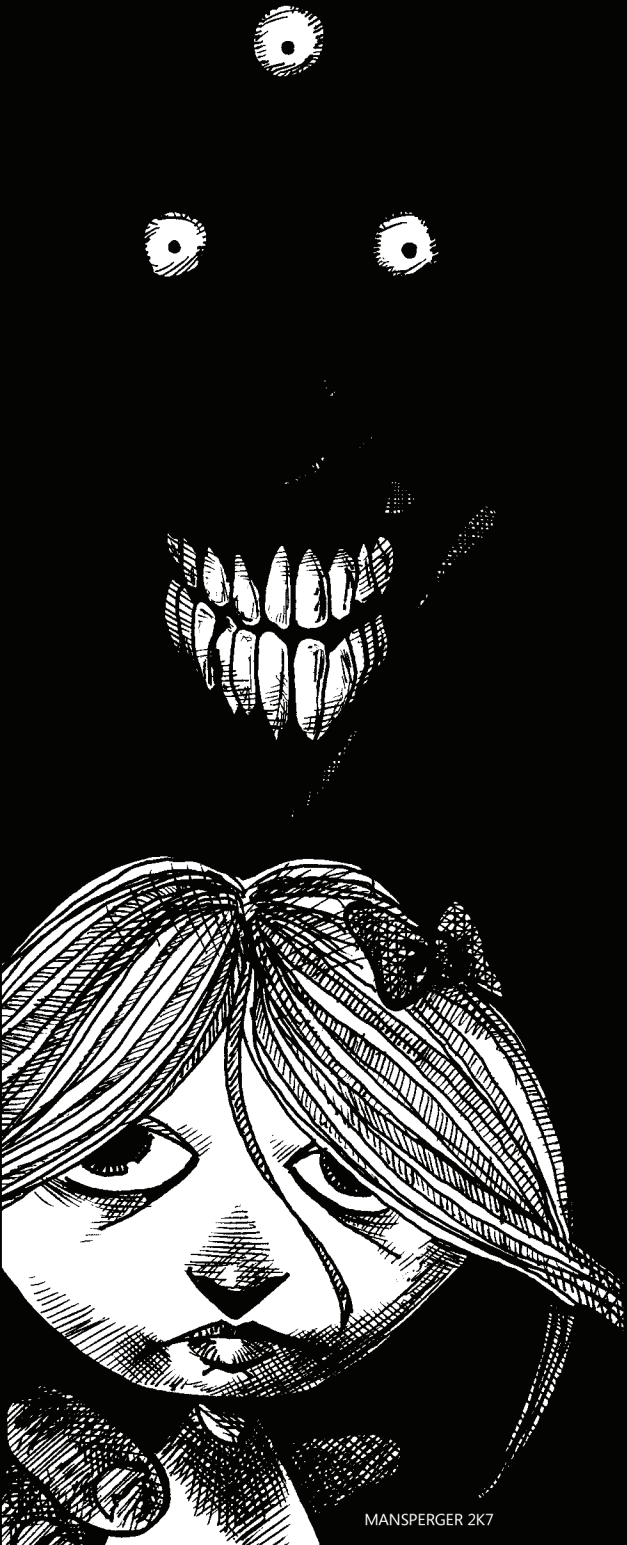


# MONSTERS

and Other Childish Things



A Distressingly Fun Roleplaying Game  
by Benjamin Baugh



# MONSTERS

and Other Childish Things

*Monsters and Other Childish Things* is a roleplaying game based on Arc Dream Publishing's *WILD TALENTS: Superhero Roleplaying in a World Gone Mad*. Written by Benjamin Baugh, © 2007. Illustrated by Robert Mansperger, © 2007. "Madison's Doodles" by Rebecca Ivey, © 2007. Edited by Kevin Pezzano. Copy editing and page design by Shane Ivey. The One-Roll Engine is © Greg Stolze. *Wild Talents* is © Dennis Detwiller and Greg Stolze. All rights reserved.

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Special thanks to our playtest GMs and all their players: Daniel Bayn, Clifford Morton, Hobbie Regan, Rowdy Scarlett and Simon Stroud.

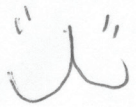
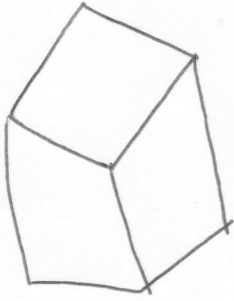
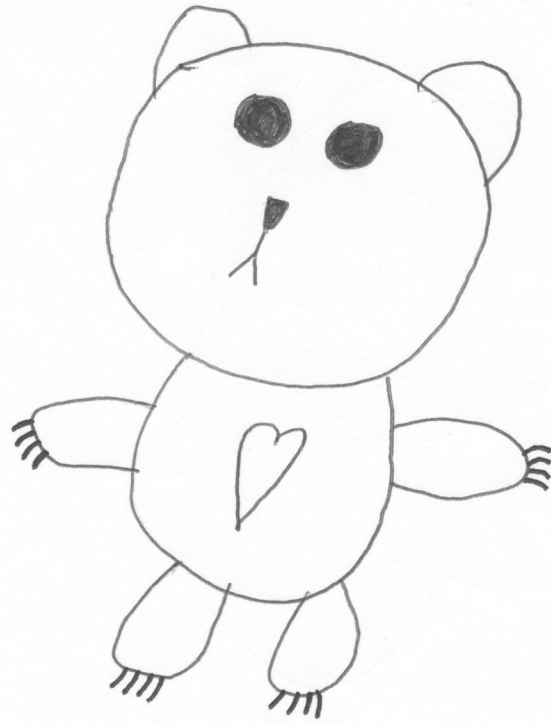
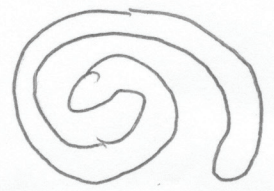
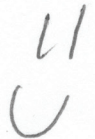
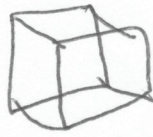
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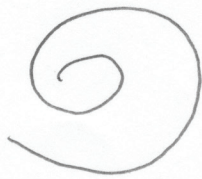
# CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1	<b>Everybody Else</b> .....	22
What Do I Need To Play? .....	1	Administrator .....	22
Thanks Where It's Due .....	2	Bully .....	22
<b>Characters</b> .....	2	Cop .....	23
Stats and Skills .....	2	Your Crush .....	23
Rolling Dice .....	2	Drunken Clown .....	23
Relationships: The Ties That Bind .....	3	Fashion Nazi .....	23
Character Creation Summary .....	4	Gang Banger .....	24
Character Creation Example .....	4	Geek .....	24
Group Creation .....	5	Gym Coach .....	25
<b>Conflict</b> .....	5	Hood .....	25
Conflict Rounds .....	5	Janitor .....	25
Hit 'Location' .....	5	Jock .....	26
Dodging and Defending .....	5	Older Brother .....	26
Damage: Shocks and Scars .....	6	O'Malley the Anti-Drug Dog .....	26
Running Away .....	7	Parent .....	27
A Conflict Example .....	7	Paparazzi .....	27
<b>Monsters</b> .....	8	Random Crazy .....	27
The Basics .....	9	Teacher .....	28
Monster Bonding .....	9	Trenchcoat Mafioso .....	28
Building Your Very Own Monster .....	10	Younger Sister .....	29
When Monsters Fight People .....	12	<b>Campaign Jumpstart: Welcome to Pluto</b> .....	29
When Monsters Fight Monsters .....	13	<b>Campaign Jumpstart: The XMFL</b> .....	30
Yummy, Yummy Relationships .....	13	<b>Campaign Jumpstart: Ugly Secrets</b> .....	31
Monster Creation Example .....	13	<b>Being Somebody: Play-Ready Characters</b> .....	32
Kicking Butt and Taking Names .....	14	Tommy Mezlowski .....	32
<b>Character Advancement</b> .....	15	Madison Kate Sinclair-Stevenson .....	33
<b>The Janitor's Closet: Junk for GMs</b> .....	15	Ralph 'Dog' Jones .....	35
<b>Grade Level</b> .....	15	Lucy Awai .....	36
Elementary School .....	16	Daniel Jackstone .....	37
Junior High .....	16	<b>Kids, Monsters and Wild Talents</b> .....	38
High School .....	16	Optional Rules .....	38
<b>Antagonists</b> .....	16	Characters .....	38
The Creepy Guy .....	16	Monsters .....	38
The Excruciators .....	17	<b>One-Roll Gadgets</b> .....	39
Mad Science Teacher .....	19	Interpersonal Conflict Generator .....	39
M.I.B. .....	20	One-Roll Monster Summoning .....	40
A Wizard (Wannabe) .....	21		

yoggie



yoggie



Madison



Madison





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## Introduction

*Monsters and Other Childish Things* is a roleplaying game about kids with pet monsters. Like childhood, its tone is intended to be in parts whimsical and horrific.

Kids from age ten up to early teens find themselves bonded to horrors from beyond time and space who want to be their friends, play fun games, and devour the souls of their enemies.

The adult world is still reeling from the revelation of monsters, and many can't help wondering, "Why now?"

But while it's about kids, this game isn't really meant to be played by kids. Gamer kids could totally handle the mechanics, but I think mostly adults will appreciate the gallows humor and the occasional grownup themes.

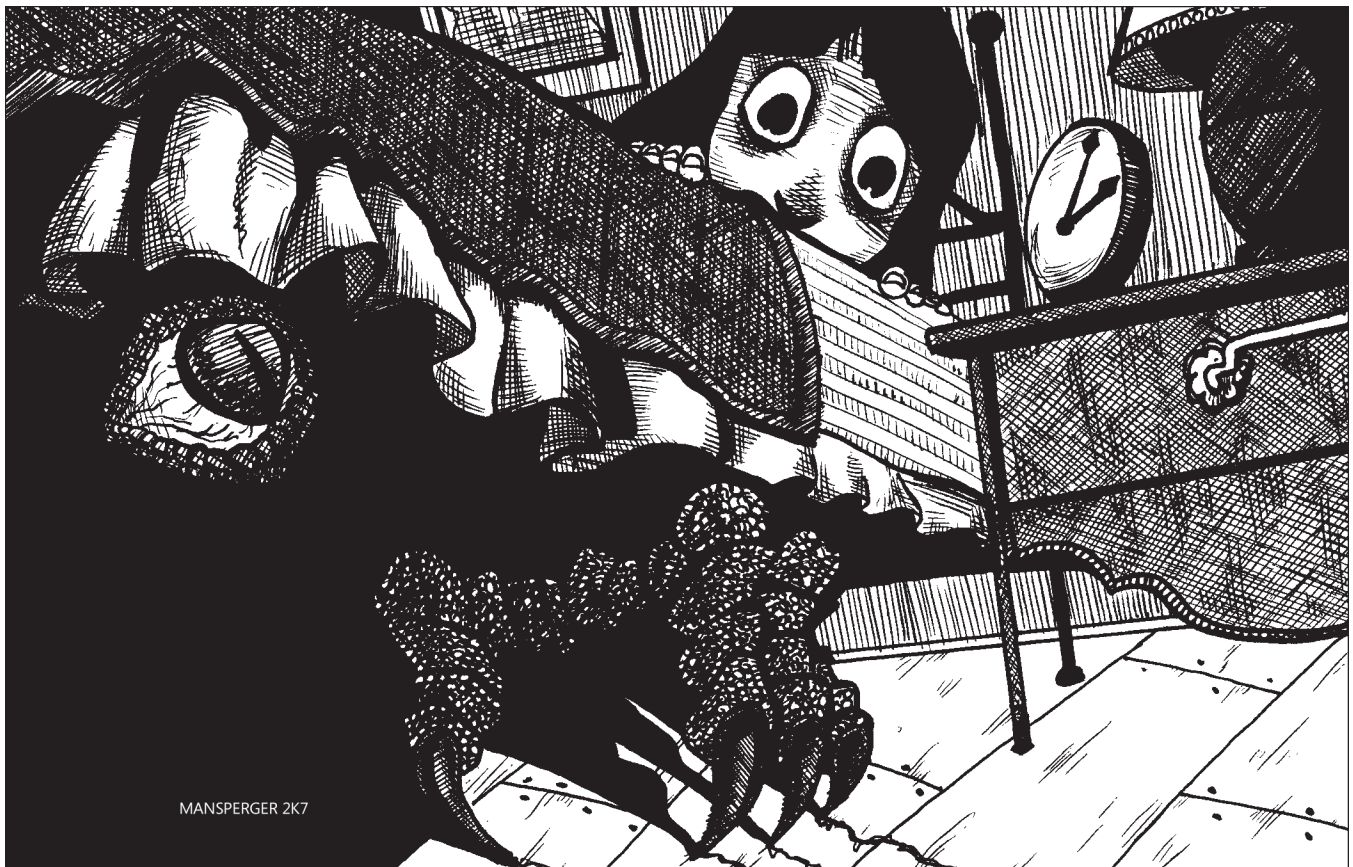
## What Do I Need To Play?

You need access to a full and proper One-Roll Engine (ORE) game to get the most out of *Monsters and Other Childish Things*.

It is based primarily on *Wild Talents*, a superhero game that does a lot more than superheroes, but without too much squinting and head-scratching you could use *God-like*, *Nemesis*, or Greg Stolze's *Reign*.

If you use *Reign*, you'll also get a shiny gold star for incorporating organizations and companies into your *Monsters* game—gangs, clubs, school government, and so on.

Beyond that, you just need all the rest of the things you'd need for an ORE game: a pile of 10-sided dice, paper, pencils, and friends.



# Thanks Where It's Due

Thanks to my wife Sarah, who puts up with my crap.  
Thanks to my daughter Adeline, who was willing to sleep strapped to my chest while I wrote the bulk of this.

Thanks to Shane Ivey and Dennis Detwiller for busting their humps making *Wild Talents* live.

Thanks to Greg Stolze, who designed the One-Roll En-

gine game system, which never fails to lure out the system monkey in me like a whole bunch of golden ripe bananas.

Thanks to Robert Mansperger, who worked his magic on this and whose style now illustrates my brain (replacing Edward Gorey, whose illustrations I originally imagined).

And thanks to Kevin Pezzano, who did a masterful job of keeping me from looking like a jerk with my editing and organization.

## CHARACTERS

Characters in *Monsters and Other Childish Things* are pretty simple. They have stats, they have skills, and—most important of all—they have Relationships. Of course, they also have monsters. We'll create them later on.

### Stats and Skills

If you don't know what stats and skills are, take a second and read about them in the ORE game of your choice.

Stats are broad capabilities, the *kinds* of things you're good at. Skills are more specialized things you actually know how to do. Each stat and skill gets a rating in dice.

Kids have the following stats: Feet, Guts, Hands, Attention and Wits. Each stat starts at 1 die, and you have 10 more stat dice to put where you like.

Under each stat, you've got some skills. Each skill starts at zero, but you have 15 skill dice to put where you like.

No single stat or skill have more than five dice.

As in other ORE games, roll dice equal to your STAT + SKILL to do something—so if you want to climb a tree, roll your Feet dice and your P.E. dice together. But see *Relationships* (page 3) for ways to get more lovely dice.

### Feet

Moving your whole body without looking like a dork.

**P.E.:** Running, jumping, climbing trees.

**Kicking:** Putting the sneaker where it'll do the most good.

**Dodging:** Getting out of the way.

### Special and Unique Snowflakes

You've just got to be different and special, eh? Well, if there's something you want to be good at that doesn't fall under the normal skills, just ask the GM if you can make up a new one.

It's totally cool to have a kid with Mad L33T Hacking Skillz, or one who knows how to Skin a Buck. Maybe one who's Got a Learner's Permit and can sometimes swipe his Mom's keys would be useful in a game.

Or if you're trying to be totally goth, Dark Secrets of the Elder Gods might come in handy. Rather than writing "Mrs. Randy McNuttly" over and over on your Civics notebook, you can write the seventeen forbidden names of Shug-Ligo'wa the Wetter of Beds.

### Guts

How tough and dogged you are. Also, the most likely place someone's going to punch you.

**Wind:** Health, breath, and fitness.

**Courage:** Standing up to bullies and Eldritch Horrors from Beyond Space and Time.

**Wrestling:** Grabbing hold and squeezing and not letting go till the other guys says you're the boss of him.

### Hands

Your fine dexterity and movement, so you don't pick your eye instead of your nose.

**Shop:** Working with your hands.

**Punching:** Socking 'em in the chops.

**Blocking:** Using a thing to stop a thing from hitting you in the thing.

### Attention

How much of what you see and hear actually gets through your skull.

**Out-Think:** Brains instead of brawn.

**Remember:** Book learnin' and keeping up with details.

**Notice:** Spotting both the forest *and* the trees, and the squirrels and the Bigfoots, too.

### Wits

How cool, clever, and sneaky you can be. Everyone loves a smart-aleck.

**Charm:** Winning friends and influencing teachers.

**Putdown:** Ragging on the other guy's mom.

**Connive:** Lying and other vitally-deceptive kid skills.

### Rolling Dice

Dice are rolled according to the ORE standard described in *Wild Talents*, pages 8 through 12. Add the values of a stat and a skill together and roll that number of dice. Look for matching dice in the roll.

So if you need to remember what the weird kid at the mall was wearing and you have 3d in Attention and 2d in Notice, you'd add them together and roll five dice.

### Width and Height

If any of the dice come up matching each other—a pair of fives, maybe, or three ones—you succeed. If not, you fail.



The number of dice that come up with the same value is called the width of the roll. If you roll three five's, for instance, that's a width of three.

The value of the dice that match each other is called the height of the roll. So with those three fives, the height is five.

We abbreviate rolls as WIDTH x HEIGHT, so three fives are 3x5. A pair of eights would be 2x8. No, that's not multiplication. It just means "three by five" or "two by eight."

Width usually indicates speed and (for physical actions like fighting) raw power. Height usually indicates quality, accuracy and finesse. So if one player rolls 3x5 and the other rolls 2x8, the player with the width 3 would go first, but the player with the height 8 would act with more accuracy and subtlety.

Which is more important, width or height? That depends on the circumstances. If you're in a race at a track meet, width is most important because width means speed. If you're in a race across a junk yard, height is important, too, because the GM will probably say that if your roll's height is too low you trip over some garbage.

Width and height are each other's tiebreakers. If height is the same, use width as the tiebreaker. If width is the same, use height as the tiebreaker. If they're both the same, use the total number of dice in the dice pools as the tiebreaker. If those are the same, too, it's up to the GM.

## When to Roll and What to Roll

As a tip for the GM, it's usually a good idea to require a roll only if an action sounds really tricky. If you think an ordinary kid could do it without too much trouble, don't bother asking for a roll, because it'll just annoy everyone if the roll fails.

A final note: You never roll more than 10 dice. If you have more than that in a dice pool for some reason, you can use the excess dice to offset circumstances that cause you to lose dice, but you can't actually roll more than 10.

## Relationships: The Ties That Bind

Even isolated malcontents have relationships of a sort. It's wired in—well, wired into most people—to form ties with others. Channels of emotional reciprocity. Empathy. Anticipation.

Monsters really love this about humans—especially kids—because to a monster, a relationship is like a chocolate and meth milkshake. It energizes them, makes them powerful, feeds them up nice and plump. Monsters *eat* relationships.

A relationship is dice pool that describes a personal attachment to something or someone, like "Dad 3," with three dice, or "Jenny 2" with two dice, or "My Blankie 5" with five dice. You can have a relationship with anything, as long as you can imagine just how that relationship might work.

## Adding Relationship Dice

Kids really benefit from Relationships, because if motivated by one they can use the Relationship score to bulk

out their generally puny dice pools. If a Relationship would somehow improve your odds of success, you can add some or all of your Relationship dice to your dice pool before rolling. If you're in a fight, you'll probably hit a lot harder when someone is ragging on your Mom (4d).

There's a risk, though. When you put your heart on your sleeve, someone's going to knock it off, kick dirt on it, and then shove it down your throat.

If, even with the Relationship dice added in, you still fail your roll, then your Relationship takes a Shock. A Shock is a special kind of hit that a Relationship takes—it's not the same as the Shock damage that characters take when they get punched.

Each Shock reduces your Relationship by one die, indicating tension, resentment or something else. This colors how you interact with the object of your relationship, and how he/she/it interacts with you.

A Relationship that's been Shocked is tense, and everyone involved knows it. One that's Shocked down to nothing is in real Crisis, and you need to do something about it immediately or it'll go south fast, causing the Relationship to become permanently weakened.

You can get dice back in a Shocked relationship, but it takes some work.

## Quality Time

Dealing with a Shocked relationship requires you to do something to fix the problem: Quality Time. You have to take active steps to make things better. You think your Mom is going to apologize to you? Ha! It's all on you to make it OK again.

You can call for a scene where you can address problems in your Relationships whenever you like, or seize the opportunity if an appropriate scene happens to pop up during the game. The GM will try and work the scene into any big plot he has going on.

Quality Time requires a dice roll with a difficulty equal to 4+X, where X is the number of Shocked dice that have been done to that Relationship. That means if you have three Shocked dice, you roll at difficulty 7: Your roll's height must be 7 or higher to succeed.

If your Quality Time roll succeeds, your Relationship gains width in dice back—so if you roll a 2x5, you get back two Relationship dice. But you can't increase the Relationship beyond what it was before you messed it up. To do that you need character advancement (see page 15).

## Which Roll?

The stat and skill you use for this roll depends on the Relationship and the actions you take to try and heal it. Throwing the ball around with Dad might require a Feet + P.E. roll, while playing poker with your amiable drunk uncle might be Wits + Connive.

The only restriction is that you can't use the same stat + skill pool twice in a row when using Quality Time. Each attempt to recover dice in the Relationship requires a different stat + skill.

## Dynamic Rolls

Sometimes the Quality Time roll is a dynamic contest, not just an ordinary roll. That means someone or something is actively trying to keep you from fixing the Relationship. Maybe your no-good stepsister wants Dad all to herself and tries to pin the blame on you for a broken car windshield, or the meanest kid in school tries to grab and steal your blankie before you and it can get away for some Quality Time.

If it's a dynamic contest, the enemy rolls against your Quality Time roll—the stepsister rolls Wits + Connive, maybe, or the mean kid rolls Guts + Wrestling. If they win, you fail.

In this case, the dice pool that opposes you gets bonus dice equal to the number of Shocked dice in your Relationship. The upside in this case is that you get the *un*-Shocked dice in the Relationship as a bonus to your own roll.

## Relationships in Crisis

Handling a Crisis is more involved, and generally it's the center of several scenes during one session, or spread out across several sessions.

To knock a Relationship out of Crisis, you have to accumulate a total width on related rolls equal to the full value of the Relationship. That gets you one die back and your Relationship is no longer in Crisis.

So if your relationship has 5d, you need to make enough successful rolls to rack up 5 width to get back one die and get it out of Crisis.

After you recover that first die, you can then regular use Quality Time to build it back up to its original value (but no higher).

You can make as many rolls as you want to try and fix things, but be extra careful: Each failed roll during an attempt to restore a Relationship in Crisis *permanently* knocks a die off that Relationship.

Even Quality Time isn't enough to fix such a damaged relationship. The only way to restore these lost dice is with hard-won advancement (page 15).

So how do you do Quality Time if you have a relationship with an inanimate object? An organization? An ideal? Someone who doesn't even know you like them? Well, sometimes by just getting involved and working to support the thing; other times, by being super-creepy. After all, a stalker can have some QT with the object of his obsession by going through their trash or watching them with binoculars.

Relationships don't have to be *healthy*.

## Relationships and Monsters

Remember how I said monsters eat relationships? That wasn't a metaphor.

You can "loan" any Relationship other than the one with your monster *to your monster* if you want, letting the creature add those dice to its pools.

