

UNCANNY ECHO



SERIALIZED ROLEPLAYING
ISSUE 5: FAITH

WHAT THIS IS

Uncanny Echo is a serialized roleplaying game. It borrows from part of the Apocalypse World engine created by D. Vincent Baker and Meguey Baker. Games using elements of the Apocalypse World engine are often referred to as Powered by the Apocalypse (PbtA).

Uncanny Echo contains small, episodic stories rooted in mysterious or eerie events that unravel with each issue. Something somewhat normal becomes something else: surreal, unearthly... uncanny.

Each issue is a pick-up-and-play one shot, intended to form an ongoing serialized narrative that has a meta-narrative external from any given session. Within these modular experiences, each game will differ greatly with player input. Each uncanny story is of your own making, and unfolds in an emergent manner. You to play to find out what happens with as little cognitive load as possible.

These one shots will sometimes be directly connected to the next issue; other times you will decide how they fit together. They may simulate jump cuts to unrelated events, returning later to the circumstances in previous months, just as a movie or TV show would from scene to scene or episode to episode. As more are released, you may choose to play them in whatever order you choose.

In issue 0: The Heist (available for free), players robbed a bank, based very loosely on the movie *The Town*, with a twist: not all vaults are meant to contain money. What this bank vault kept secure is up to you and the other players.

Each month will be a different experience within the same game world. With each issue, you'll discover how each event relates to the one before it—a process largely determined by you.

CHANGING THE GAME

You still use stats with modifiers as in most PbtA games. Each stat line is already embedded in each playbook for you. You similarly roll two six-sided dice plus the modifier, as normal.

However, instead of gaining XP or experience, you will instead advance your character using Keys in your playbook. Each Key prescribes specific actions or fiction for your character to play out in your game. When you describe these actions or fiction, you unlock a move in your playbook.

Each Key acts as a narrative guidepost to help pace your game. When you have all your moves (or all the ones you want to use), it is time to corral the story to a conclusion.

Drive your characters like stolen cars. Remember, there is a larger fiction at work beyond this single issue. This one character you embody now might be someone you return to in a later issue, or perhaps someone you will never play again. Either way, the story will move forward.





ISSUE FIVE FAITH

Before the events of the other issues take place, you play characters that are the last of an order divested from a fictitious Catholic Church.

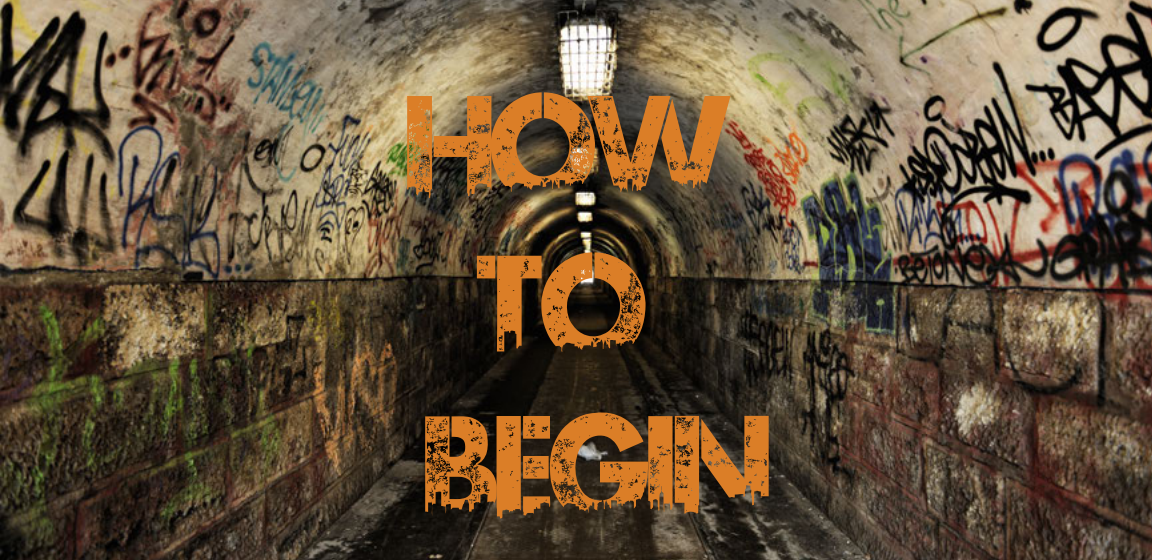
The Church no longer recognizes, or even acknowledges, this order. Therefore, only you and those like you carry on the order's legacy now. When the uncanny occurs, you and those like you do your work to keep your faith, all faith, safe.

