

January 2012 Issue 3

What Lurks in the Shadows

SAVAGE INSIDER

For All Things Savage

HAPPILY SCARED

Why we like horror

**Four gritty-themed
adventures**

Preview the upcoming Savage
Worlds edition of Apocalypse
Prevention, Inc

DANGEROUS MAGIC

Alternate rules for gritty magic

MTE

Derek Tyler (order #9232471)



ANCIENT WORLD



Coming in 2012

Ancient World is a dark fantasy setting for *Savage Worlds* published by Mystical Throne Entertainment.



SAVAGE INSIDER

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Savage Insider Issue # 1st Edition month year

CONTENTS

- 3 Letters from the Editors
By Vickey A. Beaver & Aaron T. Huss
General Interest
- 5 Happily Scared
By Lee F. Szczepanik, Jr
Alternate Rules
- 9 Dangerous Magic
By Aaron T. Huss
Great Adventures
- 12 Thieves in the Night
By Umberto Pignatelli
Fictional Writings
- 18 Crypt of the Crystal Lich (Part 3)
By Kevin Ranson
Featured Publication
- 19 Sundered Skies
By Aaron T. Huss
Alternate Rules
- 23 Town Composure
By Owen K.C. Stephens
Character Gallery
- 25 The Spawn Mother: Lusca
By Michael Zabkar
Fictional Writings
- 28 Pieces of Fate
By Steve Dean
Great Adventures
- 30 Madman Kidnaps Billionaire's Daughter
By R. Hyrum Savage
General Interest
- 34 Setting the Mood
By Vikki Felde
Great Adventures
- 37 Goddess of Ice and Snow
By Lee F. Szczepanik, Jr.
Product Preview
- 42 Raggetymen
By Jay Peters

Designer's Diary

45 Shanghai Vampocalypse

By Jennifer Brozek

Great Adventures

46 The Dark Butcher

By Vickey A. Beaver

Comic Series

49 Deadlands The Kid - Prey

By Visionary Comics

Convention Connection

56 January - April

By Vickey A. Beaver

Recent Releases

57 September - December

By Aaron T. Huss

About the cover artist Jim Scanlin

MY NAME IS JIM, AND I'M AN ARTIST.

I'M A FLEDGLING ILLUSTRATOR AND STUDENT OF ART,
I HAVE MUCH TO LEARN, BUT MUCH TO GIVE. GAMING
IS ONE OF MY GREATEST JOYS AND INSPIRATIONS,
AND I HOPE TO CREATE ART THAT CAN HELP OTHERS
FIND THAT SAME PLEASURE IN THE HOBBY.

I'M ALWAYS ON THE LOOKOUT FOR NEW PROJECTS
TO HELP PUSH MYSELF TO THE NEXT LEVEL.

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Dear Savage Insider Readers:

We've been delighted by the responses we've gotten about our first two issues. We are humbled by the number of people who have taken the time to not only download the issues, but to also comment by way of reviews at DriveThruRPG.com (we're waiting to see our first reviews at Paizo.com) or on any of our homes online.

On a personal note, I am grateful to Bruce Anderson who was willing to share his experiences with using RPGs – and Savage Worlds in particular – with me. I got some lovely compliments on the article I interviewed him for, "*Savage Worlds as an Educational Tool*."

Christopher Banks offered, "This is fun stuff! The material is top notch and I doubt it would be easy to find such a wealth of interesting, useful information for this price. Get it and give it a read, you won't be disappointed." Brent Jans wrote, "I'm loving this quarterly!...In particular, I enjoyed *Savage Worlds as an Educational Tool*.... I'd recommend [*Savage Insider*] to any gamer, and consider it a must-read for anyone playing Savage Worlds. Roy Paeth stated, "Fantastic second issue with a great article about homeschooling and gaming. Lots of great items you can use for your Savage Worlds games no matter the genre. Now if only we would make this monthly instead of quarterly."

With what Aaron and I already have on our plates, I don't foresee us going monthly anytime soon, but I wouldn't be so bold as to say that it will "never" happen. I can offer that we do put premium content out from time to time. While not free like the eZine, it does give you another way to get an *SI* fix sooner than once a quarter.

And we always like hearing from our readers in-between issues. We have questions posted on Facebook, read our reviews, and look out for e-mail and comments. We also welcome submissions from readers for each issue.

Next quarter, Aaron has graciously allowed me the reigns again. *Savage Insider Issue 4: Shaking Things Up* will be our final issue in our first volume. It's only in the outlining stages now, but I'll be looking for contributors to offer their takes on how to re-energize their table, get out of ruts, and introduce new concepts for their games.

I hope you enjoy what we've put together for you. We welcome your feedback, suggestions, and contributions.

Have a great day!

Vickey

Vickey A. Beaver,
Assistant Editor

Greetings from the Editor-in-Chief:

Welcome to the third installment of the quarterly eZine *Savage Insider*, dedicated to supporting the *Savage Worlds* games system, licensees, and the entire community. Issue #3 carries a gritty theme focusing on dark influences, horrific tales, and new ways to make your games more dangerous for the characters. Officially titled "What Lurks in the Shadows", this issue presents three adventures, alternate rules, dark stories, and more!

Working on *Savage Insider* has been quite the experience so far. With a growing community of fans and supporting licensees, we have to strive for interesting content within every issue and motivate the licensees to participate. As of the day I'm writing this, issue #1 has been downloaded over 2,300 times while issue #2 has been downloaded over 1,500 times. This is a surmounting feat for a new magazine; of course, it wouldn't be possible without the support of the *Savage Worlds* community.

On that note, I'd like to thank everyone who has downloaded either issue of *Savage Insider* and especially those who take the time to post reviews, spread the word about the eZine to others, and continue to download with each issue release. To keep the community interested, we are striving for a premium content release between regular issue releases with our first two already released (look out for another release before issue #4 hits the virtual shelves).

To briefly speak about the frequency of regular issue releases, *Savage Insider* is a product that is support in addition to contributor's regular products in exchange for the chance to advertise their products to our growing community of fans. This can be a disruptive task for those with pressing deadlines and we wouldn't want to jeopardize those deadlines or impact the quality of the submissions by rushing them.

The quarterly releases help sustain a higher quality publication by allowing everyone the time needed to create their submissions and advertisements without feeling rushed and without interrupting their regular projects. Maybe someday we'll have a regular staff, but for now, we'll continue to create the best eZine possible within the three month schedule.

Thanks again for your continued support!

Aaron T. Huss
Editor-in-Chief

If you want to write-in to *Savage Insider*, send an e-mail to aaron@mysticalthrone-ent.com and your letter will show up in the following issue's Letters from the Editor.

SELECTED SAVAGE SETTINGS

DEADLANDS: RELOADED!

The year is 1876, but the history is not our own.

Pinnacle's flagship product is *Deadlands*, a horrific journey into the "Weird West." Mysterious beings called the Reckoners have given life to monsters and magic, causing history to divert from July 4th, 1863 forward. The South has won its independence, California has shattered into a labyrinth of flooded sea-canyons, and a mysterious super-fuel called "ghost rock" has spawned as much war and strife as it has "steampunk" devices.

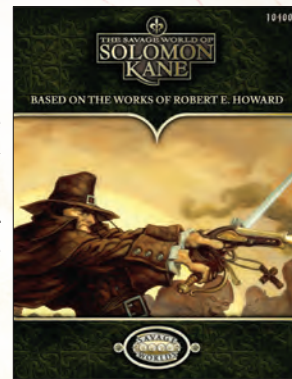
Players are steely-eyed gunfighters, card-slinging sorcerers called hucksters, mysterious shamans, savage braves, mad scientists, and more who battle against evil and attempt to prevent the "Reckoning."



THE SAVAGE WORLD OF SOLOMON KANE™

A Landless Man. A Wanderer. A Puritan. Solomon Kane is many things, but above all, he is a hero. In a time of savagery and horror, he wanders the darkest corners of the Earth and battles the evil he finds hidden within. From the savage interior of Africa to the cold forests of Europe, the frigid mountains of Cathay, and the blood-soaked jungles of South America, he battles merciless butchers, deathless queens, even winged demons in his pursuit of righteous vengeance.

Now your hero can follow the Path of Kane. Whether a Puritan wanderer, a misguided pirate, or a soldier of fortune, a time of legend has come and fate has chosen her champions. Kane began the fight against an ancient evil so great it could destroy humanity, but now others must carry the torch into the darkness.



LOW LIFE: RISE OF THE LOWLY

Sword & Sorcery Adventure in a shattered world inhabited by the descendants of cockroaches, worms, snack cakes, and stranded aliens. Discover the arcane secrets of hocus pokery, dementalism, smellcasting, and holy rolling. Battle hideous beasts risen from the rubble of ancient civilizations. Enjoy a light lunch at the Primordial Soup Kitchen. Mutha Oith is a world of grand adventure and deadly peril, of conflict and danger. It's a land of epic heroism and great evil, a realm of

horror and violence, a bold land where even the lowliest cockroach can become a king by his own sword and the most wretched gob of filth can become a gawd.

Are you worm enough to follow your destiny? Do you have the nuggets to take your rightful place among Oith's most valiant heroes? If so, strap on your esophagator hide shield, pick up your poo flinger and your huge freakin' cleaver, mount your pygmy slog, whisper a prayer to Jelvis, kiss your larvae goodbye, and open the goosin' book. The muck-riddled road to epic adventure stands before you...

NECESSARY EVIL: EXPLORER'S EDITION

The fate of the world lies with the scum of the earth: when the super heroes of the world are blown to kingdom come by an unstoppable army of invading aliens, who will save the day? Evil! The only forces left to take on the alien menace are the crafty, self-serving super-villains! Necessary Evil is a supers game done Savage Worlds style. Inside the twisted Plot Point setting are complete rules on making four-color super-powered characters, over seventy super powers, a pile of adventures weaving in and out of a resistance story, new Edges and Hindrances, a bestiary of out-of-this-world critters, and more!

No simple reprint, this classic Savage Worlds setting is reformatted to the wildly popular *Savage Worlds: Explorers Edition*-size paperback, includes a new ending (110% of the story of the first edition), and has updated rules and two dozen new pieces of art.



WEIRD WAR II

The violence and horror of war brings humanity's worst nightmares to life, and no war was as terrible or as widespread as *Weird War II*. Climb in your Sherman, crawl into the ball turret of a B17, or just grab a rifle and battle the horrors of *Weird War II*.

One of our most popular lines ever relaunched as a single massive volume covering all the war's major theatres and updating the terror to the award-winning *Savage Worlds* system. You'll find complete rules for campaigns on land, sea, and air, rules for rune magic, and a massive bestiary with haunted tanks, Nazi Wehrwolves, ghost battleships, and more!

SPACE 1889: RED SANDS

Science fiction roleplaying in a more Savage time! Since Thomas Edison first explored the worlds with the help of his marvelous ether propeller, the British Empire has grown to include to the red plains and stately canals of Mars, the steaming, dinosaur-infested swamps of Venus, even a remote outpost in the twilight zone of Mercury.

In 1889, the sun truly never sets on the British Empire. But deep inside the Empire a core of revolt festers and grows. Martian cults cry out for the Earthlings' expulsion. Britain teeters at the edge of war with the Oenotrian Empire. In the midst of seething turmoil, the being known only as Kronos siezes the technology of a forgotten race to threaten the very future of mankind!

This book contains everything you need to play thrilling Victorian space adventures with the *Savage Worlds* game system: new Edges, Hindrances, combat and construction rules for ether vessels and aerial flyers, a complete system for Inventions, copious information about the various locales, races, and mysteries of the Solar System, an Adventure Generator, dozens of Savage Tales, a bevy of alien creatures and nefarious foes, and a Plot Point campaign to take your heroes to the stars and back again.



All of our settings (except *The Savage World of Solomon Kane* and *Pirates of the Spanish Main*) require the *Savage Worlds* core rules.

Happily Scared

By Lee F. Szczepanik, Jr. of *Daring Entertainment – War of the Dead*.

My childhood was twisted.

Really, there's no other way to put it.

I grew-up in a house where horror movies were part of the normal entertainment routine. My parents had a vast collection, and we kids watched it all with them. Movies like *Evil Dead*, *Friday the 13th*, *The Exorcist*, *The Manitou*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, *It's Alive*, *Dawn of the Dead*, *Phantasm*, and many others. Not to say that was all they owned, as they were also science fiction and special effects buffs (with my father trained in special effects), but horror films played a huge role.

The fright fest, however, did not end when the credits rolled. Nope, not in my family.

My father loved to scare us kids, and we never knew when it was coming. There was a night when I was about 10 years old or so, and it was time to go to bed. I walked into my room and was about to climb into bed, when suddenly my door slammed and a figure standing behind it yelled: "Boooooyyyyy!" just like the Tall Man.

A few seconds later, there came a resounding CRACK! as my near super-human leap of fear sent me crashing onto the bed, splintering one of the wooden beams in the box-spring mattress.

Looking back, well— at least that little stunt cost the old man money for a new mattress in the end. Served him right.

Today, my father is 62 years old, retired, and living with my sister and her kids. Now the grandkids get to have all the fun. Nope, he hasn't changed. Brings a smile to my face.

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree, however, as the saying goes. When my eldest son was roughly 11 years old, I got him just as good as my father had gotten me.

It was late at night on a weekend, and we had let him and his best friend (who was staying the night) watch *The Ring* on DVD. One of the special features on the disc is that you can view the video that the characters all saw within the movie, which then started the downward spiral where you'd have a dead girl hunting you down— a dead girl who can step out of the freaking television to get you!

Anyway, we had two separate phone lines in the house at the time. I had an idea. I was about to become my father.

While they were watching the special feature with Anna Lunsford (who was in on it) I feigned going to bed. I went to another floor of the house and picked up the other phone line. Using that star-whatever code you can put in to block the number of the incoming call on the ID, I called the line in the living room. When the machine picked up, mere seconds after they'd finished watching the bonus video, I disguised my voice and told them that they had *seven days*.

As predicted, they freaked out. By the time the gag was done, they were panicked that she was coming. I got them good, and my son looks back on the event with fond humor. As do I with my father.

But why is that? Why is it so many of us flock to horror films? Whether it is the gore of something like *Friday the 13th*, or the current generation *Hostel* or *Saw* franchises— what is it that appeals to us,

which drives us to voluntarily go out and get scared?

Keep in mind that I am not a psychologist. My own take on it is colored both by my personal experiences and the writings of professionals in the field. While horror films are not for everyone (my ex-wife will never watch them), for the movie-goer that helps make the things into blockbusters, one point is for sure: people like us love to be scared!

The pulse quickens.

The heart rate increases.

The adrenaline pumps.

Humans by their very nature are adrenaline junkies in one form or another. For some, the thrill is in jumping out of airplanes (and hoping the parachute opens— no thank you) or bungee jumping (you can keep that one, too) or car racing or any of a wide variety of activities. For others, though they might not realize it, it's horror films. The brain is still unable to actually differentiate between what is on the screen and what is real. Sure, we are telling ourselves it is just a movie and, consciously and intellectually, we *know* this as a fact. In the deeper recesses of our brain, it is a different story. As far as that part of us is concerned, there is absolutely no difference between watching a machete-wielding murderer chase a hapless victim through the woods, and being chased *by* one. So, the brain reacts, and the body reacts. And it's that accelerated biological function, brought about by a deep and internal sense of danger, that mixes with our conscious mind and brings us the enjoyment of the film.

That's what the experts claim, anyway. So, I'm going to take a look at it from

some personal and family experiences and see if it holds up.

My 18-year-old son and his 25-year-old best friend had recently watched *Buried*, with Ryan Reynolds, on DVD. Both of them are claustrophobic. They watched the film in a darkened, spacious room and knew going into it that not only was it not real, but that it contained one of their favorite actors.

During the film, both of them began to react. Even though they knew the fiction of it, and that Ryan Reynolds would be appearing in the next film on his plate, their heart rates increased, they started sweating at certain points, and their anxiety levels rose. Several times, they had to pause the movie, leave the room, and step outside of the house entirely.

See, if the experts are right, the deeper portions of their brain were unable to tell the difference between Ryan Reynolds being trapped in the coffin/box, and the two of them being trapped themselves. As a result, they reacted to the predicament of the main character on a very personal level. This actually crossed a line between enjoying the sensation of being scared, and not being able to withstand the feeling. Although they finished the film after several breaks during it, they refused to ever watch it again.

The same is true on a more limited level. Ever watch someone in a horror film get sliced a certain way and cringe, not from the gore that is about to happen, but from the simulated pain you can almost feel?

For me, drowning is a huge thing. I don't like water coming down over my head and face, and have to be careful in the shower in how I do it. I've freaked out at water parks when riding down the tunnels on a round tube, getting spun around to be going down backward, and having water poured on me from one of the falls without knowing it was coming. There was a scene in a *Saw* film where the char-

acter's head was encased in a water-filled glass box. He had to use a pen to give himself a tracheotomy to survive. I had a lot of trouble with that scene, as a part of me felt like it was about to drown. My pulse quickened, my anxiety levels rose.

Looks like the theory holds.

Studies have shown that horror films, by the very attributes mentioned above, can also play a part in the whole dating ritual we all dance through. According to those studies, women find men that can handle a horror film more attractive, while men find women that cringe and jump (the Damsel in Distress syndrome) more attractive. I don't know how true that particular theory is, so I'll leave that to you to decide individually. Horror films rarely scare Anna Lunsford, and I find her attractive just fine.

Horror films are also more popular in the younger audience than the older one, according to studies. The idea behind those studies is the old "Rite of Passage" that humans used to implement in tribal times, although that has pretty much disappeared in modern society. Accordingly, we still have a programmed need to go through the ritual from childhood to adulthood, at least in the male population. While back in other times, such rites typically involved danger, fortitude, and bravery, the study says that in the modern day the horror film has taken that burden.

Young men flock to them to be scared, to go through the emotional responses, and to be able to walk away and brag that they saw horror movie X and weren't all that frightened. Deep down, experiencing the responses as described earlier takes the place of the time-honored rites, and provides a sense of moving forward overall. The "Rite of Passage" study further claims that as the reason older men don't view as much horror as they used to because they have moved past that Rite of

Passage time in life, and just don't receive the same satisfaction.

Again, does that theory hold water? I don't know. I'm 39 years old, though, and while I watch horror movies with Anna, or view them when in need of research or inspiration, I honestly don't flock to them the way I used to. There are a lot of horror films in the past couple of years I have yet to see.

Stephen King once said that the key to good horror is to take the fears of the present day and exaggerate them. Make the reader/audience feel an increased level of anxiety due to the everyday connection they emotionally and mentally create to the material. He claimed that when preying on present fears, the connection was automatic and beyond the scope of the audience to control.

I'd say that theory holds a degree of truth, even if I went no further than some of the elements King uses in his works of a particular era. But let's look at some other popular themes and when they popped up in horror in recent decades. Keep in mind, this is going to be a brief look, and I encourage any horror fan out there to take a deeper look on your own, colored by your own perceptions and opinions of the world and horror.

A caution parents have even today on checking their child's Halloween candy was an even more prominent concern in the 1970s, when cases of people tampering with the candy they were giving out was in the headlines. Halloween took on a new visage— one of fear and predatory practices over the fun of dressing up and getting free sugar. John Carpenter preyed upon that extremely well in his film *Halloween*, which not only contained a scene of a child at the hospital thanks to a razor blade in his candy, but also Michael Myers being the psychotic predator dressed in a mask, mixing in almost flawlessly with the rituals of the night. It hit the viewers on a deeper level, and provided that emotional

and mental connection with what was already happening to transform the very nature of the holiday. And it was a commercial success.

In the 1980s, the fear of serial killers was still a very prominent thing, especially with media coverage spilling over from the 1970s. It was the perfect time for not only Thomas Harris to pen both *Red Dragon* and *Silence of the Lambs*, but for Hollywood to begin production on the film version of *Silence of the Lambs* that would be released in 1991. People flocked to the film, not only for the cast and the superb acting, but also for the fact that it preyed upon very real fears of the times. The person that moved in next door could be a serial killer, and your family the next victim. The person you met at the bar for a night of fun could be your last experience. *Silence of the Lambs* was another commercial success.

How many films preyed on the fears of a nuclear holocaust in the 1980s?

Look at the *Saw* films. When stripped down, they show us how much any of us fail to truly live and care about those around us. We encounter people all the time, but how many of us actually see them or care to? How many of us treat others simply as background material, walk-on extras in the movie of our lives—there and gone, and discarded for those on the next set piece? When was the last time we stopped to help someone broken-down on the side of the highway? How often did we just look, think *poor sucker*, and press the gas to get to whatever unimportant event we were on our way toward? The last time we heard of someone suffering and gave the mechanical *I'm sorry*, how many actually meant those words? More than likely, a vast majority felt nothing and simply gave it as an automatic motion, a bit of expected behavior and nothing more.

Sounds cynical concerning my fellow humans, but when you stop to think

about it—really turn it over and examine it—it's truer than we would care to admit.

