

Outbreak: UNDEAD..

zombie survival role playing game

presents

Things That Go
Crash In the
Night

THE PUZZLEMASTER

By Christopher J. De La Rosa

The Puzzlemaster

The Puzzlemaster is a devious mastermind of great intelligence and sadistic tendencies. Despite this, The Puzzlemaster has a bizarre sense of fair play. He often lures scavengers into his twisted games with the promises of supplies, and often they never leave alive. He derives amusement from seeing people agonize through his trials and feels no pity for those that die because they were not able to accomplish the tasks he gives them.

To those that do escape, The Puzzlemaster often has a begrudging respect for them and leaves them rewards proportional to the character's performance at the door as the survivors exit. Perhaps he leaves them a note of encouragement and congratulations... which may inadvertently take on a sick tone if any of the survivors' companions died in the process of playing this "game". Despite this, The Puzzlemaster is actually sincere in their praise as they are genuinely a sociopath who does not see the problem of letting people who he feels unworthy die in one of his demented games.

Running "The Game"

To run one of The Puzzlemaster's demented games, it is best to have it as part of another Mission. A party may be totally unaware (and in fact, should be unaware) that they are in any imminent threat. A group may get suspicious when a GM starts to hoard Risk to allow the purchase of the Hazard that kicks off the whole event, but any number of grandiose Hazards can play through the imagination of the players. Part of that kind of tension is a deliberate effort to have players be unsettled during long periods where Hazards are not played and things are going a little TOO well.

Generally, this should be a cooperative effort where players must work together in order to survive the trials ahead of them. This teamwork can be punctuated by terror-stricken moments where the group is separated from each other, but the goal should be the same as any session, to find some enjoyment in the terror of survival horror. But instead of a threat they are used to, the characters find themselves trying to survive the trials born from the imagination of a madman rather than day-to-day survival in a world overrun by the undead.

Hazard

To introduce "The Game", a GM must be able to use the "House of Puzzles" Hazard.

BEASTS

⚠️ 10

A rusty gate screeches open and snarling tortured animals burst forth and attack the characters.

Deploy 2d5! Size 0 Beast opponents.

FIREARM

⚠️ 15

The characters trip over a wire that, with a series of pulleys, pulls the trigger of a gun aimed at them.

One character takes [■■■ Pi, SI] from a hidden firearm. Characters can spend ⚔️15 to free the firearm from its trap, but it will be unloaded.

HOUSE OF PUZZLES

⚠️ 100

The survivors' mission was inexplicably a lure for one of The Puzzlemaster's devious games. The characters are either trapped, gassed or systematically abducted only to find themselves in a dank, labyrinthine house of horrors with instructions as to what possible means they can get out alive.

The Encounter table and all E% are replaced by the series of Traps and Puzzles listed here. The ⚠️ cost is not actually spent on the House of Puzzles per se. The GM has the ⚠️ 100 used for this Hazard (and any other ⚠️ they have access to) to spend on Traps. To get out alive, each player must solve ⚔️100 worth of puzzles.

Characters can take whatever they find in the process along with a reward of ⚡200. Upon solving the required puzzles, The characters will be free and will likely be shaken, but The Puzzlemaster will likely never be seen or fought if the characters play along. While this may seem unfair, playing along will also grant the best chance of escape. Breaking The Puzzlemaster's rules will likely anger him and will force him to take lethal measures as punishment. Either that, or The Puzzlemaster has planned with tremendous efficiency many contingency plans that will trigger traps that would not have otherwise been sprung had the characters played by his rules.

Breaking The Puzzlemaster's protocol at any time will immediately grant the GM ⚠️ 5d5! to use however they please on traps or encounters.

Traps

ISOLATION

⚠️ 25

Through some devious planning, the Puzzlemaster has found a way to have a passageway seal when one character strays away from the group. This will isolate one character from the rest of the group to face some challenges alone.

One character must suffer the trials of puzzles that requires at least ⚔️15 before they can be reunited with the rest of the party.

PIT

⚠️ 5

The character falls into a pit and must get assistance to get out without further risk of injury.

Character or characters Fall and take [■■■ BI] damage. A {Balance%} check can prevent ■ worth of damage per (+).

SPRING LOADED

⚠️ 10

The characters trigger a pressure plate or tripwire that causes a spring-loaded trap to plunge a blade into the body of the character.