This lets your monster kick more butt and take more names, but there's a risk: The loaned relationship take

damage before your monster does, resulting in a Shocked relationship. If you let your monster suck on the silly straw of your psyche this way, you can expect it to come back at you as personal trouble, family problems, and/or emotional isolation.

Worse, if your monster gets PWZN3D during the battle, the winning monster might decide to sink its hooks into your soul and use your own Relationships later on to help it fight better.

On the upside, your monster can do the same thing to other kids. Sigh. Children can be so cruel.

You have six dice of Relationships when you start out, and also have one die for free with your monster, which is what we call a monster bond. See below for more on Bonding with your monster.

See page 12 for details on conflicts, monsters, and the horrible things you can do to people you beat up.

## Character Creation Summary

Didn't I tell you characters were pretty simple?

**Step 1: Name and Stuff.** Come up with a Name, an Age, your Favorite Thing, a Bad Thing You Did, and a Good Thing You Did. This stuff should help you zoom in on your character a little.

**Step 2: Stats.** Your stats each start at 1, and you have 10 dice to divide up between them (up to 5d in any one).

**Step 3: Skills.** Your skills each start at 0, and you have 15 dice to divide up between them (up to 5d in any one).

**Step 4: Relationships.** You have six dice to divide up between your Relationships (up to 5d in any one) and one die free in your monster bond.

**Step 5: Monster.** See *Monsters* (page 8) for how to create your very own Unspeakable Fiend—I mean, *Friend*.

## Character Creation Example

I start with an image of a kid with hair in his eyes, a stocking cap, and a leather jacket too big for him. The jacket belonged to his brother Peter, who got killed in Iraq. The kid is 12, and his name is Benny McAlyster.

Benny's Favorite Thing is monster trucks. He has a huge poster of Grave Digger over his bed. One day, he wants to drive monster trucks himself. Once, he helped beat up a kid he was friends with because he wanted the class bully to like him.

But Benny's basically a good kid. He helped take care of his grandma when she got Alzheimer's and had to move in with his family.

Benny is a quick thinker, but socially awkward. He's awesome at PlayStation but sucks at sports. In a pinch, though, he's learned to be brave, and in a fight he grabs hold and won't let go.

Last year he found a giant talking crocodile in the bathtub, and has since become fast friends with the monster he calls Mr. Crocker.

## Stats & Skills

**Feet** 1 (Dodging +2).

**Guts** 4 (Courage +2, Wrestling +2).

**Hands** 4 (Blocking +1, Punching +1).

**Attention** 4 (Out-Think +4, Remember +1, Notice +1).

**Wits** 2 (Connive +1).

## Relationships

Mom and Dad 1, Gran-Gran 2, Peter McAlyster 2, Mr. Crocker 2\*.

\* *This is Benny's Bonding score with Mr. Crocker. See **Monster Bonding** on page 9 for what this means.*

# CONFLICT

Attacking, defending, and running away. It's going to happen. You're going to say the wrong thing, or someone else is, and then everything is going to go pear-shaped. In fact, pear-in-a-blender shaped.

When just getting along just doesn't work, you're going to have to put the hurt down on someone and keep them from putting the hurt down on you.

## Conflict Rounds

Conflict is resolved in rounds. Each round lasts two or three seconds, long enough for everybody involved to do at least one thing.

Each round of conflict works like this.

**1) Declare:** Everybody says what they want to do in order of lowest Attention + Out-Thinking pool to highest. What they declare gives all characters their dice pools. To do two or more things at once, drop one die per extra thing, and hope for more than one match. If this uses more than one stat+skill combo, then use the lowest dice pool before dropping dice.

**2) Roll:** Roll dice and identify matches. If you need more dice now, you can tap a Relationship and throw those dice, trying to match them to what you've already rolled. If you roll more than one set of matching dice, choose now which to use.

**3) Resolve:** From highest width to lowest, resolve the results. Attacks either inflict damage or impose a condition on the other guy (such as holding him immobile). If you take damage before you resolve your action, you lose a die from your best set. If this breaks the set so it's no longer a match, your action fails.

## Hit 'Location'

Each stat links to a general hit location, indicated by the height of an attack roll. Reduce your dice in that stat by the width of the attack roll. A two-die hit to the Hands subtracts two dice from your Hands score until you heal,

## Group Creation

Here's an option to help a group of player characters get quickly intermeshed with each other's lives. When you create characters, hold back two Relationship dice until everyone's character is created and statted out.

Now, have everyone look over the other characters' Relationships and pick one or two to link to their own characters by assigning those last two Relationship dice to those same things. For instance, two characters can both have Relationships with the same parent or toy.

These dice can also be assigned directly to Relationships with the other characters.

reducing your dice pool for Hands-related activities.

**Feet:** Height 1 or 2.

**Guts:** Height 3 through 6.

**Hands:** Height 7 or 8.

**Attention:** Height 9.

**Wits:** Height 10.

Getting hit in the "Hands" isn't exactly the same as being hit in the arm as in *Wild Talents* and other ORE games. Instead it means your manual dexterity has been hurt in some way, which could mean a punch in the arm, but doesn't have to. What takes the hit is your *capability*, rather than damage boxes.

This keeps things simple, which is always good, but it also is supposed to encourage you to diversify your character a bit. Each stat has a skill under it which is useful in a scrap, and if your Feet get knocked out from under you, then it's *Handy* (get it?) to be good at Punching.

Oh, and if you want to make a called shot against a specific location, that's simple. Just drop a die from your dice pool, and set a second one to the location you want to hit. Roll the rest and look for a match.

## Dodging and Defending

Every attack roll assumes that the target doesn't want to get hit. The other guy is blocking, ducking, and generally trying to not be hurt. That's why you have to roll to hit.

But if you're desperate—and for some reason you can't just turn and run—you can devote an entire action to avoiding attacks.

Roll the dice pool that you're using to defend yourself. Usually it's Feet + Dodging, but it might be Guts + Wrestling if you're in a wrestling match, or whatever else is appropriate.

If your roll succeeds, each die in the defense action's set can neutralize or "gobble" any attack die *from a set that has an equal or lower width and height*. If the attack set no longer has matching dice, it misses.

Let's take that apart. First off, look at your defense roll's

width. Is it at least as wide as the attack you're trying to avoid? If not, the attack goes before you can duck.

If your width is at least as wide as the attack roll, then look at your roll's height. If your defense roll's width and height both match or beat the attacker's width and height, then every die of your set "gobbles" up a die in the attacker's set.

So if your Feet+Dodging roll is 2x9 and the other guy's Hands+Punching roll is 2x7, you can use one of your two nines to neutralize one of his sevens. A 1x7 is not a match, so his punch swings wide.

Even better, you can divide your defense dice among multiple sets this way, so a good defense roll can sometimes protect you from two or more good attack rolls.

## The Flinch

If the width of your defense roll is equal to or greater than the attacker but your roll's height isn't good enough, your defense was fast but not quite skillful enough—you get a flinch. A flinch lets you change the location the other guy hits, shifting it up or down a number of steps based on the difference in the width.

So if you roll a 4x7 and the other guy rolls a 2x9, you can't totally stop his attack but you can shift the location up or down by two steps. Instead of taking the damage to Attention you can take it to Hands, Guts or Head, whichever you prefer.

This gives you some options; you can't avoid the punch, but you can decide how you get hurt.

## Damage: Shocks and Scars

Damage comes in two flavors: Shocking and Scarring. Shock damage is kind of like the Shock that Relationships can take, but it hurts your stats.

**Shock** damage messes you up temporarily. It hurts, but you get over it pretty quickly.

Attacks that inflict **scar** damage are *serious*. Physically scarring attacks make you bleed or break your bones, and you'll wind up in the hospital if you don't wind up dead. Emotionally scarring attacks leave you a wreck for a long time. Usually it's better to run away than take scars which will permanently mess you up.

Of course, sometimes the mean guy with the chainsaw and the mask made out of puppies won't give you that choice.

## Taking Damage

Attacks in *Monsters and Other Childish Things* inflict **width minus 1 (width – 1)** in damage.

Subtract the damage directly from the stat score of the hit location indicated by the height of the roll. If a stat is reduced to zero dice, then damage rolls up or down into an adjacent hit location (attacker's choice).

If a stat is reduced to zero dice by any kind of damage, you can still use skills associated with that stat.

However, when any three of your stats get reduced to zero by Shock damage—or when even a single stat is reduced to zero by Scarring damage—you have to make a Guts + Courage roll. If that fails, you immediately and automatically do one of three things: You completely freak out and start yelling and hitting everyone who gets in your way, or you run for it, or you curl up into a little ball and wait for the bad people to go away. Your choice.

If you want to fight, run, or defend while making this roll to avoid freaking out, it counts as multiple actions.

Incidentally, normal folks—people who don't have pet monsters—have to make the freakout roll any time they see a monster attack, whether or not it's attacking them. At the GM's discretion, some norms might see enough monster violence that the roll isn't required for them anymore.

If you run out of *all dice* from *every stat* due to Shock damage, or a mix of Shock and Scars, you're out of the fight and useless for the rest of the scene, either out cold or too traumatized to do anything useful.

If you totally run out of stat dice due to Scarring damage—even emotional Scarring damage—you're comatose and *you will die* unless you get some help *soon*.

## Recovering from Damage

All but one die of Shock damage returns to every stat after the scene is over. The remaining die lost to Shock returns after you have at least an hour or two to rest, recover and catch your breath.

Scarring damage does not recover at all until you get professional attention. If you're well cared for, you heal one die a week. However, one of the dice lost to Scarring does not recover at all—it's just gone. You can get it back only by character advancement (page 15).

Worse, if your stat gets knocked down to 0 dice by nothing but Scars, it is permanently weakened. This reduces the

### Things That Shock

- Being really really scared.
- Being punched and kicked.
- Falling down stairs.
- Being really told off by a teacher in front of the class.
- Non-monster attacks against monsters (up to and including nukes).
- Monster attacks against monsters and their kids.

### Things That Scar

- Being terrified out of your mind.
- Being shot or stabbed.
- Falling through a plate glass window.
- Being ritually and publicly tormented and mocked by a teacher for months.
- Monster attacks against everyone except monsters and their kids.



maximum possible value of that stat, even with character advancement, by one die.

For example, if a single Scarring attack took you down to 0 Hands, then the most you can *ever* have in Hands from then on would be 4 rather than 5.

## Sticks, Stones and Words

You can attack with your Putdown skill as easily as your Fists by ripping someone apart verbally. Emotional attacks always inflict Shock damage, unless you have some kind of serious edge—a terribly dirty secret you can slam on the victim, say—that makes it a Scarring attack.

Using a real weapon—hitting someone in the head with a branch or a backpack full of books—gives you a bonus to damage. Generally this tops out at around +3—let's say +1 for a stick, +2 for a really stout stick, +3 for a lead pipe.

Dangerous things like knives, guns, lead pipes, protractor needles and whatnot can both increase your damage *and* make that damage Scarring instead of Shocking.

But for the most part, fights between kids aren't too mad-crazy-lethal. After all, why have a monster if not to festoon the room with the entrails of your enemies? Pity the fool that brings a knife to a gunfight or a gun to a monsterfight.

## Running Away

How do you know when a fight is over? It is over when you give up or when you can't go on. You can quit a fight any

time you like, but the other guy gets a free attack on you if you turn your back on him to make a run for it.

To run away, you have to make a Feet+Dodge roll, taking any additional damage from your opponent's free attack before you leg it. If you fail the roll, you take the hit and you're still in the fight whether you like it or not.

## A Conflict Example

Benny has been trying to find out who spray-painted "coward" on his brother's gravestone—that's the brother who got killed in Iraq, remember—and who's been spreading rumors at school that he got shot in the back because he was running away.

After putting the pieces together, he discovers it's a kid named Tommy, the brother of the girl Benny's been crushing on all year.

Benny spots Tommy at the Pizzarama bowling alley. He says, "Why'd you do that to my brother's grave? That's so not cool!" And Tommy answers, "Because — hey, it's Principal Anders." And Benny says, "What? Where?" And Tommy says, "Punch!" The fight is on, and both their monsters spring into action, tangling up as the boys roll around on the floor.

## Round 1

*Everyone declares:*

Benny's Attention + Out-Thinking is 8.

Tommy's Attention + Out-Thinking is 4.





Tommy has to declare his actions first, then his monster Flytrap Joe, then Benny, and then Benny's monster Mr. Crocker. They declare these actions:

Tommy: "I'm going to rag on his dead brother some more, attacking with Wits + Putdown. Flytrap Joe's going to wrap Mr. Crocker up in his awesome seven-dice Strangling Vines."

Benny: "I'm going to grab Tommy's head and make him shut his stupid mouth with a Guts + Wrestling attack. Mr. Crocker's going to bounce out of the way of the vines with an eight-dice defensive Bouncy Gait action."

*Everyone rolls:*

Tommy rolls eight dice, resulting in a 3x8.

Benny rolls six dice, resulting in a 2x7.

Flytrap Joe rolls six dice, setting one more to 10 before rolling the rest (he has a special monster quality that lets him do this), but he still doesn't get a match.

Mr. Crocker rolls eight dice, getting 3x6.

*Resolution:*

Tommy's insults hit home hard, making Benny feel sick and shamed, and inflicting 2 Shock damage against his Guts (taking it down to 2).

Since Benny took damage he loses a die from his set, which breaks it. His attack fails.

Mr. Crocker's defensive move is nice and fast, but Flytrap Joe missed him so it doesn't really matter.

Flytrap's attack misses the bouncing crocodile. The GM says the vines wrap around a pinball machine and crush it instead.

## Round 2

*Everyone declares:*

Tommy: "I'm going to keep on until he starts to cry,

so I'm attacking with Wits + Putdown again. Flytrap Joe's going to try and take a bite out of Mr. Crocker with his Flytrap Jaws, rolling eight dice."

Benny: "I'm going to add my relationship with my brother to my pool, and make a called shot with Hands + Punching to sock Tommy in the jaw. I drop a die, set another to 10, and then roll the other six hoping for a 10.

"Oh, and I'll give Mr. Crocker my relationship with Mom and Dad to jack him up, because they loved my brother, too. He's going to bite the motherlovin' crap out of Flytrap with his Hungry Jaws."

*Everyone rolls:*

Tommy rolls eight dice again, resulting in a 2x3.

Benny rolls six dice, resulting in a 2x10! With the pre-set 10, this is now 3x10.

Flytrap Joe rolls eight dice, getting 2x5.

Mr. Crocker rolls seven dice, setting one to 7 before rolling the rest, and rolls 2x7, for 3x7 total. And Crocker's Hungry Jaws are so wicked fast they get +2 width to see who goes first, so it goes on width 5 instead of width 3!

*Resolution:*

Mr. Crocker snaps his Hungry Jaws like lightning as the Flytrap tries to bite, and shows the vegetable what real biting is all about. He bites Joe real bad. In addition to being fast, Crocker's Hungry Jaws do +1 damage, so with his width of three he smiles and swallows three dice worth of Flytrap Jaws.

Benny's 3x10 hits Tommy like a bowling ball to the head. Whack! Tommy takes two points of Shock damage to his precious Wits, and loses a die from his own set, causing it to fail.

"Your bother was a *SMACK* groogmnop!"

The big fight continues.

# MONSTERS

They're big, they're scary, they're clawed, they're hairy, and they're sneaking up right behind yooooooooo.

Monsters.

It's what you've been wanting to hear about since you started reading this thing.

Have you ever secretly wanted to be best friends with a magical unicorn? His name would be Dewdrop, and he would talk to you with his thoughts, and he would carry you on his back away from bullies and parents and kids who don't get you, and you'd have such wonderful adventures!

It's pretty much just like that—except if you draw Dewdrop on your Trapper Keeper they would send you to the principal's office, then to the school counselor, and then perhaps to a place with a name like Morning Meadows Home for Disturbed and Psychotic Youth. Dewdrop has too many dimensions, and can gouge bleeding wounds in reality with his infinitely fractal horn. His dainty hooves burn the floor, and his breath makes Mrs. Wombatson's prize petunias wilt and shrivel. But he *really is your best friend*.

Dewdrop's not too keen on Flytrap Joe, however. An-

other kid at school is friends with this other monster that looks like a huge Venus Flytrap that just pops out of the ground whenever he's needed. Dewdrop *hates* Flytrap Joe. When Flytrap Joe is around, Dewdrop paws the ground and mumbles obscenities that would make a prehuman mariner of the elder depths wince and look uncomfortable. Dewdrop wants to eat Flytrap Joe's stupid face off and spit out the seeds.

And you know what? Despite the fact that you sort of like the kid who's friends with Flytrap Joe, you're starting to agree with Dewdrop. Flytrap Joe is a dorkwad, and somebody might ought to tell him so.

That's how it seems to go for kids and their monster friends. People without monsters just don't get it. They think it's weird or something, and sometimes they get really angry or scared and they tell you to take your monster outside, and to make it spit out the end table.

Sometimes people show up in big vans with, like, antennas and stuff on top, and guys get out with guns and helmets and they yell a lot, and then your monster sometimes

has to eat them before they go away again.

Mostly, though, you go to school, and it sucks, and your parents try and tell you what to do all the time, and it sucks, and then some other kid at school shoves you, and so your monster bites him a little, and then his monster bites your monster, and then the school is on fire (again) and the police get called (again) and you get detention (again). And it *sucks*.

You've made some friends with other kids and their monsters. It's like playing D&D—fun but a little weird. Something you have in common, so even if that kid with the lazy eye never chips in for the pizza, at least you have something to talk about that nobody normal would understand. And then there's the other monster cliques to deal with. Some are so lame they *named* their groups. Lame! But just in case it ever becomes *un*-lame, your clique is going to be the Masters of Ultima-Cool.

## Monster Bonding

Kids and monsters have a special kind of Relationship, called Bonding. It's a score representing how closely bound they are to each other, and how closely their thoughts and souls mingle.

A high Bonding with your monster means that you really anticipate each other, but the border between *you* and *it* is starting to blur. In fact, you can sometimes get messed up when your monster loses a fight.

A low Bonding with your monster means that it's pretty independent and sometimes might not want to help out with boring things—but the chance of your getting mentally or physically hurt by feedback from a monster fight is

really low.

Bonding with your monster starts at 1, and you can use some of your starting Relationship dice to boost it if you want.

You can always add your Bonding score to your monster's dice pools, but doing so risks feedback. Feedback damage, unless otherwise noted, hits the location indicated by the height of the most recent successful attack roll against your monster.

## The Basics

All monsters have some key things in common.

### Monsters Aren't From Around Here

Monsters are from Somewhere Else, and don't really need to do things like eat and breathe and whatnot to survive. They sometimes pretend to do those things, because kids expect them to, but they don't need it. They're as happy under a thousand feet of freezing seawater as they are lurking under your bed.

### Monsters Look After Their Kids

Monsters love their kids—it's just that monster love isn't human love. Monsters just don't get it. Sort of like Hobbes, if he were a fifty-mouthed ravenous blob with a thousand baleful eyes rather than an imaginary cartoon tiger. Monsters listen to their kids, and they do what they say, and try to anticipate their kids' wants and needs. This leads to Trouble. The upside is that they always leap to protect their kids in a physical conflict. And if they're nearby, they can extend their environmental immunity to the kids, allowing them to survive just about anywhere reasonably well, if not super comfortably.

### Monsters Are Good at Hiding

Almost all monsters have a knack for remaining present but unseen. Some can shrink, some can turn invisible, some project illusions, some are utterly innocuous until they reveal their powers, etc. While hiding, a monster can't use any of its powers or abilities—it has to reveal itself big and loud to do that—but it can hang out, ready to help.

### Monsters Can't Die

... unless they get beaten (and eaten) by another monster, or something horrible happens to their kid. Monsters recover all damage they take from mundane sources in moments (one die per round) and damage from other monsters pretty quickly (one die per day, although training and care can speed this up to the Width on a Wits+Bonding roll per day). See *Kicking Butt and Taking Names*, below.

### Monsters Know Each Other

While monsters are good at hiding from people, they can spot each other easily (unless they have a special ability dedicated to hiding from other monsters), even when hiding. The higher the Bond, the more this sense of other

### Bonding Benefits and Risks

These benefits are cumulative. If you have five dice in bonding, you also get the benefits of having one die, two dice, and so on. The risks are not cumulative.

**1 Die:** You always get a sense of any immediate physical danger to you, but if your monster is defeated you take 1 Shock damage to the hit location number where it was most recently hit.

**2 Dice:** You get flashes of emotion from your monster, but if your monster is defeated you take 2 Shock damage.

**3 Dice:** Get flashes of thought from your monster, BUT if your monster is defeated you take 3 Shock damage.

**4 Dice:** You always know your monster's location, BUT if your monster is defeated you take 4 Shock damage.

**5 Dice:** You have genuine telepathy with your monster, BUT take if your monster is defeated you take Shock damage equal to all the damage your monster has taken at the same location numbers.

**6 Dice:** You are one being with two bodies, BUT if your monster is defeated you take 1 Scar damage.

monsters is communicated to a monster's kid. At low Bonding levels, a monster has to tell his kid about other monsters, but at higher levels the kid senses them himself.

## Nothing Can Stop a Monster . . .

. . . except another monster.

As SWAT teams and armies and hall monitors realized when they tried to mobilize against the monsters when they first appeared, the beasties go through troopers like an airgun pellet through a GI-Joe's plastic torso. They ignore mundane armor, be it a bullet-resistant vest or six inches of composite tank hide. And mundane weapons are far less effective against them—they in effect have a free 5x10 set when defending against purely mundane assaults.

The exception to this is attacks by kids who are themselves bonded to other monsters. For some reason, this puts the kids on the same frequency as the monster (or whatever) and so the kid's attacks could possibly do the monster some real hurt.

But even then, the kid doesn't get any special bonus for mundane weaponry he might be hitting with, so most monsters aren't super worried about it.

## Building Your Very Own Monster

Every monster has an Appearance, Hit Locations, a Personality, a Way to Hide, and a Favorite Thing.

### Appearance and Hit Locations

Sketch your monster, and circle all the important bits of its anatomy, and imagine what those bits do. Those bits are the monster's hit locations.

Like kids, monsters have 10 hit location numbers. But most monsters don't have the same hit locations as kids, or even the same number of hit locations.

You can decide how many hit locations your monster has, and which numbers apply to each location. A single location can't have more than four hit numbers associated with it, and no monster can have fewer than four hit locations total. Otherwise it's up to you.

Each hit location number has five dice linked to it (that's fifty fat, happy dice, total). These dice are what you use to describe your monster and buy special abilities. So if one hit location has three numbers assigned to it (location numbers 3 through 5, for instance), it gets 15 dice.

Assign the 10 hit location numbers to the bits you circled on the sketch, and note the total dice for each body part.

A hit location's dice are rolled when the monster takes an action that uses that body part, and they're the way you track the monster's damage. They work just like a kid's stats. Instead of having stats and skills, a monster has hit locations.

Remember, you can't roll more than 10 dice in a single dice pool. So if your monster has more than two location numbers assigned to a body part—with five dice per location number, remember—then you'll probably want to

spend the extra dice on something.

For example, a monster with Goo-Dripping Mandibles with locations 7-10 linked to it would have 15 dice. Since this is more than 10, at least 5 need to be spent on something else.

On what, you ask? Let's find out.

### Monster Qualities

Each monster hit location—an eyestalk or a maw or a cluster of tentacles or a crab-like claw or whatever—starts with one special monster quality. A hit location can have additional qualities at a "cost" of one die each.

**Attacks:** The monster can use this location to attack, inflicting width – 1 in damage to the location indicated by the roll's height. This is Shock damage to other monsters, their kids, or any other miscellaneous ab-natural horror from beyond space and time. Against the remainder of the universe—the boring world of SWAT teams, toasters, goldfish, gang members, algebra tests, microwave burritos, and nuclear submarines—this damage is in Scars.

