

The Ghost Killers

Concept: A rag-tag team of people from all walks of life get together and kill creatures from the spirit world. The game itself involves a lot of gambling-style mechanics, amateur theatrics, coolness and narration control (in the form of “Fortune in the Middle”). This game is a total ripoff of *Dread: The First Book of Pandemonium* by Rafael Chandler, *Exemplar* (first edition) by Jeff Schecter and *Pretender* by Kirt Dankmeyer.

Breakdown: This game is about living on the edge, fighting unnatural creatures beyond reason. It is about teamwork, risk, violence, brotherhood and tension, loss and love, all set to the tune of adventures where the players are above the law.

Teamwork: The team, or “Pack”, has a special character sheet that has all their shared resources on it. There are mechanics within the Roles (character classes) that lead to teamwork and mutual support.

Brotherhood: As above, and players can gain by having their characters push towards their mutual goals.

Tension: The character have personal goals which sometimes conflict with the group goals.

Risk: The die system is a roll-under system that encourages high risk for great reward; But the greater the risk, the easier it is to fail. A lot like gambling.

Violence: Lots of focus on combat, natural and supernatural. “The Ghost Killers” and all that.

Loss and Love: Players have karmic ties to the world that keep them tied to the everyday world. These pawns are always at risk of being taken, driving the player to madness and despair.

Amateur theatrics and coolness: Players reward each other for doing cool things, providing cool description, saying cool lines, doing things that are just enough out of character to blow minds without being stupid, etc.

Narration control: The Flip Mode mechanic changes the rules on how to roll dice: The action moves from “task resolution” to “conflict resolution”, and narration lies entirely in the hands of the player. Flip Mode is known as “Fortune in the Middle”, where you pick the dice to roll and roll them, and then describe what happens.

Microfiction <<The Deed is Done>>

A cool, quiet forest of brick-red leafless trees growing in bright copper soil under a perpetually crimson sky.

Killhawk spent a good minute trying to wipe the green crap off his sword, while the Support dug through the creature's remains, looking for the rest of Rick's body.

"I don't see why you bother, Frank. There's no way that kid's gonna be alive."

"I know. I just...", Frank paused. He found something hard and fleshy in the ichor. "He ought to have a proper burial. Or cremation. Fucking *something*."

"Suit yourself. But make it quick, you've got about ten minutes before this place disappears for good." She looked again at the blade, grunted with satisfaction and sheathed it at her side.

"Killhawk... F... Fuck you." He brushed the slime off the remains in his arms. Every few seconds he stopped to wipe the tears from his cheeks with the sleeves of his destroyed jacket.

"Whatever. See you back in Everyday." She took a few steps back and vanished.

While Frank and the others prepared Rick's body in the basement, Killhawk went upstairs and dealt; beer, weights, watching old Shaw Brothers flicks, the punching bag... Maybe she'd pick up a guy from the local college who looked like Rick for a night or two. Days later, when no one was watching, when she was sure no one else on her team was around, only then would she allow herself to cry.

The Five Conspiracies

The Ghost World

Ghosts exist. Spiritual powers and events are real. Some have human goals and desires, others are irrational, unthinking, and often dangerous things. Human souls can turn into these creatures of horror, or themselves summon other creatures of horror. Spirits refer to any sentient spiritual entity; Ghosts are thoughtless, dangerous things.

The Hunters

Creatures of Nightmares and Demons are real. They are secretive. They have strange wants and desires. Some are humanoid, some are alien, they are very rare, but they are all extremely dangerous.

The Iron Cathedral

No one knows the motives of the Iron Cathedral: Only that it itself is a living force of some kind, and exists in a dimension both parallel and connected to ours. It appears to be an invasive force that plans to unmake society and enslave humanity.

The Red Codex

They were once an order directed to researching the Ghost World for good purposes. Now, they are a tool of control. They make use of spirits and ghosts for power in the physical world.

The Ghost Killers

The secret order of people that put axes, bullets, binding curses and magic spears in all the above.

How to Play

You need a bunch of d8s to play. This game uses d8s, because they are **FUCKING AWESOME**.

You need at least three people to play. This game requires an audience, so two people will totally not fly. To keep the game interesting for everyone, it is recommended for no more than five people total.

One person will take on the role of the game master. You know what a game master is, else you wouldn't be reading this.

The fun quirks of this game, in the designer's opinion: I'm going to come right out and draw attention to the quirks, because they're the reason that you might choose to play this game instead of, say, fucking GURPS or whatever.

1) Character generation is hella easy, and it's a cinch to make new characters to play. I want to make it so that new players can have their characters ready in about fifteen minutes. Returning players will be able to completely make their characters in about under four minutes. That's the goal, anyway. I wanted this to be a great "pick up" game.

2) The "Above the Law" play: So, all the characters are human. They're not vampires, werewolves, dragons, or whatever. They are human. They are bound by the laws of their society, just like everyone else. And yet, they will need to break laws for the greater good. Sometimes, big laws. Sometimes they will need to do so in front of lots of people. This friction should cause a lot of interesting scenes, else the GM isn't doing his job.

3) Teamwork: It's like team-based squad tactical roleplaying. Everyone's got well-defined team roles that let them slip into play quickly, and give them a definite realm of control within the team. Plus, there's the whole "Pack Sheet" business, which lets them aim towards and resolve goals together. Sure, there's gonna be individual plots and side stories and the like, but this is also going to be a throwback to troupe-style play like the classic games. After the game is done, you should want to high five the other players and grab a beer.

4) Roles: They're just like character classes from D&D! Wow, going all retro and shit! Well, this is more to support points one and three, above.

