

Dreadful Secrets
of **Candlewick**
Manor



MONSTERS
AND OTHER CHILDISH THINGS

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of **Candlewick**
Manor

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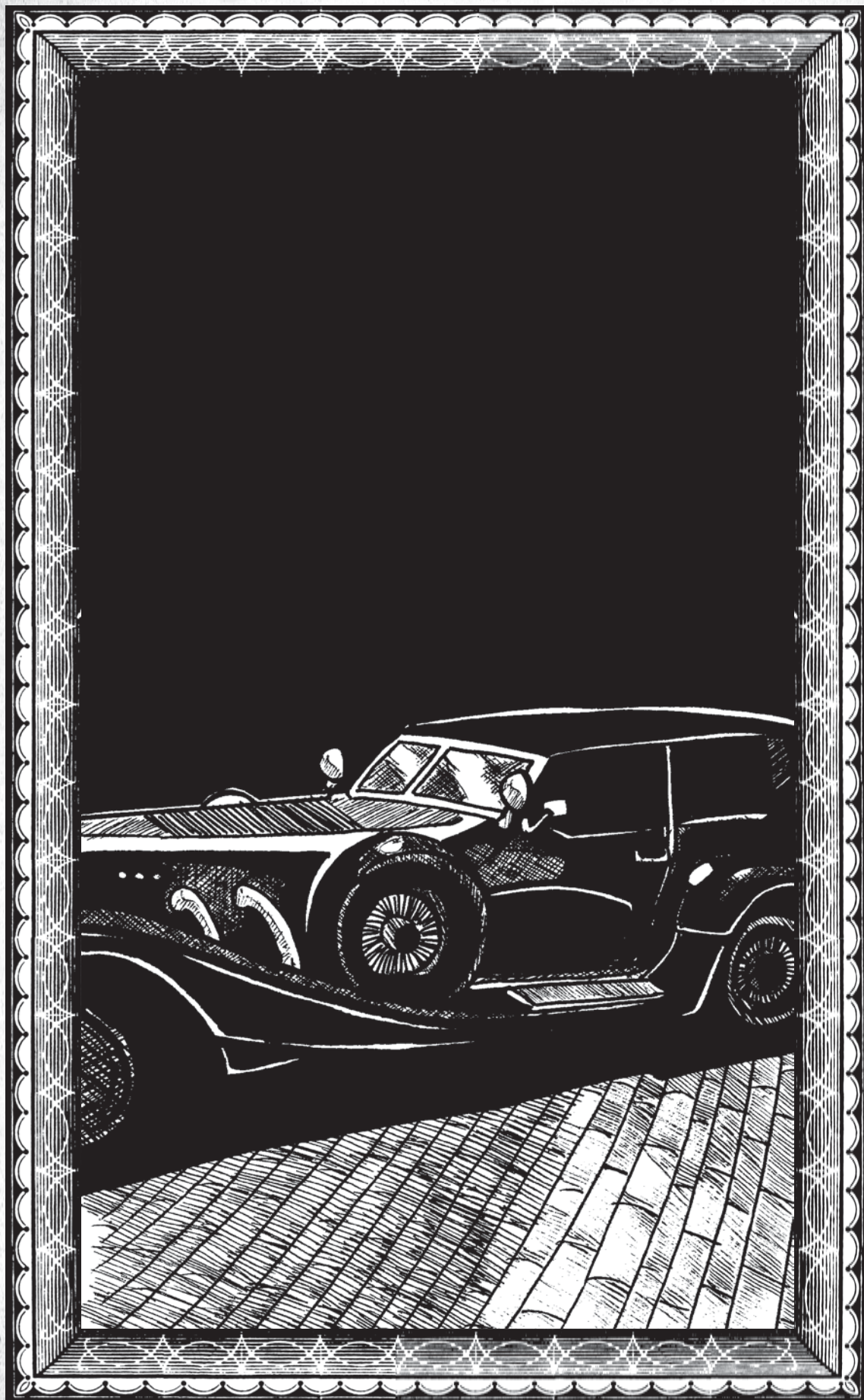
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INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER THE FIRST

It should be mentioned now, just to be certain that you, dear reader, fully understand what you hold in your hands, that *THE DREADFUL SECRETS OF CANDLEWICK MANOR* is a woeful and melancholy thing. It is a game of storytelling and pretending in which the characters you craft and care for, that you play and feel for, will come to tearful ends.

Your characters begin as mysteries in themselves, their pasts forgotten. Their futures are uncertain in every thing save the trials they will most certainly face, and the inescapable reality that whatever truth they uncover will not grant them happiness. For this is a game about the Unfortunate and the Unloved, orphans of a most unadoptable sort. They are Wednesday's children, strange, uncanny, *creepy*.

They watched as the little blond girl was carried away by wealthy and attractive new parents; the dark haired boy with the dewy eyes, gone into loving arms. Even the twitchy little girl who never spoke was taken in by a huge-hearted couple. But not them, oh no. Too off-putting. Too odd.

They stared sullenly as their fellows, departing, shrugged off the title "orphan" like shedding a cocoon. Abandoned to cold institutional affections and meals of boiled cabbage, they grew a protective layer of cynicism, like a sea captain's sun-baked skin. They learned to hate hope; to hope is to be hurt. To love is to be heartbroken. To run and laugh and sing are to fall, choke, and gurgle a last breath.

And then the man in the big black car came. He wasn't like the others who came to the orphanage, the might-be mammas and the potential poppas. This man was alone, and had all the warmth and grasping love of a stone pillar. From

their hiding place, they watched him speak in low tones to the orphanage director. Watched the director's shaking head jerk violently into an enthusiastic nod when the man opened his case and showed the director what was inside. With an uncomfortable gleam in his eye and false enthusiasm the director came to tell them that they would be going to a new home.

"This nice man, he will be taking you to a new place for you to live! A huge and very fine house in a valley by the sea, and there you shall have your own rooms, and shall have many other children to play with, and you will be taught many things! Won't that be splendid? Oh yes, it will!"

What was perhaps most perplexing to these orphans was this: In all their troubled short lives, there had never been simultaneously such an honest statement about their futures, and one which also so utterly failed to convey any genuine meaning.

So their tiny bags were packed, and into the big black car they climbed. The man didn't talk much. He offered them roasted peanuts from a bag, and bottles of pop in an icy bucket. He drove like he was fully confident that nobody else on the road would be so foolish as to impede his progress.

And so in excellent time, through many winding mountain roads, they watched the land open up before them, and saw the setting sun behind the valley, and even they, dark-minded skeptics that they were, had to admit, it did look quite fine.

Even if the valley, in some inexplicable way, resembled the opened jaws of a Venus flytrap.

Is hope what the fly feels before the jaws snap closed?

WHERE IS THIS GAME SET?

This is Candlewick Vale, a geologically and geographically *unlikely* valley somewhere in New England, though it has some distinctly Old England elements as well. It may be the 1930s. Cars are big and loud. Clothing is quaint. Children's shoes are stiff and uncomfortable. Telephones are big and brassy.

But it isn't really the 1930s. It is just some time before TV. Radio is big, but TV isn't. It is a time when little towns in the boonies can stay isolated, get weird and inbred, when people are suspicious of outsiders and like things the way they are. So really, Candlewick Vale is a time out of time, and a place out of place. It is the whole world.

To leave the Vale is to leave the game. If you're set on having your character escape and flee, you can make that happen. And then, if you want to keep playing, come up with a new character. That's just the deal. The dreadful secrets of Candlewick Manor go down in Candlewick Vale. It's a microcosm, and contains enough weird crap and strange people and messed up relationships to keep things going for a goodly while.

The Vale is bordered by mountains, with a river running down the center. The river runs to the sea, as do the mountains, though they curve and jag north, creating



sea cliffs. There's a bog, a dark forest, a jagged peak nobody has survived climbing, and in the foothills wander sheep, farms, and the huge wound of the shale pits. From the mountain they used to mine silver and lead, but now only lead remains.

At the shore fishermen fish and townsfolk take in the sea. Candlewick Township is itself a Byzantine sea of corruption behind smiling neighborly faces.

And here and there, in the hidden places, in the cracks, beneath the cold blue sea, there are *monsters*, lurking, waiting . . . for a meal . . . or a friend.

WHAT IS THIS BOOK ABOUT?

THE DREADFUL SECRETS OF CANDLEWICK MANOR is a setting and campaign framework for the MONSTERS AND OTHER CHILDISH THINGS role playing game, and a copy of that game is needed to fully enjoy THE DREADFUL SECRETS OF CANDLEWICK MANOR.

Candlewick is about mysteries and about self-discovery and about community. Characters at the start of play are vaguely defined. Many common elements of character creation are left out. These gaps are deliberate, and are to be filled during play. The mystery of the question "Who am I?" is as much a part of a *Candlewick* game as "What is that?" and "Oh God, is it getting closer?" and "Who mauled and ate my best friend's leg?"

The setting is presented in discrete units. It is broken down into People, Places, and *Things*. These elements are almost like playing cards which can be shuffled, dealt, and arranged into interesting patterns. CANDLEWICK includes over 60 characters (including 13 adorably loathsome monsters), and multitudes of places to explore and associations with agendas to uncover.

When the PCs ("Pathetic Children") begin interacting with the people, exploring the places, and joining or uncovering the associations they begin to define the links which connect them. The orphans explore the community and their previously unguessed-at connections to it.

When they are firmly attached to the community, when perhaps they are no longer even orphans, then the next stage of the game begins, dealing with the weird society of Candlewick Vale, and uncovering the greater mysteries of

the place: what's going on, why were they brought here, who really knows what's going on?

The setting begins in a state of equilibrium like a pattern of dominoes waiting to fall. Then the orphans arrive and promptly kick things out of kilter. Their actions have consequence that ripple through the community. They will bring chaos at first. Will they also bring revelation? Truth? Positive change?

Oh, what naive children they are.



WHO ARE THE PLAYER CHARACTERS?

They are the Unfortunate and the Unloved, sad orphans, unadopted, left to languish in some shoddy aging institution until now. They are brought to Candlewick Estates by Dr. Candlewick, the head of the household and the Candlewick fortune (what is left of it, at any rate). Why were they brought to this odd valley? To what end has Dr. Candlewick converted his family home into a home for the Unfortunate?

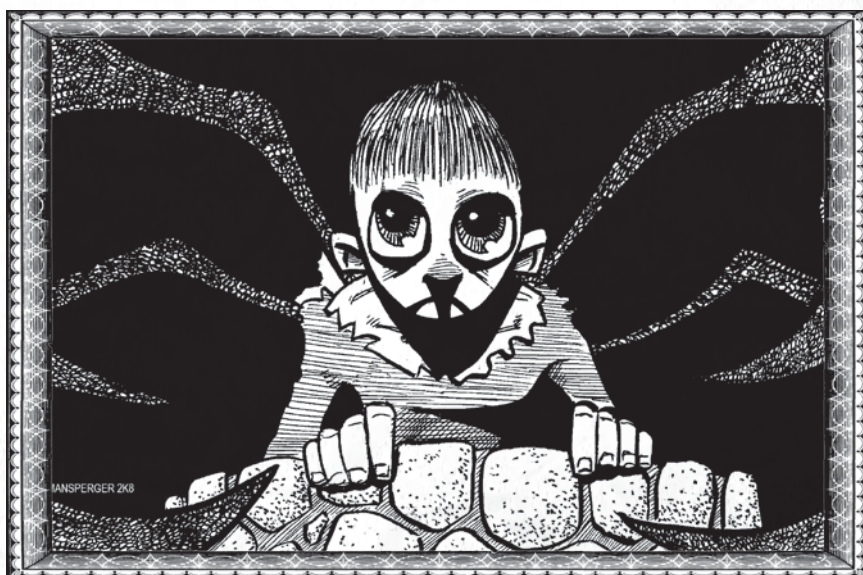
They have no pasts. Either they don't remember them, don't want to think about them, or they simply don't come up. They are who they are *right now*, without justifying it with backstory or history. Players are explicitly forbidden from indulging in this most common of character creation cornerstones. An orphan's past is obscured from the character's own player. It is part of the mystery.

Unlike characters in *MONSTERS AND OTHER CHILDISH THINGS*, the orphans of *THE DREADFUL SECRETS OF CANDLEWICK MANOR* do not begin play with a monster friend. Oh, how their lives would be so marvelously improved!

A loyal loving monster, to play with, and to care for, and to devour all those who make life tragic, including stupid Maggie Sue, with her ringlets and shiny new parents. A monster could make even an orphan's life a joy. And that, my reader, is precisely why monsters do not come easy to orphans. Monsters might be encountered and befriended only if they can be found, tracked, and *survived*.

But orphans are not entirely dependent on the native wits and abilities the Good Lord bestowed upon all his favored creations. They have *other* capacities that mark them out, small things that are part and parcel to their creepiness. They have Creepy Skills (see page 17) which are not entirely unlike the abilities of a monster.

In a way, the orphans of *CANDLEWICK* could almost be thought of as just a tiny bit monstrous themselves. It's the sort of thing that sets off alarm bells and sirens in the minds of potential adopting parents, like an adorable puppy whose mouth



is caked with dried blood. No matter how much it wags its tail, it isn't going to be taken home and given its own basket to sleep in, and its own bowl with its own name on it. No matter how much an orphan smiles—forcing cramping facial muscles into unfamiliar configurations—they are too touched by the *odd* to find a happy home.

Also unlike characters in *MONSTERS*, the orphans of *CANDLEWICK* do not begin play with Relationships. Instead they have *Echoes* (see page 19), fragments of memory, dreams, visions, or recurring motifs in their lives. Omens which follow them. Hints at greater order. They function almost like Relationships mechanically, but they build up the chance for *Revelation* (see page 21), some illumination of the mysteries which haunt all orphans. When this revelation occurs, an Echo is transformed into a more familiar Relationship.

WHAT DO CHARACTERS DO?

Characters arriving in Candlewick Vale are immediately thrust into conflicts and crises waiting to explode. Through their actions they uncover hidden truths, start new trouble, and change things. For good or ill? Only time will tell.

Characters also unravel mysteries, the most immediate being “*Who am I?*” Orphans have no past, and no future is certain. They have only teasing echoes of history to guide them in uncovering their origins, and their unguessed connection to Candlewick Vale. While unraveling this personal mystery, they’ll be confronted on all sides by mysteries and secrets.

Adults lie to children and keep secrets from them all the time. It’s part of being a child. It’s part of being an adult. Children learn these secrets and uncover these lies, and that’s called growing up. It’s as much a mystery to solve as who pushed Farmer Magruder down the well.

The orphans are outsiders suspected, pitied, and brought to Candlewick for unknown purposes by a secretive and eccentric man. Who knows what they might do to change and disrupt and remake the community of the Vale? Perhaps that’s the point.

WHAT INSPIRED THIS?

Are you sure you want to see for yourself the inspirations for so much doom and gloom?

TELEVISION & FILM

TWIN PEAKS: David Lynch’s series is a must watch (or must-Wikipedia at least) resource for *THE DREADFUL SECRETS OF CANDLEWICK MANOR*, for the sense of conflicting loyalties, hidden agendas, and strange happenings; also the weird imagery. Love Lynch’s funky transcendental visions.



ADVENTURES OF PETE AND PETE: Strange kids dealing with strange situations and strange people. Pete and Pete aren't really outsiders, but as a source of weirdness and whimsy this one is a great watch.

CITY OF LOST CHILDREN: Dark, strange, and very French. Come for the creepy clones and stay for the Ron Perlman.

HOT FUZZ: A brilliantly funny film. Watch it for the townsfolk and the town. You'll see where much of CANDLEWICK sprang from.

BOOKS

A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS: The primary source for woeful orphans having unlikely adventures. Quick and amusing reads too. If you must, the film is acceptable. The film did inspire some of the imagery and the sense that *Candlewick* isn't really set in any particular time or place.

The HIS DARK MATERIALS trilogy: Smart, well-written, and engaging. Read for the particularly English take on childhood and children that they're little malicious tribal savages until they're tamed, but letting them act this way is acceptable for a time. And also, armored bears. ARMORED BEARS.

The BARTAMAEUS trilogy: My favorite of the recent spate of young adult fantasy novels. A brilliant kids-with-monsters story in which the monster narrates alternate chapters, and is frankly a fantastic character himself.

The ORPHANS OF CHAOS trilogy: I read these three books after the completion of *Candlewick*, and really wish I'd read them before (although then I might be accused of "borrowing" a bit heavily, because there's so much here to steal—I mean, to be *inspired by*, of course). Four hostages of the Creation War forced into the forms of schoolchildren and held in a mysterious orphanage for enigmatic reason by legendary personages involved in a baroque and ancient cold war. Author John C. Wright is a gamer of old, and his writing clicks on the same level as good world design.

COMICS AND OTHER MEDIA

COURTNEY CRUMRIN: The go-to source for precocious and creepy children with a measure of power over the Otherworld and the occult, forced to live amongst norms as outsiders.

The illustrations of Charles Addams: The Addams Family illustrations and comics were writ large in my mind while writing CANDLEWICK, both in terms of their morbid humor and the cheerful people amongst gloomy surroundings. The Addams are what orphans might grow up to become, adults who are happy with their creepiness and think ordinary folk are disturbing.

THE NOCTURNALS: If *Candlewick's* orphans manage to grow up, and somehow, become fairly well adjusted and cool with their strangeness, they might become supernatural monster-heroes like the motley cast of THE NOCTURNALS. Even if they never escape their gloom, THE NOCTURNALS is lush with monstrous pulpy imagery and lurid action. The artist and author's love for his inspirations drips from every page and stains the carpet.







THE ORPHANARIUM

CHAPTER THE SECOND

OR, CREATING YOUR OWN UNFORTUNATE AND UNLOVED ORPHAN

THE DREADFUL SECRETS OF CANDLEWICK MANOR differs somewhat from ordinary MONSTERS AND OTHER CHILDISH THINGS. The major difference is that orphans don't begin play with Relationships, monsters, or even a lovely backstory. No friends? No family? Not even a personal history? Well, there are some compensations. All orphans are, in their own special way, a little monstrous. Each has Creepy Skills to help them along the thorny paths of life. But oh, Dear Reader, how I prattle on. You can see for yourself what makes each orphan special.

BACKGROUND AND STORY

You have none. Sorry. There it is. No backstory. Not only is backstory unnecessary, it's actively discouraged. You want to create a story about your character before play even begins? Save it up and write that novel you keep thinking about. I'll buy a copy.

IMAGE

Begin with an image. Start with a cue. Something like, “The big black car pulls away, leaving your orphan at the great front stairs to Candlewick Manor, with her meager belongings in a small trunk at her feet.” At that moment, who is your character? All that has gone before is a mystery to be explored and revealed.

Nailing down who this lonely girl is *right now* is essential. If someone offers her some hot cocoa, how will she respond? Will she warm immediately to the friendly face? Will she be wary? Will she suspect some trick? Will she simply refuse? Will she answer at all? You don’t need to know *why* she would react as she does just that she does so. “Why” is to be revealed through play.

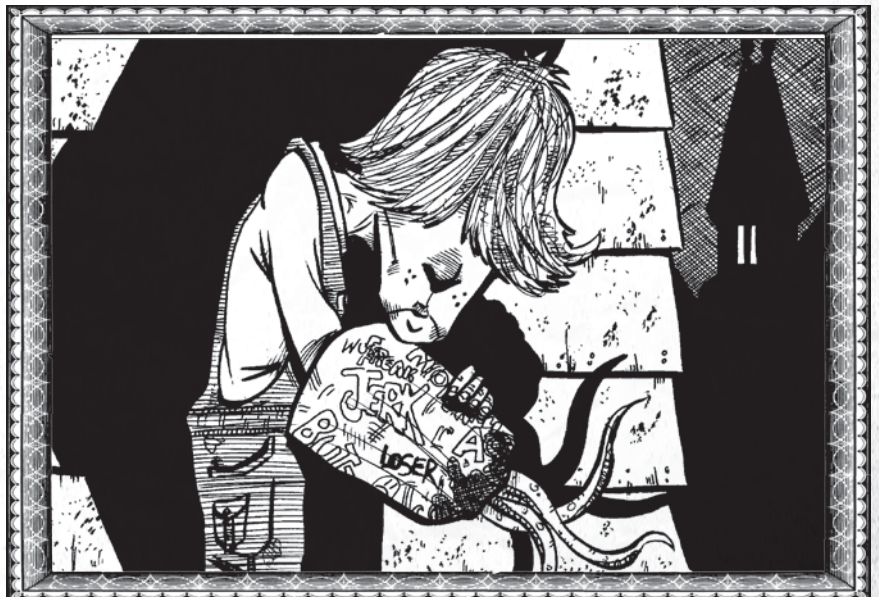
Frame your character in a moment in time, a frozen *now*, and describe it: how she’s dressed, what her expression reveals, how she holds herself.

AN UNKIND EXAMPLE

I start with an image for a character: A boy of ten. Perhaps older. Perhaps a little younger. He’s gangly and thin, with big feet (or small feet in big ill-fitting shoes). His hair hangs in his face, obscuring his eyes. His mouth is downturned, but the expression looks normal on him. His left arm is encased in a grubby plaster cast up to the elbow, and the only people who have signed it have written unkind things on it.

But there’s a hint, where there should be fingers poking out; it isn’t fingers but something else, tapered, boneless: tentacles. And noticing that detail, one’s mind is inevitably drawn to wondering just what precisely are those rusty red stains all around the end of that cast.

His name is, of course, Lewis “Lefty” Malhandler.



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

There's a particular cadence to a Candlewickian name, and they are often peculiarly fitting and filled with delicious, creamy onomatopoeia. Don't settle for one or two syllables when four or five might serve. Courtesy of the notorious Jeff Zitomer, here is a quick and ready aid to naming if you find yourself stuck. Roll three, four, even five dice and assemble your name from the tables below.

Roll	Boy Names	Girl Names	Surname 1	Surname 2	Surname 3	Surname 4
1	Alexander	Agnes	Crinkle	Ash	Bog	Blott
2	Bernard	Beatrice	Gape	Barrow	Flogg	Dred
3	Cecil	Belladonna	Gaunt	Bella	Glut	Kludge
4	Damian	Constance	Krick	Bottom	Gore	Musk
5	Edmund	Desdemona	Mac	Gold	Haggin or Haggins	Pyre
6	Frederick	Josephine	Mort or Morti	Mal or Mali	Man	Rubble
7	Jeremiah	Lucinda	O'	Snert	Soot	Slump
8	Lawrence	Millicent	Rum	Trudge	Tuft	Snot
9	Nicholas	Sybil	Vonder	Worm	Wort	Son
10	Sebastian	Violet	Wiffle	Zunkle	Worth or Worthy	Stopple

I roll five dice for an especially lumpy name, and get 1, 3, 8, 9, and 9. Taking the 3 first for no particular reason, I see her first name is Belladonna, and taking the other four tables in no particular order I have "Vonder", "Worm", "Tuft" and "Blott" to work with. I wonder if poor Belladonna Vondertuft-Wormblott will get teased because of her name. Do you hear that mad laughing in the far distance? Mr. Zitomer senses your cruel amusement at Belladonna's plight and laughs in sympathetic schadenfreude. Pray they have him locked up tight tonight. When he is tickled, sometimes he *roams*.



FIVE QUESTIONS

For each orphan, there are five questions which can guide you in nailing down who they are, while hinting at possible histories without defining them. Answer some or all of them, but try and get at least one.

How do others see you? The image, attitude, appearance, and manner in which you are perceived by others, regardless of how well it reflects who you really are.

How do you see yourself? Regardless of what you do or what others believe about you, how you perceive yourself. Who looks back at you from the mirror when you brush your teeth?

What is Creepy about you? Never adopted, never accepted; why? Because there's just something not right about you? What makes you Creepy?

What do you do to try and fit in? Pretend you don't care all you like, but fitting in is important. What do you do to fit in? How would you compromise yourself to be accepted?

What are you most afraid of? If your most horrible fear were made flesh and bone, what would be lurking under your bed waiting to grab your foot when you got up in the night to go pee?

QUESTIONS FOR LEFTY

Lefty would answer the five questions this way:

How do others see you? "Everyone thinks I'm some kind of jerk thief, but that ain't fair because nobody has good enough reason to think I steal all the time. I'm way too good at it to be caught so easy."

How do you see yourself? "I try and do right by the people who bother to know me, but everyone else can go jump in a well. I guess I'm not a very nice person, but you know what? I'm fine with that."

What is Creepy about you? "Where most folks have a left arm, I've got this mass of wriggly tentacles. What, that's not Creepy enough for you? You want to shake my hand? Didn't think so."

What do you do to try and fit in? "I keep my arm hidden because I know it makes people sort of sick to see it. I don't care. Whatever. They wouldn't get me anyhow."

What are you most afraid of? "I stick to the fringes because I'm afraid of finding myself the center of attention in the same way the bull at a bullfight is the center of attention."

STATS AND SKILLS

These are unchanged in description, though orphans get slightly fewer skill dice than the better-loved and better-adjusted kids from *Monsters and Other Childish Things*, though they have certain compensations for this.



All STATS start at 1, and you have 10 dice to distribute where desired, with no stat being rated higher than 5 dice.

All SKILLS start at 0, and you have 12 dice to distribute where desired, with no skill being rated higher than 3 dice.

LEFTY'S NUMBERS

Lefty isn't a talker, he's a doer. Not super bright, but not stupid. He is sneakier than he is charming. And he's nowhere near as brave as he makes out. I give him the following stats and skills:

FEET 3 (Dodging +2; P.E. +2)

GUTS 2 (Wind +2)

HANDS 5 (Punching +2; Shop +2)

BRAINS 3

FACE 2 (Connive +2)

CREEPY SKILLS

While orphans may be ill favored, this sometimes has its advantages. Each orphan has 5 dice of Creepy Skills. These are *weird* things. They're like superpowers, but gross or odd or off-putting. You get to make up your Creepy Skills and what they do, and which stat they nest under.

Creepy Skills work just like monster abilities, except the scope (range, speed, mass etc.) is based on the dice in the Creepy Skill only, and not the whole stat + skill combo you'd roll when using it. For example, an orphan with 4d in NOXIOUS CAUSTIC BREATH could spray his acidic ick up to 80 yards, and if it Attacks, dissolve up to 400 pounds of priceless irreplaceable 14th century illuminated manuscripts.

See Monster Might on pages 42–45 of MONSTER AND OTHER CHILDISH THINGS for further information on monster powers.

All Creepy Skills have one free Quality (just like Monster abilities), and extra Qualities or Extras can be had at the cost of 1 die each.

A character might have a single Creepy Skill worth 5 dice, or as many as five 1d Creepy Skills. This last route would get you more cool powers since you get one Quality for free. But the more individual Creepy Skills you possess, the more obvious your creepiness is going to be.

Creepy Skills make a character, well, *creepy*. The more individual Creepy Skills a character possesses, the harder a time they are going to have fitting in. This can mean a die penalty equal to your number of Creepy Skills minus one on some social actions. This won't always be applied, but as a general rule, the GM will use the number of Creepy Skills as a tie breaker and deciding factor about certain things. Creepier orphans are generally less well liked, less trusted, and more often blamed for things than less Creepy orphans.



YOU ARE SO WEIRD

Here are some Creepy Skill examples to inspire you and get your imagination ticking over.

Hands

Big Lobster Hand 2d (Attacks: super pinch; Useful: crush and smash; Gnarly x2).

Stretchy Boneless Arms 3d (Useful: streeeeeeeeetch; Useful: Tarzan swing; Wicked Fast x1).

Missing Arm is a Ghost Arm 2d (Useful: grab intangible and ghostly stuff; Attacks: chill touch of the grave; Awesome x2).

Feet

Fly Footed 3d (Useful: stick to walls and walk barefoot on the ceiling; Defends; Wicked Fast x1)

Absent-Minded Wandering 3d (AKA "How did I end up here?") (Useful: wander just about anywhere; Awesome x2).

Quantum Quickstep 4d (Useful: run with an infinite number of possible feet; Defends).

Guts

Turtle Shell 1d (Defends; Tough x2; Awesome x2).

Snake Belly 3d (Attacks: spew snakes on people; Useful: SNAKES! Useful: sense what your snakes see and feel when you eat them again).



Hideous Parasitic Twin 4d (Attacks: speak horrifying blasphemies; Useful: mutter prophecies).

Face

Sweet Breath 3d (Useful: narcotic exhalations; Spray; Wicked Fast x1).

Silver Tongue 3d (Attacks: shocking untruths; Useful: lie lie lie; Gnarly x1).

Gorgeous Mass of Full-Bodied Hair 4d (Attacks; Useful: grab stuff with hairy tendrils).

Brains

Oversized Throbbing Brain 2d (Attacks: migrating migraine; Defends; Useful: read minds; Useful: project thoughts).

X-Ray Peepers 3d (Useful: see through stuff; Awesome x2).

Bony Noggin 2d (Attacks; Tough x3).



One Creepy Skill is fairly easy to hide. It is only noticeable when used in an obvious way.

Two Creepy Skills are harder to hide, even when they aren't being used. There's always some tell or some giveaway which an observer can spot with Brains + Notice if they know to look for it. Any use of these Creepy Skills reveals them to any half aware observer.

Three Creepy Skills are very hard to hide, and anyone who's paying any attention at all can roll Brains + Notice to spot the wrongness, and any active use of them is as noticeable as screaming as loud as you can in church, "I AM A BIG WEIRD FREAK."

Having three or more Creepy Skills is blatantly obvious in some way, some physical stigmata or malformation that's impossible to hide. Such orphans will be unable to hide the marks of their creepiness, and it will take someone with a heart bigger than the whole wide world to love them and take them in without at least a secret shudder at their unnaturalness.

And how likely is it that these unfortunates will find such a boundless heart?

Tragic. So, so tragic.

This aura of the odd affects an orphan's *Revelations*. See page 22 for how.

I DID A BAD, BAD THING

So, you're thinking to yourself, "Oh! Oh! Fool game designer lets me make up my own powers! I will *destroy him!*" Here's where I reveal the mechanical limits which keep a player from macking out his Creepy Skills so hard he can use them for everything and dominate and destroy and laugh and laugh and laugh until the drool begins to froth on his lips.

Ready for it?

There aren't any.

Creepy Skills are *supposed* to be awesome. It's a deliberate design choice to leave these with only the limitations monster powers would have, which are mostly functional restrictions on what you can do with a Useful ability in a fight. A Useful Creepy Skill can't inflict damage, and it can't be an automatic "I WIN" in a fight. It has utility outside a fight based on how well (or broadly) defined its Useful qualities are, and utility in a fight based on whether it has the Attacks or Defends qualities, and within the limits on Useful qualities described on page 43 of *Monsters*.

But with a little imagination, clever players (and trust me, your players are *way* more clever than you give them credit for) will find ways to stretch their Creepy Skills to cover an awful lot of stuff. Why drop skill dice into Remember when your Enormous Ears give you a tape recorder's memory for sounds, and you make it a point to *always read out loud*?

If that's the character you want to play, go for it. Isn't that a deliciously disturbing image though? A little, hunched boy illuminated by a single bright lamp, surrounded by piles of books, his ears wide like gramophones, reading out loud in a clear reedy voice about the feeding habits of the African hyena. . . .

So there's one dreadful secret laid bare. There's nothing but the respect you have for your fellow players and the GM and the vision in your head of the character you want to play stopping you from creating a game-busting *überkind* ghost ninja.

LEFTY'S LEFTY

Lefty's tentacly left arm is weird and tricky. It can reach through higher dimensional manifolds, allowing it to pass through barriers to do tricks like grab stuff from a locked drawer without opening it, or reaching inside someone and poking them in the spleen. Even weirder, Lefty can taste whatever he picks up with his tentacle arm, but not like normal taste. It's a constant source of amazement and frustration just how good a pile of mine tailings or a dead hedgehog can taste if you touch it with your hideous appendage.

Hideous Tentacle Arm 1d (Attacks; Useful: reach through higher dimensions; Useful: taste whatever it touches; Awesome x2).

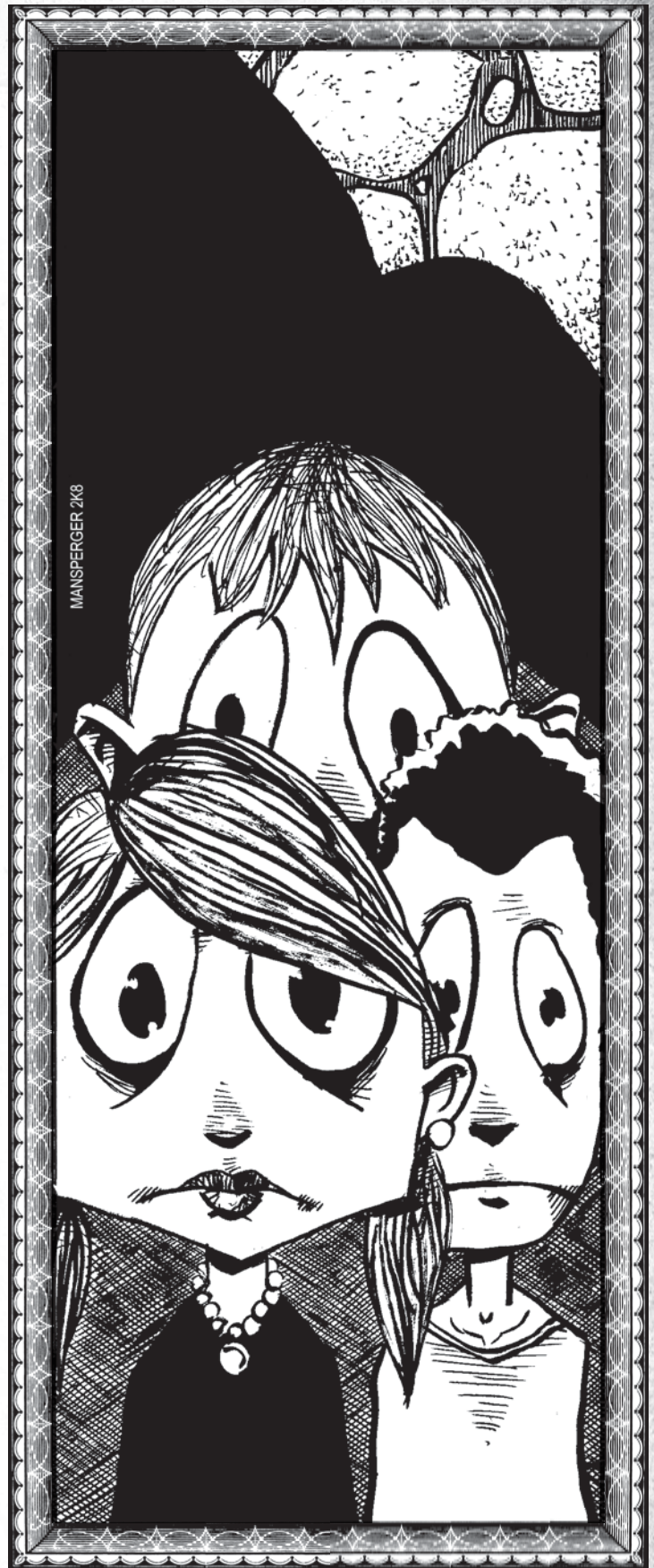
This is obviously a Hands Creepy Skill.

When he uses it, he rolls Hands + Hideous Tentacle Arm, and the Awesome extra lets him set one of the dice to anything he wants after the roll.

ECHOES

Orphans don't start play with Relationships like better-adjusted and better-loved kids. They have *Echoes* of past connections, and hints of possible future reconciliation. Echoes are fragments of memory, sensory impressions, objects of fascination, or reoccurring motifs in an orphan's life. The scent of fresh-baked banana bread. The color mauve. The sound of hungry cats mewing.

Orphans are without past, without connection at least as far as their players know, but by exploring their Echoes, finding them manifest in their explorations and adventures in Candlewick, orphans can uncover their hidden stories, and their connections to the strange place in which they have been sent to live.





YOUR OLD FRIEND TROUBLE

A major theme in *Monsters and Other Childish Things* is how your monster buddy gets you in trouble all the time. A Creepy Skill is sort of like a tiny monster that lives inside your skin, ready to leap to your aid. With a Creepy Skill, trouble is never out of reach.

There aren't any special rules for this, beyond the complications Creepy Skills can add to personal discovery and relationship-building. But it's something to always keep in mind.

Using a Creepy Skill means you're doing something *unnatural*. It upsets people and disturbs the natural world. Birds fly away when you unveil your demented prophetic parasitic twin. Milk sours when you speak the blasphemous tongue of Leng. Everyone gets the creeping dreads like a thousand ants scuttling up their spines when you manifest ectoplasm under the table to give the rat ghost something to inhabit.

Some citizens of Candlewick Vale might even have psychotic breakdowns if confronted with such blatant violations of all that is clean and well-ordered in the universe. Fainting ladies, bellowing men, cowering dogs, and you in the middle with your tentacles hanging out for everyone to see. Oh God! So embarrassing! You could just *die*.



Each orphan starts with 10 dice in Echoes, with no single Echo being rated with more than three dice.

LEFTY REMINISCES

I consider Lefty's persona and his image, as well as the answers to his questions, and give him the following Echoes:

The Taste of Cigar Ash 3d.

Barking Dogs 2d.

A Thudding, Fearful Heart 2d.

Wind as Hot as Breath 2d.

Orange Firelight 1d.

ECHOES INSPIRE ACTION

Whenever an orphan encounters one of her Echoes during a conflict situation, she can draw strength and motivation from the hints of insight it provides. It's up to you, the player, to decide if the Echo comes up. The benefit is that the Echo dice can be added to the dice pool you're rolling at the time. Just work the manifestation of the Echo into your description of your character's actions. Each Echo can only be added in this way once per session, so make them count.

LEFTY IN THE LURCH

Lefty has been knocked unconscious by the mayor's wife and locked inside a huge iron safe. He wakes in the choking darkness, rapidly running out of air. He wants to reach through the door with his tentacle arm, and spring the lock but he's got to do it FAST, and doing it fast means getting a wide success.

His Hands + Hideous Tentacle Arm pool is six dice, and because of his Creepy Skill he can set one die to any value he likes after rolling. That will at least get him a width 2 set, but is that fast enough to avoid suffocation? I decide to use one of Lefty's Echoes to increase his chances.

I go with the Taste of Cigar Ash and add, "When I felt the chloroform rag against my face, I thrashed and grabbed, and brushed against my attacker, getting a taste of expensive cigar ash, just a taint, but it fired my will to live and uncover why it was so powerfully familiar."

I now have nine dice for this roll, and I get a 3x5 to which I add another 5 by changing one of the other dice. That's a 4x5: really, really fast! Lefty flops out of the safe, gasping, but alive and now haunted by the powerful Echo.

ILLUMINATION

Whenever an orphan encounters an Echo, she gains some insight into her past, future, and place in the universe. In some way, her personal mystery is closer to being solved. Each time you add an Echo to a roll, add an equal number of dice to your *Illumination* pool. Illumination is a general sense of how close a character is

to figuring something out, how near she is to a shocking or joyous revelation.

If the Echo-enhanced roll results in failure—no sets rolled, or sets blocked by opposition, gobble dice or damage—then Illumination does nothing but continue to accumulate.

If the Echo-enhanced roll succeeds, then the orphan might experience a Revelation. Roll the character's pool of Illumination dice. If this roll succeeds, the character experiences an epiphany, a Revelation, and the height and width determine its nature. If no matches are rolled, then the epiphany fails to fully manifest and evaporates in a frustrating cloud of loss.

It feels like almost, but not quite, sneezing.

Illumination then continues to accumulate.

ILLUMINATING LEFTY

Dragging himself out of the abandoned mine office, still panting for breath, mind swimming with the powerful sensations of the Echo and a chloroform headache, Lefty feels closer to figuring things out than he has in a long time. His Illumination was 4 before the safe incident, and with the three dice from the Echo he used to save his bacon, he's now got seven dice. And since the Echo-enhanced roll was a success, I pick up those seven Illumination dice and get ready to roll them.

REVELATION

A successful roll of Illumination dice is transformative, bringing insight where there was mystery. It brings Revelation. A Revelation exposes an orphan's hidden past or reveals the nature of an oracular Echo, but whether memory or vision, in some way it connects her to Candlewick. It transmutes an Echo into a Relationship with one of Candlewick's people, places, or *things*.

A successful roll causes Illumination to drop to zero, and from the general hints provided by the height, width, and loose dice of the roll, you describe the revealed memories and history, and the Relationship which emerges from it.

Look up the height of the roll on the Relationships and Complications table, page 22. If the creative juices aren't flowing right then and there, you can note down the hints and who the Relationship is with, then sleep on it.

A paragraph or so of memory and detail is about all you need to cook up, guided by the dice and the situation in which the revelation occurred. If you want, a Revelation need not be explanatory and question-answering, but rather it can raise new ones. You might find you get more mileage out of them if you work in some additional questions. Where there was darkness, now there's light, but making sense of what has been illuminated is in itself an adventure.

When rolling Illumination, *all* the dice mean something, but the sets are the most important things. If you roll more than one set, use the widest one to define the type of the relationship (according to height). If widths are equal, then pick the one you think is most interesting. All loose dice and extra sets become Complications, which inject conflict and potential strife into the relationship.



KEEPSAKES AND MYSTERIOUS ANTIQUITIES

Sometimes, an Echo might be something an Orphan carries. A locket with an unknown woman's picture inside it. A dirty handkerchief covered in rusty brown stains with the monogram J.K. embroidered on it. A big pair of klonky boots you wear all the time, even when you sleep.

In these cases, the Echo isn't really the object; the object will be familiar and ordinary from the Orphan's point of view. The Echo will be the unexpected meaning with which a situation might imbue the familiar object.

While struggling to escape a pack of terrible wolves, an Orphan attempts to break into one of the big tombs in the Candlewick Family Cemetery, and with the dice from her WEIRD OLD KEY Echo, the effort succeeds. Before this, the key was just a thing the Orphan always had. No idea why. Now, she has questions and hints. Why would she have been carrying this weird key around all this time, and only now discover what it was for?





IT TASTES LIKE BURNING!

Players who don't like managing their own Echoes may prefer to discover their characters' secrets at the same time they imagine their characters doing so. This is pretty easy to handle. Another player or the GM takes control of your Illumination, makes the rolls and interprets the results.

This method requires a certain amount of daring and a whole mess of trust, because the stakes are what a major revelatory moment in your character's life really means. That's pretty heavy stuff to hand to someone else, especially someone who *smiles all the time* like the guy who sits next to you.

But here's a hint. You know that moment of slightly sick realization when your so-called friend tells you what is Revealed, and it's not what you would have chosen for your own character, not by a mile? That moment might be *perfect*. The feeling you have can mirror the consternation and woe your character might be experiencing out there in the airy, imaginary land of the game.



Creepier orphans have more Complications. Each Creepy Skill they possess works like a monster's Awesome extra: It flips one of the lonely unmatched dice equal to another, forming a set or making one wider. An orphan with three Creepy Skills would flip three dice this way, and suffer really, really Complicated relationships as a result.

This can be fun, because it gives the GM more room to mess with your character, giving you the spotlight more often. But it can also be a drag, because you'll find your character and his friends being horribly and mercilessly abused in furtherance of the plot while the GM steeple his fingers and goes *Mwaaaaahaaaaahaaaa!*

But hey, is there any real difference between good attention and bad attention?

All the other dice represent color or minor influences shaping the Relationship's general character, and the truth which is revealed through it.

It seems a little bit complicated, but the process is fairly organic. The dice are there to provide some general ideas you can use as a framework for your imagination. If you'd like, the GM and the other players can help you by riffing possible meanings for all the Illumination dice you roll. This collaborative aspect can be really rewarding, and it helps everyone care about other players' characters. With that kind of investment, you can end up with some really great table dynamics, but it's totally your call.