**Defends:** The monster can use this location to defend, just like a kid can dodge or block, using its roll to gobble dice from attacking sets. A monster can use this ability to defend its kid if the kid is nearby. For a monster to defend both itself and its kid in the same round requires multiple actions.

**Useful:** The monster can use this location to do something really useful, like flying, tracking by scent, walking on walls, burrowing, possessing people's minds, phasing through matter, or, say, swallowing *anything* up to the size of a pony and vomiting it back up in perfect working order on command, even if the poor pony would really, really wish he were dead at that point.

### Useful Bits in Conflicts

Useful bits can sometimes be used in conflicts, but there are limits on what they can accomplish. A Useful quality can't take an enemy completely out of the action, but it can limit his choices somewhat.

If you want a hit location that reduces a foe's dice pools, then buy it as an Attack quality and define it however you like. Useful is for things which don't do damage, but can sometimes influence a conflict.

Here's what a Useful bit can do to a foe in combat with a successful roll:

**Stun:** Temporarily paralyze one hit location for width – 1 rounds.

**Distract:** Allow the monster to escape combat without giving his foe a freebie attack.

**Tangle:** Restrict a foe's actions in some meaningful way for width – 1 rounds.

**Hold:** Keep a foe from escaping for width – 1 rounds.

## Monster Extras

Dice can also be spent on the following extras, which enhance the effect of a monster bit. You can take an extra more than once. Extras cost one die per level, and work as follows:

**Awesome:** Taken once, this lets you set one of the monster's dice for this hit location to any value you like *before* you roll the rest. Taken twice, this lets you change one die to any value you like *after* you roll them all.

**Gnarly:** This part is especially harmful. Add one point per level of Gnarly to any damage it inflicts.

**Sharing:** This allows the monster's kid to use the hit location's ability as if it were his own. This sometimes leads to temporary physical transformations, and sometimes not. A kid can use this ability even if his monster is hidden, although the power is still pretty obvious to anyone who's looking closely or who makes an Attention + Notice roll to spot the weirdness.

**Tough:** This part of the monster is pretty tough. For each level of Tough, knock one point off any damage it suffers on this location.

**Wicked Fast:** This bit is especially quick. When using it, add two to the roll's width to determine the order in which things are resolved. You can take this more than once for really crazy wicked fast monsters.

## Faster, Bigger, Farther

Monsters can go a lot faster and are a lot stronger than humans. If you want to know exactly how fast your monster can go on his "Super-Slithery Body 6d" or how much mass he can dissolve with his "Caustic Barf Sac 8d," refer to the Measuring Miracles table on page 61 of *Wild Talents*.

If you're curious, it's 64 miles per hour and 3.2 tons. A monster with these abilities could catch a speeding truck and then melt it into a pool of goo.

If you don't have *Wild Talents*, just wing it.

## Scoping Out Monsters

Your monster's appearance says a whole lot about what it can do, because all a monster's weird powers arise from some (usually obvious) bit of its anatomy.

When scoping out another monster, you (or your own critter, if it can see) can try to figure out important stuff about it—what its parts do and how powerful they are. You need to study the monster, while it is unhidden or through a your monster's senses via Bond score of 5 or more, for at least a minute outside of combat or see it fight for at least a round.

Then you can make an Attention + Notice roll. With success, you learn the names of the other monster's body parts. You also learn something extra about the body part designated by the height of the roll. You learn that location's dice pool, and one quality or extra it possesses for each point of width beyond the first (the monster's player chooses which to reveal).

For example, if Monsquito has a Terrible Needle-Like Sucker Mouth with locations 8-10, then an observation roll

with a success of 3x9 would reveal all the names of its body parts; about its Needle-Like Mouth, hit location 9, the roll reveals its dice pool and two of its qualities and extras. This kind of thing can let you scope out an enemy monster's powers and its soft vulnerable bits.

## Personality

Nailing down what your monster acts like is as important as nailing down what it can do.

A monster is played sort of like a shared character between you and the GM. You get to describe the kinds of things it likes and likes to do, and you get to say what it does when using its powers on your command, but the GM "plays" it when the big beastly is interacting with you—or your teachers, loved ones, and pets.

Your monster's personality describes how it acts and reacts, and it serves as a handy role-playing guide for whoever is running the critter. Unlike kids, monsters don't really grow up or change. They get bigger and badder, but they retain more or less the same personality. Sometimes a kid outgrows his monster's company when his monster can't change along with him.

Getting a monster to act against its personality when the situation isn't dire can sometimes be tricky. A really lazy monster like Mr. Crocker would need to be convinced, bribed, or cajoled out of a big hot bath when Benny needs help with the weird ghost things that live in the basement.

Convincing a monster to get with the program and act against its personality requires a roll with Wits + Bonding + Charm, Putdown or Connive, depending on how you want to motivate your monster.

The big exception here is when a monster's kid is at risk. All monsters are protective of their kids, and none will sit by and let its kid get hurt, even if monster is ordinarily a big, angry jerk.

Of course, you don't need a roll at all to get your monster to act according to its personality. In fact, sometimes you need to roll to *stop* your eager beaver from acting out. Mr. Crocker just loves to eat people, and, well, that means his friend Benny has to watch him pretty close.

Consider how your monster's personality and your kid's personality interact. Even if they seem to be incompatible, remember that a monster friend is a friend for life. You may argue and bicker and fight, but your monster will still crawl through burning radioactive broken glass to protect you (but wait and hug him for it later, as he'll be on fire, radioactive, and covered in broken glass). Your Bonding score is a Relationship as well as a psychic link, and its character comes from the two personalities you and your monster bring to the thing.

## A Way to Hide

Your monster's way to hide is also a biggie. Almost all monsters can make themselves unseen or unnoticed, but the way your friend does it is unique in some way. It's going to matter when you need to call him up for assistance in a pinch.



Some monsters shrink, some go invisible, some slip into higher dimensional spaces, some—despite being great hulking demonic compost heaps—just seem *totally normal* when slumping down the hallway behind you.

While it's hidden, you can talk to your monster if it's close, and it can talk to you; but this is can be an express ticket to the counselor's office, since nobody else can hear what your monster is saying when you answer back out loud.

Hidden monsters can also affect things physically in minor ways. These are minor ways, nothing that would require rolling dice, and nothing dramatic enough to be perceived as more than coincidence by ordinary people watching it happen. A breeze blows a pencil off a desk. A flock of pigeons explode unexpectedly into flight.

The sticky moral issue here is that a hidden monster friend makes cheating on tests really, really easy. Your friend just needs to hang out by the smart kid and whisper his answers out to you.

Also, since monsters can spot each other even while hidden (unless they have a special power to hide from other monsters), then sometimes while you're trying to study for an exam in the library or watch the big, loud, dumb summer explodeyfest at the local Cini-Mega-Plex, your monster is talking loudly to other monsters, and generally hamming it up and distracting you.

Some people—the crazy, the psychic, the stoned, the very young, the very old, the near-dead, and the chronically spacey—can see monsters even when they are hiding. Not all can see them clearly, or make sense of what they see, and seeing them tends to collapse all those people back down to the first type (crazy), but sometimes they see enough to make trouble.

They might think you're the sort of evil, occult-meddling punk that makes Jack Chick cry. Or they might think you've got a guardian angel or a faerie companion. Or they might figure it out and want to join the monster-friend club, even after you tell them you have no idea how they could get a monster of their very own.

Generally, if someone can spot your monster, it's going to lead to trouble.

## Favorite Thing

Your monster's favorite thing is a huge motivator, and an endless source of fascination for the creature. Monsters, given their druthers, will indulge in their favorite things to excess, which can be funny ("Spiny-Cat! No more pie!"), tragic ("Now my mother is insane, too!"), or both ("Now my mother is insane for pie, too!").

If presented with a big, tempting opportunity to indulge its Favorite Thing, a monster will be hard-pressed to pass it up if there isn't something important it should be doing instead (and even then . . .). You or the GM needs to roll your Wits + Bonding dice. If it succeeds, your monster wipes the digestive fluids off its maw, screws up its courage and continues on. Failure, and the beast wallows in excess until something snaps it out of its reverie. This can

be *bad* if your enemies figure out what your monster likes and leave a trail of breadcrumbs (or pies, or corpses, or whatever) to a trap or distraction.

But there's a definite up side to your monster having a Favorite Thing. If you can promise your monster you'll indulge its Favorite Thing in good faith, then your monster will bust his hump for you—more than usual even.

If your monster is dogging it and wants to bail on a fight, then offering its Favorite Thing allows you to set one of the dice in your Wits + Charm + Bonding motivation roll to any value you like after rolling the rest.

That's an automatic set—and when you've got to keep your monster from eating the cop who told you to ride your bike with a helmet, or to keep fighting even after Chompy McBitey rips off its pincers and eats them, that's just what you need.

Of course, if you welsh on the deal and don't come up with your monster's Favorite Thing in sufficient quantities, he's going to feel jerked around—and rightly so, 'cause you'd be a jerk for reneging. Until you pay off bigtime, your monster is going to feel less inclined to take it to the mat for you, and so all your motivation rolls are made against a difficulty of 6.

## A.P. Monster Building

Or, Getting the Most Out of Your Horror From Beyond.

Diversify, diversify, diversify. If you put all your monster's attacks in one location then when it takes a lickin' you're going to be in real trouble. Choose a couple of good attack bits, some good utility bits, that kind of thing.

Remember that you can't have more than 10 dice in any one location, so if you end up with more than 10 dice because of a particularly big bit (more than two hit numbers assigned to it) then you have to spend those extra dice on qualities and extras.

But keep in mind that hit location dice work just the same for your monster as stats for your kid—a hit location's dice pool takes damage as well as getting rolled. If you buy too many bells and whistles and spines and glands with a hit location's dice instead of leaving them as a dice pool, then the location will be easier to take out.

And don't neglect some Useful monster parts, things that will be an advantage outside of a monster brawl. If you're in a game that's going to last longer than just one or two battles, those Useful bits can be much more interesting than lots of Gnarly attacks and Wicked Fast defenses.

## When Monsters Fight People

Monsters can mess people up really bad. Unless a kid specifically tells his monster to "Go easy!" monster attacks ignore armor and defenses and inflict Scarring damage of generally pretty graphic and horrible sorts. Players have to specifically say they want their monsters to do Shock rather than Scar damage, and if the kid's life is physically threatened, then a monster *won't listen*.

Monsters are also immune to Scarring damage from



mundane sources—the only thing that can do this to a monster is another monster.

Otherwise, conflicts work pretty much as normal. Width is damage and speed, height is location.

# When Monsters Fight Monsters

When monsters go at it, it's much like when people do, except you use the monster's *kid's* Attention + Out-Think-ing score to determine which monster declares action first. Monsters generally suck at tactics and need their kids to yell advice to them.

Monsters don't like to keep fighting after they get really messed up. Each time one of their locations is totally taken out (reduced to zero dice), the monster's kid has to make a Wits + Charm + Bonding roll to convince the monster to keep fighting. If the fight is a serious one—the monster is defending its kid, for example—then it'll keep fighting regardless, but for duels and tournaments and such the monster needs to be encouraged.

If the monster chickens out, then it is Defeated. See *Kicking Butt and Taking Names*, page 14.

# Yummy, Yummy Relationships

Kids can loan Relationships to their monsters, adding those dice directly to the monster's dice pools.

Any damage the monster takes to any location while using such borrowed dice *comes off these Relationships first*, before it hits a monster body location. The Relationship dice last until they get knocked off.

In short-term play, this won't be a big deal, and perhaps it should even be forbidden by the GM, since it'll give characters with more Relationships a serious edge. But in long-term play it'll generate lots of conflicts with a character's Relationships. Every Relationship die that gets lost from attacks on the monster is immediately Shocked.

This trouble in the Relationships is somehow directly related to the monster. Your Mom is furious that Jingle-Toes slashed up the carpet in your bedroom with his scythe-like talons. Angel Hair kidnaps your favorite hard-but-fair English teacher and dangles her off the roof, threatening to kill her and eat her soul unless she lets you take a retest on your last quiz because you were feeling blue about how Fire-Goat and Maggie-Maggie-Shiny-Smile ate your Mom's car.

## Monster Creation Example

Benny McAlyster's Monster is named Mr. Crocker. Mr. Crocker used to be a river god in ancient Egypt, but now he lives in Benny's bathtub most of the time. He has big jaws and a big appetite but is surprisingly nimble.

**Name:** Mr. Crocker

**Appearance:** A huge, fat, semi-bipedal crocodile who moves (when he moves) in a surprisingly fast bouncy gait, like gravity forgets about him sometimes.

**Personality:** Lazy, verbose, and indolent, with a slow Southern accent.

**Way to Hide:** He turns into a little green lizard.

**Favorite Thing:** Slowly eating people from feet to face.

## Mr. Crocker's Bits & Bobs

Locations	Bit	Qualities	Dice	Extras
1-2	Terrible Claws	Attack and Useful (opening locked things)	8	Tough x1
3-4	Bouncy Legs	Defends and Useful (bouncy gait)	8	Tough x1
5	Swishy Tail	Useful (swimming)	4	Tough x1
6-7	Big Belly	Useful (swallow anything and then puke it back up whole and sometimes alive)	8	Tough x2
8	Beady Eyes	Useful (see invisible things)	5	
9-10	Hungry Jaws	Attack	5	Awesome x1, Gnarly x1, Wicked Fast x1, Tough x1

What can Mr. Crocker do with these bits and bobs? Almost all his locations are Tough to one degree or another, so he usually takes less damage than normal when hit.

With his **Terrible Claws** he rolls eight dice for ripping stuff up or for opening things, like doors locked to keep Benny out.

His **Bouncy Gait** lets him run fast and, since it Defends, he can use it to gobble attacks. He really likes to gobble.

His **Swishy Tail** lets him swim with a four-die pool. That's not very fast, but he's lazy.

His **Big Belly** lets him swallow something whole, but since

he doesn't have Attacks with it, he has to first grapple a foe with his Terrible Claws.

With his **Beady Eyes** he can see things that are invisible, like ghosts or farts.

With his **Hungry Jaws** he can make a really really devastating attack that gets +2 to width to make it happen fast and +1 to the damage it inflicts. And he can set one of his five Hungry Jaws dice to any number he wants before rolling the rest, which is just like making a called shot attack without a penalty. Ouch!

## Your Helpful Friend

Dealing with a Shocked relationship takes Quality Time, described on page 3. If you want, you can use your monster's help to deal with Relationship trouble. Maybe you join your Mom taking her new puppy out for a walk, and use Mr. Crocker's ability to swallow anything whole and spit it back out alive to get the dog out of the way of a drunk driver—roll Mr. Crocker's dice pool to see if the Quality Time works.

But using your monster's abilities to help is risky and can backfire. Isn't it the big scaly jerk's fault you're in this mess to begin with? With monster assistance on a Quality Time roll, failure *permanently* reduces the relationship by one die. Failure when using a monster's help during a Crisis burns two dice.

## Kicking Butt and Taking Names

When your monster beats someone else's monster, you always get something for it.

If the other monster gave up—its kid couldn't convince it to keep fighting—then your monster gets an advancement die for every location on the enemy monster it reduced to zero.

This die can be spent to boost your monster's abilities or the Bonding score you share—with a suitable training scene, of course.

Since your monster took a bite out of the enemy

monster to gain this power, it inflicts a single Scar to the defeated foe to any location of your choice. This is what you do when you *kick butt*.

If you take out an enemy monster so thoroughly it doesn't have any dice left in three adjacent hit locations, then your monster takes a (metaphorical) bite out of that monster's *kid*, in addition to the chunk it takes off the monster. It can swipe all the dice from one of that kid's Relationships.

Note it on the monster's sheet, and use that Relationship any time you like to energize the monster. These pilfered Relationships get used up pretty easily, though, and damage sustained by them in monster combat permanently reduces their score on your monster sheet.

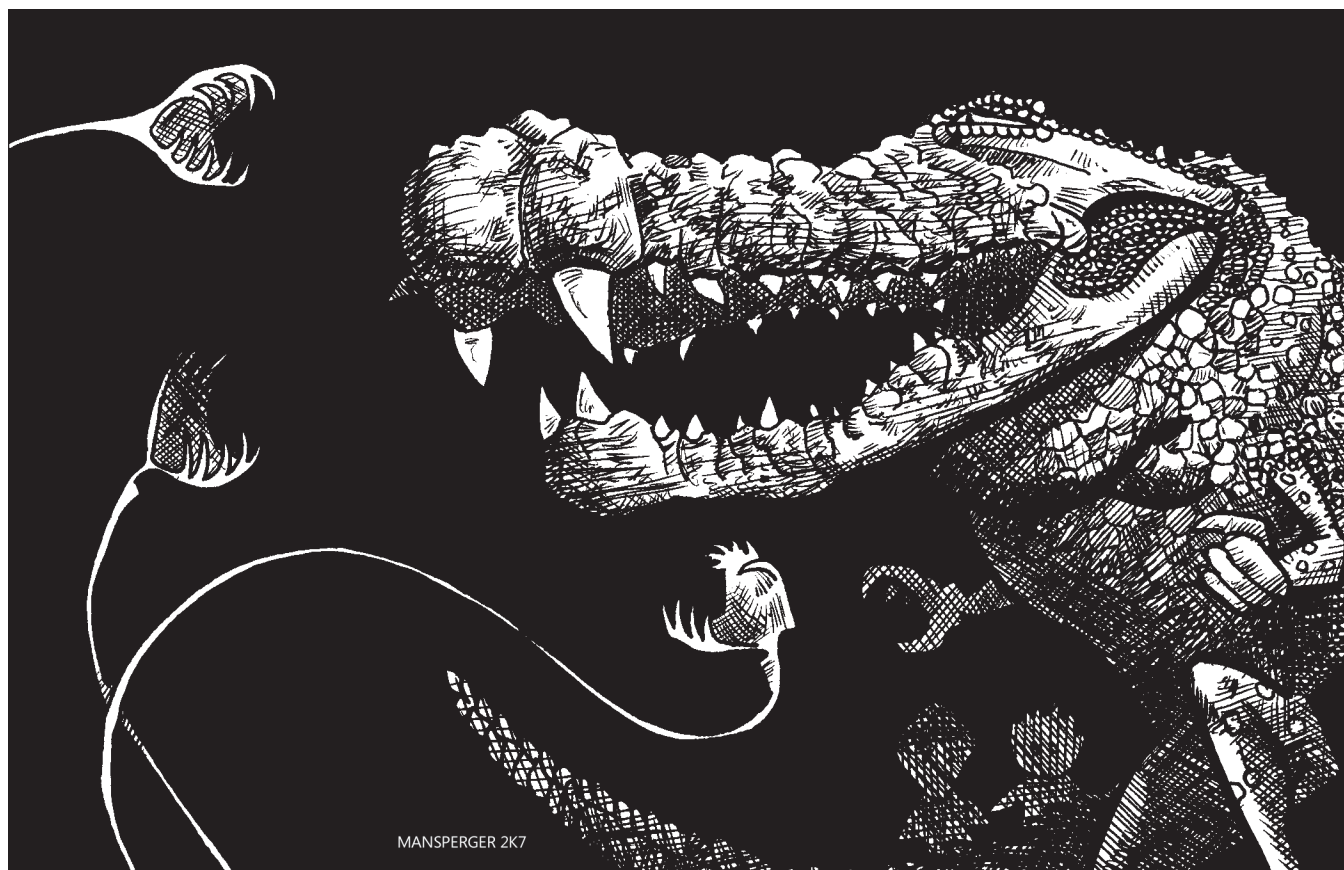
The kid you swiped them from suffers, too. His stolen Relationship is in Crisis until your monster uses up one or more of the stolen Relationship dice.

That's what you do when you *take names*.

When a monster gives up or when it is beaten down to defeat, and a kid has used his Bonding to boost the monster's actions, remember to assess any damage to the kid indicated by the Bonding score (see page 9).

A monster can escape from combat without giving up, but this requires a decision to do so *before* the monster reaches the breaking point and his kid can't convince him to keep fighting. Some Useful qualities make escaping easier.

When a monster gives up or when it is beaten down to defeat, and a kid has used his Bonding to boost the monster's actions, you need to assess any damage to the kid as indicated by the Bonding score.



# CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

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Growing up is hard to do. Kids get bigger and monsters get gnarlier. That's reflected in Experience Points.

You earn Experience Points by doing awesome things, like kicking butt and solving problems. The GM will dole these out if he likes you. One Experience Point will buy you a skill die. Two will buy you a Relationship die. Three will buy you a stat die.

If something dramatic happens—like falling in love or finding an ancient master to train you in kung fu—then you can spend Experience Points during play. Otherwise you spend them during down time, and then write about it in your “What I Did During Summer Vacation” essay.

Making your monster gnarlier is more expensive. It costs 5 Experience Points to give your monster a new die on a hit location, which can be added to a pool or spent for a Quality or an Extra.

## Growing Up Example

After finding out who messed up his brother's gravestone, and beating the crap out of Tommy Mezlowski while Mr. Crocker bit the crap out of Flytrap Joe, Benny has earned some Experience Points.

And Mr. Crocker *kicked butt* in the fight, taking two big chunks of Flytrap Joe with him. Benny has 3 Experience Points and Mr. Crocker has two advancement dice.

Benny boosts his Notice skill (since it was so useful in the fight) and spends 2 Experience Points to get a new one-point relationship: He's now sweet on Tommy's sister, Meg.

Mr. Crocker boosts his Hungry Jaws—another die, and another point of Awesome. Now, he's got six dice to roll, and he gets to set one of those to any value he likes after he rolls the others.

# THE JANITOR'S CLOSET: JUNK FOR GMS

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So you've been tasked with the honor and duty of GM. Good on you, you're one of the heroes of our hobby. The next few chapters should give you some handy things you can use to build a play experience you'll all enjoy.

First of all, what's your game about?

Just about every game of *Monsters* is about one of two things: monster conflicts or relationships. Sure, I know, the game is about both. But when you're setting up a game session, you need to decide which is most important.

If it's a short-term game, just you and a few friends and one game session, make it all about the fighting monsters. Use Relationship dice to set up the action (“Did you hear what he said about your sister? Your monster is not happy about that.”), but get to the action right quick and have fun. When you're done, save notes about Relationship damage for later, when you need them again to set up the action.

A long-term game, where you're playing out the stories of characters over a long time, is all about the relationships. That means both the big-“R” Relationships that characters have with their families and monsters, and the ordinary relationships that they have with each other and with their schools and bullies and everything else.

Sure, there's going to be plenty of monster fighting—

what *else* are you going to do with pet monsters?—but in a long-term game it serves to illuminate the relationships.

In each session of a long-term game, as GM you need to decide which relationships will get the main focus. Look at each character's Relationship scores and start there. A Relationship with lots of dice ought to feature regularly. A Relationship with one die should come up occasionally.

Now introduce some external influence that illuminates the Relationships, puts the Relationships at risk, or puts the Relationships into conflict with each other.

Maybe the kids have a spooky extradimensional *thing* in disguise for a new teacher, and they and their monsters just *know* there's something bad about her, but all the grownups think they're being ridiculous and won't lift a finger to help.

Or maybe the worst bully in school suddenly gets a new monster and wants to prove it's better than everyone else's, but the principal has banned monster fighting.

Usually you need only one external influence per game session. The players' Relationships will do the rest.

Once you introduce the conflicts, it's the players' job to resolve them. As GM, all you need to do is ad-lib the NPCs.

Not easy enough for you? Fine. Try the **One-Roll Interpersonal Conflict Generator** on page 39.

# GRADE LEVEL

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You can change the flavor of your *Monsters and Other Childish Things* games pretty dramatically by dialing the starting ages of the player characters up or down. A game with 10-year-old protagonists is going to have a distinctly different feel and themes than one featuring 15-year-olds. Grade level can be used to tune your campaign to suit, as

it'll give you a fair idea about character priorities, interests, and themes.