While you may choose to not be practicing priests, all of you are tasked with a burden handed down. Exorcisms and investigations into ghosts, demons, and hell spawn were tasked to a specific sub-group of priests; an order trained to deal with these threats. You are what remain of them.

However, your faith is formidable and persistent against the most sinister beings—even when touched by the uncanny. Not even the Takers (from *Uncanny Echo*: issue 3) can see, touch, or extract faith. Your memories and experiences stand strong against the Takers, no matter how much they may try to consume them. And that is where you come into the fold.

When the world is malleable and susceptible to the darkness—when the things the church no longer believes in emerge stronger than ever—the divine calling beckons you to see your work done. You abolish these things that threaten the faith in the ways only you and yours know how.

This issue is inspired by movies like *Fallen*, *The Rite*, *The Prophecy*, and *The Order*. In it, you will give faith a shape and form, embodying it—and taking care as well as sure action so that it does not evaporate forever. As such there is a trigger warning for dealing with religion, God, theology, and Catholicism.



First Step: Make a six-sided Clock and fill it for a 3-4 hour game, or an eight-sided Clock for a slightly longer game. This Clock represents the Mystery—both in terms of how close they are to solving it and also how close the order is to dealing with its uncanny nature. If you’ve played previous issues, you have an opportunity to tie in the mystery to events and locations previously used in your fiction.

When an echo or an event occurs, demons, ghosts, and similar beings are freed or empowered. Perhaps they were always present and their increased activity signaled a need for the PCs to investigate and the mystery.

Either way, the PCs’ goal is to solve and deal with the mystery. As they make progress, the Clock segments are removed until the mystery is put to bed finally dealt with for good. In general, the mystery itself should challenge someone’s faith or the Church and organized religion. Simply the existence of a demon or a possession might accomplish this in of itself.

Second Step: Answer the Questions in order on page 10—both before and after you create your character.

Third Step: Start either in medias res with the mystery being posed to all of the PCs at the same time, or vignettes that submit the mystery to each of them separately, uniting them in cause within the fiction.

A typical session will go something like this:

- The players have the mystery posed to them with a full Clock.
- They Lift A Stone, attempting to navigate to a place that might help them understand what is happening. This place could be one of prayer or sanctuary—like a church—or a place that subverts faith—like an underground devil-worshipping club or a space corrupted and twisted by something (or someone).
- The PCs look for clues, by Using Their Gut, and unravel the mystery, removing segments of the Clock as they do. Their investigation might involve each PCs gathering information to remove 4 segments of the Clock followed by 2 actions to actually deal with the problem, or it could be a mixture of the two. As the mystery unfolds, allow for an organic, imprecise abstraction of via the Clock.
- During their search, PCs might be tested by those succumbed to demonic possession or be tested similarly by something trying to possess them. One suggestion is using the trope of evil entities knowing and leveraging the PCs' sins and secrets to test their faith, although there are all manner of forms evil can take. Depending on people's comfort levels, this should be a thing brought into the fiction as hard as the tone allows.

Essentially, the PCs will in this issue look for clues, unravel the mystery, and then attempt to deal with it.

When the players have revealed and dealt with the mystery, the session is over.

“Did you ever notice how in the Bible, when ever God needed to punish someone, or make an example, or whenever God needed a killing, he sent an angel? Did you ever wonder what a creature like that must be like? A whole existence spent praising your God, but always with one wing dipped in blood. Would you ever really want to see an angel?”

—The Prophecy

THE QUESTIONS

As in the format of adventure starters in The Gauntlet's monthly zine, Codex, some of the fiction should be devoted to evocative questions about the specific scenario, circumstances, or location. Choose from any of the following questions to answer, or pose some of your own

1) **What kind of uncanny are you going for? Dark, gritty, intense, scary, etc.** Is everyone alright with using Catholicism and playing in a religious environment, setting. Does the religion need to be changed to make people more comfortable?

2) When do these events take place? Before other issues, after?

