SYMBOLS

In literature, symbolism is the use of one thing or idea to represent another. In horror stories, monsters are symbolic of various fears we all have. Traditional monsters like vampires, werewolves, zombies and the like all represent human fears or desires. Some, like vampires and zombies, can be seen as two sides of the same coin. Vampires represent the desire for immortality, zombies the fear of death and eternal damnation.

Fear and horror can be created when you take symbols that are generally happy or benign and twist them into something horrific. Birth is a symbol often subverted in horror movies to terrifying effect (in too many movies to list here). Childhood, a symbol of freedom and happiness can be twisted around too (for example, *Lord of the Flies*). The family is a symbol of love and companionship, but can easily be turned dark and horrifying; tales of insanity, incest, and murder by families abound in movies and books.

Using symbolism in your *Tales From The Crypt* stories is challenging but very

rewarding if done right. Again you must tailor any symbolism you use to fit your story and the characters. When a character realizes the symbolic meaning behind an object or event the effect is quite extraordinary.

FLASHBACK TO FEAR

Flashbacks are are great way to add even more depth and drama to your adventures. Characters who have had some kind of awful experience often have flashbacks. Flashbacks can have varying effects, from debilitating seizures to fits of depression. It's up to you and the player to work out the effects of any type of flashback on a character.

Any traumatic or shocking event can be enough to cause flashbacks. A character can begin play already afflicted or, during the course of the story or campaign, pick up a flashback because of some scarring event. A character who has survived the attack of a murderer, seen friends die or some other horrible action may have flashbacks. Characters who have done terrible things are also likely to have flashbacks. Characters who have killed may not always be able to forget the faces or voices of their victims.

Flashbacks can be triggered at random but are sometimes set off by a specific condition. For example, war veterans may experience flashbacks when they hear any kind of explosion or even if they see a fist-fight. Depending on what caused the trauma, the gamemaster should tailor the flashback and its trigger to the character.

For example, in a *Tales From The Crypt* story, a clergyman was traumatized by a particularly gruesome exorcism he tried to perform and failed. The victim was a young girl and in the end, he was forced to kill her. His terror and his guilt still live with him and occasionally he has a flashback if he hears a girl (or any child for that matter) screaming. He becomes depressed and withdrawn for days.

In another example, during a raid in a housing project an undercover cop accidentally shoots an innocent bystander. Now, every time he has to pull his gun on someone, the person in front of him suddenly transforms into the visage of the person he killed.

Flashbacks can happen as often as you see fit. However, if the result of the flashback affects the character severely, it's probably a good idea not to have it happening all the time. Just the threat of having a flashback is often enough to get the character scared to the point that he will probably go out of his way to avoid doing anything that might trigger one.

If this is to be part of an ongoing campaign, the gamemaster and the player should work together to decide when a character has a flashback and what its effects are. You can work this all out as part of the concept when you first create the character. On the other hand, some event during play may be traumatic enough to cause flashbacks in future sessions.

TOOLS AND TUNES

The atmosphere of your game depends on how you and your players cooperate in the creation of your stories. Your narrative will put pictures in the mind's eye and help everyone get into the game. But you can also use props to help spur your players' imaginations.

While not necessary for the enjoyment of a *Tales From The Crypt* adventure, physical props will help to focus the players and music will create certain emotional moods, just like it does in the movies.

MUSIC

Many gamers use music to help create the mood for their games. Some people will even make "soundtrack" tapes (collections of songs appropriate to the mood or genre of the game). A few properly chosen tracks will help liven up any scene.

The music you use, of course, is up to you. For horror games any kind of dark, threatening music is fine. You can also use movie soundtracks of course, which are perfectly suited to provide a specific background mood and there are literally dozens to choose from no matter what mood you are looking for.

Try to choose tracks that match the overall pace or theme of your story. If the adventure is action-packed, you'll want driving, fast paced music. If the adventure involves a lot of investigation try slower, more brooding pieces. Instrumentals are always good, since there are no lyrics to distract everyone from the game. But occasionally you may want the emotion that only a human voice can convey.

Try to keep the music in the background; don't turn it up so loud that the players can't hear what you're saying. Also, don't try to time events in a scene to the background music. It's usually impossible to get everything to happen exactly when you want it to. But occasionally, an appropriate track will cue up just in time for a specific scene in the game. This is eerily effective when it happens, but don't try to force it.

Some suggestions:

Heavy Metal/Rock: Metal is good for action scenes. Some slower songs are also great for setting the mood. Try:

Anthrax
Metallica
Ministry
Nine Inch Nails
Pink Floyd (especially *The Wall*)
Sisters Of Mercy
Stone Temple Pilots

Classical: Great for creating a gothic atmosphere. Good for general background music.

Bach — Toccata and fugue in D minor
Mozart — Requiem
Orff — Carmina Burana
Wagner — Das Rheingold
Gregorian chants — Including more modern stuff like Enigma and *Chant*

Movie Soundtracks: Take your pick but many of these are perfect for atmosphere and mood. Some suggestions:

Akira
Aliens
Aliens 3
Bladerunner
The Crow
Mishima
The Omen
Star Trek, various TV and movie albums

There are also a few compilations of sound effects or other non-musical CDs you can get. Try whale songs; very ethereal and very eerie (in fact, downright terrifying to some people!). Also, the chanting of the Tibetan Gyoji Monks is guaranteed to send chills up your spine.

PROPS

There are many simple items you can use as props for your games. Giving the players something physical to touch or look at helps their imaginations and is generally a lot more fun.

Some props are easy to prepare. Maps can be as sketchy or as detailed as you like. Newspaper clippings can also be typed up and go a long way towards improving the atmosphere of the game. If you have a computer with a word processor or a drawing program, both of these props can be done quite easily.

Whenever possible, try to provide some physical object to represent a clue or
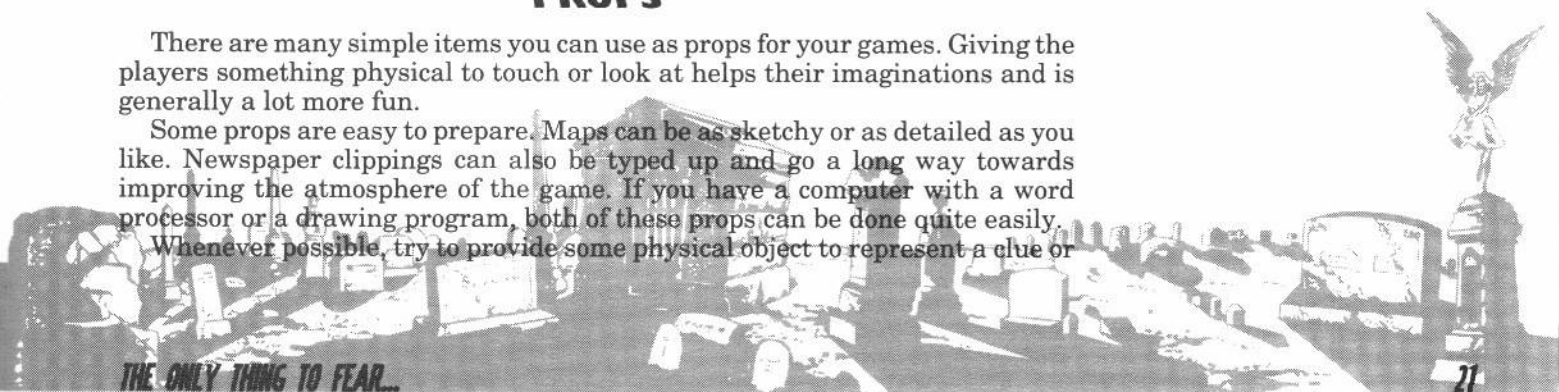
other important item the characters may find. If this is not possible, at the very least draw the object on paper or cut a picture of a similar object out of a magazine. If the clue is a weapon however, it's better (and safer) not to actually have a real weapon like a knife or gun. With these items, a picture, description or plastic replica will suffice.

For old books or manuscripts, you can type up the information on a piece of paper and stick it inside a book for the players to look through. If you can, actually use the information in the book to provide the clues the characters need. You could even take your players to a library and have them search the stacks for the book in question (of course there is the possibility that the book may get checked out and librarians have notoriously little appreciation for or patience with gaming groups).

You can weather and age maps or other documents by soaking them in water or lemon juice and then just letting them dry out in the sun. **This may completely ruin any material you use** — so it's a good idea to use either something you've made for this purpose, or something you don't want anymore anyway.

There are plenty of other items you can use as props in your games that are either cheap or free. Just look around the house for items that might serve some purpose in the adventure. Scrounge the attic or basement for old knick-knacks and curios you've got stored up there.

Another item that can be used to great effect is a voice modulator or synthesizer. These are great for making scary voices and noises. They do cost a fair amount of money, but you can sometimes find a cheap synthesizer in a toy store.

If you use props in a game, make the players treat them like the real thing. If a player has a cardboard tube which represents a knife and he throws it at another player, make the characters roll to see if anyone was hurt while playing with sharp objects. If a gun is represented by a banana and the player eats the prop ... oops, sorry, the gun has no ammunition! And if the players lose a map that you spent precious time preparing, they'd better figure out where it went. Otherwise their characters will have to proceed without a guide.
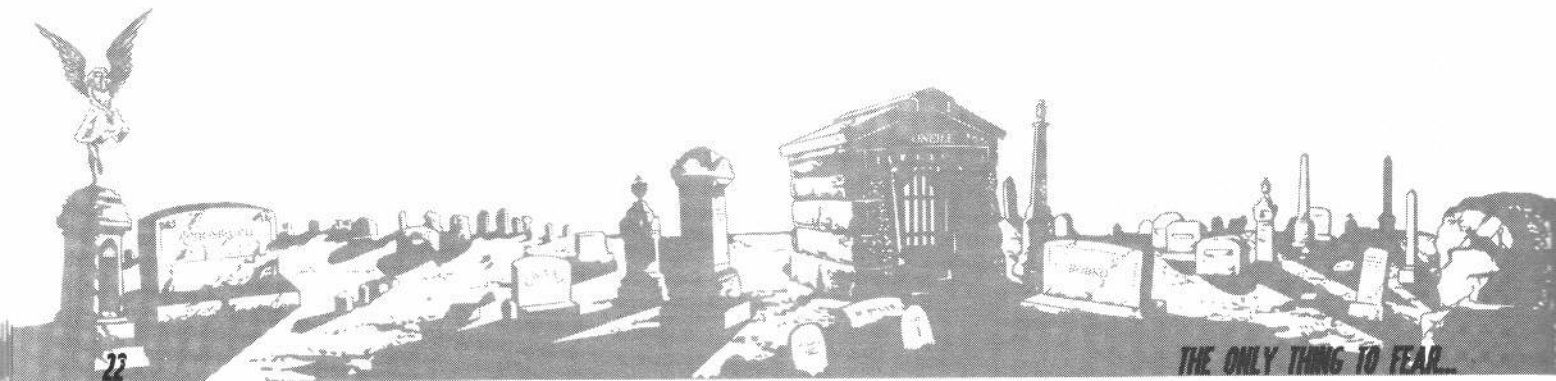
II
SINISTER SITES

Another quiet evening in my cozy Crypt, creeps. Curled up with a jug of wine and a loaf of Fred, the new issue of Playdead, and shelves and shelves of sickening stories to make you wish you'd picked a safer hobby ... like, say, skydiving into a shark tank.

But you don't need a Crypt to conjure up your own deadtime stories, kiddies. Horror can be found almost anywhere — try looking in the mirror sometime, hehehehehe! And that's the point of all the bloodthirsty babbling in this chapter ... no, the one at your throat is the other point of this chapter!

While we were working on this book, indeed, through the design process for the game itself, the questions that were asked most frequently were: How are you going to turn *Tales From The Crypt* into a game? What kind of setting are you going to use? The episodes are always someplace different ... how are you going to capture that aspect?

All good questions.

The topic capturing the essence of *Tales From The Crypt* was discussed in Chapter 6 of the WorldBook. The process of selecting and developing themes for use in your roleplaying episodes was very thoroughly covered. A wide range of themes was presented and each one was individually discussed. Due to space limitations, however, another aspect of the questions above was given a more perfunctory examination. What settings are good for you to use in your *Tales From The Crypt* campaign? Before we discuss this topic, go back and watch a few episodes of *Tales From The Crypt* or read a couple of the old EC Comics which the show grew from. What do you notice about the settings?

FAMILIARITY BREEDS FEAR

One possible answer is that they're all very "familiar." Whatever the story, the plot revolves entirely around the people. The location remains just a backdrop for the drama to play in front of. Often there is no specific city, state or country mentioned; the viewer is left to place the action wherever is most appropriate in his mind.

I remember watching one episode with friends I met while travelling. After the show was over, I mentioned that I knew the place in New York where the episode was supposed to take place. The fellow next to me said that I was mistaken. "That was clearly supposed to be San Francisco, and I know the street it was based on." Before I could tell him how wrong he was, our friend from England told us that we were both terribly ethnocentric and that the story obviously was an Americanization of a British story because they had perfectly captured the spot in London it was mimicking.

After watching the show a second time, we found that no specific city was ever shown or mentioned and, in fact, the site was a very ordinary studio back-lot city set.

DO NOT GO GENERIC INTO THAT GOOD FRIGHT

Another possible answer is that the settings seem very generic. The fact is that *Tales From The Crypt* stories very rarely depend on their specific location. Any particular episode could be moved from New York or San Francisco to London or Paris without affecting the characters or the action. The episodes are character-driven. Although famous landmarks are often shown in establishing shots, and exact locations can be easily inferred, the setting is used to add flavor or to supply some other background detail. It is rarely unique and, once the tone of the story has been established, is easily dismissed.

When you discuss your favorite episodes with your friends, how do you refer to them? Most likely your descriptions go something like: "The episode where this person does that to his boss," or "Where that person locks her mother in the basement." Because the shows are about personalities, the exact setting simply does not enter into the basic description. Oh, location can be used for clarification, but even that is more likely to be on the order of: "You mean the one on the boat?" or "The one where they live in the tiny, tiny apartment" or "Oh, the country mansion setting." The fact is that the actual settings in *Tales From The Crypt* are usually fairly generic.

RANDOM DEMAND

Perhaps the most telling answer, however, would be that the settings seem to be random. If you watched any three episodes back-to-back, there is a very high probability that you could find absolutely nothing to tie them together other than the macabre humor of the Cryptkeeper. There seems to be no discernible pattern to where consecutive episodes are situated. Since each story is self-contained there is no need for a bridge from one setting to the next. Indeed, most of the featured characters wind up either dead, incarcerated, locked up or in some other way removed from circulation (*and ask any bloodsucker, there's nothing worse than a character with poor circulation. Hehehehehe!*) A story set in the city can be followed by one on a farm or a ship at sea; one in the present can be followed by one in the furthest reaches of the past or the distant future.

Perhaps this uncertainty of where the next story will take us even adds to the feeling of suspense and excitement that carries us from one episode to the next. In any case, the indiscriminate selection of locales is a prime element in defining what locations make good stops in a *Tales From The Crypt* campaign.

PICKING YOUR SPOTS

So, as we have just discovered, the most important ingredients in choosing locations for your *Tales From The Crypt* scenarios are that the places be: 1) Familiar; 2) Generic; and 3) Random. Does this mean that you should create one setting, base it on your home town, pick the street and building names out of the phone book, and toss a dart at a map to pick the town name?

Of course not! What it means is that you should not worry about making your settings come to life, brim to the lip with depth and detail, and be 100 percent true to life as much as you might in most other campaigns. It means that you should realize that no matter how much development you put into a location, the characters will come, play out their drama-of-the-week, and go without even wondering about the town's rich history. It means that you should choose your

settings the way you choose what poster to hang over your desk; it should be something you like, that conveys a feeling or message you want to instill, but not so colorful or obvious that it distracts you from your work. (And if you do want a town setting that is richly defined, check out Gainesford in the *Tales From The Crypt* WorldBook.)

YONDER LIES THE MATTE PAINTING OF THE HAUNTED CASTLE OF MY FATHER ...

Settings in *Tales From The Crypt* games are like matte paintings in movies. They are used to get all the pieces in all the right places, provide the perfect perspective, set the mood and, most of all, not be examined too closely.

When planning episodes for your campaign, choose locations carefully. Make sure that, as much as possible, the setting immediately conveys the overall mood of your story. If the piece is romantic (not unheard of in *Tales From The Crypt*), set it by the Seine in Paris or on a train going to Niagara Falls; if it is lonely, set it in the badlands of Montana or on a deserted island in the south Pacific; if it's paranoid and threatening, set it in Beirut or the middle of a gang war in south-central Los Angeles.

Don't worry about the location being cliche. That's the point. Your scenarios should revolve around the characters interacting with one another and gamemaster characters, not around the characters exploring a city they will likely never see again. The best, in fact sometimes the only, way to impart the feelings you want is to use cliche locales. Use the cliche to your advantage and don't be afraid to use popular perception in place of actual truth. Perhaps you've

never been to New York or Paris or the Brazilian rainforest, but you probably have a very clear image in your mind of what you think these places would be like.

If, by chance, one of your players has been to one of your settings and keeps bringing up inconvenient points like there is no corner of Lexington and Madison … well, feel free to slap him with a Cryptkeeper point for just generally being annoying (*and then have his character get run over by a cement truck! Seems the driver got lost because he was looking for the corner of Lexington and Madison, and wasn't paying attention to that sack of meat that darted out in front of him … Hehehehehe!*) Remember, the setting is there for flavor, not geographic accuracy.

Like matte paintings, the location should go no deeper than where the characters will physically visit. Decide just how far the characters need to go to accomplish their mission and set up boundaries which keep them corralled there. This is easy to do — if they wander too far from where they are supposed to be, they may find themselves back in the Crypt (*and I do so hate uninvited guests!*)

One of the mixed blessings of working within the *Tales From The Crypt* mold is that the stories tend to be very focused. You can plot out very linear scenarios and expect your players to move their characters through them like good little sheep to the slaughter. When you set up specific boundaries for a scenario, however, you must make it clear to both the players and their characters exactly where the focus of their actions should be. It is beyond even the Cryptkeeper's cruelty to simply send them down in an unknown destination with no information and expect them to stay centered on a specific location. (*It is? I must be getting soft …*) The Cryptkeeper can be expected to provide a few cryptic clues to get them started. Once it is clear where the focus of the scenario is, though, the characters must not wander too far. If they do, feel free to impose the types of penalties described on page 6 of *The World of Tales From The Crypt*.

SOUNDSTAGES AND BACK-LOTS

While it is alright, even preferable, in an episode to have the city fade into a soft-focus background element, the characters' immediate surroundings should be crystal clear. The buildings and other locations that the action occurs in must be as well-defined as in any roleplaying game. Most pre-packaged scenarios will come with completely defined, and often painstakingly mapped, sets for the action to be played out on. But many of these sets will be specially designed and specific to the scenario at hand.

It is necessary that you have detailed sets for the characters to be in, ones that ring as true as the ones specifically designed for an adventure. When players are caught up in the heat of roleplaying, running into a series of shops which are all 20x20 cubes can work to undermine their willing suspension of disbelief. We all know that shops in the real world never look like that. But, as discussed earlier, the characters must be the focus of these adventures, and gamemasters should not waste valuable time preparing new maps for each shop or house the characters will visit during the campaign.

The solution? Continue with the movie analogy and think like the studios … develop your own back-lot and soundstages which can be easily adapted to different scenarios. Think about how often you've seen the same sets used in different movies or shows. The studios don't have the time or money to build new sets for every production they do, so they have a few all-purpose ones that can have the paint changed, the camera angle shifted, and fill in as any number of different locations. You can do the same thing if you keep a file or notebook full

of fully-designed sets which can be pulled out to fill whatever role is necessary in a specific adventure.

Keep a generic church in your back-lot, or better yet, three of them; one large, one medium, one small. Include different sized apartments and houses as well as a few examples of storefronts. If possible, try to have a couple of street sets, with several adjacent stores and residences, ready to use; perhaps even a T-intersection or a small neighborhood.

EXTRAS

Since we're thinking in Hollywood terms anyway, let's take it a step further. You've got your script (the scenario for your episode), you've got your stars (the player characters), you've got your villains (the major gamemaster characters), and you've got the back-lot set up to your specifications. There's only one thing you're missing — extras. You're missing the other people who live, work and play in the location the characters will visit.

In most episodes of *Tales From The Crypt,* there are only a few gamemaster characters involved. But if, in your adventure, there are only a few fleshed-out, detailed personalities who seem crucial to the story, the characters will have an easy time guessing just who is behind the weird happenings. It is important for all the people the player characters meet to be similarly detailed. If the grocery clerk is "Ed the grocery clerk" and the liquor shop owner is "Silas Strayton," the players will have a pretty good idea which gamemaster character will figure in the resolution of the scenario.

Obviously, one thing you can do to improve the quality of your gamemaster characters is to give them all full names. You may want to go so far as to prepare a few spare names for use with characters that pop up unexpectedly ("I never expected the characters to introduce themselves to the lady at the next table!"). A list of 25 male, female and family names will give you a good variety to choose from to when you are looking for instant inspiration.

The other thing every one of your gamemaster characters needs is an "attitude." By this I don't mean a sour outlook on life, but rather some distinguishing personality trait. In many instances, gamemaster characters who do not directly affect the plot have nothing to their personalities beyond a definition of his or her attitude toward the characters.

If these were real people, their existence wouldn't begin and end with the characters; their attitudes should also have a depth beyond their interactions with the characters. Prepare a list of as many situations and mindsets as you can think of that would affect your interpersonal dealings and assign at least one to each of your gamemaster characters. This will make for more interesting and fun roleplaying for the everyone involved. Examples: Stayed up all night studying; very hungry; worried about mortgage payments; had a really great date last night; going to leave for vacation in 2 hours; favorite TV show is on tonight, etc.

Instead of "Ed the grocery clerk," you'll have "Ed Spiro, the grocery clerk who is tired from studying last night, but happy because he thinks he aced the exam this morning."

RECURRING CHARACTERS

Who says that the player characters are the only ones caught up in the Cryptkeeper's game? He may have dozens of others wandering through the windows of his Crypt at any given time! And surely so witty a soul as the Cryptkeeper (that is, if he *has* a soul) would know he could double his fun by

Tim Bobko

letting his various players run into each other.

One way to really drive the characters crazy is to let them occasionally recognize one of the "extras" as a gamemaster character from an earlier episode. "The bartender seems familiar to you … he sure looks like the boat captain from two weeks ago … mmmmm ... maybe it's just the light." If questioned, the gamemaster characters will have no idea what the character is talking about.

If you really want to make them paranoid, however, let them see a whole group of characters working together in several different episodes. "Aren't those construction workers the same guys who were doing road work last week? And weren't they the clowns that time we wound up in the circus? Who the hell are they?!?"

Particularly cruel gamemasters may want to give these gamemaster characters stats, personalities and backgrounds and use them to work against the characters in a competitive scenario. Maybe the one thing these people have to do to get free of the Cryptkeeper's grasp is to make sure that everyone in your group dies. Perhaps the next adventure they show up again, but this time as allies whose help is critical to accomplishing a mission. Can the characters put aside their preconceived ideas about these gamemaster characters? The next time they show up, will they be friend or foe?

GENRES

Ultimately, the question of where to set the episodes in your *Tales From The Crypt* campaign is really a misleading one. After all the above discussion about choosing and customizing geographic and physical locations, it is time to reveal the truth: that the most important choice is not spatial, it's thematic.

Yes, in the end even your choice of locale is based on themes or, more correctly, genres. The physical "where" will tell the players what the mood of the scenario is, but the thematic "where" will tell them how their characters should act.

For example, if your adventure is set in a modern city, the characters will probably act fairly "normally." They are used to this sort of setting, know what to do and say to get along. If you drop them into the Old West, though, or the Middle Ages, all they know is what they've read in books and seen in movies. How different is that from the

reality? However difficult you choose it to be …

The players should know (or you, as the gamemaster, must teach them) that as their characters are jumped around from place to place they must do their best to fit in with each new setting. If they do not cooperate, make the scenario more difficult; have gamemaster characters be equally uncooperative or have the local police take a dislike to these odd strangers.

Pick your genres with as much, or more, care than you used in selecting your location. Remember, it will set the style of play for the entire scenario. Occasionally there will be a scenario which can only be played out in a specific milieu, but usually there will be several to choose from, although they may not be readily apparent.

For example, you want your characters to be dropped into the bodies of people marooned on a desert island for a year. You might think this adventure has to be set during the Age of Sail, when all the great "marooned" stories were written. But there are things about that era you might not like: hope of rescue was pretty much nonexistent and tech was low. But what if you want rescue to be a possibility, and have the characters wondering why it hasn't happened yet? What if you want decent tech? You can set a shipwreck story in the modern era (it's still possible to get lost and never found); you can even turn it into a science fiction/horror adventure and maroon them on an alien planet. The basic premise stays the same whichever of these three options you pursue, but the tone of each one varies a lot.

The wide array of usable genres presents another possibility to the creative gamemaster. If the characters fail at some mission, or find it particularly vexing, make slight changes to the plot and gamemaster characters and run them through it again in a new genre. For example, if they participate in a modern era scenario where they are assigned to prevent the President from being assassinated and they fail (or only succeed by the skin of their teeth), throw them into the same exact situation, only set it in the Old West. If the scenario still gives them fits, change it some more and run it again in a medieval period with death by witchcraft planned, or a 22nd century setting.

A good premise can be used several times before the scare runs out. Every time they try it will be with different restrictions and limitations due to the different time periods; and every time they fail it will double the pressure they feel the next time.

With so many genres to choose from, how do you choose the one that is right for your particular scenario? There is no hard and fast rule, but try to find one that matches the style of play with the themes in the plot. As an aid in making your selection, we offer below summations and comments on various genres and how they can be used in *The World of Tales From The Crypt*.

Remember that, whichever genre you use, you are still telling a tale from the Crypt. If you drop the characters into a medieval fantasy setting, you're not suddenly playing a fantasy roleplaying game. You should still be firmly in the Crypt — with its particular flavor and feel — just in a different setting.

SCIENCE FICTION

Science fiction and horror can be considered close cousins. They've been blended successfully for decades and the number of different types of s-f means there are many and varied stories you can tell. Your characters might be travelers on a ship which begins to malfunction, with the horror coming from the unpredictability of it all and the struggle to survive against technology gone wild. They might come upon a base that has been destroyed and have to seek out the
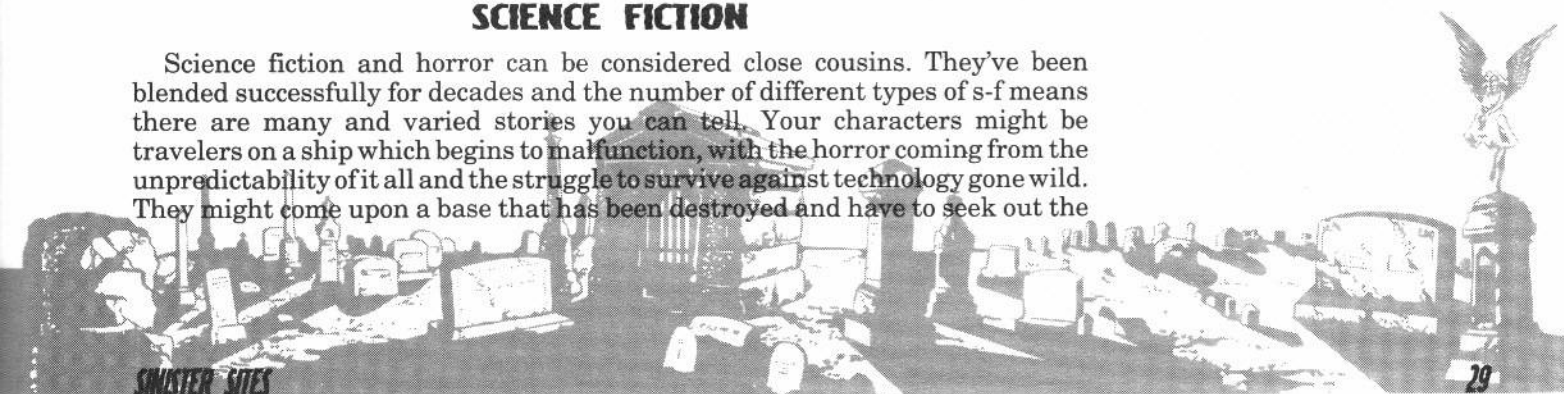
creature responsible for the piles of half-eaten corpses everywhere. They might be exploring an alien planet, or worse, the aliens might be exploring ours!

WESTERN

Tales From The Crypt has done at least a few Western episodes, and the mix works well precisely because you don't expect it. There is one major disadvantage to a Western/horror adventure, namely that the wide-open spaces give the characters lots of room to run. The advantage is that there probably won't be any help for kilometers around. Undead gunfighters, haunted mesas, ghosts of massacre victims and Native American shamanistic magic can all be part of a *Crypt* adventure in the Old West.

ROMANCE

Romance, as such, isn't a genre one normally associates with out-and-out horror. It can be a part of a *Crypt* adventure, though, as a motivating force (the character is in love with someone who turns out to be not at *all* what she seems …) or as a means of luring the characters into an adventure. Gothic romances have been known to feature haunted castles and some of the other trappings of horror, but it can be hard to shift the focus of a Romance away from the romance. You're better off combining this genre with another of the ones listed here.

CRIME

Crime drama is another excellent genre to mix with horror. You have desperate people leading violent lives, all hiding sins and guilts, already living in fear: of justice, of retribution, of each other. The characters might be tricked into robbing from someone able to levy a nasty curse, or be hunted for a murder … by the corpse! They might be searching for the loot from a long-ago theft and discover the horrible fates of those who came before them.