5) Fortune in the Middle: I totally ripped off this idea from the excellent role-playing game Pretender. Most of the game is traditional task-based "Throw the dice to climb the wall, throw the dice to shoot the ghost" stuff, but there's also an opportunity to resolve an entire conflict, to that player's narration, by shifting gears to an "everything at once" system. This is like letting the spotlight shine on that character (the player, too) for that scene.

6) Cool magic and powers: All the magic is based on lines from King Lear, and tainted with weirdness and more than a little madness. Plus, the powers are, hopefully, interesting enough to keep everyone interested in what their character can and can't do.

Campaign Generation

Here's how to start a game of The Ghost Killers:

0) Sell your friends on the game. Tell them it's like Ghostbusters meets Hellraiser (the good ones: Hellraiser One and Two), with a little Silent Hill thrown in, where you fight the forces of evil by shooting at them with 10-gauge shotguns out the windows of your green El Camino. Or it's like an episode of Law and Order: SVU, where the law can be broken sometimes in the search for the suspect (OK, maybe a lot), Detective Stabler knows Kung Fu, and Ice T can travel at will to Hell and summon ghosts to aid him.

1) Sit down with friends, so that you have like three to five people.

2) Tell them your thoughts about a scenario ("adventure"). Come up with a couple ideas by looking at the Five Conspiracies sheet. Don't go nuts, stick to one conspiracy at first (The Ghost World, or Hunters if you're feeling sadistic), and build it up from there. Throwing three, or all four, evil conspiracies into the same adventure would be like making an omelet by mixing together all the ingredients found in your pantry. Just stick to one at first. Maybe on your second scenario, go for another conspiracy, or use two at once.

Anyway, from there get their feedback. Get everyone on the same page so that there are no surprises (ie You talk it up so that everyone expects a combat-driven bloodfest and then you throw them into a highly political shadow-conspiracy game, or vice versa)

Note: The game should take place physically near wherever you are playing, or a town/city/locale that you are all familiar with. It should include local places, maybe even local people.

3) When that's clear, come up with some characters. As players, throw out your ideas first as to which way you're leaning on your character roles. In most scenarios, it's cool to have a mix of characters of various classes. In other scenarios, you may want a "topheavy" team of mainly one or two classes (Mostly Infiltrators for the Ninja Strike Team, mostly Support for the War Drama Tearjerker, or mostly Chosen for the weird, surreal game). After everyone's thrown out ideas and made their choices clear, jump straight into character generation.

4) Play through the scenario as provided by the GM.

Here's a few random tips for the GM: GM will come up with lots of shit on the fly, as well as act and react to the twists and loops that the players unwittingly introduce into the scenario. Ex: The Key to the Gate of Darkness is in the glovebox of the Buick. The players (and their characters) don't go anywhere near that Buick, but they seem really friggin interested in that mobile home over there- OK, now the Key is in plain sight on a nightstand in the mobile home. If there is Only One Solution to a puzzle, then you either come right out and tell the players in some way (don't hint at it), or make it so that there's more than one solution, based on cues received by the players.

This isn't Call of Cthulhu. The players do NOT jump through the scenario writer's hoops. YOU, the GM, jump through THEIR hoops.

Here's a few random tips for the Players: Interject a lot with relevant side comments ("Holy shit, that Mayor is being a total dick to you!"). Do it within reason, don't be annoying. Don't over-think the scenario- Do What You Fucking Want to Do. On the other hand, don't be a total dick. If someone else does something that is fucking up the game, call them on it ("Hey dude, I know that you're just doing

the 'I'm just acting how my character would act' thing, but it's kinda killing the game for me here"). If someone does something cool, reward them with cues: "That's awesome!" "That rocks!" Throwing up the horns is good, too. This helps get people out of their shells and into the game. If you feel yourself in a slump, or your energy is winding down, stand up for a bit. Also, when roleplaying, think less Dungeons and Dragons and more Amateur Theatre. Instead of saying:

"I basically ask him, 'Why are you doing this?' "

Get up in the GM's face and say, in character:

"Hey, old man, I asked you a question, why the FUCK are you doing this?"

Pretend you're in a community theatre performance sometimes. That's more entertaining (to me, anyway), and it's a surefire way to score those bonus chips from your friends.

5) When the scenario (or evening, if you don't finish), take a good 15 minutes or so and tell the other players what you liked and didn't like, but focus on the likes. Tell them what lines or actions they did that you still think are cool, tell the GM what parts of the scenario were particularly interesting, scary or cool. Think of this as the cool-down from a workout. Doing it gives everyone some positive reinforcement that they can draw on in the next session.

6) If Alan eats all the rest of the ice cream or popsicles, he should plan on bringing more for the next session.

Making Characters

Making characters should be a quick and fun process. It should only be done once everyone's discussed the upcoming scenario/game with the GM, so they know what to expect. The default, though, is "A group of people from different backgrounds and Roles that team up to fight the influence of evil Ghosts".

1) Choose a Trigger Event.

Every character has a single Trigger. The Trigger is the first thing that you should be thinking of. The trigger is basically a two-sentence event description of some point that involves one of the four evil conspiracies, and is what drove you to either join the Ghost Killers, or pushed you to fight the unknown until the Ghost Killers recruited you. All Triggers are framed like this:

Trigger: ____WHEN____ ____PLACE____ ____EVENT____, ____WHO____ ____DID WHAT____ ____TO WHOM____ ____HOW____. (note: You can reverse WHO, DID WHAT, TO WHOM, HOW, in a way that is grammatically acceptable, but all four elements must be present in the second sentence)

For example:

Trigger: When I was 10 years old, at the family cabin at Don Potter's lake, we were on a family trip. There was some sort of malevolent Ghost, who took my mother away in front of me, kicking and screaming, to the Grey Hell.