That is exactly what Jigsaw battles against in the last days of his life, as the cancer eats away at his brain. Those of us that simply go through the motions of being alive, of being human, but take that fantastic gift for granted. If we were to truly and deeply examine ourselves, we'd no doubt find that we are all worthy of being his victims for a variety of reasons. It's an unpleasant thought, really, to realize that we are no better than the victims in the film that we shake our heads at and tell ourselves they deserve what they are getting from him.

Good horror should make us examine ourselves, whether we realize it or not. It should, not only through all of the factors already mentioned, strip us down and bring us screaming naked before the mirror. It should challenge our preconceived notions of being decent people—remove the masks we've come to wear and show us our true visage.

Let's also take *The Mist* as an example. In that story, we have a catastrophe beyond our personal control invade the lives of the main characters. A strange mist rolls into a New England town and brings within it horrors generally unseen—the thing that rips you apart deep within the fog, the tentacle that reaches through the door to drag you to your death, creatures of unknown origin and ability. What's worse, the story examines the very basic notions of human behavior. Trapped within the supermarket, it takes no time at all for personalities and religious beliefs to clash, causing a localized rift between the survivors that mirrors one of the greater problems we all face. People grow intolerant of each other fairly quickly, and form their own sub-groups to simply escape and survive, rule the masses, or bring into existence some other agenda. Naturally, too, the cause of the entire series of

events is the federal government and its desire to harness dangerous technology without the proper wisdom or precautions.

In quick succession, Stephen King hits home on many prevalent fears concerning our government and us. As predicted, as well, we form an immediate connection to it and are drawn in.

The list goes on, and can fill another article entirely. But it does seem to reinforce the notion of preying upon present-day fears increases the connection to horror stories and shows. Something that, according to a host of television specials, articles, and interviews, holds true for the resurgence of the zombie apocalypse genre.

Like the generations that lived under the new fears of atomic and nuclear catastrophes that launched their own brand of horror films and literature, we live under our own fears of both biological weapons and terrorism. The events of September 11, 2001 changed the American psyche on a deep level, as no longer was the enemy—which could remain unseen and mingle with society until the moment came to strike—simply a member of a foreign nation's culture. They were now the bogeymen living next door, working at local businesses, or whose children attended school with our own. Suddenly, far too many Americans began seeing danger wherever members of a certain nationality existed. They were everywhere and nowhere. Even worse, they could, in many cases, through carefully constructed international networks, access many of the same weapons our own government could use—including biological weapons.

Add to this the popular opinion that the federal government is bloated, lazy, inept, and no longer able to properly serve or protect its citizens, and you have the mixture for a time of fear unlike any that has come along in almost 70 years.

Whether the above is true to any degree that could harm us is irrelevant to this piece. What matters is that the *fear* is there. According to many sources, and many authors of zombie fiction, that fear has been the driving catalyst in a resurgence. I tend to agree.

More so than Freddy Krueger, Jason Voorhees, Michael Myers, or even Jigsaw, the zombies represent the sum total of society's present fears and concerns, all wrapped in a neat, decomposing package.

The outbreak of a zombie apocalypse (taking Romero's return probe from Venus aside) is typically some sort of biological weapon gone wrong, or an unknown biological source. It strikes with impunity either in a certain geographical area (as in *City of the Dead*, by Brian Keene) or worldwide as is more typical.

Next, the first stages of the outbreak typically involve an unknown quantity of

what is going on, or how it is spread. That lack of knowledge in how the infection ticks leads to a rapid spread of the problem as hospitals become overburdened, and then walking graveyards. Meanwhile, the military and government are pretty much toppled in short form as the infection strikes within their very walls and ranks, all but eliminating the citizen's main form of protection and salvation.

From there, the common elements and technological crutches that we have become so reliant upon fall, leaving the pockets of survivors scrounging for a living not only against millions of infected zombies, but also with a realization that many of them do not even possess the basic skills of survival in a world without ready-made meals and store-bought goods.

The survivors now come to the realization that they lack even the most basic ability to feed and provide for themselves, never mind their loved ones and children. Starvation and illness become serious threats of death, not to mention the other survivors in a similar position that will kill another person for their most basic supplies. Economic and social classes break down, and the law of the land is what you can steal and protect.

All in all, under the mask of cool zombies and interesting characters, we have our fears of an unknown enemy (whatever agent caused the outbreak), danger being the person next to you (infection), an ineffec-

tive government (militaries and governments fall quickly), and having to fend for ourselves in a world turned completely against us, with danger possibly lurking in the survivor camp just over the hill. A common cold becomes a major threat, and even the smallest cut or animal bite could become a very dangerous medical infection.

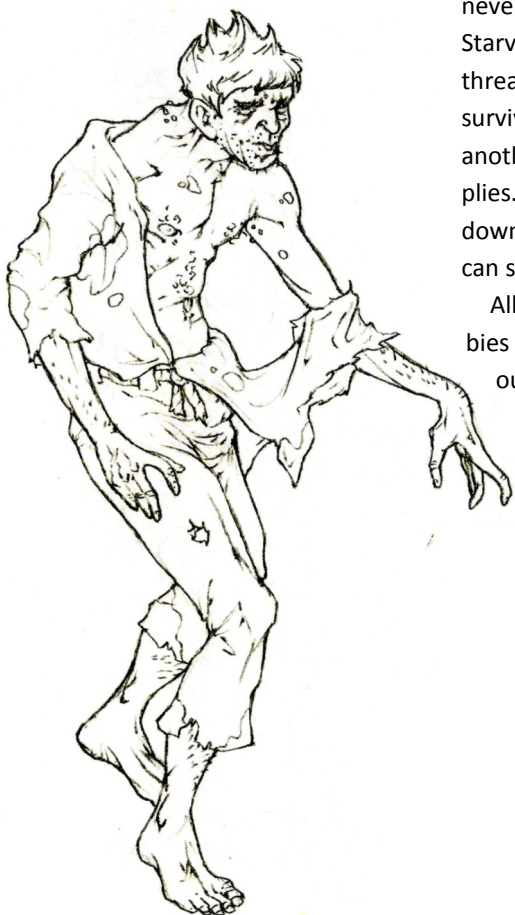
In a world of economic and government fears, of terrorism in your own backyard, and in an uncertain future that could undergo a paradigm shift, the zombie apocalypse genre does a fantastic job of bringing all of that together to both appeal and frighten us on deeper levels.

And we cling to it, hungry for that sensation, starving for the need to experience the emotional and mental connection through the relative safety of our television screen. Desiring the increased pulse and heightened anxiety brought about by the recesses of our mind as we attempt to face our fear and come to grips with it.

It's the appeal of horror, and why we fans of the genre are drawn to being happily scared— and why my son and I look back on our respective in-family horror gags with a particular fondness.

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DANGEROUS MAGIC

By Aaron T. Huss

Introduction

Magic in Savage Worlds is fairly safe. While some Arcane Backgrounds carry some type of repercussion for a rolling a 1 on your casting die, overall characters can dabble in the arcane arts without worrying. While this is suitable for heroic settings, it may not be ideal in all cases.

When creating a horror or gritty setting, not only does the setting need to be dangerous, but the actions of the characters should have some type of risk involved. One easy way to create this ambience is to adjust the danger level of spellcasting.

Volatile Magic

Spellcasting mechanics can vary in their "heroic" level, or rather how much risk they lack. The more heroic the setting, the easier magic should be. Possibly the easiest way to adjust this level is by choosing the amount of risk involved in spellcasting to make it more or less volatile.

Referring only to the backlash or malfunction mechanics (or whatever spellcasting critical failure is called for a particular Arcane Background) and ranging from least to most dangerous, rolling a 1 on the spellcasting die is the default rule for a critical failure in the Savage Worlds core rulebook. Here are some quick changes to spellcasting for adjusting the heroic level:

1. Critical Failure (rolling a 1 on both the spellcasting and Wild dice).
2. Rolling a 1 on either the spellcasting OR Wild die.
3. Failing to meet or exceed the target number on both the spellcasting and Wild dice.
4. Failing to meet or exceed the target number on either the spellcasting OR Wild die (this is a little extreme).

Corrupting Magic

Adjusting the heroic level makes magic more volatile but doesn't necessarily make it more dangerous. Some settings are designed where magic is occult in nature or is a product of blasphemous worship. In this type of setting, magic should not only be volatile, but corrupting as well. The more you dabble in the esoteric workings of the occult, the further you slide down that scale of corruption.

Corruption can become an entirely new set of mechanics in itself. To keep things simple, we'll use Hindrances as the detrimental effects of corruption.

How dangerous this type of magic is determines what spells cause corruption (due to their occult influence) and which ones may be considered more divine in nature. A few different approaches are possible, including the following:

Balancing

The Balancing method allows the character to avoid corruption by balancing the number of offensive and defensive spells they cast. This allows them to stay as close to 0 corruption as possible. Negative numbers are not allowed.

- Spells that cause damage result in +1 point of corruption.
- Spells that are defensive in nature result in 0 points of corruption.
- Spells that "aid others" result in -1 point of corruption (to a minimum of 0).

Ranking

The Ranking method allows characters to cast Novice level spells without any corrupting effects while higher ranked spells cause corruption. These levels could represent the amount of occult knowledge required to perform higher level spells, while Novice spells are possible by any who research the arcane arts.

- Novice rank spells result in 0 points of corruption.
- Seasoned rank spells result in +1 point of corruption.
- Veteran rank spells result in +2 points of corruption.
- Heroic rank spells result in +3 points of corruption.
- Legendary rank spells result in +4 points of corruption.

Downward Spiral

The Downward Spiral method simply states that all magic is corrupting and treated as heretical. The only sources of magic come from dabbling in the dark arts, dealing with demons, or performing cultic rituals.

- All spells result in +1 point of corruption.

Assigned

The Assigned method takes more work as every spell is given its own corruption number based off the mechanics surrounding the spell. This method separates the spell list into those that would be linked to dark magic, divine magic, and arcane magic (+1, -1, and 0 corruption points respectively). Characters never drop below 0 corruption points.

This method requires much more setup and is open for plenty of debate between the players and the GM. One quick definition for dark magic could be all spells that can potentially wound or control another character. The following is a non-comprehensive listing.

- **Dark:** *blast, bolt, burst, confusion, damage field, disguise, drain power points, fear, havoc, puppet, zombie*
- **Divine:** *banish, darksight, dispel, divination, farsight, healing, light, speak language, slumber*
- **Arcane:** *armor, barrier, best friend, burrow, deflection, entangle, quickness, summon ally*

This spell list can be interpreted other ways as well, as long as everyone agrees on what is what.

Effects of Corruption

Once you've established what spells cause corruption and how much, you have to define the detrimental effects that occur once a certain corruption threshold is hit.

The quickest way to define this is that with every 5 corruption points gained, the character is assigned a Minor Hindrance. With every 10 corruption points gained, the character replaces a Minor Hindrance with a Major Hindrance.

Which Hindrances are assigned should be discussed openly, but here are several fitting choices:

- **Minor:** Anemic, Bad Eyes, Death Wish, Delusional, Enemy, Habit, Hard of Hearing, Mean, Outsider, Phobia, Quirk, Vengeful, Wanted
- **Major:** Arrogant, Bad Luck, Blind, Bloodthirsty, Curious, Delusional, Elderly, Enemy, Habit, One Arm, One Eye, One Leg, Phobia, Vengeful, Wanted

Game Masters are encouraged to create new Hindrances to coincide with the effects of corruption such as:

Nightmares (Minor or Major)

Your hero continually has nightmares while resting, resulting in poor quality sleep.

As a Minor Hindrance, the hero becomes slightly paranoid while away. As a Major Hindrance, in addition to paranoia, the hero wakes up every morning with 1 Level of Fatigue which goes away after 6 hours of non-activity. A successful Vigor removes 1 level of Fatigue during the 6 hours.

Terrifying Magic

The last method of dangerous magic I want to include combines the mechanics for volatility and corruption. This method not only tracks the amount of corruption the hero has gained, but also forces a new action should backlash or malfunction occur.

Considering corruption points on a sliding scale between 0 and +20, every time backlash or malfunction occurs, the hero calls forth a denizen of the dark which forces a Fear roll augmented by the amount of corruption the hero has gained.

This Fear roll can be approached in a few different ways with consideration to the number corruption points. The approach will gauge how terrifying magic truly is. A hero can never Become Jaded during the course of calling forth a creature due to corrupting magic.

1. The hero only calls forth a frightening creature if they have more than 0 corruption points. Any corruption points above 0 also act as a negative modifier to the creature's Fear penalty. For example, a hero with 0 corruption points would suffer backlash as normal, but a hero with 2 corruption points would call forth a creature with Fear -2.
2. Any corruption points the hero has gained above 0 act as a negative modifier to the creature's Fear penalty. For example, a hero with 2 corruption points would call forth a creature with Fear -2.
3. Any corruption points the hero has gained above 0 act as a negative modifier to their Spirit or Guts roll along with being a negative modifier to the called forth creature's Fear penalty (as stated above). This is treated as Terror and not just Fear.

Fright Table

In addition to the existing Fright Table, corruption could have additional effects due to the corruption points' possibly high modifier. Once you have surpassed 21 on the Fright Table, some new, devious effects can be added.

22. **Dead:** The hero's vital organs completely shut down as she drops to the ground. Only a Healing or Greater Healing spell at -4 can revive her.
23. **Void:** The hero falls completely dead to the world. Her spirit leaves

a hole in the real world and a void is created, causing 2d6 necromantic damage to everyone underneath a large burst template, centered on her body.

24. **Zombie:** The hero falls, completely dead to the world. Her body is soon invaded by a wandering spirit and she rises as a hostile Zombie Extra.
25. **Revenant:** The hero falls, completely dead to the world. Her spirit does not pass quietly though and reanimates herself as a hostile Zombie Wild Card or Revenant Wild Card.
26. **Possessed:** The hero falls, completely dead to the world. Her rising spirit is noticed by a vicious demon who proceeds to possess her body, rising up as a demonic version of herself. Apply the Demon monstrous ability, increase her size by +1, and she is treated as a hostile Wild Card.
27. **Gateway:** The hero falls, completely dead to the world. Her fleeting spirit glows like a beacon in the underworld as a demon uses her fresh body as a gateway into the real world. Bursting forth appears a large, hostile demon Wild Card of at least size 4.

Putting it All Together

There are a number of options available to adjust the danger level of magic. Different combinations can be created for different settings ranging from controlled magic with low volatility and balance corruption to out-of-control magic with high corruption and terror-causing effects. Play around with the different options to create the one that's just right for your gritty game-play.

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BEASTS & BARBARIANS ONE SHEET #3

THIEVES IN THE NIGHT

A Sword and Sorcery Savage Worlds one sheet by Umberto Pignatelli of GRAMEL – Beasts & Barbarians.

Introduction

The heroes arrive at the small city of Gilaska, in Kyros. Despite being midday, the streets are empty, and the blinds of the houses shut. While walking in the main street, they hear a chorus of sobs, and then a magnificent funeral procession appears. Eight gorgeous girls, weeping and dancing at the same time, come before a palanquin supported by four burly slaves, on which a very old man lies, richly dressed and covered by jewels. He is clearly dead. Apart from the slaves and the girls, only a stern looking man on a gray horse escorts the dead one in his last travel.

“Young Senakai finally buries Old Senakai,” contemptuously says a voice nearby. You suddenly turn and see, under the shadow of a porch, another spectator, a legless beggar, watching the scene with a mix of satisfaction and hate.

“Young Senakai had to wait twenty years for his father’s demise, but finally he managed to get lordship. Puah, my curses upon both of them! Watch the old rotten vulture, covered in jewels even in death, yet he gave me not a Moon, nor did his son when I begged for a scrap of land. Me, who lost both my legs working in their damned tomb! Ah... if the gods would give me a strong pair of legs, only for tonight, tomorrow morning I would be the richest beggar of Kyros!”

The words of Balcor, the beggar, are of interest for any adventurer worth his name. If the heroes speak politely to him,

and offer something to drink, he spills out the beans.

The Senakai family ruled this city for generations. Greedy and stingy, Old Senakai lived past seventy years sucking blood from the citizens, but finally died yesterday evening, leaving his son, Young Senakai, lord of the city. Old Senakai is going to be buried in the old Earthenware Pyramid at the center of the Peaceful Gardens, a holy wood outside the city. Old Senakai is covered in all his jewels, because he didn’t want his son or anyone to have them – he was stingy even on the deathbed – and ordered to be buried with them.

The Earthenware Pyramid is ancient, and hosts the corpses of all the rulers of Gilaska and maybe even before. Balcor worked in it years ago to do renovation works, and that cursed place signed his life; a falling boulder crashed both his legs. He barely survived, but the Senakais didn’t give him a coin to repay his loss. Balcor made an interesting discovery before the accident. There is a secret passage on the northern wall of the pyramid, which allows sneaking inside without being noticed. It will be simple for a small group of thieves to sneak into the tomb and steal the jewels of the old lord.

Balcor cannot do it by himself, but in exchange for a share of the loot reveals to the heroes the location of the secret door. He insists that the theft must be done tonight, before any other lowlife in the city would try it.

“A word of advice before you go. I wasn’t the unluckiest mason working in the pyramid. Strange facts hap-

pened in that place all the time. Some of my work mates who entered the pyramid at dawn with me never came back at dusk. Be careful.”

The Peaceful Gardens

Kyrosians mainly worship Etu, goddess of life and nature, and the Peaceful Gardens are both park and a place of veneration. This was before Old Senakai rule; the stingy lord left them untended to save some money and they are now a sort of overgrown jungle, apart from a single path crossing them. The heroes feel a strange sensation of being watched while they walk under the shadows of the massive mangroves, but nothing disturbs them.

Finally they arrive at their destination, a reddish pyramid of seventeen gardens. It is paved with earthenware engravings, fitting its name, but they are so old and consumed that the engravings are but pale shadows.

The building lies at the center of a small lake covered with water lilies and a small bridge leads to the main entrance of the tomb. Tonight the door is surveyed by six warriors, the honor guard of the old lord, and the fires of two bracers are clearly visible from a distance. They will stay there for seven days as religious tradition has defined. Even if the heroes attack the guards, there is no way to enter the tomb through the main door. It is locked and only Young Senakai has the key (see Green is the Lotus of Vengeance).

Reaching the Hidden Door

The secret door is on the northern wall of the pyramid, on the third garden, ten paces from the left. The problem is reaching the pyramid base unnoticed; the stealthy-

SENAKAI SOLDIER

Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Pace: 6 **Parry:** 5 **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Skills

Fighting d6, Notice d4, Throwing d6.

Gear

Armor: Light leather armor (All but Head 1), bronze helm (Head 2)

Weapons: Bronze tipped spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, 2 hands), bronze short sword (Str+d6)

est approach consists of quietly swimming through the lake, apparently pacific. There is a hidden danger in it; a voracious crocodile, holy to the goddess, guards the pond. If the heroes scout the area during the day, they can spot him with a Notice roll, basking in the sun, and devise a clever way to disable him (for example with a meatball full of a *slumber* Lotus concoction). During the night the creature is virtually invisible. He waits for the group to swim to the center of the lake and stealthily attacks them, gaining The Drop if possible.

- **(M) Holy Crocodile (1)**
- **(M) Senakai Soldiers (1 per hero +2)**

In the Earthenware Pyramid

Upon reaching the pyramid, finding the secret door is easy, if the party follows Balcor's instructions. In the exact position he said, pressing the engraving of a witch strangely resembling a winged man, a dark passage opens. The heroes sneak inside and start their exploration!

Instead of a precise mapping, a list of possible encounters is presented. The Game Master can run some or all of them before finally finding the resting place of Old Senakai (see next scene). He can also try to mix encounters to create interesting situations.

Remember that the entire pyramid is pitch black unless the party has a source of light.

Dead Thief

The heroes aren't the only ones who snuck into the pyramid. Orto, a city thief, had the same idea. He gained access by corrupting one of the guards. Unluckily for him, he met the killer in the shadows (see Killer in the Shadows). His beheaded body lies on the ground, blood spattered all around. His head is missing, and seems to have been bitten away. The mere sight is so grisly to require a Fear check or become Nauseated for this and the next two encounters. With a Tracking (-2) roll the heroes can spot the barefooted footprints of a large humanoid near the corpse. The thief still has a silk rope, a set of lockpicks, and a dagger on him. Nearby lays his oil lamp, off but still containing enough combustible oil for a couple of hours.

Main Entrance

This closed door leads outside. Forcing it open from the interior requires a Strength

(-4) roll, plus the noise automatically alerts the guards outside (see The Peaceful Gardens). Another option is to have Young Senakai's key (see Green is the Lotus of Vengeance).