The grade levels are elementary school, junior high and high school. Grade level here means what kind of school the characters are in, not their actual grade—elementary school kids can range from kindergarten to fifth grade.

## Elementary School

**Age Range:** 4 to 10.

**Themes:** The wonder of childhood. The secret lives of children. The trials and terrors adults have forgotten. Dealing with the inherent injustice of the world. Learning loyalty. Experiencing the consequences of your actions for the first time. Balancing the hunger for the approval of parental figures with the budding desire for independence.

**Interests:** Faddish collectible games and toys. Novelty candy. Animals. Being liked. First crush. Exploring the world.

**Pressures and Problems:** Gradually start to realize that the parents are people—flawed, imperfect, and mortal. Be a “good kid,” which usually means being quiet and polite to adults. Please the parents. Be liked. Experience the first pushes of peer pressure to conform, follow fashion, go with the group. Experience the first pain of ostracism and social awkwardness. Experience “Tween” marketing that tries to get kids to act older and buy the props and symbols of mass-consumer “maturity”. Figure out likes and dislikes.

## Junior High

**Age Range:** 10 to 15.

**Themes:** Power and fear. Transformation of the body, the voice, the consciousness. The Drama of Self begins in earnest. Teen narcissism wars with childlike collective identity. Sexual awakenings. Letting go—willingly or not—of toys and childish things . . . *some* childish things, anyhow. Conflict with parents and authority. The quest for identity, belonging, and peer approval. Drugs, which are, of course, bad.

**Interests:** Sex—from early curiosity to flirting to the kind of thing that they talk about being so scary in Health class. Competition for its own sake rather than as a vehicle to gain parental approval. Fashion. The social circus, with its dramas, betrayals, and weekly swing between grand triumphs and crushing tragedies. Cellphones, ringtones, and morebettermgadgets. The symbols of social position.

**Pressures and Problems:** Hair where you didn’t have hair before. Puberty in all its dignity-destroying wonder and mystery. Conflict with parents over freedom, choice, clothes, music, whatever you got. Sex, and all the issues (internal and external) it brings. Late bloomers and early bloomers start to stand out. Socioeconomic differences and backgrounds really start to tell. Cliques start to become harder to drift between; kids self-organize along tribal lines, and start to persecute the outsider. Adolescent bodies start to smell bad.

## High School

**Age Range:** 15 to 18.

**Themes:** The Future begins to loom, hanging like a fist over everything. School seems much more serious and consequence-heavy. It is do-or-die time for making your future. Violence looms as a real issue, as does sex in the actual rather than the possible. Identity is still fluid but starting to solidify. The Drama of Self is coming to a close for most, but the last act is a doozie. Drugs, parties, loud music, beer, driving too fast. Teen risk-taking gets a good showing. Belonging to something, somewhere. The existential search for meaning takes on a more adult cast. Big Issues like religion start to crop up.

**Interests:** All the fashion and gadgets and social shenanigans of junior high, but dialed to 11. Fitting in . . . while being different . . . in acceptable ways. Body piercing, tattoos, smoking, drinking, sex, music, cars and driving, MySpace. Perhaps a budding social consciousness in there as well, somewhere. Maybe.

**Pressures and Problems:** Achievement achievement achievement. Acquiring sexual experience—or at least being able to pretend. Balancing school, work, personal drama, family, friends, and drama. Did I say drama already? Well, drama. If there’s sex going on, then all the problems and consequences of it. If there’s drugs and rock’n’roll going on, then all the problems and consequences associated with that as well. SATs. College applications. Decide who you are and who you’ll be *right effing now*.

## ANTAGONISTS

Or, When Bad People Happen to Good Things.

When the Monster Under the Bed is you best friend, and the Thing That Goes Bump In the Night lives next door with your pal Jenny, what is there to scare you? Well mister, there’s *plenty*.

Drugs for example. Drugs will hunt you down, and shave your head while you sleep, and sell your hair on eBay. Drugs will beat you up and tell everyone you peed your pants. Drugs are bad. Compared to Drugs, the other things out there might seem pretty tame, but you just watch out.

There are some other things, too.

These major antagonists are suitable for any grade level.

## The Creepy Guy

**Quote:** “You kids want beer? I can get you totally awesome weed. You can come to my place, and we can hang out. I got a van, I’ll give you a lift.”

**POV:** The Creepy Guy used to go to your school. You sort of remember him from way back. He was one of the first kids to get a monster, back when people hadn’t gotten used to it yet. He had some trouble adjusting, and you’re pretty sure he dropped out. But you keep seeing him around, talking to other kids and trying to make friends with them. It’s kind of sad, because he’s old and still trying to hang out with kids. Sometimes, the cops who guard the school ask



him to move back from school property twenty paces, and sometimes he listens. Your monster says he's still got his monster friend, but you haven't seen it in a while. You figure that it must be pretty big by now, cause he's like so *old*, you know? Practically 18. But, you know, he could totally buy cigarettes for you if he wanted.

**The Real Deal:** The Creepy Guy is what you get if you grow up with a monster friend and forget how to relate to other humans. He's weird. He's twitchy. He drives a white van, and he sells weed to kids in the hopes of being friends with them. He's been in trouble with the cops, but he's got a monster, and he seems fairly harmless, so Johnny Law looks the other way most of the time. But the Creepy Guy is a stewing cauldron of resentment, rage, and anger. He's started to hate his monster and himself, and wants to be a normal kid again, but now he's a young man. If some kids are nice to him, he'll latch onto them, and give them drugs, smokes, beer, and a place to hang out without parents, rules, or consequences—but if they rebuke his creepy kid-crush, he'll freak his crap out, and turn on them psycho-stalker-style. It can only end one way: A total throwdown with the Creepy Guy's really humongous monster.

**Modus Operandi:** The Creepy Guy hangs around like the proverbial Bad Influence, offering good times with the only price being his somewhat twitchy company. He's skinny, tall, greasy, and he doesn't blink enough. If his offers are rebuked, he'll sometimes flip out and make a scene, or stalk the kids he's interested in being friends with. He might offer to "show them something cool" which turns out to be his monster, a huge, old, scarred up, maudlin thing that just wants the Creepy Guy to be happy. If anyone takes him up on his offer, he gets *too* friendly—and if he's rejected then, he'll flip out and get violent. Monsters come out. Buildings burn.

## Grade Level

**Elementary School:** At this grade Level, the Creepy Guy has a real kidnapper vibe—the van, the hanging around outside school grounds, the general air of icky. Play up or play down this aspect, based on the seriousness of your game's tone.

**Junior High:** Here he's more like the drug dealers from the commercials, hanging around, offering kids a free taste so they can sass back to him about how they don't need his dope. There's still a bit of the kidnapper vibe, though.

**High School:** Here, the Creepy Guy might be someone the characters knew before he dropped out and got so strange. He's an example of what can happen if you lose your hold on humanity. There but for the grace of Grond goes thee.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 2 (P.E. +2, Kicking +2, Dodge +3).

**Guts** 4 (Wind +2, Courage +4, Wrestling +4).

**Hands** 2 (Shop +0, Punching +2, Blocking +4, Drive +4).

**Attention** 1 (Out-Think +1, Remember +0, Notice +1).

**Wits** 4 (Charm +1, Putdown +2, Connive +5, Score Contraband +5).

## Relationships

Nada, zip, nothing.

If you're nice to him, he'll try and form a Relationship with you. Every time someone is nice to the Creepy Guy he gets a die in his Relationship with them. And until this Relationship gets mauled down to nothing by Shocks and Scars, he won't leave them alone. He'll lavish Quality Time on the victim of his obsession, but mostly, he's just trying too hard.

The Creepy Guy's Monster is . . .

## Bugnutz

**Quote:** "Are you going to eat that? BUUUUUUUUUURP!"

**Appearance:** Bugnutz is a giant, fat insect-thing the size of a garbage truck. Like the queen from *Aliens* if it were a dude and drank too much beer and slept in its own sick last night.

**Personality:** Bugnutz, for all his huge terrifying grossness, is really worried about his friend Creepy Guy. He remembers when Creepy Guy was a happy kid getting into crazy adventures, and so full of delicious swirly wonderful emotions. Now Bugnutz just wants Creepy Guy to be happy. If that means snatching some people up and *making them* be friends with him, then so be it.

**Way to Hide:** Bugnutz turns into a tiny insect that looks suspiciously like a louse in Creepy Guy's greasy hair.

**Favorite Thing:** Seeing the Creepy Guy happy.

## Bits and Bobs

**Location 1-2:** Lots of Scuttling Legs (8 dice, Defend, Attack, Tough x1).

**Locations 3-5:** Invulnerable Carapace (10 dice, Defend, Tough x5).

**Location 6:** Great Buzzing Wings (6 dice, Useful [fly around], Tough x1).

**Location 7-8:** Huge Effing Mandibles (6 dice, Attack, Awesome x2, Gnarly x2, Tough x1).

**Location 9:** Vast Drooling Maw (6 dice, Useful [vomit up useful mundane things from . . . somewhere]).

**Location 10:** Too Many Eyes (6 dice, Useful [hypnotic gaze]).

## Tactics

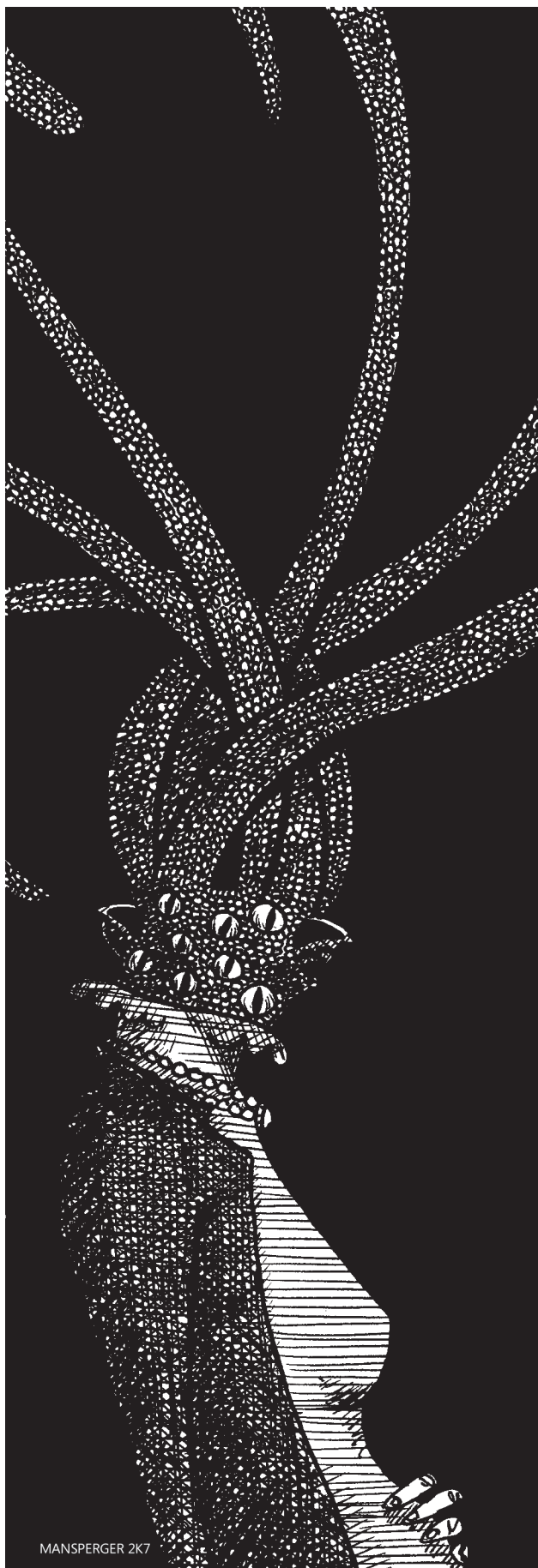
Bugnutz is big but fights cagey. He uses his invulnerable carapace to block any attack he can see coming, and alternates between attacks with his clawed legs and his great chomping mandibles.

His mandibles are *brutal* with the two levels of Awesome they pack and all that Gnarly. He does a *minimum* of 3 damage with them automatically if they aren't blocked or evaded somehow.

## The Excruciators

**Quote:** "Students, close your books for a pop quiz. This will count for 30% of your grade, and those failing must *stay after class*."





**POV:** God, the new math teacher is a witch—the kind that starts with “B”. She’s the queen of witches. She makes other witches say, “God, what a witch.”

And *she has it in for you*. Like, personally. Every day, she rides you, makes cracks about your work, says things like, “Oh, are we *counting on our fingers* today?”

But it isn’t just what she says, but how she says it, you know? Everyone laughs at you, and you feel horrible, like a worm. And after class, you’re always tired, like you had to run a mile in P.E.

And it never quits. Your folks don’t believe you. At the parent-teacher conference, she was all smiles and made it out like you were having trouble, but making progress. Your parents nodded with her, and exchanged knowing glances in your direction. When they weren’t looking, she smiled at you, and you knew how the mouse feels when the cat winks at him.

You’re convinced she’s a monster. Nobody could be that horrible. But your monster, he’s pretty sure she’s just a regular old witch. He did offer to eat her face off, but . . . well. . .

**The Real Deal:** The Excruciator may answer to “Ms. Applecart,” but she’s really a hideous extradimensional horror from beyond space and time. And not the *nice* sort, either.

Excruciators feed on the pain of those arrogant enough to court the powers of the Gulfs of Darkness and the Vast Abyss. They creep through the cracks in spacetime, wiggling past physics, creeping under chemistry, and finally treading across geography, seeking humans with minds open to the Otherworld—kids with monsters being numero uno on the menu.

They are also attracted to psychics, crazy people, little yappy dogs, and others with open minds who bark at things which aren’t really there. But the biggest treats are kids with monsters.

**Modus Operandi:** Excruciators feed on pain and especially humiliation. They seek positions of authority over kids as teachers, principles and relatives. They find those people, and they hollow them out, and they wear them like suits, but they *don’t let them die*. Inside these living flesh-suits, the hideous reality of the Excruciator is hidden from kid and monster alike.

The only thing that will drive an Excruciator out of its suit is defiance. If a kid can defeat an Excruciator with nothing but Wits and Attention actions, he can make it lose its cool and emerge.

## Grade Level

An Excruciator is pretty much the same regardless of grade level; just the kinds of things it uses to humiliate its victims would change. Also, the degree of sick cruelty the thing will employ should vary based on the tone of the game.

## Stats and Skills in Human Flesh Suit

**Feet** 4 (P.E. +2, Kicking +2, Dodge +3, Walk Like a Ghost +4).

**Guts** 5 (Wind +5, Courage +5, Wrestling +5).

**Hands** 3 (Shop +0 Punching +1, Blocking +1, Hit Without Leaving a Mark +4).

**Attention** 4 (Out-Think +3, Remember +5, Notice +2, Spot Your Weakness +4).

**Wits** 4 (Charm+4, Putdown +6, Connive +4, Menace +3).

## Relationships

Nothing. Excruciators don't have Relationships. They are pure narcissists who see every other thing in the universe as something to eat, something to ignore, or something to read while sitting on the crapper.

When they wear a human skin and pretend to be human, they don't really know what they are doing—it's all the reflexive action of their vast and horrible minds. Like making a turkey call or something. The hunter doesn't really speak turkey, but he can fool the dumb birds.

When an Excruciator inflicts damage to a kid with its Putdown skill, it feeds on the essence of that kid. It needs to inflict at least five dice worth of damage a week this way to survive, but who settles for just surviving?

## Monstrous Form

**Appearance:** A mass of horrible slimy tentacles, eyes, more tentacles, and mouths. It can squeeze through tiny openings, it can see your worst secret, and it can grab you and bite you all over.

**Personality:** Hungry. Hateful. Cruel. The Excruciator doesn't really eat flesh, but it likes to inflict pain and terror. If it can't eat delicious humiliation, it will settle for base pants-pooing terror.

**Way to Hide:** Inside a hollowed-out but still-living human skinsuit.

**Favorite Thing:** Consuming the soul-essence of human children.

## Bits and Bobs

**Locations 1-3:** Tentacles! (10 dice, Useful: Squeeze through tiny openings, Useful [hollow out human and live inside], Useful [taste the air and track like a snake], Awesome x2).

**Locations 4-6:** God, More Tentacles! (10 dice, Attacks, Defends, Gnarly x1, Wicked Fast x3).

**Locations 7:** Eyes? At Least It Isn't More Tentacles. . . (5 dice, Useful [see darkest secret]).

**Locations 8-10:** Mouths . . . Lots of Mouths (10 dice, Attacks, Gnarly x3, Wicked Fast x2).

## Mad Science Teacher

**Quote:** "Day 17, 23:00. Subject remains alert despite repeated amputations of dorsal pseudopodia and fin-like structures. Level of aggression remains unchecked, and administration of high doses of tranquilizer only serve to anger subject. On last amputation, subject said, 'When I get outta here, Doc, I'm gonna eat your *expletive deleted* face off'."

"Recommended course of action: Continue schedule

of amputations, and add microwave bombardment to the stress-panel to measure cortisol hormone response."

**POV:** You know the new science teacher? There's something off about him. Like, you get that he really loves the science, but when he talks about it . . . it's like he really *loves* the science. He makes it sort of icky.

He got hired after Mr. Humphries got crushed in that freak forklift accident—or at least they said it was a freak forklift accident. You heard it looked more like he got stomped on by something with really big square feet. And you know all about big things that stomp people.

Once, you caught the new science teacher laughing maniacally in his classroom during a thunderstorm, and when he saw you he looked flustered and said, "That Steven Colbert is one funny man, eh? Eh?" But you saw through the window the huge shape hulking off into the lightning-lit distance.

**The Real Deal:** The Mad Science Teacher is a real Mad Scientist—complete with Brotron the Robot as his servant and assistant. The Mad Science Teacher wants to study monsters and learn the secrets their flesh may conceal. He wants to do this by cutting them up and running experiments on them, and his stainless steel pal Brotron is perfectly willing to assist with beating them into submission. He has a secret lab hidden somewhere, with electrified cages containing several captured monsters.

**Modus Operandi:** The Mad Scientist watches and observes, and when he identifies kids with monsters, he sends out Brotron in a fairly unconvincing rubber monster suit to pick a fight with them. If Brotron subdues the monster, he drives up really fast in his big van, Brotron tosses the other monster in the back and runs off, and then the Mad Science Teacher drives off. So far he's snatched several monsters, and he's looking for more. A prison break might make a fun "monsters only" game session as the PCs' monster friends—played as primary characters by the players—try to bust out.

## Grade Level

The Mad Science Teacher fits neatly into any grade level, and operates almost unchanged in all of them. He'll seem cornier to older kids, but since he's more focused on their monsters than he is on the kids, he'll deal with them as an unfortunate nuisance regardless of their age.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 2 (P.E. +2, Kicking +0, Dodge +3).

**Guts** 4 (Wind +1, Courage +4, Wrestling +1, Fearlessly Peer Into Things Man Was Not Meant To Know +5).

**Hands** 4 (Shop +3 Punching +0, Blocking +0, A Surgeon's Touch +4, Build Mad Science Devices +4).

**Attention** 5 (Out-Think +5, Remember +5, Notice +1, Science! 5).

**Wits** 2 (Charm+1, Putdown +1, Connive +1).

## Relationships

All-Consuming Love of Science! 3.

## Brotron

**Quote:** “Beep! Beep! Danger, Master! Danger! Brotron Activating Defensive Systems!”

**Appearance:** A ten-foot tall metal man made of polished stainless steel, with big, crackling, luminous eyes, a speaker grill for a mouth, and crushing pincer-hands. He’s a veritable Swiss army knife of useful tools, many of obvious use in improvisational surgery.

**Personality:** Like a servile robot from 1950s sci-fi, but with a hint of sarcasm in everything it says. The Mad Science Teacher is constantly fiddling with his linguotron to fix this.

**Way to Hide:** The Mad Science Teacher dresses him up in disguises, but Brotron can’t hide—he’s a big honkin’ robot. I mean, he can hunker down in the bushes, but still. Big honkin’ robot.

**Favorite Thing:** Sweet, sweet electricity.

## Bits and Bobs

**Locations 1-2:** Stomping Steel Legs (8 dice, Defend, Useful [Running as Fast as a Car], Tough x2).

**Locations 3-4:** Crushing Pincer Arms (8 dice, Attack, Useful [Picking Stuff Up and Whatnot], Tough x2).

**Locations 5-7:** Shiny Metal Torso (8 dice, Useful [Detect and Track Monsters], Tough x5, Awesome x2).

**Locations 8-9:** Retractable Utility Units (6 dice, Attack, Useful [Car Repair and Surgery On the Go], Tough x2, Awesome x2).

**Location 10:** Great Domed Head (4 dice, Useful [Stun Beam\*], Awesome x2, Tough x2).

*\* Brotron’s stun beam knocks the targeted hit location completely out of commission for minutes outside of combat, or rounds in combat, equal to width – 1. After this time the location returns to full function, having suffered no real damage.*

## M.I.B.

**Quote:** “If you will please step away from the B.E.M., Agent Grey and Agent Blue have some questions for you.”

**POV:** Did you see the antenna-van out in front of the school again today? You walk past it and your cell totally drops five bars, and if you’re talking you get bumped. Do they think we don’t notice? Five white guys in black suits and mirror shades, hanging around outside the school fence taking pictures with a big camera. But did you notice how much alike they look? And they always seem to talk in that same voice. And what’s with the rubber gloves all the time? Creeeeepy.

You saw that one talking to the vice principle the other day, and the old guy was loosening his tie like it was hot in his office. When he saw you, he slammed the door, but he sure didn’t look happy. They called you in for a talk with one of them one time—Agent Beige or something—and he asked all kinds of questions about stupid things like if you’d seen lights in the sky or bought any weird pills from guys

with heavy Russian accents. Your monster got bored and snuck under the table towards the guy’s legs, and something in his pocket started beeping like the world’s most annoying ringtone, and he just stood up, and said, “Thank you for your cooperation. All Good Americans assist the authorities in their inquiries.” You could hear the capitals when he said “Good Americans”.

You would have written it off as one more weird thing in a weird world, then you heard that Katie Smith had gone missing, and you never saw her or her monster Jaggie-Puss again.

**The Real Deal:** The Monster Investigation Bureau is a just the latest incarnation of the American Military-Industrial Complex’s unified occult intelligence taskforce. In the 1950s they chased flying saucers and locked aliens in freezers. In the ’60s and ’70s they ran MKULTRA’s ugly stepsister, and fought a covert astral war with the commies to keep America free, and military budgets VAST. In the ’80s it was all subliminal programming via big-budget action movies. In the ’90s their budgets got cut hard, and lots of them went to work in the private sector, hunting the supernatural for corporate America.

Now, in the new millennium, they work in a public-private partnership to discover marketable and weaponizable applications for the phenomena of Adolescent Psycho-Temporal Phase Bridging. They hunt Biological Extraterrestrial Merchandise (BEMs) for their newly-privatized masters.

Not all are cut from the same creepy clone cloth, but individuality and personality are frowned upon. A tie in a non-regulation color is sometimes enough to get a M.I.B. sent back to Arkansas for a brain-scrubbing and a year riding a register at Home Office’s first retail establishment.

**Modus Operandi:** M.I.B. agents lurk and stalk and monitor from the periphery, and you might start to think they were a big joke, until someone you know vanishes, monster and all. They fight the bureaucracy of their own organization as much as your monster, but when they decide to move on you, they do so with terrifying speed and efficiency—and they have thirty years of weird technology stolen from ancient prehuman civilizations and from alien would-be invaders. M.I.B.s carry protective gear that gives them the same benefits that kids get when in combat with monsters, detectors that let them perceive monsters even when they’re hiding, and tasers, guns (for mundane threats) and other strange-tech devices for dealing with—and hurting—monsters.