One character takes [Red][Red] Pi]. A character can spend ⚔5 to free the cutting/stabbing mechanism to use as a tool or weapon.

THE RULES

⚠ 10

The Puzzlemaster introduces a rule into their game that the survivors are to follow unerringly. This is generally a mild handicap, but under duress, the rule is often overlooked or forgotten. Breaking it will impose a great penalty.

A GM will make known a strange rule that The Puzzlemaster inflicts upon them. This is generally a roleplaying demand as opposed to a mechanical disadvantage. If it is a mechanical disadvantage, then the GM specifies one {SC%} or piece of gear that is either restricted or used only under very specific instructions or with a [Black] penalty.

However, it is best if the rule has a tactile quality to it, such as one player only being able to communicate by hand signals to other players or any drink a player is consuming at the table must always be held or touched by a left hand. Any rule if broken, no matter what it is, will give the GM ⚠ 15 each time.

UNTHINKABLE CHOICE

⚠ 25

The Puzzlemaster has an additional surprise. They have orchestrated an event where a character must harm another character in order to proceed.

For this puzzle, ⚔ must be generated in conjunction with the infliction of [Red] per [Green] spent on generating ⚔. Causing another character to lose a Health Point will generate all the ⚔ needed for this puzzle and will cause the loss of d3 Morale as well. This is not quite a simple as making a choice to do this. A character must pass a {Composure%} in order to willfully harm another character, or the character who is taking damage can insist upon it with a {Diplomacy

- **Command, Intimidate%** if they can convince the others that harming another is for the greater good. A character can potentially inflict this damage upon him or herself (depending upon how the GM has established this trial is to go), but must pass a {Resist Pain%} in order to even attempt it.

ZOMBIES

⚠ 20

With an alarm and a screech, the automatic locks on all the doors open. Moans come from inside and within a few moments the room is full of the shambling undead.

Deploy 2d5! Infected.

Puzzles

The Puzzlemaster is a devious mastermind who can orchestrate a series of psychological and mechanical terrors for character to face. Solving a puzzle will do one of the following:

d10

1-5 - Passage to next room unharmed.

6-7 - a "rusty key"

8- a "polished key"

9 - Passage to the next room and a tool or clue that cuts the ⚔ cost in half of the next puzzle.

10 - A glimpse of The Puzzlemaster himself. This puzzle was one he was especially proud of. Solving it will amuse him greatly and he will find a way to congratulate and encourage the characters (from safety, of course, and in his own deranged way). Increase the reward at the end of The Game by ⚡ 100%. This reward is cumulative, so the second time it increases to ⚡ 200%, the third time by ⚡ 300% and so on. Only in these situations will characters have the option of fighting The Puzzlemaster, which will forfeit all accumulated and future ⚡ bonuses.

PAIN

✂30

This puzzle is a trial of pain that requires a character to voluntarily inflict pain upon themselves to retrieve the means of passage to the next trial.

Labor can be generated in the following way: {Tgh%} - (+) - ✂10. Each point of damage a character takes in the process of this will generate ✂1.

ENDURANCE

✂30

The puzzle requires a feat of endurance in order to accomplish. This can be holding one's breath to swim through a flooded corridor, outrun a rolling stone, etc.

Labor can be generated from any Strength-based check.

MECHANICAL

✂30

The character encounters a devious puzzle of clockwork, pulleys, gears, hooks and chains. A sober and rational mind is required to solve them... unfortunately both will be unlikely.

Characters have 10d5! Turns in order to generate the Labor needed.

SKILL

✂15

The character is tasked with a minor test of skill in order to continue.

The character can generate ✂5 per (+) in any specific skill check.

DEXTERITY

✂30

A character is required to perform a task of perception and dexterity in order for passage.

Labor can be generated from any Perception based check.

Keys

The Puzzlemaster leaves various safes and padlocks locking rooms and boxes that has some supplies. They are unlocked with the kinds of keys some puzzles can be found. A key will unlock a Resource Level to make purchases of supplies. A purchase doesn't cost ✂, and can be taken until the supply exhausts from the Resource Catalog.

RUSTY KEY

A rusted key will unlock any one Resource Level 1-3

POLISHED KEY

A polished key will unlock any one Resource Level 4-5

GM Note

Use some creative flair as to what the key actually unlocks or allows access to. If you need some help with ideas, here are some of the things that can be used that are appropriate in tone.