ACTION / ADVENTURE

Not every horror story needs to be a slow build-up and a shock ending. Constant tension and constant danger can also produce fear. The characters are constantly on the move, there's no time to think, only to react. We've all had dreams in which we're being chased by something terrible and relentless — no matter what you do, you can't get away, your breath is coming in gasps, your legs feel like lead weights … well, you get the idea. Now convert that dream to a roleplaying adventure, put the characters in fear for their lives at the hands of a shadowy predator, and have a ball!

MYSTERY

Another natural partner of horror, since both are essentially about the unknown. A mystery demands solution, and while the characters are pursuing the answers, they can encounter horror after horror. The hunt for a serial killer begins normally enough, until it becomes obvious that the killer is using the methods of another murderer, one executed years ago. Travelers passing through a particular town never leave again … so guess where the Cryptkeeper is sending you this week?
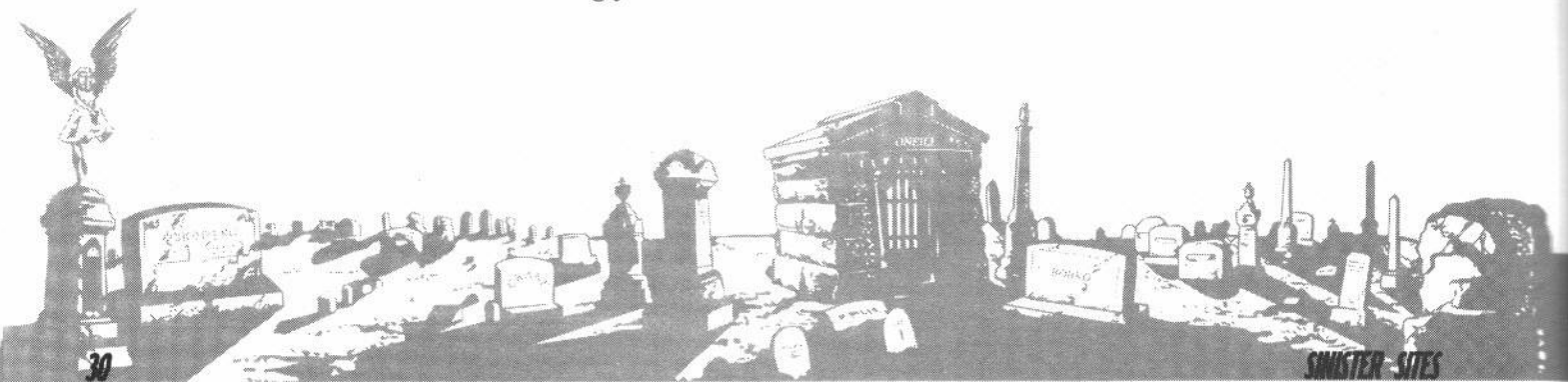
III
HIDDEN AGENDAS

Psssssst ... hey, kiddies. Can you keep a secret? I'm busting out of this game in the first laundry truck! They can't keep me in here! All I need is to whack the guard with a little jailhouse rock, and I'm gone. And I promise you they'll never take me alive — at least, they didn't last time! Hehehehehe!

This charnel chapter is all about secrets; dark, shameful little things you don't want anyone to know about, the ones you carry with you 'til the day you go hearse-back riding! Hehehehehe!

In this chapter we present two ideas to add new dimensions to your *Tales From The Crypt* campaign. One is a way to add more intrigue, suspense and nervous tension to your game sessions. The other is a format for a *Tales From The Crypt* campaign that differs quite a bit from the ones talked about in the WorldBook.

We were sitting around one night discussing what it is that makes *Tales From The Crypt* such an interesting place to roleplay in. There is no shortage of quality horror games available to gamers today, so why were we so excited about working on *The World of Tales From The Crypt?* (*Um ... because you were getting paid to?*)

One answer struck us as, at first, something which seems to run counter to everything we knew of roleplaying. The idea that, in any episode of *Tales From The Crypt*, you have no idea who to trust. Your best friend might be the "Butcher of Bainesville," and you're next on his list of choice cuts; your girlfriend may be cheating on you with your boss, and is that why you got assigned to clean the cement mixer today … from the inside?; and your mother … let's not even start on your mother.

Roleplaying is a group activity, an exercise in cooperation, not a competition. Sure, there are moments when members of a group will choose to serve their own interests to the detriment of the group, but if this happens too often the game breaks down and the group disbands. People don't usually play roleplaying games to undermine one another.

But then we thought … there certainly seem to be a lot of popular board and card games out there that use back-stabbing and secret goals to create a good time for all the players. As long as the deception and subversion were a controlled part of the game, so that the players who end up on the wrong end of the trickery would not take it personally, why wouldn't this "can't trust anyone" atmosphere work in a roleplaying game?

With this in mind, we set about designing the optional Hidden Agenda rules. These will not be for every gaming group. Gamemasters should consider the structure of their play-groups and the temperament of all the individual players before adding this option to their *World of Tales From The Crypt* campaigns.

THE RULES

At the beginning of each episode in your *Tales From The Crypt* campaign, the Cryptkeeper provides the characters with a little bit of information about what they are going to walk into. Maybe this is a clue to what he wants them to accomplish, or maybe it's just a chance for him to toss a few insults their way. It's possible that you might give the players some information too, just out of the goodness of your heart (or the desire to plunge a knife into theirs). Regardless, all the players get the same information at the same time. Right?

But this kind of opening totally ignores one of the great traditions of *Tales From The Crypt*. In the Crypt, some people always know more than others; there's all sorts of lying and double-dealing going on; people stay allied only long enough to pull off a really killer betrayal. And now you can have this sort of fun in your game sessions too!

Before running an episode, the gamemaster should prepare a Hidden Agenda sheet for each character. This is simply a note detailing a character's personal position on a number of different things, including:

General Feelings: How does character feel about the site of this episode? Does he like the town/country/job he is in? Is there anything happening in his life that will affect how he reacts to the people and situations he encounters?

This is also the place to put any particular feelings the character will have toward the task the group is about to undertake. Will he be truly committed to what they're trying to achieve?

Friends and Foes: How does the character feel about the various characters (both player- and gamemaster-controlled)? If he has met them before, were they friends, adversaries, rivals? Does he hold a grudge against, or harbor a deep respect for any of them? In a desperate situation, is there one character he will turn to for help or attempt to rescue above all others?

For characters he's never met before, does he have a gut reaction to any of them? Is there someone he simply will not trust no matter what? Or one he takes an instant liking to?

Special Relationships: Does the character have some kind of special relationship with one of the other characters? Included in this category are relatives, old lovers, ex-spouses, schoolmates, former colleagues, Army buddies,
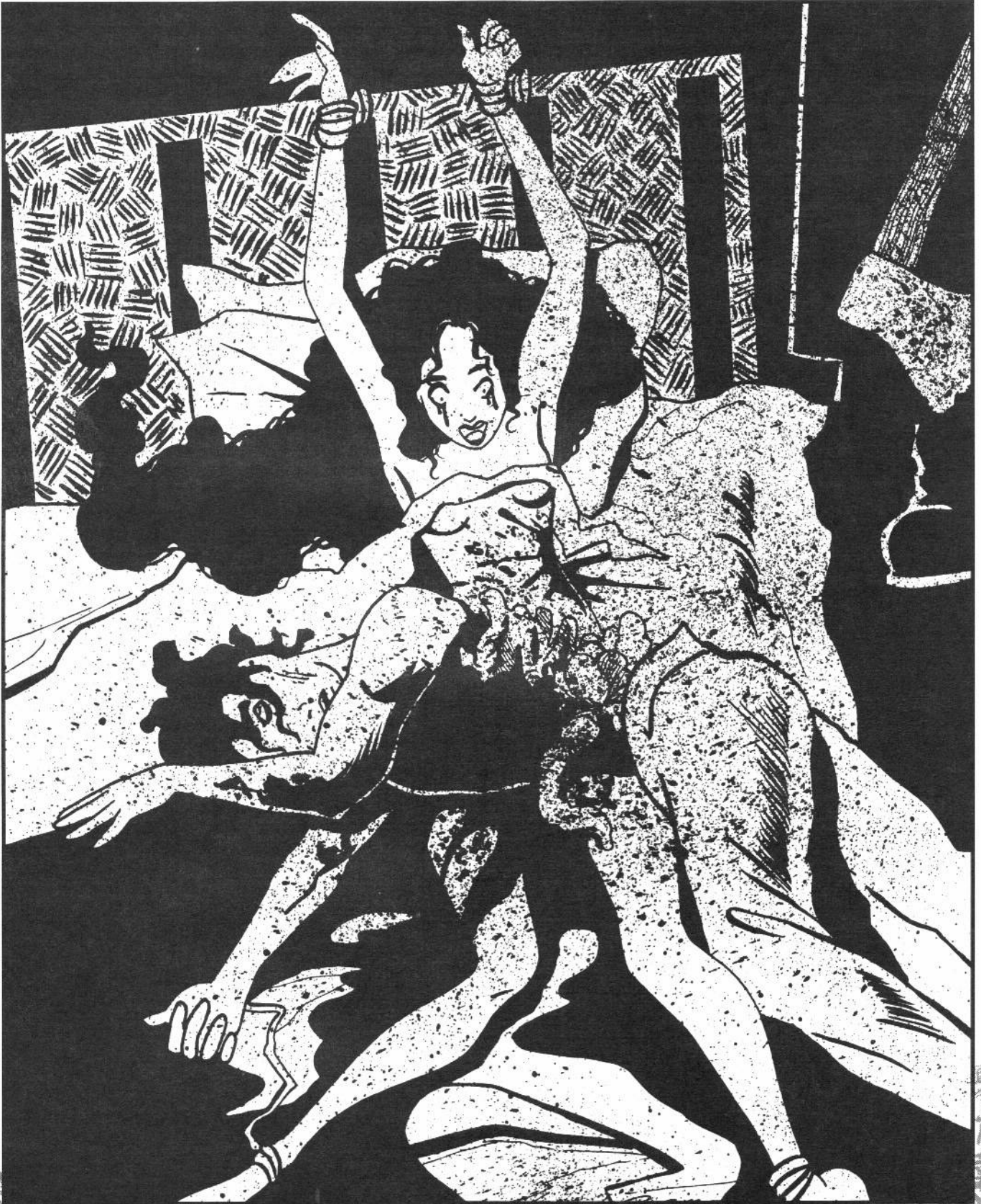
and all sorts of personal acquaintances. Also included are criminals and their victims, prisoners and their captors, bosses and workers, doctors and patients, tenants and landlords, and other sorts of personal and professional relationships.

On the other hand, this can also mean people who hardly know one another but have shared some memorable experience; having been trapped in an elevator together, being survivors of an accident or catastrophe, coming from the same home town, or having met in an embarrassing location (X-Rated theater, illegal gambling den, nude beach, etc.).

These kinds of relationships are usually secret and only characters involved will know about them. What does the relationship mean to the character now? Will he seek to renew it or will he deny it if it is mentioned?

Secrets: Everyone has secrets: things they've done that they don't want anyone to know about, events in their pasts which they wish they could undo, people they associated with they hope never to see again. In *Tales From The Crypt* these secrets have an annoying habit of resurfacing at the most inconvenient moments. This category and the Special Relationships one often overlap.

Personal Goals: Does the character have any goals or aspirations which may run counter to the desires of the group? What does he personally want to get out of the events in the episode? Is there one thing which will be more important to him than anything else, possibly even the life of another character? Maybe he wants to possess a specific item, or perform a certain task, or even hurt or kill one of the gamemaster characters (or possibly even one of the other player characters).

At the start of each episode, at the same time as he reads the Cryptkeeper's intro to the adventure, the gamemaster will also give each player his character's Hidden Agenda sheet. It is the player's job to read this, consult the gamemaster on any points he is not clear on, and convincingly roleplay the information contained on his sheet. It is also the player's responsibility to be sure that his Hidden Agendas remain secret. The other characters may figure out what he is up to through his actions, but he is not allowed to show or tell his purposes to the other players, they must stay hidden. (As a gamemaster, be flexible — remember that your players need leeway to establish their own characters and take them in their own directions. Don't give them such detailed Hidden Agendas that they feel like they are reading a script rather than roleplaying on their own.)

Gamemasters are free to reduce the number of Cryptkeeper Points of characters who succeed in their Hidden Agendas or who do an exceptional job of roleplaying them.

If used well, the Hidden Agenda can add depth, tension and drama not usually found in roleplaying games. (*And depth is important ... I find that six feet is about right, although if the soil's hard and the casket's big, well ...*)

USING HIDDEN AGENDAS

Some of you reading this may be commenting that this is not a roleplaying innovation. There has been subterfuge and secret ambitions in gaming sessions from the earliest games. This is true. We don't claim to have invented a new, "first time ever seen in print" idea with the Hidden Agenda Rules. Our goal was to give a systematic way to harness the dramatic power of actions which were likely to go on anyway (*that's a fancy way of saying he knows you little creeps are going to backstab each other anyway, and this way he gets the credit when you do! Hehehehe!*) . Er, of course backstabbing and deception can be counted on to occur in any roleplaying campaign, but the gamemaster cannot guarantee that these actions will further the action of the plot or the drama of the campaign.

The main thing about Hidden Agendas in *The World of Tales From The Crypt* is that they exist to serve the plot. The secret information, desires and goals given to the characters should not be used merely to cause random carnage, but rather

to provide a depth and tension that is difficult to achieve in a cooperative game. (*But, remember, random carnage is its own reward ...*) It is specifically to be used to provide the sudden surprises and plot twists which are common in television and comic book *Tales From The Crypt* episodes.

Below are some guidelines and tips to use in designing Hidden Agendas for your episodes.

Be Reasonable: The agendas you give the characters should make accomplishing the episode's task more difficult, but it should not make it impossible. Don't give a character a Personal Goal, or several characters such adversarial relationships, that it becomes impossible for the characters to function as a group. Causing tension is great. Causing gridlock will kill the game.

Wait For It ...: A very common plot twist in *Tales From The Crypt* is the friend or ally who is with you 100 percent ... until a certain event occurs (or item is discovered), then he turns on you like a rabid dog. This is also common in roleplaying games, but usually only in the form of a treacherous gamemaster character. With the Hidden Agenda rules, however, it is possible to set these little traps up within the group. Give one of the characters a triggering event which, if it happens, will cause him to react uncontrollably. He could attack the person who caused the trigger, try to undo the situation, run screaming into the night, or even just sit down and refuse to do anything until another personal trigger is pulled. Even better, give one character a Personal Goal of performing the action which will set another character into motion. (Or, if you don't want to do something quite this drastic, have the Cryptkeeper cut a deal with a character — "Whoever brings this little item back to me wins his way out of my comfy Crypt ... but only if he comes alone.")

Two Ends Against The Middle: An interesting type of Hidden Agenda has two of the characters both attempting to curry the favor with, or get a specific reaction from, a third character. An innocuous example would be two high school athletes each trying to get one of the cheerleaders to go to the prom with him. A more serious example is a witness to a killing who has both the District Attorney and the murderer exerting pressure on him regarding his testimony. A good way to mix this type of Hidden Agenda up is to have the character who is being courted already have his mind set on a third option which neither of the other characters will like.

All For One: With all the subterfuge and acting against the group's best interest going on, it is good to now and then do exactly the opposite of what the players expect. Occasionally, give the characters Hidden Agenda sheets which have them all working towards the same secret goal. It is a wonderful feeling to see a player thinking his character is subtly guiding the decisions of others, steering events just they way he wants them to go and then get hit with the realization that he was just playing toward what everyone else wanted all along. No one ever suspects that the Hidden Agenda handed him at the outset boils down to nothing more than "cooperate with the others."

Zero Sum Gain: While Cryptkeeper points may be positively adjusted for successfully completing a Hidden Agenda, characters should not be punished for failing to do so. Hidden Agendas are extra bits added to play, and should not

Brian Schomburg
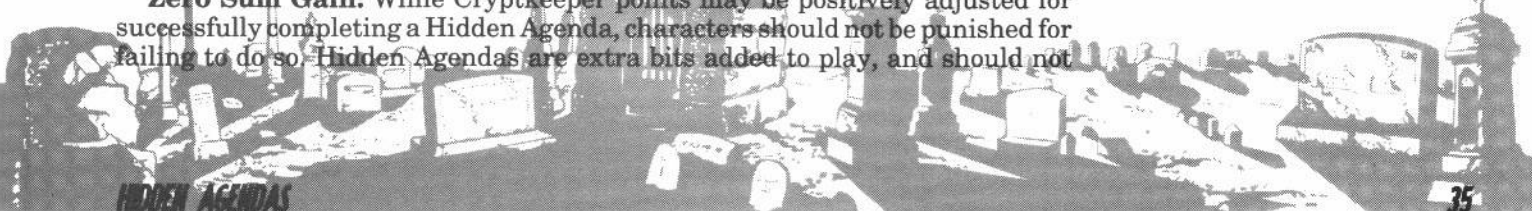
adversely affect the Adventure Awards earned during the episode.

At its heart, *The World of Tales From The Crypt* is still a cooperative game, and although these Hidden Agendas add a small bit of rivalry to the proceedings, they should not turn it into a vicious competition.

However, any character who blatantly ignores the information on his Hidden Agenda sheet or purposely works against the motivations given to him there may be penalized. Purposely bad roleplaying may gain the character one Cryptkeeper Point, ignoring a Personal Goal might add two, and severely changing the course of the episode because of disregarding Hidden Agenda information is cause for three or more Cryptkeeper Points to be assessed.

It is **not** necessary to use Hidden Agendas in every episode in your *Tales From The Crypt* campaign. These optional rules are very useful in some situations but very limiting in others. Use them in the scenarios that they can enhance and leave them out of the others.

If the players do not respond well to the Hidden Agendas rules, if they continually fight the course that the instructions set for their characters or do not enjoy the atmosphere of tension and paranoia these usually bring to a game, then remove them from play. The game must, in the end, be fun or it is not worth playing.

IN FOUR COLORS FOR A SCREAM

Another one of our discussions on the qualities that make *The World of Tales From The Crypt* an excellent place to run a campaign led to a discussion of the wealth of available source material. Not only can gamemasters draw from the usual sources which inspire horror roleplaying games, but also the numerous episodes produced for HBO , the feature film *Tales From The Crypt: Demon Knight*, the Saturday morning TV cartoon and years and years worth of the old comic books (which are now being reprinted and sold wherever you find quality comics).

Coming from a background of comic book collecting, this led us to think about the fact that the basic game *The World of Tales From The Crypt* leans heavily toward the video era (referring to episodes and scenes and acts ... er, that's screams and hacks). Why not write a campaign option which features the rich comic book history of *Tales From The Crypt*?

Why not, indeed. Below are details for a different type of campaign. In this one, the characters have not wandered into the Crypt and fallen under the Cryptkeeper's sway ... but instead, have set themselves up as adversaries of his, out to stop his sadistic schemes before they can bear fruit.

(WHAT?? I never agreed to that! Call my lawyer! Call my agent! Call my mortician! Come to think of it, they're all the same guy ...)

THE FOUR-COLOR CAMPAIGN

In a Four-Color campaign the characters are not wretched souls caught in the nefarious clutches of the Cryptkeeper. They are, in fact, normal folks like you or me, living their lives in a very ordinary world. Then, through some odd set of circumstances (called an "origin story") they come to be in possession of a comic book ... a very special *Tales From The Crypt* comic book.

The cover of this comic is a picture of the Cryptkeeper in his Crypt, very similar to the cover of *The World of Tales From The Crypt* book. From the outside nothing appears at all peculiar or ominous about it. When the comic is opened, however, the characters will get their first inkling that something is amiss. By the time the first adventure is over, they will know the power that the book contains and may well try to rid themselves of it. But once picked up, this comic book is *very* difficult to get rid of.
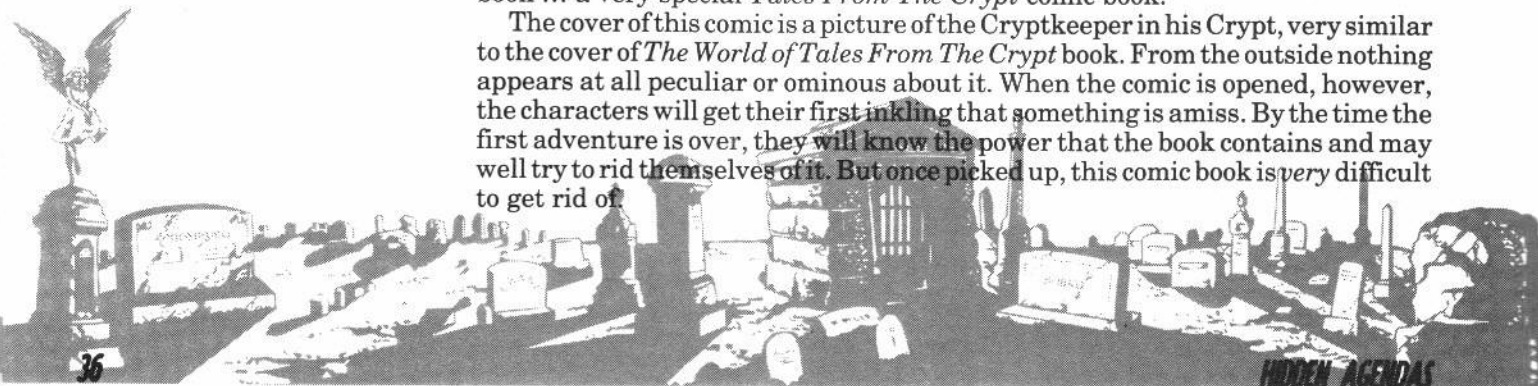
THE ORIGIN STORY

The Origin Story is not so much an episode or adventure in the campaign as it is a prologue or bridging device leading into the campaign. To begin with, the characters must have a pre-existing reason to be together (one of the reasons why this campaign setting is optional). They can be a group of friends or co-workers. They can be amateur occultists striving to obtain proof of the supernatural. They can be a coven of witches. They can even be a humble gaming group. Whatever their beginnings, their lives change suddenly when one of their members comes into possession of a very rare comic book.

It is up to you, the gamemaster, to decide how the book was acquired (based on the nature of the characters); it may have been purchased to fill out a comic collection, it may have been in the attic of a relative's house, it may have been found between the pages of an arcane text, or it may have suddenly appeared on the table as if from thin air.

It is possible that one of the characters may already have looked inside the comic book (especially if he purchased it as a collectable), but the first time it is opened in the presence of all the characters in the group, the book has undergone an inexplicable change. All the pages are blank except for the front cover (which has the *Tales From The Crypt* logo and an illustration of the Cryptkeeper) and the back cover (which has an advertisement for a mail-order voodoo doll). The other pages are a dull, bone white. The paper feels like newsprint, but looks more like bleached parchment.

After allowing for several moments of shock, disbelief, and sharing of possible explanations, start having the characters make Intellect or *perception* checks at a difficulty of 9. Tell the first one who succeeds that, as he looks at the blank page, he sees an image seem to gradually grow onto the paper. When the others look, they can see it too. A panel has appeared on the page.

The panel is a cartoon of the character who made the discovery looking in shock at a comic book page with one panel on it while the other characters in the room appear in the background doing exactly what they had been doing a moment ago. If they look carefully at the one panel in the comic book within the comic book, they find that is identical … and within that one another identical image, and within that another identical image, etc. It seems to go on forever, like two mirrors reflecting one another. This should cause some consternation among the characters. Allow them to do whatever they wish, but as long as they keep the book open nothing else will appear on the page.

After they close the book, however, it will have a new panel on that page when it is reopened. This panel, however, will be harder to interpret.

THE POWER OF THE BOOK

The panel that appears in the book will take up nearly the entire first page. It may be an image of a rich man spitting on a homeless child, a thief desecrating a tomb to steal the valuables buried within, a woman being shot in the back by a figure in silhouette, but it will always portray the commission of some evil or sinful act. There will usually be some dialogue which helps to identify the location and/or participants in the image, but which does not explain the entirety of the scene. Occasionally there will be a smaller image inset in the large one, a shot of the Cryptkeeper enjoying the carnage. *(And don't forget, kiddies, I get likeness approval. Too little rot in the right places and it's back to the drawing blood … er, board, for you. Hehehehehehe!)*

As time passes, more panels will fill in the following pages, telling a story of woe which is really happening. The images will give the characters enough information to begin investigations into the incident, but never enough to actually solve the case. The characters must find the participants and stop them, save them or avenge them. If they fail, or put off acting for too long, the comic book

will finish the story, revealing the truth for the characters to see and ending in another inset panel of the Cryptkeeper mocking the characters themselves for their inability to solve even the simplest of problems.

The comic book is an arcane artifact (as described in *The World of Tales From The Crypt,* page 74). It shows images and snippets of conversation from places that evil is at work. Sometimes it shows events that have happened in the past, sometimes things that are happening at that very moment, and occasionally things which have not yet occurred. But it always shows incidents that the characters have the chance to become involved in.

No one knows where the book comes from. Some say that the Cryptkeeper himself made the book and sees it passed into the hands of mortals who stand for what is good and decent in humanity, whom he can challenge in a kind of game for the lives and souls of the people who appear in the pages of the comic. Others say that the book was made by a higher power who gives it to those with the strength of character to defeat the Cryptkeeper in his foul machinations. Or maybe the player characters really need a nice, relaxing stay in a room with rubber walls … ? Regardless, the fact is that the pages slowly fill up with details of events which, if not averted, will cause great suffering to the innocent.

The characters are the only ones who can see the pictures which form on the pages. To everyone else it seems like a normal comic book. They see and can read classic *Tales From The Crypt* stories there and will not believe the characters' tales of changing images. If the characters take photos of, or in any other way try to reproduce, the pages they see, all that will come out are the normal comic stories that everyone else sees all the time.

If the characters try to ignore or throw away the book, it will mysteriously appear in their rooms, bags, pockets and other personal places, each time with at least one new panel added to the current "story." For some unknown reason it has become the characters' responsibility to protect others from the Cryptkeeper.

At some point in the future this burden may be passed on to another, but until that time the characters cannot give away, sell or destroy the comic … and it will always seek them out to show them all the evils they've been missing.

DIALOGUE AND LAYOUT

Writing episodes for this style of campaign is slightly more involved than in regular *Tales From The Crypt* games. You must plan out exactly what the characters will see at certain junctures in the story. You must know the background plot well enough that you can give hints to the truth without giving away the solutions at the same time.

It is not necessary to draw your own comic stories to show what is in the book. But you should write out any dialogue which would appear in the panels. If you have enough time during preparation, it would add atmosphere to the game if you could make some mock-ups of some of the panels (perhaps using photocopies of illustrations or photographs with your own word-bubbles taped over them).

Remember that whatever you show the characters at the beginning of the "story" must be a prelude to what is to come. It can be the early stages of the story (two people meeting who will one day kill each other; a scientist in his lab working on an formula that will eventually poison the entire city). Or it can be an ominous rendering of an event which will happen if nothing is done to prevent it (a prominent public figure being murdered; a catastrophic fatal accident), although these usually have the Cryptkeeper below making comments about how futile it is to attempt to prevent the incident. You need to make the picture and events spur the characters into action.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Why would you choose this type of campaign over the one described in *The World of Tales From The Crypt* book? Well, it is closer to the style of roleplaying you may be used to. Instead of the characters being blindly thrown into any situations that the Cryptkeeper likes, constantly switching genres and settings, the Four-Color Crypt has a stable setting where adventures happen against an established background. It might be an easier tableau for beginning roleplayers to step into. It can also be a good way to ease such players into the more complex setting, letting them become familiar with roleplaying in general and *The World of Tales From The Crypt* in particular at their own pace. When they are comfortable with the Four-Color Crypt campaign, have them investigate an occurence which places them in the grip of the Cryptkeeper, who can send them anywhere and anywhen he pleases.

What kind of *Tales* can you tell in this format? The list is endless. If you need inspiration, simply pick up one of the *Tales From The Crypt* comic books. Read half of one of the stories. If you were a player ... how would your character become involved to make the scenario turn out better? How could you prevent the characters in the story from tumbling to the tragic ending foreshadowed in the comic?

For those of you who do not have access to any suitable comic books, below are a few Four-Color Crypt style adventure seeds to serve as examples:

A BRIDGE TOO HIGH

Opening Panel: A woman hangs from the railing of a bridge. Far below her we see a river or sea. Her shoe has come off and has fallen halfway to the water's surface. Above, where she clings to the railing, we see a black boot about to crush her fingers.

The Cryptkeeper appears below, saying something like: "Here's a sweet young thing who just can't get a grip. Seems she fell for a dentist who lived to put the bite on people ... and she's about to become the victim of some very bad bridgework. Hehehehehe!"

The Next Few Panels: We see the same girl from the opening panel in several shots of her daily life. It's drab and unimpressive, until the day she takes a job with a handsome young dentist. It seems this dentist has secrets, and not all of them are his own. While he's fixing teeth, his gas is loosening tongues, and he's mining the facts that come out for his own personal blackmail business. At first, the girl goes along with this, but then she discovers a secret so terrible ... so horrifying ... that she tries to get away. Only she doesn't try quite hard enough ...

The Pay-Off: Who's trying to kill her? The doctor? One of his patients? And what secret has she learned?

MARK OF THE BEAST

Opening Panel: A police officer squats next to a corpse in a foggy alley. He is laying a coat over the body and has a forlorn expression on his face. The officer says, "Another one just like the others ... murder is one thing, but what kind of sick animal would tear a person up like this?" Behind him, coming out of the fog, is a hairy beast with huge, razor-sharp claws and fangs. It is poised to strike the officer while his back is turned.

