



Bite-sized RPG material without all the bloat.

## Heart-Shaped Box

by Mike "Bloodshadows" Duker

*David felt the butterflies in his stomach as he pulled the box out of his pocket and presented it to Angela. "Happy Valentine's Day," he said with a nervous smile. She smiled back as she gingerly took the silver box, shaped like a heart, from his hands. "Go ahead, open it," he urged. She kissed him quickly and then slowly opened the lid on the box. As she did so, beautiful music began playing... a music box! Inside on the red velvet interior of the box was a diamond ring. Angela's eyes widened with shock and joy. "Angela, will you marry me?"*

*Angela couldn't stop the tears from coming as she nodded and whispered, "Yes." She wrapped her arms around him and David sighed a breath of relief. He was so happy that he didn't notice her hand slipping into her purse. He couldn't know that her hand found her metal nail file and gripped it like a weapon. He didn't know until she whispered into his ear that she had something for him as well and then plunged the file into his chest over and over. She was whispering something about his betraying her, cheating on her... He felt his warm blood pooling in his lap and dully realized the heart-shaped box was still playing its music. The man at the pawn shop had told him when he bought it that his life would never be the same... guess he was right.*

Heart-Shaped Box is a short little jaunt into the world of love, romance, anger and betrayal. A witch

from years past tried to use her witchcraft to make the love of her life return her affections and the resulting mistake has been taking lives and causing madness ever since. Can the heroes put an end to the pattern of love and destruction or will they fall prey to it themselves?

### A Lesson in Love

The origin of our love story begins in 1925. Ingrid Coleman was a beautiful, but poor, young woman. She was being courted by a young man named Malcolm Chesney. For Valentine's Day, he gave Ingrid a silver music box in the shape of a heart. Inside the box, lying on the lush velvet material, was an engagement ring. Ingrid did not hesitate to say yes to Malcolm's proposal. The wedding would take place in the Fall, Ingrid's favorite time of year.

Unfortunately, Ingrid had a secret. While she paid lip service to the church, she was actually a practitioner of witchcraft. She used her spells to benefit others, but always without their knowledge. In late May of that year, Malcolm discovered her secret. Being a Protestant, this was something he could not and would not accept. He ended their

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## Bites of Midnight: Heart Shaped Box

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engagement then and there and went on to reveal her secret to the town. Her name and reputation were ruined.

Witchcraft should never be used in anger, and Ingrid knew this but she had lost everything that mattered to her. Using the heart-shaped box as a focus, she cast a spell meant to make Malcolm insanely jealous and want her back. Ingrid's negative emotions had roused dark forces and they fed on her anger and despair, fueling her spell with far more power than she had intended.

She went to Malcolm's home and confronted him, opening the music box to activate her spell. He looked at her with a familiar passion in his eyes but then grew livid. He yelled of how she had betrayed him, how her "secret" was more important to her than he was. Suddenly enraged, he attacked her. Malcolm killed Ingrid that night.

Malcolm was committed to an asylum. In town, it was whispered that the whole terrible thing had been caused by Ingrid's witchery but in the end, the Devil had called her home. The heart-shaped box was sold off to a pawn shop. In the years since, young men with little cash find their way to the 4-Kit-Up Pawn Shop in search of a perfect, but inexpensive, gift for their paramours. Inevitably, they come upon the Heart-Shaped Box which is always marked at just the right price. Bob Cambell, who owns the pawn shop, is aware of the box's history and is no longer surprised when the box finds its way back to his store when buyers end their lives in murder/suicides. Another sucker will always come along...

### Your current victim

David Corde is a senior at Pinebox High School. Like those before him, he was short on cash (most of his money went toward an engagement ring) and found the Heart-Shaped Box for a steal at the 4-Kit-Up Pawn Shop. He's leaving for the Army after graduation and just like Malcolm Chesney, is going to use

the Heart-Shaped Box to hold the engagement ring when he proposes. The Valentine's Day dance at the high school is tonight, so he's popping the question before the dance. The strange guy who sold him the box told him that it had a bit of magic to it for young lovers. The man also said David's life would never be the same. The guy was creepy but Angela would probably like the idea of the box having a bit of magic. David and his girlfriend, Angela, are sitting on the bleachers at the High School sports field when he pops the question and all Hell breaks loose.

### Cupid aims for the Heart

The PCs are taking a shortcut down School Street, near the High School, at night when they see a young man stumble out into the road from the west. Their headlights show blood covering the boy's tuxedo. The boy is David Corde. He was stabbed multiple times by Angela after she opened the Heart-Shaped Box and the music sent her into a murderous, jealous rage. David is weak from blood loss but he manages to tell the PCs what happened and asks that they stop Angela from hurting anyone.

*"Please help me! My girlfriend freaked out and tried to kill me after I asked her to marry me. She opened the music box and was all happy; then she attacked me! The old guy at the pawn shop said the box had magic; he was right 'cause once she heard the music, she went nuts... She was saying I cheated on her with this girl Paula at school, but I never did! Now she's gone across the street to the high school. The Valentine's Day dance is tonight and I think she's going after that girl Paula. Please don't let her hurt anyone!"*

Have the PCs make a Notice roll -2. If they succeed, they will hear a commotion coming from the High School. Angela has stormed into the gymnasium where the Valentine's Day dance is being held. She grabs a microphone and gets everyone's attention. "Paula Martinez stole my boyfriend, so I guess this is hers!" She then places the open music box on a table and props the microphone on the lip of the box. The evil music is then broadcast over the speakers so the entire gymnasium is affected by its sorcery. 42 juniors and seniors and 4 teachers suddenly find themselves

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in uncontrollable, jealous rages and attacking one another.

All-out war is happening out on the dance floor. Students fighting students fighting teachers... it is complete chaos. The music from the Heart-Shaped Box is being broadcast over the speakers so the PCs will have to make a Spirit roll -2 or fly into a rage themselves. The only way to stop the madness is to stop the music. Close the box, destroy the box, cut the power to the speakers, something has to be done. Unfortunately, there is a mob of raging people between the PCs and their goal. Each round, roll a d6 for each PC. If the die comes up as a 4, 5 or 6, the PC is attacked.

### Aftermath

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If the PCs decide to pay Bob Cambell a visit at the 4-Kit-Up Pawn Shop, he'll claim to have never seen the box before and knows nothing about it... but he'll be happy to take it off the PCs hands.

### The Heart-Shaped Box

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The Heart-Shaped Box is a small silver box in the shape of a heart with an interior trimmed in red velvet. When opened, a beautiful but haunting music begins to play. Place a Medium Burst Template where the box is, anyone within the Template must make a Spirit roll -2 or go into a murderous rage (see the Berserk Edge). Moving out of the area of effect allows for a Spirit roll to end the rage. The rage cannot be ended if the target is still within the area of effect. The Box has a Toughness of 8.

### Average Student

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**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d4, Drive d4, Guts d4, Investigation d4, Notice d6, Knowledge (Pop Culture) d6, Persuasion d6, Stealth d4, Streetwise d4, Swimming d4, Taunt d6

**Edges:** Luck

There are 42 students at the dance, all juniors and seniors of Pinebox High School. They have come to the Valentine's Day Dance with passions

running high, hoping for a night of romance and wonder.

### Average Teacher

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**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d4, Drive d6, Guts d6, Investigation d6, Notice d8, Knowledge (curriculum) d6, Persuasion d6

**Edges:** Alertness

There are four teachers at the dance acting as chaperones. They walk the gymnasium, making sure nothing gets out of hand, all the while reliving their own high school pasts.