Nervous Guards

In this low ceiling room stands a group of soldiers. They are Young Senakai's personal guards, his most trusted men, and are now waiting for their master to finish his job deeper in the pyramid (see next scene). They were left there because the young lord's plans require some privacy. They have a lantern, swords in hand, and are very nervous because they have heard stories of this place. They count as Active sentinels. When the party finds them, draw a card from the action deck. If it is black, the guards are around the beheaded corpse of one of them, a curious fellow who walked off a minute to watch an engraving, and found the killer in the shadows (see Killer in the shadows). If the heroes form a good plan, the Game Master should allow them to scare these soldiers and make them flee on a failed Spirit roll without any need to fight.

- **(M) Young Senakai Guards (1 per hero).** Senakai Soldiers equipped with bronze long swords (Str+d8) instead of spears.

Light Well

This perfectly round room is placed in the very center of the pyramid. The builders, for some reason, left a small opening (some inches) on the top of the building, and, in nights of full moon or at midday, a single ray of light hits the center of the room. In that precise spot there is a hole large enough to insert a staff into. This is a place of power as any character can understand with a Knowledge (Arcana) roll or by using the *detect arcana* power. If the heroes place a non-magical staff in it, draw a card from the Action Deck. If a red card is dealt, after five rounds the staff

HOLY CROCODILE

Agility d4, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Pace: 3 **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Skills

Fighting d8, Notice d6, Swimming d8, Stealth d10

Gear

Armor: Thick Skin (All 2)

Weapons: Bite (Str+d6)

Special Abilities

- **Aquatic:** Pace 5
- **Rollover:** Both gators and crocs are notorious for grasping their prey in their vice-like jaws and rolling over and over with their flailing victims in their mouth. If one of these large amphibians hits with a raise, it causes an extra 2d4 rollover damage to its prey in addition to its regular Strength damage.

starts shimmering, permanently becoming a Sorcerer's Staff.

If a Sorcerer's Staff is inserted, draw another card. If it is red, the staff gains 3d6 Power Points which can be used freely by the staff's owner. They don't recharge, but as long as the staff has at least 1 Power Points, it is considered a magical weapon. If a deuce is dealt, of any suit, the staff explodes dealing 2d6 damage in a Medium Burst Template.

The Light Well can be used only once a year.

Room of the Trapped Sarcophagus

A side corridor shows a stair going down. If the heroes remain on the main passage, nothing happens. If they decide to take the stair and explore the deviation, after a dozen steps it leads to a square room, empty apart from a stone sarcophagus in the center. The sarcophagus seems really precious, even if it is covered by filth. In truth, it is only a trap; when the heroes try to open it, a massive metal grate suddenly falls down onto the doorsteps, preventing exit. In the same moment, a massive stone on the eastern wall moves, and water starts flooding the room.

The heroes have five rounds before the entire room and the stairs are totally submerged. At that point, Drowning rules apply. They can exit by breaking the grate (Toughness 12, Heavy Armor) or by lifting it; in this case it is a Dramatic Task, based on Strength, which can be cooperative. There is also another manner to stop the water: the mechanism controlling the paddle is placed in the sarcophagus and Notice (-4) and Lockpicking (-4) rolls are required to find and disable it. After one hour, a mechanism lets the water flow away and the grates go up. Prudent heroes inspecting the room before opening the sarcophagus can find something strange on the coffin, with a Notice (-4) roll or, if explicitly looking at the doorstep, they automatically spot the concealed grate.

Ancient Engravings

A room full of well-preserved engravings. If the heroes spend some time examining them and make a Smarts roll, they understand that this pyramid was constructed by a race of winged men in a nondescript past. They weren't tombs but sort of light-houses used by this race to navigate the sky. This knowledge grants the player character with the highest successful result a Bennie. Characters with the Sage Edge add +4 to this roll.

Gust of Wind

While the heroes are walking through a corridor, a sudden, strange gust of wind hits them. Deal a card from the Action Deck for each light source (torches and lanterns) the heroes have. Torches blow out with any card lower than a King, while lanterns go out with any card lower than 8. If the heroes are left in pitch black, they must do an immediate Spirit roll or wander off in panic. Split the heroes into two groups: those who make it and those who

don't. When lights are turned on, those who failed find themselves in another location of the pyramid (facing another encounter). To reunite the party, both groups must make a Smarts (-2) roll, which may be cooperative. Each time they fail, the failing group must face another encounter.

The Monster's Den

The heroes stumble into the lair of the Killer in the Shadows. The small, filthy room is filled with small rat skeletons, the main food source of the creature, all be-headed. The monster is in fact particularly fond of the maw of the spine of his victims. It is a place full of grayish fur. With a Survival roll a hero can identify it as monkey fur. In this manner the halo of mystery around the creature dissipates and the characters count as Jaded when they see him.

Killer in the Shadows

A hideous monster is the only living guardian of the pyramid: a Tomb Baboon.

TOMB BABOON (WILD CARD)

Only the cannibals and the Tomb Baboons eat the flesh of their own kind. For this reason the goddess Etu condemned them to live in the darkness of tombs and caverns. At least this is what the Sages of the Library of Syranthia say. This baboon is bigger than a man, with a grayish mane and nightmarish face, full of teeth.

Agility d10, Smarts d8 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Pace: 7 Parry: 6 Toughness: 8

Skills

Climbing d10, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Stealth d10, Throwing d8.

Gear

Armor: None

Weapons: Bite (Str+d6)

Special Abilities

- **Darksight:** The Tomb Baboon is so acquainted to living in darkness that ignores all Light modifiers.
- **Fear:** The Tomb Baboon is so hideous to require a Fear Check the first time it is seen.
- **Size +1:** Despite walking on all fours, the Tomb Baboon is bigger than a man.
- **Throw the Head:** An ancestral habit from when his race dwelled on the trees, and threw rotten fruits to enemies, the Tomb Baboon now throws the head of his last victim (which he keeps to suck) against the enemies. It counts as a Severed Head (Damage: Str+d4, Range: 4/8/16, allows Intimidation at range) see the *Beasts and Barbarians* Players Guide.

The monster tries to follow the party stealthily before attacking them. If the GM wants to add some tension to the scene, he can let the heroes glimpse a strange shadow just outside their vision. The creature first attacks by throwing the severed head of Orto to its chosen victim, and then rushes into melee. It is smart and cunning, with an excellent knowledge of the pyramid. If able, it attacks within a narrow corridor, where heroes can only pass single file, and ambush them from the top of a statue or something similar.

➤ (WC) Tomb Baboon (1)

Condemned to Work

The heroes are now exploring a very old looking part of the pyramid. Suddenly the darkness and silence is broken by the light of torches, and shouts of men. The origin of the noise is a tall, large room, still in construction. In the middle of it, a group of slaves are pushing a massive stone block on wooden rollers. A killing work as a malicious overseer, standing on the top on the same stone, slashes his long whip viciously upon the backs of the poor souls. He is an impressive figure, wearing a helm shaped to resemble a falcon head.

Both the workers and the overseer are specters, killed in a downfall while building the pyramid hundreds of years ago and are now condemned to work in this place for eternity. If the party enters the room, the specters react in an aggressive way, raising a hail of stones against them. It counts as being under the attack of Suppressive Fire. Each round, a randomly selected hero is attacked by the whip lash from the overseer (Fighting d8, 2d4 Damage, Reach 6). Both these attacks continue each round until the specters are dispersed or the heroes flee from the room.

Physical attacks toward the ghosts cause them no harm. There are basically two ways to get rid of them; first, the *banish* power, second disbelieving. The specters think they are alive and must be convinced they are dead to be freed. It

must be done by shouting they are dead and must go away. It is a Dramatic Task, based on Spirit (-2) or Persuasion (-4). It doesn't have a fixed length, but the specters disappear when the heroes gather five successes (raises count as extra success).

Once the specters disappear, the room becomes dark and still. Upon a heap of stones the heroes find the helm of the overseer, battered and dusky but still remarkable. It is a spooky object made of bronze forged plumes (+3 Armor, +1 to Intimidation rolls) but, at the Game Master's discretion, a curse may lie upon it.

The Book of Wings

While the heroes are walking a corridor, the flames of their torches strangely flicker. With a Notice roll they understand the cause is a well-concealed door in the wall.

A Smarts roll is required to understand how the complicated opening mechanism works, and then the party can enter a room surrounded by earthenware plated columns. At the far end of the room, on an altar, an amazing book lies open on a rotten cushion. The pages are made of thin ivory layers, engraved with azure writings that shimmer in the darkness like kindles. With a Knowledge (Arcana) roll, a hero can decipher the archaic words on the first page. They say: "This is the Book of Wings, not meant for man, but only for the blessed people of Haak. Touch it and prepare to die." If a hero touches it, even only to turn the page, the book crumbles into dust and thin powder, as if possessed by an evil will that tries to penetrate the nostrils of the unfortunate victim. It

OLD SENAKAI (WILD CARD)

This old Kyrosian noble, due to the constant fear of being poisoned, administered himself small, daily doses of the commonest Lotus poisons to develop immunity. In this manner, his body always contained a strange mixture of exotic components. When he was poisoned with the Green Lotus of Vengeance mixture, it reacted in an unexpected way making him return from death. His mind is only a mass of rotting flesh, but a single thought survived: "Thieves must die!"

Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d6

Pace: 6 Parry: 6 Toughness: 7

Skills

Fighting d8, Notice d6.

Special Abilities

- **Dead Hands:** Old Senakai counts as being armed and deals damage equal to his Strength
- **Fear:** Seeing Old Senakai raise from death requires a Fear Check.
- **Invulnerability:** Attacks not based on his weakness can only shake but not wound Old Senakai.
- **Track the Thieves:** Old Senakai can use the *detect arcana (track thieves)* with arcane skill d12 at-will until the thieves he is looking for are in the Earthenware Pyramid.
- **Undead:** Old Senakai receives +2 to Toughness and to rolls to recover from being Shaken. He is immune to called shots, poison, and illness and doesn't suffer wound penalties.
- **Weakness (fire):** Death and the Lotus made Old Senakai's body crisp as a piece of wood. Any fire-based attack wounds him normally. He is a very flammable target, taking fire on 4-6 on a d6. If he is Incapacitated from fire, he explodes in a burst of flame, causing 2d6 damage to all targets within a Medium Burst Template. Targets may make an Agility roll to avoid the flame.

counts as the *bolt* power, cast with Sorcery d8, two bolts, ignoring armor.

The book's destruction leaves the cover intact. It is made of alabaster and gold, and is worth 500 Moons.

The city of Haak and its mysterious dwellers are fully detailed in *Beasts and Barbarians #2: Citadel of the Winged Gods*.

Green is the Lotus of Vengeance

Finally the heroes arrive at the very center of the pyramid. In a room decorated with statues, surrounded by four burning bracers, lies Old Senakai on an engraved stone slab. His rich vest and shimmering jewels cannot hide the bleakness of death on his face.

The room has another entrance, and it is from the second opening that a hooded figure, holding a torch, enters. The newcomer is totally absorbed in his task, and unless the heroes make themselves evident, he ignores them.

The hooded one drops the cowl, and you recognize him. He is Young Senakai.

He speaks, apparently to the dead one.

"In the end, I managed it, father; you are dead, as you should have been for years, and I am the lord. The Lotusmaster asked me a lot for the poison I poured in your wine, but it is worth every Moon. Green Lotus of Vengeance, it was called. A very appropriate name, isn't it?"

"Well, now I think I'll pick your jewels too, only to pay the venom expenses. A man is never too rich, as you used to say, didn't you?"

But before Young Senakai's hand can reach his father's necklace, fast

as a snake the dead one raises a hand and grasps his son's throat. Young Senakai is hurt, both from pain and terror. You can clearly hear the sound of his throat crushing.

Then Old Senakai stands up, a strange, greenish light in his eyes. His son lies dead on the ground.

"Thieves!" he whispers with a voice coming from the afterlife. Guided by some strange sense, he moves toward you!

The heroes must now fight for their lives. Old Senakai, revived by the power of the Lotus and his own avidity, is driven by an insatiable desire to kill the thieves, and the heroes fall plainly in this category.

The room is 9' x 9' with two doors. The stone bed of the undead lord lies in the middle of the room, surrounded by four bracers (counts as Difficult Ground and can be used for tricks or as fire sources, see Old Senakai's description). If the heroes manage to kill him, they can loot his jewels worth at least 2,000 Moons, and then leave this cursed place.

Young Senakai has a short sword, a torch, and a very old looking key. It opens the main entrance of the pyramid.

If the party decides to flee, run a short chase until the heroes reach the hidden door or the main entrance. Old Senakai pursues the heroes, but he doesn't exit the pyramid. He'll guard his own riches forever.

➤ (WC) Old Senakai (1)

Aftermath

The heroes can leave the pyramid without any problem. The guards outside, if still alive, are snoring on the ground. Young Senakai arrived at the pyramid with a flask of wine flavored with a sleeping drug and gave it to the guards. They won't awake until tomorrow. The heroes can now leave the city or find Balcro and give him his share. The crippled beggar is an honest man or maybe he hired some local bandits to get rid of the heroes and take all the money? This is a question that only the Game Master can answer...

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Derek Tyler (order #9232471)



CRYPT OF THE CRYSTAL LICH

By Kevin Ranson

Root of the Problem

The three adventurers traveled closer together now. There were additional torches remaining, but as they had lost so many, Abigail decided to use only one through the narrow passages of the temple and keep as many as possible should the need arise.

Turning a corner, the passage led into another chamber, similar to the tunnel of wind, solid all the way across and around. The walls on either side of the passage were covered in what appeared to be tree roots.

"Longfeather?" Abigail prompted.

Longfeather produced two hand axes and eyed the walls suspiciously. George was taken aback with the speed that the two axes appeared; where were they hidden for him to lay his hands on them so quickly?

Like the wind tunnel before, the torchlight didn't reach to the other end, so it wasn't clear how far the other side was. Abigail worried that if this wasn't the final leg of the journey, they would never find the skull and escape in time. The last thing they needed was another encounter with a murderous inhabitant.

"Let's move," she said.

The three walked swiftly down the center of the passageway, as far from the roots as they could get. There were still some they had to step over. Halfway across, Abigail wondered if her worries were for naught. By the time they had almost reached the other side, she couldn't help smiling, thinking there was no danger at all.

Then she heard George gasp.

Turning quickly, Abigail saw multiple roots, moving completely of their own accord, simultaneously snag her hired gun and drag him off into the darkness. Longfeather sprang into action, throwing one of the axes into the thickest tendril as he swung the other for the root twisting about George's neck. Unwilling to leave her companions, Abigail did the only thing she could think of and jammed the torch

into one of the roots. A hiss-like squeal emanated from all of the vines collectively. Satisfied that she had the best weapon for the chore, Abigail jabbed another root with the torch, hearing it singe the wood as the roots hissed again.

In apparent response, one of the roots abruptly snagged the torch away from Abigail. It smashed the torch against the stone passageway repeatedly, all but extinguishing it. With the passageway fading quickly into blackness, Abigail could still hear Longfeather chopping away at the roots, all the while wondering if they were about to engulf her as well.

"You're safe, Abigail," a voice called out. "Come inside."

Abigail turned toward where she thought the voice came from, but it was too loud and too close to have been very far away. With the torchlight gone, except for a few fading embers, a pale blue light was perceivable from the far end of the passageway. Something tugged at Abigail's mind, something that made her want to follow the voice.

So she did.

Through a narrow opening between two carved columns, a skeleton in tattered rags was seated on a rock throne holding a crystal skull in its lap, the source of the pale blue glow. Dark gemstones filled the skull's sockets and its jawbone displayed teeth that looked to have been carved from precious stones themselves.

"Why do you seek me, Abigail?" the voice called. The pale blue glow pulsed in time with the syllables.

Abigail swallowed hard. "We need your knowledge. Many need it."

"What price are you willing to pay?"

As if to offer a suggestion for payment, Abigail heard Longfeather's distant scream before it was choked off into a gurgle. She lowered her head, suddenly distraught with grief over what fate her friend had come to over her greed. The prize could still be won, she reasoned, and that Longfeather's life, and perhaps

even Mr. Talbot's, would not have been in sacrifice if she could claim the skull.

"Are the lives of two sufficient?" she asked.

"Perhaps," the voice answered. "Why should I bargain for two when three can be had for free?"

Abigail reached into her shirt and grasped a talisman, one that had been created by Longfeather, given to her for this task. As she clutched it in her hand and presented it boldly toward the crystal skull, the voice in her head groaned painfully.

"Ms. Morrison?" Abigail heard George calling from the door.

"Mr. Talbot! Is Longfeather...?"

George shook his head. "He saved me." In George's hand was one of Longfeather's axes.

"Quickly, get the black cloth bag out of the pack and carefully scoop the crystal skull into it. Take extreme care not to touch it."

George obeyed, found the cloth bag, and carefully approached the stone chair as if to pounce on the skull. The skeleton in tattered clothes seemed to be clutching the skull, so George carefully pried the hands away and dropped the bag over the crystal skull, using the bag to hold it while rolling the skull inside.

Striking a match, Abigail used the flame to ignite one of the remaining torches.

"So, Ms. Morrison, what do we do now?"

Abigail calmed herself. "We run, Mr. Talbot, and hope we make it out in time."

SUNDERED SKIES

By Aaron T. Huss



Stats

Publisher: Pinnacle Entertainment Group
(now supported by Triple Ace Games)

Author: Dave Blewer

Additional Design: Kevin L. Anderson,
Paul "Wiggy" Wade-Williams, and Simon
Lucas

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Internal Artists: Nicola Cardiff, Julie Dil-
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Rudnicki, Veronica Jones, and Cheyenne
Wright

Page Count: 176

Retail Price: \$34.99

Sundered Skies is a dark fantasy plot point setting for Savage Worlds placed in a world filled with madness and despair. A cataclysmic event tore about the world, throwing land masses into the sky to wander magically. The space between these floating islands is filled with an eerie glow that can throw you into insanity. Those who are brave enough man the skyships that sail the space between the islands (horizontally and vertically), trying to survive. They trade, salvage, relic hunt, or

turn to a piratical life. But beware! The powerful and sometimes chaotic denizens of the world travel throughout the void (that space between the islands).

In the world of dark fantasy, *Sundered Skies* includes elements of chaos but focuses more on the difficulties of survival and madness (due to sailing throughout the void). Within those pages you will find a world clinging tightly to what little they may have left with a small sliver of hope that our heroes might come through in the end. It is truly a gritty setting filled with moral decisions and possibly criminal acts. If you're looking for rainbows and unicorns, you won't find them there. But if you're looking for a rich setting filled with depth and opportunities, you won't be let down.

CHARACTERS & GEAR

Sundered Skies starts quite properly with all the information players need to get started with the setting and character creation. Racial backgrounds have been created with associated bonuses and/or penalties. There are seven races total including drakin (a dragon race), dwarves, elves, glowborn (those born out of madness), humans, orcs, and wildlings (a slave race). Moving on from that is a set of new Hindrances and Edges to coincide with the setting, like those associated with the void, and new Edges to define the different races. Bringing these different characters together is a collection of pre-generated characters (or rather a sample character template) of each race and a favorable character type (like human reformed pirates).

The Gear section contains a good number of equipment tied directly to the setting. *Sundered Skies* utilizes black powder weapons and a nice selection is pre-

sent. In addition, lots of options for putting together skyships are there including "shells" or rather descriptions of the ships minus all the add-ons. *Sundered Skies* also includes weapons and armor that can be made out of imperfect materials. This results in degradable weapons and armor (the mechanics are given as the material) giving another mechanic that adds to the difficulty of survival.

SETTING MECHANICS

There are plenty of new mechanics related to the setting including religion (and the magic tied to it), madness, skyship combat, and travel between the islands. Religion is given as a listing of the different deities worshiped throughout the *Sundered Skies*, the associated icon, allowed powers, duties (what the worshiper is supposed to follow), and sins. Seven deities are detailed (plus a couple unfriendly deities) including The Artificer worshiped by the craft loving dwarves. A variety of new spells are detailed that often relate to the flavor of their associated deities.

The mechanics section then moves into the unique rules associated with the setting. A part of this is glowmadness, the madness that comes from excessive exposure to the void, adding another method of character loss. As with wounds, glowmadness follows a path of five steps from nothing to glowmad (and the three steps in-between). Following this is the much-anticipated rules for skyships with a good portion dedicated to combat. This is very dynamic combat, which includes boarding and falling overboard. Travel between islands, a necessity during game-play, rounds out the mechanics. A nice chart shows how many weeks it takes to travel from island to island which actually flows

directly into the Gazetteer that begins the setting description (a good segue).

SETTING DESCRIPTION

A quite complete Gazetteer begins the setting description, informing the reader about all the major locations within the Sundered Skies. This Gazetteer is essentially an overview of these locations rather than a fully detailed description. More importantly, you get to learn about how the Sundered Skies has come to be. I will not share any of this as it's quite an interesting story and would potentially spoil the plot point campaign.

Now that you have an understanding of the major locations and the background of the Sundered Skies, you need (or rather the Game Master needs) to know more about the different islands. Next is a well-detailed listing of the islands including locations that characters may be drawn to, corresponding Savage Tales and Plot Point reference pages, scarce goods, abundant goods, and the associated elements, pilgrims, and creatures of those islands. Despite the list, there is still a lot about the islands you don't know (not that this is required for a core rulebook).