The Next Few Panels: Show the same policeman filling out reports at headquarters the next day. He shows pictures of victims and gives expository dialogue telling about the recent murders, any possible suspects, and how they all have happened on his beat.
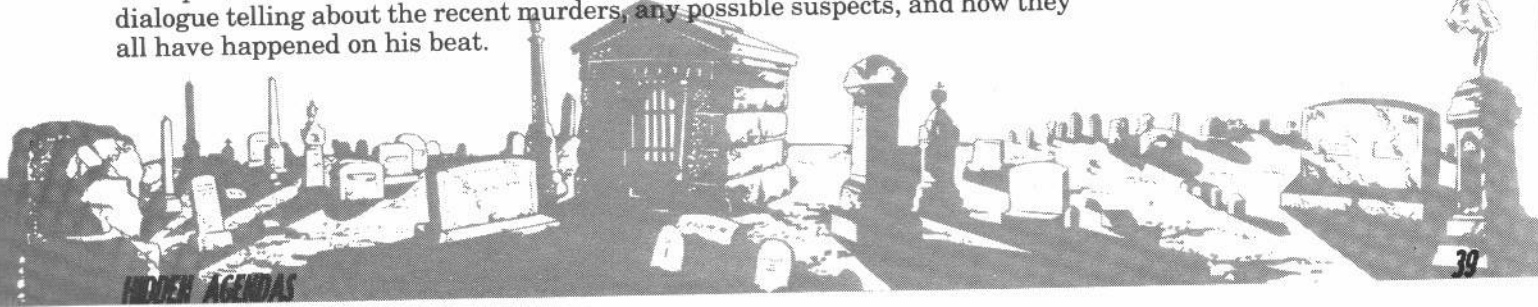
The Pay-Off: The characters have to solve this case, but do they have to save the police officer before he too is killed? Is one of his suspects actually the killer? Is he himself perhaps the beast and simply doesn't remember his bloody rampages when they're done?

PINCH OF BATWING, EYE OF NEWT

Opening Panel: A stereotypical hag stands over a frothing pot filled to the brim with a noxious brew. She is stirring the mixture with a long wooden spoon and cackling to herself. "One more ingredient and my potion will be finished! Once I get a devil's root and add it to this mixture, I will be the most powerful person in the world!"

The Next Few Panels: The hag makes a short expository speech saying that the potion will allow her to control the minds of anyone who smells it. She casts a spell on herself, giving her the appearance of a beautiful young woman, and heads out the door in search of a devil's root.

The Pay-Off: Where is the hag's laboratory? How can the characters find her if she can disguise herself as anyone she wants? What is a devil's root and where will she go to get one?

FUTURE IMPERFECT

Opening Panel: One of the characters is in the panel. He is walking down a crowded street and looks completely unsuspecting. From a dark alley a few meters behind him, a shadowy figure can be seen. It has just thrown an knife at the character's head and it seems as though nothing will stop the blade from hitting the target. The figure is thinking, "You never suspected me, did you? You thought I was your friend. Well, that mistake is going to cost you ... your life!!"

The Next Few Panels: We see the character interacting with several other people (including all the other characters and several known gamemaster characters). They all seem to be very friendly. nothing seems to be at all wrong. But we know one of them is planning to murder the character.

The Pay-Off: This would be a very good scenario to run using the Hidden Agenda rules. No one knows who the would-be murderer will be, but with secret notes being passed around, everyone will be a suspect. Who is the knife-thrower? Why is he betraying the character's trust? Can the answer be found in time?

IV
TRAGIC FLAWS

You again? You caught me just as I was cleaning all these self-help books out of my diebrary. Let's see, there's "Better Living Through Death," "I'm Moldy ... You're Moldy," "Women Who Are Dead and the Men Who Reanimate Them," "How to Skin Friends and Influence People," and the list goes on and on.

In this chapter, we're going to talk about one of my favorite subjects: all the things that are wrong with you. And when we're done, I'll have an eerie little epic waiting for you ...

Nobody's perfect ... we all know that. No one thinks that he is the paragon of human existence, at least, no one who isn't currently riding on the Disoriented Express. Still, we all think of ourselves as basically good. We imagine that in the depths of our hearts and souls is only love, compassion and other things admirable. No one thinks that he is, at his very core, evil ...at least not in the sense that a tentacled horror from beyond the stars or a cloven-hooved fiend from the stygian pits is evil. But monsters of this sort are just creations of our own imaginations, personifications of our own very human flaws and foibles. By giving these flaws some kind of physical shape, we attempt to rationalize and deal with them. We give ourselves a way to examine the evil, the very real evil, that is within us all, although we often hide or deny it. As a sentient species, our deepest fear is that our souls are as filled with darkness and bile as our dreams are with goodness and light. And every time we compromise our principles or subconsciously wish ill on someone else, we take another step closer to transforming our fears into reality.

The struggle to overcome a tragic flaw is a common theme in literature and film. It can play a crucial role in *The World of Tales From The Crypt*. By "tragic flaw" we mean not just a simple character fault, but rather an imperfection so basic that it affects everything in the character's life. A fault that the character must confront every day of his life (and usually he will face it unsuccessfully). For gamemasters who wish to include Tragic Flaws in their campaigns, we present the following optional rule:

TRAGIC FLAWS

To use this optional rule, first generate characters as described in *The World of Tales From The Crypt*, using the usual number and mix of Advantages and Compensations. However, all characters must choose an additional CIII Compensation, "Tragic Flaw."

This Compensation means that the character has a flaw so pervasive that it interferes with every aspect of his life. Usually this will make it impossible for the character to perform some actions, or maybe to resist performing them. The

flaw must be tied to situations which occur regularly in daily life.

As a result of taking this Compensation, the character is allowed one additional CI Advantage *or* one additional CII Advantage. No one said this would be fair. In fact, the point of a Tragic Flaw is that life is unfair.

It is left up to individual gamemasters to decide whether any given character fault is strong enough or pervasive enough to qualify as a Tragic Flaw. But they should be sure that the flaw will come into play at least once in most gaming sessions.

In games using this rule, each character should have a Tragic Flaw that will periodically control or limit his actions and/or reactions. This flaw can be made the focus of an adventure, but is best used as the focus of the character over the whole campaign; something that pops up at the most inopportune times to make bad situations even worse. As he fights against the external threats thrown against him by the Cryptkeeper, he must also struggle with his own personal demons which constantly tempt him away from the path to salvation.

This optional rule is similar to the "Quirk: Fatal Flaw" described on page 42 of *The World of Tales From The Crypt*. It differs mainly in severity; it is more debilitating (there is no automatic *willpower* check to resist it) and more wide-ranging (many Tragic Flaws will be active in every situation the character finds himself in). Gamemasters should feel free to use this rule as written in any *MasterBook* game, or simply add the CIII Compensation, "Tragic Flaw," to their usual list of available Compensations if they so desire.

STAYING IN CHARACTER

It is important that the players roleplay their characters' flaws to the fullest. Not only does this improve the game and the story, it allows the players to understand their characters more completely. The gamemaster should pay attention to how the players roleplay, as well. If a character is doing something that goes against his nature (or which ignores his Tragic Flaw) and is not even trying to fight against it, there should be a penalty of some kind (perhaps less experience awarded at the end of the adventure or extra Cryptkeeper Points).

Characters must remain true to themselves or the campaign will fall apart. The gamemaster cannot prepare scenarios which will effectively challenge, test and, most of all, frighten the characters if the players do not make an effort to play in character. Players should consider carefully whether or not they can, or want to, convincingly

roleplay the Tragic Flaws they give their characters. If the answer is no, then choose a different flaw.

A good example would be a cowardly character (according to his character sheet) who is always the first one to dive into a dangerous situation. As he is defined, this character should be generally unwilling to do dangerous things and should usually need to be coaxed or forced into physically mixing it up. A player who is unwilling to conform to the "reality" of his character must be redressed in some manner.

When a character wants to perform an action that flies in the face of his Tragic Flaw, have his player explain to you why his cowardly (or miserly, or bigoted) character would act against his nature. Meanwhile, you play devil's advocate (or perhaps simply the character's id) and counter his arguments with reasons why he should follow his basic instincts. Let the debate go on for a minute (or two at the most), but no longer; the game mustn't bog down over every little bit of inner turmoil. Weigh the situation in your mind, taking into account all the variables as well as the persuasiveness of the player's arguments, and render what you consider to be a fair judgment. The gamemaster's ruling is final.

In the above example, you could have the character make a *willpower* check whenever it is necessary to decide whether to do something dangerous or not. You set the difficulty number, based on just how difficult the task is. If the character succeeds at the roll he can do whatever he wants, if he fails he succumbs to his instincts and must follow his less noble impulses.

If you would rather have a set game mechanic to simulate this inner struggle, have the character make a *willpower* check against a difficulty number of 20. One card (and only one) from the MasterDeck can be played to support this attempt, but it may only be played by the player whose character is struggling to overcome his Tragic Flaw. Other players can cheer him on, but they cannot play any cards in support.

Remember, some things will motivate a character to act more charitably than usual; loyalty, love, rage, or some other strong emotion may be enough to momentarily overcome a character flaw. A man who is terrified of deep water may not even blink if he had to jump into the ocean to save his children.

Anyone who successfully overcomes his Tragic Flaw five times in a row may choose to change it to the CII Compensation, "Quirk: Fatal Flaw." This character has shown that through perseverance and strength of character it is possible to master even the deepest, darkest corners of our souls. Conversely, any character who fails to overcome a "Quirk: Fatal Flaw" five times in a row may have this personality defect raised to a CIII "Tragic Flaw" (with no corresponding gain in his Advantages).

Even if you are not running a campaign-style game, character flaws can help to create interesting stories. Since you won't be worried about long term character development in a one-shot adventure, you can explore different aspects of Tragic Flaws. A lot of roleplaying can be done with a character who has given in completely to his dark side. Can a player find a spark of goodness in a supposedly irredeemable soul? Although these kinds of stories are likely to be considerably more depressing, a lot can also be learned … about the characters, and about ourselves.

CRACKS IN THE FOUNDATION

While you are coming up with a concept for a character, you should also be deciding what his Tragic Flaw will be. Since this will be such an integral part of the character you should give it some serious thought. Don't just say, "Bill is a compulsive liar." Come up with a reason why he lies and work it into his background. Maybe Bill always made up lies as a child to protect himself from his abusive father. Or maybe he just enjoys manipulating people. Understanding your character's past will give you a deeper understanding of him and his

personality. It will allow you to get into character more quickly, and stay there when others lose their focus.

Be careful, however. In some cases, these flaws and motivations may be rather distasteful. A character who is a bigot, a bully, or simply amoral isn't going to have a whole lot of friends and may be quite uncomfortable to roleplay. Other flaws may be just as bad but are more instinctual, like cowardice and jealousy. Still, having a character with these faults is a way of looking at instincts that, to some degree, we all have. You may not like to face them, but they are undeniably at least a small part of you too. Crypt can be about facing your fears — it can also be about being crushed like a bug by them.

WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?

The following is a list of some possible Tragic Flaws and hints on how to roleplay them. Game statistics are not given. It is left up to the player and the gamemaster to work together when creating the character and discuss exactly what effect the flaw will have on the characters actions.

This list is by no means exhaustive. Feel free to give a character a flaw not listed here. Enthusiastic gamemasters are encouraged to generate their own extended lists of Tragic Flaws. Just be sure that each one has a severe, daily impact on the characters who suffer from it and that they are all roleplayable.

ADDICT

Addicts have a nearly uncontrollable physical urge to use a specific drug, generally either a narcotic or alcohol (although many other types of addictions exist, we purposely limit this flaw to the most immediately destructive substances). This drug may once have been beneficial, but now the character craves it for its narcotic influence. Drug addiction and alcoholism are both challenging and difficult flaws to play. They are more dangerous and debilitating than their media stereotypes often lead us to believe, and both players and gamemasters should be careful to treat this flaw with the seriousness it warrants. Depending on the degree of addiction, a character with this Tragic Flaw can find that he really has little or no control over his own life, and can make for some very interesting roleplaying.

The character may turn his back on everything he holds dear simply to obtain one "dose" to feed his addiction.

The gamemaster should realize that any kind of addiction is self-destructive and self-propelling; make an effort to make it easier and more seductive to the character (although probably not the player) to continue his slide into his final collapse than to overcome his cravings. Remember, addictions are more than bad habits that a character fails to exercise willpower over, they are real physical (sometimes mental) needs. If the substance is taken away, the character will suffer terrible physical illness; if the addiction continues, the character will continue in a slow decline of both physical and mental attributes.

Roleplaying: For whatever circumstances, you got addicted. Now you can't stop. You spend most of your time thinking about your next "fix" or your next drink, because that's the only thing that will ease your pain. Of course, your addiction is what's causing you pain, so it is a never-ending cycle.

You easily blame others for your condition and become indignant or withdrawn when others confront you with the reality of your pathetic state. If the substance you're addicted to becomes unavailable for long periods you will become hysterical and be unable to concentrate on anything other than finding a new supply.

If the deprivation lasts long enough you may become delirious or lapse into unconsciousness.
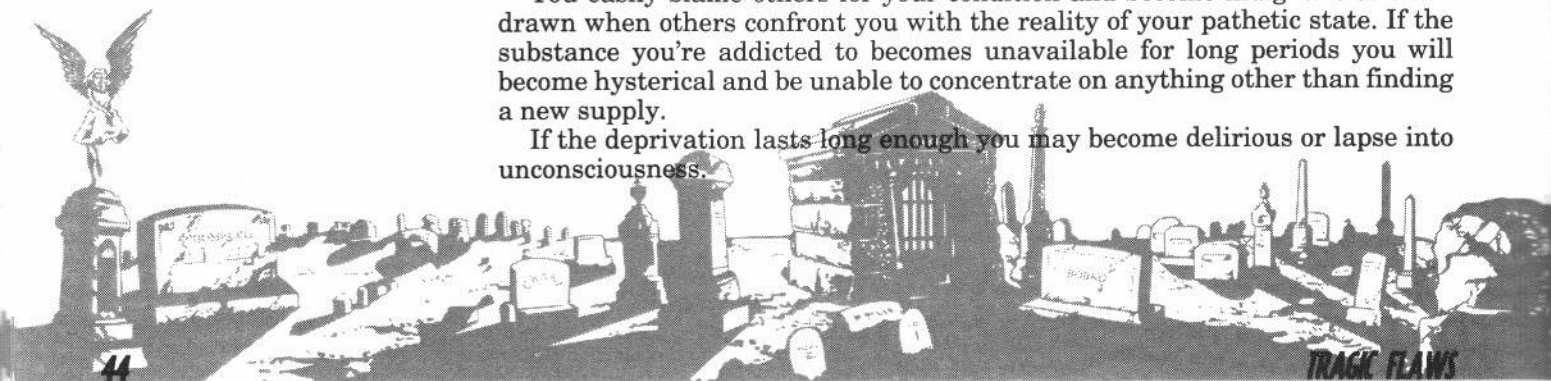
APATHETIC

Apathetic characters have a hard time getting motivated to do anything. Nothing seems important enough for them to respond to, or perhaps everything is so overwhelming that there is obviously nothing they can do to affect their situation … either way, it doesn't make any difference. No matter how dire the situation, no matter how desperate the pleas of his friends, an apathetic character will likely just stare back blankly and yawn. In extreme cases, such a character may only take rudimentary precautions when he is directly threatened. He will likewise not put up any resistance when being brought into dangerous situations. If others prod and push him he will follow just about anywhere, but he generally will do nothing to help them reach their goal..

Roleplaying: Why bother? Everyone is always running around convinced that something has to be done. But it doesn't involve you, so who cares? And what could you do to help, anyway? You will go along with people when coerced but you have a hard time getting interested in anything because of anything as trivial as idealism (though you can be motivated by petty concerns like survival). In a dangerous situation you will act out of self-preservation, but once the danger has passed it will be difficult to get you interested again.

ARROGANT

Arrogant characters look down on those around them, considering most people they meet to be inferior and not worthy of compassion or consideration. They also do not miss any opportunity to tell their companions, in the most tactless of ways, how little they think of them and their abilities. Often, arrogance hides some kind of insecurity and these characters' egos may be fragile. They are convinced of their superiority even when confronted by someone who is actually better at something than they are. This leads to overconfidence which can be dangerous or even fatal.

Roleplaying: You're the best and you know it. Flaunt it and generally let everyone know who's tops. When other people disagree with your opinions, be dismissive and condescending. You know you're right and if they had half a brain between them, they'd realize it too. You won't have a lot of friends in the group (unless they suck up to you), but these losers should be happy that you're willing to "slum it" and show them what life's all about. If someone ever manages to show you up, you get jealous and vengeful.

BIGOT

A bigot is prejudiced against a group or groups of people due to their race, beliefs, or lifestyle. Whenever he can get away with it he will make offensive and derogatory remarks about the people he is prejudiced against. In face-to-face dealings with these people, they will be arrogant and condescending if in a position of power, and cautious and distrustful if the others have the advantage. Often the prejudice is based on stereotypes, misinformation or fear, but it is so ingrained that no amount of education or "proof" is likely to change the bigot's thinking. A bigot is likely to consider those he despises as less than human and may feel no compunction about stealing from, lying to, lying about, physically abusing or even murdering them. He will not want to spend time with these people (which will be very difficult if someone in the party falls into the shadow of his hate) and may reserve some of his hatred for those who support his enemies.

Steve Garcia
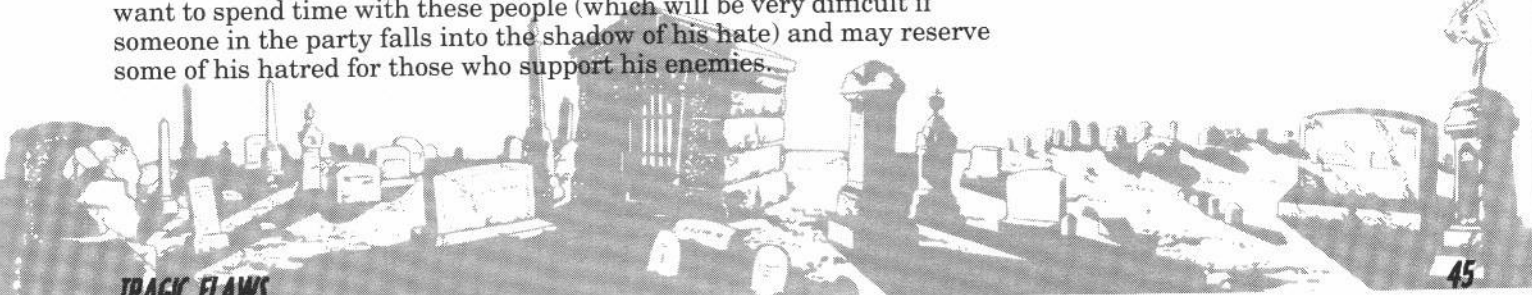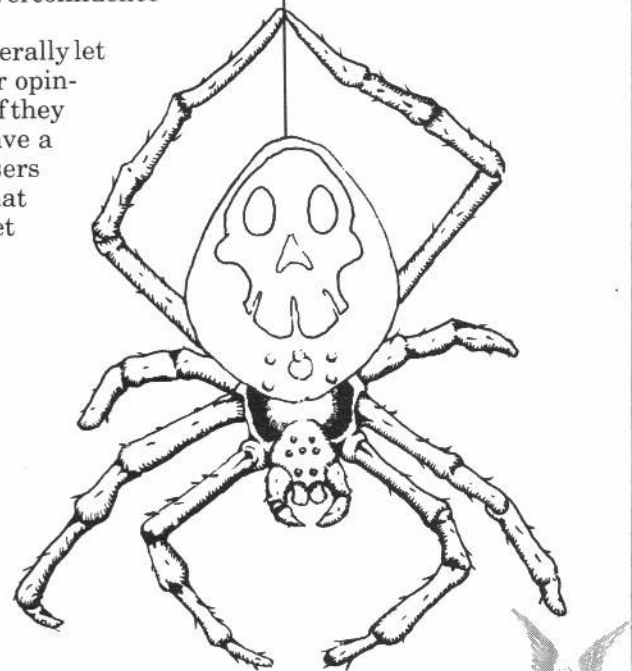
Roleplaying: Playing a character like this can be pretty offensive so be careful not to take it too far. A bigoted character will make nasty remarks, cruel jokes and place blame for everything on the group he hates. If faced with proof that someone of that group is skilled or otherwise dependable, he will only grudgingly admit it. He will do everything he can to discourage the group from accepting anyone who is a member, or supporter, of the people he's focused on. All in all, this is a very distasteful flaw and, if played realistically, can easily be the cause of hard feelings among members of the gaming group. The gamemaster should talk privately with all the players about its ramifications before any character is allowed to take it.

BULLY

Bullies like to push other people around just because they can. They are stronger or more powerful than most people and will constantly use their advantages to terrorize others. They delight in watching those weaker than them suffer, but they revel in being the cause of others' suffering. Often they have a few flunkies, who support the bully in order to protect themselves, but will abandon him the moment they see someone even more powerful. Bullies are very insecure and often turn into cowards once they have been beaten or are no longer in a position of power.

Roleplaying: Think of the fat kid and his weasel partner who used to beat you up and take your lunch money in elementary school. Be cruel and take advantage of anyone who is weaker than you. In a group situation you will try to dominate through fear. Be careful though, you can be cowed into submission if someone beats the tar out of you. If this happens, sulk and mope and think of any dirty trick you can to show-up the person who took your place.

COWARD

Everyone has a self-preservation instinct. Running away from a fight you know you can't win is usually a good idea. But running from your responsibility, especially when lives are at stakes, that's cowardice. Cowards, however, act on the principle that any risk is worth running from, even at the expense of their own long-term goals or their friends' or loved ones' lives. Getting a coward to do anything even remotely dangerous is often almost impossible. They are masters at finding spots out of harm's way, and when they can't get out of the firing line, they often freeze into inaction. When things are heating up, count on the coward to look for a convenient place to hide. Cowards can find their courage once they have finally faced their fear without flinching. But getting them to face anything is a terrible struggle.

Roleplaying: They want you to do WHAT?!? No way! You avoid taking risks no matter what how inconsequential they seem. Crossing the street makes you edgy. Weapons make you break out in a cold sweat. When the chips are down and it's your turn to lay it all on the line, it will take a serious effort of will for you to take *any* action other than covering your own ass. If there's no way for you to find a hidey-hole, you will usually freeze, like a deer caught in the headlights.

DELUSIONAL

Delusional characters do not perceive reality as most people do. Rather, they have a unique interpretation of the things around them; perhaps they see everyone they meet as medieval lords and ladies, perhaps they simply believe that all red-headed people are androids. This is a form of mental illness which is often found in characters who have witnessed or suffered some trauma that is too terrible to confront, so they simply retreat into their own minds and generate a more pleasant reality. Whatever their perceptions, communicating with them is difficult and sometimes impossible. Depending on how divergent a delusional character's perceptions are, he will sometimes have odd names for his friends —

these will be linked to his delusion (everyone might be addressed as either "Lord" or "Lady" or perhaps everyone is referred to by the names of fictional characters from the character's favorite movie).

If his delusion is wildly divergent from reality, a character may have trouble functioning in society. In most cases a character will have one permanent delusion, but in some characters this flaw may manifest itself by causing their minds to switch delusions to interpret whatever situation they are in. Gamemasters should realize that some delusions are more debilitating than others. In order for this to be taken as a Tragic Flaw, the delusion must severely hinder the character during play, so consider they player's selection carefully.

Roleplaying: Pick a statement which is not true ... anything from "We are all cavemen living in prehistoric times," to "The Kabaal is mind-controlling everyone whose name begins with T, so I must kill them all." You absolutely believe this to be true. Nothing anyone says, does or shows you will shake your belief. All the others are just fooling themselves ... you know the truth. If they force their "truth" on you too much you may become despondent (sitting motionless for hours) or you may fly into a frenzy (physically lashing out at those around you), but you will not believe that they are telling you the truth.

KLEPTOMANIAC

Whenever the opportunity to surreptitiously take something presents itself, the character just can't resist it. This does not make him a professional thief, and no additional skills come with this flaw. It is a compulsion and the character often will not want to give in to it. He generally takes small things, even if they are of no value or consequence. But as success becomes easier he may move on to larger, more expensive items. He often says that he does it just for the thrill and may even give the items back after he's successfully made off with them.

If this impulse is not controlled, the character will eventually be caught pocketing an item and then there is a danger of his being branded a shoplifter or some other sort of petty criminal; he may face criminal prosecution or become a fugitive of justice, thus making the rest of the group accomplices after the fact.

Roleplaying: If it's not nailed down take it; if it is, pry it up and take it. Just make sure that nobody sees you. Once people find out what you're up to it will, of course, be more difficult for you to get anything from them, but switching targets is no big deal. If it becomes too easy to take small things, then start moving on to bigger ones. Push your luck. What fun is life without a little risk? When your compulsion gets you in trouble, you tend to resign yourself to your fate ...'it was just a game, after all. If your conscience bothers you, give the items back later. In some cases though, you may not be aware of what you are doing. Things will wind up in your pockets or among your possessions and you won't have any idea where they came from. It's very hard to return such things to their rightful owners.

LIAR

We are all guilty of lying occasionally, if only to protect the feelings of others, but a character with this flaw simply cannot speak the truth. Everything he says will not be 100 percent lies, but there will always be some embellishment or twisting of the truth to anything this character says. And occasionally, for no apparent reason, he will simply fabricate an entire tale which seems to have major relevance to the situation at hand. This skill at coming up with stories on the spot can sometimes give a character an edge in situations which call for negotiation or persuasion. However, the other members of his group will likely learn to dismiss everything this character says as him just "crying wolf." Any bonus gained is more than offset by losing the trust and respect of one's comrades. Any gamemaster characters who spend long periods of time with the
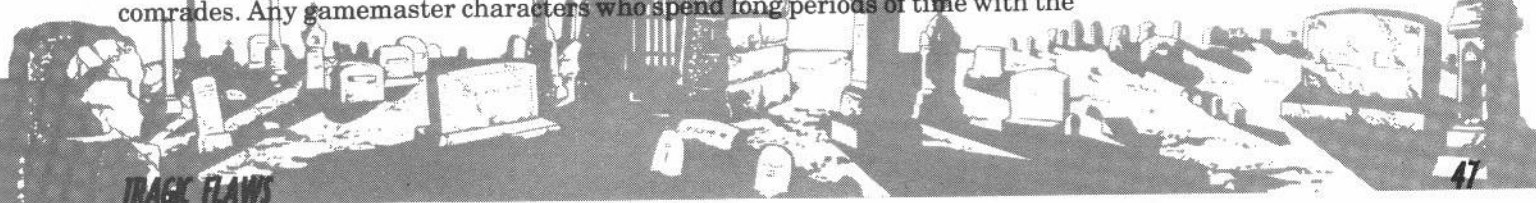
character may also come to the conclusion that his words are simply not to be believed.

Roleplaying: You love to tell stories and try to convince people that they're true. Any actual event can do with a few "additions,"just to liven up the telling, and you're happy to supply them. After all, what is "the truth" anyway? Of course, not everyone understands and they are always trying to find fallacies in anything you tell them. Occasionally they find one and after that no one trusts you for a while. That just makes it more important that you make your stories believable and only add things which cannot be disproved.

PHOBIC

A character with a phobia has an irrational fear of a specific thing. When faced with whatever it is that triggers the phobia, the character will cower, flee or freeze, or in some cases go berserk. While seemingly similar to cowardice, a phobia allows the character to function normally in other situations. When faced with the object of his fear, however, he loses all control. Take, for example, someone with an overwhelming fear of snakes. He may still function normally, indeed, heroically in every other situation — but when faced with even a garter snake, he freezes or flees.

Roleplaying: Perhaps there was a traumatic incident in your childhood, or perhaps you have no idea why, but there is one thing which terrifies you beyond all reason. There is no rational explanation, the thing you fear may not even be dangerous, but when ever you have to face it your whole world falls apart. Maybe you try to flee, maybe you freeze up, maybe you faint, or maybe you fly into a blind panic lashing indiscriminately out at everything and everyone around you. You will always avoid any situation that triggers your phobia and need to really psych yourself up to even think seriously about it. Only in the most extreme circumstances will you attempt to face your fear, but rarely will you get beyond the first step before a fist of fear closes around your heart and your breath starts coming in short gulps. Anything is better than confronting your phobia, possibly even death.

BONUS CHART

							9	11									21	26	31	36	41	
DIE ROLL	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	10	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	25	30	35	40	45	+5
BONUS #	-10	-8	-7	-6	-5	-3	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	+1

BACKGROUND COMPENSATION LIST

COLUMN I

Advantage Flaw (CI) — There is a limitation or drawback to one of the character's Advantages

Age (CI) — The character is older or younger than his prime

Bad Luck (CI) — The character is unlucky; usually when the character rolls a die total of "2," something bad happens (*stymied, setback,* etc.)

Bigotry (CI) — The character is a minor bigot in some way

Cultural Unfamiliarity (CI) — Character is "out of his element"

Debt (CI) — Character owes a small debt to someone

Employed (CI) — Character has a job that takes away some of his freedom of choice

Enemy (CI) — The character has a minor enemy

Handicap (CI) — The character has a minor physical or mental handicap that adds +2 to the DN of five or more related skills

Infamy (CI) — The character is a minor "villain"

Prejudice (CI) — The character suffers as an object of minor prejudice

Poverty (CI) — The character begins the game as poor, with substandard and limited equipment

Price (CI) — There is a "price" to a character's Advantage

Sense of Duty (CI) — Character feels compelled to take certain actions out of perceived duty.