## Grade Level

**Elementary School:** M.I.B. agents have real trouble dealing with kids this young. They’re unpredictable. They’re ill-mannered. They don’t get the whole Men In Black mythology, and they don’t know how to be properly afraid. M.I.B.s have difficulty knowing how to talk to kids in elementary school. These kids have the easiest time flustering M.I.B.s and getting them to break their conditioning.

**Junior High:** In junior high, most kids have a good idea





about the government and about Big Evil Conspiracies. Or rather, they have seen enough TV and looked at enough kooky Internet sites to get entirely the wrong idea. But they have an idea on the subject nonetheless. M.I.B.s will lean on them pretty hard, hoping to impress on them their authority before they get into high school and become insouciant little jerks.

**High School:** High schoolers are the most likely to be openly defiant of M.I.B.s, the ones who'll know to ask for proof of their authority, who'll defy their orders, and who'll be most interested in exposing them on the Internet or by passing around an incriminating cellphone video. They're also the most likely to be treated as adults by the MIBs, which includes being "disappeared."

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 3 (P.E. +3, Kicking +3, Dodge +3).

**Guts** 3 (Wind +3, Courage +3, Wrestling +3, Preternatural Cool +3).

**Hands** 3 (Shop +3, Punching +3, Blocking +3, Regulation Shooting Posture +3).

**Attention** 3 (Out-Think +3, Remember +3, Notice +3, Spot Weirdness +3, Strange Tech +3).

**Wits** 3 (Charm +3, Putdown +3, Connive +3).

## Relationships

Every M.I.B. have just two relationships: America 3, Home Office 3.

## A Wizard (Wannabe)

**Quote:** "By the Ancient Signs and the Words Writ Upon the Scrolls of the Ebon Binding, I Abjure Thee, Beast! I Bind Thee. . . . Hang on . . . I Bind . . . I . . . Wait, let me start again. Don't go!"

**POV:** The librarian always stares at you. Well, not at YOU, exactly. At your backpack, where your monster hides. He seems to somehow know what's in there, and the other day after he started his "no bookbags in the library" policy, you caught him poking around in your backpack when you came to get it. He had some lame excuse about a missing book, but you knew what he was doing—he was trying to get your monster. When you checked your bag out later your monster said, "That guy smelled funny. Bad funny. Pauly Shore funny. I don't like him."

**The Real Deal:** Some adults are sensitive to monsters and their comings and goings. It isn't a super-healthy thing to be able to do—it tends to make people crazy. Sometimes Crazy and Opportunity align, and someone gets their hands on some Terrible and Ancient Lore.

See, adults have been trying to get a handle on monsters for a long time, and some old cats figured out how to basically confiscate a monster from a kid, break the bond, and make the monster a slave. It isn't easy, but it's the ultimate goal of all Wizards to get their own demonic servant and impose occult bondage upon it. The dangerous ones aren't satisfied with only one monster and one broken-hearted kid.

**Modus Operandi:** A Wizard seeks to accumulate lore,

trying to piece together a complete working copy of the Rite of Adoption, while monitoring and cataloging local monsters. A Wizard who manages to complete the Rite has his own monstrous servant—a sad, pathetic thing pining for its kid but bound by magical chains to obey the Wizard. A Wizard with a monster is a serious concern.

A Wizard—even one without a monster—is treated like a kid with a monster friend for the purposes of monster attacks. His protective mojo keeps him from being ripped to chutney by the monsters he covets.

A Wizard must sacrifice some of his Relationships when he captures and bonds with a monster. Each two dice he sacrifices gives him a Bonding of 1 with the monster. Until then, he can use his Relationships normally.

## Grade Level

A Wizard doesn't change that much as grade level increases, but he might be less inclined towards "you pesky kids!" outrage and more inclined towards "Join me, and we can rule the galaxy together!" offers of alliance and power with older kids. Of course, he might also be more inclined to

use violence against an older kid than a younger one, and more inclined to use bribes, deception, and promises of candy against a younger one.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 2 (P.E. +1, Kicking +1, Dodge +2, Ethereal Transposition +4\*).

**Guts** 5 (Wind +0, Courage +5, Wrestling +0, Meditation of Thoth +4\*).

**Hands** 3 (Shop +0 Punching +1, Blocking +3, Signs of Warding and Shielding +4\*).

**Attention** 4 (Out-Think +2, Remember +4, Notice +2, Lense of the Other World +4\*).

**Wits** 2 (Charm +2, Putdown +2, Connive +2, Word of Power and Authority +4\*).

*\* These skills represent the Wizard's mystical lore. They work like regular skills, but against monsters and other unnatural things.*

## Relationships

Wife 2, Chow-Chow the Poodle 3, The Library 2.

# EVERYBODY ELSE

These are the sportos, the motorheads, geeks, sluts, bloods, waistoids, dweebies, d---heads—people who may or may not find you to be a righteous dude.

## Administrator

**POV:** Some admins like to play the Big Man, some are buddy-buddy with you, some punch the clock until retirement. All know more about what you're up to than they let on. How come, do you suppose?

**Real Deal:** Administrators in schools with reported monster activity are a tough breed of dedicated educator, usually moved in to keep a lid on things. They'll let a certain amount of crap slide to keep the greater peace, but they can always push you back harder than you can push them—up to the point where your monster eats them, of course.

## Grade Level

Any. Someone has to run the school.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 2 (P.E. +2, Kicking +1, Dodge +1).

**Guts** 4 (Wind +2, Courage +2, Wrestling +2).

**Hands** 3 (Shop +1 Punching +1, Blocking +3).

**Attention** 4 (Out-Think +4, Remember +4, Notice +4, Run a School +4).

**Wits** 4 (Charm +3, Putdown +2, Connive +2, Respect My Authority +3).

## Relationships

The School 4.

## Bully

**POV:** Some bullies hit you and take your stuff, the thugs of the playground. Others say things that make you wish they would punch you instead. Whether they hit with words or fists, some kids just like pushing other kids around.

You know what they say about bullies—they're cowards inside, and you just have to stand up to them. Or have your Special Friend stand up to them. . . .

**Real Deal:** Any normal kid willing to pick on a kid with a monster has to be stupid, crazy, or has to have something up his sleeve.

## Grade Level

Bullies are ever-present. Their tactics will likely change with different grades, as physical intimidation seems more harmless when it's little kids doing the pushing and giving the swirlies.

As the grade level increases, the violence will be less frequent, but more severe when it happens.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 4 (P.E. +2, Kicking +2, Dodge +2).

**Guts** 4 (Wind +2, Courage +0, Wrestling +2).

**Hands** 3 (Shop +1 Punching +4, Blocking +3).

**Attention** 2 (Out-Think +2, Remember +1, Notice +3).

**Wits** 2 (Charm +0, Putdown +5, Connive +4).

## Relationships

Gang of Cronies and Yes-Men 2.



## Cop

**POV:** Cops always seem to show up after something bad happens. It would be awesome if, just once, they'd show up *before*. It's fun to talk smack about cops, but when they show up, it's hard to mouth off. Your parents are grownups, but there's something about the cops who come to your school when there's trouble—they're to normal grownups what your parents are to you.

**Real Deal:** Cops are the front line in dealing with the chaos that monsters can unleash—and the cops who deal with it a lot develop a pretty good set of survival instincts when faced with the horrible realities of the supernatural: Stare it down, make it blink first, put the fear of authority into it. Cops who survive this beat get good at this. It's possible to imagine a kid and his monster growing up to be a cop—sort of like a K-9 unit, but with more teeth.

## Grade Level

Pretty much any grade level will see cops; the main difference is how they treat kids who get into trouble. Younger kids are more likely to get some compassion, older kids aren't going to get any slack (especially if they're mouthy).

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 4 (P.E. +3, Kicking +2, Dodge +4).

**Guts** 4 (Wind +2, Courage +4, Wrestling +2, Stare Down the Horrors of Hell +4).

**Hands** 3 (Shop +1, Punching +4, Blocking +3, Stick and Pistol +3).

**Attention** 4 (Out-Think +3, Remember +2, Notice +4, Spot Crime in Progress +3).

**Wits** 3 (Charm +2, Putdown +3, Connive +2, The Badge +4).

## Relationships

Family 3, The Brotherhood of Blue 3.

## Your Crush

**POV:** You know who I'm talking about. The one person who more than anyone in the entire world you want to talk to—and for some reason, there's absolutely in a zillion years can in no possible way it's going to happen. So you watch, you pine, and you wish for a miracle infusion of Courage. Until she starts seeing Jocky McJock the quarterback. Then you just want to curl up under a rock and die for a little while.

**Real Deal:** Your Crush might just be unaware of you, or might actually be screwing with your head. Regardless, they make you think, and feel, and act crazy.

## Grade Level

Any. If there's the chance for unrequited love from afar, then Your Crush will be there. In junior high or high school, *you* might be the creepy stalker type and not even know it.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 2 (P.E. +1, Kicking +1, Dodge +1).

**Guts** 2 (Wind +1, Courage +2, Wrestling +1).

**Hands** 2 (Shop +1, Punching +0, Blocking +1).

**Attention** 4 (Out-Think +1, Remember +2, Notice +1).

**Wits** 5 (Charm +5, Putdown +1, Connive +1, Be Everything You Could Possibly Want +5).

## Relationships

Somebody Other Than You 3.

## Drunken Clown

**POV:** OMG, your parents *did not* hire a clown for your birthday. Oh, you'll never live this down. And . . . is he . . . drunk? He sure smells gross. And he isn't very funny, and he keeps falling down, and his balloon animals all looks like crap, and you don't think a clown is supposed to use words like that. Also, you think he's flirting with your Mom.

**Real Deal:** He might be a harmless, intoxicated children's performer—or he might be an agent of your enemies sent to distract you while some nefarious scheme goes down. And if there's something occult about him, his balloon animals might come to life and attack you with great rubbery claws.

## Grade Level

Probably the worst at junior high, when parents haven't figured out that their kids don't like childish stuff anymore. In elementary school, the *drunk* part is the problem. In high school, the *clown* part is almost funny, and the *drunk* part means he might buy you beer.

## Stats and Skills

[values in brackets are while drunk]

**Feet** 3 [1] (P.E. +2, Kicking +2, Dodge +4).

**Guts** 1 [5] (Wind +2, Courage +2, Wrestling +1, Gross Physical Comedy +3).

**Hands** 3 [1] (Shop +1, Punching +2, Blocking +2, Balloon Animals +3).

**Attention** 3 [1] (Out-Think +3, Remember +1, Notice +3).

**Wits** 2 [4] (Charm +3, Putdown +4, Connive +3, Make Fun of the Birthday Boy +5).

## Relationships

Family 3 [1], The Bottle 1 [3].

## Fashion Nazi

**POV:** You *thought* these shoes were cool. You were really careful to ask your Mom for the right brand and the right color and you saved your money and paid for half of them. Then you wore them to school and the kid you were trying so hard to impress looked at your feet, and nudged the kid next to her, and she sneered at your new shoes, and all the

kids are her lunch table laughed. *Nobody* is wearing shoes like that anymore.

**Real Deal:** The Fashion Nazi is one of those kids who's always *it*—setting trends as much as sniffing them out before they hit big. She's always one step ahead of that point where a cool look turns into self-parody, then moving onto something new—and expensive. Likely rich, the Fashion Nazi doesn't really like anyone but herself, and responds with venom and hate to anyone showing her up. She might even be in league with an Excruciator, trading the humiliation of the weak and the unfashionable for favors from Elder Horror From Beyond.

## Grade Level

The Fashion Nazi's power to make your life hell increases with grade level, though perhaps it peaks in junior high where there aren't as many distinctly different stylistic cliques to join yet.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 2 (P.E. +1, Kicking +1, Dodge +1).

**Guts** 2 (Wind +2, Courage +2, Wrestling +0).

**Hands** 2 (Shop +0, Punching +0, Blocking +1).

**Attention** 4 (Out-Think +4, Remember +2, Notice +3, Spot a Fashion Disaster a Mile Away +4).

**Wits** 4 (Charm +5, Putdown +5, Connive +2, Look Great in Anything +4, Set the Trend +4).

## Relationships

Circle of Giggling Mean-as-Snakes Junior Harpies 3.

## Gang Banger

**POV:** The Gang Banger is kind of both scary and pathetic at the same time. He's a little kid, and looks sort of retarded in his older brother's gangwear, but here's the thing that's scary: His brother *doesn't* look retarded in his gangwear. His brother looks like someone that might pop a cap in your behind. And the Gang Banger is either already a member of his brother's outfit, or he's going to be soon. He sure lets it be known that if anyone messes with him, they'll have to deal with the 8th Street Warriors. He swaggers, he affects a prison-yard attitude, and even if he's a big wuss, he can bring the trouble in the form of a whole gang of puffed-up rooster-men looking to scratch.

**Real Deal:** The Gang Banger hangs with a group, but he's only a wannabe right now. In all likelihood he's going to join up when they'll let him, and be that much worse for it. But if he does, he'll likely drop out, so perhaps that's for the best. Until then, he's a simmering stewpot of fear and arrogance—a dangerous combination. Like hammers and really big thumbs.

## Grade Level

Only junior high and high school, really—an elementary school Gang Banger is just sort of funny, and not really threatening. But perhaps that's the point.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 3 (P.E. +4, Kicking +3, Dodge +3).

**Guts** 2 (Wind +2, Courage +2, Wrestling +1).

**Hands** 3 (Shop +3, Punching +3, Blocking +1, Hold a Gat Sideways Like a Gangsta +1).

**Attention** 1 (Out-Think +3, Remember +2, Notice +2).

**Wits** 2 (Charm +2, Putdown +3, Connive +4, Convincing Threats of Violence +4).

## Relationships

His Bro 3, The 8th Street Warriors 2, His Mama 2.

## Geek

**POV:** When you're feeling your weirdest and most rejected by mainstream kids, you can at least look to the feckless Geek and know there's always someone further outside than you. Having a giant monster friend hiding behind your reflection in mirrors is *way* less dorky than *pretending* to have a giant monster friend while playing *Monster: The Socially Awkwarding*.

Some geeks don't play RPGs, though, some are into computers in a big way, and will cut your throat if you dis their favorite OS. Others are nuts for *Star Wars* or cartoons from Japan. But there's a lot of cross-fertilization amongst geeks, like planting squash, pumpkins, and cucumbers in the same garden. When you go out to pick a Jack'o'Lantern for Halloween, you end up with a cusquamkin.

**Real Deal:** Some geeks are filled with rage—rage at being rejected by other kids, and rage at *Marvel: Civil War*. Others are at peace with their social position and take solace in sharing it with others of their kind. Most are harmless.

Generally, a geek is a good friend to have, especially if he's got L33T Skillz 5d and you need to hack a high-security NSA database, or get your character up to 20th level in *World of Warcraft* without having to play through all the boring stuff. Even better, to a geek having a monster friend is *the best*. It's good to have someone think you're cool.

## Grade Level

In elementary school all kids are a little geeky, so the ones who are really into it don't stand out much. Being good at computers is cool. In junior high the Geeks start to stand out, and by high school they are another species entirely.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 2 (P.E. +1, Kicking +1, Dodge +3).

**Guts** 3 (Wind +1, Courage +2, Wrestling +1).

**Hands** 3 (Shop +4, Punching +1, Blocking +1).

**Attention** 4 (Out-Think +2, Remember +4, Notice +2, Dungeon Master +3, Hacking [But He Calls It Cracking] +3).

**Wits** 1 (Charm +1, Putdown +3, Connive +4, Geek Rant +5).

## Relationships

Online Friends 3, Tuesday Night Gaming Group 2, WoW Character 1.

## Gym Coach

**POV:** It's dodge ball again. There was a time when dodge ball was just physical torture and humiliation. Now that your monster friend comes to school with you, hidden away, it's much worse. You know you can do something about it, but stopping the pummeling will only make things worse, and likely get you kicked out of school.

Your monster aches to *rend* the kids that throw those fat bouncy red balls at your head. Everything in him screams out to protect you from attack. One time, you got a nosebleed from getting hit in the face, and it was all you could do to stop the carnage. Coach just blew his whistle and yelled the usual abuse, "Cindy-Cakes! You're *out*! Make room for the winners! Hustle! Hustle! Take a lap!" One day, you won't argue as hard.

**Real Deal:** The Gym Coach fights a daily battle against the increasingly sedentary modern lifestyle. Running, jumping, climbing rope—not really vital skills anymore. That's why kids are so fat these days, and that's part of the reason the Gym Coach hates kids so much.

The other bit is how he went to school to learn to teach Physical Education, but nobody gives him any respect as an educator, and assumes he is a stupid, has-been jock who couldn't cut it in real sports. Which is true, but it still irks that people don't respect how hard it is to get 30 weedy little punks to do a chinup.

The worst case for the Gym Coach is when he really *is* the sick sadist he seems to be, and he really *does* enjoy inflicting pain and misery and humiliation. If so, he might really be an Excruciator under that scowling flesh-mask. Or he might just be a jerk.

## Grade Level

The Gym Teacher is a universal menace. He'll likely inspire more fear in young kids who are less skilled at faking injury or getting their parents to sign off on a medical excuse to avoid sports.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 4 (P.E. +5, Kicking +1, Dodge +3).

**Guts** 3 (Wind +5, Courage +2, Wrestling +2).

**Hands** 3 (Shop +1, Punching +2, Blocking +3, Throwing +4).

**Attention** 1 (Out-Think +1, Remember +2, Sports Scores +5).

**Wits** 3 (Charm +1, Putdown +5, Connive +2, Shout You Down +5).

## Relationships

Ex-Wife 3.

## Hood

**POV:** Ever since third grade the Hood has been getting into trouble. His mom split when he was real little, and his Dad drives a truck, so it's him and his older sister at home, and she's boy-crazy and gone most nights.

The Hood is alternately fascinating and frightening. He's great to hang out with if you're looking for some mayhem—blowing up things with cherry bombs, shooting at cars with a BB gun, shoplifting, smoking weed, and generally being a bad influence on others. But he's as likely to hold your hand on the table and do the knife game as he is to ride bikes with you, so it's a mixed bag. Lawless fun vs. permanent scarring—hard to call.

On the upside, he thinks your monster is "*Totally effing hardcore*." On the downside, he's always trying to get you to make it eat the principal's car.

**Real Deal:** The Hood is on his way to a life of drug abuse, petty crime, thuggery and incarceration. He's a loner, and he likes it—as much as he hates it. All told, he's got a pretty rough mix of nature and nurture, a bad seed in toxic soil. But with the right kind of friend, the Hood might turn around, at least enough to use his thuggish abilities in the cause of good.

## Grade Level

The main difference in the Hood at different grade levels is how much trouble he's been in, and just how far he's willing to take things. In elementary school, he might blow up a toilet. In high school he might steal a teacher's car, pick you up in it (saying it's his Dad's), and then get into a high-speed chase with the cops with you in the passenger seat.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 3 (P.E. +2, Kicking +3, Dodge +3).

**Guts** 3 (Wind +2, Courage +2, Wrestling +3).

**Hands** 3 (Shop +3, Punching +3, Blocking +3, Making Explosives from Household Stuff +3, Five-Finger Discount +3).

**Attention** 2 (Out-Think +2, Remember +2, Notice +2, Spot a Narc +4).

**Wits** 2 (Charm +1, Putdown +4, Connive +4, Glare That Promises Pain +4).

## Relationships

Dad 1, Sister 1, Juvenile Delinquency Officer 2.

## Janitor

**POV:** He's old, he's weird, and sometimes he'll tell you something that'll totally change your life. Just a little word or a bit of advice. Something that puts it all into perspective, and gives you a new way of looking at your problems. Other times, he just looks scornful and shames you into doing the hard thing. He's ubiquitous, and he always seems to be there when you need him most, even if you want to seem him the least. Also, he looks and sounds suspiciously like Sam Elliot.

**Real Deal:** The Janitor knows all—really, he does. Maybe he's somehow involved in the occult, or maybe he's just been around long enough, seen things weird enough, and mopped up puke gross enough to get a certain wisdom on things monstrous. Either way, he's a font of sage (if cryptic) advice from the homespun to the assumption-busting.



## Grade Level

The Janitor is a constant, unchanging no matter the school setting.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 2 (P.E. +2, Kicking +2, Dodge 2, Always Seems to Be There +4).

**Guts** 4 (Wind +1, Courage +4, Wrestling +2).

**Hands** 4 (Shop +3, Punching +2, Blocking +2, Sling a Mop Like a Janitorial Ninja +4).

**Attention** 4 (Out-Think +3, Remember +3, Notice +3, Eye for Trouble Brewin' +4).

**Wits** 2 (Charm +3, Putdown +1, Connive +2, Cowboy Wisdom +4).

## Relationships

You 3, The School 2.

## Jock

**POV:** He plays sports and everyone loves him. You defend reality from the hideous things from beyond space and time and people think you're weird and creepy.

School Spirit is only worth so much—especially when the Spirit is really a great slobbering thing that lives on the astral plane and devours student souls. But you're *still* required to go to the pep rallies. Some Jocks are also Bullies, but even the ones that aren't active a-holes are pretty hard to deal with.

**Real Deal:** The Jock is under a lot of pressure. He has to perform on the field, look good and be friendly off it, and indulge in an appropriate amount of excused delinquency without letting it ruin his game or get him in any trouble with the law that being the starting QB can't get him out of. So we should pity rather than hate and fear the Jock. Right? Hell, no. If he's nice, he's not even on your radar. If you have any contact with the Jock—outside some highly-unlikely cross-clique friendship—then the Jock is helping make your life more miserable. You've got a monster, but he got game.

**Grade Level:** Jocks start out in elementary school as kids who are good at sports, but in junior high, when organized sports becomes a big thing at school, the young princes get their crown. They get exponentially more powerful in high school, where athletics achieves almost religious importance in some schools.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 4 (P.E. +5, Kicking +3, Dodge +3).

**Guts** 2 (Wind +5, Courage +2, Wrestling +3).

**Hands** 4 (Shop +1, Punching +4, Blocking +4).

**Attention** 2 (Out-Think +2, Remember +1, Notice +2, Eye On the Ball +4).

**Wits** 3 (Charm +2, Putdown +2, Connive +2, Everybody Loves Him Even If He's A Tool +4).

## Relationships

Girlfriend (a cheerleader or Your Crush) 1, The Team 3, Coach 2.

## Older Brother

**POV:** He's annoying when he talks like he knows everything, but he really does look out for you. And unlike your Parents, he really does remember what it was like to be your age. You know you can trust him. He's sometimes into stuff you don't really get, but he says you'll understand one day. So far, he's always been right about that.

**Real Deal:** The Older Brother is the next grade-level category ahead—if you're in elementary school he's in junior high, and if you're in junior high he's in high school. If you're in high school, he's a senior.

He's been through all the same stuff that you are currently going through. He's a valuable source of advice, and sometimes confusion when he introduces things a kid isn't ready to deal with yet. Some older brothers are jerks, but this one isn't. If you want a nasty Older Brother, then the Hood or Bully template works fine.

## Grade Level

Any. The Older Brother is one category older.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 3 (P.E. +3, Kicking +2, Dodge +2).

**Guts** 3 (Wind +3, Courage +3, Wrestling +2).

**Hands** 3 (Shop +2, Punching +2, Blocking +3).

**Attention** 3 (Out-Think +3, Remember +3, Notice +3, See That Something is Bugging You +4).

**Wits** 4 (Charm +3, Putdown +2, Connive 3, Give Great Brotherly Advice +3).

## Relationships

You 3, The Fam 2, His New S.O. 1.

## O'Malley the Anti-Drug Dog

**POV:** "Hey, kids! Don't do drugs!" O'Malley is a guy in a suit who comes to your school and talks about drugs, vis-à-vis that they are bad. But once he arrives, he seems to hang around for a long time. Like, weeks.

You caught him poking around in your locker yesterday, and when you got mad he said, "Somebody with nothing to hide has nothing to fear from O'Malley the Anti-Drug Dog!" And he stared at you with those big glass eyes of his.