ADVENTURES

Adventures is a collection of adventure seeds and relevant charts. They are organized by adventure type (according to what the characters want to do next) and include adventure, employment, trade, crime, and salvage. These are the types of things characters do between (or leading up to) plot points or completely outside of the plot point campaign should they finish it and wish to continue with their characters.

SAVAGE TALES

Savage Tales is a large collection of fleshed out adventures including the associated plot point adventures and a large list of those that can be run between the plot-point adventures. This is a large collection of adventures that a GM can place

quickly within their campaign and subsequently add more details. While they are "fully-fleshed out", according to the description, they are truly overviews rather than the guts and step-by-step action of a full adventure module. Just to note, there are over 30 Savage Tales!! That's a lot...

ADVERSARIES

One of my favorite parts of new and unique settings is the bestiary that is created to go with that setting. Often times a bestiary can really complete the "look and feel" of a setting by creating creatures that properly match the atmosphere. *Sundered Skies* does not let down in its adversaries section. There is a large listing of adversaries varying significantly in nature, although more illustrations would be beneficial. Considering the design of the setting, skyship combat is imminent so plenty of character adversaries are included, ready to be sprinkled across the potential skyship conflicts. The void is also filled with other potential hazards (after all, the islands are all floating and you're not walking across the land). For this, a number of flying creatures and void-styled creatures are detailed to create encounters. Finishing this setting-styled creature list is a group of those associated with the dark fantasy that is present throughout the entire setting. There are plenty of additional creatures that can exist everywhere but are available for more options.

OVERALL

I find *Sundered Skies* to be a wonderfully developed setting with plenty of unique qualities and an excellent incorporation of skyships (or airships). The setting is very rich and full of potential inside and outside of the plot point campaign. It's definitely a setting that embraces gritty or edgy game-play by incorporating those desperate actions for survival rather than bringing in a lot of horrific elements. The setting is filled with chaos and despair

rather than horror and lots of moral decisions (although some do exist). If you like dark fantasy then there's a very good chance you'll like *Sundered Skies*.

RATINGS

Publication Quality: 7 out of 10

Sundered Skies is a beautiful book. It is full color, reads very easily, exhibits a wonderful presentation of mechanics, and flows smoothly from beginning to end. There are lots of great illustrations, although not always in the right places. While the illustrations match the mood of the setting and the atmosphere, there are numerous places throughout the book where an illustration would be very beneficial but none exists. This is particularly apparent within the Islands and Creatures sections.

The setting is very focused upon the uniqueness of the islands, but very few illustrations appear depicting those islands. In addition, there are loads of new creatures, but not many illustrations to go with those creatures (or rather with those not found in the Savage Worlds core rulebook). With that said, there are lots of illustrations depicting skyships and the heroes you would find on those skyships which look awesome! In fact, there are illustrations alongside the group of pre-generated characters that show the gritty side of the setting.

One other publication decision that I'm at odds with is the text. There is a shadow that resides behind all of the text and can sometimes cause words to get jumbled when several short letters (like i, l, and t) are next to each other. Yes it gives a semblance of the darkness of the setting, but it does periodically overpower the text.

Mechanics: 10 out of 10

A number of new mechanics are introduced for *Sundered Skies* including the large amount designed for skyships. While the basics with new Edges, Hindrances, and Spells are found, the more interesting

mechanics are the new races and skyship rules. *Sundered Skies* takes a different approach to standard fantasy races by giving them a dark twist. In addition, instead of simply including other common fantasy races, new ones exemplify the setting. This is a perfect approach as it helps to enhance the atmosphere within the setting. The rules of skyships are extremely detailed and thorough ranging from the basics of speed, armor, and weapons to effects of crew size, docking, and repairs. These wonderfully detailed mechanics can be easily translated to other types of capital-styled ships.

Desire to Play: 10 out of 10

Sundered Skies is unique and really takes you well outside the realms of epic fantasy. Not simply because the setting is filled with darkness and madness, but because everything from the races to the character professions to the skyships represents how difficult survival can be within the

Sundered Skies and how important it truly is for our heroes to succeed in the grand scheme (which is the overarching storyline). Those looking to ride a Pegasus while wearing your shining armor should keep on truckin'. Those looking for edgy adventures should find plenty of opportunities to perform activities ranging from hunting relics to full piracy!

Overall: 9 out of 10

Those who like a little grit in their fantasy games should delve straight into the *Sundered Skies* setting and set off on any number of adventures or campaigns. While it is a plot point setting and there is a designed plot, you can ultimately turn the setting into a playground for particularly ambitious players who want their characters to sail the Sundered Skies in the ultimate skyship, possibly hunt the most deadly pirates, and participate in gladiatorial events. They can venture from island to island, learning secrets and

attempting to crack their own investigation wide open to discover how the world became the way it is. There is only one thing to remember: you have to avoid the onset of madness while you're fighting against those chaotic creatures and searching the skies for whatever items you seek. This setting is filled with loads of potential.

About This Featured Publication

This review was originally posted at Roleplayers Chronicle and can be read at roleplayerschronicle.com. Roleplayers Chronicle is owned and operated by Mystical Throne Entertainment and regularly posts reviews for *Savage Worlds* products.

Sundered Skies was originally published by Pinnacle Entertainment Group and is now fully supported by Triple Ace Games.

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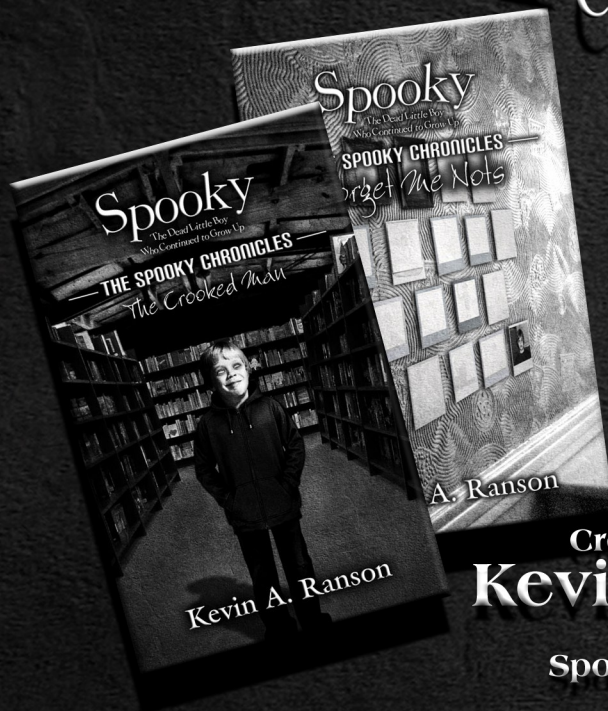
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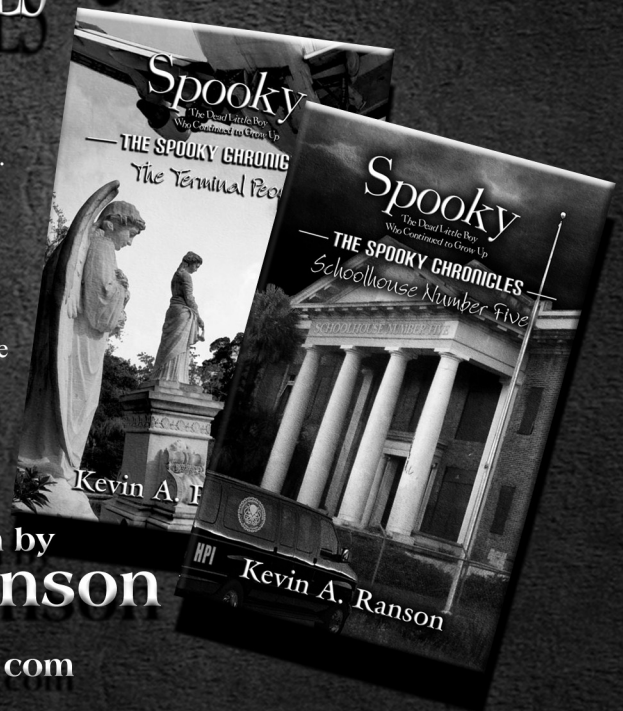
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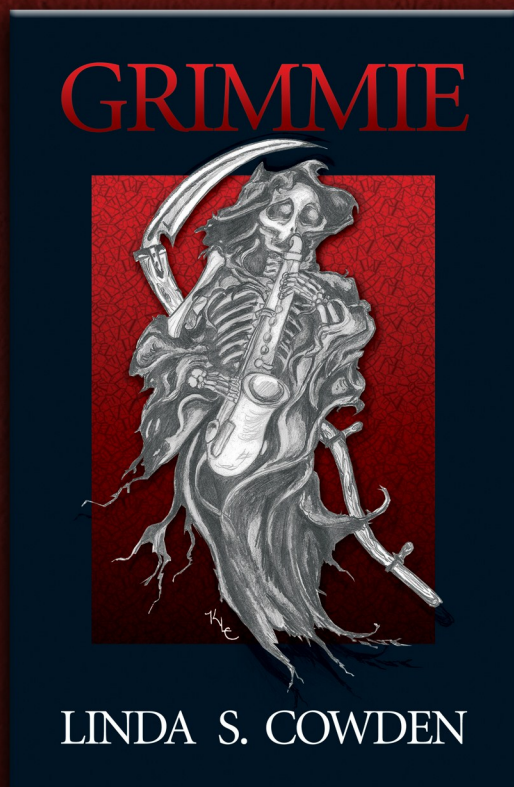


Meet Spooky,
a dead little boy
continuing to grow up.
He goes to school,
likes taking pictures
in cemeteries,
and doesn't breathe.
Accidentally starting
the zombie apocalypse
is his biggest fear,
but it's not his
biggest problem.



Created & Written by
Kevin A. Ranson

SpookyChronicles.com



GRIMMIE

LINDA S. COWDEN

GRIMMIE

The Reaper has a new face.

Bound by the laws of the hourglass and the scythe,
Death grows restless as the world beckons.

Then the deperation of one drew his awareness from the
multitudes and the scythe decended - not to take one whose
time had come, but to propel anther into damnation.

The shining lure of emotion and sensation teaches him to
explore and experiment as a being created without will
learns what it means to have a choice.

The Reaper has a new name: Corwin Grimm.

LINDA S. COWDEN

Available in Print on Amazon

AuntieMaim.com/grimmie

TOWN COMPOSURE

Adding Sanity to towns, organizations, and large groups by Owen K.C. Stephens of Super Genius Games - Strike Force 7.

Town Composure is a new rule introduced in *Midnight Harvest*, a *Realms of Cthulhu* (available from Reality Blurs) compatible adventure published by Super Genius Games (www.supergeniusgames.com). It allows Keepers to measure a town's collective slide toward complete panic and anarchy. In essence, it's Sanity for the town as a whole, to see how disturbed the social order is, and how close the citizens are to turning into one giant mob. As the town begins to suffer Mental Anguish (see *Realms of Cthulhu* by Reality Blurs for all the juicy details), there will be signs that the townsfolk are losing their calm. As town Mental Anguish goes up, antagonists gain bonuses.

During the adventure, the efforts of the Cult of Flesh Consumed force the town to make a Sanity check each night at midnight when the cultists harvest the fear collected by the Lament Sigils (specially drawn Mythos-inspired runes that collect fear). However, the town must also make a Composure check anytime a major event occurs (such as a body being found, children going missing, or a madman attacking prominent citizens). Most of the town must be aware of such an event for a Composure check to be required—the event's occurrence is only effective if the town knows about it.

Since the cult isn't operating in the open, many of their actions only have a meaningful effect once rumors of the deeds start to spread (possibly by investigators asking locals questions about events of which they'd been previously unaware).

Performing Composure Checks

Composure for a town works just like Sanity does for a character. Whenever one of the events listed below occurs (or specific events detailed in the adventure, or at the Keeper's discretion), the Keeper makes a Guts check. If his roll is a failure, the town loses some significant amount of Composure; if he rolls a success, the town loses less composure, perhaps even none.

The town of Five Lanterns, Rhode Island, the setting for *Midnight Harvest*, has a Guts score of d8. Loss of Composure (Mental Anguish) is listed as the Guts check Success/Failure.

Midnight Harvest—Every midnight, the cultists gather the day's collected fear and use it to increase both their own power and further scare the town.

Mental Anguish: 1/1d6.

Minor Disturbance—Events that may or may not be supernatural in origin such as children going missing, common, unexplained phenomena, or strange sounds coming from the surrounding woods.

Mental Anguish: 0/1d3.

Moderate Disturbance—Report of a violent crime, public witnessing of a major crime, something supernatural seen but unconfirmed.

Mental Anguish: 1/1d6.

Major Disturbance—A large segment of town witnesses a violent crime, an important town structure is damaged or destroyed, a well-known local figure is injured physically or emotionally.

Mental Anguish: 2/1d10.

Effects of Composure Loss

The Cult of Flesh Consumed is purposely driving up the town's Mental Anguish because doing so helps them gather more magical energy. There are other, more tangible results to the town's loss of control. The table on page 24 describes how in general people react as the town's Composure score changes.

Regaining Composure

Once the Cult of Flesh Consumed stops tormenting the citizens of Five Lanterns, the town decreases their Mental Anguish by 1d6+3 at the end of each week during which no disturbance occurs. This continues until the town reaches a Mental Anguish level of 0.

Conclusion

And there you have it, a simple way of introducing the awesome Sanity mechanic to towns, organizations, or any other large group. Be sure to check out the complete *Midnight Harvest* adventure to see if you can help Five Lanterns avoid descending into madness, or worse. It's available at RPGNow.com and Paizo.com.

Current Mental Anguish	Effects
0	Business As Usual: Though individual townsfolk may be very worried or even emotionally disturbed, the town as a whole is still acting normally and rationally.
1 to 5	Unease: Though it's far from universal, many townsfolk and visitors begin feeling irrational fear—jumping at shadows and refusing to go into the basement alone. While most simply chalk this up to an unusually well-put-together Haunted Trail, some are beginning to truly believe something horrid lurks just beyond their field of vision.
6 to 10	Something Ain't Right: The locals realize there is something wrong in town, even if they can't put their finger on exactly what it is. Children begin having night terrors. A successful KNOWLEDGE (MYTHOS) check will reveal they are actually seeing the Dreamlands and the horrid things that live there. Due to the power being fed to them through the Lament Sigil, the cultists gain a +1 bonus to their damage roll.
11 to 19	Outbursts: Tempers flare, innocent comments are taken as snide insults, and Cultists now gain a +2 bonus to their damage roll.
20 to 30	Lawlessness: People in town begin committing serious crimes. These are serious enough that twice a day the rumors about them cause a Moderate Disturbance to the town (see page 23). Each day there is a 25% chance that one of the crimes will be targeted at the investigators. From this point on, local law enforcement is too busy keeping the peace to be of any assistance to the investigators. Cultists now gain a +3 bonus to their damage roll.
30 or more	Riots: Most citizens lose their cool and begin looting, wrecking the town, setting fires, and attacking each other in mobs. This does not automatically mean the adventure is over nor that the investigators have lost; it just makes things more difficult. The riots last for 2d10 hours after which the town loses 1d6+2 Mental Anguish. While the rioting is going on there is a 50% chance that any citizens that recognize the investigators will simply attack. Cultists now gain a +5 bonus to their damage roll.

Nemesis
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NEMEZIS



"My lads often go on about how we're living in the End Days, how the mankind is on the brink of extinction, and how they would rather live on Earth in the ancient times, before space flight. A load of crap, if you ask me. Humans have colonized a quarter of the Galaxy, built cities on thousands of worlds; we've never been as powerful as now. No one'd better tell me that we're gonna get eaten by some kind of space worm."
- Kate Rush, Cor Army Sergeant.

THE SPAWN MOTHER: LUSCA — SHE WHO SLUMBERS

By Michael Zabkar

Future History

Four thousand years before humanity rose beyond the level of spear and rock, two races fell victim to the terrible, life-seeking energies of the Maelstrom.

The homeworlds of the gila (Yanthusar) and the kraken (Orkanaloo) were brutally fused together by the dark chaos energies of the spirit realm as they were drawn close to the veil. They melded and twisted both worlds into an oblong, unstable amalgamation and spit them out across frozen space. The pseudo-planet was continually whipped and bludgeoned by the whims of malignant entities from the spirit realms as it slowly steadied into regular orbit around a weak sun very near to our arm of the galaxy. By the time the oblong planetoid achieved a relatively stable orbit, most of its inhabitants, both gila and kraken, had perished either by the energies of the Maelstrom itself or by the cataclysmic horrors faced afterward.

The gila, having a relatively advanced level of technology, began a mass exodus of all their population toward any planet capable of sustaining their dying civilization.

Meanwhile, in the tepid pools of what's left of Orkanaloo, the Spawn Mother was dying. Her children were dying. Her race was dying. Sensing the impending slow death of her kind due to the touch of the Maelstrom, she called her children home. Thousands upon thousands of kraken descended upon the birth pool from which they spawned. In what is known in the kraken history as The Great Reaving, the Spawn Mother slew her children, sparing them from the terrors of the Maelstrom. In a final act, she gathered twelve of her guardians and they stowed themselves within the holds of a departing gila transport, not knowing where they would descend or if they would survive the journey.

They survived only by feasting on the seemingly hapless gila crew. A navigational malfunction crashed the transport in what would come to be known as the Texas coastline of the Gulf of Mexico. From there, the Spawn Mother and her retinue managed to make their way towards the seas of the Bahamas where they found structures resembling the birth pools of Orkanaloo in the 'blue holes'.

Lau, the Spawn Mother, sensing the weakness of she and her retinue, drew her twelve Guardians to her chamber to engage in her last spawning, which killed the remaining guardians. In a

LUSCA (WILD CARD)

Agility d6, Smarts d10, Strength d12+4, Spirit d8, Vigor d10

Pace: 6 Parry: 6 Toughness: 11

Skills

Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d12, Swim d8

Gear

Armor: None

Weapons: Kraken Ornate Club/Scepter (Str+d6, AP 1 vs. rigid armor), Kraken Tentacle Claw (Str+d4, AP 1)

Special Abilities

- **Aquatic:** Kraken are very comfortable in the water and cannot drown. Their water Pace is 8.
- **Dehydration:** Kraken must spend time in water or become fatigued.
- **Hardy:** Kraken are very tough and resilient. A decisive blow is needed to take one out. If a kraken is Shaken, further Shaken results do not cause a wound.
- **Large:** Attackers receive a +2 bonus to attack rolls against the kraken.
- **Multiple Limbs:** Lusca has eight limbs. This gives them the ability to act like two characters at the same time wielding as many as four weapons. They still suffer from multi-action and off-hand penalties, although they do not suffer an off-hand penalty to either of their dominant-side limbs. This also allows them to make multiple attack rolls in the same round. On a raise, the creature has grappled the victim. An entangled victim may only attempt an opposed Strength roll each round to escape. Once grappled, the kraken does its Strength damage automatically by crushing with its tentacles. Victims killed by a kraken's tentacles are usually crushed to a pulp.
- **Size +4:** Kraken are quite large creatures.

final act of honor to her slain children, Lau laid a single, very special egg in a remote spawning cave in a specific 'blue hole'. To honor this queenspawn and her impending earthbrood, Lau slew herself, releasing a chemical from her blood which enriched the egg and created a new Spawn Mother. Her last fluttering thought as her life spilled into the sea was a name — Lusca, she who slumbers.

Description

The kraken resemble land-dwelling octopi of extraordinary intelligence and psionic ability. Mercenary expeditionary crews discovered them while investigating around the Gulf of Mexico for remnants of guerrillas who fled their country during the drug interdiction campaigns in Central Mexico. They were discovered when several mercenary personnel spontaneously disappeared, seemingly right beneath the noses of their superiors. Only a slight scuffling was heard.

Lacking any form of verbal language, they communicate via chromatophoric changes in their skin color along with nonverbal cues provided by their natural psionic ability; much the same way humans use body language to communicate. They have very sharp color vision, with a rudimentary ability to see into the infrared. They do not wear clothes and have tolerances to heat and cold similar to humans. The non-shelled varieties are similar to human norms as far as damage resistance, with elder members of the race being more leathery. Shelled members are more resistant to damage with the shells being unable to change color.

Kraken have incredible powers of camouflage, and can engage in mimicry to a limited extent, though the method is unknown as the kraken lack vocal cords. They are thoroughly and diabolically evil. They are also narcissistic and view themselves as being on a different level than other life forms.