Quirk (CI) — The character suffers from a personality or physical quirk that makes his life a little more difficult

COLUMN II

Advantage Flaw (CII) — There is a significant limitation to one of the character's Advantages

Age (CII) — The character is very old or very young (see text)

Bad Luck (CII) — The character is even more unlucky than "I" (see text)

Bigotry (CII) — The character is a serious bigot

Cultural Unfamiliarity (CII) — The character is from an alien culture and is significantly limited in cultural knowledge

Debt (CII) — The character owes a large debt to someone under dangerous circumstances

Employed (CII) — The character's "freedom" is virtually nonexistent because of his job

Enemy (CII) — The enemy is very powerful or always around

Handicap (CII) — The character has one physical or two mental attributes and add +3 to the DN of all skill checks, except in very special circumstances (see text)

COLUMN II (CONTINUED)

Illiterate (CII) — Character cannot read or cannot read local language

Infamy (CII) — The character is, most likely, a criminal or thought of as an enemy of society

Language (CII) — The character does not understand the language of the area he is in

Learning Curve (Negative) (CII) — The costs for learning skills are doubled

Prejudice (CII) — The character is the subject of fairly serious prejudice

Price (CII) — There is a much higher price to be paid (physical damage as an example) for using an Advantage

Sense of Duty (CII) — Character believes strongly in something and will attempt to convince others

Quirk (CII) — The character has a much more often ocurring or serious "personality flaw"

COLUMN III

Achilles' Heel (CIII) — The character has a vulnerability

Advantage Flaw (CIII) — The flaw interferes with the use of the Advantage *and* provides an additional disadvantage

Burn-out (CIII) — Under certain circumstances, a particular Advantage goes away permanently

Bad Luck (CIII) — The character will suffer from *at least* a setback periodically (see text)

Cultural Unfamiliarity (CIII) — The character is a complete alien

Debt (CIII) — The character can gain no material goods — all must be turned over to a "lender" at the end of an adventure

Employed (CIII) — Character is, essentially, a slave

Enemy (CIII) — The enemy wants to kill the character and is very powerful

Handicap (CIII) — The character cannot perform many normal activities

Infamy (CIII) — The character will almost always be attacked or pursued

Sense of Duty (CIII) — Character's belief in a cause is so strong that it motivates all his actions

Uncoordinated — +3 to the difficulty of all Agility and Dexterity-based skills

Uneducated — Increases in value of Intellect or Mind skills cost one extra skill point

Quirk (CIII) — The character has a severe personality disorder

SKILL POINTS

Intellect Is ...	Skill Points Are ...
13	10
11 to 12	9
8 to 10	8
6 to 7	7
5	6

Mind is ...	Skill Points Are ...
13	16
11 to 12	14
9 to 10	12
7 to 8	10
6	8
5	6

TOUGHNESS CHART

Strength	Toughness Points
10 to 13	4
7 to 9	3
5 to 6	2

Endurance	Toughness Points
12 to 13	8
9 to 11	7
7 to 8	6
5 to 6	5

COMPARISON CHART

# of Skill Adds	Level of Knowledge
1	Novice
2	Beginner
3	Intermediate
4–6	Professional
7–10	Advanced Professional
11–15	Adept, or "Master"
16+	Probably the most learned in the world

SUCCESS CHART

Result Points	General Success	Damage	Intimidation	Taunt/ Trick	Maneuver	Push (Shock Taken)
0	Minimal	1	stymied	stymied	fatigued	1 (3)
1	Solid	O1	stymied	stymied	fatigued	1 (2)
2	Solid	K1	stymied	stymied	fatigued	1 (1)
3	Solid	O2	stymied	stymied	fatigued	2 (4)
4	Solid	3	stymied	stymied	fatigued	2 (3)
5	Good	Knockdown O3	untrained	untrained	fatigued	2 (2)
6	Good	Knockdown K3	untrained	untrained	fatigued	3 (5)
7	Good	Knockdown KO	untrained	untrained	stymied	3 (4)
8	Good	Wnd K/O 3	untrained	untrained	stymied	3 (3)
9	Superior	Wnd K/O 5	untrained	untrained	stymied	4 (6)
10	Superior	2Wnd Knockdown K3	setback	setback	stymied	4 (5)
11	Superior	2Wnd K/O 5	setback	setback	stymied	4 (4)
12	Superior	2Wnd KO 5	setback	setback	stymied/fatigued	5 (7)
13	Spectacular	3Wnd Knockdown K3	setback	setback	stymied/fatigued	5 (6)
14	Spectacular	3Wnd K/O 5	setback	setback	stymied/fatigued	5 (5)
15	Spectacular	3Wnd KO 7	break	up/setback	stymied/fatigued	6 (8)
16	Spectacular	4Wnd Knockdown K5	break	up/setback	setback/fatigued	6 (7)
17	Spectacular+	4Wnd KO 7	break	up/setback	setback/fatigued	6 (6)
18	Spectacular+	5Wnd Knockdown K5	break	up/setback	setback/fatigued	7 (9)
19	Spectacular+	5Wnd KO7	break	up/setback	setback/fatigued	7 (8)
20	Spectacular+	6Wnd Knockdown K5	player's call	player's call	player's call	7 (7)
+1	Spectacular+	+1Wnd	player's call	player's call	player's call	8 (10)

ARBITRARY DN SCALE

Difficulty Level	% Chance of Success**	DN Value
Simple	100%	*
Routine	97%	0
Nearly Routine	90%	2
Very Easy	85%	3
Easy	79%	5
Average	55%	8
Complicated	36%	10
Difficult	15%	12
Hard	10%	13
Very Hard	3%	15
Extremely Hard	†	18
Incredible	†	22
Nearly Impossible	†	25+

* *Simple* actions do not normally need to be rolled for — opening a door, walking across a room, etc.

** The "% Chance of Sucess" is based on an average character with an attribute value of 8.

† Cannot be achieved without a roll-again.

EXTENDED PUSH TABLE

Result Points	Push (Shock Taken)
22	8 (9)
23	8 (8)
24	9 (11)
25	9 (10)
26	9 (9)
27	10 (12)
28	10 (11)
29	10 (10)

MODIFIER CHART

Modifier to DN or Skill	Situation
+/- 1	The modifier barely affects the skill attempt
+/- 3	The modifier makes a significant difference
+/- 5	The modifier will probably change the overall outcome
+/- 7	The modifier will almost totally change the over-all outcome
+/- 10 (or more)	The modifier totally redefines the skill attempt

MISSILE WEAPONS

| Weapon | Damage | Range | | | | Price |
		Short	Medium	Long	Extreme	
Acid	20	STR-3	STR-2	STR-1	STR	Varies
Crossbow	STR+9/24	3-10	100	200	300	$300
Gasoline Bomb	23	STR-3	STR-2	STR-1	STR	$1.09
Grenade	23	STR-4	STR-3	STR-2	STR-1	$50
Throwing Dagger	STR+2/17	3–5	10	15	30	$30

EXPLOSIVE BURST RADIUS

| Weapon | Damage | Range | | |
		Short	Medium	Long
Acid	1(+2)	1(+0)	2(-5)	3(-10)
Gasoline Bomb	0–2	5	10	15
Grenade	0–3	8	15	30

ATTRIBUTE VALUE COMPARISON CHART

Attribute Value	Relative Quality
14+	Superhuman
13	Exceptional — A genius; an Olympic or professional athlete of the highest caliber would have attributes this high (but would also have many skill adds as well); a movie idol
11–12	Outstanding — A very adept or extremely bright character; in top physical shape; a very popular person
9–10	High average — smart; in good shape; personable
7–8	Low average — not overly intelligent; moderate conditioning; bland
6	Below average — unintelligent; in poor physical shape; dull or abrasive
5	Well below average — "stupid"; almost no physical ability; unpleasant and unpopular
4-	The character has either a severe handicap or another reason for being so below "normal."

MELEE WEAPONS

Weapon Type	Damage Value	Price
Awl/Icepick	STR+2/16	$3–$10
Axe	STR+7/22	$45
Blackjack	STR+3/18	$15
Brass Knuckles	STR+4/19	$25
Club/Baton	STR+5/20	$15
Electrical Cord		
Light	STR+1/15	$5
Heavy	STR+2/16	$10
Hatchet	STR+6/21	$20
Knife/Dagger	STR+4/19	$20–$600
Hedge Clippers	STR+2/16 (slash)	$15
	STR+4/19 (chop)	

ARMOR

Armor Type	TOU+/ Max Value	Fatigue?	Price (In Dollars)
Soft Leather	+2/17	no	$250
Padded Leather	+3/18	no	$350
Bullet Proof Vest	+6/22	no*	$500
Flak Jackets	+8/23	yes*	$1000

*These armors have special restrictions, see text.

WOUND LEVEL CHART

Wound Level	Modifier(s)	Healing Rate	Healing Difficulty
Light	no modifier	One day	10
Moderate	-2 to physical skills	One day	12
Heavy	-4 to physical & -2 to all other skills	Three days	14
Incapacitated	-8 to all skills	Three days	16
Mortal*	automatic KO*	One day	18
Dead*	dead	dead	we mean it; you're dead

* See *MasterBook* rulebook.

FIRST AID CHART

Condition	DN
Shock, KO	8
Lightly wounded	9
Moderately wounded	11
Heavily wounded	12
Incapacitated	14
Mortally wounded	18
Dead	22

MEDICINE CHART

Wound Level	DN
Lightly wounded	10
Moderately wounded	12
Heavily wounded	13
Incapacitated	15
Mortally wounded	17

RANGED WEAPONS

Fire Options	Attacking Modifier	Defensive Modifier
Burst Fire as Single	-1	0
Full Auto (if possible)	+3	-1
Single Fire as Multi (if possible)	+2	0
Aim (for one round)	+2 (next round)	-2 (same round)
"Trick" Shot	-4	varies
Sweep (Ranged) (if possible)	+2	0
Hit Location	*	*

* See *MasterBook* rulebook.

RANGED WEAPONS — MUSCLE-POWERED

Missile Options	Attacking Modifier	Defensive Modifier
Aim (for one phase)	+2 (next round)	-2 (same round)
"Trick" Shot	-4	varies
Hit Location	*	*

* See *MasterBook* rulebook.

HAND-TO-HAND ATTACKS

Attack Options	Attacking Modifier	Defensive Modifier
Short Range	-3	-2
Sweep (Hand-to-Hand)	+3	-1
Grab	-1	-4
"Knockdown"	-3	0
All-out	+4	-6

HIT LOCATIONS

Hit Location	Attacking Modifier	Effects
Head	-8	+12 to damage
Chest	-2	+3 to damage
Abdomen	-4	+6 to damage
Left or Right Arm	-3	-2 to damage
Left or Right Leg	-2	-1 to damage

VEHICLE CHART

Vehicle Type	Safe/Max Speed	Pass.	Tough	Maneuver*	Price
LAND VEHICLES					
Bicycle	STR/3xSTR	1–2	8	+2	$200
Motorcycle	75/150	1–2	13	+3	$10,000
Motorcycle (Large)	90/170	1–2	14	+2	$15,000
Compact Car	70/90	3–4	15	+2	$11,000
Mid-size Car	70/120	5–6	16	+1	$16,000
Large Car	70/110	6–8	17	+1	$25,000
Sports Car	100/190	2–4	15	+3	$35,000+
Small Truck	70/110	3 (cab)	19	+0	$40,000+
Large Truck	70/110	3 (cab)	20	−1	$65,000+
AIR VEHICLES					
Helicopter-Chinook	150/240	30	23	+3	$600,000
Helicopter-Attack	120/180	3	24	+5	$12m
Prop Plane (Small)	110/170	4	17	+1	$150,000
Prop Plane (Medium)	180/230	6–20	21	+0	$250,000
Small Jet	400/550	8–20	21	+0	$1.5m

Damage
Modifier

-2
+1
+1
+1
+2
-5
*

Damage
Modifier

+1
+2
*

Damage
Modifier

-1
-5
-3
first wnd
becomes knockdown
+1

BONUS CHART

DIE ROLL	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 10	11 12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21 25	26 30	31 35	36 40	41 45	+5
BONUS #	-10	-8	-7	-6	-5	-3	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	+1

ROUNDS PROCEDURE

0. Declare Rounds
1. Determine Initiative
2. Announce Approved Actions *
3. Act in Initiative Order
4. Summarize Results (Gamemaster)
6. Award Cards/Flip Over Cards *
7. End Rounds or Begin a New Round

* Only when using the card deck for initiative.

COVER AND CONCEALMENT

Concealment is:	Defensive Modifier
One-Quarter	+3
One-Half	+5
Three-Quarter	+8
Complete	+12
Complete Plus	+12+?

Cover is:	Toughness Modifier
Negligible	0
Weak	+2
Moderate	+4
Strong	+6
Very Strong	+8
"Impenetrable"	+12

MULTI-ACTION TABLE

Action Priority	Modifier to Skill Total
Primary	-2
Secondary	-3
Tertiary	-4
Etc. …	An additional -1 for each

MANY-ON-ONE TABLE

# of Characters	DN Modifier	Effect Modifier
1	DN	–
2	DN+1	+3
3	DN+2	+4
4	DN+2	+5
5	DN+3	+6
6	DN+3	+7
7	DN+4	+8
8	DN+4	+9
9	DN+5	+10
10*	DN+5	+11

* For every two characters above nine, add +1 to the DN Modifier and +1 to the Effect Modifier.

TALES FROM THE CRYPT SKILL LIST

AGILITY
Acrobatics
Beast Riding*
Climbing
Dodge
Escape Artist†
Flight*
Improvised Weaponry†
Long Jumping
Maneuver
Martial Arts*
Melee Combat
Melee Parry
Running
Stealth
Swimming
Unarmed Combat
Unarmed Parry

DEXTERITY
Fire Combat
Heavy Weapons*
Lock Picking
Missile Weapons*
Prestidigitation
Thrown Weapons
Vehicle Piloting*

ENDURANCE
Resist Pain†
Resist Shock

STRENGTH
Lifting

INTELLECT
Camouflage
Computer Hacking†
Computer Ops
Deduction
Demolitions
Divination†

Forgery
First Aid
Linguistics
Navigation *
Perception
Radio Ops†
Safe Cracking†
Science*
Super-science*
Teaching*
Tracking
Trick
Vehicle Mechanic *†

MIND
Artist*
Business
Hypnotism
Language*
Medicine
Psychic *†
Research†
Scholar*

CONFIDENCE
Bribery†
Con
Curse†
Faith*
Gambling†
Interrogation
Intimidation
Streetwise
Survival*
Willpower

CHARISMA
Charm
Disguise
Persuasion
Summoning*
Taunt

*Macroskill; must select focus
† Skill new with *Tales From The Crypt*
Boldface: Skill cannot be used untrained.

SURPRISE MODIFIERS

Surprise Levels	Attacking Modifier	Damage Modifier
Blindside*	+2	0
Partial Surprise	+2	0
Complete Surprise	+5	-2

*The modifiers for a *blindside* attack are cumulative with either *partial surprise* or *complete surprise* modifiers, but neither *partial surprise* nor *complete surprise* are cumulative with each other.

FIREARMS CHART

Weapon	Damage	Ammo	Range				Cost
			Short	Medium	Long	Extreme	
PISTOLS							
Colt Anaconda .44 Magnum	20	6	3–12	17	44	150	$600 ($40)
Colt M1911 .45 ACP	18	8	3–10	15	40	140	$300 ($25)
Glock 17 9mm	17	17	3–8	13	35	130	$500 ($35)
Glock 22 .40S&W	18	15	3–10	15	40	140	$600 ($35)
S&W .357 Magnum	19	6	3–10	25	50	150	$350 ($35)
S&W .38 Special	17	6	3–10	25	40	140	$200 ($20)
RIFLES							
AK-74 5.45mm Assault Rifle	22	30	5–20	50	150	300	$1500 ($35)
M-16A2 5.56mm Assault Rifle	23	30	5–20	50	200	300	$2000 ($35)
Remington .30-30 Lever-action	21	7	5–30	90	200	300	$700 ($40)
Remington .30-06 Bolt-action	22	5	5–20	75	200	300	$400 ($30)
Winchester .45-70 Lever-action	22	5	5–20	75	200	300	$450 ($35)
SHOTGUNS							
Remington 20 gauge pump	20	5–20	30	75	150	100	$600 ($30)
Mossberg 500 12 gauge pump	22	5	5–10	20	40	100	$450 ($35)
Fiorelli SPAS12 12 gauge semi-auto	22	10/20	5–10	20	40	100	$700 ($35)
SUB-MACHINE GUNS							
Heckler & Koch MP5 SMG 9mm	19	30	5–10	25	60	85	$2000 ($35)
Ingram MAC-10 SMG 9mm	18	30	5–10	20	50	75	$1000 ($35)
Uzi SMG 9mm	19	32	5–10	25	60	85	$1500 ($35)

TALES FROM THE CRYPT SKILL LIST

AGILITY
Acrobatics
Beast Riding*
Climbing
Dodge
Escape Artist†
Flight*
Improvised
  Weaponry†
Long Jumping
Maneuver
Martial Arts*
Melee Combat
Melee Parry
Running
Stealth
Swimming
Unarmed Combat
Unarmed Parry

DEXTERITY
Fire Combat
Heavy Weapons*
Lock Picking
Missile Weapons*
Prestidigitation
Thrown Weapons
Vehicle Piloting*

ENDURANCE
Resist Pain†
Resist Shock

STRENGTH
Lifting

INTELLECT
Camouflage
Computer Hacking†
Computer Ops
Deduction
Demolitions
Divination†
Forgery
First Aid
Linguistics
Navigation *
Perception
Radio Ops†
Safe Cracking†
Science*
Super-science*

Teaching*
Tracking
Trick
Vehicle
  Mechanic *†**

MIND
Artist*
Business
Hypnotism
Language*
Medicine
Psychic *†**
Research†
Scholar*

CONFIDENCE
Bribery†
Con
Curse†
Faith*
Gambling†
Interrogation
Intimidation
Streetwise
Survival*
Willpower

CHARISMA
Charm
Disguise
Persuasion
Summoning*
Taunt

*Macroskill; must select focus   **Boldface:** Skill cannot be used untrained.
† Skill new with *Tales From The Crypt*

MOVEMENT RATE CHART

Type of Movement	Formula	Maximum
MRG: Movement Rate, Ground (running)	MRG = [AGI+AGI+STR]/4	8
MRS: Movement Rate, Swimming	MRS = [AGI+AGI+STR]/6	5
MRC: Movement Rate, Climbing	MRC = [STR+STR+AGI]/10	3
MRJ: Movement Rate, Jumping (long jumping)	MRJ = [STR+STR+AGI]/10	3

SKILL ADD COSTS

- General skill: 1 skill point per add
- Focus: 1 skill point per add
- Specialization: 1/2 skill point per specialization add

BENCHMARK CHART

Value	Time	Weight	Distance
0	Second	1 kilo	1 meter
2			Tallest human
3		Human baby	
9	Minute	Human female	
10		Human male	Football Field
11		Lion	City block
12		Brown Bear	
15		Small Car	Kilometer
16		Large Car	Mile
17		Elephant	
18	Hour		
20		Empty Truck	
22		APC	
23			Marathon race
24		Loaded Truck	
25	Day	Blue Whale	
27		Boeing 747	
28		C5A Galaxy	
29	Week	Tramp Freighter	
30		Destroyer	Length of Great Britain
32	Month	Six-flat building	Paris to Moscow
33		Fully loaded train	New York to L.A.
34			New York to London
35			London to Tokyo
38	Year		Circumference of Earth
39		Battleship	
41		Aircraft Carrier	
45		Loaded Oil Tanker	

VALUE CHART

Val.	Measure	Val.	Measure	Val.	Measure
0	1	35	10 million	70	100 trillion
1	1.5	36	15 million	71	150 trillion
2	2.5	37	25 million	72	250 trillion
3	4	38	40 million	73	400 trillion
4	6	39	60 million	74	600 trillion
5	10	40	100 million	75	1 quadrillion
6	15	41	150 million	76	1.5 quadrillion
7	25	42	250 million	77	2.5 quadrillion
8	40	43	400 million	78	4 quadrillion
9	60	44	600 million	79	6 quadrillion
10	100	45	1 billion	80	10 quadrillion
11	150	46	1.5 billion	81	15 quadrillion
12	250	47	2.5 billion	82	25 quadrillion
13	400	48	4 billion	83	40 quadrillion
14	600	49	6 billion	84	60 quadrillion
15	1,000	50	10 billion	85	100 quadrillion
16	1,500	51	15 billion	86	150 quadrillion
17	2,500	52	25 billion	87	250 quadrillion
18	4,000	53	40 billion	88	400 quadrillion
19	6,000	54	60 billion	89	600 quadrillion
20	10,000	55	100 billion	90	1 quintillion
21	15,000	56	150 billion	91	1.5 quintillion
22	25,000	57	250 billion	92	2.5 quintillion
23	40,000	58	400 billion	93	4 quintillion
24	60,000	59	600 billion	94	6 quintillion
25	100,000	60	1 trillion	95	10 quintillion
26	150,000	61	1.5 trillion	96	15 quintillion
27	250,000	62	2.5 trillion	97	25 quintillion
28	400,000	63	4 trillion	98	40 quintillion
29	600,000	64	6 trillion	99	60 quintillion
30	1 million	65	10 trillion	100	100 quintillion
31	1.5 million	66	15 trillion		
32	2.5 million	67	25 trillion		
33	4 million	68	40 trillion		
34	6 million	69	60 trillion		

CARD DISTRIBUTION CHART

Number of Player Characters	Number of Cards for Each
1	5
2–5	3
6+	2

MEASURE CONVERSION CHART

Measure is in units of	Value Modifier	Measure is in units of	Value Modifier
Seconds	0	MPH	+3
Minutes	+9	KMH	+2
Hours	+18	Kilos	0
Days	+25	Pounds	-2
Weeks	+29	Tons	+15
Months	+32	Meters	0
Years	+38	Feet	-3
Meters per round	0	Kilometers	+15
		Miles	+16

BACKGROUND ADVANTAGE LIST

COLUMN I

Additional Skill Adds (CI)	One general skill or focus add or two specialization adds
Contacts (CI)	Character has a friend or friends who provide minor assistance
Cultures (CI)	Character gains knowledge of a foreign culture
Equipment (CI)	Character gains unusual equipment (shift one Availability code)
Fame (CI)	Character has minor notoriety
Law Enforcement (CI)	Character can carry a gun and has limited law enforcement authority.
Patron (CI)	Character has a backer who will fund one expedition, but gets anything he discovers.
Skill Bonus (CI)	+1 to a group of three related skills (modifier to bonus number only)
Wealth (CI)	Character is upper middle class

COLUMN II

Additional Skill Adds (CII)	Increase one general or focus skill by two adds, or one specialization by three adds
Contacts (CII)	As Contacts (CI), but the "friend" is more influential
Cultures (CII)	The knowledge is more extensive than Cultures (CI) or more in-depth
Equipment (CII)	The item is more valuable than Equipment (CI)
Fame (CII)	The character is better known than Fame (CI)
Law Enforcement (CII)	Character is a police officer.
Patron (CII)	Character receives less financial support, but has greater freedom of action.
Luck (CII)	The character can use certain card deck enhancements once per adventure
Skill Bonus (CII)	Gain +1 to the bonus number of five related skills
Trademark Specialization (CII)	The character gains +3 to the bonus number of any specialization, plus he his moderately "famous" for as if he had Fame (CI)
Wealth (CII)	The character is from the upper class

COLUMN III

Additional Skill Adds (CIII)	Increase one general skill by three adds, or one specialization by four adds
Additional Attribute Point (CIII)	Increase one Attribute by one point
Contacts (CIII)	The "friends" are extremely unusual and effective
Cultures (CIII)	The character has "native knowledge" and interactive abilities in the culture
Equipment (CIII)	The equipment is artifactual in nature
Fame (CIII)	The character is almost always recognized as famous
Law Enforcement (CIII)	Character can be a federal agent.
Patron (CIII)	Character is given a limited stipend to cover expenses.
Learning Curve (Positive)(CIII)	The character can improve skills at a cost of one skill point less after adventuring
Luck (CIII)	The character can choose from other card deck options to use during an adventure
Skill Bonus (CIII)	Gain +2 to the bonus number of three related skills or gain macroskill bonus (+1 to all skills in macroskill)
Special Abilities (CIII)	Gain strange or unusual talent or ability. Some examples:

COLUMN III (CONTINUED)

Accelerated Healing	+3 to all Endurance rolls when healing; heal shock at one per round
Ambidextrous	The character is adept with her right or left hand.
Animal Friendship	+2 to beast riding or other skills involving animals
BreatheWater	Breathe water, +2 to *swimming*
Combat Sense	Never completely surprised
Environmental Resistance	+2 to Endurance checks to resist extremes of temperature
Fast	+3 to Agility or Confidence for initiative, or *haste* up to three time per adventure.
Infravision/ Ultravision	can see in dark; +3 to all *perception*
Master of Disguise	Character always has a disguise total of at least 10
Natural Hand-to- Hand Weapons	Natural weapon, up to +3 to Strength damage
Natural Ranged Weapons	Range equals value of Endurance, use Dexterity to hit
Natural Resistance	+2 to Endurance checks to resist disease
Self-Healing	Character regains shock damage at the rate of two per round of rest
Sense of Direction	+3 to *cartography* rolls and *perception* rolls to find his way
Stamina	+1 to Endurance checks when performing taxing physical tasks
Toughened Skin	+3 to Toughness, but weakness to one type of attack (fire combat, fire, etc.)
Ventriloquism	+2 to trick when throwing voice
Youthful Appearance	+2 to disguise when posing as someone youthful
Special Effects (CIII)	Gain the ability to use the special effects skill (or one such skill) as per the game setting
Supranormal Knowledge (CIII)	The character can do something no one else can do (+3 bonus is common)
Wealth (CIII)	The character is incredibly rich

COLUMN IV

Contacts (CIV)	The contacts are godlike
Cultures (CIV)	The character understands a completely alien culture
Equipment (CIV)	The character gains an artifact
Luck (CIV)	The character gains more use of his card deck enhancements
Skill Minimum (CIV)	Character always gains a +0 bonus number or better on three related skills
Special Abilities (CIV)	
Accelerated Healing	Heal all shock and KO with one round of rest, +3 to healing roll (see text)
Environmental Immunity	Immune to one environment (water, vacuum, etc.)
Hardiness	Ignores first wound each attack
Multiple Abilities	Choose two CIII special abilities
Natural Armor	+4 to Toughness, no weakness in armor
Natural Hand-to- Hand Weapons	+4 to Strength for damage or damage value 15
Natural Ranged Weapons	+4 Strength for damage or damage value 15
Permanent Special Effect	The character is permanently subject to a particular special effect

V

MINI-ADVENTURE

Welcome back, creeps. You look like you could use a little helliday fun — well, you've come to the right place. I specialize in all sorts of hackage tours! Hehehehehehe! Maybe you'd like a few days in a scream park ... or I could book you into a nice little dead and breakfast. Or ... how about a resort hotel in a blizzard, with a homicidal maniac killing whenever the spirit moves him? Sound like fun? I knew it would! It's a sinister little shadow-play I like to call ...

CHECK-OUT TIME

Check-Out Time is a three-hack adventure for three to six beginning to mid-level characters. It involves a good deal of thinking, and groups who try to solve their problems with violence will find their troubles doubling and tripling as the body count rises. The players will have to pay close attention to details in order to figure out what is going on ... and even that may not help them in the end. Because so much of this episode is carried by the fact that the characters do not remember what they have done, the gamemaster should be sure to read the adventure thoroughly and be comfortable with the sequence of events which occur before play begins.

A SICKENING SYNOPSIS

In this episode of *Tales From The Crypt*, the characters have a chilling time during winter vacation. The action takes place in the present day at the Anderson Hotel, a venerable old resort in the Catskill Mountains of New York State. The hotel is huge, with over 500 guest rooms, but now it is winter and the place is empty save for the characters and a few very odd staff members.

What the characters don't know is that the hotel has a dark history. Over the years many murders have been committed on the grounds, some of them famous ritual and mass killings, some of them isolated crimes of passion, and a few which have yet to be discovered. Groups of occultists have occasionally used the hotel to perform ancient rites, and even to try to commune with the spirits of some of the hotel's more infamous killers and their victims. The place is evil and foreboding ... just the place to choose for skiing fun!

The characters initially find themselves in the lobby of the hotel and hear news that one of their friends was killed earlier that evening. They have no memories of any events prior to sitting in the lobby, although they know that they all came to the hotel together on a ski trip. As they investigate the murder, they will find the hotel staff acting very strange and occasionally evidence will be

found which implicates one or more of the characters in the murder. Someone is trying to frame them … or so it seems.

That night the sheriff is killed and, during the morning, so is the maid. More clues are found which seem to point to members of the group. Tension and suspicion will build as the characters work to clear their names, but no other suspects can be found.

As the search continues, the characters learn about the hotel's bloody history and begin to suspect the hotel staff (who now seem bent of killing the characters too). They may try to escape, but a blizzard has made travel practically impossible. At this point the characters regain their memories.

They all came to the hotel together, but not for skiing. It seems they've been very bad little boys and girls — they came to this hotel to perform a ritual to summon the spirit of a serial killer in the interests of laying him to rest, once and for all. They were doing all right until things went all wrong. The ghost came back, killed one of their number, and escaped binding. Now it's wandering the hotel grounds, possessing people and driving them to commit murder. Pretty soon, there are going to be an awful lot of vacancies …

The Sheriff's Department is sure to send another man up after the storm stops, and they are unlikely to believe that the characters had nothing to do with all these deaths. The staff is already after them, and now the ghost is urging them on. To make matters worse, the ghost occasionally tries to possess one of the characters and use him against his friends.