Roll	Relationship	Complication
1	Enemy (wants to destroy you)	Misunderstanding
2	Antagonist (wants to hurt you)	Debt
3	Rival (wants to beat you)	Animosity
4	Ally (wants to help you)	Mistaken Identity
5	Friend (wants to play with you)	Vendetta
6	Guardian (wants to protect you)	Verboten
7	Distant Relation	Love
8	Cousin, Aunt or Uncle	A Price
9	Grandparent	Lies
10	Parent	Tragic Fate

Lefty, having survived the attempt on his life, struggles through the rain, his senses blasted by lighting and thunder, his mind by swirling images and chaos. I roll those seven Illumination dice, and get 1, 1, 1, 3, 7, 7, 9 and 10.

First I look to the sets.

3x1: This is the widest set, so it defines the nature of the Relationship. The table indicates an ENEMY (which, given the whole locked-in-a-safe thing, isn't a huge surprise), but the surprise is . . .

2x7: Love. Lefty has found a Relationship with an Enemy, and the hostility they feel for each other is powerful enough to give Lefty bonus dice. But love? Lefty's love for his Enemy or her love for him (or for someone else) makes the Relationship more complex and uncertain. Even weirder, Lefty's single Creepy Skill makes this set wider by 1, so the fact that he's a deformed and unlovable orphan makes the complicating Love more powerful.

Now, the lonely dice will provide an idea about other influences on the thing. Lefty's Creepy Skill flipped the 9 he rolled so it was equal to 7, widening the Complication, but that leaves the 10. Looking at the two charts to see which offers the more interesting possibility, that gives him "Tragic Fate" or "Parent." I think, and then choose.

"I remember a storm like this one, and the taste of cigar ash, just traces of it on someone's sleeve, and the hard hands that held me, unloving hands. They rudely pushed me into the grasp of another, and I heard Mrs. Bombrienfeld's voice say:

'Take him, the little horror. My husband would have made him legitimate, but I'll not have his bastard in my house and have everyone talking about it. Take him far from here and leave him in some godforsaken orphanage. Pay them whatever they want to keep him there. Make him vanish.'

"The mayor is my father, but he doesn't know it, and his wife hates me for it as much as she loves him. She had me taken from town as a baby, and now I've returned."

THE NEW RELATIONSHIP

The new Relationship replaces the Echo that triggered the whole process. When you first uncover a new Relationship it can be a powerful thing, or it can be weirdly underwhelming.

When it is first revealed, the value of the new Relationship is equal to the width of the set that determined its type. If this is more than the value of the Echo which was converted, then the value drops by one die each time you use the Relationship until it is equal to the Echo it replaced. If it is less, then it gains a die each time it is used until it is equal to the Echo.



MY CHARACTER WOULDN'T THINK THIS WAY!

Some players find that having to step out from behind their character's eyes to use Echoes—deciding which Echo to use and what it means—is really distracting and fun-breaking.

It's good to make sure everyone is on the same page and has the same expectations before things begin. If handling Echoes breaks the illusion too much, then a player might hand the responsibility for managing their character's Echoes to another player at the table.

In some games everyone might enjoy this mode; just pass your Echoes to the player to your left. This requires you trust that the other player will invoke an Echo when you really need the dice. It's sort of the RPG version of that game where you fall backwards and the other kids catch you.

Of course, I have vivid memories of landing on my back while being laughed at by my betrayers. It's a tragedy when you learn at age 8 never to trust anybody. Ever.

One hopes, Dear Reader, that your own childhood traumas have scared you in less misanthropic ways.





MY MOMMA IS A PINE TREE?

What happens when Revelation hits, and there's just no obvious, immediate character with whom to form a Relationship? You're out in the woods, and Revelation hits with a 3x10 when you use an Echo to help climb a tree. That's a Parental relationship. So, is your Momma the tree? A bird's nest? Or what's that carved into the bark above that bough? A crude heart with two sets of initials in it. Who do you know with those initials?

The trick is rope a character into the immediate scene even if they're not actually present. By necessity, this new character will almost always be one the players have encountered before (otherwise, they wouldn't know who to bring in), but in the event that nothing at all presents itself as immediately useful, the Revelation can hold on a little bit until it can hit.

Perhaps, after climbing down from the tree, you find your hands and uniform all covered in sticky pine sap, and the only way to get cleaned up before dinner is to get some turpentine from the groundskeeper's shack. . . .

Of course, Candlewick Vale is a pretty weird place. Your Momma might *actually be* a pine tree. It would certainly explain a few things.



DEALING WITH COMPLICATIONS

Complications represent major sources of trouble. So, "Love" seems like a good Complication, does it? All warm and welcoming and wonderful? Well, if Love is a Complication, then it is *crazy love*. It's the sort of love that makes people kidnap their kids and flee across the country. Complications color all your interactions with the source of your Relationship. Nothing is ever sweetness and light for the pathetic orphans of THE DREADFUL SECRETS OF CANDLEWICK MANOR.

Complications can be managed, but they are very hard to eliminate. Right off, they give the GM a way to use your Relationships to drive play and make things crazy for your orphan. The Width of the set which produced the Complication is also noted in the Relationships section of your character sheet. More powerful Complications come up more often, and have a greater effect.

Complications can give dice to those who oppose you sometimes, in a similar way to how Relationships can give your orphan dice. This does suck, but if you still beat the odds and win through despite the more powerful opposition, you can permanently reduce the value of the Complication by one die.

DAD?

Lefty is trying to contact his father after observing him secretly for weeks, but the mayor's wife is watching for Lefty like a hawk. The Love Complication makes her efforts to block his contact with the mayor especially successful; she's driven to keep him away and to hurt him any way she can. But if Lefty manages to contact the mayor and talk with him despite Mrs. Bombrienfeld's efforts, then it'll reduce the value of the Complication by one die, making further contacts easier.

BREAKING THE RULES

Sometimes, dramatic necessity has to trump the roll of the dice. If everyone around the table is cool with it, and it makes for a good and powerful story, then some of the Illumination dice can be reserved, and set to the desired value after the rest are rolled. Sometimes, an opportunity for uncovering something powerful is so inevitable and obvious that the dice aren't needed; the truth arises through play, and it is gorgeous and complex and crazy. As always, do the crazy cool thing.

THE CANDLEWICK HOME FOR THE UNWANTED AND UNLOVED

OFFICIAL RECORD

Orphan's Name: _____

Age: _____

Quote: _____

Image: _____

Personality: _____

Illumination: _____

Relationship: _____

Complications: _____

Relationship: _____

Complications: _____

Relationship: _____

Complications: _____

Relationship: _____

Complications: _____

Echoes and Notes: _____

Stats and Skills

Feet _____

Hands _____

Guts _____

Brains _____

Face _____

Insults, Injuries, and Still More Notes: _____

Creepy Skills

Dice

Stat

Qualities and Extras



RUNNING THE GAME

CHAPTER THE THIRD

So, you want to inflict *THE DREADFUL SECRETS OF CANDLEWICK MANOR* on your smiling and guileless players? Oh, look at them—so trusting, their innocent hearts swollen with respect for you. But to give them the experience of *CANDLEWICK* they, as serious roleplayers, deserve, you must be cruel to be kind. Teach them that there is a bleak joy in misery and gloom. Break their hearts . . . even if only a little bit.

Or, if you'd prefer to keep them as friends, do the above, but also lace it with some black comedy, and some wry commentary, and most certainly enlist them in conspiring against their own characters. *THE DREADFUL SECRETS OF CANDLEWICK MANOR* is a game about outsiders thrust into a situation that they will inevitably change, possibly for the worse. While they may begin as brooding loners, they will not remain so. The mechanics push them right into dangerous proximity to Candlewick Vale's quirky cast of often two-faced characters, all steeped in their own agendas.

The orphans begin as outsiders but will end up as insiders, linked intimately to the Vale and its people. They'll have two dramatically different experiences of the place, and if you do your job right, both will be poignant and rife with conflict. This section will give you some advice and techniques, as well as a GM's toolbox of dirty tricks which will let you leverage Revelations, links, and conflict mapping to best effect.



THE SETTING IS EATING MY BRAIN!

Where on Earth to begin? **CANDLEWICK** is an open-ended setting, more Lego blocks than toy train. But starting things out can be daunting.

The easiest way to begin a **CANDLEWICK** game is the most obvious: Start at the beginning. The orphans crest a mountain road and see the Vale laid out before them. The big black car winds down into the valley, through the town (with its staring, hostile citizenry) and up into the foothills to the foreboding pile of Candlewick Manor.

They will be greeted at the door, escorted to their rooms, and given their oddly formal new institutional uniforms: for boys, black trousers, shoes, white shirt, tie and blazer; for girls, black skirt, heavy stockings, sensible ankle boots and blazer. At some point Dr. Candlewick will come around for introductions and to distribute enigmatic hints and warnings.

The Vale is there to be explored. Wandering around, meeting people, making trouble, and digging into things that don't concern them can occupy half a dozen sessions without the GM ever needing to inject an overarching plot (though if he's inclined, this is certainly easy enough).



WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY?

Thumb through the following sections and you'll see you already have all these answered. The goal of **THE DREADFUL SECRETS OF CANDLEWICK MANOR** is to provide as much of the setting as possible to you in discrete, immediately gameable chunks. Need a location for a scene? Grab one from the Places section. Need some people to inhabit it? Check out the People section. Hard up for a conflict? Look at the Hooks for the place, and the Roles the people who inhabit it bring with them. Take a place, put in some people, add PCs and shake till it explodes.

There is no core plot for **CANDLEWICK**, no rails to run a train down. It provides some strong themes, and some imagery, but is totally open, a bag of blocks you can use to build castles. The Candlewick explored and discovered by your group will be different from the one mine experiences.

Scene-building is a useful practice when you're looking to provide some plot to the game, or you need to get the orphans in enough trouble that they'll start tapping their Echoes hard and end up bound tight into the setting. We've included a scene worksheet with four scene cards on it, so you can quickly note down the elements of the scene, and then have them ready to bring into play whenever they could work the most mojo. The major campaign prep you might want to consider is how you Link everything.

LINKS

All the people (who aren't orphans) in Candlewick have Links to other people. A Link implies a strong connection between characters, but the nature of the Link is generally left ambiguous during the prep phase of the game—until the players encounter it, uncover it, and through their examination of it define what the Link is all about.

A husband and wife may have Links to each other, but what do they really mean? How do they really feel about each other? During prep, all you have to do is draw a line, and consider some possibilities. When Orphans start getting tied to people, forming Relationships with them, then you'll see that they're now bound to a spiderweb that Links them to the whole community, and the consequences of their Relationships and the health of them will have repercussions which spread through Candlewick. Sort of like a bad case of the flu.

To speed things into play, on page 35 you'll find a ready-to-go Links Worksheet ready to use, tweak, or sneer at depending on your needs, energy, inclination, and general misanthropy.

THE MONSTERS OF CANDLEWICK

The setting comes already inhabited by thirteen monsters quite similar to the creatures from **MONSTERS AND OTHER CHILDISH THINGS**. They are built with a slightly-tweaked version of the same set of rules, but there are some differences. Here's what a **CANDLEWICK** monster has going for it.

MONSTERS ARE FROM SOMEWHERE AROUND HERE. Rather than being from somewhere else, some strange and unknown and extra-bendy dimension, the monsters of Candlewick are more terrestrial in origin, more Bigfoot than Mi-Go. They have their niches and favorite places in the Vale. They play into the folklore of the place. There's something obscure about them, though. Most folks, on encountering a monster, experience some kind of freakout (See **MONSTERS AND OTHER CHILDISH THINGS** page 31), and afterwards the memory of the monster and the experience gets a little hazier. It's not totally forgotten, but hard to believe and easy to rationalize when the sun comes up. It's just one of the weird little quirks of the Vale. Along with its impossible geology, people are really good at lying to themselves.

Of course, orphans, being creepy outsiders, aren't bothered by monsters this way. They remember, and get punished for telling ridiculous stories about them at school the next day. Nobody believes what an orphan says, anyhow. I mean, they *haven't even got any parents*. And they're weird.

The monsters of Candlewick aren't really immune to environments the way those from **MONSTERS** are, but it won't really come up that often.

MONSTERS ARE TOUGH, BUT NEED TO BE CAREFUL. Candlewick's monsters are quite tough, but they aren't as broadly invulnerable to mundane harm as those from **MONSTERS AND OTHER CHILDISH THINGS**. They might be wary of a mob with pitchforks and shotguns. They're still totally boss, don't worry about that, but they lack the free defensive measures against pure mundane attacks. They must defend normally with a Defensive ability. They only take Shocks from attacks, however, unless they're really nasty, like elephant guns and dynamite. It's your call when you want to seriously threaten a monster. Candlewick monsters still heal pretty quickly, though, recovering a die lost to mundane attack every hour, and one lost to monster attack every day.

MONSTERS ARE PRETTY GOOD AT HIDING. Candlewick monsters have a favorite place where they're aces at hiding, but have some trouble hiding outside of it at least with the ease of their beefier cousins from **MONSTERS**.

MONSTERS KEEP THEIR PROMISES. Again, it's something about the place perhaps, but when a monster promises something, it's going to keep its word or die trying to make it happen. As a result, most monsters ain't so keen on promising things to meddling little orphans.

MONSTERS WANT TO MAKE FRIENDS. Monsters in Candlewick are like orphans, outcasts on the fringes of the world. They're really easy to form Relationships with. Almost too easy. See *Monsters and Echoes*, below.

MONSTERS ARE LESS FOCUSED. Monsters in Candlewick can have no more than three hit locations assigned to a single body part, and can only have one of these if they do so. This means they'll have more parts which are individually less potent, and it keeps them from being juggernauts with four-location body parts.



SNAKES AND LADDERS

All of the characters who populate Candlewick Vale are Linked to other characters, and uncovering these Links and their meaning is a major theme in play. If you want to make this more mechanically meaningful, then allow players to tap their Relationships when interacting with characters who are Linked to the ones they have the Relationship with, with one die less per each step removed. To do this, however, the nature of the Link must be explicitly known to the Orphan. It must have been uncovered and explored through play first.

For example, if an orphan uncovers a 3d Relationship with Mr. Broodenkine, then her player could add two dice when dealing with Mrs. Broodenkine or their daughter, or the sheriff, or any characters Linked to Mr. Broodenkine. With all those Linked to any of Mr. Broodenkine's Links the orphan can add a single die.

This provides immediate incentive to uncover and define Links. But it can reduce the value in revealing one's own Relationships, if a single one with three dice provides so much broad utility.





DREAM A LITTLE DREAM

In Candlewick, sometimes dreams are real. Orphans may find themselves sharing dreams, or may wake suddenly to find a whole day's activities were actually dreams. At the edges, these things smear and blur and run together.

Things that an orphan *knows* happened only in a dream sometime seem to be reflected in the waking world. It's the opposite of dreaming about what troubles you during the day. It's being troubled during the day by what you dream about at night.

Most of the time, there's no way to have real dreams on purpose (barring some special Creepy Skill or access to weird magical hoodoo), but monsters can sometimes make them real. When an orphan has a bond with a monster, that monster lives wherever it usually lives, but it also lives in the orphan's dreams. It's one of the ways a monster knows when its human friend is in trouble.

Some nefarious types know this, and wouldn't be averse to doing some quite horrible things to an orphan to keep him awake.



MONSTERS AND ECHOES

Turning an Echo into a Relationship with a regular person is a chaotic and unreliable process. There's no way to predict how things will be revealed. But things work a bit differently with monsters. Monsters don't fit into human Relationships like people do. They're weird, and they carry their own strange motifs and Echoes with them.

Orphans find it really easy to befriend monsters, so easy that sometimes it seems an Echo existed for the sole purpose of bringing orphan and monster together. You can simply decide when you encounter (and interact with) a monster that one of your Echoes connects you immediately and powerfully to the creature. Work it into the description of your interaction (talking, arguing, tricking, or running away from), and you can immediately transform that Echo into a bond with the beastie, just as if you made an Illumination roll for it.

This can mean you become friends with the monster. But it doesn't have to. What it really means is that to the monster, you are suddenly the most important person in Candlewick Vale, and you're going to get a lot of attention from it for good or ill.

MONSTERS AND JEALOUSY

Monsters can get along all right with each other if they have to, but if they're forced to share an orphan who foolishly formed Relationships with both of them, then things get ugly. These monsters will hate each other and compete for their orphan's time and attention, demanding constant mediation and lots of yelling and foot stomping to keep them off each other. Sometimes, it gets so bad you have to turn the hose on them to break it up. Things will only get worse, especially if one monster has a better Relationship with the orphan leading inevitably to a fight to the horrible death.

In each scene where monsters bound to the same orphan are forced to interact, add one die to a pool called Jealousy. This pool is rolled every time the orphan picks one monster over the other, or any conflict arises between them. If a Jealousy roll comes up matches, then a few things might happen.

A *tall* roll has a height of 6 or more; a *wide* roll has a width of 3 or more.

SHORT AND THIN: MAKE A GHASTLY SCENE! The most recently-slighted monster makes a big embarrassing scene and stomps off in a huff. He won't help the orphan until he's properly mollified, with Motivation rolls and some Quality Time, or a major indulgence of his favorite thing.

TALL AND THIN: TEMPER RUN HOT! The monsters lash out at each other in a brief flurry of violence. As soon as one monster has a single bit mauled down to uselessness, the fight ends and both monsters stomp off, and require attention to soothe their tempers before they'll help an orphan out.

SHORT AND WIDE: GO ON A RAMPAGE! Rather than attack the other monster, the slighted beast throws an angry tantrum and breaks stuff and wrecks places until calmed down (with Motivation rolls).

TALL AND WIDE: TERRIBLE MONSTER THROWDOWN! The Jealousy boils over into a full-blown monster fight, which runs its course normally with the monsters clawing and biting and being just as horrible as they possibly can. On the upside, after a blowup the Jealousy pool empties out.

GREEN-EYED MONSTERS: If you *really* want a monster to cause trouble, apply the Jealousy rules so the monster gets jealous of *any other Relationship* the orphan forms. Pump dice into Jealousy only when the monster knows his orphan is choosing to spend time with another of her Relationships. Still, having a monster fighting-jealous of someone you care about is all kinds of *ohjeezeohjeezeohjeeze*.

MONSTERS AND LINKS

Through an orphan, a monster is connected to the rest of the Candlewick community. As you might imagine, monsters tend to cause trouble. Have fun.

THE STAGES OF THE GAME

There are roughly three stages of a Candlewick game, though they blur strongly where they transition.

At first, the shiftless and unconnected orphans will be tossed into the deep end. They'll find themselves in the middle of conflicts with the people of the Vale, mistrusted, mistreated, and moved about like pawns in a game with a solid black board, blindfolded players, and pieces all shaped the same. At every step there'll be ominous imagery, mystery, and a threat. The goal in this opening stage is to push them into using their Echoes as much as possible and build up Illumination.

When they've formed a number of Relationships (especially nice Complicated ones), it's time to use **MONSTERS AND OTHER CHILDISH THINGS** Relationship-leveraging tricks to force them into conflicts and precarious situations based on their newfound connections to the community. Suddenly they have things that matter to them, and things they will be afraid of losing.

Finally, when the characters are well rooted in Candlewick and have uncovered much of the social map of the Vale, they can begin to participate in the complex social warfare of the place. They've already been drafted to one side or another. Just look at their Relationships. Now they're playing on the level of other Candlewick residents, only they bring an unnatural power to the game that wasn't there before. They're still *creepy*, and they might well be friends with *monsters* at this point.

Use adventures as bait, Relationships as hooks, and Links as the line. Then reeeeeeeel them in slow.

THEMES AND IMAGERY

Nailing down the themes you would like to explore is a good way to wrap your head around the game and make it your own. The game has strong threads of social ostracism and isolation, of man's inhumanity to his children, of Darwinian



LITTLE MONSTERS

Where do monsters come from? Well, perhaps the seeds have already been planted in the orphans. They're all already a little *creepy*. A little *monstrous*.

If you want to push things more quickly towards chaos and tragedy, then do this. Whenever an orphan's Relationships get shocked, give him or her an equal number of dice to add to Creepy Skills (acquiring new ones, expanding the dice pool of existing ones, or getting new Qualities and Extras). The orphan will lose these dice when he or she mends the Relationship, so the player has to make a choice: fix the Relationship or keep the cool powerz.

And seriously, who'd turn down cool powerz?

Their Relationships will wither on the vine, and they'll become more and more monstrous until they run out of Relationships, and then the transformation is complete. They'll then wander off to some dark corner of the Vale to carve out a little niche, and settle down to full-time monsterring. In time, they'll completely forget what it was like to be human.





DIRE PERIL

MONSTERS AND OTHER CHILDISH THINGS has a pretty robust set of rules for running complex conflicts usually in the form of fights and monster brawls. But in many Candlewick games, there won't be as much fighting, and especially not as much monster brawling (at least at first). So, let those lovely rules for complex action go to waste? Not at all!

You can use the One-Roll Engine to pace action scenes where there's no fighting at all, such as escaping from a collapsing tunnel while trying to snatch up ancient pre-human stone tablets.

You can easily represent Peril with a single die pool, rolled normally as part of the resolution process. "Damage" done to this pool would represent the characters' efforts to escape the threat. You can treat the Peril pool like the pool for a monster power with the Useful and Attack qualities.

Really complex scenes might have more than one source for Peril, and so multiple dice pools. The GM always declares the intent for nonliving sources of Peril first, giving all the players the chance to formulate their response to it.

human nature. The imagery runs to the gothic (in the Victorian sense). It is a game about outsiders joining the group, and finding it perhaps worse than being alone. It is about tragedy—though a colorful and ironic sort, the sort the French would enjoy. Getting your imagery and motifs down will also help. Is it bleak, windswept hills under gray skies? Or bright sunlight that lies with its false promise of joy?

CHARACTERS AS THE AGENTS OF CHANGE

Candlewick Vale begins in a state of suspended animation, waiting for the orphans to arrive and bring the thing life like Frankenstein's lighting bolt. The orphans are the most important characters in the game, and their actions will always have consequences, for good or ill. Use the Links to see how their actions might ripple through the community and who will be inadvertently affected by their actions.

Most inhabitants of Candlewick are primed for some kind of action, or are strongly reactive to certain kinds of pressure. When the orphans start messing with things as they explore, they'll start punching people's buttons, and then they'll be in more trouble, and so will do things that punch more buttons. Once they start, there'll be no getting out.

BUILDING MYSTERIES

Mysteries are the driving element of *THE DREADFUL SECRETS OF CANDLEWICK MANOR*. The characters themselves are mysteries to be uncovered. As they forge connections to the Vale, they'll have more and more opportunity to seek answers to their questions, and more questions to seek answers to. Building an air of mystery is as important as using mysteries to drive your plots.

Pepper your scenes with strange and unsettling imagery and motifs, odd little things that may interest the players enough for them to seek answers. This puts them in contact with more people, gets them tapping their Echoes more, and—you see where this is going.

There's a tendency in role-playing to assume that if the GM is describing something, then it must somehow be important. But if there was an official snack of *THE DREADFUL SECRETS OF CANDLEWICK MANOR*, it would be herring with ketchup. Tap into your inner H.P. Lovecraft and indulge in some pointless purple prose, wasting precious table time on describing something entirely irrelevant to the matter at hand. These flights of narration will pay off, because they'll create the sense that weird or tragic things are going on all the time in Candlewick, just waiting to be uncovered by curious orphans.

When you present an actual mysterious plot, there are some key things to keep in mind. First, never hang advancement to the next interesting scene on whether the players can make the right kind of roll. A failed roll that results in *nothing happening* sort of blows.

Instead, finding clues should be a matter of course if the players describe their

searches. The rolls can allow them to discern more information than the basics, but the basics let them advance through your plot. Particularly significant will be details which could forearm them against something gruesome or horrible in the final acts of the play.

Keep in mind that mysteries in Candlewick can best be thought of as vehicles that force the orphans to squeeze into the back seat, to get close with other people. It forces them into the space of Candlewick's inhabitants and gets them to interact. Like proper hardboiled detectives, orphans aren't going to solve crimes with their great observation and deduction. This isn't Sherlock Holmes. They'll ask questions. Disturb people. Shake things up. Unsettle those with guilty consciences, and force them to do stupid, dangerous, potentially lethal things to keep their secrets.

"I know I'm on the right track."

"How?"

"People keep trying to kill me."

EXPLORING THE MAP

Candlewick Vale is something like the maps you get in those real-time strategy video games. You have your little base, and a tiny island of revealed geography surrounded by darkness. You send out scouts to explore and find resources, and they push back the darkness, revealing more of the map. This brings you into conflict with the enemy, and before you know it they have a giant floating jellyfish dropping monsters onto your gas factory. Candlewick has many danger-fraught places waiting to be explored (many with resident monsters, so you better not have a gas factory anywhere). But there's also social exploration, and the interlinked populace of Candlewick Vale provides what's known in the biz as a *Relationship Map*. If one wrote all the names of everyone in the game on a big board, and drew lines between them for the Links, you'd have a whole lot of lines. A couple of Sharpies worth. Create your own with the help of the Links Worksheet on page 35.

TRAGEDY AND COMEDY

THE DREADFUL SECRETS OF CANDLEWICK MANOR is a shade darker than ordinary MONSTERS. Its orphans are an ill-favored lot. For the orphans there are no happy endings, or at least no simple ones. And bad things will happen to good (or at least good looking) people. But there's a strong vein of black comedy, too. "Where will we hide this other body? The hole is only big enough for one, and the sun is coming up!"

The orphans are outsiders and somewhat cynical ones at that. They'll have a certain perspective on dark gloomy things. Wry commentary and gallows humor are encouraged. It is the chance for the players to get in touch with their inner morb. But try and balance them. If you kill a loved NPC off in one session, hit them with the musical, all-singing episode next time.

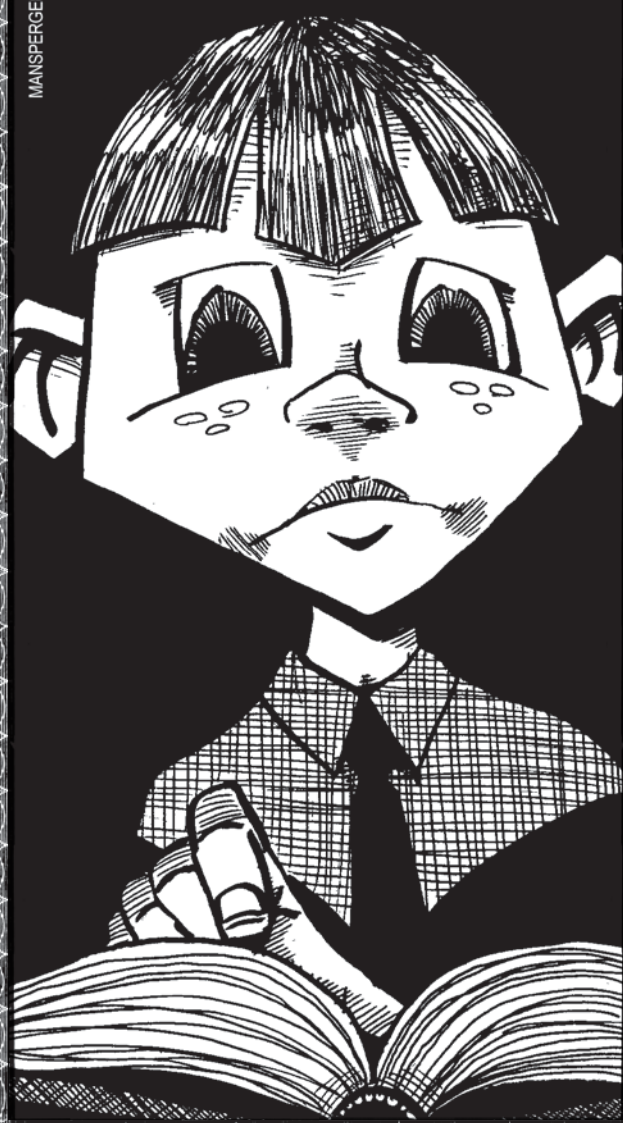
So, for example, the "Collapsing Cave 8d" represents a pretty grave threat to the characters. The GM would first declare the threat: "The cave is collapsing, raining huge rocks down upon you." The players can then respond with their efforts to evade and/or perform other actions. Then in the roll phase, the GM rolls eight dice for the collapsing cave, and resolves the results normally.

Like a monster ability, Peril can confound and complicate the characters' efforts (see page 43 of MONSTERS for how Useful abilities can be used this way). If you want really dangerous Peril, you can add other monster Extras, like Burn and Wicked Fast, to the pool's effects.

The ability you use to "damage" the Peril pool can be logically or creatively determined. To reduce the danger of the cave-in, getting out of the cave is the most logical way to reduce the Peril it represents, so Feet + P.E. could be used to "hurt" it.

And for super GM Fu, you can use this same method for running big mobs of faceless goons and generic mooks. An "Angry Goblin Horde 6d" could be made much more dangerous with the addition of Area x3 or Gnarly x2.





THE SAVAGE GARDEN

Children are beasts, and they love beastly things. They're also heartbreakingly precious, but it can't be escaped that they're quite the little savages. The fairy tales intended for the children of old were full of blood and death and revenge and psychosexual tension. The world was dark, and the lessons to be learned from the stories were bleak ones. Children like to run, and they like to be cruel to one another, and they like slimy horrible things. This is much more evident in British children's literature than in American; the characters in Britlit kids are often fascinated by things which would horribly upset Walt Disney.

THE DREADFUL SECRETS OF CANDLEWICK MANOR plays to this aspect quite strongly. The orphans will be drawn to things like bodies down wells, wounded rabbits, ghosts and dangerous old mine works, and when a parent or teacher catches on, well, their advice certainly isn't going to be obeyed despite the beatings that come with it.

The orphans of Candlewick romp and play in a savage garden, and sometimes very bad things do happen to them.

ADDING NEW PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS

What, all *this* isn't enough for you? You ungrateful sumfin sumfin! If you just simply *must* add new people, places, and things—it's no big deal. Just write them up like the ones presented in this book. There's no fixed system for this. Figure how they fit into the Vale, give them Links, and rock and roll.

It would be cool if you posted your Expanded Candlewick Universe stuff online, too. Project Nemesis (www.nemesis-system.com) and the Arc Dream Publishing message boards (www.arcdream.com) are good places to share them.

LINKS WORKSHEET

THE DREADFUL SECRETS OF CANDLEWICK MANOR

Character Name: _____

Page Number: _____

Immediate Motivation/Goal: _____

Long-Term Motivation/Goal: _____

Mystery Role: _____

☐ Victim

☐ Witness

☐ Suspect

☐ Culprit

Relationships with Pathetic Children (PCs):

Dirty Secrets and Other Notes: _____

LINKED TO WHOM & HOW

BENGALO BARENESCRE: _____

BURMAEO BAREMESCRE: _____

BRODIE BLUME: _____

WIDOW BOELEEN: _____

GRETCHEN BOMBRIENFELD: _____

MAYOR LUCAS BOMBRIENFELD: _____

MAY BOMBRIENFELD: _____

BRICKSHANK: _____

SHAMUS BROODENKINE: _____

DR. MILES CANDLEWICK: _____

MILES CANDLEWICK JR. : _____

WISTERIA CANDLEWICK: _____

CHAWNAMBLER: _____

MORTIMER COALBLACK JR.: _____

REV. DICK CRICKEN: _____

JUDY PEACH CRIMMIN: _____

JURGEN DRAKENSLAGER: _____

DR. RUDYARD DRAVENFIRTH: _____

FARMER MAGRUDER'S PRIZE GOURD: _____

MR. FIDDLE: _____

MATRON FLORA: _____

HANSEL FOXGOOD: _____

LUSCIOUS GAUNT: _____

PATSY GAUNT: _____

PADDY GOMISH: _____

MARGON MOON GONNOMAN: _____

RAIS GONNOMAN: _____

STAR GONNOMAN: _____

JUDGE IGNES GRAFFBURGER: _____

DOUGLAS GROONER: _____

KARL GRUB: _____

SVETLANA GURKINMINE: _____

BRUCE HANDLEFIT: _____

SAFFRON HOAKAM: _____

HOODEFANIER: _____

FINCHEN HOSTLER: _____

THE HOWLER AT THE EDGE: _____

HERBERT KAVIN: _____

PEARL-ANNE KNOTTENFAUST: _____

ICARUS LEE: _____

DAVID MAGRUDER: _____

PAUL MAGRUDER: _____

MOONBOY: _____

DOROTHY NAIOLAND: _____

FATHER TIMOTHY O'MAGILL: _____

JULES OUSERUS: _____

THE PACK: _____

DEPUTY PACKHAMMER: _____

PENFINGLER: _____

POE: _____

CAPTAIN BRIAN PREACH: _____

CAPTAIN PYRE: _____

DR. FELIX REDMONGLER: _____

ARCHIE RICHWISH: _____

DAN RICHWISH: _____

GIUSEPPE SANGRIOLI: _____

DOCTOR WILABEY SHANKER: _____

MADIGABIAL SHUSFINGER: _____

FIONA SILVERDALE: _____

CECIL SNOSIDASS: _____

THE SPIRITS OF SHAFT NINE: _____

JACK STANDISH _____

MADLINE STANDISH: _____

MERCER STANDISH: _____

GORMAN STERNACKER: _____

SUSAN STERNACKER: _____

JOHN STUMPS: _____

SHERIFF ROSCOE TOULOUSE: _____

SCOUT TOULOUSE: _____

BEATRICE VILLIVERT: _____

ZITOMER: _____

PAUL ZUKER: _____



PEOPLE

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

Candlewick is well peopled, filled with folk who are occasionally odd, sometimes strange, and regularly weird, each in their own way.

The denizens of Candlewick Vale are part of a community, a network of Relationships and reciprocity which binds people together. Each one has links that connect them to other characters in meaningful ways. These can be customized or you can use the Links Worksheet on page 35.

The exact nature of these links is left undefined. They are for the orphans to “discover,” and the players and the GM to describe through play. This means that two groups both playing **MONSTERS AND OTHER CHILDISH THINGS** in **CANDLEWICK** will shape the setting in unique ways, and create radically different communities.

Each person below is described with the following.

NAME: The character’s name.

QUOTE: Something the character might say.

POV: A hint about the character’s worldview and outlook, in their own words.

ROLE: The character’s place in the community of Candlewick Vale and what might motivate them, and how they might react to the orphans.

DESCRIPTION: What the character looks like and how they act. General stuff.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Unless noted here, all stats default to a value of 2.

BACKGROUND: Where the character is from, what they learned how to do before doing what they now do. If the background applies to an action, add two dice to the roll.

VOCATION: The character’s main skills and abilities, usually tied to their livelihood. If the vocation applies to an action, add two dice to the roll.

PASSION: What drives and obsesses the character (possibly secretly). If the passion applies to an action, add two dice to the roll.

THE PEOPLE OF CANDLEWICK MANOR

DR. MILES MONROE CANDLEWICK

Master of the House of Candlewick

QUOTE: “We are all sailors on the stormy seas of fortune, my little ones. Sometimes we are dashed from the decks, and near drowned, only to find ourselves washed ashore upon stranger sands. I hope in time you may come to see these sands that we walk together as not so strange and unsettling, but as a place you can know and name and call home.”

POV: All of Candlewick Vale is laid out at my feet, the pieces set, the stratagems considered, and now come my orphans. What games we shall play, oh yes, and what lessons we might all learn in the playing, for the games of children are the laboratories where reality and identity and consciousness are tried and tested. Sometimes to destruction.

ROLE: Dr. Candlewick is the master of Candlewick Manor, and his family gave its name to the Vale. He has turned the Manor into a School for the Found and Unfortunate, and scours the world for those *most suited* to attend, all for his own mysterious (possibly sinister) reasons. He’s a looming enigma, distant but benevolent, yet also somewhat frightening. His motivations, goals and desires are all part of the mystery.

DESCRIPTION: Tall and striking. Dr. Candlewick is a vigorous man of late middle years, white-haired with dramatic side whiskers. He dresses impeccably, but his clothing is years out of fashion. He favors waistcoats of bright colors, and his watch chain is hung with weird charms and talismans. His eyes are kind, but his mouth is cruel. His ears are somewhat prominent (and indifferent of temperament). He speaks in a convoluted and rhythmic cadence which some find hypnotic.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Guts 5, Brains 5, Face 5.

BACKGROUND: Traveler to Exotic Locales.

VOCATION: Master of Candlewick Manor.

PASSION: The Transformation of Consciousness Through Action.

MILES CANDLEWICK, JR.

Son of the of the House of Candlewick

QUOTE: “Um, are you *sure* you’re supposed to be here? Only, I’m sure Father said—OK . . . OK . . . OK . . . well, that makes sense. Help carry your lantern? Well, if Father said it was OK to go down into the cellars, then sure, be happy to help.”

POV: I know people think I’m dumb and gullible, but that’s not it at all. I might not be smart, but I trust people, and I figure when you stop trusting people you already let the bad ones win.



ROLE: Miles is a big, open, friendly sort who'll fall for your tricks this week, and still be your friend next week. At some point, manipulating him should make you feel like a big old jerk. Like kicking a happy puppy. You jerk.

DESCRIPTION: Miles is a big (VERY big) kid in his early teens, with a face so wide and open raccoons are constantly sneaking in to pick through his mental trash and swipe his mental potato chips. He's shamefully easy to manipulate, but he's a fast and steady friend who'll always take your side, believing honestly in your good intentions. It's a good thing he's somewhat dim. His intellectual father's disappointment in him would carve out his heart and feed it to dogs, if only he recognized it.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Hands 4; Feet 3; Guts 5; Brains 1.

BACKGROUND: Rich (but Nice) Idiot.

VOCATION: All-Around Sportsman.

PASSION: Collecting Curiosities.

WISTERIA CANDLEWICK

Daughter of the House of Candlewick

QUOTE: "So, you're Father's new foundlings? I certainly hope you do better than the last lot. They weren't ANY fun at all."

POV: Why does Father waste his time with these wretches, when he has me? Once upon a dreamtime tea party, he sat with me, and said I were his Light, and all the World to him, but then Miles Jr. came, Mother went, and these bloody damned ORPHANS arrived. But still, I know what Father loves now, and I know how to get his attention. In the same way the cat does, by clawing up the favorite furniture.

ROLE: Wisteria is a spoiled girl whose distracted father no longer has time to indulge her, and she's begun to act out. In her early teens, she's blossoming like her name, but carries bitterness decades older than she is. She never learned the difference in *good attention* and *bad attention*. She knows there are limits to what she can inflict on the orphans, and cruelties Father would not forget, but she is clever and cagey, and loves to get orphans in trouble while seeming innocent herself.

DESCRIPTION: Tall, like her father, but with her Mother's looks. Well dressed, and always poised. Her voice seems kind, but can wound with backhand complements, or snarl like a dog when she's furious. Her rages are legendary among the staff of Candlewick Manor. She'll always obey the *letter* of her father's instructions, however, even if she twists their spirit whenever she can.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Guts 3; Brains 3; Face 4.

BACKGROUND: Spoiled Child of Wealth.

VOCATION: Social Butterfly.

PASSION: Cruelty to Orphans.

JURGEN DRAKENSLAGER

Driver, Mechanic, and All-Around Good Bloke in a Scrap

QUOTE: “You are stepping away from the children now, yes? This is something you should pick on with one of your own size. Alas, I will have to suffice, though I be significantly bigger than you.”

POV: I drive the cars, yes. I keep them running, too. Sometimes, I help with the boilers down in the basement. Everyone here hopeless with machinery. Hopeless when dealing with ugly realities too, I think. Someone here must be mindful of these things. To keep the machinery running, and drive the cars, and the bus for the children, and to fix other things when they break down.

ROLE: Jurgen is like a clenched fist. His whole body promises violence, pain and damage for anyone who steps in his path. He protected Dr. Candlewick through his years traveling, and now protects the orphans like they were his own. He won't stand for any abuse, rudeness or mistreatment of them. Until the rattling black bus passes from sight, at least, the orphans can expect civil treatment from everyone in the schoolyard. Nobody in Candlewick Vale is willing to raise Jurgen's ire. He's known to have put the enormous Deputy Packhammer to sleep with one punch, a feat comparable with kicking down a redwood tree or headbutting a charging rhino.

DESCRIPTION: Jurgen is solid, like an ironbound oaken door, and similarly shaped. He's remarkably wide, though not tall, built thick. He's as hard and tough as a creosote post. They say that as Dr. Candlewick's driver and bodyguard he's been shot, stabbed, burned, and once mauled by a huge dog. Sometimes he will smile his thin smile and show a curious orphan a truly shocking scar. His thinning hair is pale blond, and his accent vaguely Teutonic, but his eyes are thin slits hinting at a Slavic origin. Nobody is sure where he's from, and he discourages questions about his origins with very pointy silences.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Hands 5; Feet 4; Guts 5.

BACKGROUND: Bodyguard.

VOCATION: Driver and Mechanic for Candlewick Estates.

PASSION: The Careful and Judicious Application of Violence.

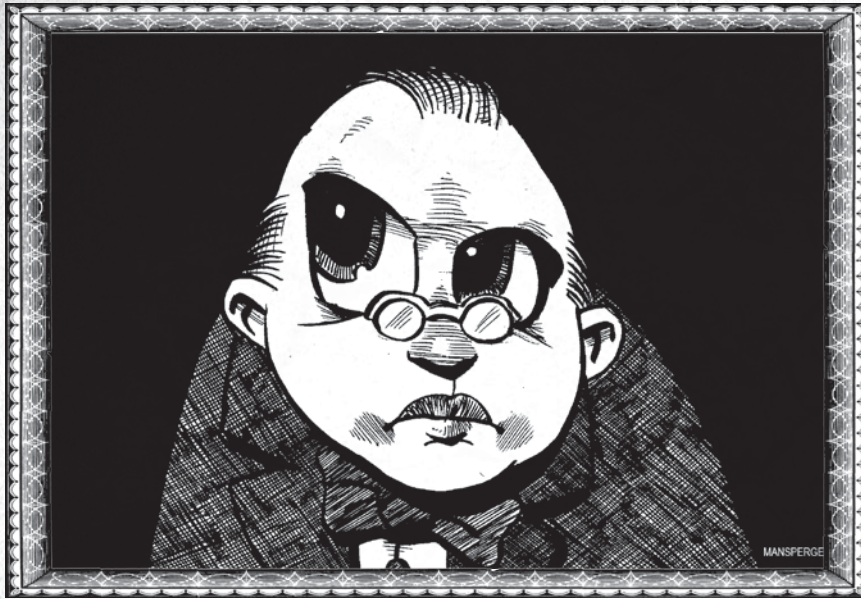
DR. RUDYARD DRAVENFIRTH

Director of Candlewick Home for the Unfortunate and Unloved

QUOTE: “Your attention please, children. Your erudition has been entrusted to me, and with due care and attention I will shepherd you into new realms of social adroitness and cognizance. Under my guidance, you shall beat back the forces of ignorance which occupy your minds like foreign soldiers billeted in an unwilling home, and together we shall crush benightedness, sciolism, mumbliness, sass-mouth, fidgetism, and noisesomness.”

POV: The position is strange, the manor is strange, the town is strange, and the orphans are very, very strange. But Dr. Candlewick—who, by the way is *strange*—is paying a bleeding fortune to head his little orphanage, and my debt being what it is . . . well, a man must eat. And so must his creditors.





ROLE: Dr. Dravenfirth is a stern, aloof disciplinarian and authority figure, a vital foil for trouble-seeking orphans. He'll assign cruel and mind numbing punishments for infractions. Scrubbing the grout in the South Dormitory showers with a toothbrush. Copying pages from *The Complete Guide to Historical Knitwear* by Mildred Snaoren. Helping the groundskeeper clean dead skunks out of the well.