Trigger: When I was in Grad School, at Hoffman Hall in my advisor Doctor Vadakupadam's office, we were discussing my future. Doctor Vadakupadam tried to tear out the soul out of me using a Red Codex incantation.

Trigger: Six months ago, I was at work at my shitty programming job at IBM, putting together some bullshit budget proposal that I didn't care about. Suddenly, two black-robed monks from the Iron Cathedral appeared and carried me and my coworker away into the darkness.

That's it. From there, you can decide in your head how that event affected you, or why the event happened, why it happened to you, how you managed to escape, etc. But for the Trigger statement, it's a sterile chunk of text that states in bland terms what happened; from there it's your job to determine how this affects your character. It should direct your character's actions. The event should appear in your nightmares, if you have any humanity left in you.

Later, there will be a random chart where you can roll a few dice to get a few suggestions for a trigger event.

2) Pick your Roles.

Everyone has several roles within their team. Your roles largely determine your abilities. There are seven roles, each one corresponding to a role of the Ghost Killer Team. You have four "Role points" to spend around as you see fit. You spend them to increase your level of that role. You can stack three levels in one class, but only one member per team can be rated a "3" in any class at one time. They represent the pinnacle of that role for that team. Find your role in the section below and write down the corresponding abilities and scores.

Quick breakdown:

Soldier – The big-time physical fighters of the group.

Support – Medics, counselors, the glue that keeps the team together.

Infiltrator – Spies, thieves, ninja-types.

Tracker – Hunters, researchers, investigators and plane-travelers.

Leader – One of the leaders of the Pack. Mucho Importante.

Warlock – The magic-users and psychics of the Pack.

Chosen – The Chosen One, The Prophesized One, Or just a guy with high connections.

Soldier: You are the brawn of the Pack. You are a machine, solid of body and spirit, that lives to do nothing more than kill the enemies of the ghost killers. You make use of modern and ancient weapons, the strength of your own body, as well as magic, to destroy your foes.

Why should you choose to be a Soldier?

Soldiers have high combat abilities and special effects. Most Pack members are serious ass-kickers, but Soldiers can go toe-to-toe with Hunters and live.

Soldiers in Media: The Bride from Kill Bill, Li Mu Bai from Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon, Blade from the Blade Movies, Gordon Freeman from the game Half-Life, Duke Nukem, Vin Diesel in like all of his movies, and Jet Li... not in any particular movie or anything, Jet Li is *just that fucking good*.

Support: You keep the team together, mending broken ribs, personal torment, gunshot wounds and depression. Gauze, medicine, pep talks and brotherhood are your weapons. Without you, the team would have been destroyed long ago, from outside or within. Packs operating without a Support are like soccer teams operating without any halfbacks, fullbacks or goalies.

Why should you choose to be a Support?

Support have a general balance of abilities, making them versatile. Support have the skills to keep the other team members in the fight. Support are needed in the long run in the team. They are the anchor, the goalie, and the battle medic.

Support in Media: Jim from 28 Days Later, Wash, Book, or Simon from Firefly, All the characters from Sailor Moon and other Sentai shows, Captain Lee Adama in Battlestar Galactica, the Asian dude from the Conan the Barbarian movie, most of the characters in Saving Private Ryan or other war movies have a level of Support.

Infiltrator: You specialize in being where you are not supposed to be. Without being seen or heard, you can sneak, hack, climb, coerce or disguise yourself into anyplace you need to be. Top Secret government compounds, the darkest regions of the Grey Hell, and the alleyways of the Iron Cathedral are your playground. That guy from Splinter Cell ain't got shit on you. Ninjas never see you coming.

Why should you choose to be an Infiltrator?

Infiltrators are the "side mission" guys: When the Pack needs someone to sneak into the Magma Citadel of the Hell Zombie Commandos and lower the drawbridge, it's up to the Infiltrator. The Infiltrator is a master of stealth and disguise, and can use their influence to sleep their way to the top, or use their feet to sneak their way to the top. Folks that play thieves, ninjas, or spies in other games would probably like this Role.

Infiltrators in Media: James Bond, Ethan Hunt from Mission Impossible, Riddick from Pitch Black, Aladdin from the Disney flick Aladdin, The Prince from the game Prince of Persia, Garret from the game Thief, Sam Fisher from the game Splinter Cell, Rikimaru and Ayane from the game Tenchu, Karasu-no-Goh from the game Shinobido: Imashime.

Tracker: A faceless, near-incorporeal Hunter consumes the soul of a child and flees, leaving no tracks, no smells, no trace or evidence that it ever existed in the physical world; Two hours later, you show up in its hidden lair and murder it with a screwdriver. You hunt spiritual horrors across all planes; your weapons are computers, libraries, and heightened senses. No one can travel through the planes as comfortably as you can.

Why should you choose to be a Tracker?

Trackers are a core member of the team- They're the ones that get the "research montage" as they look

up - on the internet, secret FBI databases, or old library archives – information and secrets on the monsters they are facing. They are the ones that find the horrors, the ones who know how to destroy them, and the ones who quickly become aware of the full depth of the secret plans of the other Conspiracies. They can be equal parts “Australian outback hunter” and “Sequestered academic researcher”. Without a tracker, the Pack is a loaded gun without a trigger.