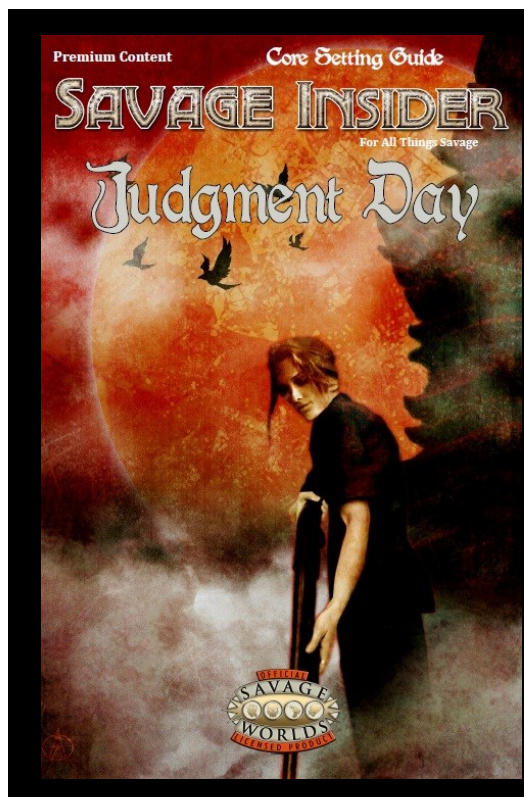
They disdain technology higher than simple blades or blunt trauma weapons, though they tend to be very ornate and indicative of social status. They have large sickle-like hooks on the ends of each of their tentacles resembling a large hooked claw, possess color vision, and run the gamut of sizes and shapes with any number of arms. They are thought to be amphibious though they have only been seen on land.

They move along the ground via a slithering, snake-like action or by levitation via their psionic ability; non-shelled individuals preferring the former and shelled ones the latter. They are surprisingly quick, despite their bulbous bodies.

One quirk inherent to the kraken is their strange fixation on small lights, akin to the small expedition lights carried by the mercenary personnel. This could account for initial disappearances of personnel who wandered into the dark to do their business, never to return.

Government scientists, having no other frame of reference, named the species after the taxonomy of terrestrial cephalopods. The kraken's own name for their species is a series of liquid burps, plops, and hisses, and is unpronounceable by humans without copious amounts of spitting. Their home-world is currently unknown, as is their method of arriving on Earth.

To date, tissue samples of deceased individuals indicate they are wholly unrelated to terrestrial cephalopods.



Judgment Day is a universal setting where characters join the ranks of the Inquisition and their fight against the supernatural beings that threaten mankind.

The Inquisition has been protecting the world for centuries. While many feel solitude within their homes, inquisitors of all types are hunting the denizens that terrorize and kill. In *Judgment Day*, players take on the role of inquisitors hunting down and purging the likes of werebeasts, demons, aliens, ghosts, vampires, and more. Whether used as a stand-alone setting or secret society within existing settings, the Inquisition is ready to protect.

Judgment Day is a mini-setting, designed to be placed within existing settings to create specialized inquisitors while still being usable as a stand-alone setting focused on hunting horrific beings. To coincide with the stand-alone aspect, *Judgment Day* contains aspects of a modern fantasy, action horror setting.

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**THIRD EYE
GAMES**

Derek Tyler (order #9232471)

Pieces of Fate

By Steve Dean

With the absolute stillness of her kind, she waited, a dark shape in deep shadow. Glossy black covered her small frame, all the better for hiding her presence. Sharp eyes to find her target and long legs to give her speed.

Night had fallen some hours ago, the house becoming quieter as its occupants settled down to sleep, bedside lamps clicking off one by one. A sliver of light shone through a gap in the curtains, cast by the orange glow of a street light. The bedside clock emanated a faint, blue electroluminescent patch. Neither made much impact on the darkness. Neither needed to; she could find her target easily enough.

Downstairs, the family canine was yelping, its legs twitching as it chased some creature or toy in its simple dreams. A very faint but regular pulse of high pitched noise indicated the house alarm was set, testing and retesting for movement or the breaking of circuits around windows and doors. None of these things would trouble this intruder; she was already inside the room.

Her victim was sleeping in the huge bed, his partner beside him, two heads emerging from a thick quilt. He wasn't yet deeply asleep enough for her liking. He kept moving around, rolling and fidgeting in an effort to get comfortable. Soon, he would settle, his breathing would deepen, and his body would go limp. Only then would she approach, and then wait again for the precise moment to strike. To move too soon was to invite failure. Timing, as much as speed and stealth, was critical to her success.

The night moved on, and still she waited, infinitely patient. If the right moment didn't arrive tonight, she would have to

hide and try again tomorrow, and the night after if necessary. This would increase the chance of discovery, but no matter, there would be others if she failed. She knew this was a one-way trip when she set out. She could die trying, or die succeeding. There were no other choices. Fate demanded it.

The victim rolled over onto his back and began to snore, his mouth falling open, his eyes rolling under the lids. She didn't know who this man was, with his huge gut, short grey hair, and black, silky pajamas. She didn't know how he had paid for this luxurious room, adorned with flock wall paper, deep pile carpets, velvet curtains, and handmade oak furniture. Such things were meaningless to her; she knew only her mission. And it was time to go to her death.

Her movements were slow at first, light of foot and totally silent. She emerged from her hiding place - paralleling the bed, short bursts of speed taking her from shadow to shadow. Across the patch of light, and stop. Carefully avoiding the framed picture on the wall, and stop. A short distance of the bed, she waited again, listening to the continued snoring. She entered the most dangerous part of her mission; every step she took from this point on could lead to disaster.

Both of the bed's occupants were still, at least as still as they ever got. The sheets rose and fell with their noisy breathing. Their bodies twitched and shifted occasionally. Soon, just before they awoke properly, they would begin to dream. Then, with his movements less predictable, her chances of success would diminish.

She was standing by the headboard now, ready to approach the top of the

man's head. This, she considered, was the safest route, with less possibility of movement in her direction, and almost no chance of being seen should his eyes open.

Off she went again, her movements smooth, a flow of darkness across the light-colored, buttoned leather headboard and onto the satin pillowcase. Another pause, then a slow, cautious creep forwards.

Then she was close enough to touch, only the thinnest sliver of distance between her outstretched leg and contact with his dry hair. She hesitated, was this the best way to go? She understood that humans had very sensitive skin on their faces. Gravity would be on her side, but what if he felt the touch too soon, or the hairs moving as they inevitably would? No, she had waited before, she would do so again.

Time passed, the light from outside unchanging, for now, but she knew the rhythms of the sun as well as any of the daylight creatures. Her victim suddenly rolled over on to his side, facing his partner. The intruder remained still, but ready to withdraw if required. He settled again, a deep rumble of snoring in the back of his throat.

She moved, from still to full-speed in no time at all. There was the target zone, only a few strides away. Sudden movement halted her in her tracks, as a large, pale shape loomed above her out of the gloom. The flabby arm of the victim's partner came thumping down on his shoulder, and she mumbled a few words, still mostly asleep. The man's mouth slammed shut and he rolled over onto his back, the snoring silenced.

At the first sign of the limb approaching, the intruder had retreated a short distance. She now sat motionless on top of the headboard. It wasn't an ideal position—too exposed for her liking, but she was reticent to go any further away now that she had come this far.

She drummed her front legs in frustration, a sound only audible to her. She had been so close to reaching her destiny, but also too close to failure. It would be a shame to give up now, when she was within striking distance, but time was moving on. All her instincts told her to wait, to be the patient hunter and strike only when everything was right. But an outside pressure, an undeniable force, was driving her on. Go, it said, go now. Once again she looked down into the bed, and observed her victim. Almost immediately, the man rolled again, his back towards his partner.

She knew, just knew, this was it. The position was perfect, the mouth open, breathing regular, and no snoring. Without hesitation, she scurried down the headboard at top speed, her movements a blur. Across the pillow she ran, around the head and towards the pale lips. As the

man took a breath she charged in, between the front teeth and along the rear ones, using the rushing air to aid her forward motion. With the wet tongue to her right, she headed unstoppably for the dark hole at the rear of the saliva slick mouth. Her legs began to slip as the moisture increased. She put everything she had into moving faster. To fail now would be the cruelest of ends.

Suddenly she was there, nothing ahead but darkness and death. She didn't stop flailing her limbs until the muscular contractions of the victim's throat crushed in on her.

The victim choked as she entered the tunnel, swallowed reflexively and down she went, a slow descent along a tube and into the stomach. She pulled in her legs as tight as they would go, more from instinctive behavior than the knowledge it would do any good.

In this ball-like position, she landed on the greasy surface and began to sink into the semi-digested mush of her victim's last meal. Her exoskeleton began to soften and dissolve as she sank further into the bubbling acid, although there was little pain. And finally the outside pressure

dissipated, leaving only lingering warmth through her entire body. The spider just had time to feel a primal satisfaction before her short life ended. Fate was satisfied: number eight had arrived.

The man sat up suddenly, choking, fumbling for the bedside lamp switch. His shaking hand snatched up the half-full glass resting on the cabinet and he took a long gulp of water. It was warm and a bit stale, but it did the trick.

"What's the matter Arthur?" his wife turned onto her back to see what had woken her this time.

"Nothing, I just swallowed something, I think it was an insect."

"You were probably just dreaming. Go back to sleep."

"Well, it's too late now, whatever it was. Just hope it didn't have too many calories. My doctor isn't going to be happy."

His wife groaned, "Oh, just go back to sleep, comedian."

"Yes, dear."

Arthur laid back down and got comfy, before drifting off to sleep. He was blissfully unaware, now his fate was fulfilled, that the final hours of his life had begun to count down.

A revised, digest-sized edition of the Mercenary Breed core setting guide has been released. This new edition follows our new 5 1/2" x 8 1/2" format for all non-eZine products for better use on electronic devices while retaining the ability to be easily printed.

Mercenary Breed is a space opera sandbox setting where inter-planetary corporations employ mercenaries to enforce laws and enact justice against those who perform oppositional activities.

No matter what kind of sci-fi action and adventure experience you're looking for, it's all possible with *Mercenary Breed*. The core setting guide gives you the base tools and framework necessary to create an extraordinary setting of your own filled with creatures sourcing from the imagination of the players. *Mercenary Breed* is meant to be interactive and social along with being fun, fast, and flexible.

Available now from DriveThruRPG, RPGNow, and Paizo.com.



GLOBAL NEWS NETWORK

MADMAN KIDNAPS BILLIONAIRE'S DAUGHTER

By John Boston, Staff Reporter (Written by R. Hyrum Savage of Super Genius Games – Strike Force 7.)

NEW YORK

In the early morning hours yesterday, November 10th, Skorpion stung the public once again as they descended upon the household of billionaire software developer Ed Farmington. The sound of the rooster crowing acted as the harbinger for the fate of what was to come. According to eyewitnesses, the still-quiet downtown Manhattan mansion erupted in turmoil as

SKORPION SOLDIERS

Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Pace: 6 Parry: 5 Toughness: 5

Skills

Fighting d6, Shooting d6, Driving d4, Notice d6, Piloting d6, Stealth d4, Survival d4

Gear

SteyrAUG, knife

Rocket Pack (Science Gadget):

- Allows user to lift/carry body plus 150lbs. It enables the wearer to fly at Pace 50, has Acceleration 20, and Climb 20. A successful Piloting roll is required to perform any maneuvers other than level flying.
- The rocket pack has a Toughness 9, which if overcome results in the engine cutting out. Duration is one half hour of constant usage.
- **Quirk (Stutter/Randomness):** The pack and its wearer lose 1d10x5 of altitude, plus when ignited the rockets have a chance to fire randomly each round. Roll a d20, on a roll of 19-20 the rocket fires again sending the wearer off in a random direction. Roll a d4 for direction (1=N, 2=S, 3=E, 4=W).

heavily armed, dark-clad brigands broke down the doors and assaulted the Farmington family. Gunfire broke the tranquility of morning as the kidnappers eliminated any who opposed them. Ed Farmington, in a desperate attempt to save his daughter from the clutches of these madmen, received a bullet in the stomach for his heroics. Thinking him dead, the men captured the lovely Amy Farmington and made off with her in what was described by one man as a "behemoth of an airship with a steam engine pouring smoke out of its sides like a dragon."

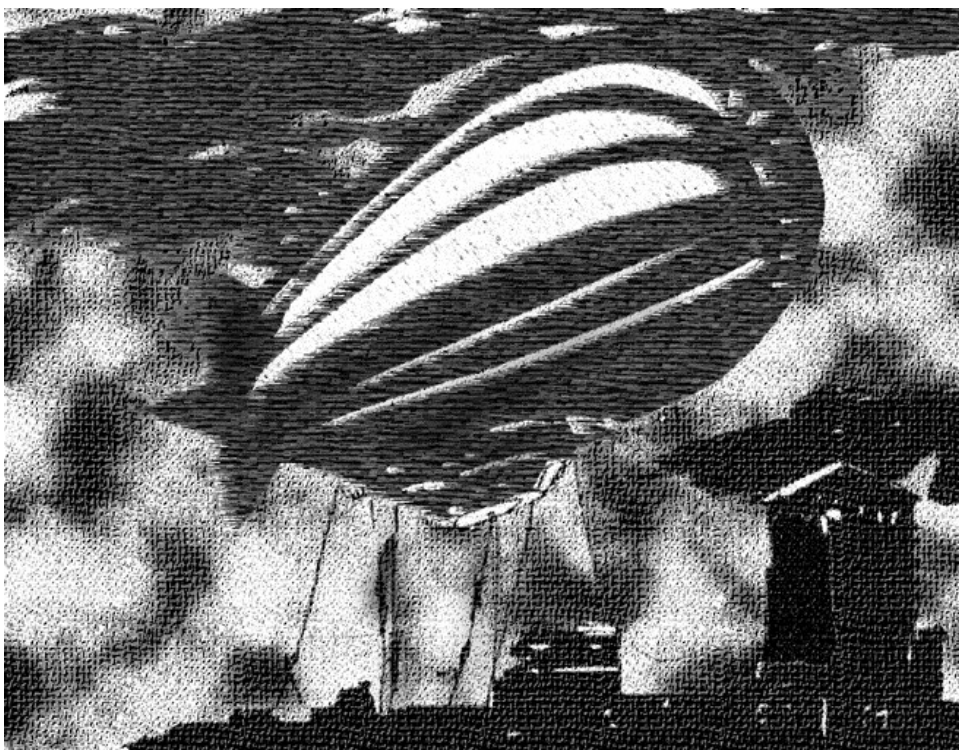
As the police arrived, they were in awe of the massive dirigible, watching helplessly as it ascended. Chief Blumkroft stated, "Several attempts were made to bring it down, but it seemed to shrug off everything we fired at it."

The survivors of the assault, long-time employees of the Farmington household, recovered Ed Farmington and attempted to staunch the grievous wound that he suffered. At present, he is still in severe condition, and his personal physician cautions that Mr. Farmington may not survive.

The whereabouts and well-being of Amy Farmington are unknown at this time. We can only hope now that Strike Force 7 has been called, and Ms. Farmington will be rescued soon.

MEANWHILE...

Strike Force 7 has been on the trail of the nefarious Doctor Phobos for the last six months as he spread his reign of terror along the east coast. The highly placed member of Skorpion is gunning for a posi-



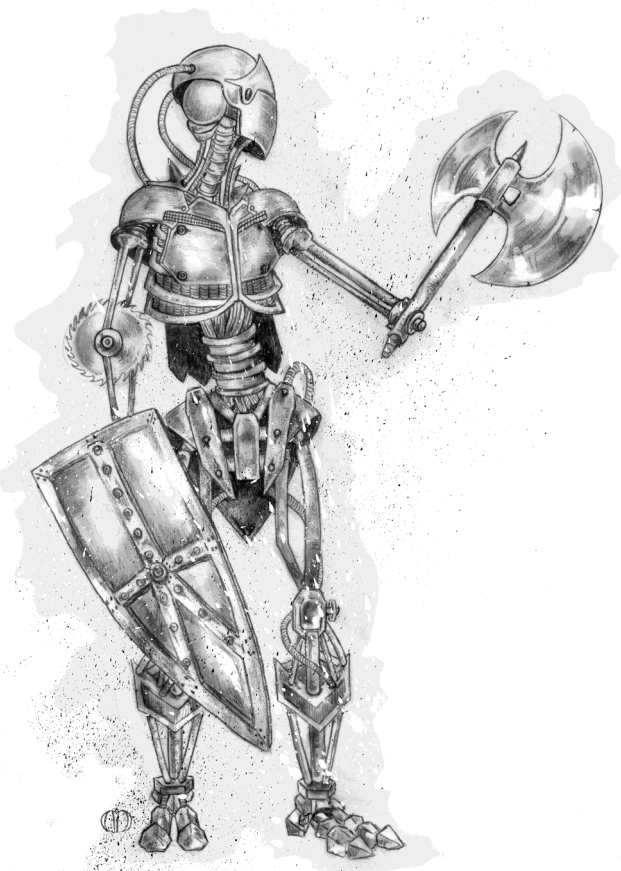
tion in the Children of Ra. With his monolithic airship, Malefactor Rex, and a legion of loyal Skorpion soldiers hell-bent on doing his bidding, this evil madman will stop at nothing to complete his diabolical plan!

After tracking down Dr. Phobos, the team finally secured transport from local SF 7 science guru Professor Mikhail Smirkitoff and proceeded to follow the zeppelin. As they roared off, the professor hastily explained that the rocket packs will only work for short durations of time and therefore should be used sparingly.

ABOARD THE MALEFACTOR REX

Almost immediately, a fight will ensue as the heroes land in the hanger of the dirigible. A squad of Skorpion soldiers (2x the number of PCs) rushes them just as they remove their rocket packs.

With that fight over, the heroes have just enough time to catch their collective breath when the steel door to the interior carriage flies off of its hinges, almost clipping them. A hole is created in the side of the zeppelin's hanger, and the Malefactor Rex rocks to one side from the force of the blow. Emerging from the murky doorway, a gleaming clockwork creation bent on the team's destruction catapults itself at the heroes!



During the ensuing battle, Dr. Phobos engages the heroes for 5 rounds, after which he begins to load Amy Farmington into his helicopter and takes off in 10 rounds (1 minute). It's up to the heroes to stop Dr. Phobos from escaping with the girl. Can they dispatch the mechanical menace in time to stop the mad doctor? Will tragedy strike over the skies of Manhattan? Will Dr. Phobos rain Red Death down upon the hapless citizens of New York? Only YOU can decide their fate!

THE VILLAIN

Doctor Phobos, Master of Terror!

From the beginning, Theomistoklis Adrealestos knew he was different. Growing up in a strict Greek household under his father's heavy hand, he knew that the only way he could get out and be somebody was to utilize the gift the Universe gave him: his intellect. At night while his family slept, Theomistoklis would pour over volumes of scientific tomes, unlocking the

secrets of chemistry, botany, mathematics, and a host of others. After laborious research, he had constructed the first prototype of his now infamous Terrorizer, a gun with the capability to cause Fear in the hearts of all it is aimed at!

After a particular horrifying accident, when the Terrorizer was used on himself during a misfiring, Theomistoklis found a way to make himself immune to its effects. Once that was mastered, he began his reign of terror on all who stood in his way. He was eight at the time his quest began. His father begged for mercy, but found none in those cold, hollow eyes. Instead, he heard insidious peals of laughter as his son took delight in tormenting the elder Adrealestos.

With his vast intellect and knowledge of the esoteric, Theomistoklis made his way up the academic ladder, publishing papers on the cause and effect of Fear and Terror on the human body and how paranoia played a large part in

CLOCKWORK ASSASSIN (MINION)

Agility d4, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Pace: 5 Parry: 4 Toughness: 5

Skills

Fighting d4, Notice d6, Piloting d6, Repair d10

Hindrances

Clunky, Electrical Susceptibility, Hard of Hearing (Minor)

Edges

Construct

Gear

Electro-axe (Str+d8), Shield

DR. PHOBOS (WILD CARD)

Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Pace: 6 Parry: 2 Toughness: 5

Charisma: 0 Power Points: 10

Skills

Driving d4, Guts d4, Knowledge (Science) d8, Notice d4, Repair d8, Shooting d6, Weird Science d10

Hindrances

Delusion, Quirk

Edges

Arcane Background (Weird, Science), Gadgeteer, New Power, Power Points.

Powers

Fear

Gear

The Terrorizer, tool kit.

The Terrorizer (Science Gadget)

- **Effect:** Causes Fear as per the Power, range is 20 (2x Smarts)
- **Area:** Large Burst Template
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Power Points:** 2, Dr. Phobos can fire the Terrorizer 5 times.
- This power causes the target overwhelming dread and horror. Every creature beneath the template must make a Guts check; apply -2 to the Guts roll if Dr. Phobos gets a raise. Wild Cards who fail roll on the Fear Table; Extras are Panicked instead.
- **The Gun:** The gun itself is just a storage unit for a crushed botanical mixture that has been ground into a fine powder. Pneumatic pistons shoot the powder out in a gaseous format, which then envelops the target.

the everyday panic that most people felt. Always seeking to capitalize on others' misfortune, Skorpion took the young professor under its wing and used him as a tool to spread fear and terror. Theomistoklis, now calling himself Dr. Phobos in homage to the Greek god of terror, worked with Pharaoh himself to build a network of extortion against high-ranking public officials. Once they fell to his mastery of their fears, they were like putty in his hands. He robbed from them, discredited his peers with their laughable notions of science, and continued to amass great

wealth. But wealth was not enough for the diabolic genius of horror! He wanted fame! He wanted to be one of the Children of Ra so the whole world would tremble at his name and would know fear like nothing before! The Red Death would rain down upon them from the sky, as he alone would sit above, like the gods of old on Mt. Olympus, and dictate his wishes to the world below!