- A heavy, damaged, rusted safe that broke through the floor of a higher level and landed at a strange angle on your current floor.
- A padlocked cage with two corpses in it that both clutch a tool the character wants or needs, as if they both were fighting over it before they died.
- A surprisingly clean room with a locked cash box in the center of it.



- A locked, long-abandoned child's bedroom that has a curious combination of toys and dated medical equipment.
- A key to a control console that makes a normally inaccessible area able to be entered and the equipment within to be taken.
- A map pointing out a section of wall that is easily broken to reveal something useful behind it.
- A small library with a crackling fire in the fireplace. The key is a piece of paper with the name (or famous line from, if you want to be cryptic or if your players are well read and appreciate a real-world knowledge puzzle) a specific book which (if located) is found to be hollowed out and filled with something small and useful.
- A locked cabinet in a room with what was clearly a recently used autopsy table.
- Lastly, the "key" doesn't need to be a literal key. It can be a combination for a safe, a clue, a keycard, a password or an unambiguous direction to where the supplies are. Whatever the GM feels appropriate to the narration and tone.

Opponents

THE PUZZLEMASTER

The Puzzlemaster is an enigmatic, masked figure who, despite being referenced as "he" is of indeterminate sex, such is the extent of the disguise. Despite remaining hidden, The Puzzlemaster has some strength and endurance, as he routinely finds ways to outrun and lure survivors into his demented games. He leaves messages in cryptic clues or rhymes and have clearly a deranged mind. Despite this obvious insanity, The Puzzlemaster is undoubtedly a genius in more ways than one. Their traps are deadly, but people are transfixed by the intricate mechanical process by which it is triggered, even if they are the intended target. The Puzzlemaster's mind games are laser guided to hit the deepest fears of their "players", finding ever more probing ways to reveal their insecurities. The Puzzlemaster's motives are as unclear as their identity, but whoever it is takes great pleasure in seeing their game played. Most confusing of all, despite the terrifying odds against their players, The Puzzlemaster genuinely wants them to win. Because of this, he will never lie or deliberately mislead his players unless they break his rules. For those that do break the rules, there is nothing The Puzzlemaster considers too harsh a punishment... and the rule-breakers are often left to die and their bodies are not cleaned out of the House of Puzzles, left to rot as a way to deter the people who think they can outsmart this diabolical mastermind.

Strength: 42
Perception: 45
Empathy: 4
Willpower: 56

Movement: 30'

Speed: ■■

{SC%}: {Brl 60%, Bal 68%, Do 50%, Grpl 66%, Sp/Li 60%, Sci - Mech. 80%}

VITALITY

Health: 3

Defense: 2

Damage Threshold: 10

Special

Hidden Switch - ■■■■ - The Puzzlemaster throws a switch and can use one Trap offensively as an attack against a single character. The ⚠ cost must still be paid.

EQUIPMENT

Knife



Defensive

Stab - (+) - [■] Pi [■] Accuracy.

Slash - (+) - [■] Sl [■] Accuracy.

Cattle Prod



Capacity: 25

Stun - (+) - [■][■][■][■][■][■] Add 1 DP.

Wight Mask



Intimidate - (+) - [Target (or Formation) -1 Morale]. A target can make a {Cmps%} as a save throw to merely add ■■■.

Final Notes about The Puzzlemaster

This entire setting is based on a general framework, and not a script. You will notice that the descriptions of the traps and various events are vague and this is for a reason. A GM is invited to turn The Puzzlemaster into a demented version of the GM him or herself. Setting players through games is precisely what a GM does, and it's what The Puzzlemaster also does. For this reason, the role of leading players into dangerous situations should not be unfamiliar. As The Puzzlemaster, however, the GM is encouraged to be relentless and cruel if the GM has been fair minded and even-handed before.

It is up to the GM if The Puzzlemaster is a worthy One Big Monster to add to their catalog, but as a recurring villain this one is sure to be a deadly one. Deploying The Puzzlemaster as an OBM will follow all rules as described in the rule booklet for doing so, but will not be able to take upgrades further than what is provided here. Also, unless The Puzzlemaster has time to prepare traps and puzzles, the "Hidden Switch" action may be unavailable, but they may have compensated in some other way.

The Puzzlemaster will not take weapons other than what is in their profile here. The reason being is that they rightly view their cunning intellect as their best weapon and will go through these dreadful games to prove that very point.

Best of luck, Survivors!