Can the characters set things right? Can they banish the ghost? Can they even survive one more night? *(Maybe they should have paid attention to all those "Do Not Disturb" signs on the gravestones, hmmmm? Hehehehehehe!)*

Ron Kulp

THE ANDERSON HOTEL

The Anderson Hotel is a huge, old place on Lake Welsh in the Catskill Mountains of upstate New York. It is in an isolated location, about 45 minutes drive from the nearest town, Wurtsboro. The hotel was built in 1909 as a summer get-away for New York City's most affluent residents. Nestled away as it was, it flourished through the 20's and Prohibition; the owner had strong connections to organized crime, and rumrunners made deliveries up to four times a week during the season. In later years, the hotel fell on hard times, until making a comeback in the '50s. The rich, of course, had moved on to Cape Cod and the Hamptons, but the middle-class flocked to the hotel. The "No Vacancy" sign was lit June through October, and in the winter months as well when the skiing was good.

This boom lasted until the the late '70s. Suddenly, it was cheaper to fly to exotic places than spend a week at a resort. The facilities began to break down and repairs cost more than the owners were willing to pay. The facade was maintained, but behind the fresh paint, rot was setting in. Soon, the Anderson was a place frequented by adulterous couples and vacationers who hadn't planned far enough ahead to get rooms in newer, more exciting places.

While the hotel remains open year-round, rumors of bankruptcy abound.

SKELETONS IN THE CLOSET

Like all good *Tales From The Crypt* hotels, the Anderson also has a darker history, one not touted in the tourist brochures.

In the 1930s, after the repeal of Prohibition, the hotel became a retreat for the mobsters who had run the speakeasies, and now found themselves fighting over the remaining rackets. The Anderson was the site of numerous quiet slayings and at least one major gangland assassination, the Independence Day Massacre. On July 4, 1938, Vito Mazzuchelli, head of the fourth-largest crime syndicate on the east coast, was vacationing at the Anderson Hotel with his family and his lieutenants (not to mention fifteen or twenty heavily armed bodyguards). Police reports say that there were three distinct explosions heard as far as ten kilometers away. When authorities arrived, the boathouse was a smoking ruin. The East Ballroom was filled with corpses of the bodyguards, each with a single bullet-hole in his temple. The bodies of Mazzuchelli, his family and the other gangsters were never found. The official report says that the bodyguards were part of a mass-suicide and that it was some kind of boating accident which destroyed the building and killed the others, sending their corpses to a watery grave. Still, more than one police informant has come in swearing that Mazzuchelli staged his own death and claiming to have information on his present where-abouts. Others claimed that another syndicate was responsible and that they knew the secret burial site of Mazzuchelli and his friends and family. The truth about what happened that day is still argued among historians and will probably never be known.

Between 1941 and the 1958 there were six double-murders, all of honeymoon-ers who were staying in Room 345. After years of investigation, police finally obtained enough evidence to convict Alec Garrett, a local farmer who did seasonal grounds-work at the Anderson. He claimed to have no memory of the nights the murders took place, but his house contained mason jars which held preserved fingers and ears from each of the twelve victims. Garrett was convicted in 1959 and executed in 1961.

Finally in 1971, six college students claiming to be members of an organiza-tion called the Eyes of Sins Past murdered two local teenagers. They were caught only minutes after performing what police described as "Manson-style ritual killings." When the police broke in the victims had already been killed and horribly mutilated (their hearts having been cut from their chests) and the students were raving incoherently and painting one another with the blood. In a highly publicized 1972 trial, the six were all convicted and sentenced to 75-years-to-life in jail. However, by the end of 1974 all of them had been murdered or committed suicide in prison.

Since then there have been no other incidents at the Anderson, but there are persistent rumors that the hotel is haunted. Business has fallen to the point of almost driving the hotel into bankruptcy. Although the hotel does what it can to ignore its tragic history and squelch any stories about it in the popular press, the bloody legacy is all that keeps the Anderson Hotel open. Every year there are a substantial number of people who travel from around the country to the hotel because of its dark reputation. Occultists, ghost-hunters and TV talk-show personalities make up the bulk of the guests every year, each one hoping for some piece of the ghoulish past to float to the surface of Lake Welsh or appear spectrally walking the halls at night.

ENJOY YOUR STAY

The Anderson Hotel is located in the mountains outside of Wurtsboro, NY (about 90 minutes north of New York City). It takes about 45 minutes to drive along the backwoods roads to town (the hotel doesn't have enough money to get the road repaved). The hotel itself is huge, built in the grand style of the early

ANDERSON HOTEL
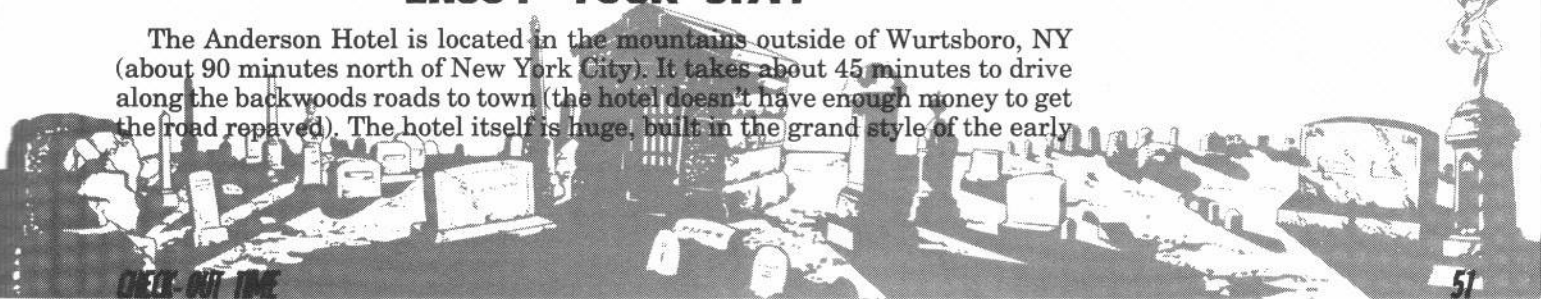
Stables
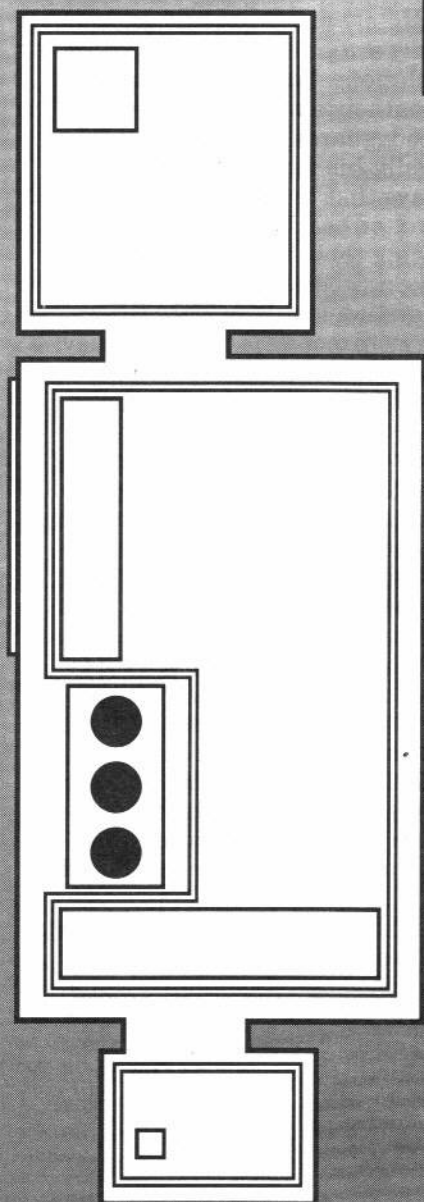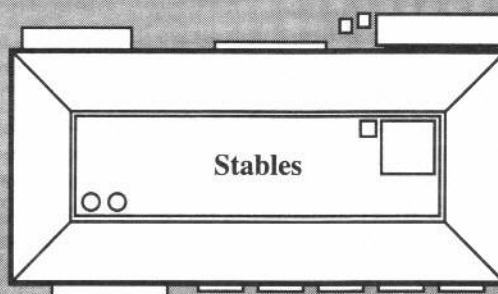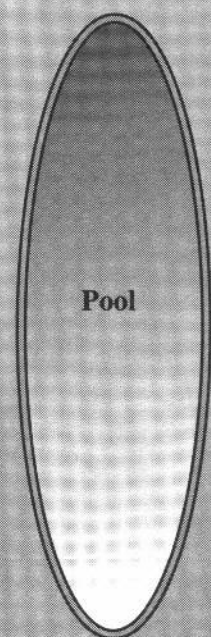
Pool

Tennis Courts

Bungalows

10

9

8

7   6   5   4   2   Bungalows

3

1
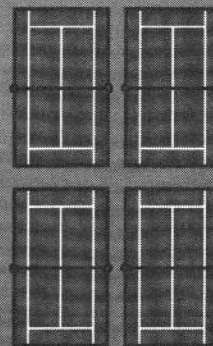
(Old Tim's House)

Thomas O'Neil

20th century. There are 500 guest rooms, 10 bungalows, 2 grand ballrooms, tennis courts, a pool, and even a stable of horses. The view from the hotel dining room overlooks Lake Welsh and the mountains beyond. One of the advantages to being in such a remote location is that the hotel owns all the property around the lake and the land has been left in its natural splendor.

The small staff can only maintain a limited section of the hotel. While the "open" areas have a stylish, if nostalgic, air to them, the rest of the place has fallen into disrepair. Should the characters go exploring in the "closed" section they will find a few broken windows, threadbare carpets, flecks of peeling paint, covered furniture, layers of dusty cobwebs, and possibly even some antique clothing.

This episode takes place in the middle of winter and it will be snowing heavily outside through most of the action. Going outside is ill-advised — one would likely lose sight of the building after going only a few meters, so the characters may find they have a feeling of claustrophobia. The atmosphere inside is one of decay and emptiness; in this sealed-up state the odors of dust and mildew are strong. The characters are the only guests in the hotel. Because of its size, the hotel will feel very empty and dark; some hallways are unlit, many doors are locked, some wings of the hotel and have not been used for years. Indeed, some suites have not been opened in over a decade. The gamemaster should strive to create a cold and oppressive atmosphere.

The characters all have rooms adjacent to one another on the second floor. Some of the rooms are adjoining, which may make for a restless night with a killer on the loose. Each room is basically identical, with a bed, desk and chairs, and a large bathroom. The bungalows are not in use, but are small cabins furnished in a similar manner.

THE STAFF

The Anderson Hotel staff is polite and professional, if a trifle odd. All the members of the staff, except the maid, are over fifty years old and some are in their sixties or even seventies. As this is the off season, there is only a minimal staff, just enough to get by. They are all aware of the hotel's history and the rumors that the people in town never tire of spreading. Many of them have been working at the Anderson for over thirty years, so they have first-hand knowledge of many of the incidents discussed above. One thing all the staffers have in common is that they consider the hotel their home and think of one another as a family ... that and the fact that the people in town consider them all to be ... well ... a bit weird.

JAMES MAXWELL —— HOTEL MANAGER

Maxwell appears to be in his fifties, but in fact, he is nearly seventy. He has worked as the manager of the Anderson since he returned from serving in the Navy in WWII, so he knows all about the hotel's most sinister secrets. He is very polite and gracious, and will dismiss any talk of murders and occultists as "fantastic stories." Still, there isn't anything that has happened here in the past fifty years that Maxwell does not know about. All the other staffers are unswervingly loyal to him.

JAMES MAXWELL
AGILITY 7
DEXTERITY 7
Fire combat 9
ENDURANCE 7
STRENGTH 7
TOUGHNESS 9
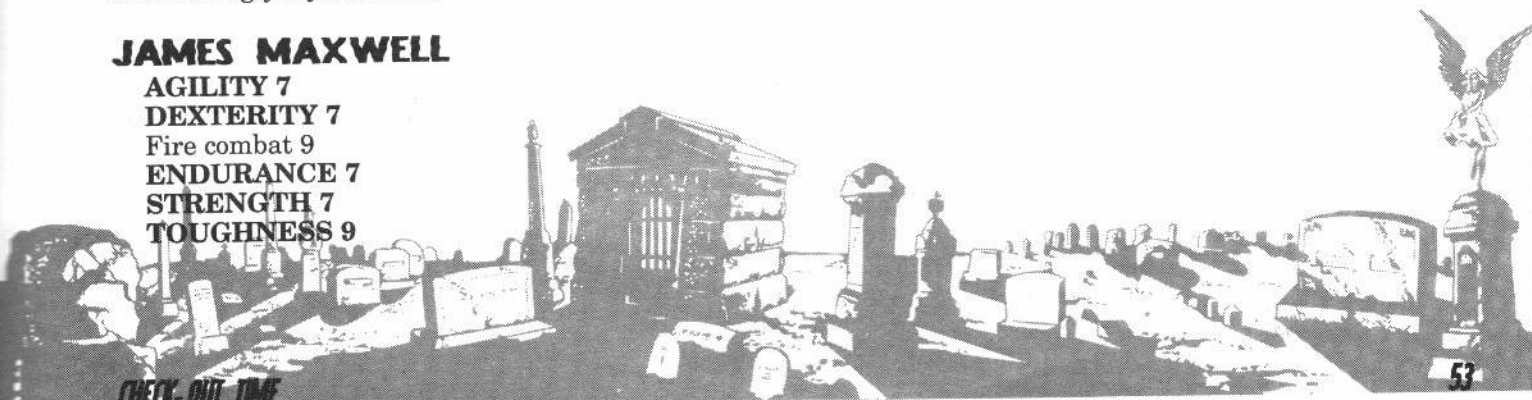
INTELLECT 10
Deduction 14, linguistics 14, perception 15, trick 13
MIND 10
Business 14, research 16, scholar: the occult 16
CONFIDENCE 9
Intimidation 13, willpower 13
CHARISMA 9
Charm 10
Life Points: 5
Equipment: Hunting rifle, damage value 21

(**James Maxwell (D6): DEXTERITY 2D+1:** Firearms 3D **STRENGTH 2D+1 KNOWLEDGE 3D+1:** Business 4D+2, intimidation 4D+1, linguistics 4D+2, the occult 5D+1, willpower 4D+1 **TECHNICAL 3D+1 MECHANICAL 3D+1 PERCEPTION 3D:** Charm 3D+1, con 4D+1, investigation 5D, research 5D+1, search 4D+2. **Force Points:** 5. **Equipment:** Hunting rifle, damage value 5D+1.)

RUDY TEMPLETON — THE BELLBOY

Rudy is easily in his forties but dresses to look younger in a sleazy sort of way. He greases his hair back, wears clothing that was trendy 10 years ago, and always seems to be inordinately pleased with himself. One gets the impression that he is hiding out in the hotel rather than working here. Since he is an ex-con, this is not too far from the truth. Rudy is in the odd habit of quoting from Shakespeare at random moments. He always picks overly dramatic quotes and always from the tragedies.

RUDY TEMPLETON
AGILITY 8
Dodge 9, melee combat 9, stealth 10
DEXTERITY 8
Fire combat 9
ENDURANCE 8
STRENGTH 8
TOUGHNESS 9
INTELLECT 9
Perception 11
MIND 8
Scholar: Shakespearean plays 13
CONFIDENCE 10
Con 13, intimidation 13, willpower 12
CHARISMA 8
Taunt 10
Life Points: 4
Equipment: Shotgun, damage value 21, ammo 2; whip, damage value STR+3/18

(**Rudy Templeton (D6): DEXTERITY 2D+2:** Dodge 3D, firearms 3D, melee combat 3D **STRENGTH 2D+2 KNOWLEDGE 3D:** Intimidation 4D+1, Shakespearean plays 4D+1, willpower 4D **TECHNICAL 3D MECHANICAL 2D+2 PERCEPTION 3D:** Con 4D+1, investigation 3D+2, sneak 3D+1, taunt 3D+1. **Force Points:** 4. **Equipment:** Shotgun, damage value 5D+1; whip, damage value STR+1D.)

MARY ENGLEWOOD —— THE MAID

Mary, at 27, is the youngest member of the staff. She is very quiet and unobtrusive and the characters will not see her very much. They may catch glimpses of her going about her business, putting away the vacuum cleaner or pushing the laundry basket, but she will always be on her way to somewhere else; they will never be able to see her actually doing anything.

Mary grew up in Wurtsboro and was labeled the class "weirdo." When she encountered Rudy in town one day, she knew she had met her own perverted Prince Charming, and took a job at the Anderson the next day.

MARY ENGLEWOOD
AGILITY 9
Dodge 10, stealth 12
DEXTERITY 8
ENDURANCE 9
STRENGTH 9
TOUGHNESS 10
INTELLECT 8
Perception 10, trick 9
MIND 8
CONFIDENCE 7
Willpower 11
CHARISMA 7
Persuasion 8
Life Points: 5

(**Mary Englewood (D6): DEXTERITY 3D:** Dodge 3D+1 **STRENGTH 3D KNOWLEDGE 2D+2 TECHNICAL 2D+2 MECHANICAL 2D+2 PERCEPTION 2D+1:** Con 3D, investigation 3D+1, persuasion 2D+2, sneak 4D. **Force Points:** 5.)

FRANZ DOPPLER —— THE COOK

Franz is a sour old German man who is usually quite irritable. He won't let anyone in his kitchen, going so far as to throw cleavers and carving knives at anyone who trespasses in his domain. Rumors in town have it that Franz was the chef for Nazi war criminal Dr. Josef Mengele, and that some of his special recipes contain cannibalistic ingredients. Franz simply laughs these whispers off … but no one has ever been able to make a stew which tastes like his.

FRANZ DOPPLER
AGILITY 8
Dodge 9, melee combat 10
DEXTERITY 7
ENDURANCE 7
STRENGTH 7
TOUGHNESS 9
INTELLECT 8
MIND 8
Scholar: cooking 10
CONFIDENCE 7
Intimidation 10, willpower 9
CHARISMA 7
Taunt 8
Life Points: 4

Equipment: Cleaver, damage value STR+5/20; lead frying pan, damage value STR+4/18

(**Franz Doppler (D6): DEXTERITY 2D+2:** Dodge 3D, melee combat 3D+1 **STRENGTH 2D+1 KNOWLEDGE 2D+2:** Cooking 3D+1, intimidation 3D+1, willpower 3D **TECHNICAL 2D+2 MECHANICAL 2D+2 PERCEPTION 2D+1:** Taunt 2D+2. **Force Points:** 4. **Equipment:** Cleaver, damage value STR+1D+2; lead frying pan, damage value STR+1D+1.)

WILLY JOHNSON —— THE WAITER

Willy is 73 years old. No one knows how long he's worked at the hotel, but it's been a long time and he's always been the waiter (although, in better times, he was the head waiter). He'll spend hours sitting with the guests, regaling them with stories of the old days (tales of the flappers and the gangsters who used to frequent the Anderson), although he no longer tells stories about any of the murders without first getting permission from James Maxwell. Willy's mind has snapped. He's seen too much blood and is just waiting for the right sequence of events to push him over the edge. Other than that, he's a really sweet guy.

WILLY JOHNSON

AGILITY 6
Melee combat 8
DEXTERITY 6
ENDURANCE 6
STRENGTH 6
TOUGHNESS 7
INTELLECT 7
MIND 7
Scholar: Anderson lore 11
CONFIDENCE 7
CHARISMA 7
Charm 10
Life Points: 3
Equipment: Bat, damage value STR+5/20

(**Willy Johnson (D6): DEXTERITY 2D:** Melee combat 2D+2 **STRENGTH 2D KNOWLEDGE 2D+1** Anderson lore 3D+2 **TECHNICAL 2D+1 MECHANICAL 2D+1 PERCEPTION 2D+1:** Charm 3D+1. **Force Points:** 3. **Equipment:** Bat, damage value STR+1D+2.)

TIM MCNARRY —— THE GARDENER

Tim is almost 90 years old and has worked at the Anderson nearly as long as Willy. He's an unrepentant alcoholic who can drink more in one night than the town of Wurtsboro does in a week. By some miracle his liver is still functioning, but Tim looks like he could need emergency treatment at any minute. He's too old to do any of the real gardening himself anymore, so Tim just supervises the young men from town who take care of the grounds in the summer. The rest of the staff dismisses him because he is usually so drunk he's hallucinating, but Tim knows a lot more about the goings on at the hotel than they think. He is the only staffer who is likely to give the characters straight answers to all of their questions about the hotel's history and will help them to regain their memories of what happened the night of the murder.

Note: Tim will not be in the hotel at all during the episode. He will be locked up in his cottage drinking heavily. The only way the characters will meet him is if they seek him out.

TIM MCNARRY

AGILITY 7
DEXTERITY 7
ENDURANCE 6
STRENGTH 7
TOUGHNESS 8
INTELLECT 7
Perception 9
MIND 7
Scholar: Anderson lore 9, scholar: gardening 9
CONFIDENCE 7
Willpower 8
CHARISMA 7
Persuasion 8
Life Points: 5

(Tim McNarry (D6): **DEXTERITY 2D+1 STRENGTH 2D+1 KNOWL-EDGE 2D+1:** Anderson lore 3D, gardening 3D, willpower 2D+2 **TECHNICAL 2D+1 MECHANICAL 2D+1 PERCEPTION 2D+1:** Persuasion 2D+2. **Force Points:** 5)

THE HOTEL LAYOUT

Each of the areas described below resonates with an aura of fear, pain, and death. Each area has a terrible history that will echo in events happening in this scenario. Gamemasters should do their best to make these areas seem moody and ominous, as if the rooms themselves were trying to call out to the characters to warn them.

THE EAST BALLROOM

A grand ballroom with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking Lake Welsh. The decor is the same as it was in the hotel's heyday, and one can easily picture, and almost hear, Woody Herman's big band playing for a packed house. This was the site of the infamous Independence Day Massacre. The bodies of fifteen mobsters were found here, each with a bullet-hole in his temple. No guns were found and there were no signs of struggle. People say that their spirits haunt the room, often looking out the windows as if searching for the people they are supposed to guard.

ROOM 345

Although it looks like any of the other rooms in the Anderson Hotel, this is the room where the six honeymoon couples were murdered by Alec Garrett ... or so the official record says. Although Garrett was tried, convicted and executed for the murders, he claims to have absolutely no memories of any of those nights. It was the prosecution's contention that Garrett was simply a twisted, psychopathic soul who couldn't stop himself from killing again and again.

BUNGALOW #5

This was the bungalow used by the occultists in 1971 to perform their ritual killing. People who have stayed here say that on nights with a full moon a spectral severed human heart sits in the middle of the bedroom, the ceiling drips blood, and the sound of a young man screaming is all that will come out of the television. It is also the place that the characters will eventually have to go in order to discover the truth about the recent murders in the Anderson Hotel. This should be the most frightening place of all, because once the truth is known, the adventure will move into its final phase.

HACK ONE: FIRST NIGHT

This episode begins as the characters find themselves sitting in the lounge of a large resort hotel. They know their own names (they are, in fact, the characters' own actual names) and they recognize one another as friends. They all came to this hotel together for a ski vacation. Other than this, they have no memories of what has gone before.

The characters soon discover that one of their friends has been murdered in his hotel room. The local sheriff arrives just before a terrible blizzard descends on the hotel, trapping them all there until it blows over. Someone in the hotel is the murderer, but no one knows who. The characters will want to investigate the hotel and its staff. In spite of some odd discoveries, nothing definite can be learned before it is time for bed.

SCREAM ONE: 'TWERE BEST NOT TO KNOW MYSELF

THE SITUATION

Standard. The characters begin sitting in the hotel lounge in the late afternoon. Outside, a heavy snow storm is just beginning to settle in. There is already several feet of snow on the ground and this new storm looks like it will add at least another foot or two. The characters will be disoriented when they pop in, but the scene that greets their eyes is a non-threatening, even a pleasant one. This will either cause them to relax their guard or send them into a paranoid fit. Either way it's lots of fun for you as the Cryptkeeper!

Read aloud or paraphrase:

A flash of sickly, green light ... the feeling of swimming through a stagnant swamp ... a wave of nausea ... and your eyes open to reveal the lobby of what looks like an expensive resort hotel. Outside it is snowing heavily and the wind is howling, but the fire in the giant hearth keeps the room at a comfortable temperature and lends a cheery, festive glow to the scene. You all have steaming mugs of coffee, tea, cocoa or mulled wine. Dimly, you recall the name of the place — the Anderson Hotel — and that you are here on some sort of vacation.

THE ACTION

Note that the characters are not in shell bodies in this adventure. They are simply a group of people who know each other fairly well and all traveled to the Anderson together. While shell characters could be used in a pinch, it would hurt the adventure as a whole (for example, the characters could never "remember" what happened the night before, because they weren't in these bodies to do those things).

If anyone thinks to turn on the radio or TV, both of which are in this room, warnings are being given concerning "the first big storm of the year." All the usual advice is being given: Stay indoors, make sure you have extra batteries for your radios and flashlights, stock up on canned food, make sure you have enough warm blankets. All things that the player characters are powerless to do at this point. If this seems to worry them, play it up. They don't remember where any of those things are in the hotel, and they haven't seen any staff members yet!

At this point the characters all are in the grip of partial amnesia — they remember their names and their association with each other, but nothing about how they go to the hotel or the events of the night before. Let them talk for a while to get into character. Allow them to look around the lounge, which has the usual assortment of newspapers and magazines as well as a huge bookcase filled with musty, leather-bound books. Although this may catch the characters' attention, the books are popular novels and short story anthologies dating back no farther than the beginning of this century. After a few minutes, someone will see a police car (actually an all-terrain vehicle) drive up through the deepening snow. At the same time Mr. Maxwell, the hotel manager, and Rudy, the bellboy come downstairs looking somewhat distressed and heading for the door.

If anyone asks what's going on, Rudy will say, with a smirk on his face:

"Mr. Carstairs is dead. Mary found him when she was cleaning his room. What a mess. It's taken the sheriff three hours to get up here in this storm. Meanwhile, we've had to make sure no one touched the body." He pauses and then adds with a melodramatic flourish, **"Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him ...will these hands ne'er be clean?"**

If anyone asks him what he means, Rudy will just smile and say, "*Macbeth*, Act Five, Scene One."

Call for Intellect or *perception* checks. On a 9, the characters recall that someone named Carstairs came on this trip with them, but they can't recall his face. (If none of them succeed at the check, the sheriff will be happy to point out their connection to the deceased.)

Sheriff Randy Skouse is a burly man who dresses and acts like a stereotypical rural lawman. He is wary of all strangers and is likely to try to intimidate anyone not from within his jurisdiction. Fortunately for the characters, the staff of the Anderson are not thought of as locals (they're just too weird to fit in) and they are as likely to be targets for the sheriff's bullying.

As he walks in, Sheriff Skouse says that the weather has gotten much worse

and ATV almost didn't make it up the winding roads to the hotel. Mr. Maxwell greets the sheriff and leads him upstairs to Room 213. The characters may follow if they wish. If they don't follow, they can get a description of the scene later from the bellboy.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

Room 213 is fairly unimpressive: two large beds, an unattractive chest of drawers and matching night-table, a solid-state television, and a utilitarian bathroom. The curtains, bedspreads and carpet are all a rusty orange color which was originally supposed to give the room a warm, dusky feeling, but now only makes it seem old, worn and faded.

A man's body lies on the floor, a man you find yourself vaguely remembering. A gaping hole in his chest shows where his heart once rested. There doesn't seem to be a great deal of blood on the floor, but that could be a trick of the rug's color scheme.

The sheriff slams the door and turns to face you and Maxwell. "Not again ... All right, Maxwell, guests and staff are confined to the hotel until we get to the bottom of this. With that storm coming in, nobody's going anywhere anyway. I want everyone on the first floor, and stay together. I'll want to talk to everyone individually."

This will, in all likelihood, set the characters' minds to whirling. At this point they should have no knowledge of the hotel's bloody history. Still, the sheriff's comment should get them thinking that this is not the first murder at the Anderson. It will quite probably also lead them to the assumption that someone on the staff is responsible. The truth is far more horrible, of course.

The staff members will vehemently deny having committed this or any other murder. They do, however, know all the details of the murder of Phillip Carstairs (or think they do), as well as the hotel's past killings. They are just keeping their mouths shut, figuring that the real murderers will take care of sheriff Skouse before he uncovers the truth. They are not aware of the characters' amnesia.

The sheriff wants to talk to everyone in the hotel individually. Maxwell provides the sheriff with an empty office to use, and he will begin with the staffers. The characters are told to stay in the lounge and come when called. As they wait, Rudy and Willy carry the body downstairs and into the kitchen. If asked why, they say that the sheriff wants it kept in the freezer to "preserve the evidence."

THE INTERROGATION

The sheriff will interview the staff first, so that they can go back to their duties around the hotel. During this time, there is little for the characters to do. They may decide to do a little snooping around on their own. The staffers who are still waiting to be called into the office will do nothing to prevent this, but they warn the characters that Sheriff Skouse has little patience with people who do not follow orders. If they decide to ignore this warning, cut to Scream Two, "And What Have We Here?" After a suitable period of time, have the sheriff come looking for them. He should be in a foul mood and threaten to lock the characters in their rooms if they disobey a direct order again.

Take each player into another room and run a short interrogation scene for his character. The sheriff will ask questions such as: Whose idea was it to come to the Anderson Hotel? What were you doing last night at about midnight? Where were the other members of your group? How well did you know Phillip Carstairs? ... all questions the characters do not know the answers to. Try to push the characters into making up answers just to satisfy the Sheriff and then use the fact that they all gave different answers to pressure them as a group.