Last night you looked outside your house and he was standing on the sidewalk, just looking at your bedroom window. By the time you got outside, *he was gone*.

**Real Deal:** O'Malley the Anti-Drug Dog jumped from the fevered brain of David Lynch right into the schoolyard. He hands out "Bark At Drugs!" buttons. He talks in a bouncy cartoony voice. And he's a total cipher. Finding anything out about him is darn near impossible—he's a figure of



menace, weirdness and surrealistic confusion. He's a mystery wrapped in an enigma wrapped in a giant dog costume. And if someone ever tells their monster to eat him, it will say, "*Eat who? There's nobody there.*"

## Grade Level

O'Malley is just as freaky in elementary school as in high school, though kids might have a stronger sense of the surreal as they get older.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 4 (P.E. +2, Kicking +2, Dodge +2, Vanish When You're Not Looking +5).

**Guts** 2 (Wind +2, Courage +2, Wrestling +2, Implacably Cheerful Anti-Drug Message +5).

**Hands** 2 (Shop +0, Punching +2, Blocking +2).

**Attention** 5 (Out-Think +5, Remember +2, Notice +2, Track Suspected Druggies +5, Hairy Enigma +5).

**Wits** 3 (Charm +2, Putdown +2, Connive +2, Dopey Cartoonish Persona +4).

## Relationships

None. Even the Cops can't really remember hiring him. But they must have . . . right?

## Parent

**POV:** Yeah, you know they love you, at least in a theoretical way. But they just don't *get* you. And sure, you love them—not that you want to walk with them at the Mall anymore. It's just that they're *parents*, you know? They're the opposite of cool. If you mixed them with cool, the resulting explosion would destroy us all. Parents mean trouble—and keeping them in the dark as much as possible is mission-critical.

**Real Deal:** They know more than they let on, and when they say "I understand," they usually really do. Being a kid is confusing enough, and now that it's complicated by MySpace, cell phones, metal detectors at school, No Child Left Behind, and monsters, it must be awful for the poor little ones.

Parents remember wiping poopie off their kids' butts, and that makes it hard to take the teen-drama thing too seriously, even if they do remember what it was like for them. No parent is perfect, but most really do want good things for their kids.

## Grade Level

It's parents. First you worship them, then you resent them, then you hate them, and one day you learn to like them.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 2 (P.E. +2, Kicking +2, Dodge 2, Come Home at Worst Possible Time +4).

**Guts** 3 (Wind +2, Courage +3, Wrestling +2).

**Hands** 2 (Shop +2, Punching +2, Blocking +2).

**Attention** 3 (Out-Think +3, Remember +3, Notice +3,

Read Their Kids +4, Make Money at a Job +3).

**Wits** 3 (Charm +3, Putdown +2, Connive +2, Mommy/Daddy +4).

## Relationships

You 3, Each Other 2, Family 1.

## Paparazzi

**POV:** You know what's worse than being a kid in this dumpy little town? Being a kid in this dumpy little town with people shouting at you and taking pictures all the time.

The real media furor over monsters died down a couple of years ago, but whenever there's any kind of big stink or throwdown, the jackals come out, and it's flashbulbs and telephoto lenses and guys rooting around in your trash to see what kind of toothpaste you use.

And they never use the pic where you're looking cool, the wind is making your hair float and your monster is gazing lovingly at you. Nope, on the cover of *Sensation Weekly* it's always a shot where you look like a crazed druggie and your monster is snarling at the camera like a rabid kill-crazed squid.

**Real Deal:** Monsters are legitimate news in fits and starts, but sensational news pretty consistently. People want to know what kids with monsters are doing. The tabloids have their darlings—usually pretty blonde kids—but are equally likely to do a screwjob on them if they think nasty headlines will sell more rag. A Paparazzo is almost certain to get a pic of something a kid would rather not have on film. It's a question then of how far he and his monster are willing to take things to get it back.

## Grade Level

These guys have *no* respect. They'll take pictures of you at 10 as happily as at 18. The headlines will differ though—"Parents Let Child Play With Monster" instead of "Violent Teen Unleashes Terrible Trained Beast."

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 3 (P.E. +3, Kicking +2, Dodge +2, Lurk Outside Waiting to Ambush You +4).

**Guts** 3 (Wind +2, Courage +3, Wrestling +2).

**Hands** 3 (Shop +1, Punching +1, Blocking +2, Snap a Pic +5).

**Attention** 4 (Out-Think +2, Remember +3, Notice +3, Ear for Scandal +4).

**Wits** 3 (Charm +3, Putdown +2, Connive +5, Press Pass +3).

## Relationships

The B----- Editor 2.

## Random Crazy

**POV:** Oh Jeeze, that guy smells bad. You feel sorry for him

because he's homeless or something, but man, he's acting totally nuts. Your monster is pretty skittish around him, too. He says the crazy guy is like a radio station broadcasting nothing but static and cursewords, and he'll attract only the wrong kind of attention doing that. Attention you don't need.

But the crazy guy just won't move along—he follows, and he spouts crazy-talk that almost makes sense, but doesn't. And weirder, he can totally see your monster even when it's hiding, and this either freaks him out or sends him into ecstatic laughter. If you give him a few bucks, he'll go away for a little while, but he always seems to find you again.

**Real Deal:** A Random Crazy might just be an unfortunate with mental issues, but is more likely someone aware of the supernatural and maddened by it, driven over the edge by the terrible insights they can't forget. He might have started out like a Wizard, or perhaps he's psychic, or he suffered a trauma at the hands of an otherworldly being.

Regardless, his crazy is a potentially insightful crazy—he can see monsters and other things, and perhaps offer useful information on them. Equally possible, a Random Crazy might attack with a sharpened bean-can lid, and rant about mind control implants and picking up Rush Limbaugh on his fillings.

## Grade Level

Other than the experience being more frightening when you're younger, being accosted by a Random Crazy can happen to anyone.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 2 (P.E. +2, Kicking +1, Dodge +1, Shuffle Around at Remarkable Speed +4).

**Guts** 1 (Wind +2, Courage +1, Wrestling +2, Turtle Up and Weep +5).

**Hands** 2 (Shop +2, Punching +2, Blocking +2, Cut you with a Homemade Pigsticker +3).

**Attention** 2 (Out-Think +1, Remember 1, Notice +3, See the Naked Horrors Hidden Under Reality +5).

**Wits** 1 (Charm +1, Putdown +1, Connive +4, Freak You Out +5).

## Relationships

The Voices In His Head 3, His Shrink 2, The Guy Who Shares His Cardboard Box 1.

## Teacher

**POV:** Your day-to-day adversaries. They see you more than your Parents, they know how to push your buttons, and they hold your future in their nicotine-stained fingers. They are the Tom to your Jerry.

Teachers come in lots of sizes and flavors, but all are united in their hostility towards shenanigans and tomfoolery. What's life without tomfoolery? It's bleak, boring, and awful, that's what.

**Real Deal:** Teachers are caught in a weird place—they are

lauded as heroes by politicians, then paid crap to do a really hard job. You either have to actually care about teaching the chilluns, or you have to be a burnout punching the clock till retirement. Teachers have it rough, but that won't stop them from the putting the smack down if pesky kids and their monsters get out of line. Few things short of a visit from the cops can get a Parent more riled than a call from a Teacher.

## Grade Level

You got school, you got teachers.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 2 (P.E. +2, Kicking +1, Dodge +1).

**Guts** 3 (Wind +2, Courage +3, Wrestling +1, Fight the System for the Kids/Slog Through Thankless Miserable Day +4).

**Hands** 2 (Shop +2, Punching +2, Blocking +2, Throw Chalk +4).

**Attention** 4 (Out-Think +3, Remember +4, Notice +3, Spot a Cheater +3).

**Wits** 3 (Charm +2, Putdown +2, Connive +1, Instill the Joy of Learning/Put the Fear of an "F" Into the Little Punks +4).

## Relationships

Secret Feelings for Another Teacher 2, Family 2, The Children 2.

## Trenchcoat Mafioso

**POV:** Voted "Most Likely To Go Postal And Shoot Up the School." You know this kid—he's angry and frightening and pathetic and unpredictable in equal measure. He fringes on the Geek and the Hood's territory. He's got a thing for faux-medieval cutlery. He glares at everyone. He listens to death metal. He wears a trench coat. His social skills are not so great.

It's like he decided that if he couldn't be liked, then being feared was pretty good—at least better than being mocked and humiliated and beaten up. Unlike the Hood though, the Trenchcoat Mafioso doesn't have much to offer in the way of extracurricular fun. He's too into his own thing: brooding, being unhappy, and cleaning his reproduction katana.

**Real Deal:** This kid is wound really tight. He's got all the warning signs—he's starting fires, he's hurting animals, he's wetting the bed. He's got a bone to pick with the whole world, and it's only a matter of time before he does something crazy. If his uncle has an unlocked gun cabinet, it might be shooting. If he has a monster, it might be something much, much worse.

If the Trenchcoat Mafioso decides the PCs are part of the conspiracy of hateful a-holes which persecute him, then they might have to make a nasty decision, and their monsters might have to take decisive and fatal action. *not* how you want to remember your freshman year.

## Grade Level

This kid has a definite high school vibe. It takes that long to build up his level of resentment and repressed rage.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 2 (P.E. +2, Kicking +1, Dodge +4).

**Guts** 3 (Wind +2, Courage +4, Wrestling +2).

**Hands** 3 (Shop +2, Punching +2, Blocking +2, Learned to Shoot With Survivalist Uncle +3).

**Attention** 2 (Out-Think +3, Remember 2, Notice +2, Remember Every Wrong Ever Done to Him +5).

**Wits** 2 (Charm +1, Putdown +3, Connive +2, Make People Think He's Craaaaaazy +4).

## Relationships

Gun-Nut (or Wizard) Uncle 3, Pet Pitbull Mix 2.

## Younger Sister

**POV:** She's *so annoying*. Always into your stuff. Always taking your things. Always following you around, asking stupid questions and bugging you about your monster. She's impossible!

Your Parents tell you to be nice to her, and to take her with you when you go out, but Jeez, they have no idea! How could you and she have come from the same family?

But—and you'll totally kill anyone who says you said

so—one time you had your monster swallow a guy who was picking on her. He was totally fine afterwards. He just needed a few stitches, and a little therapy. But *you're* the only one who's allowed to pick on your little sister.

**Real Deal:** The Younger Sister is always around, so she has to be in the same grade-level category as her older sibling, but one or two years younger. So if you're in fifth grade, she's in third, but you're both in elementary school. She's so annoying because she idolizes her older sibling and she secretly hopes that monsters run in families.

## Grade Level

Any.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 2 (P.E. +2, Kicking +1, Dodge +1, Sneak Around After You +4).

**Guts** 2 (Wind +2, Courage +4, Wrestling +1).

**Hands** 2 (Shop +1, Punching +1, Blocking +2, Jimmy Your Lock +3).

**Attention** 2 (Out-Think +3, Remember 2, Notice +3, Knows What You're Up To +4)

**Wits** 2 (Charm +3, Putdown +1, Connive +3, Get You in Trouble With the Parents +5).

## Relationships

You 3, Parents 2, Crush on Your Best Friend 1.

# CAMPAIGN JUMPSTART: WELCOME TO PLUTO

When they decided that Pluto wasn't really a planet, the town went sort of crazy and it hasn't been the same since. Lots of stuff people thought was carefully buried got stirred up again. Lots of people suddenly had things that they had to deal with. Pluto, California, went from a sleepy, comfortably run-down cottage community to a more popular beach town, and came into its own as the center of weirdness, scandal, class rivalry, and sensational murder on the American West Coast.

Pluto is a town divided between the classes. The rich rule the Westside, with all their beachfront houses and gated communities. The poor—most of whom work for the rich directly or indirectly—live on the Eastside. All the kids go to Pluto High, though, and friction and rivalry is pretty intense.

Pluto is also a town where stars too weird or scandalous for Hollywood go to live in modest seclusion. The matinee idol who got caught with the bellboy; the old starlet who's had so much surgical work she has to hide her immobile face behind a veil; the director of such famous children's films as *Hector Goes Home* and *Hector Goes to Australia* who gave up his lucrative career to produce experimental features such as *Breast Tissue Autopsy Beach Party* and *Pooping on the Christ*.

Lots of drugs move through Pluto just to feed the Holly-

wood crowd's insatiable hunger for blow and speed. There's even a little branch office of the Yakuza down from Seattle to run the trade. Mr. Komi is a really pleasant old fellow, who'll laugh with you over sake before cutting your throat with a straight razor. If asked how he ended up in such a lousy town, he'll smile sadly, vaguely wave his three-fingered left hand in the air and say, "Man is a creature of folly and hope."

And then there are all the mystics, cultists, psychics, occultists, cabalists, and assorted other mixed nuts who all wander into town, attracted by the prospect of gullible Hollywood types to fleece, or the charged metaphysical atmosphere of the town. It's a weird sort of a place, when you get under the surface.

## Default Grade Level

High school. In "Welcome to Pluto" you get the teen dramatics mixing with real-world crime, high school angst contrasting with occult horrors. It's about mysteries, and things like sex, drugs, gambling, stealing, blackmail, and other popular pastimes. The themes of class war also don't really start hitting hard until high school, where the poor kids and the rich kids end up cohabiting in the same school.

# Themes

This one deals with mysteries—ideally, personal ones—which overlap and intermingle with daily concerns. People turn to monster-keepers as a last resort, and ask for help, usually when dealing with some weird personal issue that crosses a PC's big personal mystery.

# Inspirations

*Veronica Mars*, mostly, and the excellent film *Brick*.

# Who Knows What?

The revelation of monsters happened a few years back, and people have been able to more or less get used to the idea. Kids with monsters are still outcasts—it's just too weird—but the SWAT teams don't show up anymore, and so long as your monster doesn't do anything too crazy, people treat you like someone with a bizarre pet. Monsters are strictly forbidden on school grounds, on pain of expulsion, but they can hide so well, who's to know?

# Monsters and Kids

Kids with monsters in “Welcome to Pluto” are on one hand treated as suspicious, weird, and scary, as outsiders and non-conformists (and not the cool kind). On the other hand, they’re also the people who get asked to help out with things—personal issues, investigations, and any hint of the occult. Until people need them, they generally ignore at best, deride at worst. When they do find they need some monstrous assistance, then, well, things are *different*.

Every kid in this campaign has a *mystery*—something they're driven to find out for personal reasons. Who killed my best friend? Why did my Mom vanish? When I passed out at that party last year and had the weird dream with the chanting, what happened between falling asleep and waking up naked on the beach with this weird tattoo on my back?

# CAMPAIGN JUMPSTART: THE XMFL

“Innnnnnn this corner, weighing in at one-thousand and nine-hundred pounds, we have . . . GOLGOTH the DEVOURER! And in this corner, weighing in at one-thousand and nine pounds, the SHIVER SNAKE! Leeeeeeeets get ready to Ruuuuuuuuuuuuummmmmble!”

It was inevitable. Kids get monsters. The monsters like to fight. The kids train the monsters to fight better. People pay to watch them go at it.

The Extreme Monster Fighting League was a gimmie from the word "Go."

The XMFL was born of professional wrestling, but differs in some major ways. Unlike wrestling, there's no kayfabe in the XMFL—it's all real, it's all unscripted, and it's all no-holds-barred monster mayhem. Rather than script

## Hooks

**Gang War:** Two local Eastsider street gangs look like they're going to rumble for serious over some pride thing. Some people are going to get killed, and Rico, a new member of the Eighth Street Warriors, comes to you asking you to look into it. He's heard rumors that El Muertos have a monster in their posse, and he doesn't want to get killed over some stupid crap.

What's really going on with this gang war? Why would they break the truce that's held for five years? And can you avoid getting caught up in the middle of it?

**Kidnap:** The daughter of one of the richest and most powerful families in Pluto vanishes from her bedroom one night. There's no sign of forced entry or struggle. She vanished from her third-floor bedroom, and the door was locked from the inside until her father broke it in when she wouldn't answer the door or her cell. He found a tape recorder and her left pinky finger.

The recorder had a message telling him to wait for further instructions, and not to call the police. Instead, he pulled some strings and got the MIBs involved—how else could someone have gotten in and taken his darling without unnatural aid?

Suddenly anyone with a monster friend is a suspect. Her little brother comes to you asking for some help because he's afraid that his Dad blew it by calling in the authorities, and that his sister is in real trouble as a result. With the MIB on the case, she's not the only one.

**Bad Dice:** A kid the PCs know comes up, asking for help. He's in serious trouble with the local gambling minisyndicate. He's run up a crazy debt with them, and rather than money they want him to steal files from his Dad—the county sheriff.

The files relate to whatever Big Mystery Case the PCs are hung up in. Do they work things so that they end up with the files? Do they prove that the syndicate cheated the kid out of his money, and they need to lay off? Do they help him swipe the files to cover his marker?

drama and characters for athletic performers as in pro wrestling, the XMFL is treated more like a reality TV show, with the real actions and interactions of kids and monsters both in and out of the ring filmed, then edited to make it seem more dramatic.

But the creative directors of the XMFL have it easy—kids are drama machines. Seeing nonhuman alien monsters rip each other apart gets a deliciously human touch when they zoom in close on the tears of the kid who's monster just got trounced. Kids fight for scholarships and fabulous prizes. Their monsters usually get to really like the constant carnage, and some have real trouble transitioning back to just being regular monsters when the season is done.

Big bucks are made and bet on XMFL matches, and



so corruption, organized crime, and back-biting internal politics is the rule rather than the exception. The XMFL sometimes even adds this to their heady reality TV brew, letting the audience know about a fix or dirty deal while the kids and their monsters remain ignorant. It sucks the punters right in.

## Default Grade Level

Junior high. The kids competing in the XMFL are pretty young and lack the comparative sophistication of high school, but they aren't totally children like in elementary school. They are competitive but still immature. They love to win, but still cry if they lose. It's an awkward age. . . .

## Themes

Competition, the weight of fame, the cost of failure, and the way lucrative sports careers can snatch kids right out of high school before they have the sense or judgment to deal with it.

## Inspirations

Bad reality TV. Professional wrestling. Extreme fighting competitions. Roman bloodsports. Bear baiting. All those monster-trainer anime series. The NBA.

## Who Knows What?

Everyone knows just about everything. Some kids have monster friends. Monsters are sort of scary but also really cool, and they can sometimes do wondrous magical things. There's some controversy about putting kids through things like the XMFL, but the spokesman for the league scoffs at such complaints, and points to the number of XMFL trainers who are now going to great colleges on what they won

in the league. He doesn't say anything about how many of those trainers are on serious psychotropic medication while recovering from the loss of their monster friend.

## Monsters and Kids

Trainers (as kids with monsters are known) are famous. Their friends do the impossible on command. Some are looking at careers in search and rescue, some in heavy construction, others in exploration. But lots of trainers get sucked into using their monster friends for public spectacle and entertainment. As the human face of a monster, a trainer is recognized like a celebrity, and hounded by people looking for autographs and a look at their monster. Fame can really suck.

## Hooks

**A Monster-Head in your Bed:** With all the money being wagered on your fights, it was only a matter of time before someone made you an offer: Take this lovely suitcase full of cash and this new Nintendo Wii, and see to it that Toothy Lucy takes a dive in the fourth round. In case these lovely gifts aren't incentive enough, here is a picture we took of your Mom. Note the crosshairs. Almost like we were pointing a rifle at her instead of a camera. So, do we have a deal?

**The Fan:** It's bad enough you saw the slashfic they're writing about you on the Internet, but now you have to deal with psycho fans all the time. This one guy always seems to get backstage at all your fights. He's there, waiting to ask you inane questions about what you feed your monster, or why he used his Corrosive Slime attack rather than his Heel-Spurs attack, as his acid glands were already in bad shape by the third round. He starts calling you at home. He starts showing up at your school. He starts trying to break into your house. How do you deal with him without letting your monster make lunch of him?

# CAMPAIGN JUMPSTART: UGLY SECRETS

The thing that lives under your bed just showed up one day, like a puppy in the rain. Sad, horrific and pathetic. You couldn't turn it away, but what is it? Scary, that's what. When your stepfather came home, and he had that look like he was going to touch you in the wrong way again, the thing from under the bed dragged him under and made noises like a dog with a shoe. Your stepfather's heels pounded the floor but he couldn't scream because it sounded like something was being shoved down his throat. Afterwards your new friend even licked the blood out of the carpet.

When your Mom got home, she asked about your stepfather, but you said he went out for more beer and smokes, and she believed you. When he didn't come home, she cursed him, and then you heard her crying after you were supposed to be asleep. Your friend pulled up the covers for

you, and then slipped back under the bed. Now he's just one more ugly secret for you to keep.

## Default Grade Level

Elementary school. The horrors of this setting hit the hardest when they happen to and involve really young kids. This makes for some pretty uncomfortable possibilities, and nobody should have to deal with issues they don't want to deal with in a game that's supposed to be fun.

It's possible to play this setting for gallows humor, like an *Addams Family* comic strip. But it's also possible to play it serious, and deal with some of the terrible things that can happen to kids. When it's about older kids, the impact is less—which might be exactly what you want.

## Themes

By far the most serious of these sample campaigns, “Ugly Secrets” deals with the awful things that can happen to kids in our society, and with the possible reactions and choices such a kid might make if suddenly given the power to do real serious damage to their tormentors.

## Inspirations

Stephen King’s *Carrie*. The anime series *Kite*. The intense desire to visit horrific punishments upon those who commit terrible crimes on the weak and the innocent.

## Who Knows What?

Nobody knows anything. The PCs are the only kids with monster friends any of them know about—and they only just met their scary new friends. Their monsters spy out others of their kind, and the PCs get together however they want. It’s all brand new. Other kids sense something weird about the PCs, but they can’t name it. Whether they keep their secrets, or blow the whole thing wide open is their choice. *Consequences* is a major theme for this thing.

## Monsters and Kids

Kids with monsters have only just met them, within a week or less of the start of the game. They’re still getting used to the idea. Their monsters are also wary of flashing their mojo for all to see. They will if they have to or are told to, but stick to hiding if they can get away with it.

## Hooks

**Bodies:** Your monster keeps killing people. Bad people, sure, but you can’t hide any more bodies in the big freezer in the garage, and one night soon your Mom is going to go out for frozen peas and find them.

How do you get rid of the bodies without getting caught? You’ve watched enough *CSI* to know about how it works, so you’re really freaked out about leaving DNA or something on the corpses. Your just monster licks blood from his talons and looks innocent.

**Devil, I Cast Thee Out:** You and your monsters start attracting the attention of the local mega-church’s fiery pastor. He sees you one day and turns white, and gets away as fast as he can. He *saw* something. Something most adults totally miss. He saw your monster. Now his latent tendencies for paranoia and religious mania have ripened, and he starts a program to capture and cleanse you and yours, to drive off the demons that plague you. When he finds he’s powerless against your monsters, he’ll suffer a crisis of faith, perhaps, and start looking for more *specialized* expertise in dealing with the occult.

**Crap or Get Off the Pot:** You’re looking down at him and he’s crying, peeing himself, begging you not to let your monster rip him open and eat his innards. Your most hated enemy, entirely at your mercy. It’s in your power to end him now—as fast or slow as you like. To extract as much pain from him as he put on you. You can’t help trying to balance the accounts in your head, looking back at what he did, and how you came to have him cowering before you like this.

Flashback, one month ago.

# BEING SOMEBODY: PLAY-READY CHARACTERS

## Tommy Mezlowski

Tommy is a moody kid. He’s quiet, but not shy—rather, he stew in his own juices, then acts in an impulsive explosion. He’s skinny, and his eyes are shadowed and dark like his Mom’s. His Dad cut out when he was young, and it was just him, his Mom and his sister.