3) Is everyone alright with using Catholicism as the organized religion in this issue? Are there other religions people would like to use instead?

4) What is the name of your Order and is it secret?

5) Why does your Order still do this work after being disbanded by the Church ages ago?

Create your characters, then answer:

1) Are you also a practicing priest within the Church now or do you view yourself as an extension of it in some way?

2) What has sustained your faith all this time?

3) Write down two secrets about your character they ordinarily wouldn't reveal to anyone and give them to the MC. These secrets are something a dark power knows of you—all of your sins. When your faith is tested these secrets might come out. Make sure the secrets are something you as a player are OK with airing and are "fun" for you—not things you wouldn't want to see in the fiction.



SIGNS OF POSSESSION

The signs are these: “Speaking a number of words in an unknown language or understanding someone speaking [in it]; making known distant and hidden events; showing strength beyond the nature of the individual’s age or condition. ... [V]ehement aversion to God, the Most Holy Name of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints, the Church, the Word of God, sacred things and rites, especially sacramental ones, and from sacred images” (De Exorcismis, No. 16).

These aversions and capacities are manifest in the person when in the possessed state. Those who are possessed are not in the possessed state all day, every day. Rather, they go in and out of the state, usually with increasing frequency, as the possession gets deeper.

To determine possession, the exorcist is instructed in the preface of the Rite of Exorcism (No. 14) not to easily believe a person is possessed. He should rule out natural causes to include physical and psychological causes as well as spiritual.

Usually, the exorcist will pray over someone thought to be possessed using certain selected prayers and look for the four signs.

Not finding sufficient cause to conclude possession does not mean there is no diabolical influence.

If one is not possessed, they may be suffering a lesser form of attack known as oppression. In such cases, deliverance prayers and ongoing spiritual care are called for rather than the rite of major exorcism.

Source: <https://goo.gl/ppwahL>

BASIC MOVES

Lift A Stone: When you attempt to physically navigate your way to either a holy place (a church, consecrated grounds, etc.) or to somewhere which seeks to extinguish or circumvent faith (an inverted church, cults, etc.), tell the MC what it is that you fear you may find there and then roll+Faith.

On a 10+, you find a clear path or clue to it, no problem.

On a 7-9, the same... However, some of what you feared is incorporated into the way forward, too; now or later.

On a miss, the way forward carries with it a test, danger, or something worse than what you feared.

Use Your Gut: When you scrutinize the words of an individual, what you see before you, or the situation you are in, roll+Intuition. On a 10+, ask 3. On a 7-9, ask 1.

- Does this feel like the truth?
- How does this relate to _____?
- Am I being misdirected?
- Is there anything here I notice despite an attempt to conceal it?
- How could I get ____ to _____?

Push Through: When you must be resolute, steadfast, or precise in the face of an obstacle or imminent danger, roll+Will. On a 10+, you do it, no problem. On a 7-9, there is a cost, a complication, or an important decision introduced before or after you accomplish it.

PERIPHERAL MOVES

Guard Your Soul: When you feel yourself being tested spiritually, roll+Faith.

- On a 10+, you stand resolute, withstanding the infringement.
- On a 7-9, you take Harm, the MC reveals a secret about your character, or reduce your Faith by 1; your choice.
- On a miss, all 3.

"I'm just a man. I'm a weak man. I have no power. Yet, there's something that keeps digging and scraping away, inside me. Feels like God's fingernail. And finally I can take no more of the pain, and I get shoved out from the darkness, back into the light."

—The Rite

ENDING THE SESSION

When the mystery is complete, the session is over. Set aside time for each character to have an epilogue for their character.

How does this tie into your other sessions of Uncanny Echo, if at all? Is there an epilogue scene anyone at the table, including the MC could narrate to bind this issue to others if the mystery in this one did not directly tie into the meta-narrative?

THE FAR-AWAY EYED

Name: Ivo, Kai, Lars, Soren, Quinn, _____

Look: Bright, Ethereal, Surreal, Spirited, Eager, _____

Ethnicity: Asian or South Asian, Black, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, _____

Gender Identity: _____

Fashion in keeping with your Look. Any symbols or tools of Faith you might need (2 Harm close).

KEYS

When you do the following in the fiction, you hit a Key. When this happens you unlock any playbook move of your choosing.