Trackers in Media: Riddick (again, funny that), Mulder and Scully from The X-Files, Frank Black from Millennium, Willow Rosenberg from Buffy, Lt. Gaeta from Battlestar Galactica, Abraham Whistler from Blade, The Scooby Gang from Scooby Doo, all the PCs from the RPG Call of Cthulhu and Delta Green.

Leader: Every team needs a leader; sometimes several. You are the heart of the Pack- Without you the Pack dies, pure and simple. You keep everyone in your group safe and on top of their game. Other roles may be more powerful with guns or spells, but you are the one that put the real fear into the whispers in the dark. It’s rumored that Samuel L Jackson is a Leader of a Pack on the West Coast. Scratch the rumor, it’s fucking true.

Why should you choose to be a Leader?

There may be one Leader in a team, like Hannibal from the A-Team. But in most cases there are several of different “levels”. They’re the ones in charge. They’re the ones that set the goals of the Pack, and keep everyone focused and in-line. If you like having power over the general direction of the group as a whole, the Leader role is for you. You get a bit of power, but there’s also some responsibility involved: If you’re a dick to the other players (not the other characters, but the players themselves), the campaign could come falling apart.

Leaders in Media: Buffy from Buffy the Vampire Slayer, President Laura Roslin and Commander Adama from Battlestar Galactica, Captain Malcolm Reynolds from Firefly, Cartman from South Park, Hannibal from the A-Team, Captain Miller (Tom Hanks) from Saving Private Ryan, Blade from the Blade movie series.

Warlock: You may be a patchouli-oil smelling hippie, a dreadlock’d Rasta voodoo priest with a perpetual halo of greasy weed-smoke, a straight-laced conservative closet Qabbalist, or a bible-thumping preacher of a mega-church. But you could easily tear the soul out of any motherfucker that stands between you and Salvation. Warlocks are stereotyped as being unpredictable, wrapped up in their own goals; However, they are the big guns of any real Pack. Without Warlocks, the Pack is a naked baby in a pack of lions.

Why should you choose to be a Warlock?

Dude, Warlocks get all these kick-ass magic powers. Sure, they can’t kick butt like the others in a hand-to-hand fight, but with their incantations, summonings and dark arts they can pretty much fuck up anything in the universe, living or dead. They can feel and see the forces that tug at reality that most humans will never notice in their lifetime. They can levitate a kitten out of a tree, stake a demon out magically to be finished off by the team, or turn a Conspirator inside-out and make him play his own bloody bowels like a bagpipe.

Warlocks in Media: Gandalf the Grey or White or whatever from Lord of the Rings, River from Firefly, Willow from Buffy the Vampire Slayer, The Cenobytes from Hellraiser, Julian Sands from the Warlock movie, The Avatar from the Good Ultima games, Abe-no-Seimei (a famous Heian Era Taoist wizard) and Merlin from historical fiction and associative movies and games, all those D&D mages, priests and psionicists, Raz from the game Psychonauts, Professor X and Magneto from the X Men.

Chosen: Why you? Why did [God, Allah, Krishna, Some guy you saw on the street corner] choose you to fight against the enemy? Maybe you know, maybe your clueless, but one things for sure: Someone up on high has a big hard-on for you. There is a higher purpose, and make no mistake, you are fucking connected to that purpose. Your teammates respect you; more often than not, they fear you as well. When the cards are laid out on the table, and you’re exposed for the pawn that you are, which side will

you be on? It is likely that you will never know.

Why should you choose to be a Chosen?

The game doesn't necessarily revolve around the actions of a Chosen, but they often get a second chance to do things (like, *not die*) where others do not. They might know that they are special, or may fight against that idea when others around them know them to be The One, but there's no denying that they're...somehow different... from the others. Whether they realize it or not, they're riding coach on the Higher Purpose express.

Chosen in the Media: Luke Skywalker, Riddick (didja see that one coming? Eh?), Will Turner from Pirates of the Caribbean, Hellboy from Hellboy, Frodo from the Lord of the Rings, Fucking Chuck Norris, most comic book heroes (except Aquaman), Every main character from any adventure video game, Ron Jeremy.

Once you pick your role and the level of that role, go look up that role, write down all the Abilities associated with that role (you will add your Ability scores together to find the total) as well as Styles and other notes.

3) Choose three Arenas that give you bonuses. You can choose more in play.

Arenas are like a cross between skills, abilities, jobs, affinities, connections, areas of expertise, and personal promises and vows. They can be a word or a phrase, something like that. In regular play, if your action somehow involves your Arena, you can take any die rolled and make it a "1". If you do an action that falls into two arenas, you can take the two highest dice and make them "1"s. In Flip Mode, Arenas add bonuses to your roll (see the Flip Mode section for details).

Arenas can be gained through play. Here are some examples of Arenas:

Judge. Ex-Military. Works tech support. Used to be a plumber. Runner for the Mob. Knowledge of the Iron Cathedral. Used to be a member of the Red Codex. Fast runner. Loves Nascar and driving. Is a member of local town politics. Knows calming meditation. I do not kill human beings. I must never return to Chicago. Mastery of Wing Chun Kung Fu. Great at flirting with men. Nothing fazes me. Ain't no Unix system I can't hack into. Professor of Biology. Fingers in the local gay community. I will absolutely never forgive the Red Codex. Upper class connections. Eyes like a hawk.

If you pick one that you end up using all the friggin time, then the GM can either make you change it, or redefine it so that it doesn't work all the time. The GM should allow pretty much anything within reason, though- If it looks like it could lead to overuse, just warn the player about that and maybe let them take it anyway; If you then see them then proceed to overuse it by trying to wedge it into every situation that arises, make them change or redefine it.