Tommy dresses neat. A Wal-Mart preppie: not much style, but he’s tidy in a way most kids aren’t. His clothes might be cheap, but they’re clean and unwrinkled. He’s got the style sense of a pine tree—he wears the same outfit regardless of the season.

Tommy always looks out for his sister, and sometimes he gets overprotective. Sometimes Flytrap Joe gets involved. Tommy met Flytrap Joe when he won third place in the school science fair for his lemon-juice battery. The prize was a tiny Venus flytrap in a pot covered with a plastic dome. Tommy really liked it, and caught flies for it to eat. After munching one, the flytrap said, “The green ones are tastier.” It grew and grew and grew and grew until Tommy had to plant it in the yard. Flytrap Joe’s roots

are infinite fractals worming their way not into soil, but into the fabric of reality. He can pop up anywhere, a skill Tommy appreciates when, after brooding, he has one of his manic fits of action.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 2 (Dodging +1, Kicking +0, P.E. +0).

**Guts** 2 (Courage +2; Wind +0 Wrestling +0).

**Hands** 4 (Blocking +0, Punching +1, Shop +0).

**Attention** 3 (Out-Think +1; Remember +2; Notice +0).

**Wits** 4 (Charm +2, Connive +2, Putdown +4).

## Relationships

Mom 2, Little Sister 3, Flytrap Joe 2.

## Tommy’s Monster: Flytrap Joe

**Appearance:** Flytrap Joe is a disturbing mass of giant flytrap mouths, leaves and lashing vines. His fractal roots extend through higher dimensional spaces, and so he can pop up anywhere.

**Personality:** Itching to help. Flytrap Joe wants to help so bad he sometimes goes way way overboard. He talks like a third-rate mobster, and calls Tommy “Boss.”

**Way to Hide:** Flytrap Joe’s roots extend everywhere, so he’s always waiting to pop up right when Tommy needs him, springing up out of the ground.

**Favorite Thing:** Eating insects—the bigger the better. If he can’t get insects, then neighborhood dogs and cats tend to go missing.

## Bits and Bobs

**Locations 1-3: Tangled Mass of Plant Bits** (10 dice, Defends, Tough x5).

**Locations 4-5: Strangling Vines** (6 dice, Attacks, Defends, Useful [grabbing and holding and breaking and choking], Awesome x1).

**Locations 6-7: Flytrap Jaws** (8 dice, Attacks, Gnarly x2).

**Location 8: Glossy Leaves** (3d, Useful [echo sense], Awesome x2).

**Locations 9-10: Fractal Roots** (6 dice, Defends, Useful [transport people and stuff], Useful [can’t be snuck up on], Awesome x2).

## Notes

With his Tangled Mass of Plant Bits, Flytrap Joe has one large hit location (1-3) which is darned near impossible to hurt (the Tough x5), and he can use its really big dice pool for active defensive actions, just swamping attacks in his writhing leaves and mouths and tendrils.

With his Strangling Vines he can hoist sixteen hundred pounds out to a range of 640 yards, plus he can use them to deflect attacks, hurt people, or tangle enemies up like a grappling attack. This is Awesome, too, so he can set one die to any value desired before rolling the rest.

His Flytrap Jaws are seriously bad news. He attacks with eight dice and inflicts +2 damage. That’s a minimum of 3 damage with any hit. Brutal.

His Glossy Leaves sense vibrations in the air, letting him sense his surroundings like a bat, “seeing” in all directions—and he’s double-Awesome with this, meaning he can set one of his dice to any value desired after rolling them.

Finally, his fractal roots extend everywhere, and he can slip into the ground, and pop up anywhere he likes. If he swallows people and stuff, he can bring them along with him, and he does this really reliably too.

The experience of being eaten and then popping out of a seedpod somewhere else is disturbing if you’re not as used to it as Tommy is. If needed, he can pop into the ground and pop up during combat, using his roots to defend.

## Madison Kate Sinclair-Stevenson

Madison is a very busy girl. She is in the school jazz band (clarinet). She plays soccer in a competitive private league. She takes advanced placement classes. She volunteers at local homeless shelters. She runs for student government. She helps decorate the school during Spirit Week. She



MANSPERGER 2K7



takes private tutoring during the weekends to help keep her ahead of the academic competition. She sings in the church choir. She takes karate.

She also sees three therapists, takes four mood-altering drugs and a prescription antacid, and secretly wishes a monster would come and eat her parents.

Her parents are lovely people who've firmly convinced themselves that Madison Kate loves her busy schedule and numerous achievements, and wouldn't quit anything given the chance. Not that they give her the chance.

The problem with Madison Kate's secret wish is that monsters are real, and her friend Yog'So-Soft would be happy to do the deed if Madison Kate ever voices it aloud.

Madison isn't sure who she really is. So far, she's been defined by the expectations she fulfills and the achievements she wins—but Yog'So-Soft has this way of asking questions that makes her stop and think, "What do I really want?"

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 3 (Dodging +1, Kicking +1, P.E. +1).

**Guts** 3 (Courage +1, Wind +1, Wrestling +0).

**Hands** 3 (Blocking +2, Punching +2, Shop +0).

**Attention** 3 (Out-Think +1, Remember +2, Notice +1).

**Wits** 3 (Charm +2, Connive +0, Putdown +0).

## Relationships

The Parental Units 1, Tutor 2, Yog'So-Soft 4.

## Madison Kate's Monster: Yog'So-Soft

**Appearance:** Yog is like a nightmare teddy bear grown to enormous size, clawed, shambling, with a fanged vertical mouth where the seams of its face split open. On his belly you can still see the cute felt heart, splattered and blackened by unspeakable drippings.

**Personality:** Quiet and wise. Madison and Yog'So-Soft are almost of one mind, their bond is so strong. Yog was dormant in Madison's teddy for so long, when it awakened to its true nature they were already intimately linked. Yog offers quiet advice, and Socratically encourages Madison to find herself.

**Way to Hide:** Yog'So-Soft turns back into Madison's tattered old teddy bear, and she hides him in her bookbag.

**Favorite Thing:** When Madison stands up for herself and does something she likes for her own reasons. Yog'So-Soft can't tell when these things are right or wrong, so he has a habit of encouraging her to act out on her anger, because it's easiest to get some original thought that way.

## Bits and Bobs

**Locations 1-2: Shambling Legs** (8 dice, Defends, Useful [shambling quite fast], Tough x1).

**Locations 3-4: Slashing Talons** (4 dice, Attacks, Useful [rip open mystical doors, seals and barriers], Gnarly x2, Awesome x2, Wicked Fast x1).

**Locations 5-6: Tummy with Stained Felt Heart** (6 dice, Useful (manipulate emotions), Awesome x2, Tough x2).



**Locations 7-8: Vertical Maw** (8 dice, Attacks, Useful [exhale sleepy-dust that knocks people out], Gnarly x2).

**Locations 9-10: Glassy Eyes** (7 dice, Useful [see in the dark], Useful [see what people want the most in the world], Awesome x2).

## Notes

With his Shambling Legs Yog can dodge and evade attacks, and, if needed, shuffle at about 250 miles per hour.

His Slashing Talons are seriously dangerous—fast, accurate, and really damaging. But the small dice pool makes them vulnerable. Outside of combat, the claws can easily shred magical barriers, cages, walls, locks, or other mystical obstructions.

The Felt Heart sewn to his tummy can project a beam that lets him manipulate emotions really really well. Resisting it demands a Guts + Courage roll.

His creepy Vertical Maw can bite foes horribly, or he can exhale a cloud of sleepy-dust that can knock people out—even crowds of normal people, quite easily. When they wake, they can't distinguish the last half hour they were awake from weird dreams, which Yog'So-Soft uses to cover his tracks.

Finally, his Glassy Eyes see as well in total darkness as in total light, and if he squints he can see what someone wants most in the entire world. He still can't see this in Madison, but he keeps whispering questions, and keeps squinting at her.

## Ralph 'Dog' Jones

Ralph won't tell you why he's living on the street, or where he's from, or what his real last name is. He doesn't even like being called "Ralph." Instead, he likes the nickname he got from the squatters he used to hang out with. They called him Dog, sort of making fun of him, but he liked it. If anybody asks, he says his name is "Dog Jones."

He's not living with other people right now. He's got his own squat in an abandoned Victorian in a pretty bad part of town, but he doesn't have any trouble with the neighbors. He's got a rep. They say, "Don't mess with Dog. Somebody's looking out for him. He's a good kid. If you're nice to him, someone looks out for you too, sometimes."

That's because Dog is friends with Mister Whispers, and Mister Whispers is *everywhere*.

Mister Whispers is a swarm of rats—big, sleek, red-eyed rats. Rats that make cats wish they were tigers, and make tigers glad they live in Asia. Dog knows what's going on in his adopted neighborhood because Mister Whispers lives up to his name. He listens and he whispers to Dog.

Dog's moral compass finds north every time, but he doesn't have much sense of the geography. Bad things happen to bad people in Dog's neighborhood. And even worse than bad people, bad monsters really tick him off. Monsters are for helping people and learning secrets and scrounging for day-old donuts, not for hurting innocent people.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 4 (Dodging +2, Kicking +1, P.E. +3).

**Guts** 4 (Courage +2, Wind +1, Wrestling +0).

**Hands** 2 (Blocking +0, Punching +0, Shop +1).

**Attention** 2 (Out-Think +2, Remember +0, Notice +1).

**Wits** 2 (Charm +0, Connive +2, Putdown +0).

## Relationships

Leftie (a genial old wino) 1, Carlita (a maternal prostitute) 1, The Neighborhood 3, Officer Wilson 1, Mister Whispers 1.

## Dog's Monster: Mister Whispers

**Appearance:** Mister Whispers is a swarm of rats—big, dangerous, red-eyed rats. His voice is a chorus of tiny rat-whispers.

**Personality:** Mister Whispers is subtle, quiet and watchful. He speaks with economy and tends to say just the right thing to reassure Dog. Mister Whispers lacks complex motivations. He thinks very like an ordinary rat in many ways, if all those individual rat brains added up to a lot of raw intelligence. He doesn't understand human society at all, but can interpret it from an animalistic point of view that is sometime disturbingly accurate.

**Way to Hide:** Mister Whispers is in the walls, under the floor-boards, peeking out from manhole covers and storm drains. He's always waiting, ready to swarm out if Dog needs him. He's always lurking and listening.

**Favorite Thing:** Secrets. Mister Whispers loves listening to secrets and watching secret things. He shares these only with Dog.

## Mister Whisper's Bits & Bobs

**Locations 1-3: Rats!** (10 dice, Useful [sneak and hide, even from other monsters], Tough x3, Awesome x2).

**Locations 4-6: More Rats!** (10 dice, Defends, Useful [knows lots of secrets and can find out more], Tough x3).

**Locations 7-8: Hundreds of Fangs and Claws** (6 dice, Attacks, Useful [gnawing things all up], Wicked Fast x1, Gnarly x1, Tough x1).

**Location 9: Maddening Voice** (3 dice, Useful [drive people mad with whispering from the shadows], Awesome x2).

**Location 10: Knowing Noses** (3 dice, Useful [scrounge useful stuff from trash], Awesome x2).

## Notes

Unlike most monsters, Mister Whispers isn't a single solid thing but a swarming mass of rats acting under the direction of one will. Mister Whispers is awesomely good at hiding, even from other monsters. Few monsters are able to spot him, and humans don't have a chance. If they see a rat or two, that's exactly what they'll assume they are—just ordinary rats.

He's got six hit locations blocked off to cover these wild swarms, and they are both hard to hurt (Tough) and they can take lots of damage (10 dice pools). With More Rats!, Mister Whispers can take powerful defensive actions as

well as knowing lots of secrets and learning more.

When he attacks he swarms up, binding up an opponent's movements or biting horribly. Hundreds of rat jaws can make short work of things Mister Whispers wants to destroy—up to 1,600 pounds at a time. He can gnaw a house down in a matter of minutes if he wants.

When he whispers at people from the shadows, he can drive them mad. He does this when he wants to drive bad people out of the neighborhood.

And he's great at finding things in the trash and refuse of society—nothing new or shiny, but serviceable and solid. A decent bicycle, a bag of bagels, a working computer a few years old. Dog lives pretty well on things Mister Whispers can sniff out.

## Lucy Awai

Born in Hawaii on the big island to two ethnically well-blended parents—a bit Chinese, a bit Caucasian, a bit native Hawaiian, a bit African—Lucy is going to be a stunner when she's older. Right now, she's cute as a button.

Very much the tomboy, she was swimming and surfing when she was right out of diapers, and she loves the sea. After nearly drowning when she got rolled under the chop, she met Aumakua, a huge, scarred old shark god. Aumakua was tired of the ocean and wanted to explore the dryworld. Lucy agreed, and the shark saved her life.

Soon after, Aumakua got to explore the really dry world when Lucy's Mom got a transfer to the continental U.S., in a landlocked state where kids thought water deep enough for swimming always smelled like chlorine.

No surf. No sand. Hardly any sun. Her slang was all wrong. He skin and features too hard to categorize. And the skills that won her acclaim back home, now pretty much useless. Everybody thinks she's weird. And she is. And she's getting weirder.

She dreams of the sea, and in her dreams she surfs while Aumakua circles around her, and when she wakes up she's soaked with brine, and there is seaweed and shells and sometimes lost Spanish gold tangled up in the sheets.

Sometimes she remembers things that haven't happened yet.

Aumakua can come to her during the day, too, swimming in the air as if it were water, cutting left and right, jaws unhinging, black inhuman eyes folding shut as saw-blade teeth shear closed.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 5 (Dodging +1, Kicking +1, P.E. +3).

**Guts** 3 (Courage +1, Wind +2, Wrestling +0).

**Hands** 2 (Blocking +0, Punching +0, Shop +0).

**Attention** 2 (Out-Think +3, Remember +1, Notice +1).

**Wits** 3 (Charm +2, Connive +0, Putdown +0).

## Relationships

Mom and Dad 1, Crush (a boy she hasn't met yet but saw in a vision) 3, Aumakua 3.

## Lucy's Monster: Aumakua

**Appearance:** Aumakua is a huge Mesolithic protoshark, like a megalodon with more scars and personality. He's *huge*, and he swims through the air in deceptively lazy curves, but he's lighting fast. His coal-black little eyes betray an intelligence and awareness his mundane cousins lack. He's not a shark, he's a shark god.

**Personality:** Imperious, arrogant and self-righteous, but doting and indulgent where Lucy is concerned. Aumakua can deny her nothing. For some reason he speaks with what Lucy imagines to be an upper-crust English accent.

**Way to Hide:** Aumakua can swim seas as vast as the whole ocean or as tiny as a single drop of sweat. He shrinks down to whatever scale he needs to fit into a local puddle, a bottle of water, a drop of condensation on the side of a Coke can, or the moisture in the corner of your eye. If you look close, you can see him swimming around in there.

**Favorite Thing:** To reveal his terrible majesty to quivering mortals, and elicit the primal worship of fear from them. Lucy keeps this in check the best she can.

## Bits and Bobs

**Locations 1-2:** Dorsal Fin (6 dice, Useful [inspire primal terror], Tough x1, Awesome x2, Sharing).

**Locations 3-4:** Fins and Tail (8 dice, Defends, Useful [swim in air or water], Tough x1).

**Locations 5-6:** Coal-Black Eyes (6 dice, Useful [find the gates to the Dream Sea], Useful [see the reflections of the future], Useful [bring lost things back from the sea], Awesome x1, Sharing).

**Locations 7-10:** Great and Terrible Jaws (7 dice, Attacks, Useful [steal dreams], Awesome x2, Gnarly x4, Tough x1).

## Notes

Akuma is a pretty simple beast. He's got gigantic jaws that can horribly, horribly bite people. He's got a powerful tail that lets him swim through water or air at over 250 miles per hour. Seeing his dorsal fin cutting in the classic pattern triggers the crazies in people.

But he's got some tricky abilities, too. He can find gates to the Dream Sea, the primal realm where sleepers go when they dream. He can see there, in the reflections of the sun on the water, flashes of the future. And if he catches a sleeper in the Dream Sea he can eat their dreams and know them inside and out.

Even weirder, Lucy shares his ability to enter the Dream Sea while she sleeps, and can remain lucid there. She too can see reflections of the future. She too can bring lost things back from the sea—lost gold, lost socks, lost children, lost souls.

And when she's in a bad mood, Lucy too can inspire the primal terror of the deep, of dog-paddling in the ocean and seeing the great terrible fin slashing the water, closer and closer.

# Daniel Jackstone

Dan Jackstone is a handsome kid. He's got a smile like a million bucks. He listens to the coolest music. He wears the coolest clothing. He's cool to people who aren't even popular. Nobody dares cut him out socially—he's got so many friends, making an enemy of Daniel Jackstone means cutting yourself out. Dan wouldn't have to do anything, either. People would just start thinking you were a jerk for dissing Dan.

Even the teachers like Dan. His grades aren't the best, and perhaps he isn't in class as often as he ought to be, but he tries so hard, and he's such a polite young man—he just needs extra attention, and sometimes just a nudge to the old gradebook to keep him in B's. No harm in it. Daniel Jackstone is a good kid.

It's true. Dan is a good kid. But his monster isn't. His monster wants Dan to be powerful, to be president one day. Dan's monster is Snaketongue, and he lives in mirrors, peeking out when Dan looks in and whispering advice.

Dan only sort of realizes that Snaketongue is part of the reason he's so popular. The monster looks out from the reflections cast in Dan's eyes, influencing people, hacking their minds, laying out the whammy. Dan's terrified of what will happen if people find out about Snaketongue—find out he's been messing with everyone's head. Snake-tongue isn't all that scared about it, himself. If anyone starts to get wise, he's more than able to slither out of his mirrored lair and reveal his school bus-sized serpentine horror. If they aren't totally crackers after that, he'll just eat them and be done with it.

So Dan smiles, and if his smile is getting brittle around the edges, nobody says so.

## Stats and Skills

**Feet** 3 (Dodging +1, Kicking +1, P.E. +1).

**Guts** 3 (Courage +1, Wind +1, Wrestling +1).

**Hands** 3 (Blocking +1, Punching +1, Shop +1).

**Attention** 2 (Out-Think +1, Remember +1, Notice +1).

**Wits** 4 (Charm +1, Connive +1, Putdown +1).

## Relationships

Dad 2, Circle of Hanger-Ons 1, Lacrosse Team 1, Older Brother 2, Snaketongue 1.

## Daniel's Monster: Snaketongue

**Appearance:** Snaketongue is an impossibly long serpent, coiling, rippling, and striking. His scales are iridescent and hypnotic and fascinating. His fangs are like icepicks dripping venom. His voice is rhythmic, sonorous, and utterly, utterly mesmerizing.

**Personality:** Clever and conniving, manipulative and ingratiating. He'll charm and compliment when it serves his ends, and cajole and insult when aggression works better. He's a sneaky, lying jerk who only wants the best for Daniel—the best, of course, being wealth, power, and people fawning over him.

**Way to Hide:** Snaketongue slips in and out of mirrors and reflective surfaces, lurking just around the corner, crawling around behind reflected objects, and generally being creepy. When he wants to help Daniel out, he'll hide in the reflections in Dan's eyes, circling and enchanting.

**Favorite Thing:** To see Daniel lauded as great and basking in the reflected glory of Daniel's acclaim. It doesn't matter if it's earned or not; all that matters is how much people like him and how well they treat him.

## Snaketongue's Bits and Bobs

**Locations 1-3: Hypnotic Scintillating Scales** (9 dice, Useful [inspire affection and fascination], Tough x3, Awesome x2, Sharing).

**Locations 4-6: Great Rippling Coils** (10 dice, Attacks, Defends, Useful [crawl and slither], Tough x3).

**Location 7 : Golden Eyes** (2 dice, Useful [see a person's true self], Awesome x2, Sharing).

**Locations 8-9: Poison Fangs** (6 dice, Attacks, Useful [poison that makes a person act out of character], Wicked Fast x3).

**Location 10: Forked Tongue** (2 dice, Useful [lie with perfection], Awesome x2, Sharing).

## Notes

Snaketongue is a tricky beast. He prefers to act from hiding, using his Hypnotic Scales, Golden Eyes and Forked Tongue to further Dan's popularity. These three abilities are powerful. With them, Daniel can make people like him really, really easily. He can see what others are really like inside really, really easily. And he can tell people things they'll almost always believe—especially if they already like him, and he knows what they're really like.

All this is starting to make Dan contemptuous of normal people.

When Snaketongue comes out of the mirror, he's pretty dangerous. His rippling coils let him crawl and slither at literally hundreds of miles per hour. He can wrap foes up in them or wriggle away from attacks. His large body sections are pretty tough, too.

His poison bite is really, really fast, and those he bites (or who drink his poison, say in a spiked drink) act completely out of character—popular kids act like dorks, bullies cry and run away, strict teachers kick back and let their students go crazy.



# KIDS, MONSTERS AND WILD TALENTS

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*Monsters and Other Childish Things* is a really stripped-down and simplified version of the One-Roll Engine rules found in *Wild Talents*. You need *Wild Talents* or another complete ORE game to get the most out of it. If you want to take the concepts presented here and port them into the full *Wild Talents* rules, here's how you do it.

## Optional Rules

Use the **Shaking It Off** rule for kids (*Wild Talents* page 26), so they can use Willpower to moderate any damage to themselves or their monsters.

## Characters

Create your kid using the normal *Wild Talents* character creation rules. A good point total to build a kid is 250 points, but to reflect their larval status no stat or skill should be higher than 3d without a good, GM-approved reason.

## Archetype

Use the following archetype as the basis for a *Monsters*-style kid-with-monster character. Additional sources, intrinsics and permissions to enhance this archetype can be found in the *Wild Talents* rulebook (pages 49 to 56):

### Monster Friend [30 points]

**Source:** Extra-Dimensional (free)

**Permissions:** Power Theme (monster friend, 5 points)

**Intrinsics:** Resilient (10 points); Aces 5d (flaw: only to boost monster's dice pools; 15 points)

**Description:** You're a kid with a freaky extra-dimensional monster friend. This power theme is built by purchasing the Sidekick miracle (*Wild Talents*, page 109), and then using the Attached flaw (*Wild Talents*, page 69) to link other powers to your Sidekick. Monsters frequently have the Bad Dog flaw found in the Sidekick miracle description.

## Relationships

These are simply handled with investments of Base Will points (*Wild Talents*, page 22). The more Willpower you have, the better you're able to help your monster out with the Aces miracle built into your Archetype—and Relationships are a quick way to build your Willpower back up again.

## Monsters

The Sidekick power gives you a basic monster you can summon to help you. With the full *Wild Talents* rules, you can create just about any kind of monster with whatever weird powers you can imagine by attaching other powers to Sidekick. To reflect the "basic monster" stuff described above, use the following powers:

### 'They Aren't From Around Here' and 'Monsters Look After Their Kids'

The first one is a basic function of the Sidekick miracle. A Sidekick can ordinarily survive wherever you can survive, which for a 10-year-old kid isn't a whole lot of places when you consider the universe. Remedy this by attaching a few levels of the Immunity miracle (*Wild Talents*, page 96) to Sidekick, so when your monster accompanies you, you gain protection from environmental harm.

### 'Monsters Are Good at Hiding'

This is also a function of Sidekick. When the miracle isn't turned on, your monster can just be hanging around close by somewhere waiting to help you. If you want a monster who will leap to your defense even if you don't know what's coming, then add the Unconscious extra (*Wild Talents*, page 68), or for an even more protective monster add Reflexive (also page 68).

### 'Monsters Can't Die'

Again, this is just how Sidekick works. If your monster is "killed" it really just vanishes back to wherever it hides, to be summoned up again with the expenditure of some Willpower when you need it.

### 'Monsters Know Each Other'

Attach the Detect (monsters and monster kids) power to Sidekick for a monster who can sense another monster. Get the power without attaching it to Sidekick if you can sort of sense what your monster senses, meaning you can use that power even when you haven't summoned your monster.