DESCRIPTION: A portly man of 50, with small, round eyeglasses that he's too vain to wear in public upon his large round face. He dresses conservatively, with his only affectation being colorful handkerchiefs in which he takes enormous pride. He began life as a genuine scholar before becoming a people manager and paper pusher, and recalls with fondness pursuing wisdom rather than pursuing the little delinquent who's been writing rude words on the walls of the East Dormitory toilets. He'll never use a one-syllable word when a quintasyllabic word will do, and he has a keen eye for when subjects of his droning lectures aren't paying attention. He keeps a ruler in his pocket to help reclaim that attention.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Guts 3; Brains 4; Face 3.

BACKGROUND: Classical Scholar.

VOCATION: Director of the Candlewick Home.

PASSION: The Translation of Ancient Texts.

MATRON FLORA FINELINER

Nurse to Orphans and Hypochondriacal Staff

QUOTE: "Oh there, there, 'tis only a little wound! Won't need more than two, two or three dozen *tiny* stitches. And they say scars are *quite* manly."

POV: The poor dears, with no one in the whole world to look out for them. Well, they've a good place now. I've been nurse to the Candlewick family for two generations, and brought both the young mistress and master into this world with these two hands. That doctor down in village might think he knows medicine because of

his degrees, but I have thirty years of tending the ills of the sickliest family in the Vale. A few sad little orphans are hardly going to give me any surprises, I think.

ROLE: Matron Fineliner looks out for her charges, sometimes aggressively. She's not averse to yanking an errant orphan up by the ear if she's into something dangerous, or refusing to eat her nice healthful boiled cabbage. She's kind but firm, and won't give up on an orphan no matter how bad things are. She'll treat injuries, illness, and the blues—but don't try and malingering or pull a fast one. She can spot a faker a mile off.

DESCRIPTION: Matron Fineliner is quite remarkably old, though still spry and adept. She walks for exercise, eats right, and gets plenty of sleep. She looks like your grandmother, in a white pressed uniform. She's always got a lollypop in one pocket, and bottle of iodine in the other for cuts.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Hands 3; Feet 1; Brains 4; Face 3.

BACKGROUND: Old Candlewick Retainer.

VOCATION: Nurse for Candlewick House.

PASSION: Helping Her Charges Onto the Right Path.

DOUGLAS GROONER

Groundskeeper and Master of Hounds

QUOTE: "That one's not poisonous, see? Ain't got the little striping on its legs. Now *this one*, oh, he's a killer. *Catch!*"

POV: I look after the grounds, and when we had hounds I saw to them as well. Now, with all these kids about, I have to keep the lawns clipped pretty close for their ballgames and running about and such. Not that I mind, no. It's better than it was before Master Candlewick started the orphanage. The house is warmer now. The chill after *she* died has passed a bit. And they're such an odd lot of children too. I never knew kids who were so keen on bugs and snakes and crawling down holes in the ground. Fine, that, though sometimes they need a bit of a scare for their own good.

ROLE: Groundskeeper Grooner is the gnarled old bat who keeps up the grounds around Candlewick House—the bits which haven't gone totally to weed and ruin, anyhow. He seems scary, distant and antisocial (he is all three), but he's really very fond of the orphans and intensely loyal to the House and the Candlewick family. He knows all about animals and bugs, and before the last elderly hound died he looked after the family's dogs, and he knows how to keep and care for animals. He might be an ideal candidate to help a sick monster, should the occasion arise.

DESCRIPTION: Grooner is a scarecrow of a man, all knobby joints and patched clothes. He smells of the woods, except when he mucks out storm drains, and then he smells of muck. He walks with a big gnarled stick, carries a worn jackknife, and chews tobacco constantly. He hates having to come inside the house, because he can't spit his 'backie anywhere. His left eye is white and dead, but it moves around like it's looking at things only it can see. If he's in delicate company, he'll wear a patch. If he's grubbing in the dirt with some orphans, he'll leave it off.



NOTEWORTHY STATS: Hands 4; Guts 4.

BACKGROUND: Grew Up in the Woods.

VOCATION: Groundskeeper and Houndsmaster.

PASSION: A Sappy Romantic at Heart.

GIUSEPPE SANGRIOLI

Master Chef and Food Frankenstein

QUOTE: “My greatest creation! They said I was mad, *mad!* for combining the delicate flesh of the dove with the pungent heat of the green Siam curry, and a dressing of pasted almonds and honey—but when they taste this, then who’ll be mad, eh? Not Giuseppe!”

POV: The Doctor, he say to me, “Giuseppe, you come and cook for my new home. You teach the orphans what good food is.” I say to him, “But I am so busy with my restaurant! How can I come?” And he says to me, “All these young minds, these untrained palates, will you let them learn to like only the baked macaroni and cheese? The gloopy Stroganoff? What kind of men and women will these unfortunates grow into?” And the Doctor, he shame me, and I agree to come, for it is the chef’s greatest duty to first and foremost teach how one *appreciates* food, is it not?

ROLE: Giuseppe is responsible for Candlewick Home’s dramatic dining hall. The exotic and eclectic menus are his own creation, and he’s served dishes to hungry orphans that kings and czars and merchant princes would have paid barrels of pearls to sample. He is wholly taken with his mission to broaden minds by broadening palates. These orphans my have never known love, but by God they’ll know it now. Love folded inside a delicate ravioli, with a simple sauce of butter, marjoram, sage, and rosemary. Giuseppe is a font of worldly advice, as well, though much of it is so seasoned with food metaphor that a certain amount of interpretation is needed.

DESCRIPTION: Giuseppe would be enormously fat, for he samples every dish he prepares, were it not for his furious energy and nonstop motion. He dashes around his kitchens in a blur, all white hat, swarthy complexion and curled mustache. The cooking staff are merely puppets on his strings; he’s so involved in every step of the cooking process that they rarely get the chance to make mistakes. He always joins the diners, taking a tray and a plate himself, and sits with the orphans, eating the same meals as them; for the secret of truly transcendent food isn’t the methods of its preparation, or the quality of the ingredients, but instead the people you share it with.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Hands 5; Guts 3; Brains 3; Face 3.

BACKGROUND: Orphan and Refugee.

VOCATION: Master Chef.

PASSION: Transcending the Boundaries of Ordinary Cuisine.

FIONA SILVERDALE

Head of Housekeeping and Amateur Detecting

QUOTE: “All right, girl, enough of your foolish twittering! Just think of it as very dark wine, and set to it with the mop already! Land sakes, it’s only *blood*, and hardly enough to indicate a body died. No, this could only be a serious injury, not a proper fatal exsanguination at all. Now, don’t. DON’T! Ah, now, we’ve sick as well as blood to clean up!”

POV: Well, this lot would be in a fine pickle without me, wouldn’t they? When I was hired on back in the old Dr. Candlewick’s day, I was a wee slip of a girl. A mere skull. But now, I’m head of Housekeeping, which in these reduced days for the family means I’m also their clerk, nanny, butler, and in-house detective. And in a house with this much history, and this many secrets, I hardly have time to sleep, do I?

ROLE: Fiona keeps Candlewick House running, and singlehandedly manages all the practical issues which if allowed to slip would hasten the final downfall of the family. If someone is going to figure out what a sneaky bunch of orphans are up to, it’s Fiona. Whether she elects to intervene depends on what she uncovers. She’s not one for interfering if there’s no danger to life, limb, or the family she’s dedicated her whole life to serving.

DESCRIPTION: Fiona is the very definition of “formidable woman.” She’s tall and straight, with a gorgeous wave of silver-gray hair. Her face is remarkably unlined for a woman of her years, and were she not so busy, she’d have many male admirers among the Vale’s widowers and old bachelors. But she’s so busy with running the daily affairs of Candlewick House, and dealing with the occasional disaster or scandal, that she only has time for one recreation: She devours mystery novels.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Hands 3; Guts 4; Brains 4; Face 3.

BACKGROUND: In Service at Candlewick Since Childhood.

VOCATION: Head of Housekeeping.

PASSION: Amateur Detective.

THE PEOPLE OF CANDLEWICK TOWNSHIP

BRODIE BLUME

Amiable Drunk

QUOTE: “I wasch . . . WASCH . . . waaas schaying. I waaas schaying what a lovely . . . afternoon? Morning it isch, eh? And seeing asch how I’m a bit down on me luck, I wasch wondering if you might spare me schoom . . . changh . . . CHANGE for a sschave and a hot meal?”

POV: Oh, I wasn’t always this wreck of a man. I used to be somebody around here. It’s just that most of the time, I can’t remember who. I owned something, or



perhaps I ran something. I did something, and had a house, and a wife, and kids and . . . I don't want to talk about them, OK? I don't want to think about—I need a drink.

ROLE: Brodie is the town drunk. He is a drunkard in a lovable, amiable, red-faced way that makes his addiction amusing rather than disgusting or tragic, though it is both these things. He just manages to pass out in his own sick somewhere out of sight most of the time, and gets into hilarious predicaments which the folk of Candlewick recount over dinner. “You won’t *believe* what Brodie Blume got his hand stuck in today!” But the truth is, Brodie drinks to forget, and to make himself stop hurting. His past is mysterious and tragic, like an orphan’s, almost, and he’ll never be all right unless he can come to terms with it before the drink finally kills him. He’s reached the point that if he goes without booze too long he gets the DT’s, and he’s been seeing some really really *strange* things lately.

DESCRIPTION: Blume’s laughing, bloodshot face hides a well of pain, which you can see if you meet his eyes. He smiles, and tells stories, and panhandles, and offers to do odd jobs. He sleeps around town, sometimes in a cell at the sheriff’s but never in a bed of his own. He’s got all the signs of a late-stage alcoholic, but plays up the “funny town drunk” role because people respond to it. That keeps his pockets filled with enough change to get a bottle of Old Man Snap’s Blended Sippin’ Whiskey every couple of days at Broodenkine’s Market, and enough beer to keep the tremens down between bottles of the good stuff. But the happy drunk act is wearing thin, as is his health. Soon he’ll be unable to control himself anymore, and the townsfolk will see what a wreck he really is. And then. . . .

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Hands 1; Feet 1; Guts 3; Face 3; Brains 3.

BACKGROUND: It’s a mystery. But something important.

VOCATION: Playing the Amiable Harmless Drunk.

PASSION: Being Drunk as a Skunk.

MAYOR LUCAS BOMBRIENFELD

Mayor for Life

QUOTE: “Good People of Candlewick Township, it is with the greatest honor and humble acceptance that I welcome the opportunity to serve you all for ANOTHER term as your mayor!”

POV: They’re a bunch of ignorant clods, my constituency. Sad, small-minded, pathetic twerps who’re lucky they have me to look after them. Lord knows what they’d do without a Bombrienfeld in the Mayor’s Office, eh? When Father held the job the people were less uppity, less willful. They did what they were told in those days. Now, with all these modern ideas muddying the water, it’s getting where a man can’t run his town as he likes. And now the Old Man is stirring up trouble and bringing in all these *undesirables*. My old Dad wouldn’t stand for it. But that’s me all over. Soft-hearted.

ROLE: Mayor Bombrienfeld is the top dog in Candlewick Township’s tiny political universe, as was his father, as was his father’s father. But now, with only a

daughter—a lady mayor? No! What to do? Mayor Bombrienfeld runs for office every four years and wins as expected. He takes the traditional bribes. He shakes the traditional hands. What's nontraditional about him is that, deep inside, he despises every man, woman, and child in Candlewick Vale. He hates the town and he hates his job. He'd like to sell the whole thing to strip miners. But he smiles, he schmoozes, he plays the game while his little mental time bomb ticks . . . ticks . . . ticks. . .

DESCRIPTION: A big man, bigger than life. Always smiling, always shaking hands, always kissing babies and old ladies on the cheek. Red-haired like his mother, and starting to get paunchy like his father. He's got the town pretty much suckered, but if you know how to look for it, you see how his smile is brittle around the edges, and how his eyes roll like a horse about to bolt when he has to speak to his fellow townspeople at official functions. He wanted to be in the theatre, but his father nipped that foolishness in the bud.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Guts 3; Brains 3; Face 5.

BACKGROUND: Son of Politics.

VOCATION: Mayor For Life.

PASSION: Secret Love of the Stage.

GRETCHEN BOMBRIENFELD

First Lady of Candlewick Vale

QUOTE: "Oh, I'll have to ask my husband about that."

POV: Lucas is SUCH an important man, so it is up to me to support him, and make sure everything is taken care of so he won't have to worry about it. When a man is as well respected as Lucas, there are some people who are jealous of that respect, and they want to drag down the important man. Important men need looking after; they have so many important things to worry about. It is up to those of us who love them to make sure these *little annoyances* never distract them from their good and honorable public service.

ROLE: Gretchen Bombrienfeld plays the dutiful and respectable wife of Candlewick Township's foremost politician perfectly. She participates in civic events, encourages voters, keeps house, and raises their daughter. She looks after all the little things so Lucas can worry about the big ones—little things like covering up scandals, running troublemakers out of town, and, on at least one occasion, seeing that a shiftless temptress who had seduced her husband suffered a terrible accident, and her child (her husband's bastard) was borne away to an orphanage far from Candlewick Vale. She smiles and she bakes cookies, but under the plump and amiable exterior a vicious political animal lurks.

DESCRIPTION: Gretchen still has some of the looks that in her youth won her the title of Miss Candlewick Township five years running. But she's grown plump and motherly, with kind gray eyes, smile lines, and a soothing voice. She dresses conservatively but stylishly, and is healthy. Beneath all this glowing health and cheer she's an amoral creature, concerned only with her status in the community,

and her husband's position as mayor. She'll do *anything* to protect her privileged place in Candlewick.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Guts 4; Face 3; Brains 4.

BACKGROUND: Teen Beauty Queen.

VOCATION: Power Behind the Throne.

PASSION: Playing People Like a Game of Cards.

MAY BOMBRIENFELD

Daughter on the Edge of a Nervous Breakdown

QUOTE: "I'm . . . happy . . . to . . . meet . . . you . . . Father . . . has . . . spoken . . . highly . . . of . . . you . . ."

POV: God, could this town be any more boring? Every day, I get up and I have to start playing niceynice and smiling. Every day, Mom is riding me about making a good impression for Dad's sake. Dad is always rushing off. My cheeks ache, I smile so much. If I don't get out of this place soon, I don't know what I'm going to do. I'll go crackers and howl at the moon. Or hop on a train and never come back. Or maybe drink that whole bottle of black syrup in the woodshed they use to kill rats.

ROLE: May is about the same age as the orphans, and she's starting to crack under the pressure to be perfect all day every day. She's very much *not* perfect. She's got her Dad's unruly red hair and flushed complexion. She's blocky like him too, not lithe like her mom used to be. Given the chance, she'll take any escape she can, and damn the scandal that it causes.

DESCRIPTION: Average height for a girl her age, but built thicker. There's more rugby than ballet about her. She plays along with her family's role in Candlewick society, and if her smile is getting brittle, and her eyes wander, looking for escape, then few have noticed it yet. She's having strange thoughts too, and has seen *things* that can't possibly be real. She is wound tight, and if she explodes it'll be like a bomb going off—but afterwards, she'll feel much better. More than anything, she could do with a genuine friend.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Hands 3; Feet 3; Guts 3; Face 1.

BACKGROUND: Child of Politics.

VOCATION: Keeping Up Appearances.

PASSION: Sport!

SHAMUS BROODENKINE

Nervous Grocer

QUOTE: "Hush! There's one of those *orphans* in the store. Over there. *Don't look!* Shuuuuush. If we're quiet, I'm sure we can catch her in the act, stealing me blind."

POV: This used to be a respectable town. When my father ran the market, there was a level of decorum and deportment. We've seen the back of all that. All these modern notions filtering in, giving people ideas. My father would roll in his grave, if we hadn't had him cremated, may he roast in hell, the drunken old bastard. Ahem. But I was saying, the town just ain't what it used to be, and it's getting where a man of business can hardly make an honest living.



ROLE: Shamus Broodenkine owns and operates Broodenkine Market, and is Candlewick Vale's only grocer. He's a leading citizen, a member of several associations, and a general town busybody. His store is one of the places where people frequently run into each other; everyone needs groceries. He's exquisitely particular about everything, obsessive, in fact. He's driven his employees to near madness with his demands for perfectly-ordered shelves and a floor mopped always in the same direction. Perhaps this obsession with detail is why he never married, and why he's never happy with anything. His paranoia adds to the charming package. He'll glare at anyone he considers an "outsider" and treat them coldly at best, with open hostility at worst. If it's within his power to do so, he'll make efforts to drive them from his precious little town.

DESCRIPTION: A fussy man of middle years with a flushed complexion and a constantly sweaty brow he dabs with his handkerchief. His voice is querulous and anxious. He glares at unfamiliar customers and fawns over his regulars. His speech is short and terse, or florid and flowing, depending on how well he knows you.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Guts 3; Face 3; Brains 3.

BACKGROUND: Keen and Obsessive Observer.

VOCATION: Grocer and Businessman.

PASSION: Bringing Order from Chaos.

MORTIMER COALBLACK, JR.

Amiable Mortician

QUOTE: "And! Haaaaa ha ha! Oh, man. And after I drained him—haaaaa ha! I accidentally left the suction wand in his chest cavity ... hang on, wait for the punch line ... and when I came back from lunch—haaaawhaw he ha! He ... oh man ... he—!"

POV: Life is a veil of tears, and then you die. Still, you have to laugh. I know the healing power of laughter comes a little late when clients cross my table, but a good chuckle does me a world of good. Being able to see the humor in things like dying is important. I mean, if I had to think seriously about pulling people's insides out and stuffing them with sawdust, I'd go crackers, wouldn't I? Hey, you want to hear a joke? It'll slay ya!

ROLE: Mortimer (never "Mort") is Candlewick Township's (and nominally the whole vale's) resident mortician. He inherited the job from his dad, whom he hated. Mortimer wanted to join the Vaudeville troupe that performed in the town when he was a child, but the sheriff's father ran them off when one of the musicians got fresh with (read "looked at") local girls. So he went into the family business making the dead look alive, and accepted his lot with jokes and humor. Catch him in an introspective mood though, and he won't be laughing. Mortimer wants to change, he wants the town to change, but he's given up on his dreams. His sense of humor has *gone off* a bit, becoming positively *rancid* sometimes. When he smiles now, the skull hiding under his skin smiles, too.



DESCRIPTION: Mortimer does not look like a mortician. His father was a tall, crowlike man in black coat and top hat. Every inch the looming manifestation of distilled solemnity. Mortimer, though is small, bright-eyed, and dressed inevitably as something of a dandy, with striped trousers and spats and a colorful hat band. He likes floral patterns on his waistcoats. So much better to hide the stains.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Hands 4, Guts 4, Brains 3.

BACKGROUND: Mortician's Son.

VOCATION: Mortician.

PASSION: Comedy!

REVEREND DICK CRICKEN

Unhappy Churchman

QUOTE: "And, um, from the Greek, the passage translates 'Let ye not forgive he who hath borne upon his back bundles of rushes bound with hide strips, as the Lord hath commanded man not to so bind.' Which suggests an interesting parallel to the second chapter, first verse of . . ."

POV: It was so much *easier* in seminary. There, it was learning, wonderful learning, and I wasn't expected to, as it were, to *preach* what I had learned. I could read, polish my Greek, and write my thesis, but eventually I had to graduate, and then, find some church in need of a pastor, and so to Candlewick Township I come. Somehow, all the things I've so easily learned, they . . . they went into my brain so easy, so why are they so hard to get out?

ROLE: Reverend Cricken enjoys being the pastor of a real church. Except for the preaching parts. And the weddings. And the funerals. And the christenings. And, well, the raffles, bingo nights, potluck dinners, fundraisers, fairs—anything, in fact, that brings him into contact with his actual congregation. Yet, he's kept on at the church, and every Sunday his service has a respectable turnout. He's beginning to wonder why they come, as they never listen, and he's considering giving a whole sermon in nonsense words to see if anyone would notice.

DESCRIPTION: Nervous and mousy, Reverend Cricken seems to be in a constant state of apology, flinching, or fumbled explanations. There's a secret campaign amongst the ladies of Candlewick Township to see him married, but the efforts thus far have proven fruitless, and socially awkward for everyone concerned. He's one of those people who do not wear glasses, but for some reason everyone always remembers him wearing a pair.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Guts 1; Brains 4; Face 1.

BACKGROUND: Cloistered Academic.

VOCATION: Awkward Preacher.

PASSION: Theolinguistic Analysis.

JUDY PEACH CRIMMIN

Classics Teacher

QUOTE: “And who finished their assignment and completed *The Iliad* last night?”

POV: People say I expect too much, but that’s just not fair. I like to think I expect only what someone is capable of doing—if they’re willing to go the extra mile to do things properly. I expect my students to complete the reading and be prepared to discuss the work in class. I expect my suitors to meet their traditional obligations, to be well groomed, polite, chivalrous, and prosperous enough to pay for dinner. I’m not unreasonable. I expect only *perfection*.

ROLE: Judy is one of the young ladies who teach at Candlewick Comprehensive. She’s quite well educated, and also quite stunningly attractive, in a very straight-laced way. As a result, she receives a great deal of male attention, and is the center of many intrigues and romantic schemes. She’s quite aloof to such things, and prefers to spend her time indulging her passions for hill walking and the excavation of strange archaeological sites, which in fact brought her to Candlewick Vale.

DESCRIPTION: Tall, thin, and perfectly poised. Judy’s expression is stern, her voice controlled, and her eye critical. She dresses practically. She is very difficult to satisfy as a teacher, as a friend, and as a potential romantic partner.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Guts 4; Face 4; Brains 4.

BACKGROUND: Academic Upbringing.

VOCATION: Classics Teacher.

PASSION: Uncatalogued Archeology.

HANSEL FOXGOOD

The Usual Suspect

QUOTE: “I didn’t do it, sheriff. Not this time, anyhow.”

POV: The town looks like easy picking, right? Well you try and crack it. It’s tighter than a ... very tight thing. I’ve tried working the badger, the bar dog, the honey pot, all the classic grifts. Nothing! You’d think a bunch of stuck-up softies like this lot would fall for the old stuff, but no! They suss me out right away. I mean, of all the people to fool them, it’d be me. Who knows them better? I grew up in this town, and knew half of them since we was kids together!

ROLE: Hansel Foxgood is Candlewick Vale’s most prolific and least successful criminal. Where most of the Vale’s lawbreakers do so beneath a thin veneer of civility, Hansel struts his stuff. He feels like the spiritual inheritor of the legacy of the old (dead) bootleggers who used to run hooch through the Vale, and of the great con artists Two-Step Frank, Danny the Wheeze, Gentleman Joey McKilldagi. But he’s just *terrible* at crime. By the time the sheriff arrives, Hansel has usually only managed to rack up a Disturbing the Peace charge, and after a night in the stir and fifty bucks in fines, he’s back out on the streets looking to offend again. He’s always screaming and carrying on when they take him away, too, promising “No jail can hold me, copper!” The only way he can afford to pursue his criminal lifestyle is



with the modest trust fund left to him by his grandma. All told, he's a sad case. He wants more than anything to be a *successful* criminal, but whether he could keep his mouth closed about it is another thing altogether. If Hansel ever gets tangled up with real mobsters from out of town, he's going to be in serious trouble.

DESCRIPTION: An average-looking brown-haired guy who dresses like a mobster from a film. He talks out of the side of his mouth. He smokes. And he looks about as threatening as a wet Pomeranian.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: None.

BACKGROUND: Read About all the Classic Rackets.

VOCATION: Wannabe Gangster.

PASSION: Winning Respect.

LUSCIOUS GAUNT

Struggling Mine Owner

QUOTE: "We've all had to make sacrifices to stay in business, but you have my word that I'll make them with you."

POV: When the mine came to me, it was just about clapped out. We're still getting enough lead to stay in business, and the new chemical rendering techniques get us some residual silver out of the slag piles, but it is only a matter of time. Unless we can hit a big vein, the mine's only got a few years left before it'll be losing money. I already laid off so many workers, we've hardly got two shifts covered, and—well, you don't want to hear about my troubles.

ROLE: Luscious is a good man stuck in an impossible situation. He's living on the legacy of his father, who ran the mine like a Dickensian industrialist, driving his workers to the breaking point to squeeze profit out of them, and damn their safety and livelihood. He squeezed so tight there's almost nothing left in the mine, and even though Luscious is a decent man, and a sympathetic boss, he can't do anything to put more silver into the ground, and he gets no credit for the improvements he's been able to make. More than anything, he hopes to hit a big vein of silver and lead, to reopen the closed off shafts, hire back the workers, and see the business thrive. Not likely, barring a miracle.

DESCRIPTION: Harried and prematurely balding, paunchy from too much coffee and pastry eaten at his desk. Needs glasses from all the squinting. And perpetually tired, so tired it is contagious. Spend time with him and you start yawning and dozing off in sympathy.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Brains 3; Guts 5.

BACKGROUND: Learned All the Dirty Tricks From His Pop.

VOCATION: Mine Owner.

PASSION: Mountain Climbing.

PATSY GAUNT

Accounts Manager and Lonely Wife

QUOTE: “Here are the orders for the next quarter. They’re pretty thin, so we shouldn’t have any trouble filling them this time.”

POV: Luscious works so hard trying to keep the mine open, so I pitch in where I can. I did bookkeeping before we married, and so I handle the books for the mining company, and try and make them seem a bit more rosy than they are. I know my husband loves me, but he’s so busy. He’s got more things to worry about than me right now. He says we’ll have time together one day, time for kids. But sometimes, I don’t think I can wait. It would be easier if he weren’t so decent.

ROLE: Patsy is torn. Her love for her husband has cooled as he’s become more obsessed with the problems at work, and she’s begun to crave attention—specifically, male attention. But she has no desire to hurt her husband, and so if she finds someone with whom to have some passion, she’ll do everything in her power to keep it from Luscious. Will she have a discrete romance, or will some rogue take advantage of her and put her in a compromising position?

DESCRIPTION: A wilted flower, a faded masterpiece. In her day Patsy Gaunt was classically stunning. Tall, highbrowed, with eyes gray like slate. Now, in early middle age, she’s careworn and a bit crushed by life. She lacks her husband’s capacity for monomaniacal focus, and so the strain is really starting to tell. She aches with longing, and everyone but her husband can see it.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Brains 4; Face 3; Guts 3.

BACKGROUND: Accountant.

VOCATION: Bookkeeper and Secretary for Gaunt & Co. Mining.

PASSION: Aches for Human Contact.

MARGON MOON GONNOMAN

Kept Woman and Drunken Flirt

QUOTE: “Oh, you are the *devil* himself, aren’t you? You keep pouring the bottle, and I’ll keep laughing at your jokes.”

POV: Well, being married to Rais beats running daddy’s herd of stinky sheep. I get to wear pretty things, and meet handsome people; it’s really better. Not as *warm*, perhaps. Not really warm, out there with the sheep in the winter—that was really cold. But warm *inside*, you know? I know Rais loves me. Loves being married to me. Well, he loves that other people think I’m good looking, anyway. And he loves that I can throw a good party, and that I never discuss his business because I don’t have a clue how it works. I know he loves it, well, when I keep things out of his way so he can get some work done. I know—I know I’m going to have another glass of wine.

ROLE: Margo Moon is the daughter of a sheep farmer who married the rich, handsome mill owner. It would be the stuff of a soppy girl romance novel, if there were really any romance involved. Margo is a trophy and she knows it. She has her duties, and is well compensated for performing them. And she’s afraid of failing Rais, because Rais made some very explicit threats were she ever to betray him. Then he

gave her a diamond bracelet. Rias likes to use a stick that's made entirely out of carrot. So Margo drinks, flirts, and puts on the social show for her husband, and wishes now, surrounded by all her lovely things, that she could actually be in love.

DESCRIPTION: Margo is very much the match for Rais: tall, blond, very well built, and, with the finishing lessons Rais paid for, well spoken and elegant. She has an enormous smile, like a pinball machine lighting up, that never touches her eyes except when her daughter is in the room.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Face 4.

BACKGROUND: Farmer's Daughter.

VOCATION: Kept Wife and Socialite.

PASSION: Ah, Romance.

RAIS GONNOMAN

Resident Wool Magnate

QUOTE: "With the market what it is, we're all having to make cutbacks. The office just reduced the number of mechanical pencils lost during a given business week via a check-in/check-out procedure. If we can take these measures in the office, then I think it's reasonable to ask the mill workers to take a 7% pay cut for the coming quarter."

POV: Who knew there was such a market for these scrawny local sheep? And a lucrative one, so long as nobody gets wind of the current market price of Candlewick wool. The farmers would demand more for their fleece, the workers better pay and more staffing, and I'd have to tell Star that she wouldn't be getting the Sweet Sixteen party she'd so been looking forward to because her daddy would be broke.

ROLE: Rais Gonnoman is the archetypal sociopath businessman. In the pursuit of profit he's unfettered by guilt or compassion. He's lied to the people of Candlewick, he's lied to his workers, and he's lied to the tax assessor. And he'll keep lying (or worse) to protect his power.

DESCRIPTION: Handsome, like a retired movie star. Big teeth, always ready to flash inside a smile. He dresses sharp and situation-appropriate.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Brains 4; Face 4; Guts 4.

BACKGROUND: Born Poor and Knows the Value of Money.

VOCATION: Mill Owner and Land Speculator.

PASSION: Acquiring New Property.

STAR GONNOMAN

School-Age Power Broker

QUOTE: "Shut up! Or my dad will fire your dad!"

POV: Sometimes people in this town forget who my Daddy is. He owns the mill, and a bunch of these idiots work for him. And my Daddy loves me, and he doesn't want me to be sad, so people better watch out. He says we're going to move away from this dumpy town when he's ready to sell the mill, but made me promise not to tell anyone. Oops.

ROLE: Star is cute and knows it. She's rich and knows it. She's smart and knows it. She's every inch the spoiled child of wealth and indulgent parents. She's also her father's only confidante. He tells her about his every crooked business deal, because he feels something of a connection to her (which is weird, considering what a cold snake he is). She loves being powerful and conspiratorial, but she could really do with some friends who don't buy into her crap. Unfortunately, she'd likely drive away anyone who would do her any good before a bond could be formed.

DESCRIPTION: Star takes after her mother: blond, cute, and socially adept. But like her father she's cool, calculating, cruel, and deceitful.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Brains 3; Face 3; Guts 3.

BACKGROUND: Spoiled Rich Girl.

VOCATION: The Most Popular Girl in School.

PASSION: Pushing People's Buttons.

THE RIGHT HONORABLE JUDGE IGNES GRAFFBURGER

Judge for Sale Cheap!

QUOTE: "Ahumgph! I say! Order! We'll have order, or I'll have the deputy bring out the leg irons! We'll see this troublemaker bound, child or not!"

POV: Everything was going just fine, thank you very much, despite that meddler Candlewick and his schemes and tomfoolery. But this! This orphanage! It's an outrage, and if there were some way I could make some writ or ruling, or the one where you sign the special paper—proclamation? Would I have to get someone with one of those long trumpets to play and announce it? Because I would do it in a second.

ROLE: Every good citizen of Candlewick is complicit in the transparent lie that is Judge Graffburger. The Judge *is* a judge. The open secret is just how lousy he is at his job, and how wholly corrupt. Everyone knows he's a pawn of the sheriff and the mayor, and trials before him are shams, public theater, but at least Graffburger puts on a good show in the courtroom. Judge Graffburger is a perfect representation of the corruption and arrogance of authority, and is wholly ignorant of just what a tool he is.

DESCRIPTION: The judge is hugely fat, a great wobbling spheroid in a tentlike robe. He jiggles when he moves, like he's filled with fluid—which, judging from how much he sweats, must indeed be the case. He seems to shout everything. He thinks in exclamation marks. In court, he's all bluster and indignation, and loves to bang his gavel and find undesirable types in contempt. He smokes big stinky cigars which he trims with a little model guillotine to punctuate his verdicts when he thinks it will look dramatic.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Guts (the metaphorical kind) 1.

BACKGROUND: Mediocre Lawyer.

VOCATION: So-So Judge.

PASSION: Keeping the Trappings of High Political Office and Social Position.



KARL GRUB

Mechanic and Pump Monkey

QUOTE: "See, here's your problem right here. Look close. See it? There, in the rearview mirror. That idiot is the reason your clutch is burned up."

POV: I don't mind the work, but I sure wish folks would learn to take proper care of their motor vehicles. Change the oil occasionally. Buy new tires when the inner tube starts to show through the tread. Don't drive all the way to the shore and back with the emergency break on.

ROLE: Karl keeps the cars and trucks of Candlewick Vale running, and he's seen so much car abuse his patience for it has grown thin. He has a sign that reads, "English to Moron translation services, \$50," and if he has to explain what he's doing more than three times, he'll add that to the invoice and bill. He'll take to any orphan with an interest in machines or mechanics. Most of the Vale's kids are too keen on college or going into their dad's business to deal with getting greasy after school.

DESCRIPTION: Grease-stained and potbellied, Karl looks the part. He wears sleeveless undershirts and khaki work trousers most of the time, but will clean himself up a bit if someone he likes or trusts is on site.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Hands 4; Guts 3.

BACKGROUND: Dirt-Track Racing Sensation.

VOCATION: Mechanic and Gas Station Attendant.

PASSION: Improving Engine Performance.

SVETLANA GURKINMINE

Man-Eating Butcher Babe

QUOTE: "You want good cut of meat? Here, this is best cut in shop! I wrap it for you now. You not want this one? Then why you make me wrap it up? No, this the one you buy. Be lovely with wine sauce."

POV: Is a lovely town. Much better than Old Country. Here, there is so much meat! In Old Country, meat was so scarce we thanked the saints for meat of the dog. But here, there is the meat of the cow, the pig, the goat, the goose, the chicken, the sheep—so much meat. When I brought over, I first thought I marry nice rich man, but he not so nice it turns out, so I take job with butcher,



and now I am butcher. Is wonderful country. Candlewick, it is, how you say? Quiet. Not like Old Country. But so full of lovely handsome *men*. Again, not so much like Old Country.

ROLE: Svetlana is from *somewhere else*. She has a thick vaguely Eastern European accent, and she feigns ignorance of social customs and cues when it suits her. She is aggressively single as well, despite the attentions of many of Candlewick's bachelors. In the social games of Candlewick Township, she's a wild card. She is jovial with children, conspiratorial with women, and boisterously flirtatious with men. Oh, one other important, secret detail about Svetlana Gurkinmine: She's a black widow murderess who carves her victims up and sells them in her shop. Yeah, that's something to keep in mind.

DESCRIPTION: Svetlana seems like she was built on a different scale. Everything about her is big. Big personality, big hair, big bosoms, and she's enormously tall. She can throw a side of beef over her shoulder and carry it easily, and her arms are heavy with muscle. She'd look right at home on a war poster holding a rivet gun. She's got a vague but heavy accent, and when not wearing her butchering apron she dresses in trousers, boots, and blousy shirts of bright colors. She's hard to miss.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Hands 4; Feet 3; Guts 4; Face 4.

BACKGROUND: Black Widow.

VOCATION: Butcher.

PASSION: Falling In and Out of Love.

BRUCE HANDLEFIT

Mill Foreman and Right-Hand One-Armed Man

QUOTE: "I don't think Mr. Gonnoman invited you kids here at all! You can't fool me."

POV: Mr. Gonnoman's a good man. Good to me, anyhow. When my arm got caught in the spool winding machine and—well, when I got this hook, I figured I'd never work a day's proper work again. But he raised me up, and now I'm foreman. I got pride, and I got an interest in seeing this place do good. So nobody had better threaten my livelihood.

ROLE: Bruce is fiercely loyal to Mr. Gonnoman and the mill. He's willfully blinded himself to all things illegal and unethical, and has taken part in union-busting activities and the like. He's more a professional heavy than a professional mill manager, a strong hand (and hook) when Gonnoman needs one.

DESCRIPTION: Bruce is a big man, dark haired and dark eyed, whose right hand terminates in an articulated hook. His left hand is big and strong enough to crack walnuts, something he does constantly, picking the soft nutmeats out with his hook.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Brains 3; Guts 4; Hands 4.

BACKGROUND: Hard-Working Blue-Collar Joe.

VOCATION: Mill Foreman.

PASSION: Play the Guitar Again.



SAFFRON HOAKAM

Teacher of the Arts and Student of the Universe

QUOTE: “Hey, that’s great . . . ah . . . Billy? No. Bob? Joey? Susan! Yes, sorry! Susan! You don’t look like a boy AT ALL. But great use of color!”

POV: Hey, I know people think I’m sort of a flake, you know? But it’s just different priorities. Some people are all concerned with numbers and doing things at certain times, and you know, building stuff, but they don’t see what it’s really all about. You get a sense of it in art, you know? Like, the big picture. My old teacher, Master Bramah Padrani, once told me, “In all the universe, there is no greater teacher than a child.” So like it makes sense to be a *teacher*, you know? Because then I’m surrounded by children, and they’ve all got so much insight! I just need to figure out how to *hear* it, you know?

ROLE: Saffron is a *seeker*. She’s just not that clear on what she’s looking for. She teaches the arts at Candlewick Comprehensive, but she’s really looking for a sign, an inspiration, a visionary experience. Under Headmaster Sternaker’s administration she’s like a reed, bending but never breaking no matter how hard he blows. When dealing with kids, she teaches almost accidentally. There is undeniably something compelling about her wide-open eyes and honest smile. She’ll glom onto any kid who seems to offer some insight into the weird and otherworldly. One wonders who that might be.

DESCRIPTION: Saffron dresses the part in brightly colored shawls, headscarves, mismatched motley clothing and big boots. Her eyes are as pale as cornflowers, wide and unblinking. Her complexion is dark from days spent outdoors and some Spanish ancestry. Her hair is, predictably enough, a tangled mass of wild curls, usually matted with paint or clay or plaster here and there. She smells like rainstorms. She’s broken more than a few hearts in Candlewick Vale, especially with her tendency to fall crazy mad in and out of love in the span of a day. Her inability to commit is total.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Guts 4; Face 5.

BACKGROUND: Wisdom-Seeker on the Rocky Path to Enlightenment.

VOCATION: Arts Teacher.

PASSION: Real, Transformative Experience.

FINCHEN HOSTLER

Master of Strange Mathematics

QUOTE: “And if you divide the square of the value derived from the Montamonu Formula by the circumference of a sphere with radius N, you can find the value of the inverse cosine without resorting to all that tomfoolery with slide rulers.”

POV: It is sometimes said of me that I have a better relationship with my numbers than I do with my students, fellow teachers—or anyone, really. It only makes sense. One is always closer with family than associates. Numbers visit me in my dreams, whispering insights and revelations. People—sometimes, I think everyone in the whole world is nothing but an empty skin filled with random words which emerge

like the passing of gas. There's no more meaning than that in approximately 93.563726 percent of what people say.

ROLE: Inside Finchen's head are secrets which could unlock the cosmos, opening possibilities left unexplored since the ancient days of the Elder Things. His transcendent mathematics could change the nature of humanity's relationship with the universe, if he had any hint of ambition, or any need for the approval of others. He's perfectly happy to teach math to children and pursue his passion for numbers privately, or inside his own head. However, if he found a student who could comprehend some of his ideas, he'd open up, and possibly realize what his insights portend.

DESCRIPTION: "Strange duck" would be an ideal expression to describe Finchen Hostler if he were a waterfowl. As is, only half that expression is precisely accurate. He's quite a good-looking man in his early thirties. Finchen dresses with precision and habit rather than flare, and has a certain dorky style. He's frequently the target for flirtation, but utterly fails to recognize it. If asked a math question outside of the classroom, he'll become *too* enthusiastic about the answer, believing that he's finally found a colleague with whom to discuss his work.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Brains 5; Face 1.

BACKGROUND: Childhood Math Prodigy.

VOCATION: Math Teacher.

PASSION: Exploring the Outer Reaches of Mathematical Understanding.

HERBERT KAVIN

Accident Waiting to Happen

QUOTE: "Oh, man. Don't nobody tell Mr. Gaunt, or I'll get fired for sure!"

POV: It's not fair to call me clumsy. I got my dad's left foot, but my mom's right. That's how come I wear the special shoe. But I'm careful, because I grew up with it, right? I been working in the mine since I got out of school. Mr. Gaunt—the old Mr. Gaunt—gave me the job, and it was pretty rough, but mom needed help after dad died climbing up in the mountains, and working was always what a man was supposed to do, so he said. So I worked, and it was pretty rough before Mr. Gaunt—the young Mr. Gaunt—came on, and he had to let some folks go, but the work is easier now on the account of us getting enough light and air and such.

ROLE: Herbert is a born bumbler, astonishingly accident prone but also amazingly lucky. He might trigger trouble, but he's great at surviving it. The other miners have come to see him as a lucky charm, and a good man to be next to if things go sour. He's actually worked to dramatically improve mine safety, but if an accident can happen, Herb will make it happen. He's spent a lot of time below ground, and since he tends to get lost, has found some weird things, and met some weird *things*. But the odd blithe attitude which keeps him calm in a cave-in seems to protect him from encounters with the otherworldly.

DESCRIPTION: A gawky man in overalls when out of work. While working, he's decked out in his mine jumpsuit and helmet. He's agreeable and pleasant, and very



polite. He gives the impression of being mildly mentally disabled, but he's not. He's simple, but not stupid. In a disaster, even one he caused, he's a beacon of calm and good cheer. He's quite religious, but isn't preachy. It's just something he lives.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Face 3; Feet 1; Guts 5; Hands 1.

BACKGROUND: Survived a Childhood of Accident and Disaster.

VOCATION: Mine Safety Inspector.

PASSION: Church.

PEARL ANNE KNOTTENFAUST

Baker by Day, Witch by Night

QUOTE: "There's only one thing for it, darling. Pastry. I find nothing eases the pain more than a nice custard tart, fresh from the oven."

POV: They come in for a loaf, and stay for the consolation. Poor dears. Candlewick's womenfolk suffer troubles slight and troubles terrible. I'm bound by certain oaths I took as a girl to listen to a woman's troubles, and, if entrusted with them, to use my small influences to help her how I might. If kind words and sound advice can't set a situation right, well, there's other things one might do. Higher courts of appeal than one's husband, anyhow.

ROLE: Pearl Anne inherited the baking business from her father, who taught her all the secret recipes for which Knottenfaust Bakers is justly famous. She's also the first person any woman in town sees when she needs a sympathetic ear, a nice hot cup of tea, and the solace of a warm bear claw. As a result, she's perhaps the most well-informed person in town when it comes to gossip about Relationship woes. Which she isn't averse to amending with the judicious application of some of the witchcraft she learned from her mother. Baking by day, consorting with spirits of the otherworld at night. Pearl Anne's two careers complement each other marvelously.

DESCRIPTION: Pearl Anne has the complexion and physique which suggests milkmaids, save for her hair graying a bit in streaks. She smells of baking all the time, and her hands are covered in flour. She radiates kindness, but there's nothing weak about her. She's got a core of teak. There's also something inherently trustworthy about her, something which almost demands you unburden yourself to her.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Hands 3; Guts 4; Face 4.

BACKGROUND: Witchcraft and Folk Magic.

VOCATION: Baker.

PASSION: Seeing Relationship troubles righted, and justice meted out.

ICARUS LEE

Owner-Editor of the Candlewick Intelligencer

QUOTE: "That was the mayor. He said if we run the shale pit article on the front page, he'll shut us down. The sheriff is sitting in his car across the street. So take the transcript of the conversation with the mayor that I recorded, and snap a picture of the sheriff to go next to the headline CORRUPT OFFICIALS THREATEN INTELLIGENCER. And we'll bump the shale pit story to page 2, just like they wanted."