Ex:

Player: "I am a Zen Master"

GM: "OK"

Later, in play:

Player: "I use my Zen Mastery to hold my breath while swimming underwater." "I use my Zen Mastery to steady my aim when I shoot that guy." "I use my Zen Mastery to detect possible ambush by... uh... 'feeling the universe' "

GM: "OK it's a little fucking old now. How about 'Zen Mastery: It only helps with mental stuff' for now?"

Player: <grimacing> "Yeah, that was a stretch. Sure, Zen Mastery for mental stuff only is cool by me. I'll try to tone it down a little, too."

GM: "Thanks. Back to the action..."

4) Pick your Stuff: Items, including your Bonded Weapon.

Your Ghost Killers character is assumed to be of low or lower-middle class. If you are more than that, you may attract attention to yourself, but that can be interesting. In any case, now it's time to define

your Stuff.

Your Items are things that give you bonuses in play when used. You have eight points to spread around in any way you see fit, with a maximum of five points for one piece of gear. Adding more points to a piece of gear doesn't make it that much more 'powerful' per se (a "Pistol: 1" for one character can be the same model of pistol as "Pistol: 4" for another character, it's just that in your hands you do more damage with it). As a point, maybe add more points to the equipment that you want to come into play more. Spread those points around between gear, weapons, and personal items, and effects.

"Effects"? Yeah, this is some esoteric shit right here. We call them "Esoteric Items". You can have a "Kawasaki Ninja: 3" or a "9mm Glock: 2" or a "Subscription to Gold's Gym: 1"... but how about "Winning Smile: 2", "Nasty switchblade-scar on cheek: 3", "Glaring Eyes: 1", "Incredible Grip: 2", "Gold Teef: 1". These are also totally valid, and cool Items.

Just a note, though, these Esoteric items can start to look like Arenas, above. General rule is that Esoteric Items are really specific, while Arenas are way more General. Like, you might have an Item of "Kung Fu Iron Palm: 2", which will give you a +2 bonus when you work it into a personal attack move. But having the Aspect Wing Chun Kung Fu will let you flip over cars, size up opponents, maneuver into place quickly, attempt to dodge bullets, make any kind of debilitating attack, etc.

If you lose an Item, don't cross it off your sheet yet! You still have two options:

1) Cannibalize: You can immediately take those gear points back from the item and put them in a pool for future use, else spread those points to different items immediately. To cannibalize, you MUST throw that item away effectively for good. You can take that item later, if you find it again. You can cannibalize esoteric items, too.

2) Leave: Just leave that item on your sheet, but put a check next to it indicating that you lost it. Later, if you find that same item, or a similar model (pistol, rosary, El Camino, rare coin, etc), you can pick up where you left off with that item.

In the end, when thinking of Stuff, try to put in at least two "personal items" that say something about your character. Rosary or Buddhist prayer beads. A copy of *Godel, Escher, Bach* or an iPod loaded with indie Ska. A coin that's been in your family for generations, or a crappy craft item a relative made for you that means a lot to you anyway. Pick two of these kinds of items. They give your character more mad flavor than another Desert Eagle-Trenchcoat-Katana combo can.

5) Choose your Karmic Ties and Vices

"I am still human. I am still human. I am still human."

A lot of Ghost Killers keep thinking that so they don't cry themselves to sleep. The things that make this mantra true are your Karmic Ties.

Karmic Ties are usually people, but they can also be specific places or things. They are the things that, at the end of the day, keep you a member of the human race. They are the people you love, hate, or fight for. They keep you from falling over the edge or raising that 9mm to your dome.

You have at least one Karmic Tie at the beginning of the game. Your first Karmic Tie must be based on Love (but it can be romantic love, brotherly love, friendship, etc) This Karmic Tie must be to another human being. It can be one of the other members of the Pack, but it is suggested that you create an NPC and make them your first karmic tie, and use the second one for another Pack member.

You do not have to take Karmic Ties to other pack members. You may be their best friend and still not have a Karmic Tie to them.

Your followup Karmic Ties can be to other people, places, sports teams, creatures, etc. They have to be coupled with a human emotion, some kind of passion that elicits a human reaction out of you. Each Karmic Tie after the first must use a different descriptor emotion. You can take as many of these as

you want, though it might be good to stop at 5 or so at first. The GM should set a house limit for the maximum number of Karmic Ties: 12 is a good range.

Here's an example of a sample character's starting Karmic Ties:

Love: Rebecca (ex-girlfriend) 2

Respect: Bedlam (fellow Pack member)

Fear: The Deep Grey

Distrust: The White Man

Murderous Hate: Servants of the Iron Cathedral 2

You can take a Karmic Tie against something more than once, as in the above example of Rebecca and the Servants of the Iron Cathedral.

Karmic Ties, if they somehow intersect with your current conflict allow you to take all the dice you just rolled for that action, and roll them again if you are not satisfied with the result. However, you can not pick out dice to roll: You must reroll all of them. You must stick with the second result (which you can then modify with Arenas and the like), unless you have another point of Karma on that same tie to blow (like in the above example for Rebecca: 2). It must be the same Karmic Tie, too, to get a second reroll: You cannot use one Karma to get one reroll and another Tie to get a second reroll.

Ex (using above sample Karmic Ties):

GM: "The ghost is advancing on Bedlam. He seems to be helpless, bound to the chair."

Player: "I throw my rune-dagger at the Ghost. <clatter> Crap. OK, time to blow a point of Karma for Bedlam."

GM: "Sure, go ahead."

Player: "<clatter> ...crap. CRAP! That's even worse than the previous roll. Uh, I blew Bedlam already... Since I'm in The Deep Grey now, can I use that here?"