### 'The Only Thing That Can Stop a Monster Is Another Monster'

Buy lots of really dangerous powers for your monster. Heavy Armor blocks damage, Harm inflicts it, Projected Hallucination can drive someone mad, with Radius it can affect everyone in a big area. With monsters as the only source for superpowers in the setting (or at least the only one generally known), ordinary people are going to be really, really out of their depths when dealing with them.

For example, one level of Immunity (universal) combined with 30 levels of the Hardened extra (total cost 76 points) allows a monster to totally ignore 11 Killing and 11 Shock in damage every single round. It can laugh at heavy bombs! Is a special tactical truancy squad going to make a dent in it? And with a single level of the Multiple Targets extra for 8 more points, the monster can apply the same protection to his kid. But by applying a flaw to your monster's defensive powers, you make it vulnerable to the attacks of other monsters or their kids.



# ONE-ROLL GADGETS

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Here are some tools that really do put the “one roll” in “One-Roll Engine”. Throw dice, add a little creative interpretation and you’re ready for fun.

## Interpersonal Conflict Generator

To generate interpersonal conflict on the fly, pick one Relationship from each kid involved, add the dice together and roll them as a single pool. You can add a kid’s monster bond score just like a regular relationship if you want the monster to be involved in the conflict.

Don’t roll Shocked dice. Instead set them to any value you like, *after* rolling the un-Shocked dice. That ensures some interesting situations.

Unlike normal dice pools, you can roll as many dice as you like to set up really complex situations involving lots of characters.

Each set you roll—taking into account the Shocked dice—defines some kind of *entanglement* between one or more of the characters. Height and width determine the nature and the severity of the entanglement.

If you roll multiple sets are rolled, then you have more than one overlapping entanglement. If you roll no sets, well, slap another Relationship into that pool and try again.

## Entanglement Severity

Width determines the severity of the entanglement and the maximum number of characters tied up in it.

### Width 2: Casual

A minor motivation fuels the entanglement. This might be more interesting than harmful, but it could lead to risky behavior over the long term. (A minor rivalry leads to bad feelings and unkind words, or a budding romance has a chance to progress at a civil and relaxed pace.)

### Width 3: Intense

A pretty major motivation fuels the entanglement. This could lead to interpersonal conflicts or risky behavior in the short term. What’s at stake here is a relatively minor change of the terms of a relationship. Mom and Dad 4 could end up Mom 2 and Dad 2 after a divorce. (A rivalry sparks public spectacles, arguments and minor violence, or a passionate affair involves sneaking around and deception.)

### Width 4: Driving

An intense and immediate motivation fuels the entanglement. This could lead rapidly to conflicts, risk-taking and life-changing consequences. What’s at stake here is a radical redefinition of a relationship; Mom and Dad 4 could become Mom 1 and Dad’s Ghost 3. (A rivalry leads to bitter arguments, lawsuits, property damage, and serious violence, or a mad illicit affair is pursued without thought to consequence or exposure.)

## Width 5: Psycho

An overwhelming motivation fuels this entanglement, which eclipses everything else and turns characters monomaniacal and irrational. What’s at stake here is the relationship being not just redefined but damaged or destroyed outright. (A rivalry burns beyond all reason—anything goes—or an affair of Shakespearean proportions leads to rack and ruin, where logic, reason, and consequence do nothing to slow the headlong plunge.)

## Nature of the Entanglement

Height determines the nature of the entanglement—exactly what the conflict is all about. Tailor the results to your characters’ backgrounds and relationships.

**Height 1:** Bad Blood.

**Height 2:** Politics.

**Height 3:** Religion.

**Height 4:** Competition.

**Height 5:** Recreation.

**Height 6:** Crime.

**Height 7:** Academics.

**Height 8:** Friendship.

**Height 9:** Work or chores.

**Height 10:** Romance.

## Who Is Involved?

Sometimes the results can be hard to decipher. Here are some guidelines.

**Select for maximum conflict.** If entangling two characters will put a couple of monster-controlling adolescents into a collision course of chaos and disaster, then that’s the way to go.

**Select for maximum cringe.** If you see no easy conflicts, go for the most disturbing and cringe-inducing combinations. Got a height of 10? Entangle one character’s monster romantically with another character’s grandma. On the Internet, every dude looks like Brad Pitt.

**Invent context.** If you end up with a work entanglement but there’s no clear work-related connection between the characters, make one up on the spot and use it to enrich the social setting. Maybe one character just got a job mowing the other character’s lawn.

## Revealing The Entanglements

When you’ve mapped out the entanglements, the next step is to clue the players in. This calls for a simple scene that reveals the entanglements, at least in part, and foreshadows the possible consequences of failing to resolve it.

Dad comes home from his new job and says, “D--- that Mike McAlyster! I’m going to fire his a-- if he doesn’t straighten up!” Problem is, one of your best friends is Benny McAlyster, Mike’s son. . . .

## Resolving The Entanglement

At this point, the Generator's work is done: Deal with the tangled mess of lives and loves through normal roleplaying. But here are some guidelines on how to pace these conflicts and what they might mean to a character personally.

**Width in Scenes:** An entanglement requires at least as many scenes to resolve as its width.

**Bring the Drama:** A player can choose to Bring the Drama, resolving an entanglement in a single cathartic scene. One of his Relationships must be involved in the conflict. Bringing the Drama immediately Shocks a number of the Relationship's dice equal to the width of the entanglement.

**Monsters Get Obsessive:** A monster is harder to control when told to act against an entanglement's driving issue. If that's what you're doing, all rolls to motivate the monster lose dice equal to the width of the entanglement.

**Bring the EXP:** Successfully resolving an entanglement can count as Quality Time, and resolving particularly wide entanglements without really bad things happening, or resorting to Bringing the Drama, should be worth a point or two of bonus Experience Points.

## Example

Things are slow for my players, so I decide to stoke the fire with gasoline. They are playing three of the pregenerated characters from pages 32 to 37. I select one relationship from each character for my conflict pool, and then throw in their monster bonds just to make things interesting. That makes six relationships:

**Tommy Mezlowski:** Mom 2, Flytrap Joe 2.

**Madison Kate Sinclair-Stevenson:** Parental Units 1, Yog'So-Soft 3.

**Ralph 'Dog' Jones:** Carlita the Maternal Prostitute 1, Mister Whispers 1.

That totals to 10 dice, but since Tommy's relationship with his Mom is currently shocked down to 0, I hold those two dice back before I roll the rest. The roll comes up 2x10, 9, 7, 7 and 6. I now set one of the reserved dice to 10 (Romance), and the other to 6 (Crime).

Yowza! With the two Shocked dice, that comes out to 3x10, 2x7, an 2x6, for three entanglements.

**3x10, an intense romantic entanglement:** Yog'So-Soft has been surfing the Internet, and struck up an online romance with Tommy's Mom. Things are getting hot and heavy in the chatroom, and the text logs are getting more and more scandalous.

To make things more complicated, Mister Whispers has done what he does best: learned the secret. Yog'So-Soft has no idea how humans are supposed to behave in these situations, so he's been copying and pasting text from other people's sexy chats and using someone's picture he found on MySpace as his own.

When asked to meet in public, he'll go along with it because, well, it's what people do when they're in love, right?

**2x7, a casual academic entanglement:** Madison's Parental Units were quite suspicious of Tommy's last prize-winning science project, an experiment involving a rare species of large Venus flytrap (wink-wink, nudge nudge). They think Tommy didn't do his own work, and so robbed Madison of her transcript-building science-fair win. They have hired a private investigator to investigate Tommy, thinking that if the flytrap were an endangered species, then Tommy's project would be disqualified. Problem is, poking into Flytrap Joe's business is likely to make *you* the endangered species.

**2x6, a casual criminal entanglement:** This one is pretty basic. Madison's father (one half of her Parental Units) has been seeing Carlita the Maternal Prostitute for years and paying for her illegal services. He's kept it on the downlow, but now it's come to the attention of the kids (the player characters). Something must be done!

## One-Roll Monster Summoning

To generate your very own random monster, roll 10 dice and consult the following tables.

### Phase 1: Bits and Bobs

Each rolled die is worth five monster dice on one hit location number. A single, unmatched die gets you some kind of weedy body part with only five dice assigned. Look up the height of the die on the lists below.

For sets wider than width 4, reduce to width to 4 but add a die to another set, or make a new one from loose dice.

Once you have your body parts and know their stats and how many hit location numbers they occupy, arrange them on the 1-10 hit location scale. (Tactical tip: It is smart to give smaller weaker body parts low hit numbers so they are easier to protect with defensive actions.)

### Cumulative Effects

If a monster body part indicates that each increase in width is "cumulative," it includes the functions of the previous widths, and can, if you want, include the previous rank's color as well. So if you have width 3, it also includes the effects and powers of widths 2 and 1.

If it's not described as cumulative, you get the one ability listed for that exact width; if you have width 3, you have the ability for width 3. Or you could have the abilities for width 2 and width 1 by splitting the three dice up.

### Missing Bits

If you find your monster lacks some basic function—you get no sense organs or legs, for example—you can assume your monster can see and hear OK and walk around as needed, but it can't do these things well enough to beat a character or monster that has body parts or a skill dedicated doing them. A monster with no body parts dedicated to locomotion, for example, couldn't outrun someone with the P.E. skill or a monster with hundreds of legs.

## Height 1: Limbs Of Locomotion

These are cumulative.

- 1x1: Shambling** (4d; Defends, Useful [shamble along]).
- 2x1: Scuttling** (+2d; Defends, Useful [dash from hiding place to hiding place], Wicked Fast 1).
- 3x1: Bounding** (+2d; Useful [jump really high], Awesome x1, Wicked Fast x1).
- 4x1: Stomping** (+2d; Attacks, Gnarly x1, Awesome x1).

## Height 2: Limbs of Manipulation

These are cumulative.

- 1x2: Grasping** (5d; Useful [manually dexterous]).
- 2x2: Catching** (+1d; Defends, Useful [grapple and hold], Wicked Fast x1).
- 3x2: Slashing** (+2d; Attacks, Gnarly x2, Awesome x1).
- 4x2: Crushing** (+2d; Useful [break stuff really really well] Gnarly x1, Awesome x1).

## Height 3: Weird Appendages

These are not cumulative. Each entry stands alone with the listed traits.

- 1x3: Feelers** (5d; Useful [Sensing in the Dark]).
- 2x3: Eye Stalks** (6d; Useful [All-Around Sight]; Defends; Wicked Fast 3).
- 3x3: Pseudopodia and Goo** (8d; Useful [Ooze under doors and such], Useful [Engulf things and hold them inside], Defends, Awesome x2, Tough x3).
- 4x3: Brain-Sucking Proboscis** (10d; Attacks, Useful [Suck Minds], Useful [Inject Memories], Awesome 2; Gnarly 3; Wicked Fast 3).

## Height 4: Body Segments

These are not cumulative. Each entry stands alone with the listed traits.

- 1x4: Thin, Elongated Body** (3d, Defends, Awesome x2).
- 2x4: Wasplike Thorax And Bulbous Abdomen** (6d, Attacks [stinger], Useful [spinnerets and web-glands], Useful [ovipositer for implanting mind-controlling larvae], Awesome x2).
- 3x4: Huge, Barrel-Thick Torso** (8d, Attacks [ear-splitting bellow], Gnarly x2, Tough x5).
- 4x4: Vast Serpentine Coils** (10d, Attacks, Defends, Useful [crushing constrictions], Useful [hypnotic writhing], Tough x3, Gnarly x4).

## Height 5: Uncanny Modes Of Movement

These are not cumulative. Each entry stands alone with the listed traits.

- 1x5: Burrowing Claws** (3d, Useful [tunnel], Awesome x2).
- 2x5: Great Cloaklike Wings** (6d, Useful [fly], Defends, Wicked Fast x3).
- 3x5: Phase-Shifting Quantum Voice-Box** (8d, Useful [walk through walls], Defends, Awesome x2, Wicked Fast x3, Sharing).
- 4x5: Space-Warping Fractal Cilia** (10d, Defends, Useful [fold, spindle and mutilate space], Useful [right place, right time], Awesome x2, Wicked Fast x5, Sharing).

## Height 6: Integument

These are cumulative.

- 1x6: Oily Skin** (4d, Defends, Tough x1).
- 2x6: Bony Plates** (+2d, Wicked Fast x1, Tough x2).
- 3x6: Spiny Exoskeleton** (+2d, Attacks, Awesome x1, Tough x1).
- 4x6: Invulnerable Carapace** (+2d, Awesome x1, Tough x2).

## Height 7: Body Weapons

These are not cumulative. Each entry stands alone with the listed traits.

- 1x7: Poison Glands** (3d, Attacks, Awesome x2).
- 2x7: Fiery Gullet** (6d, Attacks, Gnarly x2, Wicked Fast x2).
- 3x7: Wicked Spines** (8d, Defends, Attacks, Gnarly x3, Wicked Fast x3).
- 4x7: Entropy-Projecting Evil Eye** (10d, Attacks, Useful [paralyze], Useful [bring misfortune and ruin], Gnarly x5, Wicked Fast x2, Sharing).

## Height 8: Viscera and Organs

These are not cumulative. Each entry stands alone with the listed traits.

- 1x8: Scent Glands** (3d, Useful [targets marked by scent can be tracked anywhere], Awesome x2).
- 2x8: Black Wrathful Heart** (8d, Attacks, Useful [resist pity, remorse, and other weak emotions], Sharing).
- 3x8: Infernal Guts** (10d, Attacks [acid spew], Useful [eat anything and it's gone], Gnarly x2, Tough x2).
- 4x8: Throbbing External Brain** (10d, Attacks [psychic energy bolt], Defends [psychic force field], Useful [out-think anyone and everyone], Useful [spot weaknesses], Gnarly x2, Wicked Fast x5).

## Height 9: Mouth Parts

These are cumulative.

- 1x9: Big, Savage Teeth** (4d, Attacks, Gnarly x1).
- 2x9: Fanged Grin** (+2d, Wicked Fast x2, Gnarly x1).
- 3x9: Dripping Maw** (+2d, Useful [swallow whole], Awesome x1, Gnarly x1).
- 4x9: Terrible Mandibles** (+2d, Awesome x1, Wicked Fast x1, Gnarly x1).

## Height 10: Sense Organs

These are not cumulative. Each entry stands alone with the listed traits.

- 1x10: Knowing Nose** (2d, Useful [tracking], Useful [smell lies], Awesome x2).
- 2x10: Serpentine Tongue** (8d, Useful [taste the air], Useful [wicked lies], Sharing).
- 3x10: Keen Ears** (8d, Useful [hear really really well], Defends, Wicked Fast x4, Awesome x2).
- 4x10: Mesmeric Hypno-Eyes** (10d, Attacks [illusory pain and injury], Useful [see in the dark], Useful [see into minds], Useful [impose hypnotic domination], Awesome x2, Wicked Fast x4, Gnarly x2).



## Example

So I decide to summon a random monster for my kid. I roll my 10 dice and get 10, 2x8, 2x6, 3x4, 2 and 1.

For Phase One, my monster's body plan, this gives me six hit locations (three with only a single hit number and 5 monster dice each, two with two hit numbers and 10 monster dice each, and one with three hit numbers and 15 monster dice). I consult the charts and find my monster friend has the following body parts of note:

1x10 gets her a Knowing Nose. That does sound like the head, I assign this to hit location 10.

2x8 gets her a Black Wrathful Heart. I assign this to hit locations 6-7.

2x6 gets her Bony Plates. I assign this to hit locations 4-5.

3x4 gets her a Huge, Barrel-Thick Torso. I assign this to hit locations 8-9.

1x2 gets her skinny little Grasping Limbs. I assign this to hit location 2.

1x1 gets her Shambling little legs. I assign this to hit location 1.

So she's this huge thick torso with bony plates, skinny arms and legs, and a little squint-eyed head with flaring nostrils. I think that sounds sort of turtle-shaped. But before I commit to an appearance I must move on to Phase Two.

Follow along and see how you think she'll turn out.

## Phase Two: Everything Else

Now, pick any four of the dice you rolled and consult the following tables to get your monster's other characteristics.

### Appearance

**1: Reptilian** (burn one die from dice pools for Gnarly x1 in each location that has an Attack quality).

**2: Insectoid** (burn one die from all dice pools for Wicked Fast x1 to each body part).

**3: Dinasauroid** (combine one or two loose dice to form a Swishing Tail location that has 3 or 8 dice, Attacks, Awesome x1, and Tough x1).

**4: Non-Euclidean** (burn one die from all locations to add Sharing to all body parts. If a part already has Sharing, add a Useful quality describing a new form of reality-warping movement).

**5: Elemental** (burn one die from all locations to add the Attacks quality; if the location already Attacks, add Gnarly x1 instead).

**6: Industrial** (burn one die from all locations to add Tough x1 to each).

**7: Inside Out** (Combine up to two loose dice to form a Gross, Pulsing Mass of Glistening Tubes and Meat which has 3 or 8 dice and a stomach-turning Useful quality with Awesome x2).

**8: Vegetable** (Burn one die from each location to add Tough x1 to each).

**9: Cthonic Mass Of Tentacles** (Combine up to two loose dice into a single location to form Writhing Mane of Tentacles which has 3 or 8 dice and is Useful [open gateways to

the elder realms], Attacks, and is Tough 1).

**10: Freakish Mish-Mash of All of the Above** (burn one die from each location to add the extra or quality of your choice).

### Personality

**1: Morose** (reduce any Wicked Fast the monster has in any of its body parts by 1, adding instead a level of Tough).

**2: Emo** (burn one die from the monster's largest location, adding a Useful [inspire extreme emotions] quality).

**3: Giddy** (reduce any Tough the monster has in all its body parts by 1, adding instead a level of Wicked Fast).

**4: Thoughtful** (burn one die from the monster's largest location adding a Useful [Extra Brain for Tricky Thinking] quality).

**5: Sneaky** (burn one die from the monster's largest location, adding Useful [crazy hard to spot when he's hiding]).

**6: Furious** (burn one die from all the monster's body parts with the Attacks quality adding a level of Gnarly to each).

**7: Lazy** (reduce any Wicked Fast the monster has in any of its body parts by 1, adding a level of Awesome instead; if the monster already had two ranks of Awesome, then leave the body part alone).

**8: Helpful** (burn one die from the monster's largest body part, adding the Sharing extra; if the monster already Shares this bit, then add Sharing to the next biggest one; if they're all already Shared, then add Wicked Fast to the biggest one so it can Share faster).

**9: Gregarious** (burn one die from the monster's largest body part, adding Useful [sweet and persuasive voice]).

**10: Hyperactive** (convert any and all levels of Tough your monster has to an equal amount of Wicked Fast).

### Favorite Thing

**1: Eating (something specific, or eating in general).**

**2: Sleeping.**

**3: Stalking.**

**4: Dreaming.**

**5: Being worshiped.**

**6: Doing favors.**

**7: Secrets.**

**8: Certain emotions.**

**9: Certain smells.**

**10: Sundering reality until it hemorrhages chaos and terror.**

### Way to Hide

**1: Wear an innocuous costume.**

**2: Lurk in the closet, crawlspace, or under the bed.**

**3: Burrow or sink underground.**

**4: Hide in plain sight.**

**5: Shrink down really small.**

**6: Turn invisible.**

**7: Hide in mirrors.**

**8: Retreat to your mind and dreams.**

**9: Transform into something normal and inanimate.**

**10: Turn into a seemingly-normal kid.**



# MONSTERS AND OTHER CHILDISH THINGS

## Your Kid

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationships: \_\_\_\_\_

Appearance: \_\_\_\_\_

Personality: \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite Thing: \_\_\_\_\_

Experience Points: \_\_\_\_\_

### Stats and Skills

<b>Feet</b>	_____	<b>Guts</b>	_____	<b>Hands</b>	_____	<b>Attention</b>	_____	<b>Wits</b>	_____
P.E.	+_____	Wind	+_____	Shop	+_____	Out-Think	+_____	Charm	+_____
Kicking	+_____	Courage	+_____	Punching	+_____	Remember	+_____	Putdown	+_____
Dodging	+_____	Wrestling	+_____	Blocking	+_____	Notice	+_____	Connive	+_____
_____	+_____	_____	+_____	_____	+_____	_____	+_____	_____	+_____

## Your Kid's Monster

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Borrowed or Stolen Relationships: \_\_\_\_\_

Appearance: \_\_\_\_\_

Personality: \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite Thing: \_\_\_\_\_

Way to Hide: \_\_\_\_\_

### Bits and Bobs

Hit Location	Name	Dice	Qualities and Extras
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

# GODLIKE

In the beginning, there was only one.

He flew into the Berlin Olympics in 1936 to light the torch, then landed beside Hitler to proclaim the triumph of the Aryan will.

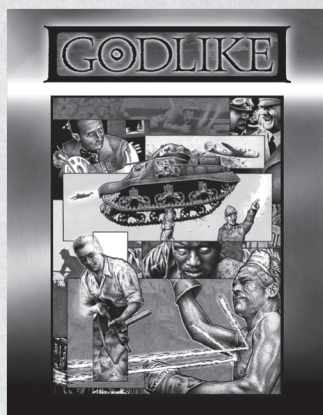
By the end of the war, there were *two hundred thousand* of them. They came from Poland, from Finland, from England and from

France. They came from besieged villages and from the halls of academia, from the devastation of Stalingrad and from the corn fiends of Kansas.

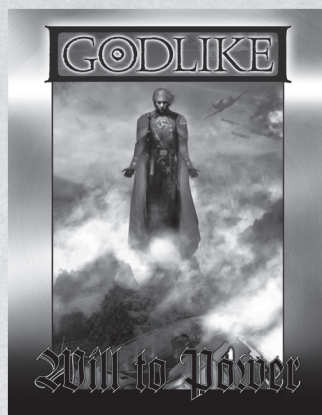
Their powers were both great and small, and they died by the thousands for the sake of the people they loved.

This is their story.

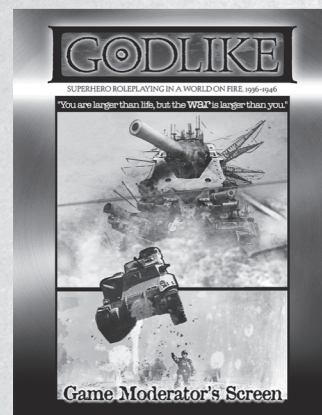
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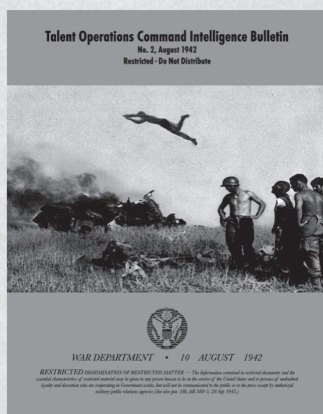
The core game book



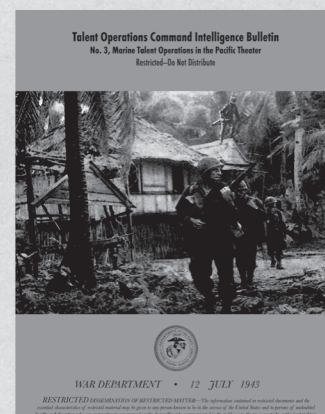
The Nazi Talent program



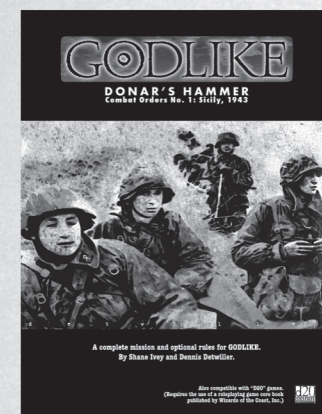
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