If any character gets particularly snide or obnoxious, sheriff Skouse is likely to threaten or hit him. He takes this matter very seriously. He remembers the murders of 1971 and, although the characters do not know it yet, Carstairs was murdered in exactly the same fashion as the victims back then.

In the end, the sheriff will not be able to find a single prime suspect, although he may handcuff one or two of the characters just to see how they react. By the time he is through with the interviews, about 8 o'clock, it is snowing so heavily outside that it is impossible to see his truck, parked about eight meters from the front door. The TV weather report says that the State Police have closed many of the mountain roads and do not plan to reopen them for at least two days.

CUT TO

Once the characters have a little freedom to wander, cut to Scream Two.

SCREAM TWO: AND WHAT HAVE WE HERE?

THE SITUATION

Standard. Things in the Anderson Hotel should be getting pretty tense at this point. The characters have the choice of sitting around staring accusingly at one another or looking around to see if they can find any clue as to the identity of the killer (or killers). The Anderson is a huge complex with no shortage of linen closets, storage areas and possibly even a hidden corridor or two from the rumrunning days; a murderer could be hiding anywhere.

THE ACTION

Searching the rooms is time consuming and, at this point, possibly a bit nervewracking, but will ultimately prove to be a fruitless pursuit. The gamemaster should endeavor to make the rooms dark and spooky and have the chill and howl of the wind permeate every empty room and hallway.

If they specifically enter Room 345 (in other words, if someone has told them its history and they are checking it out as a possible lead), there is also nothing special to be found ... not yet anyway.

There will be two characters per room (if there is an extra character, Phillip Carstairs was his roommate for the trip and he has now been given a new room). Once they have reached their rooms, two of the characters will discover inexplicable clues. The gamemaster should pass a note to each of the players. Two of the notes will have clues on them, the others will bear a less-important message. It will be up to the players to decide whether or not to share the information with the others.

Copy the following messages onto individual notes for the players:

You reach into your pocket and pull out not one, but two wallets. One you recognize as your own. Looking over the other one you find fifty dollars and Phillip Carstairs' driver's license.

When you go back to your room, on the desk is a double edged combat knife. The blade is clean, but there is a small, dried bloodstain on the guard near the hilt. It seems familiar, but you don't think it's yours.

The other notes read, "There's something strange about the room. Nothing is missing or out of place, but you suspect that someone has been in here going through your belongings. You have the feeling that you are being watched right this minute."

If the recipients of notes 1 and 2 are confused, explain privately (or via notes) that the characters don't know where these items came from and that they don't think they were there all along. Again it is up to the players whether or not to share their information.

MIDNIGHT STROLL

Once the sheriff and the hotel staff are all asleep in their rooms, the characters may decide to have another look around, post guards, or take some other precaution against the murderer in their midst.

If they go snooping around, everything will be very much the same as earlier in the evening, except that no one is out and about.

Alternately, the characters may wish to brave the freezing temperatures, high winds, and near-zero visibility and go outside (perhaps to use the radio in the sheriff's truck or possibly even to attempt an escape). It is very easy to get lost outside; looking out the front door, the characters will only be able to see a curtain of blowing snow and will feel severely chilled no matter how thick their clothing is.

If there are any characters foolhardy enough to go out anyway, read aloud or paraphrase:

You go out about a dozen paces and find yourself in a howling void of white. You can see absolutely nothing. Not the lights of the hotel. Not the sheriff's truck. Only snow swirling all around. Perhaps this wasn't such a good idea after all.

At this point they can decide to turn around and walk back to the hotel. If they press on, however, the tug of the wind, their unfamiliarity with the area, and the lack of any reference points to navigate by cause them to move in a completely random direction. Roll 1d10 and consult the chart below for the results.

Die Roll	Direction Moved*
1–2	North
3	Northeast
4	Northeest
5	East
6	West
7	Southeast
8	Southeest
9–0	South
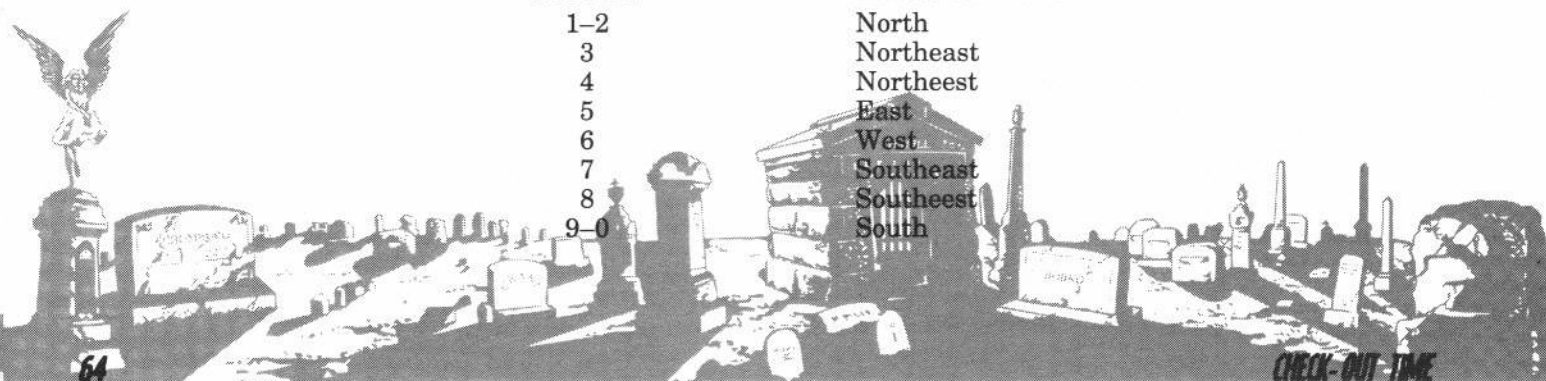
Steve Garcia

*For ease of reference, compass points are used to describe the direction taken. However, in every case North will indicate straight ahead from the current position, not actual Magnetic North. In this way it is easiest (although by no means easy) to go either straight ahead or turn directly around.

Each time a new direction is chosen, the character(s) will go two meters in that direction before having to roll again to determine a new heading. Once lost in the storm, characters surrender all control over their movement. Have the players roll the dice to determine the course, but do not tell them what the numbers mean. The gamemaster should keep track of exactly where the characters are (using the Anderson Hotel Grounds map found on page 52) and may be as generous or harsh as he wishes in fudging rolls to help them to get back to safety.) While they are lost, however, make the players feel as isolated and lost as their characters are. They can see nothing but the snow and hear nothing but the wind.

Anyone who remains outside for more than twenty minutes will be found frozen to death when the storm breaks (if their bodies aren't completely buried in the snow).

It is possible that the characters will succeed in finding the sheriffriff's ATV. Unfortunately for them, the truck is three-quarters buried in a snow drift. Only the passenger-side door and rear quarter-panel are uncovered. The door is locked (and frozen) shut. Unless the character has an ingenious solution, it is impossible to get into the vehicle. See? It really was a bad idea!

THE MAKE-BELIEVE BALLROOM

If the characters are looking around near the East Ballroom, have them make *perception* checks against a difficulty of 9. Anyone who succeeds will hear the faint sound of a piano coming from the ballroom.

The ballroom is dark, but some light comes in through the huge windows

casting odd shadows across the walls. The music is clearer now. It seems to be big band swing music … anyone with a familiarity with the music of the 1930's and 40's will recognize it as Glenn Miller and his orchestra playing "Tuxedo Junction." The shadows seem to be moving in time to the music, almost as if they were dancing. The music is not very loud and its source is indeterminable without taking a careful look around.

Once in the ballroom, the characters won't be able to see anything and will bump into chairs and tables until they turn on the lights. When they do, however, the music will stop.

The music was coming from Mr. Maxwell's room, which is next to the ballroom. He is listening to one of his CDs and the sound is being carried through the air vents into the ballroom. But this fact will not lessen the impact of this scene on the players (who should not be able to discover the truth to the music's source). The main thing is to raise images in the characters' minds of the ghosts of all the people who were killed in this room in 1938.

MIDNIGHT SNACKS

If the characters pass near the kitchen, they will find the door ajar and the lights on. The same chopping sound they heard earlier is still coming from within. If they sneak in (a *stealth* total of 8) (D6: Easy *sneak* total), read aloud or paraphrase:

As you peer in the swinging door, you see Franz Doppler, the cook, heave a large slab of meat onto his chopping block. It looks like a large leg of … of … say … they left the body of poor Phillip Carstairs in the freezer here, didn't they?

Time for a Confidence or *willpower* total of 10 (D6: Knowledge or *willpower*). Failure means the character lets out an audible gasp. If everyone is successful, the characters can withdraw without being noticed.

If one of the characters did fail, or they decide to stay and watch, Doppler will notice and shoo them out of his kitchen. Read aloud or paraphrase:

Franz looks at the door and his eyes narrow. "What are you doing here?!?" he screams at you in a thick German accent. "Get out of my kitchen … get out NOW! No one can know my secret ingredient!" Franz begins waving his meat cleaver around as though he were going to throw it at you.

The cook will throw several pots, pans and dishes to scare the characters away. If the characters don't leave or blatantly walk into the kitchen, Franz will skip the threats and proceed immediately to throwing heavy pans and sharp cutlery at them. He should be very easy to overpower, he's just a psychotic little old man. Or, if they decide to leave, he will quiet down and go back to his chopping.

When the characters are able to get a good look at the meat, they will see that it is indeed a leg … a leg of ham.

A SHRIEK IN THE NIGHT

At some point when the characters are in the halls, they will hear a short, pinched scream. Have them make a few Intellect or *perception* checks (difficulty of 9) to determine that it came from somewhere on the third floor. When they arrive on the third floor, they will hear the noise more clearly. There are moans and sobs coming from Room 345, and occasionally a sharp, cracking sound. The door is locked, of course. (*Lock picking* difficulty of 10) (D6: Easy *security* roll). If the characters don't want to be subtle, a Strength total of 9 will allow them to break in (D6: Easy Strength roll).

Inside, the characters will find Rudy and Mary at "play." Rudy is dressed in black leather and carrying a whip …. Mary is dressed in a blood-red spandex body

stocking with one wrist handcuffed to the bed. They chose this room because of its nasty reputation, finding that an extra turn-on. Rudy will be furious at the interruption and may take a swing at the characters. Mary will be mortified, uncuff herself and run off into one of the less-frequented parts of the third floor.

If the characters don't break in, the noise in the room will eventually stop. Shortly after that, Rudy will open the door and discover the characters. He'll berate them for invading his privacy and insist that they leave with him rather than embarass his "guest."

If the characters go back to the room later, nothing incriminating can be found in the room, beyond the rumpled sheets.

BEFORE THE DAWN

The most important thing to happen during the night will not be witnessed by any of the characters (although some of them will be present at the time). At some point the characters' fatigue will begin to catch up with them; they will need to get some sleep. Even if they set up shifts to stand guard, once most of the group is asleep, the following will happen.

Sometime in the hours just before dawn, the ghost of Alec Garrett, the serial killer from the 1940's and 50's, will possess one or more of the characters and have them kill both Sheriff Skouse and Mary Englewood. A sleeping character will have no chance to resist; he will feel compelled to rise, don a ski mask, and slug whoever is on guard. (If at all possible, don't let the character on guard see who is hitting him.)

What happens if the guard does see who is attacking him, and a scuffle ensues? Well, if the possessed character escapes, Hack Two can proceed as written. If he doesn't, the murders will still be committed, only by someone else. Garrett may flee one character's body and occupy another. (Resisting possession requires a successful Confidence or *willpower* total of 17.) Even if he has to resort to a staff member, Garrett will get those murders committed, but if possible he will make use of one of the player characters.

In the morning, the characters (including the one manipulated into murder) will wake up feeling refreshed. However, the one who did the murders will not be wearing the same clothes he went to bed in — on a *perception* total of 10, he'll notice this (it will take a 13 for anyone else to notice it, since they probably weren't paying much attention to his garb the night before). The ghost has covered his tracks well. The bloody clothes went down the laundry chute, the character showered and changed before going back to sleep.

Important: The players — including the one whose character is possessed — should not know of the events of the night. Keep them in the dark, just as their characters are.

CUT TO...

Oh, not good at all. Someone is slicing the less than great staff of Anderson and that someone is one of the player characters ... now what? Take a commercial break and then be back here for Hack Two.

ACT AWARD

Award the characters one Life Point apiece for their participation in the first act.

HACK TWO: THE SECOND DAY

In the morning the characters wake up to find that there have been two more murders while they slept. And one of them, whichever one was on guard duty,

has a lump the side of an egg on the back of his head and a murderous headache.

The sheriff is dead, so the immediate threat to the killer is gone. But for the first time, a staff member is a victim, and that seems to send the rest of the workers into a frenzy. Is one of them the killer? Even if not, they all seem to have murder on their minds, and the characters are the chosen targets.

The sequence of events in this act is more in the hands of the players. If they are willing to face the attacks of the staff, there are clues to be discovered inside the hotel. If they head outside, the storm has broken enough so that they can see the shack of the one staffer who has not been accounted for in all this, Old Tim the gardener. He is too old and weak to be the murderer, but he knows more than anyone thinks he does. He knows the secrets of the characters' recent past.

In the end, all the clues seem to point to Bungalow #5, the site of the murders in 1971. The solution to the mystery awaits the characters in that unused structure. But it is a solution that will bring them no comfort.

SCREAM ONE: MORNING OF MOURNING

THE SITUATION

Dramatic. In the morning, the storm has died down considerably. The snow is still coming down very heavily, at least an inch per hour, but the wind has lessened and visibility is greatly improved. The roads will be impassable for days, but at least the feeling of claustrophobia is gone. Anyone looking out the front door or windows can see snow-laden trees and the frozen surface of Lake Welsh.

Breakfast is served at nine o'clock, and the characters will be given wake-up calls at eight. When they come downstairs they find a buffet of scrambled eggs, sausage, oatmeal and several types of juice, coffee and tea set up in the dining room. Already at the table are Mr. Maxwell, Willy, and Rudy. Franz's voice can be heard amid the clanging of pots coming from the kitchen. If anyone asks about the whereabouts of Mary, Rudy will explain that she usually gets up very early, eats a light breakfast and gets to work in the laundry room so there is fresh linen for the guests.

THE ACTION

Halfway through the meal, Mr. Maxwell will ask if anyone has seen Sheriff Skouse. He didn't answer his wake-up call, and hasn't been seen since he went to bed. If anyone thinks to look, his car is still outside, buried in a snow drift.

The staffers do not seem to be at all perturbed by this news. They seem to be taking the attitude that Skouse will come down when he is good and ready. The characters, however, are likely to take more interest in the sheriff's tardiness. If anyone asks, Maxwell will take them up to the sheriff's room and unlock the door.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

There is a foul, coppery smell in the air. One of the lamps is on, but the light in the room looks wrong ... it is too red. You soon discover why. There is blood covering almost the entire room. The walls, ceiling and furniture are all soaked in deep red gore, and the carpet squishes stickily under your feet as you walk. Inside you find Sheriff Skouse dead with the same gory hole in his chest that you saw in Carstairs' body yesterday.

Maxwell shakes his head sadly, but there seems to be little sincerity in his gesture. "Who can we call now?" is all he says. There is no sign of forced entry. If anyone thinks to look, the sheriff's gun and car keys are missing.
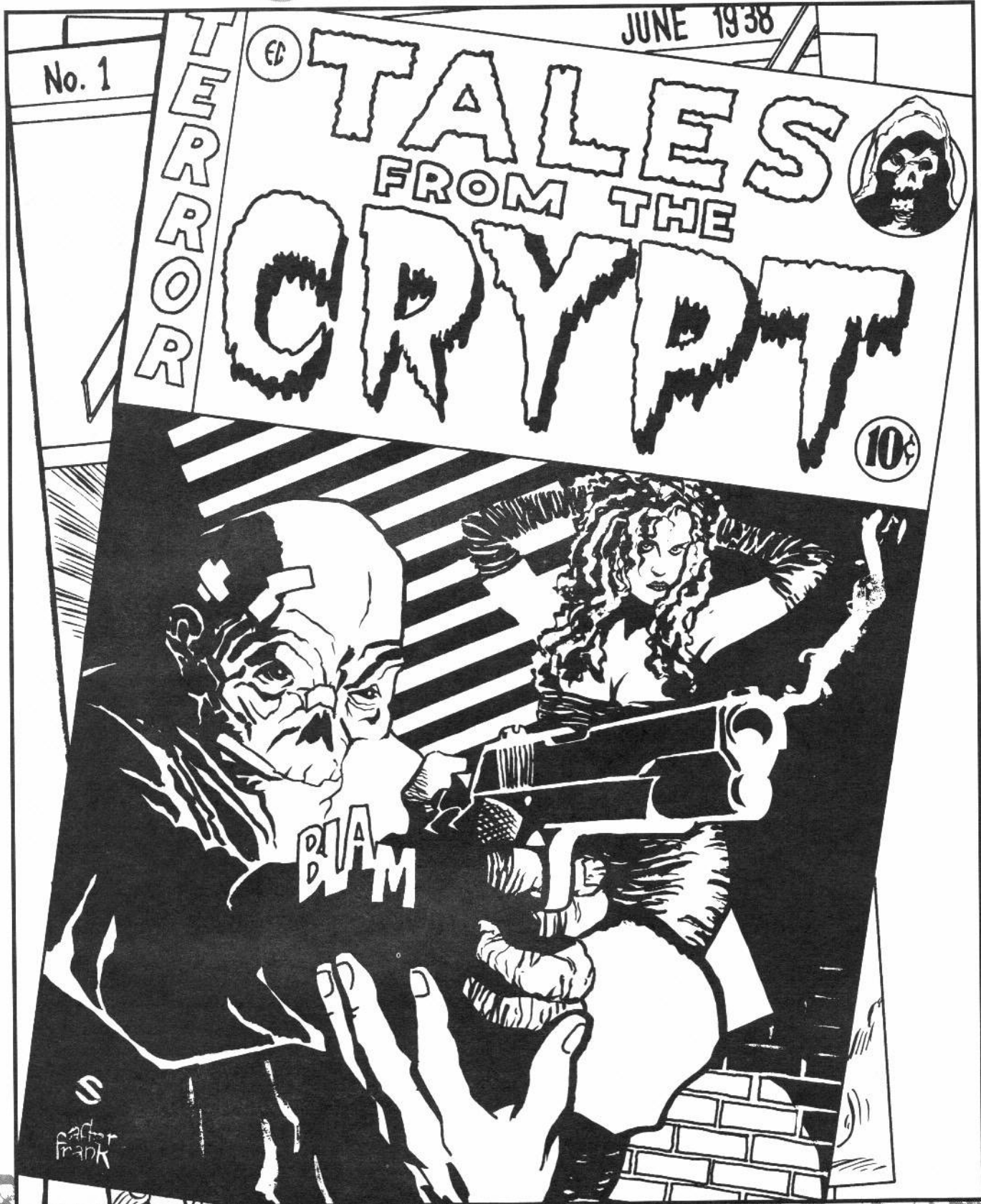
Unlike Maxwell, this will likely get the characters very upset. The outside phone lines are down and the storm is still blowing (although not as hard), the only car that might get them out is buried and the keys are missing. While they are arguing about what to do (and quite likely accusing Maxwell), Willy will run up and tell them that they'd better come down to the East Ballroom.

When they get there, read aloud or paraphrase:

From one of the ornate chandeliers the body of a woman dangles and twirls like a macabre decoration. The woman is quite obviously Mary. Her lifeless eyes stare out through a red leather dominatrix mask, but she is dressed in her maid uniform. A small piece has been torn off the apron. There are bruises on her neck and a small pool of blood is forming underneath her.

The blood is coming from a small open wound on Mary's leg (one sustained in her romp with Rudy, see Hack One, Scream Three, "A Shriek In the Night") which continues to ooze as the blood in the body settles to the feet. Her heart was not cut out, she was strangled with bare hands.

Willy and Maxwell both seem genuinely disturbed by this sight. Seeing Carstairs and the sheriff, cut up as they were, didn't seem to phase them, but now that the victim is one of their own they are reacting more emotionally. Both men pale visibly and excuse themselves quickly. Willy says he is going to the laundry room "to get something to cover the body." Maxwell heads silently into his office and shuts the door.

MORE CLUES

The gamemaster should allow the characters some time to assess what all this means. Let them discuss things among themselves for as long as they like. While they are doing this, however, all the staff members will slip away and hide. The hotel becomes eerily quiet. The only sounds the characters can hear are those they themselves make.

As they try to decide what to do next, give each player a secret note. The two unique notes should go to players whose characters did not get clues last time.

Note 3: "You stick your hand into your coat pocket and feel something unfamiliar there. Surreptitiously you pull it out and discover it to be a piece of white cloth ... about the right shape and size to match the missing piece on Mary's apron."

Note 4: "As you sit down, you feel an uncomfortable object in your back pocket. When the others aren't looking, you examine the object and find that it is a police-issue handgun."

Other Notes: "As you discuss the situation you get an uneasy feeling. The entire hotel staff seems to have disappeared. Your group is left standing in the East Ballroom all alone. There are no other signs of life in the building."

THE TRUTH IS IN HERE

Up until now, the hotel staff has been very nonchalant in dealing with the murders, going through the motions of taking precautions and even making jokes about recent events. It was almost as if they felt the killer posed no threat to them (and let's face it, they're not the most stable group of people you've ever met). With Mary's death, however, they stop playing games. Suddenly, the murderer is after them, too! They've all gone to ground, trusting no one, and ready to kill to protect themselves.

Make the mood tense by emphasizing how quiet it is in the hotel. Every action the characters take should echo slightly in the massive old building. Floorboards and stair should creak loudly as they search the hallways. Occasionally they will hear the groaning sounds of the building settling or the steam heaters rattling as the furnace comes to life, but give them the feeling of total isolation.

As the characters walk around the hotel, the remaining staff may make attempts on their lives. The staff has the advantage of knowing the building better than the characters (so it will be difficult to sneak up on them). They're scared senseless and will be extremely difficult to reason with.

The only weapons available to the characters are the sheriff's gun (damage value 17, ammo 6) (D6: damage value 4D), the hunting knife (found by one of the characters in his room) (damage value STR+4) (D6: damage value STR+1D+1), and anything else they might reasonably find lying around. If they think to try to get the shotgun from the sheriff's car, the side window is broken and the gun is gone. The kitchen is obviously a good place to find some knives, and fireplace pokers are always useful. Allow the characters to be creative. If someone thinks up an ingenious (and plausible) way to make a weapon, let them have it … it won't do them much good, anyway.

THE MAN WITH THE CLEAVER

The dining room still has the food and place settings from the morning meal. There are serving trays full of eggs and breakfast meats growing cold, and plates of unfinished meals sitting unappetizingly on the table. The knives found here are too dull to be useful as weapons, but the forks might do in a pinch (especially the serving forks).

If the characters spend a long period of time in the dining room, or go into the kitchen looking for sharper utensils, Franz will attack them. He is crazed, fearing for his life, and comes at them swinging a meat cleaver and brandishing a lead frying pan. As before, it should be fairly easy to subdue him, but remember that he is an old man. If the characters are too rough with him, they are likely to break one of his bones and, if he gets too worked-up, he may simply have a stroke and lapse into a coma.

FIND WILLY

If the characters are exploring the second floor, they will eventually run into Willy. He has hidden in one of the rooms here (gamemaster's choice) like he used to do when he was a young boy playing hide-and-go-seek with the children of the guests. His mind has completely snapped and he is impossible to reason with.

He will hide until discovered or until the characters pass his hiding spot and move further down the hall. When one of these things happens, Willy will attack using the Louisville Slugger he used to use in the annual "Guest vs. Staff Softball Game."

If the characters manage to subdue him (again, not a very difficult task), Willy's heart will seize up. He will shake violently and scream in a high-pitched voice, his eyes bulging in his skull. Suddenly, a bloody foam will froth from his mouth and he will die before anyone can do anything to save him or get any useful information out of him.

MR. MAXWELL'S SECRETS

If the characters go looking for James Maxwell, they will find the door to his office closed but unlocked. The office itself is empty, but there is another door behind the desk. The hotel manager is hiding in his room, which adjoins his office. The door to the room is locked, and Maxwell won't let anyone in. He will politely tell anyone knocking at the door to go away. If they break in, he'll use his hunting rifle to hold them off. Once they get too close to shoot at, he'll use a hunting knife to fight until he is killed. If they go away, he'll wait a few minutes then follow and try to pick them off at a distance using the rifle.

Mr. Maxwell is one of the people who knows the truth about everything that has gone on. He is the one who encouraged the characters, through correspondence in a magazine devoted to the paranormal, to come to the Anderson in the

first place. Maybe he thought they could be of some help in laying Garrett's spirit, but obviously the reverse happened and things have gotten worse. Though he knows the characters aren't really responsible for what's going on, he feels that if he gets rid of them it might settle Garrett down.

Once he has been taken care of (one way or another), the characters are free to explore Mr. Maxwell's room. The room contains a few items which should prove of interest to the characters. On one wall he has a strange alchemical chart (no one is able to decipher it). His bookshelf is filled with occult books, mostly dealing with rituals of summoning and binding. Have any characters who spend any length of time examining the books generate a Mind total — on a 12, they feel there is something important about one particular leather-bound book. The text is gibberish, looking more like something a chimp with a fountain pen would do than actual, meaningful script (the meaning of the book will be revealed in the section "The Cold Truth," below).

There is a tall filing cabinet near the desk. One of the drawers is open and a file has been laid open on it as though Maxwell had been looking it over when the characters had interrupted. If they read it, they'll find that it is the personnel file for Rudy Templeton.

It turns out that Rudy is an ex-con who served 10 years of a 15 year sentence for statutory rape and attempted murder. Apparently he was caught in a tryst (similar to his one with Mary) with a local high school girl. When the girl's father pressed charges, Rudy beat him half to death with a tire iron. After being released early because of overcrowding, Rudy found it impossible to get a job, so he broke his parole and skipped town.

He somehow wound up in Wurtsboro and was on the verge of being arrested for vagrancy when James Maxwell showed up out of nowhere. He told the sheriff that he had been expecting Rudy at the Anderson to begin his work as bellboy and asked the lawman to stop harassing the workers simply because of the hotel's unfortunate history .

Other personnel files are here, but only Rudy's holds anything of passing interest. On an Intellect or p*erception* check of 8, the characters will notice a file for someone they have yet to meet (D6: Easy *investigation* roll). The file details Tim McNarry, the gardener, his problems with alchoholism, and the fact that he lives in a cottage by the lake.

The gamemaster is free to create interesting backgrounds for all the workers based on the passages in the "Staff" section on page 53.

In his desk drawer are newspaper clippings about the occult murders of 1971 (one of them mentions Bungalow #5 as the site of the murders). There are also some other clippings from older newspapers about the "Honeymoon Murders" committed by one Alec Garrett, a crazed local farmer who was convicted and executed for the murders in 1961. Gamemasters should go back to the section "Skeletons In the Closet" and tell the characters as much as they deem appropriate.

Did Maxwell merely know about all this or did he take part in, possibly even mastermind, all the murders? If the characters read the clippings carefully (Intellect total of 9) (D6: Knowledge roll of 9) they'll see that all of the convicted '71 cultists were students at the same school, Upton College. The degrees on Maxwell's wall are also from Upton.

FINAL SOLILOQUY

If the characters go looking for Rudy (before or after they find Mr. Maxwell) he will be difficult to find. He is hiding in Room 345, where he and Mary had been the night before, crying piteously. He has the sheriff's shotgun and will fire it though the door if anyone knocks (so be sure to find out who is standing directly in front). He never really believed in all the mumbo-jumbo about spirits and human sacrifices, but the whole thing made his nights with Mary more interesting, so he played along. Now he is sure that the characters have come to kill him and is terrified.

Once a hole has been blown in the door the characters can peek carefully into the room. Read aloud or paraphrase:

Rudy is huddled against the far wall, dressed in the same ridiculous outfit he wore last night. He is sobbing and repeating Mary's name over and over while cradling the sheriff's shotgun in his arms. When he sees, the characters he will point the gun and begin yelling at them.

"Stay away from me, you bastards! One little sacrifice wasn't enough for you, was it? I know why you had to kill the sheriff, but why Mary? Why? She helped you. We all did. I know what you're thinking ... 'What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our pow'r to account!' ... right? Right?!?"

Rudy has completely flown off the deep end at this point. He loved Mary, in his own perverted way, an emotion he had never known before. He rants and raves, possibly continuing to quote from *Macbeth* ("Is this a dagger I see ... " soliloquy from Act 2, Scene 1 is a good choice). If the characters interrupt him to ask what he's talking about, read aloud or paraphrase:

Tears roll down Rudy's face. He seems to alternate between laughing and sobbing. "You really don't remember, do you? Now there's irony for you! You know the murders you've been trying to solve all this time? Well ... you did them! You killed them all and now you're going to kill me too!" he shrieks and laughs even louder. "If you don't believe me, go take a look at what you did in Bungalow #5! Or ask Old Tim! You'll see!"

He turns suddenly serious and continues, "At least you didn't carve Mary up. You owed her that much. Oh Mary ... 'This I have thought to deliver to thee, my dearest partner of greatness ... Lay it to thy heart, and farewell.'

As he speaks these words, he puts the shotgun to his chest and pulls the trigger.

Nothing the characters can do will stop him from killing himself. For Rudy, it is the perfect tragic ending to his tragic life. But it does throw the truth in the characters' faces for the first time. And it gives them somewhere to go to learn the truth and to meet their final challenge.