GM: "Nope, sorry man, you can't switch Karmas for the same task."

You can change the emotion behind Karmic Ties at any time: Love can become Hate, Respect can become Fear, Hate can become Pity, etc. The emotion word is just a tag, you'll get the bonus either way, but this tagword shows the other players what your character feels towards that person or thing.

You can buy off Karmic Ties, too: However, once they are removed from your sheet, you can never buy them back, ever.

OK, that's a lie, you can buy it back, it just costs triple to buy it back at the first level. And it deserves a real whopper of an in-game story.

If the object of your Karmic tie is lost, destroyed, murdered, etc, you should still leave it on your sheet for a while: You can still draw from it later (Revenge!).

Vices are just that: Things that other people might find wrong or inappropriate if they saw you do, that you end up doing when you're in a slump. They don't have any game effects, but they're good pointers. Some games make you record your eye color and height, this game makes you record that you're a chronic drinker and porn collector. Choose one or more vices and just write them in the space provided. They're not set in stone. At least write one down, you can think of some more later.

Sample Vices: Mean drunk. Drink to Forget. Drink to fool around. Carouse/Pussy Hunt. Frequent Biker Bars. Porn. Cigars. Heroin. Weed. LSD. Masturbation. Seclusion. Gambling. Excessive Sleep. Ignoring others. Excessive Video Games. Camwhore chat rooms. Raves. Bar fights. Excessive Pool Playing. Binge spending. Hang with a Gang. Theft.

6) What the Fuck Just Happened?

Oh my! Something just happened before the curtains went up and the scenario began! In your first scene something happened to you that's gonna set the stage for your character's reactions throughout the rest of the adventure, and maybe even steer the plot. The player sets this event, and throws it past the GM for approval. If the idea doesn't make the group wince, or go " 'cmon, that totally throws off the whole game", then it should fly.

(Note: This is called "Kicker" in certain other games).

Some examples of What the Fuck Just Happened?

"My brother disappeared when we were camping when I was 10, taken by a Wendigo. I just got a phone call from him; his voice was hollow, and there were the sounds of tormented people wailing in the background."

"I woke up in a bathtub full of ice and somebody's freshly-removed kidneys were lying on my lap."

"I had a bad dream about chasing a small, helpless girl. When I woke up, I was face to face with that girl twisted and evil, and she chased me all over my apartment, tearing shit up with razor-sharp fingernails, until I managed to flee."

"My dead mother's spirit came to me in the shower, cried "Help Me!" in a pitiful voice, and vanished."

Well, you're pretty much done. Describe your character to others. Be brief; No one cares if you have hazel fucking eyes. Get on with it so the others can get a basic idea, then get into the story. But make sure you tell the others your Trigger Event: That's important. It frames how they should think of your character's actions, which can influence how they award you drama chips.

How to Do Things

Standard actions. Standard actions make up the majority of play. They represent actions that you want your character to do. Usually you say it as “I try to pick the lock”, or “Giovanni tries to pick the lock.” Try not to say “My character/My guy tries to pick the lock”, it lacks a certain something.

Standard actions are simple. Look on your sheet to the Ability they fall under. The rating of that ability is your base score. You can increase that number by using Items or adding in other abilities (if applicable: GM has final approval). After a moment, you will have your final score that you need to roll equal to or under to succeed.

Next, you pick a number of d8 dice to roll. You can choose to roll as many as you want. You can pick just one die if you want, but your fellow players will probably taunt you and call you a “Pussy”, or find other ways to encourage you to throw in more. Roll those dice. If they are equal to or lower than the difficulty number, you succeed. If you roll higher, you fail.

Why roll more than one die? Because the number of die you roll determines how well, or how effortlessly, you succeed. 1d8 means that you were just able to do the task well. 3d8 means that the task was done naturally and without effort. 8d8 means that people who witnessed the event will be talking about how you did that task for a few generations. Whether you use more dice, or less dice, is entirely up to you.

Still, if you succeed anyway, why push your luck? Why would you ever want to roll more than one die? Because the GM can counter-roll: The GM can pick out a number of dice greater than yours (at least one greater, sometimes more) and attempt the roll as well. If the GM succeeds and scores higher than you, you fail. The GM must state that they are going to counter-roll before you roll, though. Once you roll the dice, then the GM can't jump in with a counter-roll. It's like playing against the house at Blackjack. The GM doesn't have to, and shouldn't, counter-roll for every little die roll thrown.

If the GM rolls three or more dice than you and succeeds, it's the gaming equivalent of getting totally bitchslapped.

In situations where the player succeeds, but the GM counter-rolls and scores higher without breaking the difficulty number, the GM immediately gives the player a point of Damage for every extra die they used above the players' dice (the Player decides where to put that point of Damage). Next, the GM is encouraged to introduce a complication of some kind. Examples of this in a later edition.

In rolls where there is no simple Ability that the action falls under, try to squint and put it under the influence of one of the other Abilities anyway (growing strawberries might be Investigation or Intuition, Digging a well might be Movement, Investigation or Intuition, etc). If you still just can't get it to fit, then use this chart for base difficulty:

VERY EASY: 12

HARD: 6

IMPOSSIBLE: 2

Assisting: Other players can assist the player attempting the action by adding their appropriate Attribute Assist adds to that player's base difficulty. Items/gear can assist another player in this regards, but only if that gear remains in the hands of its owner.

