



IMP *of the* PERVERSE



BETA PLAYTEST DOCUMENT



IMP OF THE PERVERSE

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Beta Playtest Document

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PLAYTEST FEEDBACK

This game is still in playtest while the manuscript for the full release is being developed and edited. If you play and have feedback about your experience, it is very welcome! The best way to submit feedback is to:

✉️ **Email me: n.d.paoletta@gmail.com**

If you have rules questions about the game, suggestions for the final release, or want to share your stories publicly, please consider posting to the Google+ Imp of the Perverse Community.

✉️ **Search “Imp of the Perverse” on Google+**

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PART ONE

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

Imp of the Perverse is a game that asks you and a group of your friends to enter a Jacksonian Gothic America where monsters are real. Using the media of pencils, paper, dice and your shared imagination, the rules of the game focus your creativity and fears into telling a compelling tale of psychological horror as your characters, the *dramatis personae* of your tale, hunt down the very real monsters that afflict their world.

One player takes on the role of the Editor, creating these monsters and setting the stage for the individual protagonists, inhabited by the rest of the players. Each protagonist is a person of this Gothic version of the historical Jacksonian period in America, but what makes them central to the game is that each bears an Imp of the Perverse on their shoulders, birthed from their particular untameable urges and urging them to commit terrible deeds. Only by fighting those who have given in to their own Imps, literally transformed into creatures of the night, can these afflicted reject their Imps and gain redemption. This struggle continually tempts them to embrace their perversity in order to gain the power necessary to banish monsters back beyond the Shroud between the world of the living and the world of the dead.

Thus, the question before you: can you resist the seductive draw of your own perversity long enough to regain your intrinsic humanity, or will your embrace of the power within lead you to become damned yourself?

WHAT YOU'RE IN FOR

Each time you sit down to play *Imp of the Perverse*, the protagonists engage in the hunt of a specific monster. The arc of this hunt, from the discovery of the influence of the creature through gaining understanding of its nature to resolving its presence in the world, is a Chapter of play.

You can play a single stand-alone Chapter, or play a series of Chapters that follow the journey of the protagonists from their first hunt through their experiences as they change and grow in the face of the terrible evils they confront on the hunt. Ideally, you will play a series, as the transitions between Chapters are where the protagonists showcase how they've changed, and your group of players begins to construct your own unique Jacksonian Gothic world around them. But if a single Chapter is preferable, never fear! You will still get the full experience of the protagonists discovering, investigating and confronting a monster, and facing what that means for their own perversities in so doing.

Each Chapter generally takes 1-3 sessions of 2-4 hours to resolve. The very first time you play, you'll also need a session of similar length to create your protagonists. If you do play an ongoing game, you do not need the exact same cast every time. If an individual player cannot attend, or if you have a new player who wants to try out the game for just one Chapter, you can simply elide or add the protagonist in question when the Chapter begins.

Before each Chapter, the Editor (let's assume that that's you, reading this now) creates the monster that will be the subject of the hunt. Making a monster can take anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour, depending on how fully you detail the monster, its web, and its environment. There is also a sample Monster included in this playtest document that you can use as is.

The rest of the players will each create an individual Protagonist, an inhabitant of the Gothic world whose perversity has pierced the Shroud between the land of the living and the world of the dead. In general, the sweet spot for play is two or three protagonists. For four to six protagonists, the time to play extends and the focus on dramatic character play requires more effort to maintain. More than six protagonists are not recommended.

Each Chapter starts with the protagonists aware of what they have to do, but not of what the nature of the creature is or what it is doing in their world. Throughout the Chapter, they investigate, discover and finally confront the monster that you have prepared, while struggling with the slide towards perversity demanded by the hunt.

There is no question about whether the protagonists will be able to find or defeat the creature. Thus, the plot of each Chapter follows a similar pattern each time, as the protagonists search and then decide how to resolve the presence of the horror in their world. The thematic questions of play revolve around the effects the hunt has on the protagonists, and tension comes from how they decide to manage the temptation to embrace their own Imps. Whether they give in to their perversities or not, the protagonists will be changed by their journey.