- Why do you do what you do in the Order?
- Divulge how it is you came to possess your sight.
- Tell someone of the most beautiful thing you've seen with your sight, as well as the most disturbing.
- Use your sight to help uncover the mystery.
- Reveal what someone of faith looks like to you.

MOVES

- **The Sight:** When you open your mind to your second sight in order to discern the supernatural or uncanny, roll + Faith. On a 10+, you see things clearly and as they truly are. On a 7-9, the same, but you draw attention to yourself or what you see is scary and alarming.
- **Omission:** You always know when someone does not tell the whole truth, so long as you can see them as they speak.
- **Insight:** When you use The Sight you also take +1 Forward.
- **Practitioner:** When you Use Your Gut you may always ask, "Does this person practice their faith?"

WILL

1

INTUITION

1

FAITH

1

HARM

--	--	--	--	--

THE PROTRACTED MIND

Name: London, River, Haven, Ali, Sage, _____

Look: Sly, Patient, Jovial, True, Precise, _____

Ethnicity: Asian or South Asian, Black, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, _____

Gender Identity: _____

Fashion in keeping with your Look. Any symbols or tools of Faith you might need (2 Harm close).

KEYS

When you do the following in the fiction, you hit a Key. When this happens you unlock any playbook move of your choosing.

- Why do you do what you do in the Order?
- Divulge how you became a theologian.
- Tell someone either of the most beautiful thing you read in your books or the scariest or disturbing.
- Use your mind to help unravel a mystery.
- Reveal how it was that you obtained your books.
- Tell a player character how your knowledge could help them.

MOVES

- **Theologian:** When you recall your knowledge of theology, tell the MC what you hope to uncover, then roll + Faith. On a 10+, you'll get good detail and something useful. On a 7-9, you get fragments or a snapshot of something useful.
- **Small Details:** When you go to a place of worship or to a place that subverts the faith, tell the MC when you were last here. They will tell you how it has changed. Take +1 Forward when you act on the information.
- **Knowledge Is Power:** When you use the knowledge in a book, such as scripture, rituals, etc., tell the MC what your goal is in doing so and then roll + Faith. On a 10+, it has the intended effect. On a 7-9, you do it but there is a cost, complication, or unforeseen consequence of your success.

WILL

INTUITION

FAITH

0

1

2

HARM

--	--	--	--	--

THE SURE HAND

Name: Lyric, Amari, Shay, Quincy, Ever, _____

Look: Brooding, Assured, Passionate, lighthearted, _____

Ethnicity: Asian or South Asian, Black, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, _____

Gender Identity: _____

Fashion in keeping with your Look. Any symbols or tools of Faith you might need (2 Harm close).

KEYS

When you do the following in the fiction, you hit a Key. When this happens you unlock any playbook move of your choosing.

- Why do you do what you do in the Order?
- Divulge how your hand(s) differ from everyone else's.
- Tell someone either of the most beautiful thing you've done with your hands or the hardest thing you ever had to do with them.
- Use your hands to reveal something concealed.
- Reveal what tool or symbol of faith you use most often and why.
- Tell someone what being a sure hand of the faith means to you.

MOVES

○ **Strike The Mark:** When you use violence or force to Push Through, roll+Will instead of with Faith.

○ **These Hands:** When you take something into your hands roll+Faith. On a 10+, choose 3. On a 7-9, choose 1.

- Reveal something concealed
- Ask them a question and have it answered honestly
- You heal 2 Harm
- You inflict 2 Harm AP

○ **Instrument Of Faith:** When you Push Through using an instrument or symbol of your faith, roll 3d6 and take the highest 2 to get your result.

WILL

2

INTUITION

0

FAITH

1

HARM

--	--	--	--	--

THE PEREMPTORY VOICE

Name: Gentry, Halo, Ocean, Bowie, Oakley, _____

Look: Meek, Trusting, Hopeful, Kindly, Curt, _____

Ethnicity: Asian or South Asian, Black, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, _____

Gender Identity: _____

Fashion in keeping with your Look. Any symbols or tools of Faith you might need (2 Harm close).

KEYS

When you do the following in the fiction, you hit a Key. When this happens you unlock any playbook move of your choosing.