CUT TO...

When the characters are ready to leave the hotel and head outside, cut to Scream Two.

SCREAM TWO: THE GREAT OUTDOORS

THE SITUATION

Standard. After their encounters with Maxwell and Rudy, the characters will probably want to head outside, to find Old Tim, to seek the answers to their lost memories, or possibly even to escape altogether.

It is no longer snowing as hard as it was the night before. The characters may leave the hotel and walk around the immediate area with no fear of becoming lost or freezing to death (provided they dress properly). Still, there are other dangers. The wind has caused the snow to blow into drifts which range anywhere from two to five meters deep. The going will be slow. There are snowshoes in the lobby cloakroom, if anyone cares to look. Also, should the characters decide to try to cross Lake Welsh to escape the madness in the Anderson Hotel, they will find the surface frozen solid for the first 200 meters. Beyond that there is a 25% chance per ten minutes (non-cumulative) on the ice that a section will crack and collapse, throwing everyone in the immediate area into the frigid water. Anyone who is not pulled out will die of hypothermia in ten minutes. Anyone successfully rescued must be brought to a warm, dry place within 5 minutes or frostbite will begin to set in.

THE ACTION

As they step out the front door, have the characters make *perception* checks. On an 8, they'll see smoke coming from the chimney of a small cottage near the edge of the lake. This was Bungalow #1, but now Old Tim McNarry lives here. He mostly keeps to himself, staying in his cabin and drinking to excess. The characters won't meet him until they go looking around outside, and then only if they decide to investigate the cottage. If they were observant while exploring Mr. Maxwell's office, or listened carefully to Rudy, they may already know about Tim's existence.

Like the other staff members, Old Tim knows what is happening at the hotel, but he wants no part of it. The other staffers never felt he was a threat to any of their plans because he is a well-known alcoholic and over the years he has gone into town with tales of everything from alien abductions to lake monsters. He will be drunk whenever the characters meet him.

If the characters enter the cottage, read aloud of paraphrase:

The interior looks as if the cottage had hosted a party which lasted several months. Empty beer cans and bottles of numerous types of liquor cover almost every square-inch of space. The air smells foul and stale and smokey. The furniture is ratty and has more stains than clean patches. There is a roaring fire in the fireplace, but the grate is open. An ember has popped out and started a small fire, causing the smoke you smelled. If it isn't extinguished soon it will spread to the curtains and the whole shack will probably burn down in a matter of minutes.

Putting the fire out should not be a problem. There is an extinguisher in the kitchen (not to mention a sink full of melted ice cubes), and the blaze is still very small. While putting it out, however, one of the characters trips over Tim buried under his own empty containers.

While the fire proved no problem, waking Tim could be. The gamemaster is encouraged to play this any way he sees fit. It might only take a light slap across the face, it might take smelling salts, or it might take a pot of black coffee, but eventually the characters should succeed in bringing the old man back to consciousness.

From Tim, the characters can learn all the details of the tragedies throughout the Anderson's history. He will tell them all the awful parts that no one else will mention, particularly as regards the murders of 1971. He'll also tell them that Maxwell was involved in those killings; he contacted the college students, planned the trip entirely and even arranged for the victims to be brought to the bungalow. He'd gotten away with it too — except that Alec Garrett's ghost knew.

Getting this information out of Tim won't be easy. He is still very drunk and very tired. Every time the characters ask him a question there is a chance he may pass out (generate an Endurance check for Tim against a difficulty number of 7. If he fails, he passes out in the middle of a sentence and they'll have to revive him).

Read aloud or paraphrase:

"Maxwell arranged it all back in '71 ... the police always suspected, but they couldn't prove it ... he set it up and let those kids take the fall ... just like he was going to do with you. And he got away clean, except for one thing: Garrett's ghost knew. That's why he's thrown the ghost victims over the years, that's why he brought you in to lay him to rest ... guess it backfired ... you just made Garrett mad. And he used you, like Maxwell wanted to ... you got blood all over your hands, but Garrett shed it ...

"But the main thing is, you got the evidence that proves Maxwell was behind it all ... but you left it in the bungalow! That was a really stupid thing to do ... why did you do that?"

A lot of things should be becoming clear now. Garrett's ghost had been blackmailing Maxwell for years, and Maxwell had gone along by setting up the occasional victim for him (maybe even surrendering to possession). But Garrett must have started getting cranky, so Maxwell went outside for people willing to exorcise him. It didn't work ... the characters got their memories wiped clean, but only after one of them had been used to kill Carstairs. Garrett then proceeded to throw a tantrum of sorts, killing the sheriff and Mary. Maxwell knew that all these deaths would attract attention ... and just maybe Garrett would finger him from beyond the grave.

The characters may be ready to accept the fact that they were possessed, what with their memories being absent and the proof piling up, or they may cling desperately to a state of denial. Whichever, the only way they will ever know the truth is to go to Bungalow #5 to see what this evidence is.

If the characters decide to try and escape the hotel grounds, cut to Scream Three. If they head to Bungalow #5, cut to Scream Four.

SCREAM THREE: ESCAPE!

THE SITUATION

Standard. Before the characters are willing to go to Bungalow #5, they may want to try to escape from the hotel. There are two ways they are likely to make the attempt: walking or driving.
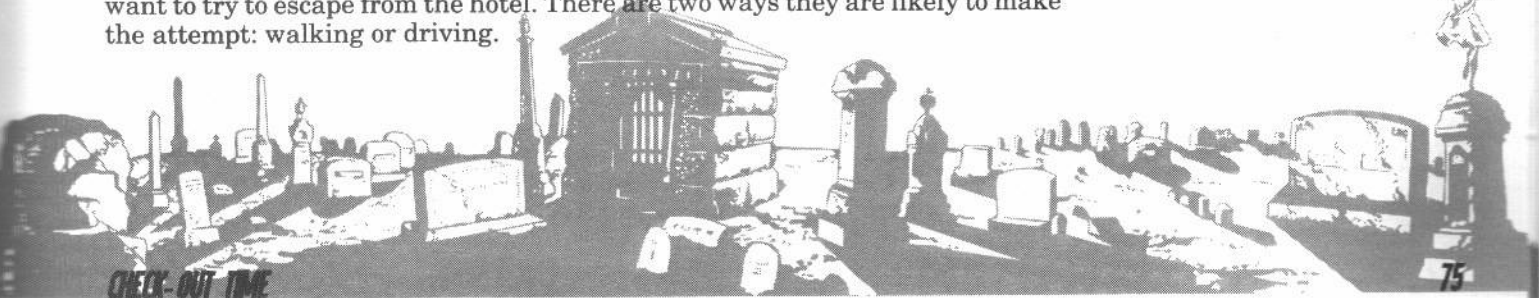
THE ACTION

Walking out is a risky proposition, as it is over 48 kilometers to Wurtsboro and the only road is snowed in right now. There are snowshoes in the lobby cloakroom, but that will only make the going easier ... it will by no means be easy. They run the risk of starting, or getting caught in, an avalanche, making a wrong turn and walking deeper into the wilderness, running into wild animals such as wolves and bears, or just being clumsy and tripping (it's a looooong way down the mountain).

On the other hand, they might decide to drive. Sheriff Skouse's ATV is still buried out front. The side window has been smashed in and they have no keys, but problems like these rarely phase truly motivated characters. For the record, the sheriff's keys were not taken by one of the staff members (as the characters are likely to suspect). Skouse hid them before he went to sleep to protect his only means of transportation from a trapped felon. Characters who thoroughly search his blood-soaked room (and succeed at a *perception* check of 10) will find the keys in the toilet tank.

Even if they don't find the keys, the characters may find some way to get the car started (hotwiring it). They will find, once they get going, that the roads have been closed for a reason. Even with the ATV, the snow and ice make driving extremely difficult. They will not get more than five kilometers away from the Anderson before the truck skids off the mountain road and becomes stuck beyond all hope of freeing it. The characters will have to walk back to the hotel (which brings back all the problems originally inherent in walking).

A final problem is, as they start to get further away from the hotel, the characters will start having flashbacks. They will begin remembering the murders they have committed under the influence of Garrett (see "The Cold Truth") and if they get too far away (gamemaster's discretion), the flashbacks will get worse and worse until madness is threatened.

In the end, though, the only way they are going to get any answers is in Bungalow #5.

CUT TO

When the characters are ready to confront the truth about the events at the Anderson, cut to Scream Four.

SCREAM FOUR: BUNGALOW #5

THE SITUATION

Dramatic. All the varied plots and twists lead the characters to Bungalow #5. Either boldly by choice or timidly under duress, the characters find themselves approaching the door to this infamous structure. This is the location where the cult murders took place in 1971, and it's the site of the more recent murder of Phillip Carstairs.

The characters will have to fight their way through the deep snow to get here. The wind and snow drifts seem to be working to isolate this place from the rest of the grounds, as though they were trying to scour the area from its unholy presence.

THE ACTION

When they reach the bungalow, the characters will see that it is old and falling apart, in even worse shape than Tim's cottage (if that is possible). The door is unlocked and, when it is opened, some of the characters will have a flashback of

Carstairs' murder and the others that have taken place in the last day.

Direct your attention to the appropriate player(s), and read aloud or paraphrase:

The door to Bungalow #5 swings slowly open and you see ...

... Mary Englewood looking you dead in the eye. You've got the red leather hood over her head and your hands around her throat. She's squeezing your arm, digging in slightly with her nails, but she's not really struggling. Maybe she's just given up ...

... Your left hand is covered in blood. In the dim light it fairly glistens as it grips the lifeless throat of Sheriff Randy Skouse. Fresh blood and gore spray onto your left hand as your right is busy sawing at the sheriff's chest with a knife.

Seeing these visions is cause for the characters to have to make Confidence or *willpower* totals (D6: Knowledge or *willpower*). The difficulty number is 11. Failure means the character is frozen in place for 2d10 minutes as his mind struggles to cope with what he has done. While the afflicted characters deal with their memories, everyone else will be gaping at the terrible sight in the middle of the room.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

The door to Bungalow #5 swings slowly open and you see blood everywhere. Somehow, you feel certain this is the room where Phillip Carstairs was really killed and mutilated, and it shows. The dried blood in the carpet crunches under your feet as you walk in. All the furniture has been pushed back against the walls to make space for the giant pentagram laid in salt in the center of the room. The pentagram is at least two meters in diameter, and parts of the lines have been rubbed out or stained red and pink by the blood.

On one of the defiled couches there is a gym bag, also covered in viscera. Under the gore you can still make out a logo and name: Upton College.

The blood on the walls has been smeared into bizarre symbols unlike anything you've ever seen before. Some look like primitive cave paintings, others like mathematical symbols, and still others look like the random scribbles of a madman. But the longer you look at them, the more you are able to find an underlying pattern. The most disturbing thing is, as you stare at the symbols, they seem familiar to you.

BOBKO

Tim Bobko

Inside the blood-soaked bag the characters will find a few old photographs, a video camera and some coaxial cables.

The photos are of a group of young people dressed in hippie-style clothing. They are sitting on and around a couch (which looks very much like the one the bag was on) looking as though they were posing for a class picture. In fact, they're even holding a handwritten banner that says "Eyes of Sins Past." Standing to one side, like a proud teacher, is James Maxwell holding a large, leather-bound book. The quality of the photograph plus the clothing and hairstyles tell the characters that this photo was probably taken in sometime in the late 1960's or early 70's.

There is a tape in the camera. The cables can be used to connect the camera to the TV so the tape can be played back. When the characters are ready to view the tape refer to "Let's Go To The Video Tape."

THE COLD TRUTH

The photograph is proof that Maxwell was involved in the killings in 1971. The hippies in the shot are the college students who killed the two teenagers (their faces can be matched with the ones in the newspaper clippings in Maxwell's office), and James Maxwell was their guide.

The video tape will prove that the characters did indeed kill Phillip Carstairs, but it will also show that Maxwell was there (for details see "Let's Go To The Video Tape"). When the characters see the tape, their memories will come flooding back and they will know the truth.

Maxwell, as manager of the Anderson Hotel, was privy to all the inside information on the various killings and dark happenings there over the years. In fact, he took the job because he was an amateur occultist and was intrigued by the Anderson's dark history (particularly the Independence Day Massacre).

While attending one of the local estate sales he, quite by accident, happened across a book with actual supernatural power. The nameless book (the one seen in the photo and video tape) was written in a language not known to any linguist. Experts told Maxwell that it was simply gibberish, not an actual text, but he paid them no heed. Every night he worked almost until dawn trying to decipher the mysterious tome.

And as time went by he made progress. Parts of the book opened their secrets to him. Experts said that he was attributing significance where there was none, that the book was nonsense and only Maxwell's obsessed mind saw meaning in it, but Maxwell knew better. He knew that the translation he was generating was accurate and that, somehow, it would be a means for him to achieve great power. All this was true, but it wasn't until much later, until it was too late, in fact, that he knew the whole truth.

The book explained the means of communicating with, summoning and binding spirits. Using it, Maxwell made contact with the spirit of serial killer Alec Garrett, who convinced him that, if summoned, he would serve the hotel manager and teach him how to get even more power.

Maxwell bought it. He continued to translate the text, discovering that two ritual sacrifices were required for what he wanted to do, one to supposedly summon a spirit and one to bind it. Maxwell could do this, but he was sure he would be caught; the townspeople already mistrusted the workers at the Anderson. He would have to find some dupes to perform the ritual in such a way that he could not be directly connected to it.

In order to accomplish this, Maxwell got in contact with some students he knew from his visits to the library at his alma mater, Upton College. They were part of a pseudo-occult society called Eyes of Sins Past. He told them that as part of his research he was going to hold a "mock sacrifice." Maxwell told them that he already had people to play victims, he needed the students' help to fill out the flock. They were already playing at occultism, so it was no wonder the jumped at the chance to participate in a reenactment of an actual ritual.

The rest of the staff could not be kept completely out of this. One of them was sure to notice what Maxwell was doing and turn him in. So he let them speak to Garrett as well, and then offered them a choice: a share of the power and wealth the spirit would lead them to, or death. Guess what they chose?

The day before the ritual, Maxwell abducted two local teens who were hitchhiking outside town. On the night of the ceremony, they were sedated and tied up. When the students came in, everything seemed just as it ought to. Maxwell did his ritual, Garrett was raised, the sheer trauma of the experience robbing the students of their memories. Garrett possessed the youths and had them kill the two sacrifices.

It all went perfectly, except for the fact that someone saw Maxwell picking the boys up. When they were reported missing, the first place the police came to search was the Anderson Hotel. They pulled up in front of the bungalow just as the ceremony was getting started. The possessed students continued, oblivious to the lights and sirens, but Maxwell managed to get out mere seconds before the door was broken down. What did he care what happened to the students? He had accomplished what he set out to do — or had he?

The truth was that Garrett wasn't planning to take orders from anyone, and thanks to a mistranslation on Maxwell's part, he didn't have to. He was free now, if bound to the grounds of the hotel, and he held his knowledge of Maxwell's complicity over the manager's head. As long as Maxwell would toss a few victims his way, he'd keep quiet and forego killing any of the hotel staff.

Things went on this way for 25 years. As new staff members, like Rudy and Mary, joined, they rapidly became acquainted with Garrett's ghost and the conditions under which they had to work. Garrett's spirit permeated everything in the hotel, slowly eroding the sanity of anyone who worked there.

Finally, Maxwell couldn't take anymore. He decided to exorcise the ghost once and for all until he could correct his mistake and learn how to truly bind the entity. Through an occult magazine, he happened upon a group of amateurs interested in ghost-hunting and exorcism (the player characters). He invited them to the hotel, saying he wanted to hire them to get rid of Garrett's spirit.

Things went wrong right from the start. The exorcism only managed to irritate Garrett, who promptly possessed one of the player characters and killed Carstairs (in the same manner as the killings in '71, a little jab at Maxwell). Again, the trauma of the event and the energies unleashed combined to wipe out the memories of the player characters.

There was no choice but to contact the police (the characters would have insisted on it the next morning, anyway). Maxwell called Sheriff Skouse because he trusted Skouse not to leak the story to the papers. Skouse didn't want Wurtsboro's reputation damaged any more by doings at the Anderson.

Garrett found all this amusing and used the player characters again to murder Skouse and Mary, the first time he had ever killed a hotel staff member. The message was clear: all deals were off and no one was safe.

The characters found themselves hated by the surviving staff members (who blamed them for Garrett's murderous mood) and hunted by Maxwell, who feared they might stumble upon the truth about his past.

LET'S GO TO THE VIDEO TAPE

At this point, the characters will either be resigned to the scenes on the tape or they will come as a complete shock. Whatever their reactions, the video will settle the question of who killed Phillip Carstairs. When the characters set the tape up to play, read aloud or paraphrase:

The tape begins with a static shot of the main room of Bungalow #5, with the furniture pushed against the walls. The date and time is displayed in the corner of the screen; it is the morning of the day before, about eight hours before you found yourselves in the lobby. The top part

Ron Kulp
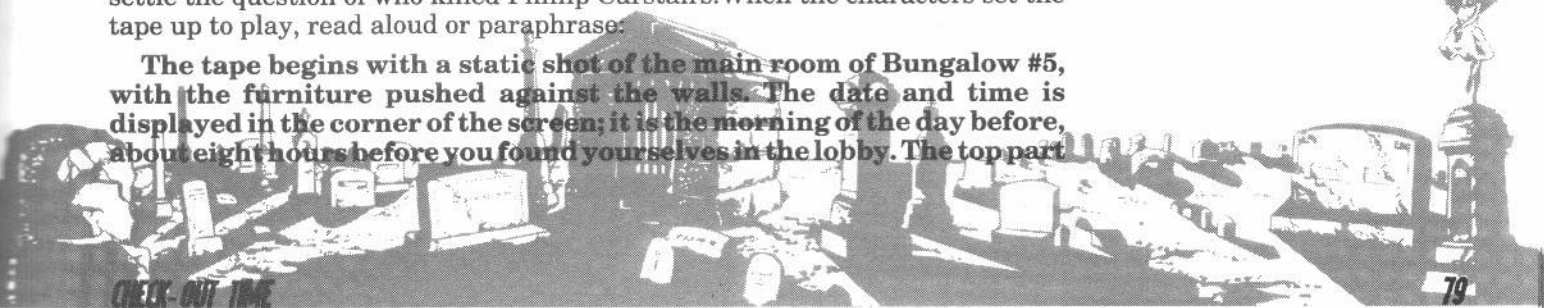
of the shot is obscured by a large leaf. Obviously the camera was hidden in one of the decorative plants found around the bungalow.

There is a sudden commotion, several voices speaking at the same time, and the camera is knocked onto the floor for several minutes. When it is righted again all the members of your group can be seen sitting on the floor in a circle. To the right of each of you, a long, flat, slightly curved dagger lays on the floor. You see Phillip Carstairs there, talking amiably with you, and memories flood back of your lost friend.

On the left side of the screen, James Maxwell stands, looking anxious and urging you to get started. Obligingly, various members of your group begin reading passages from a book — rites of exorcism. You recognize the book as the same one you found in Maxwell's library. Somehow, you were able to read it then!

A hazy, almost translucent figure of a man appears next to Maxwell with a pained expression on his face. Maxwell giggles maniacally and says, "Now … do it NOW!"

You all begin chanting at once, louder and louder, as if the very force of your voices could be enough to drive Garrett away. But the spirit is no longer looking pained … instead, his face is lit with malevolent glee. The color drains out of Maxwell's face. A wind begins to whip through the room, carrying your words away with it. Little by little, your voices trail off, until you are all merely standing in place, looking as if you don't know what you are doing there. Garrett's spirit suddenly vanishes from sight …

Look directly at the player whose character you have determined struck the first blow.

… And you see yourself begin to move. Your expression now one of pure evil, you snatch up the dagger from the center of the chalk pentragram and plunge it into Phillip Carstairs' chest. Then you go still again.

One by one, each of you takes the dagger and stabs your friend, obviously under Garrett's influence. Then it's Maxwell's turn, his body moving like a grotesque marionette as he cuts out Carstairs' heart. With the blood that pours out, he paints designs on the walls. Behind it all, you hear deep, bone-chilling laughter, the laughter of Alec Garrett's ghost.

Suddenly, Maxwell is himself again. He looks around him in horror and you can almost see what was left of his sanity ebbing away. The rest of you are still moving like sleepwalkers. Maxwell looks at you, his mind no doubt sorting through courses of action, until he finally settles on one. Hurriedly, he hustles all of you out the door of the bungalow, the laughter trailing in his wake.

And then you realize the laughter isn't coming from the tape ... it's coming from behind you!

When the characters turn, they'll see the spectral form of Alec Garrett. His body seems to be wavering between the tangible and the intangible. He smiles at the characters and says simply:

"Check-out time."

FIGHT OR FLIGHT?

The characters have two choices: they can attack Garrett's ghost or they can run for it. If they choose discretion over valor, cut to Hack Three. If they want to try and fight it out, keep reading.

Trying to slug it out toe-to-toe with Garrett isn't a very good idea. For one thing, he spends most of his time intangible, making it just about impossible to do him any damage. For another, you can't kill him, he's already dead. Annoy him enough and he'll possess one of the characters and you know what kind of trouble that will cause.

But if the characters insist, let them throw what they have against him. When he grows bored, he'll possess one of them (probably one that's armed) just to show them he can do it. That ought to be enough prompting to get them to run away. (And don't kid yourself that killing a possessed character will kill Garrett too ... he's not bound to the body, so he'll just find another.)

ALEC GARRETT
AGILITY 8
Dodge 11, maneuver 11, melee combat 14, stealth 17, unarmed combat 16
DEXTERITY 8
Fire combat 10
ENDURANCE 6
STRENGTH 7
TOUGHNESS 9 (29 w/intangibility)
INTELLECT 10
Perception 15, trick 15
MIND 9
CONFIDENCE 12
Intimidation 18, willpower 17
CHARISMA 10
Taunt 15
Life Points: 7
Natural Tools: Intangibility (armor value TOU+20/29) — Garrett's body density is at virtually zero, and that is now his normal state. By force of will, he can make himself tangible for up to one minute. While intangible, he cannot make any physical attacks nor can he suffer damage from them. He usually only turns tangible as a way of taunting opponents.

Garrett is capable of possessing a living human body. He does this by generating a *willpower* total against a difficulty number of the target's Confidence of *willpower*. The target may actively defend if he knows it might happen; in addition, he is allowed one resistance roll (his Confidence or *willpower* against a difficulty number of Garrett's *willpower*). Once possessed, the character will have no control and no awareness of what he is doing. Garrett does not have access to the character's memories or skills.

Garrett is bound to the grounds of the hotel and cannot pass beyond them.

(Alec Garrett (D6): DEXTERITY 2D+2: Dodge 3D+2, firearms 3D+1, maneuver 3D+2, melee combat 4D+2 **STRENGTH 2D+1:** Brawling 5D+1 **KNOWLEDGE 3D+1:** Intimidation 6D, willpower 5D+2 **TECHNICAL 3D+1**

MECHANICAL 3D PERCEPTION 3D+2: Con 5D, investigation 5D, sneak 5D+2, taunt 5D. **Force Points:** 7. **Natural Tools:** Intangibility, armor value +6D+2.)

If the characters keep fighting until they are killed (something we don't recommend), cut to "The Wrap-Up," below. If they decide to flee, Garrett will make one or two half-hearted attacks at them (maybe a brief possession, just to prove he can do it), but they'll be able to escape. Remember that they don't know that Garrett is bound to the hotel, so they can't be sure leaving the ground will help them any. Hopefully, they know that the only hope they have is to get Maxwell's book and do the exorcism right this time.

CUT TO

Once they have come face to face with Garrett, cut to Hack Three, "Final Night."

HACK AWARDS

Award the characters two Life Points apiece for getting through Hack Two.

HACK THREE: THE FINAL NIGHT

Unlike the other sections of this adventure, Hack Three has very few predetermined scenes. If the characters have made it this far, they know the truth behind the '71 killings and the more recent ones, their memories have returned, and they know that Garrett is the true enemy. Now what?

The only weapon they can be certain of is the rite of exorcism in Maxwell's book. It didn't work the first time, for some reason — will it work now? And will they live long enough to use it? If they do nothing, Garrett will surely hunt them down and kill them ... even if they escape, they run the risk that someday Garrett will overcome his imprisonment in the hotel and pursue them.

SCREAM ONE: BREATHING ROOM

THE SITUATION

Dramatic. Well, the characters are still alive and this is the last night of this adventure. There's a murderous ghost on the loose, a lot of corpses scattered about, and they're in a very bad situation. Let them stew for a little while. The more they think about things, they worse they'll seem.

If the characters are determined to escape the hotel ... well, it's up to you. Letting them is kind of an anti-climax. Might we suggest another snowstorm? Just to make things interesting?

But the situation isn't as bleak as it might at first appear. They know the rite of exorcism is in Maxwell's book, and they should know where the book is (if they haven't been to Maxwell's office, they should at least be able to take a guess that that's where it could be found).

Call for Mind rolls, with a difficulty of 10. On a successful check, the characters will remember that there was something strange about the symbols Maxwell scrawled on the wall of the bungalow while possessed ... he seemed to be fighting against doing it. Was that his own resistance — or was he perhaps writing something Garrett didn't want him to, fighting back with some last reserve of willpower, and the ghost was now powerless to erase the symbols? (If the

characters have seen Maxwell's book, they'll realize those symbols are in the same language in which the book is written.) If they return to Bungalow #5, they'll be able to read what is written (see "Bungalow #5 Revisited.")

(If there are still living people in the hotel besides the characters, Garrett will kill them first. If not, the characters might be able to trick him into thinking there are, using tape players, etc., and thereby slow him down.)

THE ACTION

This last section of the episode is very unstructured. It is completely up to the characters to decide what they want to do, and completely up to the gamemaster to decide what happens to them at each stage. Several important facts are noted in this and the following section, but the "script" for this Hack will be different every time the scenario is run.

Be sure that the characters understand the options available to them. Their situation is desperate, but it is not hopeless. The book which Maxwell used is on the bookshelf in his office. The walls of Bungalow #5 have helpful instructions smeared on them.

OUT OF SIGHT

The characters are free to wander about the hotel and its grounds as they see fit (noting that the weather outside is still inhospitable and the snow is still causing drifts to form). The following paragraphs describe some of the encounters waiting to happen at different locations around the hotel.

Any of the hotel staff members whom the characters did not encounter in the previous Hack are still in their hiding places. With all the excitement involving Garrett's ghost, the characters may have completely forgotten about the human obstacles which still await them inside the Anderson. Encounters with the staff will take place as described in the appropriate sections of Hack Two.

Alternately, the gamemaster may choose to bring the staff members out of hiding and use them as wandering encounters. Or, if Maxwell has been killed, their unity of purpose may be shattered and they might respond better to the characters than was originally described. If the gamemaster prefers, it may be possible for the characters to convince the staff members to join forces with them to fight Garrett. Of course, if the

group of individuals surrounding you is as unstable as most of the staffers are, they become as much a danger as they are a help.

READY OR NOT

Besides the mundane problems that wait throughout the grounds, Garrett is actively stalking the characters and the staff. Even though slaughtering everyone will ruin all its future fun, Garrett no longer cares. After a quarter of a century as a shadow, he's madder than he was when he died in '61.

If Garrett turns tangible, he can be hurt, if not killed — which is precisely why he doesn't turn tangible that often. Feel free to combine menaces for the characters. At some point, when Garrett is stalking them or possessing one of them, have one of the staff members show up and attack, too. This is also another good way to get the staff members and and the characters working together.

If the characters are having it too easy, spice things up a little. After all, the hotel is saturated with evil, so all bets are off. Reanimate Rudy and Mary and have them to a grotesque reenactment of their little tryst. Sic them on the player characters. Do the same with Carstairs, the sheriff and any other corpses that might be lying about. Stopping Garrett will stop all of these things too (stats for reanimated characters are the same as they were in life with the following exceptions: they are virtually mindless and immune to interaction attacks, and they are immune to shock and K/O results. They keep coming until they are destroyed.)

CUT TO

When the characters are ready to either check out the Bungalow again or get the book from Maxwell's library, cut to Scream Two, "Knowledge Is Power."

SCREAM TWO: KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

THE SITUATION

Dramatic. At some point the characters will either go back to Bungalow #5 or head for Maxwell's office. The trip to the bungalow is not necessary, but it can't hurt … much.

If the characters head back to Bungalow #5, cut to "Bungalow #5 Revisited." If they go to Maxwell's cut to "Words of Power."