PEARL ANNE'S MAGIC

Most of Pearl Anne's folk magic is simple blessings or curses which add or subtract dice from the target's pools for specific actions for a certain time. Working a spell takes some time (5 – width hours), and personal items or hair or whatnot from the targets. She makes a Face roll (plus her Background dice) to cast the spell, and the height determines how broadly the blessing or curse could apply (1 only applies to a single specific situation, 10 applies to almost everything the person does). These spells last for a day, after which they lose one die of effect per day until failing completely.

So, if Pearl Anne were trying to teach Mayor Bombrienfeld a lesson about not paying attention to his wife Gretchen, Pearl Anne could curse him when he pays attention to anything else (essentially, whenever he uses the Brains stat for something). With a width of 3 it would subtract three dice on the first day, two on the second, and one on the third.



POV: There's no denying it. This town is rotten to the core, but I'd not have it any other way. That's news! That's business! I know they call us the best fishwrapper in the Vale, but hell with them. We've been reporting it like it is for twenty years, and they can all go jump off the Tearmark if they don't want to hear the truth. We'll report it, and damn anybody who tries to stop us.

ROLE: Icarus Lee is a curmudgeon's curmudgeon, but in the grand old curmudgeon tradition he has a good heart under all that bitter black gunk. He's got no illusions about Candlewick, and is disgusted by how willfully blind everyone is to what goes on. They think the Intelligencer is a rag full of sensational lies and exaggerations, and many skip right to Community Events, Sports, or the Obits. He prints stories that *should* have the lot of the city administration trotted off to federal prison, but nothing ever seems to come of it. He's cynical, frequently drunk, and by the way he coughs, likely dying of the smokes that have stained his fingers yellow. But he won't back down from anybody who tries to tell him what to print. He used to be a private investigator, but he's not anymore on account of the bullet embedded in his hipbone.

DESCRIPTION: Fat, balding, and unhealthy. His name is ironic, because few people could be LESS likely to take flight. He has a booming voice, roughened by the cigarettes he smokes compulsively. His nose is bloodshot from drink, but his eyes are like cut glass, sharp and clear. He's got a sense of news and for nonsense that would make him a journalistic terror in a big city, but in Candlewick Vale he's been beaten down by years of public indifference.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Brains 4; Feet 1; Guts 5.

BACKGROUND: Private Investigator.

VOCATION: Undaunted Newspaperman.

PASSION: Uncovering the Secrets of the Powerful.

DOROTHY NAIOLAND

Teacher of Board-Approved Science

QUOTE: "If you'll please turn to page one hundred and twenty-three and read about gravity, you will better understand the reason for the following School Board-approved science lessons, and that will greatly improve your comprehension of the Board's approved lesson plan. Wink-wink."

POV: The School Board only bans books from little Susan's reading lists; they don't rewrite them. How am I to give these children anything approximating a good grounding in the sciences if I can't talk about gravity? Or natural selection? Or where babies come from? Or what happens when you dump toxic slurry into a river? Every time I come up with a way of teaching around their absurd dictates, still more come down the pipe. It makes me want to take to the hills and become a guerrilla teacher, descending in the dead of night to terrorize the town with unedited science lessons.

ROLE: Dorothy is fighting a losing battle for the hearts and minds of Candlewick Vale's children. The School Board seems to have it in for science. If they could get



away with doing away with science education completely, they'd do it. But there are all those pesky government requirements. So, they instead make teaching it all but impossible. Dorothy does her best, letting the kids know without actually saying it overtly when she's teaching something that's complete tot. She has half a dozen silly voices she likes to use.

DESCRIPTION: Short, plump, smiling, and bright-eyed. Dorothy is that rare beast, a competent teacher driven by the love of teaching and the joy of broadening young minds. She suffers under the all-too-common yoke of a meddling school board. She's sharp as a tack, and witty enough to play the board, so she keeps her job, and still manages to teach the kids something useful.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Guts 3; Brains 3; Face 4.

BACKGROUND: Student Activist.

VOCATION: System-Bucking Science Teacher.

PASSION: Teaching Children.

FATHER TIMOTHY O'MAGILL

Smoking-Hot Priest

QUOTE: "That's all right, ladies. I'm sure I can manage my own laundry. I'm sure ... well ... if you insist on it. Well, all right, so long as you let me know what I can do in exchange for the favor."

POV: It certainly is a *friendly* town. I'm not oblivious, of course. I know I have a certain *presence*, as it were, but really, it can get to be too much. I don't know what these people expect. I'm a *priest*. There's certain rules, and my bosses are quite keen on them. Not to say that I'm not flattered, mind, but still. I wonder sometimes if it is anything to do with why I have such a good turnout for mass.

ROLE: Father O'Magill is a good priest cursed with truly astonishing good looks. He's so good looking that just talking to him makes you feel better about yourself, just because someone that handsome deigned to talk to you. Frankly, there's something almost unnerving about the effect he has on people. He's clearly a bit uncomfortable with it sometimes, especially with the frequency with which people "accidentally" spill things on him, requiring he "get that into some water to soak immediately before the stain sets!" He always wears undershirts now, after the sight of him shirtless nearly caused a traffic accident outside Broodenkine's. Despite this oddity, he's genuinely good at his calling, he loves it, and he takes it seriously.

DESCRIPTION: Saying Father O'Magill is blonde, fit, and good looking is like saying Mount Everest is cool, a bit rocky, and tallish.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Feet 3; Guts 3; Brains 3; Face 5.

BACKGROUND: Traveled in Europe.

VOCATION: Priest.

PASSION: Helping the Community.



HOT ENOUGH TO BURN

Father O'Magill isn't just good looking. He's impossibly good looking. Its almost *creepy* how good looking he is.

He's got a Face-based Creepy Skill, almost like one of the orphans. He's wholly unaware of how he came by this, even if he finally realizes his looks aren't entirely natural. If asked directly, he'll say, "Oh yes, I was adopted."

SMOKIN' HOT +2d (Attacks; Useful: Crazy, insane attractive; Awesome x2).

When he realizes he has this power, he's going to be conflicted. It's pretty much exactly the sort of thing the Devil might do to turn a man into a terrible person. But this power came to a boy who would grow up with a deep faith and a calling to the priesthood.

He'll feel even more conflicted when he realizes he's so good looking, he can actually *hurt people* with his hotness.



JULES OUSERUS

Banker With a Secret

QUOTE: “The terms of your loan were made quite clear when the contracts were signed, were they not? I’m afraid if we start excusing scheduled payments on account of something like medical and funeral expenses, well, we’d hardly be in business, would we? People sicken and die every day, but the bank’s business must continue or the *town* will sicken and die. Now, if you wouldn’t mind exiting from this door, so as not to disturb the other patrons.”

POV: I’m not heartless, but someone must take the long view on financial matters, or this whole community would simply fail. If this institution closed, there would be no capital to invest, no loans to build and improve homes and businesses, no place for citizens to save and invest their wealth. It is entrusted to me to safeguard this vital beating heart, and were I not constantly vigilant, it would cease to pump the life-blood of this community. The money would cease to flow, and the town would die.

ROLE: Jules is a cold man. He’s fixated on the Big Picture, and in that view he simply can’t resolve something as insignificant as human misery. He attends to the town, the community. He can make a world of trouble for those who run afoul of the bank by defaulting on loans or overdrawing accounts. It isn’t personal, mind. He doesn’t respond especially well to persuasion, but if he can be shown some larger economic benefit in reconsidering a decision, he’s willing to consider it. As analytical and cool as he seems, he’s a classical piano player of some virtuosity, and while he (if he could) wouldn’t let it interfere with business, he’s on the prowl for a Mrs. Ouserus. The one crack in Jules’s respectability is his carefully-buried past. Before he came to Candlewick he went by the name Johnny Sparecrow. The authorities called him The Mechanic for the precision of his robberies.

DESCRIPTION: Slim, precise, and cool. He always gives the impression of being air conditioned, even when it’s a hundred and ten outside. His suits are harsh and conservative. His words are clipped and efficient, not rude but lacking warmth. He’s constantly aware of his position in the community, and how rumors of his competency and soundness could effect the bank, so he maintains remarkable control when in public view.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Awareness 5; Guts 3.

BACKGROUND: Bank Robber.

VOCATION: Banker.

PASSION: Piano.

DEPUTY MITCHELL PACKHAMMER

Big as a Buffalo, and Half as Clever.

QUOTE: “Now, sir, if you would please . . . sir. . . . Sir! Come back here! Come back! Damnit, lost another one! Sheriff is gonna kill me!”

POV: This here town might seem quiet, but it’s hopping with secret crime. Every face hides a secret. Every soul is blackened by hidden sin. Just the other day down at Broodenkine’s, I saw Reverend Cricken in the produce aisle *eating grapes*. He



just reached over and helped himself, and when he saw me he said, “Top of the morning, deputy,” nice as you please, his mouth still wet with pilfered grape juice! And he a man of God! I got my work cut out for me.

ROLE: Deputy Packhammer makes good comic relief, but he can also be a serious thorn. He’s a fairly dim bulb, but when he illuminates some crime, petty or bold, he’ll glare at it like a personal insult. It takes the sheriff “explaining things” to him to make him let it go. Deputy Packhammer’s naivete and obsession might be funny if the man weren’t so HUGE. He’s easily the largest man in Candlewick Vale. He worked the lumber mill as a lad, and represented Candlewick Township in the TriCounty Games for the last seven years, taking the gold medal each time. You’re not going to beat him physically—so it’s a good thing he’s so easily persuaded.

DESCRIPTION: HUGE. Deputy Packhammer is HUGE. It deserves to be said again. HUGE. So large it’s unnatural. He’s also quite magnificently ugly. So ugly that it is almost a sort of handsome. A big lantern jaw, long arms, huge barrel chest, legs like tree trunks. Even the uniforms tailored to fit his frame strain to the bursting point when he raises his arms. But he grins easily, and is putty in the hands of a grandma or a pretty girl. He’s also got a soft spot for kids and a sob story.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Hands 6; Feet 3; Guts 4; Brains 1; Face 1.

BACKGROUND: Strong as an Ox.

VOCATION: Idealistic Deputy.

PASSION: Sports, Both Playing and Watching.

DR. FELIX REDMONGLER

Doctor with Bad Bedside Manners

QUOTE: “And how are we today? Not well, I hope! Otherwise, this is a social call, and you know how I despise you.”

POV: Wretched bunch of fakes. All of them. All their smiles and keeping up appearances. I’ve seen them naked. I know their bodies, and I know their sins. I know who has sores on his John Thomas. I know who beats who. I know whose baby it *really* is. They can’t fool me, and neither can you. But I’m no fake. I let everyone know just how I feel about them. What are they going to do? Go to a different doctor?

ROLE: As the only doctor in town, Dr. Redmongler has a unique position in the community. He’s essential. And he’s well aware of it. So he doesn’t mince words. He’ll tell you just what he thinks of you. But he keeps his oaths, and nothing shared with him during a consultation will ever escape his lips. In many ways, he’s more a confessor for the town than Father O’Magill; people at least trust he’ll keep his mouth shut, though nobody expects he’d withhold judgment or blunt his advice with concerns for feelings. He hates almost everyone in town, because almost everyone has disappointed him.

DESCRIPTION: He’s small and spare, with a mass of white hair and small round eyeglasses. He dresses in an old-fashioned white coat over a black suit. He makes house calls, but will happily tell you how ugly your curtains are. There’s something

positively ophidian about him, a real lack of pity. He'd be a terrible doctor if not for his passion for beating back disease and mending injury. A patient is a broken machine rather than a sick human being. His only vice is gambling; it is less about the winning for him than about giving himself over to pure chance.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Hands 5; Brains 5.

BACKGROUND: Gifted Medical Student.

VOCATION: Caustic Doctor.

PASSION: Gambler.

ARCHIE RICHWISH

Junior Auxiliary Revolutionary

QUOTE: "You know what they did to my dad? That's nothing compared to what they're going to do if we let them take any more power or buy up any more of our town. We have to fight them! Organizing is all good if you're like old, but we're young and we need to take more direct action! We're kids. It's not like we'll go to jail. Who's with me?"

POV: The bastards in this town broke my dad and made him crazy. Mom split when he went nuts, and they keep on doing what they're doing. They're strip-mining the foothills to dig up shale for garden paths! They're talking about draining Mumsigh so they can cool a new sawmill! They pay crap, and they work you to death, and City Hall doesn't do anything. Well, we can do something. Nobody would suspect a kid of what I got planned. We're going to shut them down, and show them what it's like to go without for a change. Maybe they won't be poor enough to have to eat ketchup soup, but they'll be hurting.

ROLE: Archie is a firebrand, like his pop, Dan Richwish, wants to be. He's a kid with a mission, and where his dad just contemplates blowing up the mill, Archie has planned it out in exquisite detail. He and his little group have been responsible for dozens of unexplained failures and shutdowns. They call themselves the Gremlins. And he's always looking for new members, especially ones who seem outside the system as it is.

DESCRIPTION: Thin like his dad, but taller. Freckly, well spoken, well read (much to the irritation of his teachers), and willing to argue a point till the dead horse could be made into burgers. He's also got a touch of the user about him. He's willing to lie to the Gremlins to get them to go along with a plan, downplaying the danger, or the risk to lives and property. All for the Cause.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Face 3; Feet 3; Guts 4; Hands 3.

BACKGROUND: Son of a Labor Organizer.

VOCATION: Gremlin Revolutionary.

PASSION: Hurting the System.

DAN RICHWISH

Daredevil Union Organizer and Former Mill Employee

QUOTE: "Management is afraid of us! When they got word that I was organizing, they sent that one-armed thug to break up the meeting! They fear our power if we



unite! So join now and . . . hey, come back!”

POV: This whole valley is lousy with antiunionism and the institutional oppression of the worker, and we’re not going to beat it unless we get *serious*. I’m not talking about violence—you never heard me advocate for violence—but we need to make these powerful men take notice of us, whatever that takes. Us? Well, I’m not going to name names, but yeah, we’re well placed in every major concern in the Vale, and when the time comes, this whole place will grind to a halt. Then the bastards will *have* to deal with us.

ROLE: Dan is a strange beast, one of those people who sees every fluke of fate as a personal and grievous insult, possibly perpetrated by his many enemies, who fear his power. He’s just this side of pathological, but he actually *does* have a case for what he says. Just because you’re paranoid doesn’t mean some thug hired by the Chamber of Commerce didn’t try and throw you off the Tearmark Cliffs. Problem is, Dan comes over a little too intense, a little too nutty, and drives off a fair number of entirely reasonable and interested potential union members with his hard-sell message and not-so-subtle calls for direct action. In the cottage where he lives with his son, he has four pounds of blasting jelly secreted in a twee pottery novelty jar labeled “EyeCrispies and Sleepy Sand”.

DESCRIPTION: Small and thin, but with an intensity that makes him seem tall and thin. His mousy hair falls in his eyes, and he dresses like the working-class intellectual he aspires to be. He does lawn work to make ends meet, but still has meetings and tries to rally support for workers rights.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Brains 3; Face 3; Feet 3.

BACKGROUND: Factory Worker.

VOCATION: Union Organizer.

PASSION: Fighting the Powerful.

MADIGABIAL SHUSFINGER

Librarian and Defender of Decency

QUOTE: “Oh, you’re *much* too young for this book. You might get *ideas* reading this.”

POV: I simply can not believe the smut and blasphemy passing for literature these days. These books arrive, and there’s scarcely one word in ten fit for decent folk to read! But as much as I’d like to toss them on a big bonfire and send them up to the Lord for judgment, well, they’re *books*. After all, I might want to give those smart-mouthed little orphans a smack to knock the sass out of them, but no matter how foul their mouths I wouldn’t kill them. Books are like that. Even dirty ones. They’re *alive*.

ROLE: Madigabial is a nosy, prudish busybody always on the lookout for any sign of impure thinking or lascivious desire. Most folk don’t pay her much heed, but they do try and avoid her eyes when they’re going about their impurity and lasciviousness. As the Candlewick Township librarian, she’s carefully chosen the books she’ll allow out for public consumption, but as a bone-deep bibliophile she can’t damage or destroy a book, any book. As a result, the Reserve Collection of

the Candlewick Township Library is filled with unique books, monographs on the blasphemous, lurid and indecent foreign volumes, and lost and forgotten first editions. She's keenly aware of Candlewick Manor's famous library. So many amazing books in someone else's care—it's galling.

DESCRIPTION: She's a handsome woman of early middle age, with a severity that leads her to slim black skirts and white blouses, glasses on a chain, and hair in a tight bun. She stares unrepentantly, without flinching, and writes things down about what she sees.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Brains 5, Face 4.

BACKGROUND: Heartbroken Divorcée.

VOCATION: Bibliophile.

PASSION: Snooping.

CECIL SNOSIDASS

Proprietor of Four Gables House

QUOTE: "Of course, mayor, your usual table is certainly available. And will you be requiring use of one of our ... *special* conference rooms this evening?"

POV: Have you passed the Star and Circle lately? It looks worse and worse, and so glum are those unfortunates who patronize it! Sadly, Mr. Stumps has failed to grasp the way we do business here in modern Candlewick Township. He's waiting for some great change to make his brand of public house popular again. But alas, its time is over. People want *deniability*. They want to dine or have a drink, and be perfectly able to delude themselves as to the activities which go on in the rooms above. I provide an atmosphere conducive to just such denial.

ROLE: Cecil is very much the man about town, and a major figure in Candlewick's social game. He plays bridge with the mayor and poker with the sheriff, gardens, hosts Blue Hat events, and generally schmoozes with everyone. His business only functions so long as he knows everyone and knows what everyone is thinking. He's the town fixer, arranging deals and taking his payment in influence. He provides services and goods both illegal and scandalous, but does so with total confidence because everyone is already in bed with him. Rather than the devil you don't know, he's the devil you know, invite over, serve tea, and allow to escort your daughter to the winter festival dance.

DESCRIPTION: A foppish man of indeterminate age, with flamboyant manner and salubrious speech. Dressed stunningly, elegant, and always ready with a quip or comeback. He's clean-shaven, and his hair is always combed as if for dinner with the Queen. While he's charming, erudite and fun, there's no mistaking his cold-bloodedness. His moral compass always seems to point due profit.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Guts 3; Brains 3; Face 5.

BACKGROUND: Long Con Artist.

VOCATION: Publican and Fixer.

PASSION: Spinning a Spiderweb of Social Influence.



JACK STANDISH

The Wolfcub

QUOTE: “How stupid are you? No, shut up! Don’t talk to me! Ever! It was a rhetorical question, because the answer is obvious. You wear THAT? Did your mom dress you? Oh, wait, your mom is DEAD, isn’t she? She killed herself, is what the help up at Candlewick are saying. Killed herself by drinking strychnine when you were born, and she looked down and saw you. You ask them. See what they say. They’ll turn their eyes away, and they won’t answer, but you’ll know it’s true.”

POV: Please, this town? My dad owns it. Or he’ll own it soon enough. Mom says so. She says we’re the most important family in town, and I’m the heir to it. And that means people had better watch out, because if Dear Daddy drops dead, then I’m putting a lot of people out on the street. I don’t know why I have to go to this lousy school with the proles and these new orphan kids. Dad said it’s good to mix with regular folks, but mom told me what was really going on. She said the school was like the town, but it was up to me to take it over the way dad was taking over Candlewick. When I’d proved myself, then I’d be ready to take over for dad. Mom said we can’t kill him until then.

ROLE: Jack Standish is the worst possible bully: cruel, imaginative, and almost immune to sanction barring some truly egregious abuse. He limits much of his cruelty to verbal assaults, and he has a sense for the weaknesses of others that’s frightening. He can smell blood, and it makes him crueler. It’s rumored he talked one child into suicide. He sees the orphans as a grievous affront to everything he thinks is right and proper, weirdoes with no family or influence or purpose. Unlike most bullies he’s not a coward at heart, and standing up to him, especially inflicting public humiliation on him, will only make him more dangerous. He’ll sometimes feign to have learned respect, only to stab those who grant him trust in the back. His clutch of chuckling hyena friends don’t really like him, but on some level know it is better to follow him than be his target. He’s smart, he’s cruel, and he’s his mother’s son.

DESCRIPTION: Handsome, tidy, polite to teachers (to their faces, anyhow). But his features can transform and show such revulsion and scorn that one of his withering looks can shrivel even the strongest spirit. He’s strong and athletic, too.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Face 4; Feet 3; Guts 3; Hands 3.

BACKGROUND: Social Predator.

VOCATION: School Bully.

PASSION: The Infliction of Imaginative Agonies.

MADLINE STANDISH

Wolf in Slightly Smaller Wolf’s Clothing

QUOTE: “Darling, surely we can’t have THIS SORT about the place? Shall I have Charles and his men escort her out?”

POV: Mercer, my love, he’s such a child, really. His grudge consumes so much of his energy. All his status and all his property won to punish the Candlewicks

for who knows what. Well, I'll not let his silly tiff break us. No, I will not. And I certainly will not allow it to sully our reputation, especially if it hints at some kind of *connection* to that family. No, where Mercer would play this long game of schoolyard pushing and shoving with Candlewick, I'll let him have his fun until it becomes tedious, and then simply *see to it* that the Candlewicks and their little orphans never trouble my family again.

ROLE: Madeline is honest-to-God EVIL. Most people assume she's just a snotty elitist or a social climber, but she's actual evil. As in, consumed by evil. As in, *inhabited* by evil. She'll do anything to protect or improve her status. She has no conscience, but she can lie and fake human empathy well enough; she understands how this makes other people hurt. She's a hollow thing, a gorgeous shell. She has skeletons in her closet, and she'll sometimes take them out to remember with fondness how she boiled off the flesh before hiding them behind the old coats.

DESCRIPTION: Simply ravishing. That's about as explicit as you're allowed to get in polite society, and it hardly does her justice. A redhead in the style of a torch singer, with similar tastes in dress, she's savvy, and speaks in witty jibes and flirtations. Her eyes have more than a little of the raptor about them. She doesn't seem to blink often enough, which makes people lock eyes with her and be drawn in. All she has to do to have half the men of the Vale come running is crook her little finger and raise an eyebrow. And she fully knows just how gorgeous she is.

NOTEWORTHY STATS AND SKILLS: Brains 3; Courage 5; Face 5.

BACKGROUND: Never Be Poor Again.

VOCATION: Social Tigress Guarding Her Territory.

PASSION: Devouring Her Enemies (Sometimes Literally).

MERCER STANDISH

The Rich Man

QUOTE: "I'm sure we can come to some kind of arrangement. If memory serves, your—mother? Yes, your mother is in one of my little cottages. Moved there after your father died, didn't she? Well, we'll do *everything* we can do to keep her happy at home, *won't we?*"

POV: I look up at night and I see the lights up there. Candlewick's manor. Once upon a time, everything the lord of that house surveyed around him in the Vale was his. Now? Sold off bit by bit, to support the corruption and insanity of that clan. The lights are going out for the Candlewicks, and soon nothing will be left but the name. And that? Well, when I've bought up a few more properties, it won't be much of an issue to get that changed.

ROLE: Mercer Standish is wealthy. Astonishingly wealthy. By far, the most wealthy individual in the whole Vale. And he owns a huge chunk of it, and is always buying more. He has some old personal grudge against the Candlewick family, and he and Dr. Candlewick have a history neither will speak of. They play a game between them for the Vale and its people. And Mercer, with his sharklike acumen and merciless business sense, is winning. Mercer isn't an evil man; he has his principles



but he also wields power, and has ambition, and he hates the Candlewicks and all those the Candlewicks take in.

DESCRIPTION: Mercer is in his fifties, lean and hard. He looks more like a roughneck oilman than a semiretired property magnate. His skin is dark, and weatherworn. He dresses as the occasion demands, with no particular personal style. He carries all his identity in his bearing and his expression. His clothes might be identical to a dozen other men, but he's unmistakable.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Brains 4; Face 4; Feet 3; Guts 4; Hands 3.

BACKGROUND: Self-Made Millionaire.

VOCATION: Real Estate Magnate.

PASSION: The Destruction of the House of Candlewick.

GORMAN STERNACKER

Hardheaded Headmaster

QUOTE: "We will have *discipline*, my lovelies, or there will be a price to pay for it, I assure you."

POV: A well-run school is like a military unit. Ordered, disciplined, and precise. Every soldier has his role. Every soldier knows his place. When provided with order, a student excels. Without order, students flounder, and they will lose the battle against ignorance. Ignorance is the enemy, and only with discipline will it be defeated.

ROLE: Headmaster Sternacker was a sergeant in the war, responsible for the training and discipline of the men under his command. As headmaster of Candlewick Comprehensive School, in town, he models his administration on his army unit, pushes students and faculty for discipline, precision and promptness. He's a fiend for the rules and seems ever-present, always lurking to catch a teacher who's snuck out back for a smoke or a student lollygagging in the hallway. Outside of school, he considers it his duty to monitor his students even when they are outside of class. Were it possible, he'd order the lives of their parents and families to more perfectly enforce his ideas of discipline. As it is, he has huge files on every one of his students, detailing their lives at school and away from it. It's pretty creepy, really.

DESCRIPTION: A small, rod-straight man of middle years. He runs five miles every morning at sunrise, doesn't smoke, drink, or curse, and expects those under his command to maintain similar lifestyles. His voice is sharp and always seems too loud for the situation, and when he talks to you he stands too close, just inside your personal space.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Feet 4; Guts 4; Face 3.

BACKGROUND: Sergeant and War Veteran.

VOCATION: Headmaster.

PASSION: Physical Fitness.

SUSAN STERNACKER

Town Gossip and Semi-Pro Busybody

QUOTE: "Oh, you won't BELIEVE what I heard about Mr. Motley."

POV: I'm not one for gossip, but really, how can it even be considered gossip when she flaunts it so openly? You know I don't like to listen to all this talk about people, but it only makes sense to try and know your neighbors as well as you can, hmmm? Well, I'm sure you understand. Let me tell you this delicious little bit of scandal I just heard!

ROLE: Susan Sternacker is socially prominent, a member of several civic groups, and a well-known hostess. She's also a poisonous, spiteful shrew who loves to see others humiliated and brought low. She'll spread rumors, grub for secrets, and elicit confessions from people who've sworn never to share anything with her again. She loves the power that uncovering and disseminating secrets gives her, and she loves her bevy of gossipy friends, at least so long as they remember who's in charge. She'll make life hell for anyone with a secret they want kept. She'll spoil reputations, and she'll make it really hard to keep things on the down low when she gets it in her head that you're hiding something.

DESCRIPTION: Susan is a tall, gawkily-thin woman with an owlish face behind enormous eyeglasses. She dresses sharply, and speaks with a lilting, smiling mockery, and her every compliment contains an insult, every observation a criticism. She knows things about just about everyone in Candlewick, and unless mollified she might let slip what she knows at one of her famous afternoon teas. Stand too close to her and you'll get a whiff of horrendous breath, like she's rotting from within.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Brains 4; Face 4.

BACKGROUND: Lifelong Gossip.

VOCATION: Socialite.

PASSION: Grubbing Up Other People's Secrets.

JOHN STUMPS

Proprietor of the Star and Circle

QUOTE: "I have no idea what an 'appletini' is. We've got beer. Will that do?"

POV: The old place has seen brighter days, that's for sure. When I bought it off old Munterow, he said he expected business to pick up any day. It's probably what the guy who sold it to him said. But I have a feeling. Something's going to happen. Something's going to turn this slump around.

ROLE: John Stumps is unflappable, indifferent, and absolutely unwilling to bend or compromise with anyone over anything. If everyone in town is trying to make the orphans feel as unwelcome as possible, he'll still hire one to help with the washing up, and stare down anybody who says boo to him about it. It's not stubbornness; he just can't conceive of doing anything other than whatever he's decided. He'll just stare blankly at someone suggesting he do otherwise, perhaps polishing a pint glass while fixing his eyes on a point slightly above and to the right of the other guy's eyes.

DESCRIPTION: John Stumps looks like a man who lives alone and doesn't expect



that to change any time soon. He was married once, but that didn't take, so now he lives above the Star and Circle. He's fortyish, paunchy, thinning on top, and rarely wears anything more than stained trousers and an undershirt. He has a cloth thrown perpetually over his shoulders, and a look that says, "I don't care." He's happy to stand in silence behind his bar for hours. He, like the place, is asleep, waiting to wake to something greater.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Guts 5; Brains 3; Face 3.

BACKGROUND: A Stint in the Army as a Barber.

VOCATION: Publican.

PASSION: He'll Know it When Things Wake Up.

SHERIFF ROSCOE TOULOUSE

Corrupt Cowboy Sheriff

QUOTE: "And what do you fellas reckon you're up to, hmm?"

POV: Candlewick Township is a quiet, respectable place, because of me. Left to these wishy-washy types, we'd be living in chaos in under a fortnight. Man is a beast in his natural state, and only the Law keeps him in check. The rare few such as me who understand *discipline* must take it upon themselves to hold all the others to account. Of course, those of us who are self-mastered need not worry so much about the rules created for lesser men, but we must *be seen* to obey them, so the rabble don't get ideas.

ROLE: The sheriff is both sanctimoniously certain of his place and the need for his brand of justice, and also convinced that his type of superior men need not obey the law themselves, at least when nobody is looking. He's officious, suspicious, and likes throwing his weight around. In the end, he is more concerned with maintaining the status quo (and hushing up anything which "might give people funny ideas") than he is with justice. He'll make a great foil and antagonist, too powerful to move against directly, and more than powerful enough to make an orphan's life very hard.

DESCRIPTION: Tall and looming. Dresses like a cowboy, with a big hat and boots. He wore spurs until he tripped over them while chasing a vandal and looked like an idiot in front of several prominent Candlewick citizens. He affects a drawl that slips when he's angry or excited. He carries a six-shooter and everything. He doesn't own a horse, but drives a big shiny black car he calls The Ranger. Once upon a time, he was an honest young man who needed steady work, so when the previous Deputy vanished mysteriously while hiking in the hills, he applied and got the job. He learned all his superior and corrupt ways from his predecessor, the deceased Sheriff Klondike.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Hands 4; Feet 3; Guts 3.

BACKGROUND: Idealistic Deputy.

VOCATION: Cowboy Sheriff.

PASSION: Driving The Ranger.



SCOUT TOULOUSE

Rebel With A Cause

QUOTE: "My Dad drove out to the shore. Somebody reported that a body had washed up, and it'll take him hours to get back. Let's swipe a bottle from his liquor cabinet and get hammered. The body? Well, if it were just a false alarm, he'd be back too soon, so there HAD to be a real body."

POV: Oh my God, could my father be any more hypocritical? And he's only gotten worse since Mom died. The cowboy thing is out of control. It was bad enough what he named me. Now he talks to his car like it was a horse. At least I'm not a boy, so he'd expect me to follow in his footsteps or something. He really has no idea what to do with me, so he lets me do more or less whatever I want. I can get away with murder, because the Sheriff will cover for me. But I don't want him to cover for me! I want him to care. I want him mad at me, and I want him to do something to stop me, but he won't. So, I just need to keep turning up the heat until he does.

ROLE: Scout is trouble with a capital OH GOD THE BUILDING IS ON FIRE! She's waging a war with her father, trying to pull something so bad that the old man won't just cover it up and ignore it. She's trying to force him to put his own daughter in jail. She's not really a bad person, but things are escalating, and she might not be able to quit before something really, seriously wrong goes down.

DESCRIPTION: Pretty, in an intense and unsettling way. As much manic energy as a Chihuahua, and the same huge (slightly popped) eyes hinting at a thyroid problem. She dresses for rebellion, in whatever she thinks will earn her father's disapproval. She's got a daredevil streak, and the tendency to involve others in her schemes and stunts. One of these days, she'll pull something that can't be laughed off as "youthful high spirits" and she and whoever was with her at the time will be in serious serious trouble.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Feet 3; Guts 4; Face 3.

BACKGROUND: Sheriff's Daughter.

VOCATION: Teen Daredevil.

PASSION: Secretly Obsessed with Fashion.

BEATRICE VILLIVERT

Candlewick Postmistress

QUOTE: "I'm sorry if your mail found its way into someone else's mailbox. We can't be responsible for the actions of naughty children or curious raccoons, now can we? What? No, it's impossible that the mail was delivered to the wrong address. Utterly and completely preposterous. Look to the raccoons, sir, and there you will find the culprits!"

POV: Does anyone really have any idea how difficult it is to deliver mail in a township with so many roads all named "Elder" this or "Old" that? And with such

slapdash street numbering and mailbox standards. Well, people should realize we're only human, and we can't be responsible for every act of nature which sweeps bags of mail into the river and out to sea. That could happen to anyone.

ROLE: Beatrice is either shockingly incompetent or a brilliant strategist. The reputation of the Candlewick postal office is so abysmal that when a letter arrives at the correct address in a reasonable time, people remember it, and it stands out. Beatrice does her best to keep expectations for the post office low, but this is really a sideline for her true duties. Postmaster Beatrice routinely opens the mail of those on the sheriff's "undesirables" list and makes copies or changes, or simply passes them to the sheriff. This way, little information escapes the Vale, and little which is deemed disturbing to the peace finds its way in.

DESCRIPTION: Beatrice projects an image of the total scatterbrain: mismatched socks, wrinkled uniform, and a vacant expression. She's not really that dim, though. She's in her middle 30s, handsome rather than beautiful.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Guts 4; Brains 3.

BACKGROUND: Amateur Dramatics.

VOCATION: Corrupt Postmaster.

PASSION: Getting Married Before It's Too Late!

PAUL ZUKER

Hardware Store Owner and Handyman Extraordinaire

QUOTE: "Don't worry about it today. I'll put it on your account and you can settle when the crops come in."

POV: Folks have enough to worry about without me riding them about money. These are hard times, they say, and the farmers have been hurting, and the weather, it's been taking roofs off people's houses, and, well, it's a shame. All the young ones are leaving, heading out to the city looking for work or something exciting, but I grew up here, and I can tell you a thing or two about exciting. Folks forget what the town was like when they was knee-high to a grasshopper, but not me. I remember.

ROLE: Paul is a kindly widower who runs Zuker's Hardware. He barely keeps the store floating, as he has a terrible head for business, and lets his customers' accounts go years without collection. He'll hit a crisis at some point, collect what he's owed or lose the store, but he's not there yet. Not quite. More interestingly, Paul knows something of how weird Candlewick Vale really is when you scratch the surface. Not the human side of the equation—he's hopeless with human drama or social politics—but he's the one adult in Candlewick who hasn't forgotten his old *friends*. Unknown to almost everyone in the Vale, Paul Zuker is a published poet, though none of his books have found their way back into Candlewick. His poetry is phantasmagorical, and his readers think heavy with metaphor and allegory. It's not. It's autobiographical.

DESCRIPTION: Paul dresses the part of the handyman, in overalls. He's tall and spare, with long fingers heavy with calluses. His eyes are almost colorless, and sad like a hound's. He's helped build every structure in Candlewick constructed in the

last 20 years, and his work around the shop and building and doing handy work keeps him in good shape. Plus, it gets him out, and he knows just about everyone. In his way, he's quite handsome, and there's a remarkably vicious competition for his affection among Candlewick's single ladies of a certain age. Of course, he's wholly ignorant of all of it.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Hands 4; Guts 3; Face 3.

BACKGROUND: Blessed With Simple Charm.

VOCATION: Hardware Store Owner and Handyman.

PASSION: Poetry.

THE PEOPLE OF THE COUNTRY

BENGALO BARENESCRE

Young Roma Hothead

QUOTE: "Answer me this, then, Father. Why have we come back to this accursed place? We break an oath just being here, and it breaks my spirit to be amongst people who hate us so. And you invite the wretches into our camp? Damned old fool!"

POV: Why are we here? I don't know! The old man won't say, and so we languish here. We should pack our caravan and be gone tomorrow. No debt to the guyoy is worth this humiliation. I've taken about all I'll take.

ROLE: Bengalo is angry. The son of the Roma clan leader, he's angry with his father's rule, with his secrets, with the way his people are treated in Candlewick, and pretty much with the world. He'll make trouble and get into trouble, and in all likelihood be a perfect scapegoat for someone else's crime.

DESCRIPTION: Tall and as dark as his father, but he lacks his father's brightness. Instead he's savagely handsome, and radiates a dangerous charm.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Face 4; Feet 3; Hands 3.

BACKGROUND: Wanderer.

VOCATION: Hothead Troublemaker.

PASSION: Romancing the Local Girls.

BURMAEO BAREMESCRE

Roma Chief

QUOTE: "Ah, come, come! You want to listen to the music, you come in by the fire, too! Too cold to be sitting the dark, my little ones. You come in and Burmaeo tell you a story."

POV: We get the call, and we come. We owe the House that much yet. But we're almost free of the old debts, and when we see to the Doctor's business, we'll go and never return again to this cursed valley.

ROLE: Burmaeo seems jovial and open and jolly, but there's a darkness, a mystery



hidden behind his colorful garb and manner. He's a source of good advice and occasional unexpected aid, but he's hard to trust. His true motives are simply unknown.

DESCRIPTION: Dark of skin and hair and eye, bright of dress, and voice, and spirit. He seems much younger than his years, with his grin and his laughing eyes, but those eyes are wary, too. If you watch, you'll see his hand is never far from the heavy folding clasp knife in his trouser pocket.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Brains 3; Face 4; Guts 4; Hands 4.

BACKGROUND: Wanderer.

VOCATION: Roma Chief.

PASSION: Song.

THE WIDOW BOELEEN

The One Who Remembers

QUOTE: "You remind me of someone, girl. Did I know your parents? No? Well, you remind me of someone."

POV: Oh, it's only a matter of time, now. I know he's not coming home, but I've been watching for so long; what else would I do? I've been watching for him for longer than I've been anything else. I remember what this place used to be like. Those days are gone, but I remember. And when I look out my windows and see the children going by, in their faces I see the past alive again, and I cry sometimes.

ROLE: The Widow is mysterious, distant. Her tragic past subject to much rumor, as is the supposed wealth buried somewhere in her cellar. She can be scary, too, and in some of the rumors she's a witch and the herbs drying on her porch are for casting spells. Some say she killed her beloved. Others say she's been waiting for him to come home from the sea for decades. Uncovering her past will define her as ally, villain, friend, or fiend.

DESCRIPTION: Bent and ancient, dressed in layers of black lace and shawls. Her hair is long and gray and matted by the constant winds off the sea. Her eyes are so pale they almost seem dimmed by cataracts, but they're sharp. Her hearing isn't so good anymore, but she can read lips from forty paces. She's sad and resigned, but still has a touch of humor about her.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Brains 3; Feet 1; Guts 3; Hands 1.

BACKGROUND: Foolish, Romantic Girl.

VOCATION: Watcher at the Cliffside.

PASSION: Redeeming Herself by Redeeming Candlewick Vale.

DAVID MAGRUDER

Broken-Down Man of the Soil

QUOTE: "Before my leg went, I was farming this whole hillside in beans, and the pasture beyond I had cattle, and then sheep out on the grazing commons. Doing pretty well, too. Then, my leg went, and, well, I haven't been able to keep up with the place. And with Paul in school . . . I keep my hand in, though. You probably seen the vines."



POV: Farming is pretty much all I ever done. I worked hard, I slept, I got up and did it again. But the Vale isn't what it was when I was helping my daddy. It's got mean, and folks don't play straight no more. I don't go down into town unless I can help it, and since my knee went, I haven't exactly been able. Can't drive my old truck, or my tractor. I started growing gourds while my knee healed, selling them to the arts and crafts people. But now I'm thinking about seeds. I'm thinking *everyone* will want one of my prize gourds of their own.

ROLE: David is the old and fading past of the Vale, a farmer on the family farm, whose son isn't likely to farm it himself. He's broken down, and so is his farm. If he doesn't find some way to get by, he's going to vanish.

DESCRIPTION: Skinny limbs and a pot belly make David Magruder look like a wading bird. He dresses for farm work, but of late has been walking with crutches when he walks at all. His right knee is blown, and it can't bear any weight without pain.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Feet 1; Hands 4.

BACKGROUND: Farmboy.

VOCATION: Farmer.

PASSION: Has Plans for the Gourd Business.

PAUL MAGRUDER

The Smartest Boy in School

QUOTE: "I can help you with your homework, if you don't mind coming up to the farm with me. I have to do something with hay for Dad, but then we can totally get into this super keen geometry!"

POV: I don't know why I have such an easy time in school, but I do. Dad and I get along all right, but he doesn't really understand me. Nobody really does. But that's all right, I guess.

ROLE: Paul is a *genius*. He just gets it. He gets it *all*. He just doesn't have any context in which to place all the things he gets. It's like having a killer collection of *Sorcery: The Convocation* collectable game cards but no idea how to build a decent deck. He's also something of a blank, waiting to be stamped out into the sort of person he'll become: good, bad, friendly, devoted, shallow, selfish, open, secretive. Much will depend on the people he ends up with.

DESCRIPTION: Paul is a big kid and pretty strong from working on the farm. But he spends way more time reading than working, and doesn't play any sports. He hasn't been around other kids much; his dad's farm is sort of isolated. He always seems awkward around people his own age, but is comfortable around adults. He always looks slightly perplexed, like he's trying to figure out the way the whole universe works. Which, of course, he is.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Brains 5, Hands 3.

BACKGROUND: Farmboy Genius.

VOCATION: Omnivorous Student.

PASSION: Finding Order Amongst the Randomness of Life and Pattern in the Chaos.



CAPTAIN BRIAN PREACH

Fisherman Fearing Fate

QUOTE: "What the hell are you doing down there? Stowing away? You think this is like in the stories or something? Well, we're out for the whole day, kids, so you, grab a mop, and you, help me haul this net up. You're working."

POV: The ocean's changed. It's colder. We're pulling up smaller catches, and—other things. Foul stuff that ought stay down deep where there ain't any light, because nobody should have to see them. I don't know. But what else am I going to do? All I know is fishing. And I'll keep doing it. No matter what it might mean.

ROLE: Captain Preach knows there's something coming, something bad. He can read the sea and he knows the signs. Like a storm, but it's not a storm. He's seen storms. What's coming is different. And bad. And as it gets closer, Preach is going to get more and more stressed, and more and more hostile, and more and more frustrated that his warnings aren't heeded.

DESCRIPTION: A heavy man, dressed for long hours on the sea. Cabled sweater, oilskin coat. He always smells like fish, and he smokes hand-rolled cigarettes constantly, and drinks tarlike coffee which has stained his teeth. As he gets more worried about the looming doom he senses, he'll get thinner, his eyes wider and redder. His hands will start to shake and his temper will fray. His hands will only be steady when he holds a hunk of coral or a whale's tooth and his little carving knife. His carvings will reflect the images he can't get out of his dreams.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Brains 3; Guts 3; Hands 4.

BACKGROUND: Fisherman Born.

VOCATION: Captain of a Fishing Boat.

PASSION: Carving.

DOCTOR WILABEY SHANKER

Psychoanalyst on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown

QUOTE: "You don't understand the good we're doing here! The lives we're saving! Mistakes have been made. *Sacrifices*. But all great advancements in human history come at a price. Only the brave and the daring have the fortitude to make those sacrifices for the good of all. I won't let you stop the *great work*!"

POV: Nobody understands. Candlewick was an ally, but he betrayed me. He questioned my methods, my treatment for his poor sick. I'll say no more of him! The work continues, but slower. Progress is still being made, oh yes. When Candlewick opened his home to those sports and Darwinian dead ends, it seemed like perhaps he was rejoining the quest, but no. It is just another betrayal that he keeps those wonderful specimens away from me. Bah! I have all the help I need from my *associate*.

ROLE: Doctor Shanker genuinely believes his work will change the world. He will eliminate misery, hatred, swearing, and superstition, and usher in a new age of Rational Sanity. He's single-handedly paved a few roads to the hot place. Doctor Shanker is a smiling, wide-eyed presence who is subject to wild digressions into his personal psychiatric theories.