Opposed Actions: Same as above, but another player or the GM will be rolling against you. The GM should clearly state the opponent's base difficulty so that the player knows what they're up against. Rather than keeping this information secret, or rolling in secret behind a cardboard shield, you should come out and state the NPC's base difficulty, adds and the like, and roll the dice in front of the player. It adds to the drama, and proves that every choice in the game matters, that nothing's gonna get fudged by the GM to keep things in line.

Drama Chips: Drama's a finicky thing. You have to declare that you want to use Drama Points before you roll the dice. You cannot roll them in after the dice hit the table. When you spend Drama Points, you should take a number of d8s of a different color and roll them, one die per Drama Point that you spend. You subtract the result of the Drama from your total roll.

When using Karma to reroll all your dice, you also pick up your Drama Dice and reroll those as well.

Flip Mode

Flip Mode is something that the players (and only the players, not the GM) can call upon when they want to have greater narrative control over a situation, or want to turn over narration to someone other than the GM. It can be very risky at times, but the payoff is that you can wrap up an entire conflict, scene, or battle almost any way you want. Play it well, and you can finish off a Hunter or Red Codex Cabal with little real time effort. But the risk is greater; Failure means that you're fucking toast.

Flip Mode is also a good way of wrapping up conflicts that you're not interested in doing the blow-by-blow on. Flip Mode is a good way of getting people who aren't in the scene in on the action by giving them the rights to narrate the conflict. Flip Mode is also a great way to go out in a blaze of glory.

When a player declares Flip Mode, it cannot be countered by the GM (ie "Uh... No."). However, the GM is encouraged to talk with the player about what they hope to accomplish. It might be the case that the GM, when designing the scenario, has something really cool in mind to happen next: Hinting at that, or engaging in a compromise (GM: "OK, you will bluff your way past Doctor Insidius, but can I slip in a line or two, and take back control right after that? I promise that he'll be out of the fight, and no traps or anything like that. I just had a few cool lines written down here, and I wanted to bring in this other badass dude right after.") are the two tools the GM can use to frame out the scope of the Flip Mode. If the player wants to, they can retract their Flip Mode and continue on as normal, but again the GM can not force or strongly coerce the player to do so.

When Flip Mode starts, the way you roll the dice and record results changes.

With Flip Mode, you decide whether the struggle is a Physical one or a Spiritual/Mental one. It has to be one or the other. Once that is decided, you take your remaining points of Health (for Body) or Drive (for Spirit) and convert those to dice. From there, you add in your Boost Value of the closest determining Ability. For Flip Mode, you are only allow to add in one single Ability Boost, not any more.

Assistance: No one else is able to assist you like they can in normal dice rolls. It's all on you.

Arenas allow you to take any die you roll and make it an "8". You can use more than one Arena for this roll.

Items: Items add their numeric value to the pool. Pick out a few dice (maybe d6es, or d8s that are all a different color), put them on the table face up with the item's number exposed. Make sure to separate them out so that you don't accidentally think they're regular dice and try to reroll them.

Drama Chips: F

Karma: Using your Karma allows you to roll the whole pool of dice again. This includes any Drama Dice in the roll.

Note: If you use an Arena to make a die an “8”, and then after that decide to try your luck and reroll everything with a point of Karma, you can’t make a die an “8” again; it’s spent. It would be wise to consider Karma before Arenas and Drama Points for messing around with dice.

Note 2: You can use an Arena to reroll a die gained from a Drama chip.

So, now the player has a bunch of rolled dice sitting in front of them. What next?

They then pull out the handy Flip Mode Sheet, and move the dice to the areas they want on that sheet. There are a number of areas on the Flip Mode sheet, and how many points’ worth of dice you move to those areas, the more overall successful you will be.

You can not take a die that was rolled as an “8” and split it up into “4” and “4”: You have to keep that “8”.

At least one point must be assigned to the following four categories. If you put no dice in that category, it is considered a “1”.

1) Narration. On a 1-4, the GM narrates. On a 5-6, the player picks someone else to narrate, either the GM or another player, but they themselves cannot narrate. On a 7 or higher, they can either narrate themselves or pass narration to someone else. On a 12 or higher, the player basically gets to do a Drum Solo: They (or the person they pick to narrate for them) can bring in other characters, describe what happens to them (within reason and compromise), and you can do some Narrative Fallout (see below). If the player chooses not to put any points here, rather leaving it as a default of “1”, then the GM is encouraged to rake you over the coals a little.

2) Meeting the Goal. On a 1-3, the player will fail in their goal or lose ground. On 4-6, it’s uncertain whether you succeed or not- You gain some measure of success, but there is some resistance as well. If you were destroying a ghost to Cleanse an area, one interpretation is that you destroyed the ghost, but the hauntings continue from another source. On a 7 or higher, you meet with overall success. On a 12, you can double the points of Effectiveness gained towards damaging mooks or Greater Evils.

3) Effectiveness. This is how stylishly/cool you do what you wanted to do. Effectiveness 1 with a high Meeting the Goal is that scene from Raiders of the Lost Ark where Indiana Jones only won that fight, bruised and bloody, because the big Nazi backed up into an airplane propeller. On 1-3, your results were barely passable. On 4-6, you managed to do it well, but with no flair. On a 7 or higher, your results were awesome. Priests passing by throw up the horns and bang their head to your Symphony of Success. With 12 or higher, you or your team gain notoriety for your action. Whether that’s a good thing or bad thing depends on the first two pools.

Effectiveness also measures Damage against the Greater Evils. If the conflict was directly involving any other sorts of people or evils, then Effectiveness is just that. If you are fighting against multiple evils or humans, every point of Effectiveness indicates the number of these mooks that are removed from play (whether they are kicked in the head to unconsciousness, exorcised, shot, blown up with grenades or stabbed to death with pencils is totally up to the narrator). If you are in a fight with 12 gang members, and roll an effectiveness of 12, you can narrate wiping the floor with all of them. The same is true if you Meet the Goal with a 12 and roll 6 for Effectiveness, as Meeting the Goal at 12 doubles the results of Effectiveness.