BUNGALOW #5 REVISITED

If the characters go back to Bungalow #5, read aloud or paraphrase:

The bungalow is just as you left it. Dried blood still covers most of the items in the room. The camera is still hooked up to the television and the image of Carstairs' mutilated body is still frozen on the screen. But now the messages on the wall no longer appear to be gibberish … in fact, you can comprehend it quite clearly.
The message reads:

"I know now where I went wrong … the third line, it should have read 'Cast into' not 'Cast out of.' I erred in the translation. I leave this as a sign, if you should have the courage to try again. For all things to be reversed — look to page 99."
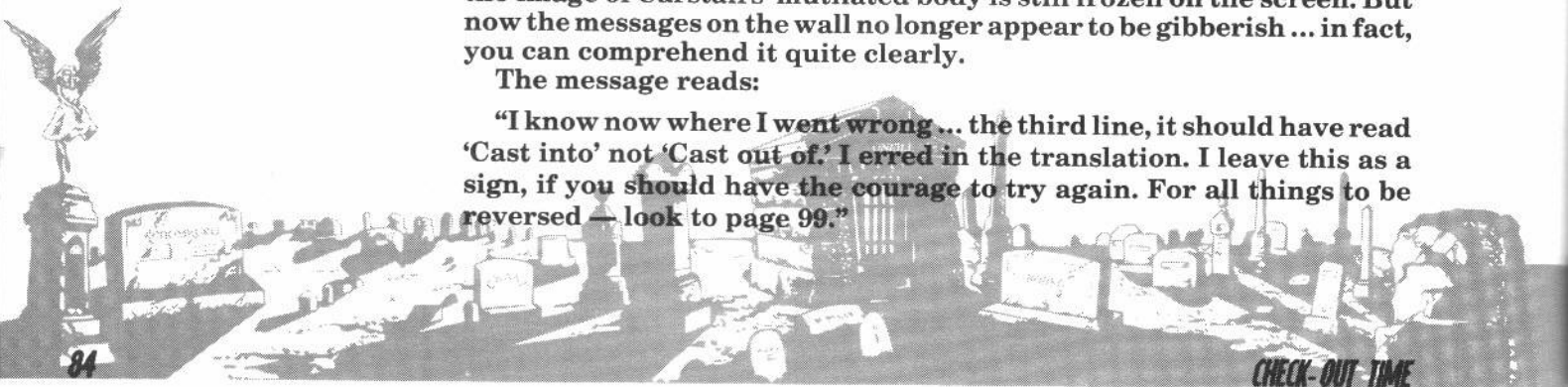
Unless the characters moved it earlier in the adventure, the book is still on the bookshelf in James Maxwell's office.

WORDS OF POWER

It is possible that the characters have not dealt with James Maxwell since the discovery of Mary's corpse. If this is the case, run the section "Mr. Maxwell's Secrets." If this scene has already been run, the office is in the same state it was when the characters left it last.

If it has not been moved before this point, finding the book now will not be difficult. It is on the top shelf of the bookcase in Maxwell's office. With the increasing strength of Garrett's ghost, the book itself almost glows with arcane energy. Anyone who picks it up notices that it is warm to the touch and vibrates as though there were an electric motor operating between the covers.

When the player characters begin to leaf through the book, read aloud or paraphrase:

The scribblings all make sense. The book deals with ghosts and spirits, with detailed accounts of hauntings through the ages and references to ways to banish them from the mortal plane. But as you read, you feel a premonition that causes your heart to sink. And sure enough, as you flip through the pages you see 96 ... 97 ... 98 ... 100. Someone has torn page 99 from the book!

Rather than go to the trouble of erasing the writing on the bungalow wall, Garrett did the next best thing, having Maxwell tear page 99 out of the book and burn it. But a Mind total of 10 will tip the characters off to the clue the manager left them: "For all things to be reversed ..." The rite of exorcism is buried on page 66 which, seen in reverse, would be 99.

If the characters turn to page 66, read aloud or paraphrase:

The spirit of a sinner can be wondrous strong. But what remains of its heart has long since been poisoned by evil, and it is there that you must strike. Recite the following incantation four times from within the pentagram and then strike the spirit with this tome:
**Begone, spirit, to the flames of Hell that beckon you ...**
We command this in the name of Powers which dwarf your own ...
Cast into perdition must ye be, for you have no place amongst the living ...
Begone, damned thing! Begone!

Give the players a piece of paper with the above written on it. This represents the book. They must have it with them to perform the exorcism.

This course of action may not be very comforting for the characters, since it involves prolonged interaction with a homicidal ghost. But it's the only way to win out, and no one ever promised them life would be a bed of red-hot spikes, right?
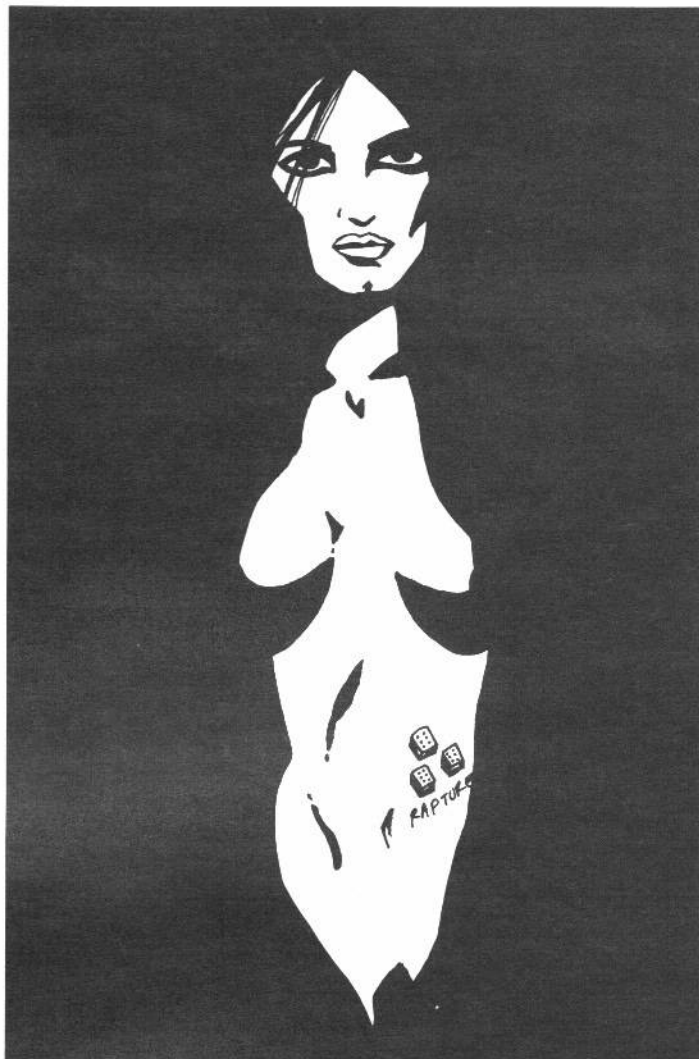
Tim Bobko

CUT TO

Armed with the one weapon they need (and the only one they're getting), the characters are ready to confront Garrett once and for all. Cut to Scream Three.

SCREAM THREE: THE LAST STAND

THE SITUATION

Dramatic. The characters have a number of problems to deal with in this Scream. First off, they have to find Garrett before he finds them. Secondly, they have to lure him into a confrontation. They have one big advantage, which is that the ghost believes the rite of exorcism has been burned. Once they begin reading from the the book, he'll be forced to remain in the room until the ritual fails or is disrupted somehow.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

It's been a long time since you've felt the darkness and stillness of a night in your bones like this. Every noise makes you jump. Every scrape, every thump, could be Garrett looking for you ... or one of the Anderson dead.

THE ACTION

The characters need to choose which room they will prepare with a pentagram (or they could be really sneaky and prepare more than one room). Suggestions would include Room 345, the East Ballroom, or other places that already have a nasty atmosphere.

It's up to you as the gamemaster to decide when and where Garrett and his shambling servants will confront the characters. Remember that the whole of this Scream must take place during the night. The State Police will arrive in the morning (in response to Sheriff Skouse's orders the night he was killed). This, of course, will be a complete surprise to the characters (unless they remember the sheriff's comment about his men coming in 24 hours if he didn't contact them). However, the night can seem as long as the gamemaster wants. Time tends to go slow when one is in terror for one's life.

The character who is to recite the incantation must have the piece of paper with the incantation written on it. The phrase must be recited four times, but the book can be passed from character to character to do this. After each recitation, a successful *melee combat* attack must be made on the ghost. Note that damage does not need to be done to the ghost for the attack to be considered successful in this case — the character simply has to be beat his *dodge*. As long as the characters are in the pentagram, they are safe from Garrett's attack and those of any Undead — but once they leave it (as they'll almost have to to hit him) they become vulnerable to attack, possession, etc. So,

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they may want to hit and run or hit and throw the book to another character before it gets ripped away from them (along with assorted limbs). The attack must be made by the character who last spoke the incantation — if he is killed, the incantation must be read again and that character must make an attack.

Garrett will do just about anything to avoid being exorcised, once he realizes that it is working this time. He'll plead, beg, offer deals, and make an effort to see the characters ripped into tiny pieces and the book destroyed.

In the end, if the characters succeed, read aloud or paraphrase:

You see Garrett begin to fade, a look that combines rage and horror on his face. One by one, the walking dead that served him collapse to the ground. With a final, fading scream, the spectre is gone, and peace descends on the Anderson ... as much peace as this place can ever know, anyway.

If the characters fail ... well, running for their lives comes to mind. Eventually, Garrett may grow powerful enough to leave the grounds and stalk them. The police certainly will, once they see the mess they left behind.

AFTERMATH

If the characters have succeeded at driving out the ghost, they would be well-advised to disappear themselves before morning comes. They're the only living people in a hotel full of corpses, all victims of violent death. When the police show, they'll either wind up in jail or in an asylum.

When they leave, they might want to think about taking: the videotape from Bungalow #5; the guest register; any correspondence between them that might be in Maxwell's office; and anything else they can think of that might tie them to the hotel this weekend. If they miss something, it could come back to haunt them in the future. Should these player characters return in a future adventure, they might find the New York State Police wanting to ask them some questions ...

Not all episodes in your *World of Tales From The Crypt* campaign need to be as out-and-out spooky as this one. As discussed in the earlier chapters, subtle horror often works as well or better than major fright nights ... but there is no substitute for a good old shake-in-your-boots creepfest like "Check-Out Time."

We hope that you could see some of the principles mentioned in the earlier chapters in action during this adventure. Use it to gauge how easy

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your players are to frighten, fool and manipulate. Apply this knowledge to developing and running future episodes in your campaign.

ADVENTURE AWARDS

Award the characters three skill points each if they survived the adventure, and one if they didn't. Each character can also be awarded from 2-4 Life Points, depending on what shape they were in when the episode ended.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Check-Out Time may be over, but that doesn't mean the characters, background and even the Anderson Hotel itself has no place in future episodes of your campaign. If the players and their characters were particularly disturbed by this adventure, there is no reason not to throw it back in their faces in several different ways.

CONCURRENT EVENTS

When planning future episodes, note where they fall in relation to the events in the history of the Anderson Hotel. Have snippets in the news pertaining to the history presented in episode. It will give the players a nasty shiver down their spines to be occasionally reminded of the horror they were once involved in.

DÉJÀ VU

Have other episodes set in Wurtsboro (or even at the Anderson Hotel) which have nothing to do with the established history. Stephen King is famous for using Castle Rock, a supposedly insignificant fictional New England town, over and over in his novels and short stories; it often seemed to be the nexus for all things paranormal, but the residents never noticed. Wurtsboro can act the same way in your campaign. Sheriff Skouse can show up hale and healthy any time before the established date of "Check Out Time." It will be hard, at first, for the characters not to treat him like a ghost. Members of the Anderson staff can be encountered in town just to unnerve the characters.

Alternately, everytime the characters go to a hotel, no matter where in the world or when in time the episode takes place, you can proclaim it to be named the Anderson Hotel (or the linguistic equivalent thereof). This will also serve to unnerve your players as they try to figure out what is so important about the name Anderson. Any character with that name will be instantly suspicious and any hotel *not* named Anderson will seem a safe haven. To make matters worse, you can populate all these various Anderson Hotels with essentially the same staff as in this episode (again, changing names and attitudes to suit the different locations).

OTHER TALES

Finally, you can plan future episodes around the events chronicled in the history of the Anderson Hotel. The characters would probably not be very happy about being dropped into the bodies of two teenage boys hitchhiking outside Wurtsboroin the early 1970's.

In particular, you could plan several adventures around the story of the Independence Day Massacre, which had no bearing on this episode, but could lead off into a very interesting series of tales based on the gamemaster's interpretation of the story presented here.

Back from your ski trip so soon, thrill-shriekers? What's the matter, didn't like the scare-lift? Or you just didn't like going fester and fester and fester — too hexhilarating for you? Maybe a little hot hemlock will calm your nerves, kiddies ... after all, you don't want to miss the next episode, do you? Hehehehehe!
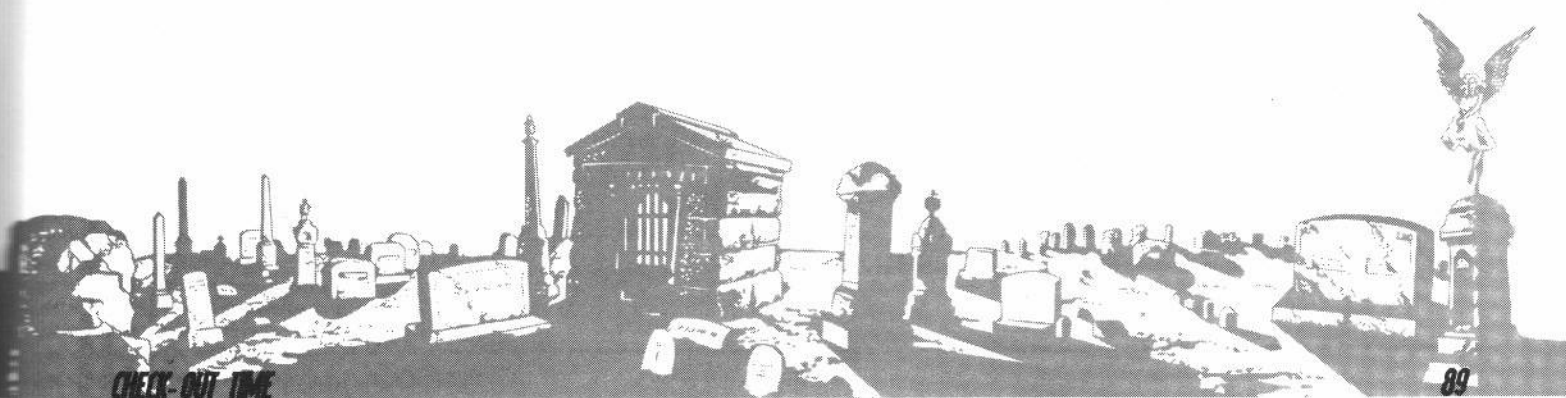
West End Games MasterBook/D6 System Conversion

This system converts *MasterBook* characters and adventures to the *D6 System* rules (used in other roleplaying games produced by West End). Of course, since the conversion translates logarithmic values to linear values, you have to exercise good judgment. If something doesn't look right after you convert it, alter the value or die code to what seems more realistic.

The conversion involves one simple formula: divide the *MasterBook* value by three. The quotient becomes the *D6* die code and the remainder becomes the number of pips. For example, a *MasterBook* value of 14 becomes a *D6* code of 4D+2 (14/3 = 4, remainder 2). Using this equation allows you to convert statistics on the fly. You don't have to convert all the numbers in a particular adventure beforehand. For example, your characters encounter a thug who immediately opens fire. You convert the thug's *fire combat* skill value of 8 to a die code of 2D+2 and start rolling.

To convert from *D6* to *MasterBook*, simply multiply the die code by three and then add the pips. For example, a *D6 planetary systems* skill of 4D+2 has a *MasterBook* skill value of 14 (3 * 4 + 2).

The main sections of conversion are characters, difficulty numbers, modifiers, and damage values.

Characters

MasterBook and the *D6 System* have different character Attributes. The first task in translating a character, then, is mapping the Attributes from one system to the other. The chart below shows the correlation between the two sets of Attributes.

Attribute Values/Die Codes

In instances where multiple Attributes in one system convert to a single Attribute in the other system, the Attributes are averaged. For example, the *MasterBook* Strength and Endurance Attributes translate to the *D6* Strength Attribute. To determine the *D6* Strength, first determine the average of the two *MasterBook* Attributes and then convert using the standard conversion formula.

Note that the *MasterBook* Intellect Attribute is used to determine the *D6* Knowledge *and* Technical Attributes.

To convert Attributes, divide the *MasterBook* Attribute value by three. The quotient represents the die code and the remainder represents the number of pips. For example, a *MasterBook* character with a Mind of 11 would have a *D6* Mechanical of 3D+2 (11/3 = 3, remainder 2).

Skills

There is no direct correlation between *MasterBook* skills and *D6 System* skills. First, try to find a skill with a similar name. For example, the *MasterBook energy weapons* skill would translate to the *D6 blaster* skill. If you can't find a match, just list that skill beneath whatever *D6* Attribute seems appropriate. For example, the *MasterBook archaeology* skill would fall under the *D6* Knowledge Attribute since the *D6 System* does not have a corresponding skill.

Example: Using the conversion formula, a *MasterBook espionage* skill of 10 becomes a *D6 espionage* skill of 3D+1.

Attribute Conversion	
MasterBook **Attribute**	*D6* **Attribute**
Average of Agility & Dexterity	Dexterity
Average of Strength & Endurance	Strength
Intellect	Knowledge
Intellect	Technical
Mind	Mechanical
Average of Confidence & Charisma	Perception

Below you'll find the *MasterBook* skills currently extant and their *D6 System* equivalents. Where no *D6* skill matches, the skill and/or its base Attribute (if different from the *MasterBook* Attribute) are listed in parentheses. Skills placed under a different Attribute in *D6* than in *MasterBook* are indicated by an asterisk (*).

### Miscellaneous Character Information

MasterBook Life Points equate to *D6* Force Points, and *MasterBook* Skill Points equate to *D6* Character Points. Bonuses or penalties resulting from *MasterBook* Advantages and Compensations can be converted using the standard conversion formula.

Difficulty Numbers

Since there is no linear formula that will accurately convert difficulty numbers, use the chart above to translate them between systems.

Modifiers

Divide the *MasterBook* modifier value by three. Treat the quotient as the die code and drop the remainder. For example, a *MasterBook* trick shot has a modifier of -4, which translates to a *D6* modifier of -1D (-4/3 = -1, remainder 1).
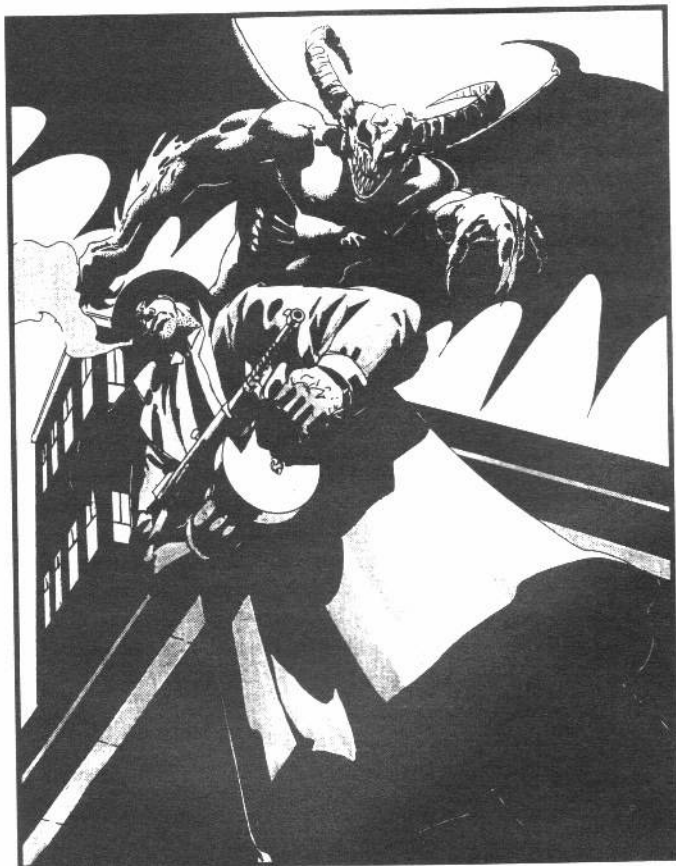
Difficulty Conversion	
MasterBook Difficulty Level	**D6 Difficulty Level**
Routine, Nearly Routine (1–2)	Very Easy (1–5)
Very Easy, Easy (3–5)	Easy (6–10)
Average, Complicated (6–10)	Moderate (11–15)
Difficult, Hard (11–13)	Difficult (16–20)
Very Hard, Extremely Hard (14–18)	Very Difficult (21–30)
Incredible, Nearly Impossible (19+)	Heroic (31+)

Damage Values

Since *MasterBook* damage values tend toward the high side, you must first subtract five from the *MasterBook* value and then apply the conversion formula. For example, a light rifle in *MasterBook* has a damage value of 16. In the *D6 System*, the damage value is 3D+2 ((16 - 5)/3 = 3, remainder 2).

Miscellaneous

Conversions for other areas of game play (vehicle and starship combat, magic, psionics, *et cetera*) are left to the gamemaster. In each case, the standard conversion formula should provide you with a basis for translation. For example, characters from the *Bloodshadows*™ game who have magical spells at their disposal may attempt to cast a spell by generating a skill total and comparing it to the spell's difficulty (the skill value and the difficulty number can both be converted using the guidelines presented above).

Refer to the following two pages for charts of converted skills and damage values.

MasterBook Games	**D6 System Games**
Bloodshadows™	Star Wars®,
Indiana Jones™	the Roleplaying
Necroscope™	Game
Shatterzone™	
Species™	
Tales From The Crypt™	
Tank Girl™	
The World of Aden™	

D6 System Damage Chart

FIREARMS

Weapon	D6 Damage Value
Holdout pistol (.22 caliber)	3D
Small pistol (.25 caliber)	3D+1
Light rifle (.22 long)	3D+2
.38 Special	4D
Ingram SMG	4D+1
Colt .45	4D+2
.44 Magnum Pistol	5D
.30-.30 Lever Action Rifle	5D+1
AK-47 Assault Rifle	5D+2
M16 Assault Rifle, Grenade	6D
7.62 HK21 Machinegun	6D+1
7.62 Maremont Lightweight M60	6D+2
7.62 "Chain Gun"	7D
GE Minigun M134	7D+1

MELEE WEAPONS

Weapon	D6 Damage Value
Pocketknife	STR+1
Small knife	STR+2
Knife	STR+1D
Dagger, Club	STR+1D+1
Short sword, baseball bat	STR+1D+2
Quarterstaff, rapier	STR+2D
Light sword, warhammer	STR+2D+1
Broadsword	STR+2D+2
Morning-star, pike	STR+3D
Two-handed sword, battle axe	STR+3D+1

MasterBook/D6 Skill Conversion

MasterBook Skill	D6 Skill Equivalent
AGILITY	
Acrobatics	(Acrobatics /Dexterity*)
Beast riding	Beast riding (Mechanical*)
Climbing	Climbing/jumping (Strength*)
Dance	(Dance/Dexterity*)
Dodge	Dodge (Dexterity*)
Escape Artist	(Escape Artist/Dexterity*)
Flight	(Flight/Dexterity*)
Improvised Weaponry	Melee Combat (Dexterity*)
Long Jumping	Climbing/jumping (Strength*)
Martial Arts	Brawling (Strength*)
Maneuver	Maneuver (Dexterity*)
Mechanical Maneuver	Powersuit Operation (Mechanical*)
Melee Combat	Melee Combat (Dexterity*)
Melee Parry	Melee Parry (Dexterity*)
Running	Running (Dexterity*)
Stealth	Sneak (Perception*)
Swimming	Swimming (Strength*)
Unarmed Combat	Brawling (Strength*)
Unarmed Parry	Brawling Parry (Dexterity*)
DEXTERITY	
Energy Weapons	Blaster
Exotic Weapons	Lightsaber, Bowcaster
Fire Combat	Archaic Guns, Firearms
Gunnery	Vehicle Blasters, Capital Ship Gunnery, Starship Gunnery
Heavy Energy Weapons	Blaster Artillery
Heavy Weapons	(Heavy Weapons)
Lock Picking	Security (Technical*)
Missile Weapons	Bows, Missile Weapons
Prestidigitation	Pick Pocket

MasterBook Skill	D6 Skill Equivalent
Security	Security (Technical*)
Thrown Weapons	Thrown Weapons, Grenade
Vehicle Piloting	Archaic Starship Piloting, Capital Ship Piloting, Ground Vehicle Operation, Hover Vehicle Operation, Repulsorlift Operation, Space Transports, Starfighter Piloting, Swoop Operation, Walker Operation
ENDURANCE	
Resist Pain	Stamina (Strength*)
Resist Shock	Stamina (Strength*)
STRENGTH	
Lethal Strike	Strength*
Lifting	Lifting
INTELLECT	
Apportation	(Apportation/Knowledge*)
Camouflage	Hide (Perception*)
Cantrips	(Cantrips/Knowledge*)
Computer Hacking	Computer Programming/Repair (Technical*)
Computer Ops	Computer Programming/Repair (Technical*)
Counterfeiting	(Counterfeiting/Perception*)
Counter-Intelligence	(Counter-Intelligence/Knowledge*)
Data Analysis	(Data Analysis/Knowledge*)
Deduction	Search (Perception*)
Demolitions	Demolitions (Technical*)
Divination	(Divination/Knowledge*)
Espionage	(Espionage/Knowledge*)
First Aid	First Aid (Technical*)

D6 System Damage Chart

RANGED WEAPONS

Weapon	D6 Damage Value
Small Rock	STR+1
Throwing stars	STR+2
Throwing knife	STR+1D
Small slingshot	STR+1D+1
Sling, short bow	STR+1D+2
Medium bow, throwing axe	STR+2D
Composite bow	STR+2D+1
Long bow	STR+2D+2
Light crossbow	STR+3D
Heavy crossbow	STR+3D+1
Compound bow	STR+3D+2

ARMOR

Type	D6 Armor Add
Heavy "adventurer's clothing"	+1
Heavy furs	+2
Heavy padding, metallic woven fabric	+1D
Leather armor	+1D+1
Leather armor with metal links	+1D+2
Chain link, "light" bulletproof armor	+2D
Light Kevlar	+2D+1
Plate & chain armor, flak jacket	+2D+2
Plate mail, standard Kevlar	+3D
Plate armor, Kevlar ceramic	+3D+1

MasterBook/D6 Skill Conversion

MasterBook Skill	D6 Skill Equivalent
Forgery	*Forgery* (Perception*)
Inventor	(*Inventor*/Knowledge*)
Journalism	(*Journalism*/Knowledge*)
Linguistics	(*Linguistics*/Knowledge*)
Navigation	*Astrogation* (Mechanical*)
Perception	*Investigation* (Perception*)
Performance Arts	(*Performance Arts*/Knowledge*)
Photography	(*Photography*/Knowledge*)
Psionic Manipulation	(*Psionic Manipulation*/Knowledge*)
Radio Ops	*Communications* (Mechanical*)
Safe-Cracking	*Security* (Technical*)
Science	*Sensors, Capital Ship Shields, Starship Shields, Computer Programming/Repair, Droid Programming, Droid Repair, Armor Repair, Blaster Repair, Capital Starship Weapon Repair, Starship Weapon Repair*
Smuggling	*Business* (Knowledge*)
Super-Science	(*Super-Science*/Technical*)
Teaching	(*Teaching*/Perception*)
Tracking	*Search* (Perception*)
Trick	*Con* (Perception*)
Vehicle Mechanic	*Capital Starship Repair, Ground Vehicle Repair, Hover Vehicle Repair, Repulsorlift Repair, Space Transports Repair, Starfighter Repair, Walker Repair*

MasterBook Skill	D6 Skill Equivalent
MIND	
Artist	(*Artist*/Knowledge*)
Bureaucracy	*Bureaucracy* (Knowledge*)
Business	*Business* (Knowledge*)
Conjuration	(*Conjuration*/Knowledge*)
Hypnotism	(*Hypnotism*/Knowledge*)
Language	*Languages* (Knowledge*)
Medicine	*Medicine* (Technical*)
Research	(*Research*/Perception*)
Scholar	*Alien Species, Cultures, Law Enforcement, Planetary Systems, Value* (Knowledge*)
CONFIDENCE	
Alteration	(*Alteration*/Knowledge*)
Con	*Con* (Perception*)
Curse	(*Curse*/Knowledge*)
Faith	(*Faith*/Perception*)
Interrogation	(*Interrogation*/Perception*)
Intimidation	*Intimidation* (Knowledge*)
Psychology	(*Psychology*/Knowledge*)
Streetwise	*Streetwise* (Knowledge*)
Survival	*Survival* (Knowledge*)
Willpower	*Willpower* (Knowledge*)
CHARISMA	
Charm	(*Charm*/Perception*)
Disguise	*Con* (Perception*)
Persuasion	*Persuasion* (Perception*)
Summoning	(*Summoning*/Knowledge*)
Taunt	(*Taunt*/Perception*)

MasterBook™
D6 SYSTEM

Character Name: _____
Type: _____
Gender/Species: _____
Age: _____ **Height:** _____ **Weight:** _____
Physical Description: _____
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Dexterity _____
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Perception _____
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Equipment: _____
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Knowledge _____
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Strength _____
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Background: _____
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Mechanical _____
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Technical _____
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Personality: _____
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Objectives: _____
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Special Abilities
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Move _____
Force Sensitive? _____
Force Points _____
Dark Side Points _____
Character Points _____

A Quote: _____
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Connection With Characters: _____
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Wound Status
☐ Stunned
☐ Wounded
☐ Incapacitated
☐ Mortally Wounded

CRYPTIC CAMPAIGNS

by Steven Brown and Mike Montesa

Greetings, fright-fans! It's time for another terror tour through my cozy Crypt. Tired of one-fright stands? Ready for a creepy campaign? Then this is the "diebrary" book for you! Hehehehehehe! It's filled with all sorts of fearsome facts on character cremation ... er, creation ..., sinister settings, a "gamemonster scream" and a full-length screamfest called "Check Out Time." Read this book, and you'll never want to leave the Crypt again!

Cryptic Campaigns features details on settings and tones for your Tales From The Crypt episodes, optional rules for "Tragic Flaws" and "Hidden Agendas," adventure hooks, a new full-length adventure, and a fold out "gamemonster scream" (um, that's gamemaster screen).

Cryptic Campaigns is a supplement for The World of Tales From The Crypt. You must have the WorldBook and the MasterBook to use this book.