Two novels, two great heroes!



Well hung and left for dead, Throb Hammerdong is quite annoyed....

Barbarian quarry worker Throb wakes up one day to find himself hanging by his neck from a bridge. Luckily for us, he doesn't die, but instead sets out on a quest for revenge.

Accompanied by his loyal crew and armed only with the latest weapons, a full stomach, and regular, almost constant sex, Throb must survive attack by bandits, go shopping, and sit through the worst live porn show on earth, before facing his enemies and sorting out the whole beaver thing.

Wayland Snowball doesn't want much from life. A fast car, huge amounts of money, and two gorgeous women with big... personalities.

Unfortunately, Wayland is one of life's losers; a shallow and work-shy youth whose only purpose in life seems to be to get drunk, upset people, and try to find a way for his only friend to lose his virginity.

But with a bit of luck, lots of luck, and unbelievable amounts of luck, even he may make something of himself.



By
Steve
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Setting the Mood

Written by Vikki Felde of Palewolf Publishing – Olympian Breed.

Horror, according to the dictionary, is an intense feeling of fear, shock, or disgust. It is a common theme in movies, literature, and in role-playing games alike. Thousands of people are drawn to the thrill of being scared and the adrenaline rush it brings. It's why Halloween is one of the most popular holidays. Unfortunately, Game Masters (GMs) often find it difficult to build that pending sense of dread into their games.

When you describe something that's supposed to be scary, one or more of the

players might pop off with a joke, then things become campy or cheesy as you try to move forward. You can avoid that pitfall if you are careful in slowly creating and building your mood. One thing I've noticed over the years: if the GM is serious and really focused about the game, the players also become engaged.

Start with the atmosphere -- a dimly lit room, some candles (for aroma, not lighting) and mood music (e.g. musical groups like Nox Arcana or E.S. Posthumus). Dark candles are available in many

scents including graveyard, crypt moss, or even black roses. Candle lighting is nice for mood but frustrating for players as everyone needs to be able to see their character sheets and dice. Music can play a huge role in creating a dark ambiance, building suspense, and setting the stage for your stories. Movies use music to enhance their films and build tension. Have you ever watched an extra scene on a DVD that didn't have all the music and sound effects in it?

Music can also be annoying if it's too loud or repetitive, so great care is needed in choosing the right tunes for your group. Another technique is to only use music for specific scenes. Finally, some GMs choose to enhance their games with sound effects only. There are millions of sounds available for download on the internet. These days, almost every gamer knows someone who likes to bring their laptop to tabletop games. GMs should take advantage of every opportunity to infuse more moods into their games. The internet is a great resource for finding images for characters I've seen GMs use images to great effect, introducing a sense of realism. Now that your stage is set, you can concentrate on the elements of your story.

Role-playing games have a distinct advantage for setting up horror. Unlike horror movies where you already know something's going to be scary, GMs can keep players in suspense without revealing the theme in the beginning. In movies, they build up the characters, make them interesting and exciting, get you involved in their lives while in the back of your mind you are anticipating when the "bad



thing” is going to happen. You are already expecting it and it’s just a matter of time. Sneaky GMs will dial in the horror a little at a time, slowly building up with creepy moments, shadows moving, and eerie howls in the distance. If you do it right, the characters shouldn’t realize just how wrong things are until they find Bob, the friendly gas station attendant who gave them directions, lying on the ground in a pool of his own blood with millions of small bite marks all over his body and parts missing!

Giving the players a vivid description is paramount in achieving the imagery and mood you are trying to convey. Give them time to think about it and let the horror sink in. Let them wonder what got Bob, how many creatures there are, where they came from, where they went, and who their next victim will be.

While it’s possible to infuse horror into a large crowd of people, it’s far easier to accomplish in a small, isolated group. Things are just not as scary when there is a big group of people around. Whether it is a remote mining camp, a space ship millions of miles from Earth, a secret tunnel underneath the house which leads to a dungeon, or a secluded cabin deep in the woods, choosing the right place for your events to unfold is the key to success.

If there are not a lot of people around to confirm the strange events, characters will be forced to wonder if those events are happening for real or just in their heads. They won’t have many people to turn to for help; there’s no easy way to escape and they can’t just run away or call for help. GMs should use the few non-player characters (NPCs) they have around to the greatest effect now. Make sure to introduce them to the player characters (PCs). Let the PCs get to know them, meet their families, and spend some time together. Even if you plan to kill them all in Act III, their deaths will

have a far greater impact on the players if their characters “get to know” them first. Heck, if you are lucky, they might even care about any surviving family members.

Another critical element is mystery. It can be hard to introduce mystery into a hack-and-slash game that we’ve all played for years and years, but it’s not impossible. GMs need to be creative with their descriptions so players can’t easily figure out what is lurking in the shadows. Tell the players what they smell and hear, not what they see. GMs also need to create new, fiendish beasts that the players have *never* seen before.

Another idea is to only show parts of the creature, maybe just a tentacle or a barbed tail. The creature always stays just around the corner or hidden underground. To truly horrify your PCs, the threat needs to be unknown. Something about the unknown thing, lurking in the dark and waiting to pounce and feed, frightens us on a subconscious level. The imagination can come up with visions of things far worse than any description can do justice. With rumors of scientific experiments, military testing, or some kind of mutations, it will be sure to add to the level of horror.

Use props. Everyone has access to a word processor and a printer these days. With the wide variety of free handwriting fonts and creative borders, there is no telling what kind of documents you can come up with. These props also add a sense of realism to the game. You can type out a prophecy and tear it up into pieces, only giving some of the pieces to the players – just the ominous parts to make them wonder. Maybe one of the PCs searches the desk and finds a cryptic confession scrawled in the dying man’s own blood!

One of my favorite notes received from a GM was a fragment of a letter that had been burned and only a small piece remained, revealing exactly what he wanted

to be known and not a word more. These things all have an impact on the players and can enhance the uncertainty of a situation. It’s also a great way to give out clues and reveal the secrets that will keep the PCs on the path of your story. It’s also interesting to see if the player chooses to share this information with the group or keep the knowledge to himself and seal his character’s fate.

RPGs can handle the terror from the deep, the madness within, the undead zombie, the alien from beyond, and the experiment gone wrong equally well. I especially like creatures that are intelligent, yet so utterly incomprehensible that we could never begin to understand their motives. Cthulhu fhtagn!

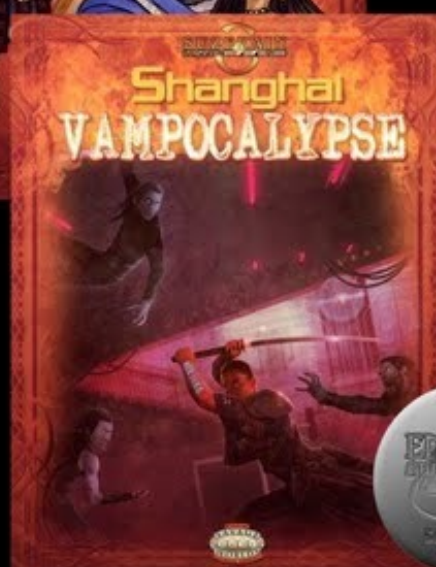
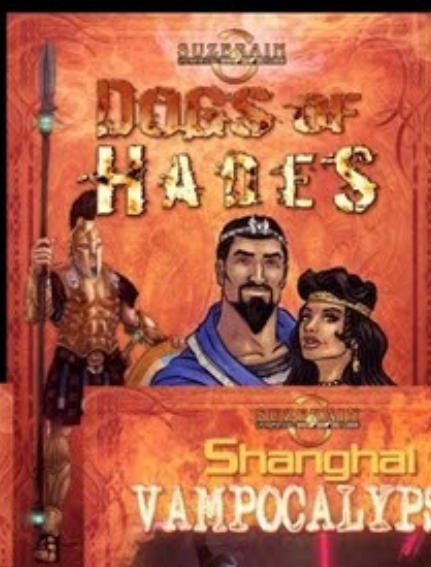
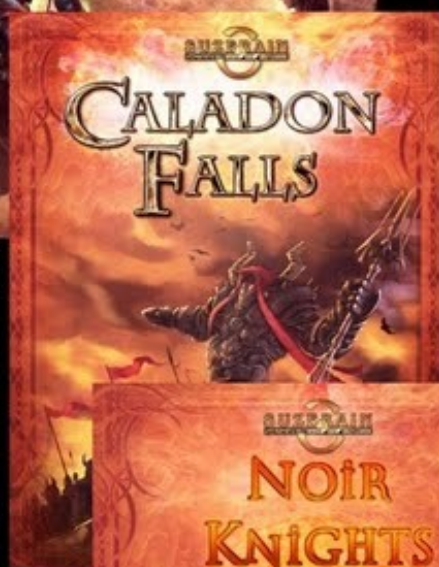
Setting the mood and bringing horror into your game can be a challenge, but it’s not as hard as you might think. It can be very rewarding to both players and the GMs alike. We once had a game session continue on until dawn because the players were so horrified and, scared, yet intrigued, that they just couldn’t let it go. So, the next time you have a dark and stormy night, take advantage of the natural stage dressing and run a game with a horror theme. Better yet, download a thunderstorm track on your laptop and make it rain in your game anytime you want.

What’s most important to remember is to make sure your story is enjoyable and that the players are having a good time. That is, after all, what gaming is all about.



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Goddess of Ice and Snow

A Savage Worlds sci-fi horror adventure by Lee F. Szczepanik, Jr. of Daring Entertainment – War of the Dead.

A Simple Job

The characters are hired by Jorin Yevits, a wealthy businessman, to transport him from whatever port the crew has most recently set down in, to a planet on the outer expanses of frontier space. Jorin claims that he was on his way back from the Rigallos system from a business meeting when pirates attacked his vessel. The ambush was well planned, and his crew was killed when the ship was destroyed. He, alone, managed to escape in one of the life pods, and only barely made it to the port. Now stranded without a starship, he will pay handsomely for transport back to his operations in the Hirosh IV system. A successful Knowledge (Planetary Systems) check will reveal that Hirosh IV is a mining planet whose main export is the primary type of gas used in Hyperdrive engines.

Jorin is a short, heavy-set man with a ruddy complexion and thinning hair. He's dressed in the expensive attire normally worn by people of opulence in whatever setting the adventure is placed in. Seven gemstone rings adorn as many fingers, and as he talks to the characters, he nervously fidgets with one of them.

Exactly how much money he offers the characters is up to the GM, depending upon the needs of the overall campaign. Although he should offer them a significant amount (they will never actually see the payment, after all), it shouldn't be so much that it immediately makes the characters suspicious. He'll offer them 20% upfront, with the balance payable once they reach Hirosh IV. If questioned as to why he doesn't just contact his operations on Hirosh IV for transport, he'll explain

that the port doesn't contain a Hyper-space Transmitter, and by the time the message made it through sub-light relay to the planet, he would be away from his operation for far too long.

Once the characters accept the job, Jorin is prepared to leave immediately. Time is money, after all, and he is eager to get back.

Frozen in Time

Although the job has started innocently enough, the characters are about to come face to face with a horror that could very well kill them all.

Jorin Yevits is not what he appears to be.

Fifteen years ago, Jorin was a man with dreams of making it big. After having lost most of his savings on one bad investment after another, he met Genny Kellis—a beautiful lady of considerable means. It didn't take long for Genny to become more than a little attracted to his quick wit and desire to build his own fortune. The two of them married, although some would say too quickly.

Not long after the nuptials were consummated, Jorin proposed a business endeavor. The two of them would invest in a small mining business on the arctic planet of Gelidean, where some black-market tips had indicated vast deposits of extremely rare gems for the taking. The gems, typically used in everything from handheld to ship-scale blasters, were worth a vast fortune in the Corporate Sector, as well as within the underworld arms manufacturers. They would establish a low cost, prefabricated complex on the planet and hire a small team of labor-

ers to harvest the gems. They would then use her connections within the Corporate Sector, and his own less than legal acquaintances, to funnel the gems off world and rake in the credits.

Although Genny was concerned about intruding on the mining operations of the underworld factions already on the planet, Jorin convinced her that Gelidean was a large world, and they would be able to establish their own mining endeavor far enough away to avoid drawing unwanted attention. With the smugglers he could hire, they would be able to ship the cargo off world without alerting the other mining outposts.

Despite her reservations, Genny agreed to provide the startup investment. It was a decision that would ultimately cost her far more than finances.

Once the operation was in place, Jorin secretly made a deal with one of the local crime bosses. He would assume control over Genny's fortune through the marriage, and the two businesses would merge their efforts and corner the market. Between the two of them, they could control a majority of Gelidean and ship greater quantities of gems off world, faster. Additionally, the crime boss had been having issues with pirates in the area, and had been losing several expensive shipments. With their forces combined, the pirates would find their targets better armed, with tighter escorts and more defenses.

Although it took some negotiating, the crime boss eventually agreed.

Jorin convinced Genny to accompany him to survey a new deposit he had discovered. She generally hated the cold

weather of Gelidean, nevertheless, she went along. There, in tunnels deep beneath the surface, Jorin made his move and killed his young wife. With Genny out of the way, he would return to the complex and contact the proper authorities to begin staking his claim to her fortune. Her death would be reported as an accident in the tundra, the body unrecoverable.

The strange ecosystem of the planet, however, had other plans. Deep beneath the surface, alien filaments crawled over the remains of Genny, seeding within her pores and doing strange things to her biology. Genny awakened, after a fashion. Her senses were everywhere at once— in the ice and rock, in the particles within the air, in the very clouds that swirled and circles high overhead.

She was also hungry.

It didn't take long for instinct to take over. In short time, a dozen miners were mysteriously killed, their bodies drained and their corpses reanimated. Genny Kelis, now a part of Gelidean, sustained her existence by feeding upon the life-forces of the living through her filaments. She then used the remains of her victims as part of a plan to extend her influence.

Jorin was at a complete loss over the disappearances of his laborers. Over the next few weeks, close to 40 men vanished, and the rest were ready to pull up their tents and get off of the planet. Jorin couldn't understand what was going wrong, but already word was spreading that the planet was far too dangerous, and hiring more miners was becoming overly expensive. Prepared to suspend mining operations until he could determine a method to bring labor expenses back under control, Jorin was making final preparations to depart when Genny finally struck at him.

That day, close to four dozen of Jorin's missing miners arrived at the complex. Within an hour, Jorin was taken— kicking and screaming— to the same place where

If you are running this as a one-shot and not as a side adventure to an ongoing campaign, you can use the starship stats provided below for the characters' vessel.

SAMPLE FREIGHTER

Acc/Top Speed: 150/FTL

Toughness: 25 (10) **Crew:** 6

Notes

FTL, Heavy Armor, Sensor Suite, Spacecraft

Weapons

2x Laser Cannon Turret (Range 100/200/400, Damage: 4d8, ROF: 2, HW, AP 30)

he had murdered his wife. There he came face to face with the results of his greed.

Genny revealed her new nature to him, and told him that his betrayal would not go unpunished. As his now-dead men held Jorin in place, filaments entered his body through every orifice. Slowly and painfully, they changed him. Jorin was now forever linked to the planet, needing the filaments for sustenance— at Genny's mercy. Though he would die if not sustained, his death would not be a permanent ending, but a transformation into another member of Genny's undead army. The prospect frightened him to his core.

Jorin now hunts the nearby systems for unsuspecting victims, using his cunning and resources to lure them to Gelidean where his immortal wife— now a Goddess of the ice and snow— can feed to sustain herself and her slaves.

Crash Landing

Jorin chose the Hirosh IV system as his fake destination because he knows the main Hyperspace routes that ships will take from his current port. Unfortunately for the characters, Jorin has already set-up an ambush with a known pirate organization, and has paid them handsomely to disable the ship to force a landing on Gelidean, and then leave the area.

PIRATE CORVETTE

Acc/Top Speed: 150/FTL

Toughness: 30 (15) **Crew:** 20

Notes

FTL, Gravity Projector, Heavy Armor, Sensor Suite, Spacecraft

Weapons

- 5x AP Pulse Cannon (Range 75/150/300, Damage 4d10, ROF: 1, HW, AP 100, Reload 1)
- 5x Laser Cannon (Range 100/200/400, Damage: 4d8, ROF: 2, HW, AP 60)

It will take 12 hours to get to Hirosh IV. The ship is six hours into the journey when warning klaxons suddenly blare and the vessel is ripped from Hyperspace. Everyone must make an Agility roll at a -2 penalty or take a level of Fatigue due to the bumps and bruises from being thrown forward. The ship takes 5d10 damage from the force of being ripped back into Realspace (such a jolt has been known to destroy starships).

If the ship has sustained any wounds, roll on the Critical Hits table in the vehicle section of the *Savage Worlds* rulebook.

As the ship drops back into Realspace, new warning sirens blast through the communication system as the sensors detect hostile vessels in the characters' vicinity. A Pirate Corvette, equipped with the huge, egg-shaped Gravity Projector on its hull, maintains a course very close to where the characters dropped from Hy-

SPACE FIGHTER

Acc/Top Speed: 200/1000

Climb: 80 **Toughness:** 12 (5)

Crew: 1

Notes

Heavy Armor, Improved Stabilizer, Repulsorlift, Sensor Suite, Spacecraft, Stealth Paint

Weapons

1x Laser Cannon (Range 100/200/400, Damage: 4d8, ROF: 2, HW, AP 60)

perspace. Meanwhile, two other Pirate Corvettes are drawing within firing range even as they launch a total of four space fighters.

Only one planet appears within the system—a single, white sphere as though the entire thing is composed of ice.

The dramatic action of the battle is going to depend strongly upon what special outfitting the characters' ship possesses. The pirates will keep the characters locked under the gravity sphere in order to prevent a shift into Hyperspace. Meanwhile, the fighters and the Corvettes will attack with ionic weapons to seize control, and target the ship's engines.

While the characters are busy attempting to stay alive, Jorin will sneak into the engine hold. There, he will use the strange filaments that now fill his body to disable the Hyperdrive.

Without a functioning Hyperdrive, the ship is as good as crippled, even if the characters could manage to get out of the gravity sphere.

Jorin will eventually enter the cockpit and look outside the ship. Once he sees the nearby planet, he'll tell the characters to make a run for it. He recognizes the place, as he used to have a mining operation there. If he recalls correctly, his company left their complex intact when they pulled out and there used to be all sorts of ship parts stored in the complex. During certain seasons, the cold played hell with a lot of ships' engines.

The Pirates, for their part, are earning their money. They will allow the characters to escape toward the planet; even tossing a few extra shots in their direction to make sure the ship is sufficiently crippled.

Gelidean is suffering from its harsh season, so the pilot will have to make a Piloting roll at a -2 modifier (plus any modifiers from the ship's wounds). Failure indicates the ship crashes and sustains

ICE GHOUL

Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Pace: 6 **Parry:** 2 **Toughness:** 8

Skills

Intimidation d6, Notice d6

Equipment

Weapons: Claws (Str+d6)

Special Abilities

- **Cold Aura:** Any character adjacent to an Ice Ghoul at the end of movement must also make a Vigor roll or be slowed, causing them to discard and redraw any face cards (except Jokers) during initiative the next round.
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and cannot be intimidated
- **Invulnerability:** Ice Ghouls can be Shaken but never wounded by attacks not aimed at their weakness.
- **Undead:** Ice Ghouls add +2 to their Toughness, +2 when attempting to recover from being Shaken, suffer no additional damage from called shots, suffer no Wound modifiers, and do not suffer from disease or poison.
- **Weakness:** An Ice Ghoul suffers +4 damage from fire trapping attacks, and can be wounded.

and automatic extra wound. Those inside the ship take 5d6 damage.

On the way through the atmosphere, Jorin directs the characters as best he can, which takes them to the night side of the planet. Once they make landfall, he acts as though he is getting his bearings before telling them that the complex should be roughly five miles to the north. He suggests they all dress warmly (no doubt they have winter garb on the ship for such emergencies), as the temperature on Gelidean averages -40° C at night.

Into the Night

Jorin has long since learned that the complex is a unique structure on the planet. For reasons he can't figure out, Genny is

unable to extend her filaments into the place, making it the one safe haven on the planet. He has been plotting a betrayal, and hopes to lead the characters there so that they can discover the truth about the planet, escape, and possibly warn others away from it. Although he won't stop attempting to obtain victims for Genny out of a stark fear of becoming one of her mindless slaves, he hopes that he can somehow prevent others from coming to the planet so that she might eventually cease to exist. He holds a long-shot dream that if she is eliminated, he'll be free of what she'd done to him.