DESCRIPTION: Tall and energetic, and roughly mid-fifties in age. He wears a long white coat all the time, and his pockets are filled with pens, medical instruments and bits of string. There's something manic about Shanker that is slightly infectious. Talking to him, you'll find yourself talking faster and faster.

NOTEWORTHY STATS: Brains 5; Face 4.

BACKGROUND: Seeker After Universal Human Truth.

VOCATION: Brilliant Experimental Psychoanalyst.

PASSION: Unlocking the Secrets of the Human Mind.

CANDLEWICK ASSOCIATIONS

Candlewick's people belong variously to one or more associations, groupings of folk with similar agendas or ideas. Associations provide a blanket link for all their members, not as strong as a direct personal link but still significant. Associations can be especially influential with their members who step out of line. Reacting based on their personal motivations to an orphan's actions, for example, could bring them into conflict with their own associations.

Each association is described with an **AGENDA**—the association's spoken or unspoken motivation and purpose—and **HOOKS**, some ways the association can be used to drive play or get the orphans into hot water.

THE BLUE HATS

Another lady's organization, though this one mostly for senior citizens. They gather for lunch, tip horribly, and all wear blue hats. Sometimes, they have a little bit of hard cider, and then they get rowdy.

AGENDA: Nothing less than the transformation of society into a more senior-friendly institution. They're planning campaigns to get the newspaper printed in larger type, to get the grocer to widen his aisles, and to gain occult puissance with an invocation of an ancient and terrible manifestation of the Crone—or, rather, to get an after-dark curfew on anyone younger than 25. Ignore my ramblings about crone this or crone that. How my mind wanders.

HOOKS: Bumping into the wrong old lady when she's wearing her blue hat can result in someone being run out of town. If the Blue Hats take against you, you're in for it. They're like the mafia, only they knit more, and are far more vicious when crossed.

THE CANDLEWICK FAMILY

Members of the Candlewick Family share the legacy of the family, whether they like it or not: The strange fortunes, declining influence, and weird obsessions. Its traditions include obsessive secrecy and obfuscation, and vicious infighting which never stops the family from uniting against outside threats. Laid down next to the actions of his ancestors, Dr. Candlewick's endeavors to help the unfortunate seems quite tame.

AGENDA: To further their own odd goals, theories, and obsessions—and always



to seek understanding of the causes of the family's decline, and perhaps one day to reverse it.

HOOKS: When the Candlewick Intelligencer publishes some dirty family secrets, it's clear that someone in the family has broken the cardinal rule that no one ever expected to be broken: Someone divulged family secrets *to the town*.

CANDLEWICK FAMILY RETAINERS

Converting the manor into a functioning home for the betterment of unwanted and unadoptable orphans required the addition of some new staff, but the old family retainers who served the Candlewick clan and its home did not welcome the newcomers wholeheartedly. They consider them in many ways to be interlopers, and remain an insular group who keeps things from the new staff almost as a matter of course.

AGENDA: To see to it that no Johnny Come Lately usurps the rightful place of one of the family's old servants. Part labor union, part snobbish schoolyard clique.

HOOKS: Those who've served the family for decades know many of its secrets. Persuading them to part with a few will be tricky, but perhaps worth a try.

CANDLEWICK TOWN COUNCIL

The Town Council is a group of seven elected citizens who handle issues related to town planning, business, and budget. The mayor has a seat on the council, and his is often the tiebreaking vote. In truth, it's a rubber-stamp machine for the mayor. The elections are always a choice between a flunky or a flunky, so the mayor always maintains his control.

AGENDA: To maintain the genteel corruption that is the Candlewick status quo. Most depend on bribes as a regular source of their income and would be in financial hardship without them. So they work to keep themselves in power, and keep Candlewick Township mollified with things like the First Annual Hot Air Balloon Festival.

HOOKS: Were a genuinely independent councilman to be elected, it could throw Candlewick Township politics into chaos and mark that councilor out as an enemy of the mayor and his block. Things would then get ugly.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The collusion of Candlewick Township's business interests is called the Chamber of Commerce. They gather to further their protectionist agenda, destabilize organized labor, and destroy out-of-town competition—all under the auspices of "encouraging economic development." The Chamber isn't a law enforcement or regulatory body, so it can't officially sanction anyone, but it has its ways of making sure all the business interests in Candlewick Vale play ball.

AGENDA: To protect its members from the ravages of true commerce and free markets by keeping out-of-town business from taking hold and preventing local competition for its members.

HOOKS: Someone the orphans know and like is about to go into business,

opening an establishment which at least partially overlaps with an existing business. The Chamber swings into action to prevent it, or impose limits on how they can do business. If they resist the Chamber's subtle intimidation and blackballing (or worse, do well despite it), then the Chamber might step things up. While they won't allow someone from outside the Vale to open a grocery store, they're more than happy to hire thugs from outside to beat people up or burn things down.

THE FISHERMAN'S ASSOCIATION

The trade association which represents the fishermen, whose cottages sprout like mushrooms along the Eastern mouth of the Bent Stick. The FA has a long tradition of harsh controls on catches and fish prices, efforts to ensure a consistent price and consistent demand. Its membership also has an equally long history of subverting and circumventing the rules of the FA in order to catch more fish and sell them for lower rates. This is perhaps why the Fisherman's Association has such HUGE managing officers who carry such BIG sticks. Getting caught busting the catch, or underselling FA rates, is a good way to find out how it feels to get punched in the stomach until you throw up.

AGENDA: To protect the profits of Candlewick Vale's fishermen, whether they like it or not.

HOOKS: How did the orphans come to be in the possession of seven hundred pounds of greasyhead and smelt? And how did these very large men get the idea in their heads that the orphans were somehow operating their own illicit fishing boat, or buying from an illicit non-FA source?

GARDENER'S ASSOCIATION

A group of avid gardeners who gather to discuss techniques, new varieties, and the gardening standards and guidelines for the coming growing season. Gardens and flower beds which don't meet the published guidelines are subject to replanting or removal, at the association's discretion.

AGENDA: To keep Candlewick Township looking beautiful, coordinated, neat, and tidy. And to crush those who think they know better how their gardens should look.

HOOKS: The Gardener's Association has no influence at Candlewick Manor, but during a lesson on crops and the economics of food production the teacher assigns the creation of a viable vegetable garden to the orphans, with the requirement that they produce saleable produce. Almost immediately, they'll run afoul of the GA's inspections and standards.

GONNOMAN MILL

Gonnoman Mill turns the wool of Candlewick's signature sheep, the BlueFace Rumderand, into thread, which it weaves into high quality wool broadcloth which is cut into tiny circles and used to pad the lens cases for high-quality scientific telescopes. The mill also produces a limited line of dyed cloth for local sale. It employs dozens, and its employee-funded co-op buys almost all the wool it produces in the Vale.



AGENDA: To maintain its total control over the Candlewick wool trade, and prevent local ranchers from realizing it pays a fraction of what the wool would be worth outside the Vale.

HOOKS: Internal memos detailing the truth of the Mill's buying practices come into the hands of certain orphans, who now have a choice to make. If the truth were to get out, it could spell the end of the mill, or it could force them to pay a proper rate for the wool they use. Or, it could cause the mill's owner and management to do some quite extraordinarily horrible things to keep the word from getting out.

LADIES' SUNSHINE VOLUNTEER CLUB

A group of Candlewick's womenfolk who gather to help those in need, take meals to the elderly, and assist the poor with as little condescension as possible.

AGENDA: To do good works, especially when the newspaper is on hand.

HOOKS: The plight of the orphans will initially be irresistible for a Sunshiner. They'll drown the orphans in gift baskets and coupons for free haircuts. When they realize that the orphans are not the shiny, happy, adorably-cute waifs they had imagined, but rather the hard-to-love and excessively creepy types, then they might get vindictive about all the time they wasted being nice.

MASONIC BROTHERHOOD LODGE #479

Back in the day, the Lodge was a power in the town. Now it's a place for bigots without influence to come and complain about the power they used to have.

AGENDA: To reestablish the Masonic Brotherhood as an influential force in the community, and to persecute the "gypsies" who've recently come to town.

HOOKS: Unknown to most of its current membership, Lodge #479 is sitting on an occult arsenal. Hidden in its rituals are powerful mystical workings which only function for those with absolute faith in the Masonic Brotherhood, or any order or cult or Klan that were to adopt the rituals.

OUR LADY OF THE HEIGHTS

The more orthodox branch of the church gathers at Our Lady of the Heights, this association includes some of Candlewick Vale's most wealthy and most poor residents, and attendance is always impressive. The priest who officiates here (page 61) is compelling and unnaturally charming. Some members of the congregation drop by between services and confession, just to help out around the church and residence, especially when Father O'Magill takes off his shirt when splitting firewood.

AGENDA: Is it possible? A Candlewick association whose true agenda matches its official one? Well, it *seems* so, anyhow. Our Lady of the Heights is concerned with providing fellowship, support and charity, and furthering the doctrine of the church. It does pretty well on the first three scores.

HOOKS: Is Father O'Magill a priest first or a man? Rumors occasionally circulate that his flesh might rule his spirit, at least where certain of the congregation are concerned; but nothing is ever proven, and he's too well liked for the rumors to

be vicious. Were those rumors to prove true, and prove true to the wrong person, the Father could find himself in the power of a villain who could demand indulgences and favors only a priest could deliver. Those who respect O'Magill, who've benefited from his kindness or sage advice, might find they have the strength to act when the Father is too bound by his faith and oaths to do so.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sheriff Toulouse's private fiefdom. Within the confines of his mandate, he can do as he pleases, and what he pleases to do is play cowboy.

AGENDA: To keep the peace. Upholding the law comes distant second. And justice trails so far back it's about to be disqualified from the race entirely. The Sheriff's Office makes sure the right people aren't bothered, that the wrong people are leaned on, and nothing scandalous reaches the newspaper.

HOOKS: Ending up on the sheriff's list of undesirables means a world of trouble. Getting off of it either involves doing something amazing (and public) for the town and the mayor, or getting something so damning on Toulouse that he'll back off.

TOWN WATCH

In some places those who poke into other people's business, watch them with binoculars and track their movements are called "busybodies" at best, "creepy stalkers" at worst. In Candlewick, they're called "members of the Town Watch." The Watch's members take notes and harass the sheriff with spurious complaints. They've gotten the idea that the town is suffering a baleful crime wave, and they're the only citizens with the guts and drive to do anything about it.

AGENDA: Watch! Be vigilant! Take copious notes! Especially of anyone *acting strange*.

HOOKS: The Watch tends to attract kooks, but until now it has never attracted a vigilante. Someone is striking out at the Watch's frequent targets for complaint, inflicting ironic punishments like a nighttime avenger of petty crime. The boy who wrote his name upon a downtown wall was himself found bound and gagged, with "Vandal!" written all over him. The man who threw down his cigarette butt and started a small fire on the public green space came out to find his own lawn ablaze. Troublesome orphans might have something to fear from the Candlewick Avenger.

TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION

An elected board of citizens charged with ensuring the township's school prepares its students properly for the responsibilities and duties of adult Candlewick citizens. Also, with making sure the curriculum doesn't put any funny ideas in their heads about bucking the system or questioning authority.

The Board proposed a ban on the teaching of a lesson on gravity because "The notion that *things just fall* is antithetical to the essential truth of our ordered and purposeful universe, in which the Divine is obvious in all its complexity." The "Theory of Intelligent Falling" was a compromise between those who wanted a religious message to explain gravity's function and those who were too shocked at the idiocy of it all to put up a proper argument.



AGENDA: To prepare the children of Candlewick for the rigors of citizenship. In other words, to toe the line, not ask questions, do what they're told, and accept the capricious dictates of those with power. Anything else is insubordinate nonsense.

HOOKS: Teachers suffering the dictates of the Board find ways to circumvent them here and there, introducing students to literature and ideas the Board would forbid if it bothered to actually read what the students were assigned. The teachers make kids love to learn by making learning feel like breaking the rules and rebelling. There's no way that could possibly have any unforeseen repercussions. . . .

UNITED CHURCH OF THE SAVIOR

The congregation which gathers in the building of the same name began as a revelatory movement following the ecstatic visions of their founder. It has become tamer since then. Less concerned with bringing the Good News and turning souls for the Savior, the congregation is now more involved in raising money to patch the sanctuary roof and addressing the concerns of its more sensitive members about "that *loud and upsetting* sort of preaching". If the founder could see it now, he'd rear up from his grave and preach a fiery sermon from rotting lips.

AGENDA: Ostensibly to spread the Word and save souls, but in truth nobody in the congregation is especially interested in that sort of thing. The church is a place to come on Sundays which doesn't intrude into the rest of their lives. Who wants to be troubled with morality and the state of the eternal soul when trying to screw a few more hours of labor out of exhausted, overworked and underpaid employees?

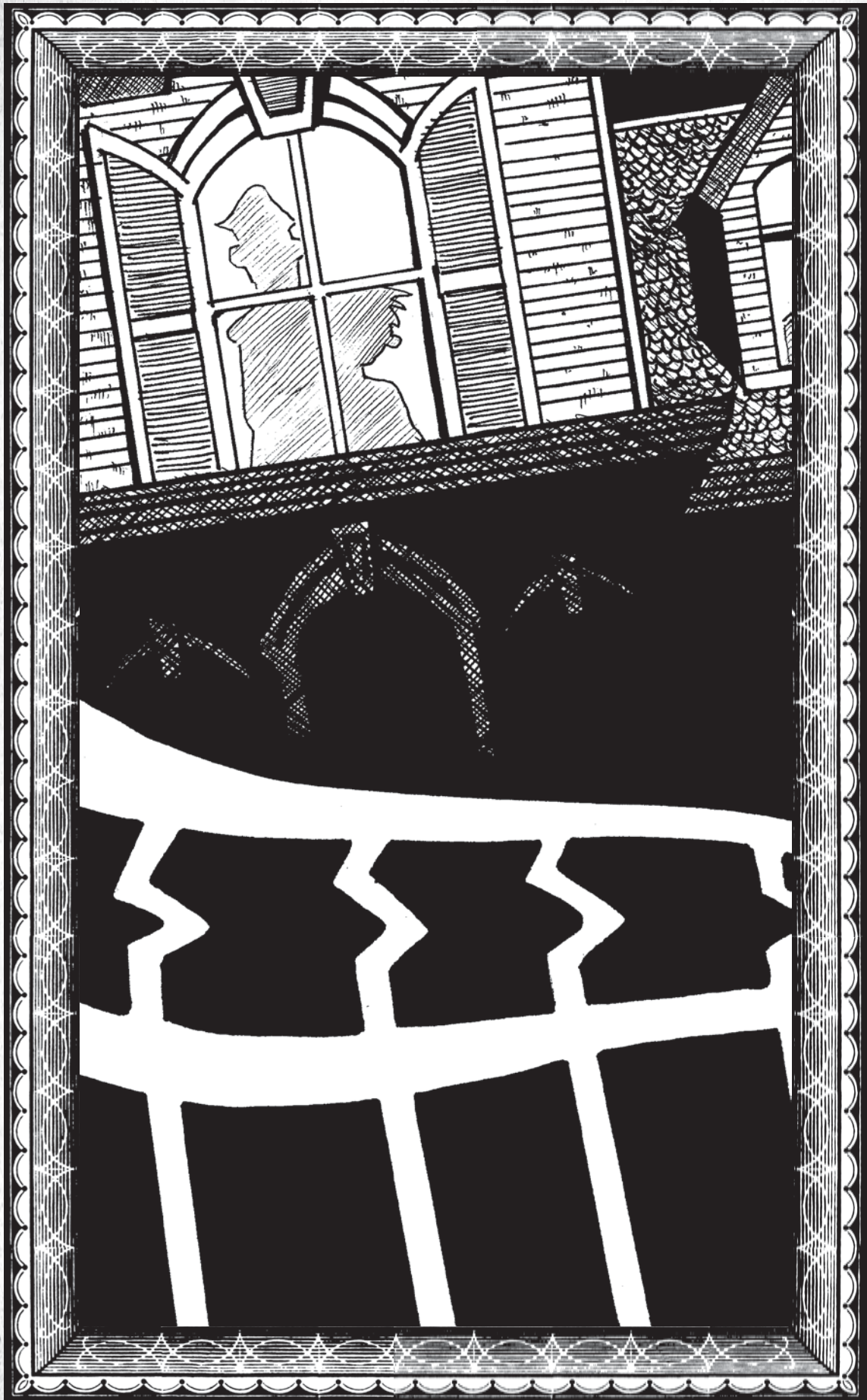
HOOKS: When the church's milquetoast reverend (page 49) decides to take a sabbatical to polish up his Aramaic, the junior preacher who takes over brings some of the fire back into the place, and the congregants are torn, compelled, and agitated by his hypnotic oration. Some of the things he preaches seem fairly Old Testament, even by the standards of the Old Testament, especially as they relate to what one must do with witches—and creepy orphans who might as well be witches.

UNITED WORKERS LOCAL #126

Candlewick's beleaguered United Workers Local is a stunted shrub: tough, tenacious, and hard to kill, but small and scrawny from all the times its been stomped on. Trying to organize in Candlewick Vale has proven problematic, what with all the forces of officialdom and industry allied against it. Yet the Local endures. Ironically, the policies of the Chamber of Commerce to reduce competition have benefited the Local somewhat. There's not a huge workforce in Candlewick, so striking workers are hard to replace with scabs. Unfortunately, there never seems to be any shortage of thugs willing to work a hard day giving strikers some real scabs of their own.

AGENDA: To organize the workers of Candlewick Vale around a platform of safe working conditions, fair pay, and collective bargaining.

HOOKS: An orphan getting a part-time job might suddenly find she has to make a tough choice: join the United Workers and cough up a chunk of her tiny paycheck for the promise of possible benefits in future (and possible retribution from her boss), or ignore principle and allow the corrupt system to perpetuate.



PLACES

CHAPTER THE FIFTH

Candlewick Vale contains town, country, hills, forests, mountains, sea cliffs, wharfs—lots of different places, each with its attractions and dangers. These are described here, and broken out roughly by the geographic area they are found within. For example, the first section details the Candlewick Estates area and the places found within it. The areas have a general description, but the places have a more detailed breakdown.

COLOR includes riffy sensory details and motifs to use in descriptions, when establishing mood or creating a sense of place. HOOKS are things which can drive an adventure, spur a mystery, or get the orphans in trouble in the place.

CANDLEWICK ESTATES

The Estates sit where the hills are deciding to become mountains, rugged and unforgiving terrain. Cedwick Candlewick, the ancestor of the line who built the house, chose the location of his grand home because, “The place spoke to me in a voice from elder time, from the depths of history, and promised wonders and fortune for all my issue.”

In Cedwick’s days the estates covered the whole Vale, but the promises he heard were not entirely true. His family has been in a slow decline ever since, and more and more of the Vale was sold off until the estates are just a small portion of the whole. The estates have fallen into a sad state, but of late Dr. Candlewick has invested a fair bit of the family’s remaining fortune into opening his Home for the Unfortunate and Unloved, and the estates have seen some improvement.

Here are some of the places in the Candlewick Estates.

CANDLEWICK MANOR

A great gothic pile, suffering the excesses of a grim and romantic architect. Candlewick Manor is a huge, sprawling house, which if viewed from the air resembles a stumpy crucifix. Perhaps coincidentally, the patterns of moss and lichen on the roof slates bear an uncanny resemblance to a crucified dwarf Savior. The larger parts of the manor, the arms and foot of the crucifix, if you will, have been converted over to house the Home for the Unfortunate and Unloved, Dr. Candlewick's passionate project. The last portion of the house remains closed, and reserved for the family. The manor is overgrown with ivy, and some of its floors list at slight angles, and it never seems to have the same number of windows when you count one day to the next.

COLOR: The clatter of something scurrying on the slate roof, the caw of ravens which roost in the gothic embellishments, and incongruously, the sound of children playing, and of laughter.

HOOKS: Is there something to the Manor's distinctive architecture other than being a victim of the times?

PRIVATE WING

Locked in the back section of the manor is the Candlewick family's private quarters. Behind the locked double doors, the house is crammed with all the things which had before been spread throughout the house: family heirlooms, relics, weird paintings, and the bedrooms of the family. The area is strictly off-limits to orphans, but one can find almost anything there.

COLOR: The whir and click of a mysterious clockwork device. The staring painted eyes of generations of Candlewicks. The smells of strange incense. Piles of books in unknown languages. Strains of weird, lilting harp music. Careworn carpets, and casually tossed artifacts of obvious antiquity and price.

HOOKS: After wandering in through accidentally open doors, the orphans get locked in the Private Wing. They have to then navigate through and escape before being discovered.

LIBRARY

The famous library of the Candlewicks fills a huge central space in the manor. It is three stories tall, with brass-railed balconies lined with books. Wrought-iron spiral stairs link the floors. Ladders on tracks allow access to the topmost volumes. The roof is a great skylight, though somewhat obscured with leaves and green ick, which gives the library an otherworldly glow, like it were underwater. There are thousands of unique and rare books in the Library, dealing with almost any subject imaginable, organized by an arcane and obscure cataloging method.

COLOR: The scent of old paper. The green light from above. The rustle of pages turning, even when you're alone. The skreekeek of a ladder on well worn tracks. The

cool smoothness of a brass rail underhand. Deep, comfortable chairs, stained glass reading lamps, and trays filled with ancient cigar ash which is not to be disturbed.

HOOKS: The library is a stopping-off point on many adventures for research. If the pen is mightier than the sword, then the library is a great and terrible armory. There are also books in the library to be found by foolhardy orphans which contain secrets and insights no sane mind should bear.

CELLARS

Candlewick House has wine cellars, root cellars, storage cellars and a huge cistern. It was built (for reasons known only to Cedwick Candlewick) atop the ruins of an old abbey, and the crypts and ossuaries are still down there, too. The cellars connect here and there to underground passages, caves, and down deep, even the Maze. There's no telling what lives down there, and what secrets have been hidden.

COLOR: All the flavors of darkness, the black heavy darkness, the cold cloying darkness, the sparkly hallucinogenic darkness you find after being without sight for too long. The weird sounds of scuttling and chattering you *hope* is rats. The squeak of bats. The distant white noise of water. The sound of your own breathing, impossibly loud.

HOOKS: The cellars are every dungeon and haunted horror movie basement in one. They're deliciously scary, and promise adventure and secrets to creepy orphans. Down in the cellars you can find privacy, bottles of priceless wine, the bones of dead saints, or secret passages and tunnels to who knows where.

EAST WING DORMITORY

The lichen savior's left arm lies across the roof of the East Wing, and within it, the East Wing Dormitory is housed. The wing's rooms have been converted over so each orphan can have his or her own space. Dr. Candlewick was very particular about each of his charges having a personal place to call their own, and to do with as they wished. Because the East Wing gets the best sun in the morning, shining seasonally from directly over the ocean, or slanting through the peaks, it has many windows for catching the warmth, and heavy curtains for holding it in the winter when the sun has passed on. It smells of the breezes from the sea, and of the Childalost Forest through which those breezes blow. East Wing is warm and open, the rooms tall ceilinged, and the colors bright. Mrs. Pith, the East Wing housekeeper whistles. All the time. It's a truly hateful place for the grimmer of Dr. Candlewick's guests.

COLOR: Bright rays of morning sun, dancing with dustmotes. Spring colors. Whistling. Early rising. Birdsong. It is *hell*.

HOOKS: Assigned rooms in the bright, shiny wing, the orphans must connive some way to escape its oppressive, manic cheeriness.

WEST WING DORMITORY

Like the East Wing, the west is given over to housing orphans, but is much more in keeping with the spirit of tragedy many of them have come to expect from life. Its floors are uneven, the colors dark and brooding, and it gets no sun until midday and evening, when the light is sullen and worn out. The West Wing still houses the Candlewick Collection, art and statuary of *peculiar* description. Started by Cedwick Candlewick, and expanded by his more eccentric descendants, the collection is no doubt priceless, but still more unsettling than illuminating. If beauty is truth and truth beauty, then what truth is revealed by a statue of a horse headed man eating a gorily realistic bowl of baby mice?

COLOR: Deep, somber colors favoring the fall pallet of reds and oranges and sepia. The creak of the uneven floor. The constant moan and thump of an old structure settling. Every nook, crevice, and wall hung or inhabited by a bizarre and grotesque object d'art: surreal paintings of dreams and nightmares, statues so realistic and contorted they seem to writhe in the corner of your eye. Every shadow is longer and more threatening.

HOOKS: Assigned to the oppressive and cold wing, the orphans must connive some way to escape to the bright and well-lit East Wing Dormitory.

DINING HALL

The old ballroom has been converted into the Home for the Unfortunate and Unloved's dining hall. The complex parquet floor has been covered with protective wood panels, and long tables fill the old dance area. The orchestra area has been converted to house the serving line, and an elevator was added to allow easy access to the kitchens.

Even with the transmutation from golden luxury to leaden practicality, the Hall is still lavish. The arched ceiling is hung with an enormous chandelier, and painted with a complex mural depicting the history of Earth from its cataclysmic birth, through the rise of life, and finally to the red glare of its death inside the swollen, hungry red sun.

Looking closely at this will reveal some anomalies which don't appear in any reputable textbook. The arrival of weird things from space, a war amongst the gods, dinosaur armies and reptile kings—but there is so much detail, that one would have to climb up *very* high to see it clearly.

The food is abundant and exotic. Dr. Candlewick believes a diverse and experienced palate is vital for mental and physical well-being. Though, sometimes it is wise not to examine it too closely, or ask too many questions about the number of legs the entrée possessed when alive,

COLOR: The echo of all activity below, thanks to the room's marvelous acoustics. The exotic scent of the day's meal, whatever it might be. Knives and forks at work, clicking and scraping. The chatter of people at their leisure. The eye-drawing colors of the painted ceiling, hinting at insights great and terrible.

HOOKS: The promise of a midnight snack might lure an orphan into the Dining Hall, perhaps hoping to use the elevator down to the kitchens (rather than use the rickety



old stairs), and by moonlight the mural of Earth's history seems clearer, almost alive. Stare too long, and you'll find yourself drawn into an episode from the world's savage past, or its terrible future.

CHAPEL

Surprisingly humble, given the grand stature of much of the House, the old family chapel is nestled in between the library and the dining hall, its door almost invisible against the dark paneling of the manor's entranceway. The place is somber and dark, with two rows of pews before a simple altar on raised stone platform. It can hold most of the staff and residents of the house, but it would mean a sardine's shoulder room for everyone.

It's mostly disused these days, being opened and aired only for funerals, and much less frequently, weddings and christenings. To a keen observer, it's unusual that there are no actual religious symbols here. It's impossible to tell the chapel's ecclesiastical orientation.

COLOR: The somber atmosphere seems to dampen sound. Even the sounds from the rest of the house hardly intrude. Old, worn wooden pews, and smooth spots where knees have knelt and hands have clasped. In alcoves along the walls, behind curtains, the wax death-masks of the Candlewick Line are hidden. They are revealed and candlelit from within at funerals and special family observances, so the pale yellow faces seem to stare and smirk at the proceedings.

HOOKS: The chapel contains hints about the Candlewick family's obscure origins. Perhaps some reliquary might be found under the altar, or one of the death masks pilfered to provide a good facial reference. And there's no telling what else might be hidden here—signs of true religious affiliation, for example.

INFIRMARY

Below stairs, warmed by the kitchen, the infirmary is getting more work than it has in decades. With so many children, so often clumsy, sickly or undernourished, the rickety stairs have seen a lot of traffic. The infirmary is a small room, windowless but well lit, with curtained-off cots and an attached examination room. Bottles of medicine clutter the shelves alongside jars of sweets, bandages and tongue depressors. There's a skeleton in the corner, eyecharts on the walls, and the stinging smell of antiseptic.

COLOR: The brightness of the examining room, and the dim coolness of the cots. The smell of antiseptic, cinnamon, and the smells of cooking from the kitchens. The cluck and soothing of the nurse tending a scrape or bump. Occasionally, during flu season, there is barfing.

HOOKS: How to soothe a savage beast? Laudanum is a good choice, and there's some in the infirmary under careful lock and key. Likewise, if you need to bandage a wound or stop bleeding, or get something for the pain of a bad knock on the noggin, *and* you need to keep it secret, then skulking into the infirmary might be the only way. But then there are the odd pills the nurse sometimes gives certain orphans, pills to help them with their "regular complaints". What's she doing? Mind control drugs from the depths of the Amazon? Better find out.

STABLE YARDS

The old stables behind the main house had fallen into disrepair until they were reclaimed and turned into an automotive garage by Dr. Candlewick's father. Now the stables house the family's cars, including the big rickety bus that carries the orphans down to the township for school and brings them back again. They also contain an impressive machine shop, and receive monthly deliveries of petrol for the big tank of fuel behind the stables.

COLOR: The ping and pop of cooling engines. The smell of exhaust and oil. A dozen cars, trucks, and motorcycles, some half assembled, others covered over with tarps. Machines and parts everywhere.

HOOKS: Need to get somewhere fast? Need a car? Well, where's an unfortunate orphan likely to find one? The Stable Yards might also be a destination for orphans with a knack for machines, or those looking to mix Vyacheslav Molotov's favorite drink.

CEMETERY

Down a winding trail behind the house, in an overgrown meadow, the Candlewick Family Cemetery can be found, badly in need of some attention. Graves are grown over with ivy, and flowers are choked out by briar. It is an altogether bleak place, which for some reason Dr. Candlewick has dictated shall receive no attention from the house staff. "Let it fall to ruin, and perhaps to dust. I care nothing for preserving those names and memories." Generations of Candlewicks are buried here, including all the family's secrets. Children dead at birth, conjoined and sharing a grave forever. Murdered wives. Consumptive sons. Black sheep and misfits. The crypts and markers are all as baroque and gothic as the house itself, but Dr. Candlewick has declared that he shall be cremated, so as to never stand with these folk again. It's a quiet place, though, and in the summer the briars are revealed as blackberry vines. To those of poetical temperament, it might be quite relaxing.

COLOR: Weatherworn and mossy gravestones with obscured names. The names which can be read are all voluptuous. Mariana Veranda Candlewick. Sol Sebastian Candlewick. Belantine Ruth Candlewick. They seem so lonely, without anyone to remember them.

HOOKS: Any mystery or dirty secret haunting the Candlewick the family will eventually lead intrepid investigators here, to the family burial ground. And the place being what it is, there's no telling what might *come up* when you start digging around. The cemetery is also a good place to get away, have a secret meeting, or stage an arcane ritual to contact the netherworld.

SERVANT'S COTTAGES

Down the back lane from the stables are the old servant's cottages. A dozen were built along with the manor. Cedwick's wife, Lucretia Candlewick, said, "I'll not have the thieving, loutish *help* sleeping under the same roof as I!" Only eight of the cottages are in use now. One burned in an awful tragedy decades ago. Another's roof collapsed. Two sit empty. Nobody will talk about why. The others are inhab-

ited by the manor's remaining staff, and most have been extensively personalized and renovated, with paint, gardens, solariums, and in one case, a small observatory with telescope. It has become a little community. It's where all the staff of Candlewick come to be themselves and relax.

COLOR: A little slice of normality in an often uncertain world. The Cottages are a place where people have carved out a little bit of peace for themselves. The personalities of the residents are written on the cottages and their voices have a different timbre here, easier, more at home.

HOOKS: While they tend to guard their personal space, an invitation into the cottage of a Candlewick staff member is the chance to really see them and what they're like. Each cottage reflects its occupant, and just peeking in the windows gives more insight than months of casual contact. And some residents might have things they'd want kept private.

GROUNDKEEPER'S SHACK

Almost a small barn, the shack is both home and workshop for Groundskeeper Grooner. He has a small room upstairs in the loft where he sleeps and has his personal area and sitting room. Down in the main area, it's a chaos of tools and lumber, and poisons, and pest traps, and a broken-down mechanical mowing machine. The shack is located on the edge of the Childalost Forest, and is attached to the old kennels, which have been turned into storage. No telling what's been chucked in there.

COLOR: Dusty darkness. The smell of lawn clippings, of tilled earth, of leaf mold, and of mushrooms (Grooner grows them under the workbench). When it's hot, the smell from the compost heap seeps in. When it's cold, the wind whistles through the wallboards, and there's a hot kettle boiling upstairs, and tin cups full of powerful tea. There's also an oppressive sense of loss here, as if hearts have been broken and the boards and tools have soaked up the sorrow.

HOOKS: If anyone knows the secrets of Candlewick, it is Grooner. He keeps the old plans and blueprints for the gardens and landscaping in his little sitting room in the loft, and has thick notebooks filled with observations on every aspect of the estate's lands, wildlife, and gardens even in their currently sad state. And under the dust and rubbish down in the shack, there is that heavy trap door in the planked floor with the iron ring and enormous hinges. Where might that lead?

BOOTLEGGERS' CAVES

The hill upon which Candlewick Manor sits is an anthill of tunnels, cellars, and old mineworks, and here and there, stranger things. They say there are tunnels which run all the way out to the Widowsrun and the Stonecut Stair. They say all kinds of things, but what's certain is that at some point, there was a prodigious distillery down in the catacombs beneath the house big enough to turn thousands of pounds of rye into whiskey, whiskey worth a fortune during the lean prohibition years.

From there, winding out to the ocean and secret midnight rumboats, a railed track led which could carry barrels of hooch fast as a steam train. And in the other direction,

down the hill, to a hidden cavern with a disguised mouth, where the booze was loaded into fast cars for special deliveries. Here, NineFinger Poe made his reputation as the fastest and craziest bootlegger on the coast. And here, Poe met his end at the hands of Little Jackie Thomas' violin-case-carrying torpedoes.

COLOR: Stacked barrels of high-grade hooch, and great copper vessels for cooking and distilling the alcohol, all covered in thick spider webs and dust.

HOOKS: Finding the entrances to the Bootlegger's Caves gives orphans a secret, fast, safe—well, OK, not *safe*, but really cool route from Candlewick House down to a hidden entrance, where a back road leads away and tracks lead to the sea cliffs. There's also the matter of the barrels of leftover booze. No telling what you could do with a few thousand gallons of high-grade aged rye, or what'll happen if gangsters come looking to start up the operation again. It does raise some questions of how this came to be under Candlewick Manor, and how the family was involved in it.

CANDLEWICK TOWNSHIP

The charming little village of Candlewick Township lies down in the valley, along the Bent Stick River. The residents are *very* particular about the name. It is not "Candlewick". It's *always* "Candlewick Township". They want to be very clear when distinguishing it from the estate, or the vale itself. Attempts have been made to have the name officially changed (one year, "Winding Riverbrook Village" almost won a referendum, but was defeated when the campaign was found to have been funded by the KKK, or so it was made to seem). But it remains Candlewick Township, and as much as the good folk of the town would like to forget it, they owe the name and the town to the Candlewick Family, and its fortunes and misfortunes.

The town is picturesque. Cobbled streets, flower beds, seasonal banners and flags. The Chamber of Commerce sees to it that all the businesses keep up a good appearance. It is *bad* if they don't. Bad for them. Most folks in town are very keen on keeping it quiet, respectable, prosperous, and with keeping the damned property taxes low. This new infusion of students to the local school has caused *consternation* among Candlewick's first citizens. Will their taxes be paying for the education of these shiftless unwanted wretches?

The main streets of the town are the north-south Elder Avenue and the east-west Old Run Road. Crossing the square in the center changes how people reference their address, "East Old Run Rd" or "West Old Run Rd." Off these main streets is a warren of roads which grew up organically, as cow paths and walking trails were paved or graveled, and houses built. Most of Candlewick Township's residents live within an easy walk of the square.

CAPITAL BUILDING AND OFFICES

The main street of Candlewick Township was laid out according to a precise design in a perfect cross, with arms of equal length. Resting at the eastern terminus of Old Run Road are the capital building and town offices. The road circles around the



building before running out of town, and winding along the river to the Shore. The capital houses the mayor's office, the two courtrooms (one for criminal one for civil cases, both seen by the same judge), the town administration, comptroller, and public works.

The building was rebuilt quite recently after a major fire, and the style changed radically. Gone is the gothic influence which once made it look like the cousin to Candlewick Manor. It was rebuilt with a fierce modernity, all clean lines and stylized steel statuary. If it were a thousand feet tall in a major city, it would be a wonder of Art Deco design, but here in Candlewick, stumpy and squat, it looks like the shoebox to a fashionable pair of ladies evening pumps. But, for whatever *entirely coincidental* reasons, when the building was rebuilt, it marked a dramatic downward turn in the power and influence of the Candlewick family, and the decline in their fortunes.

COLOR: The bustle of township business. The glare of deco statues like giant hood ornaments, with plaques saying they represent such things as *Industry! Ingenuity! Community!* The pink and blue of the imported marble the building is built from not even the stone is native to the Vale.

HOOKS: The beating heart of Candlewick Township. If it were a dog's heart, it would be swarming with worms. The building's lines might be clean, but within, the administration is filthy old corruption, comfortable corruption. Most residents don't even notice it anymore. But a stranger, someone who didn't grow up with the bribes, the kickbacks and the selective enforcement of the law, might have a problem with the Candlewick system of government. Especially if she fell under its power. Candlewick law enforcement (both of them) takes a dim view on shenanigans by kids who're not from around these parts.

BROODENKINE MARKET

Located on the corner of East Old Run and North Elder, Broodenkine's is the township's only full-service grocer. Broodenkine's sells local produce, meats, and goods, as well as popular items such as cigarettes and feminine hygiene products. Mr. Broodenkine is a nervous, suspicious sort, and he hovers and twitters over his regulars while glaring at those he doesn't know. His store is full of convex mirrors so he can watch what goes on behind the shelves. He can afford to be difficult, as his is really the only place in town to buy the necessities.

COLOR: The cha-ching of the big brass mechanical cash register. Broodenkine's chirping voice, or his stabbing glare. Shelves stacked with perfectly ordered and aligned merchandise. The oppressed looks of Broodenkine's long-suffering clerks.

HOOKS: If Mr. Broodenkine won't sell you anything, then how do you get what you need? Five-finger discount? Or a crazy scheme involving disguises, or getting an older kid to buy stuff for you? And then there's basic curiosity. When someone skulks in, looks around to see no nosey kid is listening, leans close to Broodenkine and whispers "I'll have the *special*," and is then led back into the storeroom, well, who could refuse a challenge like that?

THE STAR AND CIRCLE

The more *earthy* of Candlewick Township's two public houses. The Star and Circle is by the river on South Elder, caters to a blue-collar crowd, and resembles a saloon or tavern. When the mines were turning shovelmen into fat cats, there were girls in the rooms upstairs whose affections were negotiable; but now that the mines have mostly played out, the town has tightened its belt, the girls are gone, and most of the rooms sit empty.

Downstairs, the mood is usually pretty solemn most of the time. The Star and Circle is justly famous for its stout beer brewed in house from grain grown in the Vale but most of the drinking is done in silence. Some evenings, it is so quiet you can hear the past Echoing out of the walnut paneling, hear the songs sung in bawdier days. It's a place that seems to be sleeping, just waiting to come to life again.

COLOR: The muted clink of glasses, and the smell of heavy pipe tobacco. The scents of brewing, and of fried fish and potatoes. No feeling of grimness or sadness, but of sleep. The place is like an old bear, sleeping through the winter.

HOOKS: Down in the cellars where the barrels of beer are kept, and the big brewing casks and vats rest, there's remnants of the old rowdy days, when Candlewick was a rougher place. Boxes of pictures, old newspaper articles, and hints at the town's past. While skulking or trying to swipe a beer barrel, these tantalizing hints could lead curious orphans into some fantastic trouble. As could puzzling out just what goes into the beer to make it so darned good.

FOUR GABLES HOUSE

Sitting at the top of North Elder, Four Gables House is a bright and airy public house, with a small taproom, garden café, and clean rooms filled frequently with the town's respectable guests and visitors. Four Gables is one of the town's social nexus points, and many of the town's associations have some or all of their meetings in its public rooms. Ironically, the uppercrust kin to the girls who once plied their services at the Star and Circle now work the Four Gables. Waitress, hostess, housekeeper, these uniforms frequently button up over some quite naughty undergarments. But it is all enormously respectable and quite discrete, part of Candlewick Township's genteel corruption.

COLOR: The clink of fine china. The chatter of Candlewick's good folk about their business. Fresh cut flowers. And ever watchful, the staff keeps an eye out for anything, *anyone*, who might disrupt the elegant repast. There's the sense here that if you can pay (after being billed discretely; can't let base commerce disrupt the atmosphere), you'll be taken care of. There's something of the geisha about the female staff.

HOOKS: Four Gables is a nest of vicious scandal waiting to escape. If these walls could talk, someone would have them killed to keep their secrets. Orphans are just the sort expressly unwelcome in Four Gables, which might actually be reason enough to put in an appearance.



BURNESHARPE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Opposite the capital, and ringed by the divided Old Run Road, is the Burnesharpe Comprehensive School, Candlewick Vale's only public education institution. The town is so small that classes often combine several grade levels into a single session, and it's expected that older children will assist younger children in their lessons.

The cruel geniuses who design such systems thought it amusing to establish a policy by which the grades of the older children reflected how well the younger children performed. Never has a surer recipe for Darwinian savagery ever been conceived.

The building itself is a cheery red (perhaps, like a British Redcoat's uniform, to hide the blood), and the classrooms are open and spacious. The playground is another Darwinian jungle, and navigating its hazards (not to mention the attentions of older kids) is a trial.

COLOR: Chalk dust, and the sound of blackboard writing. During recess, the laughter of children, and sometimes, the crying of children. The ringing of the bell. Teachers droning, teachers lecturing, teachers admonishing. And you, off to one side of it all, the outsider, the New Kid: "Where are your Mom and Dad? Are they dead?" You thought it was lonely being alone. It is worse being lonely surrounded by people.

HOOKS: Orphans get bussed down here five days a week, forced to mix with the town's little darlings, and slapped in the face over and over with how unfortunate and unloved they are. It's enough to make you do something crazy. Something with fire. Or with pilfered chocolate-flavored laxatives. Making friends might be an adventure, especially when they meet the parents of a new friend. More dangerous still would be having a crush, puppy love or, when the hormones start to rush, a secret romance.

CANDLEWICK TOWNSHIP LENDING LIBRARY

Candlewick Township's library is a recent addition to the town's public infrastructure, and is located next to the sheriff's office. The librarian, Madigabial Shusfinger, pursues grant funding tirelessly, but is torn between her moralism and her love of all things bookish. The library's collection is marvelous. Its Reserve Collection rivals the Candlewick family library, but less than thirty percent of the books she's acquired find their way into circulation. Ms. Shusfinger is more than willing to deny a patron a book if they fail to meet her standards, or she feels the book "might give them ideas."

COLOR: A forced quiet, filled with threat. Even footsteps sound too loud, breathing seems to roar, and the rustle of paper tears the air. Bright sodium electric lights drive back the shadows. The floors are kept immaculate, and some visitors remove their shoes before walking in. Shelves are precisely ordered, books arranged by the Falco-Brightgroom Catalog System.

HOOKS: After an unfortunate incident, the orphans need to replace a lost or destroyed volume in the Candlewick Manor library; but where to find such a rare book in a very short time? Upon gaining illicit entry into the Reserve Collection, what do the orphans find? Evidence that another sneak thief had only just quit the premises, looking some of the library's most valuable (and most puissant) tomes. And who gets caught and blamed for the whole thing?