However, to make use of Effectiveness you have to get at least 4 points in Meeting the Goal, otherwise gains in this category do not convert to damage.

Against the Greater Evils, like Ancient Ghosts, Hunters, Grand Warlocks of the Red Codex, or

Enslavers from the Iron Cathedral, Effectiveness indicates how much damage you do against them: Every point of Effectiveness indicates one point of Underdamage (bypassing their Damage and going straight to their Health or Drive) that they receive. Again, this can be doubled by Meeting the Goal at 12.

Finally, if you're in a situation where you are confronting a Greater Evil and Mooks at the same time, you don't have to pick either-or: In most cases taking down the Greater Evil will scatter the mooks anyway, but if not 11 points of Effectiveness will both take out 11 mooks AND do 11 points of Underdamage to the Greater Evil.

4) Safety. This is a pretty important category. This indicates the amount of Health or Drive points that you will have remaining when this conflict is over. You can not gain more points than you originally used for this conflict: If your Drive was "5", and you put a single "8" die in this category, that means that you remain at "5", no real damage taken.

In a pinch, or if you're in a dramatic mood, you can choose to *die*. If you do so, this Safety category drops to Zero, you gain two "6"es (12 points) which you can sink into any category that you want. This is a great way to go down in a blaze of glory going toe to toe with a greater evil for the benefit of the group.

As mentioned above, each of the above needs to have points in them before you can add points to any of the three categories below. If you choose not to put any points in the above categories, then a default of "1" will be put into those categories.

5) Side Effects. This represents ripples that this conflict has across the world. If no points are added to this category, then the GM can cause the effect to have ripples or not as they see fit. If 1-3 points are added here, then there are bad effects that will result in this encounter (the Hunter is defeated, but the Red Codex then takes note of the PC and starts to thwart them. Or more immediate, like the Iron Cathedral Enslaver takes a bullet in the head, but he falls backwards, hitting a lever that sends a cage full of children spiraling into a pool of demonic soul-acid). 4-6 points means that something either a little bad or a little good happens, depending on the bent of the narrator. 7 or more means that the effect has a great beneficial side effect. At 12 or higher, one point may be added to Destroy a Conspiracy.

6) Growth. This represents personal "hefty growth" gained by the encounter. If no points are added to this category, then no growth is made on the sheet in terms of adds to Abilities and the like. 7 points here gains 2 points to any single Ability, or they can be split up between any number of abilities. You can also choose to instead add a single point to Health or Drive. 12 points in this category means that you have 4 points to spend between any Abilities, but you must spread them between at least two, if not more, abilities- You cannot sink them all into a single Ability. You can choose to instead add two points to either Health or Drive (or 1 and 1).

You don't have to assign Growth to the Ability used in this conflict, nor do you have to choose Health or Drive based solely on what you used in the conflict. You are free to increase whatever you want.

7) Pack Pool. This represents the growth and strength of the Pack as a whole. If no points are added to the Pack pool, then there is no gain to the pack. Every point you add to Pack Pool is a point that goes to the Pack's point total. 12 points or more in this category means that you get to add another extra 10 points to the Pack pool on top of the number of points in the Pack Pool.

Narrative Fallout:

You can do one of the following to anyone if you hit 12 or higher on Narration:

Give anyone (including yours own character) one free level of any Role you choose. If this brings them to Level 3, and there is already a Level 3 in the group, that is fine under only this condition.

Add 10 points to the Pack Pool.

Add 1 point to Destroy a Conspiracy.

Change up to 3 Karmas of any number of characters in the group. Each change allows you to add a brand new Karma, change one existing Karma descriptor, or change one existing Karma target. This is a good way to change how other characters see your character. Be careful with changing those Karma targets, you might want to propose some changes and see if the other player is at least somewhat cool with that before you go erasing shit on their sheet.

Note: If the target character finds themselves unsatisfied with these changes, they can spend a point of Drama to roll back that change on their Karmic Ties.

When you take someone's narration: Be nice to them. Find out in the briefest detail what they were looking for (the person who called a Flip Mode may just say "Do with it; Do whatever you want"), and make that happen in rich detail. Think of what the die rolls might represent, and make that happen. Keep the narration brief; You're wrapping up a conflict, not telling a bedtime story.

Compromise

Uh.... Crap. This is where my 24 hours ends.

Here's what I couldn't add, but will soon:

0) The Character Sheet, the Pack Sheet, rules regarding the Pack Sheet, and the Flip Mode Sheet.

1) All the background information on the geography of the underworld, what the Grey Hell, Near Grey, Deep Grey etc are, a lexicon, and other background bits to help... uh... start the game.

2) Breakdowns of Roles, including the points they grant to Abilities, and their special abilities per level. This is the main thing missing from this game, rendering it unplayable. I was thinking of basically each level adds at least one or two points to all Abilities, with up to four points for the focus ability of that Role (Combat for Soldier, etc).

2a) Explanation of Chosen Weapon.

3) Lots of play examples.

4) The entirety of the magic system, which incidentally is based solely on lines found in the Shakespeare play *King Lear*. And totally borrows its feel from the game Dread.

5) Cleaning the whole damn thing up.

As such, this game is totally unfinished and pretty much unplayable. But hey, it's my first attempt, and I plan to update this version on 1KM1KT, then move forward with attempting to publish this game.