- Why do you do what you do in the Order?
- Divulge how it is you came to possess your voice.
- Tell someone a time in which you regret using your voice, or in which you should have used it and didn't.
- Use your voice to allow for someone else to do something they otherwise wouldn't be able to.
- Reveal what someone of faith looks like to you.

MOVES

○ **Intonation Of The Faithful:** When you make a single, clear command or request to a spirit, entity, or demon, roll + Faith. On a 10+, they have no choice but to follow the command as interpreted by them. On a 7-9, they want something first or there is a cost or complication in the doing.

○ **Rhetoric:** When you recite scripture or voice your faith to another to bolster them, when they next make a roll they roll 3d6 and take the highest two to get their result.

○ **Fervor:** When you do nothing but sing a hymn, no one in your presence can do anything but stare and watch and listen. You command their absolute attention. If you so choose, you may exempt individuals from this by naming them.

WILL

INTUITION

FAITH

-1

2

2

HARM

--	--	--	--	--

AGENDA

Above all else, behind every Principle and Move you do, you need to make this Agenda the root of it all:

- Make faith important, in danger, and central to the fiction.
- Show the world beneath the surface, filled with demons, angels, possession, and the unknowable.
- Uncover the kind of tone the players want while doing so.
- Forge a self contained story about these individuals that still ends with a question or two unanswered, hanging there.
- Play to find out.

PRINCIPLES

Your best practices for this fiction are as follows:

- Make the fiction feel real and lived in.
- Depict faith as complex and non-binary.
- Weave the mystery into the player characters' lives.
- Respect the boundaries of the players and considerate of the subject matter.
- Address the player character, not the player.
- Centralize the fiction on them.
- Name everyone.
- Linger on details; when you have the time to do so.
- Ask questions of the players and then incorporate the details.
- Give them a chance to think.
- Spotlight all the players.
- Show your moves through the fiction, do not speak them.

ALWAYS SAY

Like all Powered by the Apocalypse games, *Uncanny Echo* runs best when you keep your Agenda and your Principles in mind when you're making your moves—both soft Moves and hard ones.

...what the Principles demand.

...what your Agenda demands of you.

...what the consequences and risks are.

...what honesty demands.

MC MOVES

You make a Move when a miss is rolled, when you tell them the consequences and they act anyways (a Golden Opportunity), or when they look to you to see what happens next.

- Challenge their faith.
- Reveal a player character's secret.
- Make a sin feel human or forgiveness hard or inhumane.
- Complicate a moral decision.
- Make an ordinary activity or event feel and seem uncanny.
- Tell them the possible consequences and ask what they do next.
- Foreshadow something bad coming in the fiction; now, or later.
- Offer an opportunity, with or without strings attached.
- Separate them.
- Inflict harm or trade it, as established in the fiction.
- Put someone in a tough situation.
- Turn one of their own moves back on them.
- Take something away from them.
- Make a small problem a big one.



If you like this product, consider helping me out on Patreon, without which this project wouldn't exist. You can find an actual play ongoing podcast exclusive to subscribers of myself and other folks of The Gauntlet gaming community playtesting each issue every month. Find out how our story unfolds, and how it differs from yours!

I also have a blog, Consuming Cyberpunk, where I review and talk about all things cyberpunk (go figure). Additionally, I also edit other podcasts—if you are looking for an individual to provide those services, contact me!

Finally, if you want to support me in any or all of these things, simply click the logo below and become a patron. It would mean a lot to me if you did, hope to see you around soon!

A solid red rectangular background. On the left side, the word "PATREON" is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. To the right of the word, there is a thin, white vertical bar.

CREDITS

This product and other Powered by the Apocalypse games are hacks of Apocalypse World, which is a product by D. Vincent Baker and Meguey Baker—both of whom have a Patreon of their own. Click on their names in order to be taken to each of theirs, respectively.

This game and all of my games are always played with the wonderful Gauntlet gaming community. Come game with us! The community is always looking for more people to run games, as well as players. They produce their own zine: Codex, too! It features terrific content every month, with a professional layout designer and fantastic art.

Layout, Design, Writing: Fraser Simons

Cover: Rangizzz—Other Art: MsMaria & SvedOliver

Line Editing: Lauren McManamon

Special thanks to: Yoshi, Lauren, Ellen, Jason, and Lu for helping me playtest this issue, couldn't have done it without you all!!