OUR LADY OF THE HEIGHTS

Candlewick's orthodox church, Our Lady of the Heights claims roughly half the churchgoing population as members. It's a stately, steeped stone church located half a mile up North Elder Street, after it runs outside the town's proper limits, at the base of the foothills, and at the crossroads where they used to hang murderers and theater folk. There hasn't been a hanging there in a long time, and the church's resident priest discourages discussion of the place's grim past. The church's graveyard is fenced and well tended. Mass is held daily, confession from 1:00 to 5:00. And the Sunday homilies are so moving that Our Lady of the Heights sees a fair number of drop-ins who only come to hear Father Timothy O'Magill's masterful oration.

COLOR: The smell of incense and the hushed presence of the sacred. Gray stone without is broken with stunning stained glass windows which, if one examines them closely, don't seem to correspond to anything in the Bible. Not the conventional one, anyhow.

HOOKS: Could this place possibly be as *pure* as it seems? In a town so full of hidden sins, could a place this upstanding remain unsullied? After all, this is where people come to dump their transgressions. In old times, clearing the conscience of Candlewick would involve the slaughter of herds of animals; now a few words from Father O'Magill and some modest penance seem to suffice. Where do all the sins go? When they have been washed from the sinner's skin, where does it run off too? Good money says the hidden passage under the altar might reveal something about this.

UNITED CHURCH OF THE SAVIOR

Located across from the Star and Circle down by the river on South Elder. The United Church of the Savior once housed an *enthusiastic* congregation of believers, and the river saw regular use as a baptismal. The church is wooden, and white painted, with steeple and wooden pews, and frosted rather than stained glass. It hails from the same era as the Star and Circle, and was founded by an evangelical visionary who came to Candlewick chasing the dreams he said God sent to be his guides.

He set about saving the town's soul, whether it liked it or not. Since then the church has calmed down a fair bit, going in more for potlucks and raffles than for tent revivals and fire-and-brimstone preaching. The current pastor is extremely well educated, and preaches from a Greek edition of the Holy Book, but while he can speak seven languages fluently, he's boring in them all. Membership is dwindling. It would take something dramatic to light a fire under the congregation and Rev. Dick Cricken.

COLOR: The snores of congregants unable to stay awake through Cricken's droning and fumbling. The flutter of church programs used as fans. The groan of the old organ waking up, and the desultory cacophony of voices raised in halfhearted praise.

HOOKS: What would it take to fire up the United Church of the Savior and inspire Reverend Cricken to crusade against ungodliness and sin? How about a terrifying run-in with a creepy little orphan with unnatural hellspawn powers and demonic familiars? Yeah. You can see where this is going.



MASONIC INITIATES LODGE

Once, the Brotherhood of Masonic Initiates was a proud and influential society of upright and freethinking men. But somewhere along the line it became something else, more a society of workaday and priggish small-minded bigots. At least the Candlewick lodge suffered this fate. The Masonic Lodge was once where Candlewick's most influential citizens met to discuss town business away from the everyday rabble, but it's fallen out of fashion, and so the days of grand conspiracies and collusion have gone, as has the lodge's paint and, quite soon, its roof.

Located off South Elder, the Lodge is in a sad state. The upper floors where bachelor brothers could keep apartments have fallen into total disrepair and disuse. Only the main sitting room, with its big fireplace and old split-leather chairs, still sees use during the bimonthly meetings of the remaining brothers.

COLOR: The sad remnants of past glories. Faded photographs of groups of smiling, well-dressed men. Masonic banners and plaques, as well as symbols carved into the woodwork. The Lodge's Tools—ritual implements such as the Aprons, Compasses, Scales, Sextants, and Pendulums—are locked in a glass display case in the corner of the common room, dusty from disuse.

HOOKS: The Lodge may have fallen into decline, but there is still a certain influence. The legacy of the Lodge lives on from how it influenced such things as the town's layout and its building codes, and in its old records new links unimagined might be uncovered.

SHOEGRINDER'S HALL

The hall is a large public meeting space located just North of Broodenkine's on North Elder. It hosts dances, chicken dinners, senior citizen events, weddings, funeral receptions, and any other large gathering of the town citizens. The township's busy social scene sees the Hall dressed up for the holidays and for private occasions.

It is named for Mildred Shoegrinder, the wealthy octogenarian who saw the hall established and supported with bequests in her will. In another, less-discussed stipulation of her will, she made provisions to be buried under the foundations of the hall so she might "Hear above me the merriment and dancing feet my bequest made possible, that I may rest satisfied that I am remembered, and can rise when the trumpet blows to greet welcoming faces."

According to Candlewick legend, she was buried in a recessed chamber in the concrete foundation which was filled with dirt right up to the underside of the wooden dance floor, and in a coffin that locked and unlocked from within.

COLOR: The hall transforms with each season. It is all giant papier mâché eggs and bunnies for Easter, then it's pumpkins and witches for Halloween. It dresses in white for weddings, black for funerals, and motley for the annual Candlewick Masquerade. Yet, under it all, there's always the weird sense of being watched and judged, even in the bathrooms. It makes it hard to pee. It makes you want to say, "Quit staring at me, I'm trying to pee!" But if you say it too loudly, then people are really going to start wondering about you.

HOOKS: An invitation to an event at the hall might mean an orphan has arrived, being included in a major township social function. But there's likely to be an ulterior motive. Or, orphans might try and earn some pocket money working at an event, carrying trays of nibbles and trying to remain unseen, something they should be good at.

Whatever it takes to get them there, the falsely-festive atmosphere will certainly start to cloy and oppress, even if none of the locals seem to notice it. They say Ms. Shoegrinder is buried in the foundations of her hall, but *they* say all kinds of things. *They* lie like snakes. Who knows what's really down there? All it takes to uncover the truth is a pry bar for the floorboards and a shovel for the dirt.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Located adjacent to the capital building on the north side of East Old Run, like the capital's strong right hand, the sheriff's office is built like a small fortress, squat and intimidating. The offices in the front have glass windows, but the jail in the back has bars, and the exercise yard's fence is topped with barbed wire. The sheriff's big shiny black car, The Ranger, is always parked close to the building, well away from foot or motor traffic which might throw up grit or God forbid a stone to chip it.

The township is a place well tamed, so that the Sheriff's Office rarely sees new customers. The same half-dozen regulars come through the doors for all the regular offenses. Other crime by unexpected culprits, well, that's just unexpected, unthinkable. Not the way the town works. Folks who go committing crimes will find the Irritated Arm of the Law reaching for them.

COLOR: The sheriff leaning up against the building, striking a cowboy pose, and pretending to smoke a long cheroot. Deputy Packhammer hauling (sometimes literally) one of the usual suspects in for a night in the cooler. There are no birds anywhere near the Sheriff's Office. Pigeons won't land on the roof. Geese won't fly over it. Even after a rain, robins won't peck its flowerbeds and strip of well-manicured lawn. Wonder why?

HOOKS: There are pretty much three good solid ways to get hooked into the Sheriff's Office. One is in handcuffs. Another is (fruitlessly) trying to file a complaint. And a third is trying to bust someone out of the joint. You could do all three in the same outing.

CANDLEWICK BANK AND TRUST

Opposite the Sheriff's Office is the capital's advisor and vizier, its left hand. The Candlewick Bank and Trust has weathered robberies, recession, and the collapse of financial markets. It is the sole lending institution in Candlewick Vale, and someone reviewing its books would be shocked to see just how much of the town is in hock to the bank. It's a spider, and its web covers the whole vale. The building is exactly what people hope their bank to be: clean, well built, conservative and subdued. The interior is quiet, carpeted, and always cool.

The vault is huge, and the door impressively thick and studded with enormous locks.



The bank manager is ever present, ever watchful, and ever ready to head off trouble before it manifests. His office is soundproofed, and any screaming a customer facing foreclosure might feel inspired to indulge in won't disturb the customers outside. He has a special exit in his office as well, so they can be escorted from the building without a scene.

COLOR: The whisper of money being counted, or the jingle of coinage. The scent of money, oily, bitter. Bland faces in sharp, conservative suits. The bland, washed-out cheer of the tellers helping customers with their financial needs.

HOOKS: The vault is full of cash, but also safe-deposit boxes filled with secrets, oh, so many secrets. What might tempt an orphan to seek illegal access to that vault, and who (or what) might aid him? And in the morning, with the greatest crime in decades the talk of the town, what might result?

VALLEY LOWLANDS

Winding through the Vale, and defining its lowest point is the Bent Stick River, fed from creeks and streams running down out of the mountains, swollen with winter melt and spring rains, low and sullen during summer and fall dry spells. The township grew up on the river, as a waypoint for the mines and mills shipping their products downriver, to the waiting ships at the docks. That trade has mostly dried up, but the town still owes its existence to the Bent Stick (and, less obviously, to the Candlewick family's interests in the enterprises which grew because of it). But the town isn't the only thing in the Valley Lowlands.

BENT STICK RIVER

The river itself runs a fairly short distance, but builds from a mere crick at the vale's western boundary, growing quickly, and running clear over smooth rocks. By the time it reaches Candlewick Township, it's navigable by shallow draught boats and barges, but it loses its clarity from all the farm runoff and the town's semi-treated effluvia.



COLOR: The river changes for the worse when it meets the people of Candlewick, growing murky and picking up a certain *odor* in the summer. When it is young and innocent, just down from the mountains, it is bright and cold, running fast and care-free. It rushes past the township and carries filth and waste, and sometimes the dead, out and away to sea.

HOOKS: The Bent Stick is a frequent choice for adventurous field trips aboard canoes or inner tubes. It is considered very educational and bracing to be thrown into the freezing water when the boat hits a rock. Riding the Bent Stick all the way to the ocean is a good way to see the vale. It's also a good way to drown. Nobody talks about how many have died in the Stick, but some call it the Bent Styx, and when they say it you can hear the "X" at the end.

BITTERWOOD METALWORKS

When Mercer Standish bought the (then nameless) Ironmonger Bog from Old Man Snap, everyone said the newcomer was crazy. He came into town, bankroll fat from business elsewhere, and found a project to occupy himself in his semi-retirement. What none in the town suspected was that the bog was an *iron bog*, with natural processes resulting in the deposit of bog iron of remarkable quality in prodigious quantity, needing only a good dredging to bring the ore to the new metalworks built on the edge of the bog. The great coal-fired smelters produce iron ingots, which are floated down river to waiting cargo ships. Standish's retirement project is proving as profitable as his past ventures. The metalworks also make wrought iron, which is sold locally at a loss. The style for wrought-iron fences, gates, railings, and cabinet hardware has taken hold in the town, so every well-to-do house looks like an obsessive blacksmith lives there.

COLOR: The mucky smell of bogs blending with the reek of hot metal and smoke of the smelting fires. Clanging and banging. Heat rolling off the brick building in waves. Sweat-soaked workers taking a break, catching some cool air, or having, against all reason, a quick smoke outside.



HOOKS: The ironworks are tearing up the delicate balance of the bog something terrible, and at the pace the barges dredge the bog, it seems it can't possibly continue to disgorge so much iron. Yet month after month, it does. Almost as if something is *producing* the iron. Those who dwell in the bog think the truth most certainly won't be good news for Standish.

IRONMONGER BOG

A huge swath of the vale's eastern end, mostly south of the river, is given over to bogland. Misty and mucky, treacherous, too. Before Mercer Standish bought it, it was just called The Bogs, but when they were dragging it for the body of Bethany Vandirmine's boy, they came up with chunks of rusty iron, *bog iron*. And the bog was lousy with it. Somehow, Mercer Standish found this out, and using the acumen which made him his fortune, purchased the whole of the bog from Old Man Snap. The damage he's doing to the bog, dredging it for iron, is incalculable.

COLOR: The reek of decay and rot, of bubbling bog water, and the earthy smells of lichens and moss. At night, marsh lights flit and flirt. By day, biting flies and mosquitoes swarm. And always, the sense of presence, as if every black pool holds some being, watching, waiting, judging.

HOOKS: Becoming lost in the Ironmonger Bog is the stuff of nightmares and frequent parental threats. "You better eat that, or I'll take you to the bog and drop you in!" The mists that always seem to cling to it, even on bright days, makes it hard to see more than a hundred feet, and so it is possible to get terribly lost. The ground is treacherous, and hungers for human life. It's a deadly horrible place. What on earth could induce a wary orphan to enter? Cries of a friend, perhaps.

OLD MAN SNAP'S FARM

Formerly a quite large lowlands farm in the rich Eastern end of the valley, Old Man Snap's farm has fallen fallow, and Snap himself has taken ill, and is selling off chunks of his land to pay for his exorbitant medical expenses. The farm has been whittled down to a few acres of rich bottomland, which if farmed could produce two crops a year, it's so fertile. But Snap can't manage it himself, and his kids all left town years back, looking for something more interesting.

COLOR: Weedy fields, falling barns, and broken-down tractors. Old Man Snap's farm is clearly suffering hard times. Even the scarecrows are hanging their heads.

HOOKS: Old Man Snap hasn't got anyone left, and he's dying slow and alone. He grew up in Candlewick Vale, farmed his whole life, and had three sons to whom he promised the farm if they would stay. One went and joined the army, and promptly got killed. Another learned his figures, got married, and now keeps the books for a big company somewhere else. The third killed a man in a drunken brawl in some place Snap can't remember the name of anymore. None of them are coming home to take the farm and work it. But *somebody* should. Somebody. And then there's the matter of the Old Man's mysterious illness, which doesn't seem to get better, requiring him to sell off more and more of his land to the vale's rich and ambitious.

THE SHORE

As the valley opens like spread hands, it dips into the ocean, the right hand flat, the left with fingers curled up. The mountains north of the vale curve with the ocean, running northwards to create the dramatic Tearmark Cliffs against which the ocean beats and thrashes. To the south, around the Bent Stick's modest delta, the coast flattens out into a gentle shore. Here, along the river's mouth, and further south where the land creates a protective cove, Candlewick's still-vital fishing industry is based. Many enjoy their holidays at the seaside.

DOCKS

The Docks are a series of weatherworn piers, warehouses, and dry docks where Candlewick's small fishing fleet ties up and unloads. Some of the catch goes into Candlewick Vale (where fish is always cheaper than beef or chicken), but most waits for the big ships and the big fishing co-ops to buy up the catch, which waits in the refrigerated warehouses until pickup.

COLOR: Orphans are likely to learn a whole new profane vocabulary walking the Docks, as blasphemies and oaths and curses and slurs roll fluidly from the mouths of fishermen. The reek of gone-off fish. The squawk and caw of the gulls fighting over the gone-off fish. And the constant heave and slosh of the ocean.

HOOKS: If something is being brought into the vale or spirited away from it, then dollars to doughnut holes it'll be going out of the Docks on a fast midnight ship. Smugglers of all sorts might be coming and going constantly, creating a serious traffic problem on moonless nights. Being shanghaied aboard a passing freighter is also a real possibility, especially if someone from the township *helped* you aboard, perhaps while you were knocked unconscious.

THE QUEASY EEL

Every town needs a proper dive, and when the good folk of Candlewick Township want to go slumming and mix with low company, they dress down and skulk into the Queasy Eel. It is a dive of truly villainous proportions. It does the tradition of wharfside drinking establishments proud. It serves rough liquor to a rough crowd, and the furniture is all made of heavy thick oak, so when it is used to break someone's skull, it won't itself break. There's a sticky film on every surface—the bits that aren't slippery, bloody, or covered in sick, anyhow. Many a Candlewick lad “became a man” in the Queasy Eel after making the acquaintance of one of the feminine regulars and agreeing to her “walking about” price. For a certain category of Candlewick manhood, one's first social disease is considered quite a milestone. They call it “getting Eelbit.”

COLOR: So much color. The Queasy Eel has nothing *but* color. The lights are dim, the better NOT to see you with, my dear. The east-facing windows are smeared opaque. The place reeks of fishermen, vomit, and spilled rotgut. I could go on and on. The place is a *dump*. But that's part of its charm. And by “charm” I mean “train-wreck fascination.”

HOOKS: There's nowhere in the whole vale that you can meet and speak with someone in such perfect anonymity as at the Queasy Eel. Nobody there wants to acknowledge that they're there, so nobody will hassle you, lest you remember them. The regulars also might have some insight into someone the orphans are looking for—or they might actually be who the orphans are looking for.

FISHING BOATS

The regular fishing boats that make their home port in the Docks are a motley fleet of small dragnet vessels. There's no fishing company, so they're all independents, with the repair and paint reflecting the owner's success in the catch. They bob about along the docks, almost inviting some curious orphans to sneak out.

COLOR: Sea legs, and finding them. The reek of the fish hold, especially if the ice has melted out. Rusty metal fittings, winch cables, and piles of netting. The mementos and personal items of the crew, usually including grubby underwear thrown casually about.

HOOKS: When you have to get out to Killbyrne Island at 3 A.M., what are you going to do? I'll wager it *isn't* respecting someone's property rights.

KILLBYRNE ISLAND

Killbyrne would almost be a little fingerlike peninsula extending from the northern edge of the shore where it rises rapidly into the sea cliffs—but the violence of the waves undercut it eons ago, finally causing the last bridge of land to collapse into the hungry ocean. What remains is a rocky island with grottoes and culverts eaten away on its underside, which rises a hundred feet from the ocean. Tenacious trees have taken root in the cracks and crevices of the island, and hardy seaside grasses have smoothed its rough contours. Beneath the island, in the caves and hidden pools, local legend tells of a pirate ship run aground by its maddened and harried captain. Treasure always figures strongly into these legends. Generally, though, the island is home to gulls, midges, and daring young men trying to impress their ladyloves by climbing up from a boat at the base, to pluck one of the rare Killbyrne lilies from the rock and bracken.

COLOR: A testament to the ocean's relentless power, Killbyrne is the skeleton of an island, eaten away by the tides and wind-driven waves. Gulls roost and caw and coo. The wind blows constantly, making the grass and trees sigh, and the whistling wind through the weird caves blends with the ocean bursting through channels in the rock, to give the whole island a moaning voice.

HOOKS: Talk along the docks tells of pirates, desperate men who strike on moonless nights, raiding ships and stealing cargo, and escaping with nary a trace. In town it is considered so much foolishness, but a trip to the shore shows how much fear prevails. And in the night, one keen-eyed orphan might catch a glimpse of something on Killbyrne, a light like a campfire revealed in a gap amongst the windblown trees. Where better to hide, if you're a pirate, than on the island said to be the final resting place to a famous one?

THE WRECK OF THE SCOTTS MARIE

That legend of a wrecked pirate ship? That's what we call in the word business FORESHADOWING. There is indeed a pirate ship, run aground in one of the island's deep semi-submerged grottoes. Chased by the forces of the British and American navies, the notorious *Scotts Marie* ran before the storm with full sail. She dumped her water and then all but two of her guns to lighten the load.

But the heavy pursuers carried more sail, and were closing the gap when the *Scotts Marie's* savage captain saw an opportunity through his spyglass as he passed Killbyrne Island, a daring and possibly insane chance to evade escape and seemingly to vanish from the sea. Into the mouth of one of Killbyrne's caves, widened by low tide, the captain steered his ship against the screamed protests of his crew. The crack of his pistol silenced the opposition, and into the mouth of the cave the ship dashed. It lost its topmasts and broke its mainmasts, but came to rest in a cathedral cavern within the island, and then aground on a sandy bank, where the rising tide threw it higher and then receded to leave it dry and stranded. And to this day, the ship so remains.

COLOR: Light leaks into the *Scotts Marie's* tomb through cracks in the island, up through the water, and from the luminescent slimes and fungus growing on the worm-eaten wood itself. She's rotted, rusted, and broken, but is still clearly an old wooden sailing ship. She is strangely in far better shape than her age and the conditions of her burial would normally allow. In the crevices above, sea bats squeak and click. Across her decks and the sands weird crimson crabs scuttle. She smells of rot, gunpowder, and salted pork gone bad.

HOOKS: When running from the forces of Law and Retribution, the *Scotts Marie* dumped her water, her guns, her spares and her lumber but kept her treasure. Hidden about her, and in the sands she rests on, are seven heavy leather chests bound with rusted iron and filled with oilskin sacks of plunder: proper pirate booty, doubloons and pearls and rings, some still on the skeletal fingers that wore them before they were cut from their owners' hands.

Finding the treasure is the easy part. What to do with it afterwards is a much stickier wicket. It's enough loot to buy the morals of almost anyone in Candlewick, enough loot to make people forget their principles, their ideals, or their basic human kindness and sympathy.

SHINGLE BEACH

South of Killbyrne and the mouth of the Bent Stick, the coast flattens out and becomes a rocky beach. This stretch is under water with the tides, and hosts huge tidal pools filled with weird and exotic life. In areas with more gentle slopes, the stones have been worn down flat by the wave action, and are thrown up with a clattering when the waves come in strong. The place is named for these stones, called shingles locally. The Shingle Beach is a popular summer vacation spot for folk from all over the vale who come for the sun and the water.

COLOR: The clattering roar of the tide coming in, throwing the shingles all about. The exotic creatures lurking in tidal pools, like unfolding flowers, or lace, or fiery ribbon.



Sometimes a Medusa's Head jellyfish finds its way past the strong currents and come to rest in these pools, a great hazard to anyone caught in them. In the summer, bathers in folding chairs, children splashing, and the scent of tanning oils on the air. In colder, bleaker seasons, lonely folk walk, hunched in their wool coats, contemplating the end of all things, as the sea devours the land.

HOOKS: A day trip to the beach for science class or for recreation is a source of excitement and joy for normal children. But for poor unfortunate orphans of grimmer temperament and macabre inclination? Sun, fresh sea air, and revealing bathing costumes, blah; though, in a class outing, the slimy creatures in the tidal pools might certainly be interesting. But when a student goes missing or drowned? Caught in a gap in the rocks as the tide begins to come in? Swept out by a riptide? Or pushed down a cave by some vindictive little unloved foundling? Well, we know what the teacher is likely to believe.

TEARMARK CLIFFS

North of the Bent Stick's mouth and the shore, cliffs rise quickly upwards, and the rolling grassy foothills of the vale terminate dramatically in a sheer drop down hundreds of feet into the thrashing ocean. The cliffs are stained with streaks like tears by the water, which carries iron and other minerals down the worn face of the stone. The Tearmark Cliffs have the notorious reputation as the Vale's premier method of suicide, a practice romanticized in far too many soppy ballads and folk songs. It keeps giving people ideas.

It also spawned the dismissive expression, "Go scream it from the Tearmark!" which means something like, "Shut up with your complaining to me, and just go yell it at the ocean, or if you can't get over it, jump off, you horrible little man." The winds blowing off the ocean at this height are constant and quite strong, so carefully-barricaded meadows along the cliff's edge host the annual Candlewick Township Kite Festival.

WIDOW BOELEN'S COTTAGE

Perched atop the highest point along the Tearmark is Widow Boelen's cottage, a ramshackle old building with a sod roof and crooked stone chimney. The Widow has lived in this cottage for decades, and she spends every day doing the same thing: looking out to sea, looking out to sea. She has some means, and Broodenkine's makes weekly deliveries of food and necessities, but she's a mystery, clearly stricken with a tragedy nobody remembers, and left all alone in the world. The children of the vale say she's a witch who killed her husband with a spell and put his soul in a seagull, and she watches the sea because she fears the day when he returns.

COLOR: Wood smoke from the fire which burns every day of the year, from the coldest winter to the hottest summer. The rattle of dried fish hanging out on racks. The elderly goat, maaaaaing, and standing on the cottage's roof, nibbling the grass growing there. Windchimes of found objects: spoons, kettles, bits of bottle, bolts and screws ringing constantly. Sad singing. Perhaps that's only the wind.

HOOKS: What is the Widow's story? And what of the rumors that she keeps her murdered husband's hands and eyes in jars on her mantle? And where does her money come from? And is there really a secret cave under her cottage? And is she a witch? And did she really turn Celia Fambrius into a black cat last fall when she came with her father to deliver firewood, or is stupid Celia Fambrius lying? Again? And can you catch her in a lie this time so everyone will know she's a big fat liar?

SWALLOW'S WALK

Along a relatively level segment of the Tearmark, an ambitious showman a generation past decided to create the vale's only true tourist trap by taking already-breathtaking natural beauty and modifying it to make it more breathtaking. He sank huge girders deep into the cliff face, and built upon this support a concrete platform suspended at its corners by huge chains running up to the top of the cliff. Along the outside, he erected sturdy railings, but down the center portion, rather than a path of opaque concrete, he installed panels of thick glass so one might walk this path, and look downward, downward, downward to the crashing surf below, while the cliff swallows wheeled underfoot.

The billboards along the winding road to the shore read "Walk on Air at the Swallow's Walk!" After paying admission, one can walk upon the glass path, and then purchase commemorative thimbles, spoons, plates, tiepins, cufflinks, personal grooming kits, and shoes with stylized leather wings affixed to either side of the heel. While popular with out-of-town visitors (few and far between), most locals tire of the walk before their 13th birthday. As a result, the attraction has fallen into some disrepair. Mind your step, please move to the right. Please walk ONLY on the right.

COLOR: Wind, the sound of swallows, and constant vibration and wavering of the platform, the creek of the huge chains, and the streaks of rust staining the platform where it is pierced by rivets or iron braces. But the eye is drawn away from these things, and to the glass path, a hundred yards of terror.

HOOKS: New to town, the orphans might find the Swallow's Walk interesting (something that will mark them as "not from around here," as all the local kids have seen it and decided walking on glass three hundred feet from certain death is boring). The Walk is a place people meet for certain kinds of business: to exchange fat envelopes of dirty, dirty money, or to talk of things best heard only by the swallows, or things that are easier to discuss while staring out at the ocean rather than into the eyes of your confidant. A group of orphans stumbling blithely into the middle of such a conversation would certainly cause some hearts to race. What did they hear? What do they know? How to keep them quiet?

THE CUTFACE STAIR

Cut into the living rock, the Cutface Stair switches back and forth, downwards and downwards from the heights of the Tearmark, down to the crashing surf below. The origin of the stairs is a mystery. They've always been there, longer than history records. They've been used by explorers, pirates, bootleggers, adventurers, and all have noted an unusual feature of the stairs: Every one is carved with a remarkable precision, the

same height, one to the next. The height is just slightly too far for a human leg to step comfortably. All have asked themselves, why go to the trouble to carve thousands of stone stairs which are weirdly uncomfortable to climb? Why indeed?

COLOR: Constant peril. The wind pulls at clothing, the stairs grow slick with sea spray, and the gulls and swallows explode from crevices in the rock face, startling ragged nerves. The uncomfortable height of each stair, and the unavoidable question of their origin.

HOOKS: A chase down the stairs in the dark while pursued by savage, desperate killers. Good times, for sure. The stair is also something of a rite of passage for Candlewick Vale's malcontented teenagers: Climb down and back up, don't fall to your death, and don't scream like a wuss, and you might be cool.

THE SHOULDERBONE HILLS

Aptly named, because the vale seems to shrug as one travels north towards the mountains, with increasingly bony shoulders. The Shoulderbone Hills are rough country but well farmed, and there are herds of sheep dotting the midlands, chased by monomaniacal shepherd dogs. Once there was also silver in them thar hills, but most of that's been tapped out. Now, most of the old mines have been closed, though there's still enough metal down there for a profitable local lead industry. The traces of silver help pad out the meager profits. During the war, Candlewick's motto was "One in Five Jerries Die by Candlewick Lead!" Which gives you a sense of the vale's true character, when war strips away the geniality.

GAUNT & CO. MINEWORKS

Most of the old Gaunt & Co. Mineworks are closed down and rusting away. There's still a small operation, but it's a shadow of the old days when thousands of men risked death to make their fortunes. Now, most of the old mines are closed off, usually pretty shabbily. If one were inclined, it would be very easy to wander down into the dark, with the creaking weight of millions of tons of rock waiting to squash you into so much goo. The deepest mines also link up with the Maze, the weird, twisting cave network undermining the whole vale (page 113).

COLOR: The skeletons of old mining machines, rusting in the midst of the current struggling Gaunt operations. Piles of mine tailings and slag. Sheds full of sweating, delicate dynamite.

HOOKS: If one were to get lost in the Maze it might be possible to come up in the mineworks. The mines also make ideal hideouts for bank robbers, bandits, or runaways. With the promise of a fortune in silver down there, the legendary McGummit Load, some folk just can't leave well enough alone.

THE SHALE PITS

A recent operation, meeting the demand for fashionably-green slate for roofing and garden paths. The unlikely geology of the vale contains a thick layer of just such slate, and the Shale Pits were opened to exploit it via modern strip mining

techniques. The Pits are a gaping wound in the Shoulderbone. A hundred tons of shale and slate is broken out and dumped in order to get the premium uncracked and properly colored stone which is so in demand. The bribes flowing from this operation are so astonishing, that it is said the pit operators could strip every blade of grass off the hills and no official word would ever be raised.

COLOR: The crushing grind of the rock-breaking machines, and the screech and hiss of the slate-cutting machines, and the rumble and throb of the earth-moving machines, and the dust, the constant choking dust.

HOOKS: The Shale Pits grow, threatening the farms of neighbors who refuse to sell. Appeals for aid from the township utterly fail. What can the little guy possibly do against the industrial might of modern commerce? Perhaps getting the help of an *even littler* guy. And his giant monster buddy.

CHILDALOST FOREST

The Shoulderbone is gradually engulfed in forest as one travels westward. The Childalost Forest surrounds the Candlewick Estates and creeps up the Widowsrun. The trees are a transitional mix of hardwood and evergreen, favoring the evergreen as the altitude increases. The Childalost is old growth, and was protected by the Candlewick family until fairly recently, when Dr. Candlewick sold the bulk of it off to fund his Home for the Unfortunate and Unloved. The decision to sell has had consequences, and now the old Hackam mill is up and running again at full capacity and expansions are being considered. Childalost lumber is quite marketable, and the saws hiss, and the trees fall, and old sleeping things awaken and are not pleased.

HACKAM LUMBER MILL

The main mill is on the edge of the Childalost, though its lumberyard is down closer to the river. Trees are cut, hauled, and milled into rough sections, and sent down to the yard for finishing. The mill is where the operation is run; the owner believes in being close to the action. The mill is a big corrugated metal building, with the scream of a huge circular blade within, cutting at all hours, with only a break to allow the equipment to cool down or blades and belts to be replaced.

COLOR: Screaming saws, the scent of pine resin and sawdust, mountains of sawdust. Huge burn piles of branches and leaves fired weekly. Working men, and working men's earthy talk.

HOOKS: The destruction of the forest is raising some eyebrows in Candlewick Township, where there's a contingent of citizens who like the woods for hunting, walking, or birding. The bribes from Hackam aren't as favorable as for the Shale Pits, and so there's a real chance of political action against the cutting so long as dirty tricks and backroom deals don't spoil things. And then there are the rumors of wolves in the forest. And of disappearances.

SHADY ACRES FUNERAL HOME AND CEMETERY

Just up from Candlewick Township is the Coalblack family's funeral home, mortuary, and cemetery. The windswept hill it occupies affords the bereaved a clear view of the whole town, and it was always Mortimer Coalblack, Sr.'s way to take the weeping widows aside, and turn them around so they can see the township, and say to them, "Your husband may have left us, but look, dear lady, at all the good folk who remain and wish you well."

Mortimer Coalblack, Jr. is less effective with his efforts to lighten the mood with a joke. The funeral home was once a place of cool silence and heavy curtains, but Coalblack Jr. has opened it up, added some color, and replaced the ancient organ with a modern upright piano. So far, few in the township have warmed to the notion of *happy death*. The cemetery retains its solemnity, however. To walk through it is to witness the unspoken tragedies of the township. Just noting the surprising number of tiny headstones and child-sized graves gives one chills and raises disturbing questions.

COLOR: Within the funeral home it is all bright and cheer, with lots of light and color. But the scent of potpourri can't conceal the reek of embalming fluid and decay, and the light only throws the grief of mourners into sharp focus. Outside, it is all bleak and cold, with cutting wind and bent graveyard trees with their roots sunk deep into the decayed remains of Candlewick Township's ancestors.

HOOKS: Sometimes you just need a corpse, whether to fake a death, prosecute the guilty, perform dark necromancy, or find a snack for a squamous buddy. Perhaps the corpse is that of a friend, and the dark necromancy is meant to restore them to life. Best hurry before the cheery Mr. Coalblack sucks out all the blood and organs. And then there's the cemetery. For those with the eyes to see and the ears to hear, it's lousy with ghosties. Most have faded into mere shadows and hints of cold in the air, little flashes of emotion. Others are strong, some not even aware that they've died.

WANDERING ROMANY CAMP

Off the winding road leading up to Candlewick Manor, a troupe of Roma have made camp on Candlewick land, with the casual permission of Dr. Candlewick (or at least, no obvious disapproval). The Roma have traveled to Candlewick for their own private reasons, but ostensibly ply their trades as handymen, tinkers, entertainers, and more mysterious pastimes. Their music winds around the trees, carrying farther through the woods than even a hunter's gunshots. The caravans of the Roma are brightly painted, but seem mysteriously occluded there in the shadowed clearing where they are circled around a central fire pit; yet the camp is unmistakable to orphans passing by daily in the bus which carries them down into the township for school.

COLOR: The wail of fiddle and the throb of drums, nerves racing, and heart beating faster to keep pace. The folk are friendly but mysterious. They speak English perfectly, except when they might reveal something, and then "English ... not so good, yes?" The scent of exotic cooking. The sense that all the flash and color and smiles are the magician's concealing flourish; but concealing what?

HOOKS: Sneaking down to the Roma camp to lurk outside the firelight and listen to their songs and stories is very tempting. What could the careful, secretive Roma want in Candlewick? What could be keeping them here so long? A half-heard argument in a strange tongue, angry words between the Roma chief and one of Dr. Candlewick's children. And the looks the Roma give an orphan: expectant, anticipating, like they are waiting for the punchline to a really well-told joke.

FRANK TIPPLE MEMORIAL PARK

One segment of the Childalost remains outside the reach of Hackam's saws: the Frank Tipple Memorial Park. Frank Tipple was one of Candlewick's most famous (notorious) citizens, who struck it rich before the silver ran out, squandered every cent on gambling and women, and then made a second fortune with the invention of a device which allowed mining helmets to burn brighter and clearer for longer. His second fortune he squandered on land speculation and miracle treatments for male-pattern baldness. His third fortune came from his salon and beauty shop won in a game of cards. Against all probability, Frank Tipple, balding roughneck miner, gambler, womanizer, failed businessman, and salty speaker, proved masterful at pampering ladies, suggesting makeup, clothing, and applying time-bending, youth-restoring regimes.

When he died, he left his fortune to the establishment of a public park, because "Quiet contemplation of the wonders of the natural world is the surest path to inner beauty. Let my brother see to the outside, and my park to the inside." He left the salon to his brother Jacobi, who accidentally burned it down. Alas, Candlewick's womenfolk must now contend with beautifying their outsides themselves, but the park remains for their inner beautification.

COLOR: Carefully tended and managed forestland with a postcard or storybook quality. A sense of isolation, even if one is rarely more than half an hour from the car park. And, as the logging increases, a larger and larger population of fauna, starting to strip the forest of edible flora.

HOOKS: The park is a frequent meeting place for lovers, illicit or otherwise. The sense of isolation is sometimes more illusory than real, and there has been at least one instance of a philandering husband running into his philandering wife, both with their secret romances in tow. It's the sort of place where a wandering orphan might see something she was not meant to see.

MUMSIGH LAKE

Mumsigh comes upon a hiker like a gust of cold wind. Visitors break from the trees and the lake shines before them, cold as snowmelt, fed by springs. The lake is quite high up in the Shoulderbone, capping a hill, and it's a surprise to find so much water this high up. There are no roads to the lake, only walking paths and animal trails. Some folk hike up to it with the intention of swimming or at least, plunging in it. In a warm parlor, with a brandy, and a fire, and good friends listening to the story you'd describe it as "Bracing!" Having just thrashed and clawed your way out

of it, you would describe it as “OOOHRHAHHHRGHHH!” Less articulate, but fundamentally more accurate. In the winter, the lake freezes, and a popular winter pastime is to hike up to the lake, and ice skate.

COLOR: The lake is a mirror when the sun is high, a black depth when it is not. It *looks* cold. Even on a blazing summer day, it's still icy. Along its edge, deer, bear, coyote, fox, and sometimes, some say, wolves come to drink.

HOOKS: Mumsigh is truly isolated. A murderer could scarcely wish for a better place to do his deed: no witnesses, and an easy place to dispose of the body. Plenty of handy rocks to weigh it down. And the black cold waters, waters which don't easily give up their dead. It's the sort of place a meddling orphan might find himself one day or a place such an orphan might come, seeking the final evidence of a horrendous crime.

THE ZITOMER INSTITUTE FOR THE DISTURBED AND DELUSIONAL

The Zitomer Institute lurks low in the Shoulderbone Hills, overlooking the Shale Pits, with grounds bordering on the Childalost Forest. The low, rambling structure hugs the terrain and skulks like a thief in a low area amongst the hills, invisible from the township. You can walk through the hills and suddenly break out into the grounds, and there's the institute slouching on the land.

It's a sanitarium and asylum for those suffering persistent and exotic delusions. The eminent Doctor Shanker studies these disturbed individuals, and his specialized staff provide for their comfort and safety. The town is so anxious to forget the institute exists that nobody mentions it. It is a taboo topic among the townsfolk, and anyone from the institute will find a cool reception in the town and at Candlewick manor.

All the staff and Doctor Shanker himself live at the institute, supplied by deliveries from town. There are typically a few dozen patients, some so mad they must be drugged and restrained. Others with more benign delusions are permitted to wander the grounds and garden (with proper supervision).

COLOR: Well-manicured gardens and lawns; the smell of grass, earth and flowers in the spring. Patients in grey robes shuffle about, with white uniformed orderlies, all strangely identical, following nearby. Inside, the smell of disinfectants and sounds impossible to identify. Human noises blunted by thick soundproofing. The slumping, low building almost seems to creep and shift about if you don't pay attention.

HOOKS: How you came by the Candlewick family financial records is neither here nor there, but what is worth considering is the regular monthly payments made from Candlewick accounts to the Zitomer Institute regularly for twelve years, until they suddenly stopped three years ago. Patient records might reveal just who was receiving treatment under the good Doctor Shanker. And what sorts of treatments? Doctor Shanker's academic record is long and dramatic. Why did he come to Candlewick Vale? And just what does he do in the private treatment rooms that requires so many heavy locks on doors and so much black paint on windows. . . .



WIDOW'S RUN PEAK

Dominating the mountains marking the northern reach of the vale is the Widow's Run Peak, reaching fingerlike upwards, and incongruously jagged against the smoother, more rounded mountains. It is named for the rush of widows upwards to identify the mangled fallen body of another climber seeking its summit. The peak has never, so far as it is known, been successfully climbed, a reputation that brings daring climbers from outside the vale every few years, only to see the survivors skulk away in fear and chagrin. Nobody who has passed within reach of the summit has survived. Sir Reginald Bladderhorn, the famous British explorer and mountain climber, lived for a few minutes after his fall from the Widow's Run. His final words were, "The stars. They danced like dragonflies." His death only sealed the peak's reputation, a reputation in which the people of Candlewick Vale take a gruesome pride. The Widow's Run is also notable for some unusual features, other than its unrelenting power to deal death to any who dare challenge it.

THE WATCHTOWER

Built upon a shelf of stone well above the snowline is a great pile of loosely-fitted boulders, roughly shaped to form a stable platform several stories high. Remnants of a timber structure top the tower, though it was burned long ago. Local legend attributes the tower to Viking raiders, who built it as defense against local tribes, but this makes almost no sense; who builds a defensive tower halfway up a mountain? It's not as if the view from the mountain itself isn't good enough.

It is called the Watchtower, but in truth it is more likely some kind of barrow or ritual mound, possibly a tomb. Vale folk with an interest in anthropology frequently solicit support for a proper investigation and excavation of the Watchtower site, but things never seem to come together. If one asks enough, someone will admit to seeing signs of activity up there on certain nights of the year: torches, fire, strange lights.

COLOR: The raw bleakness of the naked stone contrasted with the view of the vale, green and fertile. It is sort of voyeuristic, looking down on the valley from this spot, like secretly watching a lady take a bath. This high, the only living things are the mountain goats cracking their horns, and the eagles riding high thermals, scanning the valley below for something tiny and warm to kill and eat.

HOOKS: Oh, there's something going on with this weird old structure, and that's for sure. Following certain people on certain nights leads here, to this cold bleak place. For what purpose? And who else is involved in the strange activities carried out beneath the watchful moon?

STONE SNAKE

Still higher than the Watchtower there's the Stone Snake, a gigantic petroglyph made from stacked boulders, rocks, and even pebbles, millions of them. It's carefully arranged to create an artificial ledge coiling around the whole mountain just below the point where the peak rises at killing angles, and where so many brave climbers have fallen. For a long time, the Snake was called the Wall, but viewing



it from the air revealed its true shape, with head, eye, and tongue on one end, and obvious rattlers on the other. The work. The danger. The ambition. To what purpose? Somehow, the Stone Snake is even more baffling than the Watchtower. What minds could have conceived the Snake? And to what end? Efforts to study it have met with difficulty. It's so high, so perilous, that any real examination is all but impossible. Even stranger, while there's some mention of the Watchtower in local native folklore, there's nothing about the Snake.

COLOR: Cold, wind, and the almost oppressive perfection of the Snake. Each stone, each pebble, all placed so that the final structure is so strong as to stand to winter snow, summer thaw, and pounding weather, for millennia. No mortar, no adhesive, just the inhuman perfection of the stacked stone. Study it too long, and it gnaws the mind.

HOOKS: What happens if a segment of the snake crumbles? How does the snake relate to the Widow Run's lethality, its anomalous height, or the vale's uncanny fortunes?

THE MAZE

Coiling and twisting beneath Candlewick Vale, the Maze is the primordial endless cave of blackest marrow-deep nightmare. The Maze runs deep, but if you start digging anywhere in the Vale you'll run into it eventually. Its ophidian curves intersect all the Vale's below-ground edifices.

Some parts run with icy torrents of ink-dark water. Others are smooth-walled and disturbingly organic, like the fossilized shells of ancient deep-sea worms. In some places, old tunnels have been broken and crossed by what can only be new tunnels; but what could possibly be burrowing so furiously through the rock?

Wandering in the Maze is inadvisable without some careful means of tracking progress; and even then, chalk marks and trails of string tend to become mysteriously erased or tangled, almost as if some unseen force wishes unwise wanderers to become hopeless and horribly lost in the curving darkness.

COLOR: Curving walls, never straight. Even with bright light, you can't see more than a few dozen feet. The distant drip of water, and an ever-present, almost inaudible rumble felt in the chest rather than the ears. Sounds are magnified and muted weirdly, echoing and reverberating. A whisper sounds like a shout, yet screams are strangely muffled. One would expect rats and bugs, but you won't find any. The Maze is suspiciously clean, even of bones.

HOOKS: Dig deep, fall down the rabbit hole, or wander inadvisably into abandoned mines or sub-basements, and you might find yourself lost in the Maze. Wander for a timeless night and you emerge finally in some weird and unexpected place, likely right into a dangerous or mysterious scene already playing itself out. Arrogant orphans with unnatural senses might realize the Maze provides a secret way to travel the whole Vale, creeping up from below like ghosts from the Earth—but of those who trespass too freely in the Maze's darksome passages, something might extract a price for the secret travel.





This section details the monstrous residents of the Candlewick Vale. Each of these monsters is in its way an outsider like the orphans, but unlike them it can't connect to the people of Candlewick on its own. Through the orphans who befriend them, and their Relationships, these monsters will become players in the big game. They are built like normal MONSTERS AND OTHER CHILDISH THINGS monsters, except for some variations noted on page 29.

BRICKSHANK

Brickshank is a vaguely humanoid mass of rock, with moss and lichens across his shoulders and face. Like everything about him, his looks are dead simple. His proportions resemble a gorilla more than a man, and he hunches over onto all fours sometimes. When he hunkers down, he's indistinguishable from a mossy rock pile. When he rears up, it's like the Earth itself rises in fury.