Getting to the complex will take the characters five hours of overland travel. Due to the harsh, arctic conditions, the blistering winds, and the heavily falling snow, the terrain is considered harsh and the characters are reduced to a base 1mph of travel. The group will travel for four hours before anything happens to them.

The characters must make a Vigor roll each. Due to the subzero temperatures, the check suffers a -3 penalty. If the characters actually had winter garb on the ship, however, the penalty is reduced to a -1. Failure causes the character to gain a level of Fatigue.

After the Vigor roll is made, the characters are in the last mile of their journey. The snow is coming down even harder, the thick flakes and pitch black of the Gelidean night causing a -4 penalty to all combat rolls.

As the characters approach, 20 Ice Ghouls attack, appearing 10 in. away. They come from the left and right, and each character must make a Notice roll at -4 or be surprised the first round. Additionally, they must make a Fear check (using the Guts skill or Spirit, depending upon your setting) at a -1 penalty. Genny doesn't want to kill them, just yet. She is aware of Jorin's plans to betray her, and wants him and the characters to get to

TYPICAL CREW SURVIVOR

Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Pace: 6 Parry: 5 Toughness: 6

Skills

Fighting d6, Gambling d6, Notice d4, Persuasion d6, Piloting d8, Repair d6, Shooting d6, Streetwise d6, Survival d8

Hindrances

Code of Honor (no slavery cargo), Greedy, Wanted (by Sector Authorities)

Edges

Connections

Equipment

Blaster Pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, ROF 1, Ammo: 100 shots, AP 1)

the complex, where she has another surprise waiting. The ghouls are simply to instill fear in the group and move them more quickly along the course Jorin has prescribed.

Once the characters realize they can't completely destroy the Ice Ghouls, run the remainder of the scene as a Chase, using the rules from the *Savage Worlds* rulebook. The chase is of standard length and uses Agility as the Trait.

Hiding From a Goddess

The complex is a two-story affair, squat and square. Next to it is a smaller structure that serves as a garage, and several landing pads for cargo ships are mostly buried in the snow on the opposite side.

Jorin rushes to the door and types in a security code.

Nothing happens.

He types it in again, with the same result.

Meanwhile, the Ice Ghouls appear through the storm, now only 6 in. away.

Jorin chuckles, and says he was using the wrong code. He types the pad again, and the door hisses upward.

Once everyone is inside, he punches the button that closes the door.

The interior is powered, and the lights are dimmed causing a -1 penalty to any rolls involving sight. Jorin is out of breath. No doubt, the characters will ask what those things were, and he'll wave them off, replying that they are part of the dangers of the planet. Between things like that and the weather, it's one of the reasons mining operations on Gelidean were abandoned. The risks and costs outweighed the profit. They should be safe enough in the complex, though, until the creatures get bored and leave. In the meantime, they should head to the garage and look for those ship parts.

As Jorin leads them down a series of metallic hallways illuminated by overhead recesses of dark orange, a single blaster shot from further down the corridor strikes the wall next to their heads.

The attackers are the last crew that Jorin brought to Gelidean. Although they will claim to have survived his attempts to betray them, they are actually servants of Genny sent to stop Jorin and retrieve the characters. There is one man for each player character.

If the characters don't think of it, Jorin will attempt to reason with the attackers using Persuasion (allow one of the players to roll for him, as though he was an ally for this task). As far as the characters can tell, once the attackers realize it is Jorin, they start warning the characters not to trust him. One of them asks the characters if they were attacked by pirates and conveniently brought to this place. Jorin tries to interrupt that it's simply the dangers of the route. There are pirates everywhere.

The lead attacker goes on to yell down the corridor at the characters that Jorin hired them to take him to a system where he had business operations, claiming he was stranded after a pirate attack. They accepted the job, got ripped from Hyper-space and attacked, and were forced to land here. Jorin claimed he could get

FILAMENT HORROR

Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Pace: 4 Parry: 5 Toughness: 9

Skills

Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6

Equipment

Weapons: Claws (Str+d6)

Special Abilities

- **Extra Limbs:** Filament Horrors possess six filament-like limbs, allowing them to take extra physical actions each round at no multi-action or off-hand penalty, as though they possessed the Extra Limb power from the *Super Powers Companion*.
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and cannot be intimidated
- **Hardy:** If Shaken, a Filament Horror never suffers a Wound from further Shaken results
- **Regeneration:** Filament Horrors have Fast Regeneration.
- **Undead:** Filament Horrors add +2 to their Toughness, +2 when attempting to recover from being Shaken, suffer no additional damage from called shots, suffer no Wound modifiers, and do not suffer from disease or poison.

them spare parts, but instead led them into an ambush by some ice creatures and took off into the storm. They barely managed to survive, and eventually found this place and a ventilation duct that got them inside.

They have been trapped here for two weeks. There are no spare ship parts.

The characters will have to decide what to do with Jorin, as the chance of the attacker's story being a coincidence is very slim. By this stage, it's obvious that Jorin set them up. The reasons, though, remain a mystery.

Once Jorin realizes the jig is up, he starts to spill the beans. He tells the characters about how he met Genny and how he convinced her to fund his operations

on this planet. Just as he finishes with the tale of his betrayal and murder, and how she somehow merged with the planet, he doubles-over in pain. He's told the story, which Genny allowed, to better instill fear into the characters that they are trapped on a living planet determined to devour them. Now, she enacts her first strike.

By the end of the first round, Jorin's body splits open, folds back upon itself, and finishes the transformation into a Filament Horror. Each character must make a Fear check at a -2 penalty for witnessing the transformation.

Unless the characters can strike at Jorin's weakness, they must flee and make it to a room that can be sealed. Run this as a chase of standard length, with Agility as the Trait.

Once Jorin has been destroyed, or the characters have locked themselves in a room with the other crew, the leader introduces himself as Keric Tarsec and states that he was the captain of the Nova Star freighter. He tells them that he lost his entire sublight engine core, and unless he can get another and find a way to get it installed (he's simply a basic mechanic), they are screwed. As it turns out, both ships are of very similar design. Whichever of the two is the least damaged, Keric (if the characters don't think of it) suggests that they strip the parts off of one, and use it to get the other back into space and away from this frozen hell.

Once a plan is in motion, they will have to escape Jorin (if he isn't dead already), and get outside the complex.

The Ice Ghouls have disappeared into the storm.

The Great Escape

Whichever ship the characters go to first, they face 20 Ice Ghouls along the way, two different encounters of 10 Ghouls each. Once they make it to the first ship, it will take a Repair roll and 20 minutes to get the parts. During that time, a total of four Filament Horrors and another 30 Ice Ghouls arrive to attack. Divide the total number of attackers up into however many waves will challenge the group, but do not kill them outright.

Once the ship's parts have been removed, it's time to get to the second ship. This will take the characters five hours in the blinding storm, requiring a Vigor roll at a -3 (or a -1 if they have winter gear), or suffer a level of Fatigue.

In the last quarter mile of journey to the second ship, the storm increases in intensity, reducing vision to a mere 2 in. The characters and the crew are separated, and somewhere over the howling wind, they hear the others calling for help.

The sound suddenly stops as the wind rises.

Each character makes a Notice check at -2 to avoid a Surprise round. Suddenly, a Filament Horror emerges from the storm, one for each character. From the appearance of what remains of the once human bodies, they were the other crew. Each character must make a Fear check at a -2 penalty.

If the characters decide to fight the Horrors, firing from a maximum of 2 in. away subjects them to no penalty, and firing adjacently causes the target number to be the Horror's Parry instead of the

basic TN 4. Firing from further away causes an additional -2 penalty due to the storm.

If the characters decide to flee, once again run the chase as a standard length with Agility as the Trait.

As the characters close in on the second ship, they discover 20 Ice Ghouls arrayed against them, blocking their progress. Genny isn't about to lose her next meal and newest recruits without a fight.

Once the characters make it onto the ship, they will have to install the parts as the vessel is rocked by the storm's ever-growing intensity. If they don't get the parts in fast, the ship could be flipped by the Hurricane-level winds.

Getting the parts installed in time is a Dramatic Task, as detailed in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook. If the characters fail, the ship is picked up by the winds and slammed to the ground upside-down. The vessel takes 4d10 damage, and anyone inside suffer 5d6 damage. It also means they are stranded.

If they succeed at the Dramatic Task, they are able to lift off and escape the storm with a Piloting roll at a -2 penalty.

They have lived to explore another day, and can warn people about landing on Gelidean.

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RAGGETYMEN

Other Names: Hobos, Rag Men, Masks

Stereotypes: Agitators, Survivors, Boogeymen

"Listen up, kid. These Hobos aren't the ones you're thinking of. They're not just looking for some change or a burger. They're not sleeping in dumpsters or living in boxes. These ones are trying to make the whole Earth one large ruin; make us the ones looking for a place to live. You have to make sure you don't let them slide by you. That's why I pay so much attention to the homeless around here. You think Centralia or Detroit were all on us? Think again, Rookie."

- Agent Ellis, API Elite

By Jay Peters of Third Eye Games – Apocalypse Prevention, Inc.

Appearance

Raggetymen are slightly taller and lankier than your average person. They often have dark skin, almost black when satiated but fading to a dark grey when hungry, and solid white eyes. They also have no mouths. This does not stop them from communicating, however. Instead, they have to move their hand as though it were speaking for them. This has caused some of the Rag Men to use sock puppets, Pez dispensers, or toys to talk for them, making them appear to be little more than ill, crazy homeless people. Some like to take it further, though.

Because they are often living in areas that are devoid of people, Raggetymen dress in whatever they can find. If people do start appearing, they make sure to hide their lack of mouths with whatever is at hand. Some have used scarves, or bandanas. Others have used masks to hide their entire face. Raggetymen do not like populated areas and reveal themselves as the monsters they are with small groups. Some enjoy slinking into a home and frightening families, hoping the terrified tenants move away. The Boogeymen know that if a place develops a bad enough reputation then it'll be all theirs.

Origins

Raggetymen come from a place of stasis. Nothing there changes, ever. There is no progress, no struggle, only a dried up husk of a once thriving world named Loss. They were apathetic on their homeworld, coming from the belief that there was nothing

left. They were merely waiting to fade away because there was no more reason for them to exist.

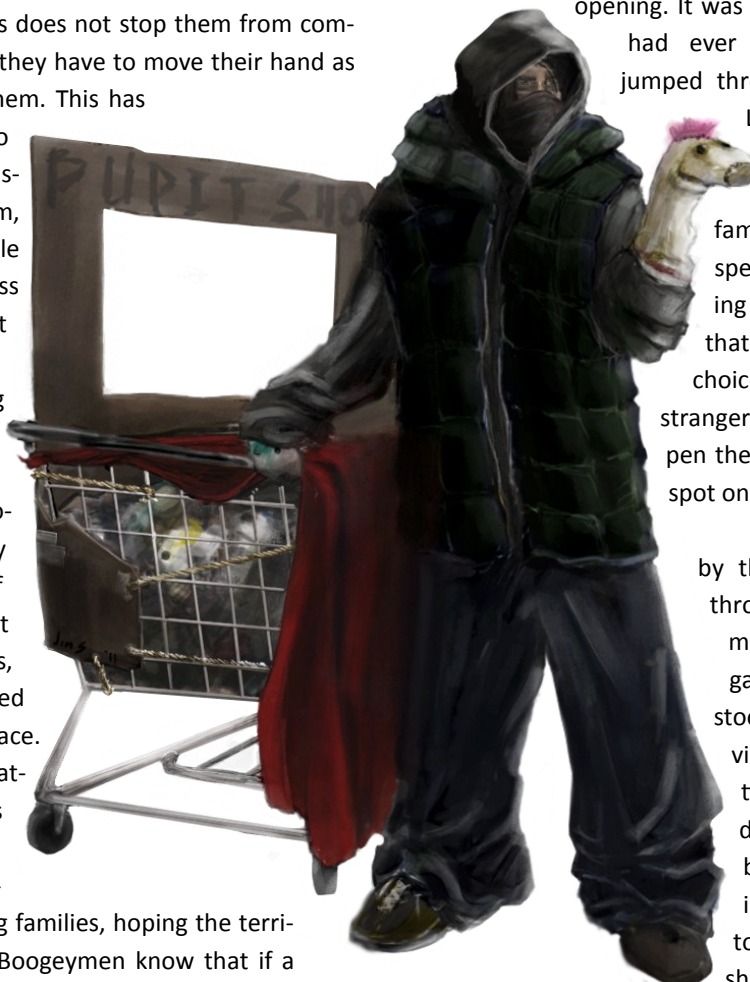
In 1929, a portal opened to Loss and a wave of ruin, rebellion, and despair washed over the Raggetymen nearest to the opening. It was the sweetest thing any of them had ever tasted. A frantic API adept jumped through the wavering portal into Loss and stood facing a hungry crowd of strange-looking demons, ones she was not at all familiar with, and knew that her spell had taken her out of the frying pan and straight into the fire. At that moment she had to make a choice – stay with the ravening strangers and hope for the best, or reopen the portal and head back to a safe spot on Earth. She chose the latter.

The Raggetymen, consumed by their newfound hunger, surged through the portal, many of them making it through before the gateway snapped closed, and stood in a ruined structure on a vibrant world. The API agent noticed their reaction, how the demons slowed and seemed to be drinking in their surroundings, and managed to get back to the company and report what she found. It wasn't until much

later that the agency realized how dangerous these creatures truly are.

Lifestyle

Raggetymen live off the remains of fallen civilizations, consuming the emotions that are left in the earth and stone. When



they drain an area, they move on to find another one. There is no social caste among them, though they do understand the value of moving and working together. Still, the fewer Raggetymen around, the longer a plot of land will last them. If humans start showing up around the Rag Man's current haunt then the Rag Man will do what they can to "encourage" the trespassers to leave.

Status

API once tried to recruit the Raggetymen and found that in an active environment these demons would become anxious, often lashing out in uncontrolled rages. Through controlled experimentation, API determined that the Raggetymen could not coexist with humans and that they must be returned home. However, the Raggetymen didn't want to leave the Earth and return to Loss where they had nothing. Here they were not starving, not apathetic, not bored. Here they felt they could thrive. At that moment humanity became the enemy.

Several Raggetymen managed to elude capture and learned to hide amongst the ruined cities in America. When they couldn't find a ghost town, they would begin agitating small groups of the population, stirring up pockets of rebellion or attempting to cause ecological and economic problems for people living in an area with the goal of forcing them to leave. Centralia, Pennsylvania is often thought to be the work of a Rag Man, which is why API continues to watch the area closely. The surveillance teams are certain that some Hobos are around, but they are having a hard time rooting the demons out. If nothing else, the Raggetymen have shown a well-developed talent for hiding and surviving.

Special Abilities

Inhuman Appearance - Fear

Anyone seeing a Raggetyman's natural form for the first time must make a Guts check or be Shaken. If they are already Shaken, they do not take a Wound from this effect. See Fear in the *Savage Worlds* core rulebook for additional effects.

Survivor

All Raggetymen start with a d6 in Survival. This can only be used for finding shelter and clothing as they have a very specific diet.

Paranoia

Because they have been forced to hide for so long, Raggetymen are terrified of being found out. They have a +2 bonus to Stealth and Notice rolls.

Hindrances

Talk to the Hand

Raggetymen must speak with their hands. If their hands are restrained from moving, they are effectively silenced as well.

Illegal (Minor) (Found in *API Savage Worlds Edition*)

The character is an unregistered demon or a member of an illegal race. If caught or questioned while doing something illegal or remotely magical, there are dire consequences from API.

Adventure Seeds

- A restaurant in an isolated area starts having problems. Bugs getting into the building, customers' tires are being damaged, and it's only a matter of time before maybe, one day, someone has an accident when they are the only one there.
- Centralia, PA's mine fire is a big example of what can go wrong with bureaucracies in today's system. First there's the fire, then every attempt to douse the flames has been foiled, and everyone is blaming the government. Today the population is down to 10, and something is trying to get those 10 to leave.
- Ghost hunting has been getting a lot of attention on TV and it seems so easy to get into. Some kids decide that they're going to go investigate the old haunted jail, but what they find may just frighten them to death.

About Apocalypse Prevention, Inc. *Savage Worlds Edition*

- New Magic System based on Fatigue resistance.
- New Races, Edges, and Hindrances.
- New Fighting Styles for dynamic unarmed combat.

Developer's Note: You'll notice that we mention Guts above, something that was removed in *Savage Worlds Deluxe* and which received a positive response. The reason we are retaining the skill for *API Savage Worlds Edition* is because it will represent the specialized training API agents receive to deal with the horrors of their job. Some of the things they see are down-right grisly and some of the situations they find themselves in would cause an untrained person to snap. Your average Joe probably won't have the Guts skill unless they have a very good reason, but API agents are not your average Joe.

FAITH & DEMONS

THE RISING

The Dark Ages you never knew...

Demons and undead plague the land...

Your lord awaits your service.

Become a playtester by visiting
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Faith & Demons is a Dark Ages, gothic fantasy setting where united lords have brought the world's warriors together to prevent undead armies and demons from enslaving their people.

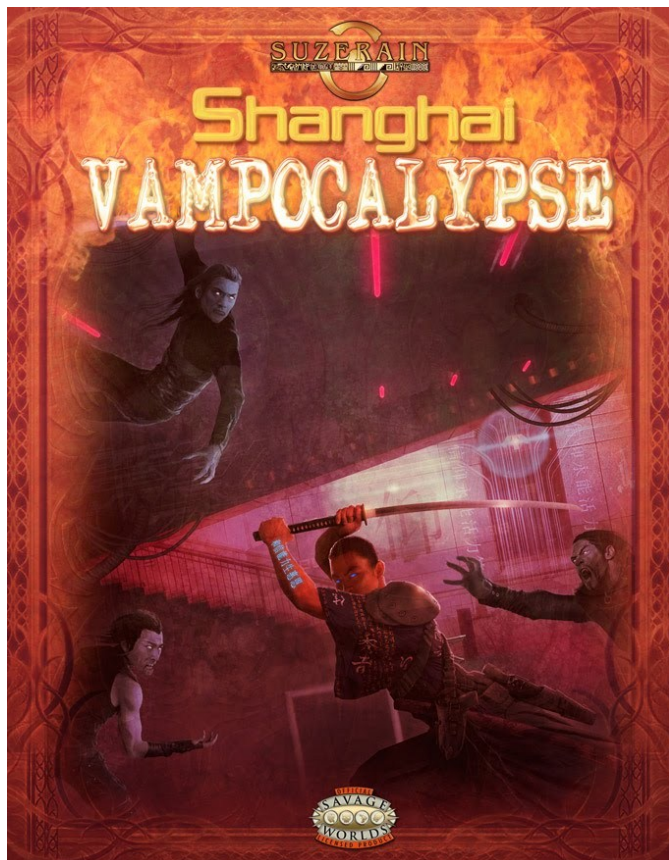


Derek Tyler (order #9232471)



SHANGHAI VAMPOCALYPSE

By Jennifer Brozek



Shanghai Vampocalypse won the 2011 silver ENnie award for Best Electronic Book. It is published by Savage Mojo and written by Jennifer Brozek.

Designer's Description

To me, *Shanghai Vampocalypse* is *I Am Legend* marrying Cyberpunk and having an affair with *Big Trouble in Little China* in Shanghai 2048. It is a horrific world over run by nanite-created vampires mixed with the old gods of legend and lore. With only twelve hours to save the world, the characters have a lot to overcome.

Purpose

We wanted to show that you could have epic-level campaigns in *Savage Worlds*. *Shanghai Vampocalypse* is a demigod-level campaign where everything is out to get you.

Influences

I loved Kung-fu theater growing up. So, that was in the back of my mind. I also love *Shadowrun*, the first *Matrix* movie, and horror in general. Dark speculative fiction is my specialty.

Research

I did all sorts of research on the city of Shanghai itself – where it came from and where it is heading. I also researched its gods, military, transportation systems, and parks. Shanghai is a city rich in technology and tradition.

Art Direction

[Vickey Beaver, the marketing manager, answers:]

Unfortunately, Aaron Acevedo and Jason Engle, who did the bulk of artwork and overall design, and Alec Acevedo, who contributed additional illustrations, weren't able to respond in time for this interview. Still, it's clear from flipping through *Shanghai Vampocalypse* that they endeavored to capture elements of Shanghai, a vision of cyberpunk, and the horror of vampires and bring those together with a unified feel. The illustrations support the grand nature of the text. Jennifer's initial description can be seen in the depictions Aaron, Jason, and Alec designed.

Gaming Experience

This is a fast paced, kick-ass, epic-level campaign where a misstep can mean the end of the world. It is all about hard choices, the greater good, and being Demigods.

Comparison

I think *Shanghai Vampocalypse* is a lot more lethal. But, honestly, I don't know.

Development Process

Everything I did for *Shanghai Vampocalypse* came in layers – outlining each section, researching the needed areas, and then writing that section. I was logical about my progression with a top down approach. While I worked, I sent completed drafts to the publisher for vetting to make sure I was on the right track. It is a lot more complicated than it sounds. Ideas are easy. Everything else is hard – but worth it.