PERSONALITY: Brickshank is a deep but slow thinker. He isn't stupid. He just operates on a different timescale than squishier people. He can focus on things happening within the human frame with a little effort or a lot of persuasion on the part of a human friend. He's frequently shocked at how quickly people change when years pass between his contacts with them. He's got a big (rocky) heart, but tragically, tends to lose track of his friends if they don't make the effort to keep him focused on the here and now. His anger comes slow, but when it arrives, it's like an avalanche or earthquake, from calm to total destruction without much notice.

FAVORITE THING: Glass (the better quality, the more he likes it). Glass is refined and purified sand, and Brickshank is made of rock. Glass is like perfect health food for Brickshank.

FAVORITE PLACE: The Shale Pits.

WAY TO HIDE: Brickshank just hunkers down and looks like a pile of rock. It's sometimes weird to see a pile of rock inside a school or house, but nobody says "What's this giant rock monster doing inside my house?" Instead they said, "All right, who's the wise guy that dumped all this rock in here?"

MONSTROUS BITS

Location 1: Teeny Rock Head 2d (Useful: listen to the earth; Awesome x2; Tough x1).

Locations 2–3: Warm Magma Heart 6d (Attacks; Useful: inspire warm feelings; Area x2; Tough).

Locations 4–5: Stubby Little Legs 6d (Useful: shamble at speed; Tough x4).

Locations 6–7: Huge Stone Body 6d (Defends; Tough x4).

Locations 8–10: Enormous Apelike Arms 10d (Attacks; Useful: powerful grasp; Tough x4).

WHAT BRICKSHANK CAN DO: Brickshank is really, really fantastic at being really, really, really hard to hurt. Seven of his 10 hit locations have four levels of Tough, letting him laugh off just about anything. He's also no slouch at dishing out the damage. His huge stone arms can grab and hold a foe, or bash them silly. His weak spot has to be his teeny little head, which isn't very tough, but is quite attuned to the slow voices of the Earth. And he's deceptively fast, like an avalanche. His most unusual ability is the influence of his molten stone heart. It throbs with warmth, literal and metaphorical, and he can let it radiate out into a large area. If emotional, this inspires feelings of warmth, connection, and hippy earth love. If actual heat, it creates a searing wave which can singe everything in quite a big area.



CHAWNAMBLER

A fifty-foot-long worm thing, like a cross between a mole, a snake, and a centipede. He rarely pokes more than half his length out of the ground at a time. His face is all wrinkly, like a shar pei puppy, and would be cute if you could ignore the Earth-rending mandibles he uses to chew through rock and soil.

PERSONALITY: Busy. Chawnambler always has places to be, things to do. He's positively hyperactive. If forced to hang around in one place for long, he gets anxious and starts doing the giant-worm-snake-mole equivalent of pacing and clicking his tongue. If given a task, he's bang on top of it; sometimes *too* on top of it, what with his extraordinarily literal mind and all.

FAVORITE THING: Powerful rhythmic sounds through the earth, like mining explosives or a really loud drum solo.

FAVORITE PLACE: The Maze.

WAY TO HIDE: Chawnambler lurks under the ground, ready to burst out.

MONSTROUS BITS

Location 1: Sensitive Nose 3d (Useful: supersniffer; Awesome x2).

Locations 2–3: Long Serpentine Body 7d (Defends; Useful: grappling coils; Tough x2).

Locations 4–5: Dozens of Scuttling Legs 6d (Defends; Useful: run like crazy; Useful: move supersneaky; Wicked Fast x2).

Locations 6–7: Vibration-Sensing Organs 6d (Defends; Useful: sense vibrations all around and through the ground; Useful: hear lies in a person's voice; Awesome x2).

Locations 8–10: Rock-Crushing Maw 10d (Attacks; Useful: chew through the earth; Gnarly x4).

WHAT CHAWNAMBLER CAN DO: He's a big, industrious fellow, and his tunneling has left the whole of Candlewick Vale undercut by thousands of miles of tunnel, eaten from the very living rock. Some of these have been pressed into service (intentionally or accidentally) by Candlewick civil engineers as municipal sewers. Chawnambler is unhappy about that. But he's more than able to eat his way through stone and earth at a prodigious rate, creating new tunnels whenever he wants.

He avoids digging too close to the surface, because that might lead to cave-ins which might lead to curious spelunkers which can only lead to tragedy. He knows his way around the Maze instinctively, and is able to smell and hear his way through the confusing Swiss cheese of tunnels. He made them, after all. His long serpentine body is terribly strong and getting caught in its coils is generally a Bad Thing.

He is also evasive and twisty. His legs let him scuttle faster than a motorcar if you can ever persuade him to come out on the surface and race one. But his most prominent feature, and most potent ability, is his huge, rock-gnawing mouth. It's so powerful he's able to eat just about anything in the whole of Candlewick, so it's a good thing he thinks eating people is gross. Although he's been known to eat houses when he wanted to encourage someone annoying to move away.

FARMER MAGRUDER'S PRIZE GOURD

The Prize Gourd seems like an overgrown vine that wasn't trimmed back. It runs all along the fences at Magruder's Farm, through the barn, and down into the root cellar. It runs up the trees and chokes the corn. If it keeps growing, there won't be much left. It's covered in hundreds or perhaps thousands of regular-looking gourds, which are like psychic sense organs. The Prize Gourd has no eyes or ears, but it borrows the senses of animals using its psychic sense field. Hanging from the rafters of Magruder's old barn is the Prize Gourd proper, an enormous specimen bigger than a horse, which radiates terrible psychic power.

PERSONALITY: Megalomaniacal. The Prize Gourd knew from the moment it was awarded First Prize at the Candlewick Fair that its destiny was to Rule. Grown from mail-order seeds bought through an ad in Farmer's Quarterly, the Gourd's origins are obscure, and it knows nothing of what came before its prize those years ago. But it grows slowly, extending its influence over the farm, and out into the countryside. One day it will blanket all of Candlewick Vale in its vine, and all the animals will be its slaves. In the meantime it's terribly bored being stuck for the most part in one place, and would really appreciate someone coming to visit occasionally.

FAVORITE THING: Conquest! Failing at that, a nice gentle rain.

FAVORITE PLACE: Magruder's Farm.

WAY TO HIDE: The Prize Gourd seems like an ordinary if out of control vine until it moves or does something equally freaky.

MONSTROUS BITS

Locations 1–2: Deep Roots 6d (Useful: sense ground vibrations; Tough x4).

Locations 3–4: Scarecrow Creepers 6d (Attacks; Defends; Useful: animate scarecrows; Area x2).

Locations 5–6: Vines 6d (Useful: grasp and tangle; Area x4).

Locations 7–8: Sense-Gourds 6d (Attacks; Useful: read minds; Useful: borrow senses; Area x2).

Locations 9–10: Throbbing Prize Gourd 6d (Defends; Useful: telepathic; Useful: Mind Control!; Awesome x2).

WHAT FARMER MAGRUDER'S PRIZE GOURD CAN DO: The Prize Gourd is well equipped to fulfill its ambition to rule one day. Its sense-gourds can hijack the senses of animals and read their minds. Its roots are hard to hurt, thus keeping part of the Gourd safe from even a scorching. It can sense the vibrations of approach. It can communicate mentally, and with some effort dominate the wills of lesser minds. Its tendrils wind around the scarecrows around the farm, and it can bring them to life in a shambling mob. This and its grasping vines work over an area, as do its sense gourds, making it a dangerous foe to even large groups. Its only major drawback is that it can't just pull up root and leave the farm; it has to creep and grow and extend itself the hard way. Still, with its mind-control abilities it hasn't had any trouble getting Magruder to tend to its needs, so its limited area is at least comfortable.



MR. FIDDLE

Mr. Fiddle is an enormous bug, something between a grasshopper and a mantis. When stretched out he's enormously long, well over twenty feet, but his multi-jointed limbs fold up so he can fit into a chair meant for a man. Which is a boon, because Mr. Fiddle wears a magical mask which causes everyone who sees him to perceive him as an ordinary human, a down-on-his-luck tramp. Harmless and smiling, he's more local color than an indication of poverty or a homeless problem; certainly nothing to worry civic-minded townsfolk. He gets his name from the fiddle he plays in his guise as the tramp, and answers to the name whether he wears the mask or not. Regardless of his appearance, his voice is calming and pleasant, rich and warm.

PERSONALITY: Mr. Fiddle embraces mad whimsy. Riddle rhymes with Fiddle. He'll caper and crow when he's not capturing and eating a crow. What he does with the handouts he earns playing his fiddle is a mystery. He loves to issue seemingly-mad advice and pronouncements which turn out to be meaningful and insightful after the fact. Delivering these irony bombs seems to be one of his greatest pleasures. He also loves to subtly meddle in the personal affairs of Candlewick's citizens, creating more chaos and conflict, or at least more excitement and moments of revelation. He's delayed secret lovers so they arrived at their paramour's home in time to meet their rivals. He's assisted eloping youths. He's engineered reconciliation between feuding families. It is *change* that Mr. Fiddle seems to cultivate, and he loathes nothing so much as Relationships stuck in ruts.

FAVORITE THING: Witnessing the moment when a Relationship is transformed, for good or ill.

FAVORITE PLACE: The Square.

WAY TO HIDE: Mr. Fiddle wears a magical mask made by the Spanish magus Juan Valderon de Espana in 1567, which causes him to appear to all observers as a harmless tramp. The mask was a gift to a king, so he might walk amongst his people and observe them without revealing himself, but it was taken from him when he used his knowledge to persecute those who spoke against him. The mask is so potent that it even fools other monsters.

MONSTROUS BITS

Location 1: The Mask of Juan Valderon 3d (Useful: appear as a harmless tramp; Awesome x2).

Locations 2–3: Long Switchback Legs 8d (Defends; Useful: leap prodigiously; Useful: sprint with unnerving speed).

Locations 4–5: Multi-Eyed Face 6d (Useful: warm, persuasive voice; Useful: issue prophetic advice; Useful: see hidden personal truths; Awesome x2).

Locations 6–7 Antenna 8d (Useful: sense and trace Relationships; Useful: project emotions; Area).

Locations 8–10: Six Clever Hands 10d (Attacks; Useful: play the fiddle like a virtuoso; Useful: exquisite dexterity; Awesome x2; Spray).

WHAT MR. FIDDLE CAN DO: He's clever and subtle, is Mr. Fiddle. He'll spring away on his long legs before fighting unless there's something serious to be gained by the fight. His tramp persona is a harmless physical coward, and Mr. Fiddle has no pride with regards to fighting and winning. If he's forced to fight, his legs make him very hard to hit, and his six amazingly adroit arms are extremely effective with their long sharp fingers. His mask lets him blend freely with the human people who fascinate him, and his remarkable sensory abilities are so cued into human emotions and relationships that few in Candlewick know more about who's connected to whom, and how. His antennae sense links between people, and he can project emotions to more than one target within a small area. These emotions can be intense enough to hurt.

HOODFANIER

With her great wings folded, Hoodfanier is like a deeper darkness against the night's gloom, but when she opens her wings the scintillating points of light dancing within are hypnotic, mesmerizing. The lights are tiny symbiotic insects that live under her wings, clinging to their velvety inner surfaces. Were you to see her in the light, you'd say she was like a huge bat, but smooth and black, with skin like a snake's. Her wings are long and strangely jointed, and their ends are clawed with two fingered hands. Her feet are large and nimble, and the way she flies or hangs on a surface makes it seem like gravity is alien to her, as perhaps it is.

PERSONALITY: Hoodfanier is quiet and mysterious. She speaks in a whisper, but one which can weirdly be heard for miles and miles if she speaks to you. Her words are cryptic, and she loves ambiguity as much as she hates daylight. While quiet and weird, she doesn't mind company, and enjoys conversation; but she's so quiet in her comings and goings that you might be speaking to her only to realize she'd vanished minutes before. Hoodfanier has some agenda. Those who know where to look can see her going about strange rituals in isolated parts of the vale at different times of the month and season. As with all her comings and goings, expect no clear explanation.

FAVORITE THING: Fresh fruit, when such a thing is available in the vale.

FAVORITE PLACE: Widowsrun Peak.

WAY TO HIDE: Hoodfanier is flexible and loves the darkness. She'll squeeze into any available shadow and just blend right in.

MONSTROUS BITS

Location 1: Tiny Sensitive Eyes 3d (Useful: see through deepest dark; Awesome x2).

Locations 2–3: Huge Pointed Ears 7d (Defends; Useful: hear for miles and miles; Useful: echo location; Useful hear spirits).

Locations 4–5: Needle-Fanged Mouth 7d (Attacks; Useful: speak whispers to anyone within miles; Gnarly x1; Wicked Fast x1).

Locations 6–7: Long-Toed Feet 6d (Defends; Useful: cling to just about anything; Useful: snatch and carry; Awesome x2).



Locations 8–10: Shadow-Black Wings of Night 8d (Attacks; Defends; Useful: fly in ghostly silence; Useful: hypnotic luminous insects; Useful: wingclaws; Area; Wicked Fast x2).

WHAT HOODFANIER CAN DO: Hoodfanier can lurk in hiding miles off and listen to conversations halfway across the vale, and whisper to those she knows across such distances. Her greatest asset is her wings, with their colonies of luminous insects to hypnotize and immobilize. When flying overhead they let her black shape blend with the starlit sky. She isn't extremely resilient to damage, but all her body parts are sturdy, save her tiny little eyes, which are quite sensitive and vulnerable. She tends not to make them targets, however, as her favored mode of battle is to rush in and ambush her target, or to snatch them and carry them off to her mountaintop to do with as she would. She's more than strong enough to carry off a full grown man, let alone a bevy of unfortunate little orphans. She's well equipped to learn all sorts of secrets, and with her ability to hear the mumbling of spirits as easily as mortals, she knows quite a lot about the secrets of Candlewick Vale.

THE HOWLER AT THE EDGE

The Howler resembles one of those horrific deep-sea jellyfish, all wavering tendrils and translucent flesh, which you're quite relieved to realize is only about a quarter of an inch long. Except the Howler is the size of a small cottage and its tendrils are a hundred feet of wavering, twitching, sting-laden death. Its weird flesh is as clear as glass, showing up only because of the apparent distortion it creates in objects behind it, and its milky innards, and any halfdigested unfortunate still trapped inside after a recent meal. When angered or frightened or just feeling a bit piquey, however, the Howler's body flushes with mad colors: crimsons, purples, acidic yellows. When calm, on a still night, it's only revealed by the creeping sensation of something looming above you. Unlike one of its tiny harmless deep sea cousins, the Howler at the Edge floats upon the very air.

PERSONALITY: The Howler is frighteningly intelligent. Its multiple semi-independent brain lobes give it a shocking amount of raw reasoning power, but its personality is barely the shape of a regular personality. The Howler is driven by the conflicting forces of ancient prehuman instinct and exquisitely complex and alien logic. It would be almost impossible to relate to the Howler, were it not for its love of games, puzzles, wordplay, and enigmas. To the Howler, everything is something to flee, something to eat, or something to solve. It's best to make sure it sees you as this last thing. So long as the Howler finds you intellectually fascinating, it'll do whatever it can to keep you happy and visiting. The Howler gets its name from its weird howling calls, which as it turns out, are the alien jellyfish from the depths of primordial time's equivalent of humming while it thinks.

FAVORITE THING: The moment when a mystery, puzzle, or enigma comes clear. Don't spoil the ending, or the Howler might get touchy.

FAVORITE PLACE: Tearmark Cliffs.



WAY TO HIDE: The Howler is nearly transparent, so is difficult to see at the best of times, but when it needs to really lurk it will loom high above its targets. Nobody ever really looks up. Or it might skulk beneath the ocean waves.

MONSTROUS BITS

Locations 1–2: Rings of Eyespots and Sense Tendrils 6d (Useful: 360-degree sight; Useful: taste the air; Useful: hear a heartbeat; Awesome x2).

Locations 3–4: Globular Translucent Body 7d (Defends; Useful: nearly transparent; Useful: silent floating flight; Tough).

Locations 5–6: Brain Lobes 5d (Useful: alien logic; Useful: mindspeak; Area x2; Awesome x2).

Locations 7–8: Digestive Sac 6d (Attacks; Useful: engulf and dissolve; Burn x2).

Locations 9–10: Wavering Tendrils 6d (Attacks; Useful: snare and entangle; Area x2; Gnarly x2).

WHAT THE HOWLER ON THE EDGE CAN DO: The Howler has some extremely impressive sensory abilities, and is completely attuned to its environment. As it floats along the lonely edges of Candlewick's Tearmark Cliffs, contemplating weird alien problems with its multiple brain lobes, its tendrils are at work constantly, seeking birds and squirrels and errant doggies and the occasionally person nobody would miss, snatching them up and feeding them into its saclike mouth/stomach.

If engaged with a problem, the Howler will restrain these feeding instincts, keeping its tendrils from snatching up a fascinating orphan. If presented with an extremely vexing problem (solving the complexities of a human relationship, for example) it will pace and howl for hours. The Howler is quite difficult to spot, even for other monsters, and when it wishes to remain hidden its globular translucent body makes it very difficult to find, which makes its weird howls even more disturbing.

MOONBOY

Moonboy is a luminous child who seems about the same age as the orphans. He wears a shirt with a circle crossed by a lightning bolt, and his face is like a cartoon of a face, wide blank eyes like spots, and a mouth like a wavering outline of a mouth. His arms and legs are long and boneless, giving him a weird, wobbling, wavy gait. But his weirdest feature is his head, which is open at the top like a cracked egg, and his imagination spills out in glowing aluminiferous waves filled with images and phantasmagoria. The more he imagines, the more it spills out, creating a liquid wash of imagery and phantasms that take on the character of his quicksilver mood.

PERSONALITY: Moonboy is just as batty and erratic as you'd expect a boy to be if he lived in the moon and stared down at a tiny Earth village all night looking for someone to play with. He's older than human reckoning, older than epochs. He remembers living with his family on Earth back when it was really hot and squishy,

and then a big rock hit it, and he got thrown off and stuck on a chunk of it that got cold and boring, so he had to learn to be imaginative to keep from being too bored. But eventually, he decided that he wanted to share his pretend games with others, and he started squinting at the Earth looking for someone to be his friend.

He's a high-strung child, as likely to run home in a huff and take his ball and bat with him as he is to lash out. But he loves adventure and playing, and will happily go along with any scheme no matter how crazy mad it seems. If no schemes are offered, he has a tendency to cook up schemes of his own. "This is booooooring. Let's swipe a grownup's consciousness and put it in a dog, so the dog won't bite, but the grownup will!"

FAVORITE THING: Adventures and play, even if it can run away with itself.

FAVORITE PLACE: Anywhere other than the Moon.

WAY TO HIDE: Moonboy isn't great at hiding, but in a pinch he can focus his mind on something boring. His glow dims, his imagination slows to a trickle, and with a hat he can look sort of like a regular kid. Or, he can just go back to the Moon, but he won't do this if he can help it because the moon is BORING.

MONSTROUS BITS

Location 1: Cartoonish Face 2d (Useful: see really crazy far when he squints; Useful: persuasive madness; Awesome x2).

Locations 2–3: Wobbly Boneless Legs 7d (Defends; Useful: run like crazy fast. Useful: jump in floaty slo-mo; Wicked Fast).

Locations 4–5: Lightning Circle Shirt 6d (Defends; Sharing; Tough x3).

Locations 6–7: Flexible Wobbly Arms 7d (Attacks; Useful: make solid stuff squishy like dough; Wicked Fast x2).

Locations 8–10: An Imagination His Skull Can't Contain 10d (Attacks; Defends; Useful: materialize anything he can imagine; Area x3).

WHAT MOONBOY CAN DO: What *can't* he do? His sloshing, spilling imagination can seemingly do *anything*. It's like having a power ring in your skull. Except it is



seriously fickle; if he doesn't concentrate on keeping his imagination on one thing, he gets distracted and his imagination swirls and swarms in a froth of images and shapes. It's gorgeous, but also more than a little terrifying. In his hands, hard, solid believable things like rocks and books and arms become soft and bendy, like silly putty. His weird legs can carry him at amazing speeds. His cartoonish face is thin and fragile, but he can see really far, and his reedy voice is weirdly persuasive. If he likes you, he'll give you a shirt like his that protects you while you play with him. It gives you the same Tough x3 protection on locations 4-5, and lets you roll six dice to defend against anything: monster attack, a mad farmer's shotgun, or getting mangled in a grain thresher. But if Moonboy gets bored of you, or goes back to the Moon, the shirts he gives out will evaporate into light and mist.

THE PACK

The Pack is a group of normal-seeming wolves who move and hunt with eerie coordination, sharing as they do one cool, patient mind. Each of the five wolves making up the Pack appears different. Individuals, all act as one even when spread across miles of distance.

PERSONALITY: Cool, clever, and patient. The Pack is wary of people, and doesn't usually hunt them, but will protect its territory or secrets with decisive and merciless violence. Those the Pack recognizes as kin, it welcomes with excited, puppy-like affection. The Pack has been known to help lost children back home again, and to drag down and devour foresters who take more than their share of lumber.

FAVORITE THING: Tummy rubs.

FAVORITE PLACE: Childalost Forest.

WAY TO HIDE: The Pack scatters into the forest, but if it must blend into human surroundings it acts like a dumb friendly dog(s).

MONSTROUS BITS

Locations 1-2: Runt 5d (Attacks; Defends; Useful: wolf speed; Useful: wolf senses; Useful: spread out; Useful: man talk).

Locations 3-4: Scar 5d (Attacks; Defends; Useful: wolf speed; Useful: wolf senses; Gnarly x2).

Locations 5-6: Streak 5d (Attacks; Defends; Useful: wolf speed; Useful: wolf senses; Wicked Fast x2).

Locations 7-8: Big Tom 5d (Attacks; Defends; Useful: wolf speed; Useful: wolf senses; Tough x2).

Locations 9-10: Queen 5d (Attacks; Defends; Useful: wolf speed; Useful: wolf senses; Awesome x2).

WHAT THE PACK CAN DO: The Pack has a huge amount of redundancy, making it very hard to effectively cripple in a fight. All the wolves who make up the pack are fast, have powerful senses, can attack, defend, and each has a special further advantage. Its greatest power, however, is its ability to spread itself across a large



area of miles. It is possible for it to move a portion of itself completely outside a dangerous situation, say, leaving a single wolf behind to slow down an enemy. This lone wolf has a real advantage: he's hard to hit (being hit only on rolls showing one of its two hit location). Without an attack with range able to reach the other wolves, those absent from the fight simply can't be hit (though they also can't be used in the fight, always a trade-off). Most frequently, the Runt is left somewhere safe, as this power to spread out resides in the Runt.

PADDY GOMISH

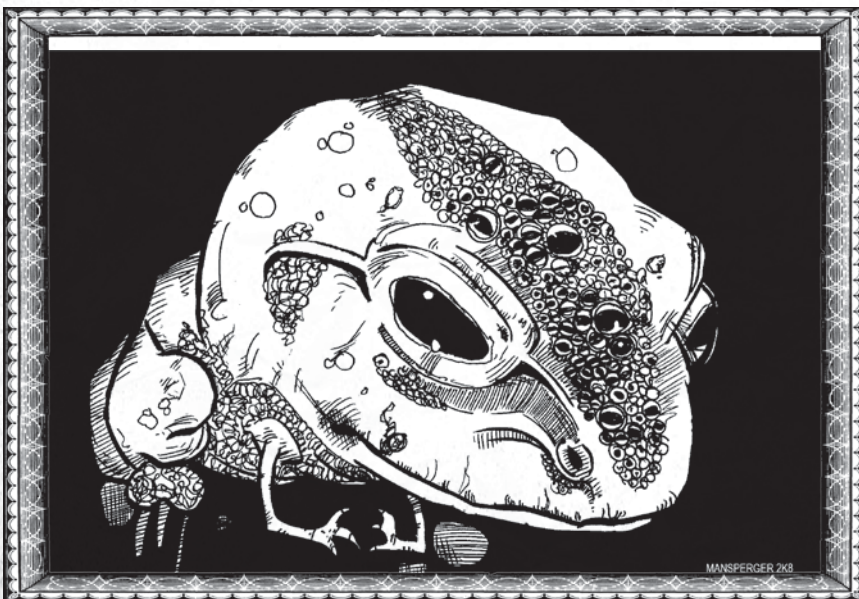
Paddy Gomish is a frog as big as a small car, which is pretty big by frog standards. He's got a hundred blue eyes all over his head, and they twitch and watch and move constantly. The end of his long tongue looks like a green face, and below it are two spindly boneless arms. He can talk and see and hear with his tongue, and grab things with its surprisingly strong arms. He'll lurk below the bog water sometimes, just poking his tongue up above the surface to call for help and lure a victim for conversation—or consumption.

PERSONALITY: Paddy Gomish is very self-conscious and keenly aware of how monstrous he seems to most folks, even if he doesn't really understand their reactions to him. Yet he craves conversation and social contact. He gets mooney when people run away from him. And then he overeats. Which makes him *more* monstrous. It's a nasty cycle.

FAVORITE THING: A good, long talk about anything under the stars.

FAVORITE PLACE: Ironmonger Bog.

WAY TO HIDE: Lurking under the water, peeking only his tongue out.



MONSTROUS BITS

Locations 1–2: Powerful Coiled Legs 6d (Defends; Useful: jump hella high; Useful: swim hella fast; Tough x2).

Locations 3–4: Loathsome Frog Mouth 7d (Attacks; Burn; Tough x1; Wicked Fast x1).

Locations 5–6: Cavernous Belly 7d (Useful: bigger in than out, and contains a lovely sitting room; Tough x2).

Locations 7–8: Tongue Face 6d (Useful: pleasing and persuasive voice; Useful: clever little hands; Wicked Fast x3).

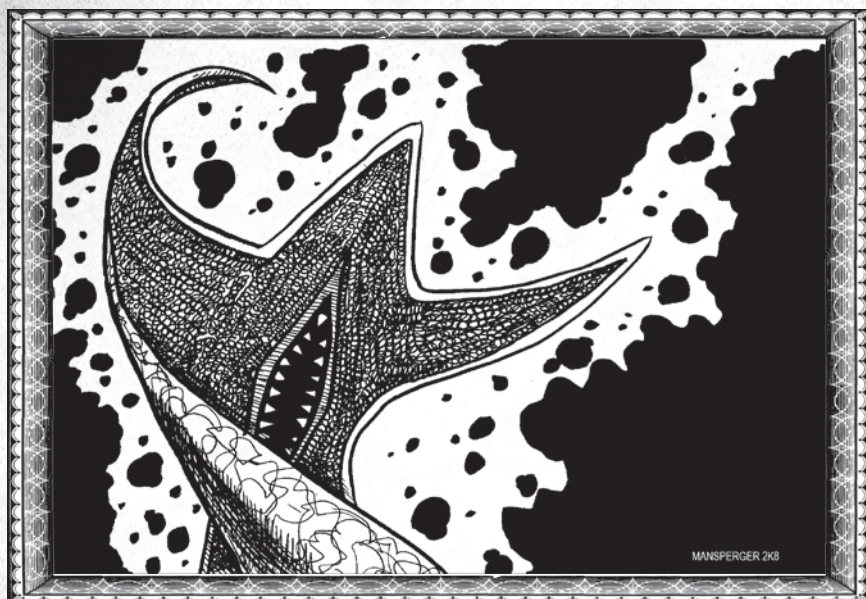
Locations 9–10: Hundred Blue Eyes 7d (Defends; Useful: see crazy well; Awesome x2).

WHAT PADDY GOMISH CAN DO: Paddy is a pretty well-rounded monster, with lots of useful abilities. His legs let him jump and swim very fast, and his mouth can bite and cover a victim with burning saliva. His hundreds of eyes let him see all around himself effortlessly, and evade attacks easily. His most unusual feature is the head and hands on the end of his tongue, which speaks with a pleasant and very convincing voice. If the face can persuade you (or grab you) he can draw you down his convoluted extradimensional gullet into his belly, where he has a lovely little Victorian sitting room full of knick knacks and overstuffed chairs. If you avoid looking at the pulsing slimy walls, it's very pleasant. His tongue face will even serve you tea while he talks and talks and talks. Getting out—well, that might be tricky.

PENFINGLER

Penfingler resembles an enormous gnarled crimson starfish, five-limbed with a central mass. Four of his limbs are stout and thick, while one, badly hurt some time in the past, is spindlier but more dexterous than the others. With his thousands of tube feet he can cling to almost any surface, and the mouth located on his underside can suck the insides out of a captured sailor in minutes. Upon his top surface, seemingly embedded in his hard exoskeleton, is a porcelain face like an old mask. From this he can see and speak.

PERSONALITY: Loud and aggressive. Penfingler always assumes everyone agrees with him, and is genuinely surprised when they don't. He acts stereotypically masculine because he's in his male gender cycle, but when he becomes biologically female in a few months he'll be passive, polite and demure. Not only does his sex change twice a year, but so do the clichés he acts by.



FAVORITE THING: Cracking open giant shellfish and sucking out the innards. Failing at that, a lovely human is also nummy.

FAVORITE PLACE: Shingle Beach.

WAY TO HIDE: He clings to a surface and changes his color and texture to match.

MONSTROUS BITS

Location 1: Speaking Face 3d (Useful: commanding *or* persuading; Awesome x2).

Locations 2: Wizeden Arm 3d (Useful: exquisite dexterity; Awesome x2).

Locations 3–4: Long Arm 8d (Useful: stick to walls; Useful: grabbing stuff and people; Wicked Fast).

Locations 5–6: Thick Arm 8d (Defends; Tough x2).

Locations 7–9: Spiky Arm 8d (Attacks; Gnarly x2).

Locations 9–10: Feeding Arm 7d (Attacks; Burn; Awesome x2).

WHAT PENFINGLER CAN DO: Penfingler isn't a complicated beast. His various arms can pry and rip, and his fantastic little wizeden arm has superlative dexterity. He can stick to walls. And he can lash out and do some really ugly things. What's really odd about him is how he acts, and how this changes through a year. He acts like the Big Man when he's in his male season, but when it's time to change to female there's a week or so when he's neuter and pretty chill. He'll hang around in tidal pools, and can't be bothered to be monstrous. When he becomes female, she pines for romance and bemoans the lack of mates, fearing she'll remain childless forever.

POE

Poe is a huge, black car with a deep-throbbing engine and malevolent, glaring headlights. While it can pass for an ordinary motorcar, there's something *not right* about Poe. Even ordinary people can sense it, like the car is *looking at them* and somehow it *looks hungry*.

PERSONALITY: Poe is a danger junkie. Poe likes speed. Poe likes taking risks. Poe loves to show off. But for all this to matter, Poe needs an audience of people who're easily impressed by his antics. In truth, Poe's personality is that of NineFinger Poe, the bootlegger who owned the car before meeting his end at the hands of gun-toting mobsters from out of town. Before getting whacked, NineFinger Poe was the best 'legger on the coast, but he tended to hold out on his employers and put more money into his car. When he got rubbed out while working under the hood, his soul and blood leaked into the engine, and so the monster car Poe was born.

FAVORITE THING: *Danger!* Poe likes nothing so much as hugging hairpin turns at 85 while his passengers scream in terror. Maybe he was a roller coaster in another life, but in this one there's no safety inspector to make sure the riders survive the ride.

FAVORITE PLACE: The Bootleggers Cave.

WAY TO HIDE: If he's not doing anything overtly supernatural, Poe looks like a regular car. A bit old, and a bit flashy, but nothing so totally crazy that people would pay him undue attention, even if there's something DANGEROUS about the car even when it's not moving.

MONSTROUS BITS

Location 1: Headlights 2d (Useful: see in the dark; Useful: blinding; Awesome x2).

Locations 2-3: All-Surface Tires 6d (Attacks; Useful: drive on any surface; Useful: drive on water; Area; Burn).

Locations 4-5: Custom Bodywork 6d (Defends; Awesome x2; Tough x2).

Locations 6-7: Massive Chrome Bumper 6d (Attacks; Gnarly x2; Tough x2).

Locations 8-10: Huge Throbbing Engine 10d (Useful: go really insanely fast; Tough x2; Wicked Fast x3).

WHAT POE CAN DO: Poe can do just what you'd expect any self-respecting demon car to be able to do. His tires grab any traction they can, letting him drive at unholy speeds on any road, or along a vertical cliff face, or across water. They can lay down the burning rubber literally, creating a decidedly dangerous hazard, a huge patch of incinerated road. His bodywork is pretty much bulletproof, and if NineFingers had been *inside* rather than under the hood when the mob came to whack him, he'd have lived long enough to kill himself in some horrible fiery wreck. The front bumper is a massive fanged artifice of chrome, and it can smash and chew other cars, to say nothing of foolish pedestrians or bicyclists who don't yield the right of way. Poe's massive engine, big enough to drive a train, pushes Poe (and his white-knuckled occupants) to insane speeds. When Poe decides to put the hammer down, it goes through the table. He's first off the mark and will leave you sucking the brimstone stink of his exhaust while he's tearing up the road a mile further on.

CAPTAIN PYRE

Captain Pyre is the skeleton of a big man, bound together with leathery scraps of flesh and dressed in stolen finery and a worn captain's uniform. His notch-bladed cutlass hangs ready, and his wide-barrel pistols are always primed.

When the good captain, fleeing the British Navy, ran his ship aground in a hidden grotto, his crew cursed him as devil. Pyre cursed them right back: "I may be a devil now, but in a hundred years I'll be a devil to devils, and you'll be nothing but rotten bones!" He's done his best to live (unlive?) up to that oath.

PERSONALITY: Pyre is a pirate, but he's forgotten what that means. He tends to confuse the storybook idea of the pirate with realities he's starting to forget. He can't really say for sure whether he ever slid down the sails of an enemy ship or dueled corrupt British officers on a burning man o' war. But presented with a credulous audience, he'll "ARRRRRRRRR" things up and threaten to keelhaul everyone or make them walk the plank. More than anything he wishes he could remember exactly where he buried his treasure. With the right inspiration, he might be convinced to make the *Scotts Marie* seaworthy and take to the seas looking for his lost loot.

FAVORITE THING: Reminiscing about the bad old days (real or not).

FAVORITE PLACE: The Wreck of the *Scotts Marie*.

WAY TO HIDE: Captain Pyre doesn't hide, and damn your eyes for thinking him such a coward! But his appearance is so disturbing that after they finish freaking out, most folks just forget about him or think it was a bad dream. Wounds from rusty cutlasses might need a bit more explanation, of course.

MONSTROUS BITS

Locations 1–2: Nest of Blood Crabs Inside Ribcage 4d (Attacks; Useful: see what the crabs see; Area x2; Awesome x2; Burn).

Locations 3–4: Leathery Salt-Cured Organs 8d (Useful: sense the sea in his guts and spleen; Useful: inspire the lust for plunder; Tough).

Locations 5–6: Knock-Kneed Bone Legs 8d (Defends; Useful: tireless speed; Wicked Fast).

Locations 7–8: Sinew-Bound Skeleton Arms 6d (Attacks; Useful: terrible undead strength; Gnarly x2; Wicked Fast).

Locations 9–10: Terrible Grinning Skull-Face 6d (Useful: induce crazed terror; Useful: charming old sea dog; Useful: a sailor born and dead; Awesome x2).

WHAT CAPTAIN PYRE CAN DO: The Captain's arms are skeletal but inhumanly strong, and his blade is sharp if rusty. His legs let him scuttle out of harm's way like a hyper-active fiddler crab. Anyone with the stones to look into his face can be stricken with a primal terror, but he can also be weirdly charming; something about him makes people want to embrace the piratical life. He still knows how to sail and fight a ship like it was yesterday. He can sense the sea in his leathery organs, feeling its moods and predicting the weather. His weirdest, grossest ability is the nest of flesh-striping blood crabs in his ribcage. He can shake them out of his body and clothes and see whatever they see, and they can attack in a devouring swarm.

THE SPIRITS OF SHAFT NINE

A close-crowded mass of spectral miners, blurring into each other in floating coal dust and mine mist. Their lamps give off a baleful green glow, and their eyes and mouths are black smears in misty faces. They aren't really solid, but they have some ghostly physicality and can affect the material world.

PERSONALITY: Depressed. Very depressed. The Spirits of Shaft Nine don't really remember who they were before the cave-in. Time has robbed them of their old individual identities, and the forgetfulness of Candlewick folk has made them more uniform. They've been rendered down to their essence, and all that's left is the anger that drove them back into the world of the living, and the terrible loss they feel at being forgotten even to themselves. They crave knowledge about who they once were, and will cling to anyone who helps them remember. As they recover more of their memories and mementos, their personality will change, becoming more like a closely-linked group than a single vague mass.

FAVORITE THING: Learning something about who they were when alive.

FAVORITE PLACE: Gaunt & Co. Mineworks.

WAY TO HIDE: The Spirits become thinner and thinner and thinner until they're like a cloud of dust and light fog.

MONSTROUS BITS

Locations 1–2: Tendrils of Smoke and Dust 6d (Useful: move stuff, seemingly invisibly; Useful: pass through the tiniest crack; Tough x3).

Locations 3–4: Spectral Legs 7d (Defends; Useful: move in total silence; Tough x2).

Locations 5–6: Ghost Hands 5d (Useful: drain light and heat; Useful: hands of undead working men; Area x1; Awesome x2; Tough x1).

Locations 7–8: Blank Black-Eyed Faces 5d (Useful: see no matter what; Useful: speak language of spirits; Tough x2; Awesome x2).

Locations 9–10: Baleful Lamps 5d (Attacks; Useful: cast light which reveals weakness and flaws; Area x4).

WHAT THE SPIRITS OF SHAFT NINE CAN DO: The Spirits have a whole raft of funky abilities. Their misty, swirly essence can move stuff around, and lets them slip through any crack thin enough to pass air through it. And it is strong enough to pick up a cow and toss it. Poor Bessie. Their legs let them move in appropriately ghostly silence, and evade their enemies pretty handily—*footily*, rather. Their hands remember what it was to work, and can do all sort of Useful things really well.

They can also reach out and suck the heat and light from a whole room. Meeting the gaze of their black inkspot eyes is hard enough, but they can also see regardless of the light, and can speak the secret language of spirits with perfect fluency. Finally, atop their ghostly helmets, their old mine lamps still shine, and the eerie green illumination shows a thing's (or person's) flaws, magnifying them, revealing what the hints of hidden decay will blossom into in a decade or century. This revelation is terrible, and hastens the dissolution of all things, and can spread across a huge area. All told, the Spirits very much do their ghostly kind proud with their fearsomeness.

ZITOMER

Remember the Zitomer Institute for the Disturbed and Delusional from page 111? Well, guess what isn't all that it seems? The reason the Institute seems so off and creepy, the reason it seems to move, and the reason all the orderlies look an awful lot alike, is because they're all part of the same entity.

PERSONALITY: Zitomer doesn't remember why he looks like a mental institution. He doesn't remember much anymore. At some point the shape offered unlimited feeding possibilities, because Zitomer is a psychovore, feeding on the emanations of madness. There was a time when he was free to roam. He almost remembers what that was like, before he got so fat and lazy, before he got so BIG. Zitomer is confused much of the time, and relies on others to do his thinking for him. Right now, he's letting Doctor Shanker handle that side of things, which is especially disturbing, when you consider he's by far the most powerful monster in the Vale.

FAVORITE THING: Supping on the delicious auras of the insane.

FAVORITE PLACE: He's his own favorite place.

WAY TO HIDE: He's so big, he hides in plain sight. Almost everyone thinks he's just a big building.

MONSTROUS BITS

Locations 1–2: East Wing 8d (Useful: fold space to keep people wandering around lost; Tough x7).

Location 3–4: West Wing 8d (Useful: make time pass faster or slower for those inside; Tough x7).

Locations 5–6: Special Treatment Room 6d (Attacks; Useful: warp minds in tasty ways; Useful: restrain unruly patients; Gnarly x3; Tough x3).

Location 7: Orderlies 5d (Attacks; Defends; Useful: grab you; Useful: eyes and ears; Area 3d; Tough x3; Spray).

Location 8: Nurses 5d (Useful: treat injury and sickness; Useful: sooth and calm people; Awesome x2; Tough x3).

Location 9–10: Administrator's Office 8d (Attacks: psychic blast; Defends: disturbing illusions; Useful: omniscience within the grounds; Useful: uncanny insight into the minds of the mad; Sharing; Wicked Fast x3).

WHAT ZITOMER CAN DO: Zitomer is *huge* and *tough*. Hurting him is pretty hard. He's so big that it might be easier to treat his monstrous locations as separate sources of peril (see page 32). If an orphan is attacked by orderlies, damage to them would simply be tracked against that one hit location, not targeted based on the height of a roll.

His east and west wings can totally mess with someone's head in a subtle way, warping space and time. His Special Treatment Room is *nasty*. The snapping restraints can hold down even thrashing monsters, and the special treatments are never pleasant. His orderlies patrol the grounds, acting as his eyes and ears (and his grabbing hands). His nurses care for his collection of tasty madmen, keeping them fit and healthy (in body, at least). Ensconced in the Administrator's Office—Zitomer's nerve center, literally—a human ally has great and terrible powers and insights into the minds of men.



THE JANUARY BOYS

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH

On a cold, snowy day in early January, six orphans arrived at the Candlewick Home for the Unwanted and Unloved more or less at the same time. They quickly found themselves lumped together by earlier arrivals and staff. Somehow the stupid adults assumed just because they all arrived together, they must be destined to be oh-so-wonderful friends. They quickly picked up the title The January Boys, and were assigned adjacent rooms, the same dining table, and the same chore routes. More irritating still for half the Boys is that they are, in fact, girls.

These pregenerated characters are ready to play if your players don't have time to make up their own orphans from scratch.



DOROTHY ("DOTTY") DRUEY

She Sees Dead People

QUOTE: "Shuuuu! Stop talking! People will think I'm a *nutter* if you keep talking to me in class!"

IMAGE: A huge-eyed girl who looks perpetually like a half-drowned cat, even when bone dry. She's cutting her eyes to the left and looking quite worried about what she sees, invisible to everyone else. Her coat is much too big for her and the sleeves hang down well past her hands, making it look suggestively like an unbound straightjacket.

PERSONALITY: Dotty seems crazy. She's always starting and jumping because of people nobody else can see, and then shouting at them for frightening her. She has a firm policy that if persuasion doesn't work, running away very fast is the next best option.

She's really quite nice, even if she comes over as morbid rather than crazy when you realize the stuff she sees, and the invisible people she's talking to, aren't just painted on the inside of her own skull but rather upon the thin membrane between life and death.

STATS AND SKILLS

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

Guts 3 (Wind +0, Courage +2, Wrestling +0)

Hands 2 (Shop +0, Punching +0, Block +0)

Brains 3 (Out-Think +2, Remember +0, Notice +0, *Twilight Eyes* +2)

Face 4 (Charm +2, Putdown +0, Connive +2, *Graven Speech* +2)

CREEPY SKILLS

Twilight Eyes 2d (Useful: see dead people).

Graven Speech 2d (Attacks; Useful: harangue the dead).

Dotty can see dead people, and she can yell at them until they do what she wants. She's quite persuasive, or at least her voice so annoys the dead that they obey her. There are usually enough aimless spooks around that in a tight spot she can demand that one conk a foe of hers in the head with a teapot or something.

ECHOES: Old Photographs 3d; Smell of a Coming Storm 2d; Being Blinded by Her Own Hair 2d; Tinkling Music Box Song 2d; Wet, Squelchy Earth 1d.

KARL KRAKOV

The Amazing Rhino-Skin Kid

QUOTE: "What are you staring at, smoothface?"

IMAGE: Karl is a thick, wide-shouldered boy with short, prickly hair and jug-handle ears. But his most notable feature is the thick grey skin that covers his whole body, giving him a rough, inhuman appearance. He's ugly and thick and unsettling, and he's glaring right at you like he knows it and he's daring you to make a crack about it.

PERSONALITY: Karl is an angry kid, and who can blame him? He looks like a giant calloused fist. Which is apt, considering how willing he is to get into fights, which he usually wins—not by being bigger or stronger or punchier, but by taking everything the other guy can dish out and not backing down *ever*.

STATS AND SKILLS

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

Guts 5 (Wind +2, Courage +2, Wrestling +2, *Rhinoskin* +0)

Hands 4 (Shop +0, Punching +2, Block +0, *Rhinoskin* +0)

Brains 2 (Out-Think +2, Remember +2, Notice +0, *Rhinoskin* +0)

Face 1 (Charm +0, Putdown +0, Connive +0, *Rhinoskin* +0)

CREEPY SKILLS

Rhino Skin 0d (Defends; Tough x5).

Karl is blessed and cursed with thick rough grey skin like that of a rhino, and it's made him as thick and tough on the inside as on the outside. He's got one rank of Tough in all his hit locations, and this makes him pretty dramatically resilient, even if it makes his life a steaming pile of cruel drama.

ECHOES: Wrapped Up in Something, Almost Smothering 3d; the Scent of Drink on Someone's Breath 2d; Tumbling So He Can't Tell Which Way is Up 2d; Thornless Roses 2d; Whispered Promises 1d.

PRICILLA PETTY

She Hates You

QUOTE: “Why don’t you go stick your head in an anthill and die so the ants can eat your face off, because at least then you’ll be a use to someone!”

IMAGE: Pricilla would be pretty, if she weren’t perpetually scowling like the whole world has disappointed her. She wears a dress (only a little bit patched) with sunflowers on it, and carries a dolly with only one eye. She herself has one eye closed tight, and the other is popped wide, veiny, horrible.

PERSONALITY: Pricilla is all rage and spite and hate contained in a cute little girl body. She has a truly scandalous vocabulary, and a tongue so sharp the French would put it on crackers and serve it with a dry wine. While she does hate everybody, she recognizes the difference in “US” and “THEM” and reserves the extra special hate for “THEM.”

STATS AND SKILLS

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

Guts 3 (Wind +0, Courage +2, Wrestling +0)

Hands 2 (Shop +0, Punching +0, Block +0)

Brains 3 (Out-Think +2, Remember +0, Notice +2)

Face 4 (Charm +0, Putdown +2, Connive +2, *Evil Stinkeye* +2)

CREEPY SKILLS

Evil Stinkeye 2d (Attacks, Useful: inflict bad luck; Gnarly x2).

Pricilla’s power lets her bring misfortune and tragedy to people who annoy her. Which, considering just how many people annoy her, might make one wonder just how much of the tragedy of Candlewick might be her doing. Some of her curses manifest as lasting reductions in ability or immediate accidents (they inflict damage), while some are more circumstantial. The better the roll, the more precisely she can define just what happens to the people she hits with her whammy. See page 43 of *MONSTERS AND OTHER CHILDISH THINGS* for the ways a Useful ability can be used.

ECHOES: Tears of Frustration 3d; Overhearing Bad Things Said About Her 2d; Shadows Hiding People’s Faces 2d; Painfully Bright Light 2d; a Mumbled Nursery Rhyme 1d.

EDWARD PINKERMINE

The Spiderleg Boy

QUOTE: "Sure, I'll lend you a HAND."

IMAGE: A sallow, skinny boy in shorts with big boots. He wears a striped, bulky, oversized sweater in need of mending. In his left hand he's holding a suitcase. In his right hand, a baseball glove. And peeking out from behind him, holding an apple up near his face, is one of his hideous hairy clawed spider legs. He has three more sprouting from his back, usually hidden under the sweater.

PERSONALITY: Edward is so sarcastic, sometimes he finds it hard not to sass snidely, even when he wants to be sincere. If someone asks him if he wants ice cream, he'll say, "Oh, ICE CREAM. Sounds GREAT. Yeah, SURE I'd LOVE some," and then look worried.

STATS AND SKILLS

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

Guts 3 (Wind +0, Courage +2, Wrestling +0)

Hands 4 (Shop +2, Punching +0, Block +0, *Spider Legs* +3)

Brains 3 (Out-Think +2, Remember +2, Notice +2)

Face 3 (Charm +0, Putdown +2, Connive +0)

CREEPY SKILLS

Spider Legs 3d (Attacks; Defends; Useful: extra sets of hands).

Edward has four long, multi-jointed, hairy, hard spider legs sprouting from his back on either side of his spine. The clawed legs are dexterous, and Edward makes good use of the extra set of hands. This gross deformity can be hidden fairly well under a sweater or coat, but as Edward says, "Oh yeah, I LOVE being all knotted up under this thing. It's GREAT FUN not being able to move properly."

ECHOES: Scent of Lavender and Sage 3d; A Man in a Dark Blue Suit 2d; Aching Knuckles 2d; the Taste of Really Sour Pickles 2d; Birdsong at Night 1d.

HOWARD ("H.P.") POGUE

Draws with the Colors out of Space

QUOTE: "I made you a peekture."

IMAGE: A round, florid boy always carrying a lunch pail full of crayons and a notebook filled with scrap paper and doodles and drawings. His clothes are marked with smears of color from his drawing, his fingernails stained a rainbow with waxy scrapings. Even his lips are stained with color, because of his habit of absent-mindedly nibbling on his crayons while drawing. His eyes are mostly hidden behind big, thick, plastic-framed glasses that definitely make a certain statement. That statement is, "My eyeglasses were bought and paid for by a badly-run charitable institution."

PERSONALITY: H.P. comes over as blithe and somewhat dim, but he's not. He's just good at deflecting people away from making fun of his glasses or weight by getting them to make fun of his intelligence. He knows he's bright, so insults to his brain don't bother him because he knows they're not true. But when someone calls him "Fatty McFat Fat!" And asks, "What happened to your parents? Did you *eat* them?" It really hurts. When people make fun of his weight, he sometimes draws pictures of them. Pictures of them *and sharks*.

STATS AND SKILLS

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

Guts 3 (Wind +0, Courage +0, Wrestling +0)

Hands 3 (Shop 2, Punching +0, Block +0)

Brains 5 (Out-Think +2, Remember +2, Notice +2, *Crayons of Doom* +2)

Face 3 (Charm +2, Putdown +0, Connive +2)

CREEPY SKILLS

Crayons of Doom 2d (Attacks; Useful: drawn stuff happens; Awesome x2).

When H.P. wants to, he can draw things and make them come true. There are some limits to this, because the things he draws have to be at least possible. He can't draw alien space invaders coming down and melting the whole town. Well, he *can* draw this, but it won't happen. It takes him awhile to complete one of these drawings (5 – width hours), and the effects last until he makes another magic drawing or tears it up. See page 43 of *MONSTERS AND OTHER CHILDISH THINGS* for other uses of a Useful ability.

ECHOES: Wavering Glint of Reflected Light 3d; Gasping for Breath 2d; Frying Sausages 2d; Smiling When It Hurts 2d; Ochre 1d.

JOSIE WROUGH

Joe Joe the Wolf Girl

QUOTE: “Growl! Bark! Woof! Pant pant! Ha ha, I’m just kidding.”

IMAGE: Josie is a tall, fit, athletic, and good-looking girl. Except it’s hard to see how good looking she is, under all that hair. She could be The Wolfman’s daughter, except she’s not bothered by silver bullets (at least, no more than anyone else would be). She hunches a little, the way tall people sometimes do, and prefers trousers to dresses because they’re easier to move in.

PERSONALITY: Josie is *nice*, which makes her sort of painful to be around. She’s so obviously different, so obviously a freak, and people are so blatantly cruel to her, you find yourself wincing and cringing sympathetically. Yet she always seems to smile, and never seems to get her feelings hurt. Of course, her smile is somewhat *toothier* than a normal smile, and people who make fun of her do tend to suffer a statistically-unlikely number of tragedies (missing pets, destroyed property, and the occasional midnight attack by wild dogs). Yet Josie smiles and sometimes seems simple to the point of idiocy. A smart observer might ask himself a question about wolves and the kind of clothing they might prefer, were they to mix with sheep.

STATS AND SKILLS

Feet 4 (P.E. +2, Kicking +0, Dodging +2)

Guts 3 (Wind +2, Courage +2, Wrestling +0, *Thick Lustrous Coat* +1)

Hands 4 (Shop +0, Punching +0, Block +0, *Claw/Claw/Bite* +1)

Brains 2 (Out-Think +2, Remember +0, Notice +2, *Nose That Knows* +2)

Face 2 (Charm +2, Putdown +0, Connive +0)

CREEPY SKILLS

Nose That Knows 2d (Useful)

Claw/Claw/Bite 1d (Attack, Gnarly)

Thick Lustrous Coat 0d (Defends, Tough)

Josie’s Creepy Skills are pretty simple. She’s got hair all over, which on her torso (played here by the Guts hit location and stat) is thick enough to provide protection to the tune of Tough 1. Her nose is keen enough to track by scent, smell what you had for lunch last Friday, and know that you’re mad about something. Finally, those teeth and claws aren’t just for show. They can tear somebody up pretty badly.

ECHOES: The Smell of Fallen Leaves 3d; How Good It Feels to Run 2d; Feeling Hot and Feverish 2d; a Pressure Around Her Throat 2d; Unabashed Stares 1d.



INSTANT MYSTERIES

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH

Instant Mysteries is a gadget used to produce mystery plots, and a set of techniques for fleshing out these skeletal plots into full mystery adventures, and two ways of using the thing: one as a handy GM aid in building mystery adventures, the other in a crazy hippy collaborative real time way that builds mysteries on the fly.

THE MYSTERY OF MYSTERIES

Mysteries are always a bit tricky in role-playing games. You can plot and plan and come up with pages of devious notes and complex subplots, and within five minutes of starting, some pesky player looks at you and says, “She was hypnotized into killing her husband by the jealous carnie. Duh. Obvious.” And then you have to keep your poker face, and mentally chuck all your lovely prep into the garbage.

One of the pleasures of reading a mystery story is the thrill of vicarious revelation as the protagonist puts the pieces together, and the slightly less pure thrill of figuring it out before the protagonist so you can feel smart and superior, until you realize you’re feeling smart and superior to an entirely fictional imaginary character in a book.

To this end, it’s imperative that you don’t start feeling like your mystery story is a “ME vs. PLAYERS” sort of thing. Yes, they won’t act like you expect, and yes, they’ll stomp all over your lovely plot, and they’ll miss clues you think are eye-searingly obvious, but that’s OK. That’s why they’re there. Your role is to do three things:



YOU MEDDLING KIDS!

One thing to keep in mind when running mysteries in a *CANDLEWICK* game is that the investigating characters are mistrusted outsiders who are also kids. Adults don't take kids seriously. Kids who ask uncomfortable questions is disturbing enough. From a kid with eyes like windows into hideous infinities or one whose left arm, hidden under a grubby plaster cast, is really a mass of squamous tentacles, such questions are positively alarming.

As the township's favorite scapegoats, the orphans may find themselves investigating crimes to clear their own names, and sometimes may find a culprit turning the blame back upon them when they finally confront the guilty with the evidence of their crimes.



1. KEEP IT MOVING

Mystery adventures can stall, especially if they're built like an old computer adventure game where you have to click the mouse on every pixel on the screen to find the clues hidden in badly-rendered scenery. It isn't whether the orphans find the clues they need to advance to the next cool thing. The real question is *what does this cost them?*

To this end, the success or failure of rolls to find things and figure things out and ask the right questions is not essential to advancing in the adventure, but to having the vital information you need to resolve the thing satisfactorily (and *safely*). You might find out the culprit escaped into the forest but completely fail to find out she took a high-powered hunting rifle and a box of dynamite pilfered from the mine.

2. MAINTAIN TENSION

Sometimes knowing whodunit is only the first step. Proving it is a different matter altogether, especially when the people doing the proving are creepy little unloved orphan outsiders that nobody really trusts. In these cases, proving it before something tragic happens is where the real tension in the story comes from. If a mystery gets busted open too early, then shift focus. Suddenly the story is no longer an investigation. Now it's a race-against-the-clock thriller.

3. SMILE, NOD, AND LIE LIKE A RUG

When you get right down to it, what matters more than actually having a perfect plan is *being seen to have a perfect plan*. Even if they sink your battleship, don't let them know. If it'll produce a more exciting, fun, and fulfilling experience then change it all around without letting on, and nod like they did just as you expected, and then hit them with a twist that changes everything. Obviously you should only do this if it serves the fun, but some of my most successful sessions have hinged on me pretending it was all going perfectly to plan even when the players had rendered my notes and prep useless.

HOW TO USE INSTANT MYSTERIES

There are two ways to use Instant Mysteries in your game, almost opposite approaches to building mystery games. In the first mode, the GM employs Instant Mysteries to generate a mystery plot, and then prepares a general skeleton of the adventure before play begins in earnest. This is a more traditional technique. The GM plans the adventure, the mystery and the clues, and the players uncover what is hidden through their characters' actions. Many will find this method familiar, and in this mode Instant Mysteries serve to help a GM come up with plots.

The second method is more dynamic, and is a fair departure from the traditional. In this mode, before the mystery is resolved through play, *there is no predefined solution*. In this, it is very much like developing an orphan's history and

true nature, an unknown until revealed through play, created by players using the Illumination mechanics.

If the Instant Mysteries system is used this way, it provides a pool of elements which are drawn on during the actual game rather than before it begins. The GM works in real time to create emergent plot from the creative input of the players weaving story from what might otherwise be chaos. This role for the GM then is less *storyteller* and more *continuity editor*. You are tasked with tying it all together. Don't worry if it seems baffling and backwards right now. We'll explain it in less noodle-boiling detail later on.

METHOD THE FIRST: GENERATE PLOTS BEHIND THE SCENES

So, you wish to confound and confuse your clueless players with a convoluted conundrum of crime, eh? Yet when you draw up the bucket from the well of creativity, you find it dry but for a single ill-tempered salamander, representing metaphorically your distracting desire for a delicious doughnut or buttery pecan sandy. Relax your tired brain, grab up some dice, feed the salamander, and consult the following oracular gadget.

CLUES AND PARTIES INVOLVED

First you need to know how many dice to roll. Look over the orphans' sheets, examining their Echoes and any Relationships listed thereon. Select the ones you want to somehow tie into the mystery.

Echoes become **clues** used to help solve the case.

Relationships become the **Parties Involved** in the mystery. These are the people who will become Victims, Suspects, Witnesses, and Culprits. By selecting one or two from each orphan you ensure they are all invested in the mystery in an immediate way.

Your starting list of parties includes all the orphans and all the characters drawn in through Relationships. If you need more characters to flesh out the mystery, look first to characters linked to the ones drawn in through the orphans' Relationships. Then, if this doesn't fit the bill, select from the general population of Candlewick Vale. It is entirely possible, encouraged even, to work Candlewick's monsters into some of your mysteries.

Total the dice for all these Relationships up, and this gives you the Mystery Pool.

There's no reason the orphans themselves can't be Parties Involved (well, perhaps not as the victim of murder, unless they're Creepy in just the right way). Make sure to clear it with the player ahead of time if an orphan is going to be the culprit in a crime. Such a thing might make for a great twist at the end.



ECHOES AS CLUES

Normally a player decides when his orphan encounters one of his Echoes, and the insight from this chance (or not so chancy) experience becomes Illumination. How it works within a mystery is that the orphan will encounter his Echo, but it will serve to also illuminate the mystery. When such a clue is encountered and recognized, it works the same as if the player had chosen to use it: granting bonus dice and contributing to Illumination normally. Unlike other Echoes, one used as a clue can be tapped for bonus dice as often as desired during the mystery once it has been recognized as a clue.





A PUZZLE WRAPPED IN A MYSTERY WITH SPECIAL ENIGMA SAUCE

While they're working their way through the external mystery, each orphan has a mystery on the inside (at least so long as they have Echoes). They'll tap their Echoes for dice, and they'll gain Illumination, and sure as Cthulhu eats little green apples, someone will experience a Revelation before the mystery is solved.

This is *marvelous*.

Suddenly, they uncover a new Relationship, in all likelihood with someone entangled in the mystery with them. If they aren't already on the list of Parties Involved, they sure as sassafras are now. Add to this all the weirdness of the uncovered Relationship and its nature and strength.

Imagine the delicious tragedy of finding your long-lost mother, and then having to make the agonizing decision about what you will do about her terrible crime.



THE CRIME

Now that you have your dice pool, some Clues, and some Parties Involved, pick that pile of pollies up and throw 'em. Unlike other dice pools, a mystery can have more than ten dice. In fact, it's not a bad idea to go for more than ten, because then you'll have a guaranteed set.

On this roll, matching sets give you the **crime**. A crime is some kind of bad act which causes harm to others. The **height** determines the nature of the crime, and **width** determines its heinousness.

More than one set means this mystery involves more than one crime! Perhaps all were committed at the same time, perhaps one was committed to facilitate or conceal the other, or perhaps one was in response or in answer to the other. It's possible to have two entirely unrelated crimes intermingling and confusing each other all in the same mystery.

MOTIVES AND TWISTS

Look next to the unmatched lonely dice. These dice are used to determine the **motive** (or motives) for the crime, and to add **twists**. Each of these dice must be used.

Pick a motive first. Each crime can have its own motive, or they can have different motives. This will imply how the crimes relate to one another, suggesting plot.

Now, take the remaining dice and pick twists that complicate things in interesting ways.

The trick is to work out how the crime, motive, and twists fit into a plot, and the key here is figuring out which of the parties involved fill which role within the mystery.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Now that you have crime, motive, twists, and a full cast of characters, how does it all hang together?

We've included a handy Mystery Worksheet on page 157, which will help you keep all these things straight. Note down all the various elements as you figure them out. You can define some or all of the following for your mystery:

MYSTERY NAME: ("The Case of the Blank Blank.")

PARTIES INVOLVED: Everyone linked to the mystery, including all the investigating orphans, any Relationships brought in for dice, and any supporting characters added by the GM to round out the cast.

CLUES: All the Echoes brought, plus any further clues added in to round out the plot.

CRIME: The type of heinousness of the crime, and a brief descriptor.

MOTIVE: The motive for the crime

TWISTS: Any twists thrown up to confound things further.

THE SKINNY: What's really going on, general notes, and behind-the-scenes facts.

VICTIM: Who suffered as a result of the crime?

SUSPECTS: Who might have committed the crime?

PERPETRATOR: Who really did commit the crime?

WITNESSES: Who saw something?

SCENES: The core scenes needed to assemble all the clues, clear all the suspects (but one), interview the witnesses, and have any action and adventure needed to reach the final revelation of who's responsible and why.

THE VICTIM AND THE SCENES

You've got all the characters involved, so the next step is to figure out their roles within the plot. First, decide the victim. Who suffers as a result of this crime? Combined with the motive, this should point you to a culprit, or at least a list of suspects. It's possible for a character to be put into more than one category; one might be a witness and a suspect.

When you have the basic crime sketched out, think about how the twists affect it. Now grab the Scene Worksheet (page 158), and start creating the outline to the investigation. Each scene fits into one of the following categories:

1. **Clue:** The scene's primary purpose is to reveal something.
2. **Twist:** The scene introduces (or in some way hinges on) a twist.
3. **Reveal:** The scene is about putting it together and the fallout from that.
4. **Action:** The scene is a tangent into familiar territory: running and screaming, kicking and biting.
5. **Red Herring:** The scene exists to throw the players off the scent. Make sure not to overuse these, because they can be frustrating if they delay the fun unreasonably.

On the Scene Worksheet, you'll define some or all of the following for each scene (as much as you need to get a handle on it):

NAME: What's the scene called?

TYPE: What type of scene is this (clue, twist, action, reveal, red herring)?

DESCRIPTION: A rundown on the scene in general terms.

CHARACTERS: Who from the parties involved is brought into this scene?

COLOR: Details, motifs, and bricabrac to flesh the scene out sometimes. This might include some running theme which seems to haunt the whole investigation.

THE SKINNY: The real dirt on why things are the way they are, and why people do and say the things they do and say.

LINKS: Which scenes connect to this one, and how. Clues are the most common link to another scene.

And there you go! You have a lovely mystery in which the orphans are powerfully connected to some of the people involved. You have a few core scenes, as many as you think you need, and enough structure to improvise around as needed.



RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTIES INVOLVED

The way a Relationship is affected by a mystery depends on the role that character takes in the mystery.

VICTIM: Solving the mystery will allow the Relationship to change for the better. Failing to solve it will change the Relationship for the worse. The player can tap this Relationship for bonus dice when moving to solve the mystery if the Relationship is positive, but can tap only them to frustrate or derail the investigation if the Relationship is antagonistic.

WITNESS: Solving or failing to solve the mystery won't affect the nature of the Relationship, unless their evidence is in some way harmful to them, and it is revealed. The Relationship can be used normally for bonus dice. They usually represent insight gained by the witness' information.

SUSPECT: Exonerating a suspect will generally improve the Relationship. Bonus dice can be used to help convict a hated character or clear a loved one.

CULPRIT: Finding out you have a Relationship with a culprit will almost inevitably cause shock to it.



INSTANT MYSTERIES

Height	Width 2	Width 3	Width 4	Width 5
1: Damned Dirty Lies	Spread nasty rumors	Made libelous statements	Swore false testimony	Framed a victim for a terrible crime
2: Traffic With the Occult and the Unnatural	Gained advantage through black magic	Worships an abominable Elder Thing	Unleashed a terrible chthonic menace	Slave to a beast from the Abyss
3: Corruption and Betrayal of the Public Trust	Persecuting undesirables	Looking the other way	Taking bribes	Sold the welfare and health of the whole town
4: The Lure of Vice, the Chains of Addiction	Indulges far more than temperance or moderation dictate	Squanders time and money in pursuit of vice	Suffers terrible withdrawals when forced to abstain	Utterly enslaved to vice
5: Infidelity	Had an affair, now ended	Maintains an occasional and secret dalliance	Once had a secret romance which produced illegitimate issue	Enjoys multiple and continuing infidelities
6: Swindling and the Confidence Game	Made a promise for services unfulfilled	Used schemes to bankrupt a victim	Left a string of paupers behind	Lied and swindled a great fortune
7: Theft	Five-fingering and shoplifting	Stole by burglary and housebreaking	Robbed individual citizens by threat of violence	Armed robbery of a bank or other institution
8: Embezzlement	Dipped into the petty cash	Profited mightily at the company's expense	Raided the pension funds	Brought the company to the brink of ruin
9: Violence	Made vicious and explicit threats	Delivered a brutal beating	Regularly uses physical violence	An assault so violent, only circumstance and luck keep it from being murder
10: Murder!	A long-hidden killing	A freshly-slain victim	One murder to cover another	Bodies in the crawl-space, heads in the freezer, fava beans on to simmer



Height Motive

1	REVENGE: To get some payback for a wrong or a perceived wrong.
2	ACCIDENT: "I didn't mean to do it!"
3	KICKS: For fun, for laughs, to see what it feels like to do a bad thing.
4	FEAR OF EXPOSURE: To conceal something worse.
5	STASIS: To keep things the way they are, holding off terrifying change.
6	INSANITY: BeCaUsE tHe VoiCEs Sald to!
7	OBSESSION: Because you can't stop thinking about it, so you have to act.
8	JEALOUSY: Because someone has something (or someone else) you don't have.
9	GREED: For money, profit, or personal gain.
10	CRUELTY: Because doing wrong and hurting people feels so so good.

Height	Twist 1	Twist 2	Twist 3
1	A witness is lying	A false confession	Framed for the crime itself
2	The dead bear witness	A debt to the devil comes due	. . . by magic
3	Official roadblocks and obstruction	Threatened with legal action	Intimidation by the authorities
4	A secret addiction	A stash of contraband	Out-of-town suppliers
5	A lover scorned	A polygamous revelation	Unexpected paternity
6	Betrayed by an ally	Someone unexpected offers aid	A true identity revealed
7	Missing evidence	Evidence out of reach, under lock and key	Robbed at gunpoint
8	Two sets of books	Mob justice	Creative accounting
9	Attack by thugs	A suspect flees	A suspect attacks
10	A witness is murdered!	A stranger's corpse	A faked death!



PREVIOUSLY ON . . .

If you want to ape the episodic nature of a weekly TV show, one dirty GM trick is to make the teaser not an introduction to a new situation, but a recap of the previous session of play—one that never actually happened. You can start things *in medias res* with the orphans dangling in terrible peril.

Another approach is the REMEMBER WHEN episode. Rather than play through the mystery in real time, present it in flashbacks as the characters recount the adventure. While sitting around sharing some pilfered cookies, they take turns talking about an exciting shared experience. Someone says, “Oh, oh! That’s when we fell into the flooded basement!” Flash back to a scene which begins falling into cold wet darkness.

Then you have the INTERVIEW episode. Things begin with all the orphans sitting outside the heavy doors of Dr. Candlewick’s study, waiting to be called in, one by one, to explain their part in some fracas. Cue the players in this way by asking loaded and leading questions: “So, can you explain how the library caught fire?” They player starts to answer, and then: flashback. Even better, there’s no need for every story they tell to even be true at all within the game world!



METHOD THE SECOND: GENERATE MYSTERY PLOTS IN REAL TIME

With this method, you use the One-Roll Mystery gadget to produce new scenes and scene elements on the fly. The mystery itself has a dice pool which defines the difficulty faced by the orphans when trying to unravel it. The mystery is almost a thing, a shadowy creature made of circumstance and information and lies and hate. Is that a metaphor? Hrm? Do you think? I’m not saying.

In this method, the GM grabs some elements off the orphans’ sheets as previously described (Relationships for parties involved and Echoes for clues), but players can volunteer to add in others if they wish. There’s a powerful advantage to a big Mystery Pool, as you’ll soon see. List all these things on the Mystery Worksheet. These are clues and parties involved.

THE MYSTERY AND THE TEASER

Once you have a big giant pool of Mystery Dice, roll them. But unlike other types of rolls in the game, **these dice stay on the table**. It helps to have plenty of dice for this trick, obviously, and you can get by with writing the numbers down, but there’s something tactilely satisfying about seeing the Mystery Dice, and having them there to grab and manipulate.

These dice represent all the elements of the mystery which you and your players will create as you go. They’re your guides and inspiration. And add some “game” to the “role playing”.

Pull out at least one set to represent the crime, and introduce it in a special scene called the **Teaser**. A teaser is like the first few minutes of a TV show before the credits and the interminably-long commercial break. It’s a hook to get the orphans tangled up in the mystery. You may need to pick a victim for the teaser (or less frequently, a culprit). If you do this, note it down on the sheet.

The teaser gets things rolling, and sets the tone for the thing. It may or may not involve the orphans themselves. It could be something as simple as a little description and narration, or could involve actual play with rolls and stuff.

INSIGHT

The key to using Instant Mysteries in this way is a special mechanic called an Insight roll. Broadly, an Insight roll can be just about any kind of Stat + Skill combination, which a player creatively describes as leading to some kind of discovery.

One orphan with scads of Brains and Notice spots things everyone else misses. Another with Face and Connive might trick someone into revealing more than they intend. A third, ugly and thick and frustrated by all his good-looking brainy friends, punches a hole in the wall with his Hands and Punching, and what does he find hidden behind the paneling?

And oh, the weird and wonderful, terrifically terrible ways a creepy, creepy orphan can use her creepy, Creepy Skills to gain information she should never

know, insight her soul should never have to bear. With the right eyes, you can see the silently howling shade of a murdered woman following her killer and showing him with spectral tears.

The Insight roll does something pretty funky, and if you haven't played games which invert the player/GM relationship before, it'll be as shocking and unsettling as finding your Grandma waiting at home for you with a fresh baked apple pie. "But," you say, "My Grandma has been *dead for years*." Ah, you see how unsettling this might be, then.

Basically, success on an Insight roll lets the player say that something is true. If they roll well enough they can say what they find, what it means, and how it'll help them solve the mystery.

HOW DOES AN INSIGHT ROLL WORK?

Each player can make one Insight roll per scene if they want. They're not obligated to do it. There are three things you can get out of an Insight roll by answering one or more of the following questions. You can answer up to width – 1 questions.

WHAT DO I FIND?

You get to describe what your orphan uncovers. You can make this as specific as you like (if you have an idea of a cool direction to take things), or you can make it vague and intriguing. You can't draw conclusions from it at this point, but you can make it as suggestive as you like. This allows you to do one of the following:

Add a Clue: Add a new Clue to the list on the Mystery Sheet and check the FOUND box next to it.

Uncover a Clue: Check the FOUND box next to an existing Clue. If this clue is also an Echo, then the orphan it is drawn from gains a point of Illumination *and* gets added to the Parties Involved list. It just got personal for one of the characters.

Add a Party Involved: Evidence suggests someone previously unknown is involved in the mystery, possibly complicating matters. This may be one of the NPC inhabitants of the Vale, one of the other Orphans, or even your own Orphan.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

If you can answer this question, you can reach a decisive conclusion about how a clue or element fits into the overall mystery. If you also find something with the same Insight roll, you can say what that means. If you only find meaning, then you can reach a conclusion about something already on the Mystery Sheet. This allows you to do one of the following with a found clue:

Add a Party: Add a character to the Parties Involved list based on your interpretations of a Clue or event. This can be anyone previously encountered, another orphan, yourself, or a character that you thought was cool in your skim of the Candlewick book.

Add a Witness or Suspect: Add one of the Parties Involved to either the Witness List or the Suspect List based on your interpretations of a Clue or event.

Make a Witness (or Suspect) a Suspect (or Witness): Move a party from the Witness List to the Suspect List, or vice versa.



FRAMING A WHAT NOW?

"Framing a scene" is just I'm So Hip Indie Game Slang for "outline something that'll happen soon." It doesn't take too much, just a little lead on how the clue points logically to a new scene.

If you find petals from a cherry tree at one place (a clue), you could then say, "The mayor has cherry trees in his walled-off garden. We'll need to go there and compare these to see if they match."

Or, if you're itching for a monster fight to break up all this boring, navel-gazing nonsense, you could say, "What starts like the sound of rain falling resolves into the sound of hundreds, possibly thousands of little feet coming closer and closer and closer and *closer!*"

Finding clues is cool this way, because you can outline an event or a situation you want to play through, all while your GM grits his teeth, and wishes he had all his precious power and control back. Haw haw haw!





YOUR STRANGE CUSTOMS MAKE ME FEEL ITCHY AND UNCOMFORTABLE

This on-the-fly use of Instant Mysteries isn't for everyone, and that's totally cool. It *IS* a little weird, and it *is* sort of risky, because lots of people are really happy with a traditional divide between the GM and the players.

Some people hate being put on the spot and asked for improv creative input. They might happily write detailed histories of the setting and their characters, but resent the GM doing something that can be seen as unloading his sacred duties around the table onto them.

These folks find it irritating and frustrating if they make a successful roll to look for clues, and they say "What do I find?" and the GM answers back, "I don't know. What *do* you find?" That's cool: stifferent drokes for fifferent dolks. Make sure everyone is hip to this thing before trying it out.

But having used a system like this with a group willing to give the weird

Nominate a Prime Suspect: Nominate one of the Suspects as the mystery's Prime Suspect. Another player might change this if their Insight allows, but until then that Suspect is the most likely culprit.

Identify the Culprit: Name the Prime Suspect (if there is one yet) as the Culprit. Twists or additional crimes might make this strange, but with this Insight you know whodunnit. But remember, sometimes knowing the culprit is miles away from being able to prove it.

HOW DOES IT HELP?

Does this insight give you an advantage down the line? If so, in a later roll that's related somehow to this one, you may flip one die to any value you like after rolling the rest. For example, you might realize just how dangerous a suspect is, and so when later he tries to chop you up with a big cleaver, you can use this advantage to help you Dodge.

USING MYSTERY DICE

Do you remember all those Mystery Dice still hanging out there on the table? Here's where it gets interesting.

You can grab any single Mystery Die or any set you like, to widen (or create) a set in an Insight roll by picking mystery dice with the same height as your roll.

These dice allow you to take some additional control over the course of the mystery, and make changes to the Mystery Worksheet beyond those allowed by the Insight Roll itself.

Here are the extra cool things you can do when you use mystery dice in your Insight Roll:

Suggest a Motive: You can decide that the evidence you uncover suggests a motive—the one indicated by the height of the die you grab. If there's already a Motive on the sheet, then you can decide if the one you uncover replaces it or serves as an additional motive for added complexity.

Add a Twist: You can add a single twist from one of the three Twist Tables to bring in some amusing complications. You get to frame a scene to describe how this happens.

A New Crime: You can uncover a new crime, somehow related to the first crime or the events of the Teaser. This crime has a severity and nature based on the width and height of your Insight Roll, so it might be much worse than the original one. Start investigating shoplifting and uncover murder, addiction and pacts with the Devil.

The GM can grab some mystery dice now and again to add twists or motives or additional crimes if it'll make things more interesting or more cohesive.

Regardless of who grabs them, remove mystery dice from the table once used.

SOLVING THE MYSTERY

Once all the Mystery Dice are used up, then just about everything that's going to be known about the mystery is on the worksheet. If it hasn't happened already, the GM and players need to shift focus to tying it up and seeing that it makes some kind of sense. Further Insight Rolls can narrow the suspect list or name a prime suspect or even a culprit.

But life is ambiguous and complicated. Sometimes there just is no easy answer. If at the end of the adventure there's no clear pattern to the mysterious events, then perhaps it's one of those disturbing situations where reason and insight fail to push back the darkness. It can be revisited later if future events shed unexpected light.

And, again, knowing the truth isn't the same thing as being able to prove it. Sometimes naming the culprit is where the mystery begins.

Confused? Take a breath and wipe your brow, Dear Reader, for here we have an example of how to use Instant Mysteries in the Second Method.

THE CASE OF THE WRECKED ROOM AND THE DECAPITATED DOLLY

My players are anxious to play, but my detailed game prep notes were eaten by aggressive Formosan termites while I was the worse for drink on the previous evening. Cursing my insectile ill fortune, I slouch to the game table under a cloud of foul temper. Then I realize I can fall back on Instant Mysteries!

I smile to cover my consternation, and announce to my eager players a clever, cunning, and quite deliberate change in the evening's usual entertainments: We'll be playing a dynamically-generated spontaneous mystery. Huzzah!

Before the January Boys (see page 133) can tease the delicate bones of truth from beneath the paws of the snoring tiger of criminality, I need to build my mystery pool, and kick things off with a teaser.

I grab one Echo from each orphan. Each goes on the Clues list and adds a die to the mystery pool. None of the orphans have Relationships yet, so I jot a few names down on the Parties Involved by the expedient method of randomly picking them from the book. I end up with 14 Mystery Dice and the following:

CLUES

Old Photographs
Scent of Drink on Someone's Breath
Bad Things Overheard
Man in a Dark Blue Suit
Frying Sausages
Smell of Fallen Leaves

PARTIES INVOLVED

Captain Brian Preach
Mortimer Coalblack Jr.
Gorman Sternacker
Wisteria Candlewick
Brodie Bloom
Poe

thing a try, I confidently say that you'll be thrilled and amazed at the cool things your friends will come up with. That's the real goal with this system: to capture that rising excitement you get when something chaotic starts to make sense—when order and story rise from the primordial soup and evolve flippers, then feet, and then turn into dinosaurs, and then pirates come and tame the dinosaurs and ride them into battle against their ancestral enemies in the Robot Empire.

The role of the GM in this scheme is to think fast and weave all the stuff the players come up with into something coherent. While this seems crazy hard, I've found that order emerges almost on its own. It takes the basic GM techniques that you use to compensate for players being too clever by half and outguessing your plot, and it makes that technique *everything*. Here you've got NO prep and NO notes to fall back on. The Mystery Dice hit the table, and from that, things begin. The whole of CANDLEWICK is there when you need character, places or organizations.

Stay on your toes, think fast. It's sometimes hard, and certainly tiring, but it can sure be worth it.





Now I roll the dice to get the Crime and the Teaser. I pick up all 14 dice in two heaping handfuls and recklessly strew them across the table, resulting in . . .

10, 8, 2x7, 3x6, 3x5, 4, 3, 2x2

Wow, that's a lot of sets. That's a lot of CRIMES. Woe, woe, the immorality of the modern age.

I look over my crime options, and see I've got the following to choose from:

3x5: INFIDELITY (a secret romance which produced illegitimate issue).

3x6: SWINDLING (left a string of paupers behind).

2x7: THEFT (stole by burglary and housebreaking).

So many choices. In a flash of inspiration, I decide to go with THEFT, and describe the following Teaser to hook my glassy-eyed players into the mystery.

"Chapel proved as lugubrious as usual, with the odd theology of the Candlewick clan well mangled by the headmaster's high-shelf vocabulary and confused pauses. With the final "amen," everyone retires gratefully to their rooms to dress for brunch. But upon arriving at your adjoining dormitories, what do you find? Doors ajar! Rooms ashambles, clearly rifled and tossed, precious keepsakes missing or broken! This tiny sanctum of personal space, this refuge from the world, violated. And to insult your injury, some villain has stolen you poor shabby dolly's wee head!"

I watch the outrage and indignation replace the previous distracted looks upon my players' faces, and they settle into their orphan personae to seek some righteous recompense for this egregious discommodity.

"Does anyone wish to seek some Insight in the shambles of your rooms?"

"Yes!" cries the player of Dotty Druey. "I'm going to look under the bed where Little Boy Ghost hides, and ask him what he saw."

"What will you roll?"

She answers, "I'm going to roll Dotty's Face plus Graven Speech. That gives me six dice. I get . . . oh,

sassafras! I got a 10, 8, 4, 3, 2, and a 1. No sets.”

“Do you want to grab any of these Mystery Dice?”

She thinks, then “Yes. I’ll grab that 10, for a 2x10.”

“That means you can answer one question. Which insight question do you want to answer?”

Pursing her lips, your player answers, “I’ll answer WHAT DOES IT MEAN?, and I’ll use the Old Photographs clue.”

“Isn’t that one of Dotty’s Echoes?”

“Yes. That means I add Dotty to the Parties Involved, right?”

“Yep. And you get to do something else.”

She checks the list of things you can do when answering that question, and says, “I’m going to move Wisteria Candlewick onto the Suspects list.”

“And how does this all come out of your conversation with Little Ghost Boy?”

“Hmm. I ask him what he saw, but he’s too scared to talk. Instead, from under the bed a series of inexplicably familiar photographs are flipped out onto the floor. The first is the Candlewick family, when the kids were really young. The face of the woman in the picture is smeared and out of focus, but the baby held in Doctor Candlewick’s arms has little devil horns drawn on it with ink. It’s Wisteria Candlewick when she was a baby.”

“You also get to add something because of the number 10 mystery die you used in your roll. A Twist or Motive.”

“Oh, cool. OK, I’m going to pick a Motive. Ten gives me CRUELTY.”

“Nice. How did Dotty reach that conclusion?”

“I look at the room, the fear which has consumed Little Ghost Boy, the violence on display in the room, and the sheer nastiness of the things broken or stolen. I say, ‘Whoever did this wanted to hurt us and to make us sad and afraid. Whoever did this is a big jerk-face.’”

From this exchange and single Insight Roll, we have a Suspect and a Motive: a girl known to be cruel to orphans and inferiors, suspected of a crime that was motivated by the desire to cause pain.

But with 11 Mystery Dice still on the table, and the possibility of five more Insight rolls in this scene alone, what are the chances that this simple and pat conclusion turns out to be the true one?

THE CANDLEWICK HOME FOR THE UNWANTED AND UNLOVED

OFFICIAL RECORD

Orphan's Name: _____

Age: _____

Quote: _____

Image: _____

Personality: _____

Illumination: _____

Relationship: _____

Complications: _____

Relationship: _____

Complications: _____

Relationship: _____

Complications: _____

Relationship: _____

Complications: _____

Echoes and Notes: _____

Stats and Skills

Feet _____

Hands _____

Guts _____

Brains _____

Face _____

Insults, Injuries, and Still More Notes: _____

Creepy Skills _____

Dice _____

Stat _____

Qualities and Extras _____

LINKS WORKSHEET

THE DREADFUL SECRETS OF CANDLEWICK MANOR

Character Name: _____

Page Number: _____

Immediate Motivation/Goal: _____

Long-Term Motivation/Goal: _____

Mystery Role: _____

☐ Victim

☐ Witness

☐ Suspect

☐ Culprit

Relationships with Pathetic Children (PCs):

Dirty Secrets and Other Notes: _____

LINKED TO WHOM & HOW

BENGALO BARENSCRE: _____

BURMAEO BAREMSCRE: _____

BRODIE BLUME: _____

WIDOW BOELEEN: _____

GRETCHEN BOMBRIENFELD: _____

MAYOR LUCAS BOMBRIENFELD: _____

MAY BOMBRIENFELD: _____

BRICKSHANK: _____

SHAMUS BROODENKINE: _____

DR. MILES CANDLEWICK: _____

MILES CANDLEWICK JR. : _____

WISTERIA CANDLEWICK: _____

CHAWNAMBLER: _____

MORTIMER COALBLACK JR.: _____

REV. DICK CRICKEN: _____

JUDY PEACH CRIMMIN: _____

JURGEN DRAKENSLAGER: _____

DR. RUDYARD DRAVENFIRTH: _____

FARMER MAGRUDER'S PRIZE GOURD: _____

MR. FIDDLE: _____

MATRON FLORA: _____

HANSEL FOXGOOD: _____

LUSCIOUS GAUNT: _____

PATSY GAUNT: _____

PADDY GOMISH: _____

MARGON MOON GONNOMAN: _____

RAIS GONNOMAN: _____

STAR GONNOMAN: _____

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HERBERT KAVIN: _____

PEARL-ANNE KNOTTENFAUST: _____

ICARUS LEE: _____

DAVID MAGRUDER: _____

PAUL MAGRUDER: _____

MOONBOY: _____

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JULES OUSERUS: _____

THE PACK: _____

DEPUTY PACKHAMMER: _____

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POE: _____

CAPTAIN BRIAN PREACH: _____

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ARCHIE RICHWISH: _____

DAN RICHWISH: _____

GIUSEPPE SANGRIOLI: _____

DOCTOR WILABEY SHANKER: _____

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MADLINE STANDISH: _____

MERCER STANDISH: _____

GORMAN STERNACKER: _____

SUSAN STERNACKER: _____

JOHN STUMPS: _____

SHERIFF ROSCOE TOULOUSE: _____

SCOUT TOULOUSE: _____

BEATRICE VILLIVERT: _____

ZITOMER: _____

PAUL ZUKER: _____

LOCALE WORKSHEET

— THE DREADFUL SECRETS OF CANDLEWICK MANOR —

Place Name: _____

Page Number: _____

Characters Likely to Be There: _____

Crime Scenery: _____

Dirty Secrets and Other Notes: _____

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THE DREADFUL SECRETS OF CANDLEWICK MANOR

Mystery Name: _____

Motive: _____

Mystery Dice: _____

Twists: _____

Parties Involved: _____

Victim: _____

Witnesses: _____

Clues (Check If Found):

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

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☐ _____

☐ _____

Crime: _____

Suspects: _____

Culprit: _____

The Skinny: _____

Scenes: _____

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Scenes: _____

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— THE DREADFUL SECRETS OF CANDLEWICK MANOR —

Scene Name: _____
Scene Type: _____
Description: _____

Locale: _____

Parties Involved: _____

Color: _____
The Skinny: _____

Links to Other Scenes and How They Are Linked: _____

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You hold in your hands a tale of sorrow and woe, waiting only for you to tell it.

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