THE DARK BUTCHER

A horror episode for the Relic fantasy realm of Suzerain from Savage Mojo by Vickey A. Beaver.

This can be played in conjunction with Caladon Falls, as a side adventure to your own campaign, or on its own.

Days on End

The adventurers have been on the road through a hilly region. It has been at least a week since they last had anything resembling regular shelter. The season is cool and the leaves have been falling for nearly 30 days. Along the hard-packed road, they see something they haven't in weeks.

A weathered, roughhewn sign shows a saw-tooth line on the left, midway down, and a curved line reaching vertically from near the top to the bottom on its right. The last symbol is an arrow pointing in the direction the party is moving. A Smarts roll reveals the meaning: River Bend, the name of a location nearby. A successful Notice roll allows the characters to hear through the rustle of green, red, and yellow leaves to discern the flow of a gentle river to their right. They also realize that the carving glows slightly.

As they walk another kilometer, the water is louder. Shortly, they see what they've been hearing for minutes. The river is several meters across with waves lapping over jutting rocks and smacking the banks. Ahead, the river bends inward to the left and a few small buildings reside along it. The rest of the view is blocked by tall trees of blue and green needles and others with fan-like leaves.

Upon reaching the bend, the party reaches a small village with at least two dozen homes, shops, and the like. A couple of teenagers are scaling a tree with broad yellowing leaves the length of a grown man's thigh. They have woven baskets. The pair shakes a limb. Brown, rounded objects drop into the baskets. The two, a boy and a girl, shimmy down, surprised by the party's sudden appearance.

Townfolk

"Mercy!" the girl exclaims, stepping back. She has a sunbaked look, making her skin appear slightly scaly. Her brother has a similar look, but somewhat softened. He is about her height, but steps nearly behind her, saying nothing.

"You startled us. Are you passing through?"

If the adventurers engage her in conversation, they'll learn that her name is Galell and her brother is Stion. She volunteers that their mother, Cora, runs the tavern inn, River Hearth. They were gathering the last of the elsen fruit, a juicy tree food with a hard center that can be roasted to keep for the dormant

season. The fish will be gone soon and something has been scaring away the animals the community normally hunts. The siblings suggest the party go to the inn. They can get rest and maybe work, if they're interested in that sort of thing.

If they don't talk to the teens, the adventurers come across the tavern inn anyway. Smelling the sweet aroma of freshly baked bread, anybody who has been eating travel rations and other road food is unlikely to just walk on by. It doesn't take long for the welcoming woman to ask them all about who they are, what brought them to River Bend, and where they are headed.

Whenever any of the PCs gives her an opening, Cora will tell them about Cymion Wycliff, a local hero, who is looking for a group of spirited adventurers to help him track down a beast he's seen in the woods while hunting. He's never seen anything like it and is convinced that not only is it unnatural, but dangerous. He claims that the creature has been slaughtering deer in the far reaches of the forested area.

Once a Champion

When the characters meet Cymion, they might be surprised by his appearance. He is a fury with graying hair along his tied-back mane of black. His left arm is cut off at the elbow. A gleaming shaft of celestium, the most anyone in the area has ever seen at once, is attached as a substitute. Standing nearly 2m tall, he's not exactly a small man. When he walks, someone might guess that his left arm isn't the only limb that's maimed; he drags his left leg just slightly.

In conversation, Cymion will suggest they get food and lodging for the night. He's got preparations to make before



going after The Dark Butcher in the morning. The townsfolk have the last of the harvest to see to, so he would really appreciate some extra hands – and weapons – for the hunt.

“We don’t really deal in the king’s coins out here, but we have some provisions that will do you well on the road. Jade the tanner is the best I’ve seen out here. She can fashion most anything from a good hide. Jerkins, gloves, special straps for unusual weapons – you name it. Samis has a way with the extra bits that don’t make it to steaks. Those’ll last for three weeks if packed correctly in his special casings. And I’ve got a four-person tent I’d throw in. It’s been blessed by a priest of nature. I can promise you only holding the flaps open would cause the water to get inside that work.”

Of Nature

After he gains their interest, he’ll arrange to meet them for the evening meal at River Hearth. He gives Cora a bundle of candles and three flasks of oil to cover the meal and the party’s rooms (either a sin-

gle, large room or a pair of small rooms – clean and comfortable, but not lavish). To prepare the adventurers for the hunt, he describes the deer and their habits.

Rusca are a special breed. They aren’t the same as common deer; they’ve got ears and antlers that seem too big for their heads and light, puffy clumps of hair between the two. Their throats and chests are a lighter brown than the rest of the animal, and they look like over-sized dogs with short tails and a nearly furry coat.

If you see one, others are near. They are so good at camouflage that even Cymion will confess to being startled by them on occasion. He’ll relay a story with some humor. Once, he was hunting and lost sight of a stag. He crept about as quietly as he could. He took another step forward and stepped on a large, dry twig. The second after it snapped, a rusca let out a honk loud enough to make his heart leap to his throat and give him a headache for hours. The beast was an arm’s length

away. It and six more sprinted in different directions.

At this point, he gets serious. “They’re worthy prey. They don’t sit there like bunnies. But what I’ve seen out there isn’t natural. The kills I’ve come across have been grotesque. Nothing native to this area would do what I’ve seen; it’s as if whatever it is out there is playing with its food – before and after feasting. If it keeps up, the ruscas will disappear, which would spell ruin for River Bend. Ruscas are our main source of food after harvest. I don’t know a proper name for it, but I call it the Dark Butcher.

“I came upon it early one morning, as the sun was on the rise. It was nearly the size of a bear with brown, grey, and black stripes along its body. It hunched the way a wolf would, but with much greater mass, and its head was snakelike

“I lobbed a stone at it from the distance, distracting it from its meal. I got its attention. Trying to lure it out, the thing stuck to the shadows while it followed me. When it got near enough for me to try to go one-to-one with it, I realized just how big it was. I got it to lose its footing, and it stumbled into the light. The Dark Butcher let out a hissing howl and ran.”

Hatching a Plan

He goes on describing its habits and lays out ideas for how to track it. The beast is hunting on the same schedule as the ruscas’ favored feeding time: between dusk and dawn. Its lair is a den in a small hillside within the woods. Using old hunters’ tricks, the adventurers can follow remnants of carcasses, dried blood, tufts of hide fur, fight scenes, and the like to find the Dark Butcher.

How exactly the party goes about working with Cymion is up to the GM. If it’s a small or unbalanced group, you might have one of them run Cymion as an ally. Otherwise, you can introduce him as having been previously injured and unable to do more than guide the party or

DARK BUTCHER (WILD CARD)

The thing is a Wild Card. It is damaged by direct sunlight (1d4-2 for each of the first 5 minutes of exposure. Each of the next five minutes is at 1d4-1. Then it goes to 1d4 for each of the next 5. After that it goes to 1d6 per minute with a minimum of 2. The initial exposure causes a separate Spirit wound (if playing in Savage Suzerain) of 1d8, even if only partially exposed). This thing is super strong and wickedly fast. It has a malicious disposition. It will not run unless it keeps getting pushed into the light. It will fight until the party is dead or it is.

Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d8

Pace 8 Parry 7 Toughness 8 Pulse 20

Skills

Climbing d4, Fighting d10, Guts d10, Notice d10, Stealth d10, Tracking d12

Edges

Fleet Footed, No Mercy, Quick

Special Abilities

- **Bite/Claws:** Very sharp and deadly teeth and claws (Damage: Str+d4, AP 2).
- **Size +1:** He’s as large as a bear.
- **Wild Taint:** Dark Butcher is a perversion of a natural creature by Wild magic, and gains +1 Toughness and +1 to Spirit checks to recover from being Shaken. Additionally, when a Wild Tainted creature is killed, everyone within a Small Burst Template must succeed at a Vigor check or gain a level of Fatigue (Extras are Shaken). This Fatigue can be recovered normally.

give them a rough idea as to where to go. Either way, the reward is the same. He wants the hunt to begin two hours before light.

To play up the fright factor, emphasize the Dark Butcher's characteristics and inclinations: size, strength, and speed. It has an unnatural appearance. It seems supernatural. It lurks in shadows. It apparently tortures the rusca before killing, and continues to play with the remains after eating them.

The party should hunt the Dark Butcher as it slinks around in shadows until they can corner it or block it from going into its den, which it heads toward as dawn nears. Have them find evidence of its entertainment during the search – maybe a small, mangled humanoid. Play up the sounds of twigs and night creatures. Have the clouds cover the moon every so often, plunging everyone into darkness. Maybe something splashes across a creek connecting to the river. Have them see blood flowing in the water. Keep them concerned this beast has more than animal desires and is coming after them under cover of the receding night.

CYMION WYCLIFF (WILD CARD)

He is a Wild Card. He is disfigured (missing arm & leg, but replaced with celestium prosthetics), which slows him down and dampens his charisma. He can handle a sword with expert precision. As a fury, he's normally in a wolfish state. He has to expend Pulse to invert his form to a more human countenance.

Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Pace 6 Parry 8 Toughness 6 Pulse 20

Skills

Climbing d4, Fighting d12, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d10, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Tracking d10

Edges

Fury, Hard to Kill, Luck

Gear

Bow – rigged so he can use it with his celestium appendage (Ranges: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6), 20 Arrows, Wrapped Short Sword (Damage: Str+d6, used in his right hand), Claws (Damage: Str+d4 – while in wolf-man form)

Special Abilities

- **Transformation:** This is an automatic action costing 3 Pulse and lasts 1 hour which can be maintained by paying 2 Pulse to extend the duration for an additional hour. Transformation inflicts a level of Fatigue – as does transformation back. Furies in wolf-man form suffer a -1 Charisma penalty with non-furies because... well they're a bit scary to deal with. A fury in his human form suffers no charisma penalty.
- **Regenerate:** Furies can regenerate wounds while in their wolf-man form. Five minutes after having sustained an injury, a fury can make a natural healing check. In the case of multiple wounds inflicted close together, such as during combat, make a single check five minutes after the fracas. Before you ask, this effect cannot bring a fury back from the dead.
- **Claws:** Furies in wolf-man form also have claws. Unfortunately they tend to get in the way of fine manipulation, and any action requiring manual dexterity (including wielding other weapons) is at -2.

DEADLANDS

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DIME STORE BACKUP: PART 3 OF 4

The Kid in "PREY"

Story & Colors: C. Edward Sellner
Art: Alejandro Aragón
Letters: Jacob Basile Edits: Ron Marz





"Things I wouldn't have believed if I hadn't seen them with my own eyes."



"But there were more wolves than there were Indians."



"I never imagined such things as werewolves existed."



"Much less men brave enough to fight them."



"But I learned a hard lesson that day, mister."



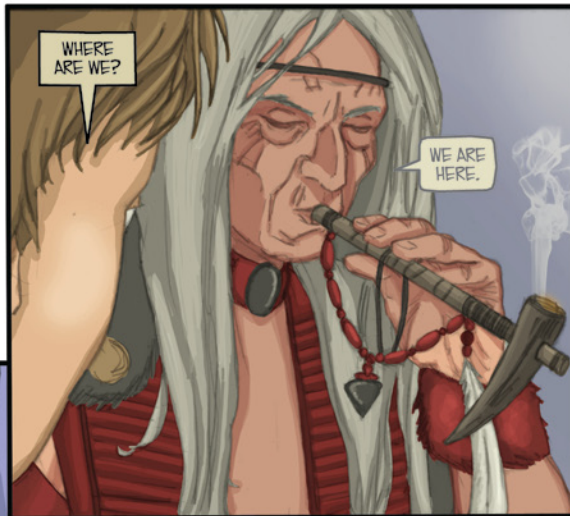




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THE DEVIL'S SIX-GUN

JUNE 2011

JIMMY PALMIOTTI, JUSTIN GRAY & LEE MODER

MASSACRE at RED WING

JULY 2011



RON MARZ & BART SEARS

Death was Silent

AUGUST 2011

JEFF MARIOTTE & BROOK TURNER

Black Water

SEPTEMBER 21, 2011



EACH ISSUE ALSO CONTAINS A
CHAPTER OF THE 4 PART ORIGIN OF

The **Kid**



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CONVENTION CALENDAR JANUARY - APRIL

Welcome to Convention Connection! In order to ensure that readers have a chance to plan their convention trips, each quarter's issue will show conventions occurring in each of the three months of that quarter, plus the first month in the next quarter. It wouldn't do much good for you to get April's issue and only then find out that you have 10 days or so to get to a convention in April. That does mean there will be some overlap, but we felt the benefit was worth some small duplication.

Covering January, February, March, and April At-A-Glance

Convention	Website	Dates	Location (States + UK)
Anime Los Angeles	www.animelosangeles.org/wp	1/6-8/12	CA
Arisia	http://2012.arisia.org	1/13-16/12	MA
SCARAB	www.s-c-a-r-a-b.com	1/13-16/12	SC
Conception	www.conceptionuk.org	1/25-29/12	UK
ChattaCon	www.chattacon.org	1/20-22/12	TN
Confusion	http://confusion.stilyagi.org	1/20-22/12	MI
Running GAGG	http://gagg.geneseo.edu	2/3-5/12	NY
Orcon	www.strategicon.net	2/17-20/12	CA
Genghis Con	http://denvergamer.org	2/17-20/12	CO
Fire & Ice Game Convention	www.fireandiceconvention.com	2/24-26/12	WI
Who's Yer Con	www.whosyergamers.org/wygms	3/2-4/12	IN
PlatteCon	www.plattevillegaming.com/plattecon	3/2-4/12	WI
GameStorm	www.gamestorm.org	3/22-25/12	WA
GaryCon	garycon.com	3/22-25/12	WI
Midsouth Con	www.midsouthcon.org	3/23-25/12	TN
Ambercon	www.ambercon.com	3/29-4/1/12	MI
MACE West	www.justusproductions.com	3/30-4/1/12	NC
SimCon	www.simcon.org	3/30-4/1/12	NY
Norwescon	www.norwescon.org	4/5-8/12	WA
UBCON	http://ubcon.org	4/13-15/12	NY
Odyssey Con	www.oddcon.com	4/20-22/12	WI

All dates and websites were accurate as of this printing. If you know of conventions occurring between January and April that are not listed here, please let us know.

Savage Saturday Nights

Savage Saturday Nights (SSN) started at Con on the Cob and has become something popping up at other conventions from those as large as Gen Con to small, regional ones. If you are aware a convention featuring an SSN, let us know, and we'll mention it if we can.

Genghis Con XXXIII: Brought to you by Denver Gamers Association, this convention at Red Lion Hotel in Aurora, CO is hosting "The only Savage Saturday Night west of the Mississippi!"

At the time of notification, they were hosting 37 Savage Worlds games. One such

**GENGHIS
CON
XXXIII**



**RED LION HOTEL
Aurora, CO
16 - 19 Feb 2012**

game is *Caladon Falls* in the Savage Suzerain line, co-written by our assistant editor, Vickey A. Beaver. Run by Marc Gacy (notice his name in *Savage Worlds Deluxe!*), this will be fun.

Here's the description to give you an idea of what you can expect at Genghis Con's SSN:

Being new to the small frontier town and a bit suspicious of the locals, you at first ignore their reports of weird happenings and appearances on the border. When you finally see one of the abominations while on patrol yourself, any thoughts of a peaceful and relaxing assignment grind to a halt. Will sword and shield be enough against such foul creatures? Fantasy beginners - rules taught - characters provided - prize support by Savage Mojo.

An SSN will be available at UBCON and another hosted by Clint and Jodi Black at MACE West.

Here's a comprehensive look at Savage Worlds products that have been released during the previous three months.

<u>Title</u>	<u>Publisher</u>	<u>Setting</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Format</u>
<i>Camp Wicakini, Part II</i>	Silver Gryphon Games		Adventure	PDF
<i>Horror Companion</i>	Pinnacle Entertainment Group		Supplement	PDF
<i>50 Fathoms (Explorer's Edition)</i>	Pinnacle Entertainment Group	50 Fathoms	Core Rulebook	Print
<i>Bad Seed</i>	Reality Blurs	Agents of Oblivion	Adventure	PDF
<i>Agents of Oblivion</i>	Reality Blurs	Agents of Oblivion	Core Rulebook	PDF, Print
<i>Citadel of the Winged Gods</i>	GRAMel	Beasts & Barbarians	Adventure	PDF
<i>Death of a Tyrant</i>	GRAMel	Beasts & Barbarians	Adventure	PDF, Print
<i>Skinner of Syranthia</i>	GRAMel	Beasts & Barbarians	Adventure	PDF
<i>Wolves in the Borderland</i>	GRAMel	Beasts & Barbarians	Adventure	PDF
<i>Beasts & Barbarians (Golden Edition)</i>	GRAMel	Beasts & Barbarians	Core Rulebook	PDF, Print
<i>Armored Motor Bank Car</i>	Alternate Realities Publications	Big Bang Ricochet	Supplement	PDF
<i>Fowler Armoured Road Train</i>	Alternate Realities Publications	Big Bang Ricochet	Supplement	PDF
<i>M1117 Armored Security Vehicle</i>	Alternate Realities Publications	Big Bang Ricochet	Supplement	PDF
<i>Guide to Elite Nazi Units</i>	Triple Ace Games	Daring Tales of Adventure	Supplement	PDF
<i>Devil's Night</i>	Pinnacle Entertainment Group	Deadlands	Adventure	PDF
<i>Marshal's Handbook (Explorer's Edition)</i>	Pinnacle Entertainment Group	Deadlands	Core Rulebook	Print
<i>Weird White North</i>	Pinnacle Entertainment Group	Deadlands	Supplement	PDF
<i>Adventure Compendium</i>	Triple Ace Games	Hellfrost	Adventure	Print
<i>Adventure Compendium 2</i>	Triple Ace Games	Hellfrost	Adventure	Print
<i>Heroes & Villains 2 - Spellcasters</i>	Triple Ace Games	Hellfrost	Supplement	PDF
<i>Isles of the Seareavers</i>	Triple Ace Games	Hellfrost	Supplement	PDF
<i>Resource Miracles</i>	Triple Ace Games	Hellfrost	Supplement	PDF
<i>Death and Desire</i>	Reality Blurs	Iron Dynasty	Adventure	PDF
<i>No Stone Unturned</i>	Reality Blurs	Iron Dynasty	Adventure	PDF
<i>The Bones of Borudaa</i>	Reality Blurs	Iron Dynasty	Adventure	PDF
<i>Doragon Mizu</i>	Reality Blurs	Iron Dynasty	Supplement	PDF
<i>Karasu Rokku</i>	Reality Blurs	Iron Dynasty	Supplement	PDF
<i>Judgment Day</i>	Mystical Throne Entertainment	Judgment Day	Core Rulebook	PDF
<i>Mercenary Breed (Revised)</i>	Mystical Throne Entertainment	Mercenary Breed	Core Rulebook	PDF
<i>Hand of the Harbinger King</i>	Reality Blurs	Old School Fantasy #9	Adventure	PDF
<i>Midnight Harvest</i>	Super Genius Games	Realms of Cthulhu	Adventure	PDF
<i>A Peculiar Pentad</i>	Super Genius Games	Realms of Cthulhu	Supplement	PDF
<i>ChalkChain</i>	Reality Blurs	RuenPunk	Supplement	PDF
<i>The Cost of Living</i>	Reality Blurs	RunePunk	Adventure	PDF
<i>HawkHaven</i>	Reality Blurs	RunePunk	Supplement	PDF
<i>Suzerain Pocket Universe</i>	Savage Mojo	Savage Suzerain	Core Rulebook	PDF, Print
<i>Operation: Winter Kill</i>	Super Genius Games	Strike Force 7	Adventure	PDF
<i>Compendium 2</i>	Triple Ace Games	Sundered Skies	Campaign	Print
<i>Festival of Madness</i>	Triple Ace Games	Sundered Skies	Campaign	PDF
<i>Game Master's Guide</i>	Gun Metal Games	Totems of the Dead	Core Rulebook	PDF, Print

Savage Insider Issue 3: What Lurks in the Shadows is a dark, gritty-themed issue with a look at the more horrific side of games. The pillar article *Happily Scared* is a lengthy discussion about what makes horror so appealing while *Dangerous Magic* introduces a grittier theme to your game's magic mechanics.

What Lurks in the Shadows is a cross-genre horror issue with content covering modern, action, fantasy, and sci-fi horror. There are four, fully-developed *Savage Worlds* adventures to support all these horrific themes.

What Lurks in the Shadows includes:

- 4 fleshed out adventures
- 2 sets of alternate rules for incorporating horror
- 2 general interest articles about horror
- A preview of the upcoming *Savage Worlds* edition of *Apocalypse Prevention, Inc.*
- Part 3 of the *Crypt of the Crystal Lich* fiction series
- Part 3 of the *Deadlands* comic series *The Kid*
- And more!

Look for new issues of *Savage Insider* every 3 months in January, April, July, and October with Premium Content releases in-between.