And if any fall, then they must be hunted down.

Whether because of one dramatic slide in one Chapter or a gradual descent over many, a protagonist will eventually fall to their Imp. When this happens, that protagonist becomes the next monster to be hunted. If the player is interested in doing so, they then prep that protagonist as a monster, and become the Editor for the next Chapter! The current Editor makes a new protagonist to hunt down the poor fallen wretch, and the story continues. For more on transitioning between Editors, see **page 60**.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

- ⇒ Two to five players;
- ⇒ A room within which you have the freedom to exercise imagination;
- ⇒ The comfort of table, chairs and food and drink to the taste of your society;
- ⇒ Adequate facsimiles of the Protagonist Creation Survey and Protagonist Sheets;
- ⇒ A monster prepared, the subject of the hunt to come;
- ⇒ Perhaps six or so each red and black six-sided dice--the two colors are a metaphor for the difference between the actions of humanity and those of the perverse, and as such must be differentiable in some way, whether by color, size, or design;
- ⇒ A notable six-sided die, separate from the rest - this is not to be rolled, but rather shall track the growing Anxiety of your tale;
- ⇒ Pencils and papers adequate for the notation of any other ephemeral details worth consigning to the page.

JACKSONIAN GOTHIC AMERICA

Imp of the Perverse takes place in an America much like our own historical 1830s and 1840s, but with the addition of the Shroud between the protagonists world of the living and their Imps world of the dead. Human passions sometimes pierce this barrier, and invite in the terrible things that we still remember as monsters. This is the world that contains *The House of Usher*, that once saw the *Masque of the Red Death*, that averted its eyes from the *Conqueror Worm*.

This world contains monsters, yes, and today we have many names for them. But then, they were simply the expressions of souls over-full to bursting.

While the game is set within this particular time, it will not ask you to become a historical scholar in order to play. As you will see when you make your protagonists, they are embedded squarely in overlapping circles of social relationships from the beginning, and those circles are drawn from the period and constructed in order to demonstrate how people related to each other during this time. It's this grounding in normal life that creates the tension in your protagonist's life as they get closer to the Shroud. The contrasts between the fantastic demands of your Imp and the pedestrian concerns of your family, the atrocities committed by the monsters you hunt and the obligations you have to your friends and peers, those are what makes this a horror game.

The other reason to embrace this period is that it's a time of rapid, wild change in America. The growth of new transportation and information technologies, the explosion of commerce, the clashes between opposed ideologies from politics to expansionism to slavery, these all create cracks in the world in which perversity takes root. You can set your specific game anywhere from the early 1830s of populist optimism, surging mercantilism, Indian Wars and Abolition to the late 1840s of bitter sectionalism, westward expansion, railroads and the telegraph.

This book contains overviews on the three most thematically resonant sections of Jacksonian America: the East, the South and the West. Each overview describes the particular historical attributes of that region with an eye towards giving you tools to bring that tone and tenor

into your games, along with little details and historical incidents that are particularly suited to bring into a horror game. However, this rich history is not limited to just those chapters, and you will see more references to historical context wherever it serves to explain something about how the game works or illustrate how to use it in play.

Again, the goal of including this history is not to give you homework; this is a fantastical, fictional, Gothic version of the world, and the one you create at your table will diverge quickly from anything “real.” Simply creating protagonists, a monster and its web of influence in the world will put you in the right mental space, and then you can bring in as much detail as you wish from there. The resources in this book are there to support you, not place a barrier in your way.

MAKING YOUR OWN WORLD

Making a unique dark, troubled world is something the protagonists of your tale are empowered to do as part of their struggle against their perversity. Each hunt, each particular creature brought to heel and banished from the world, also reveals more and more of the nature of the Shroud itself. The metaphysics of the twin worlds, the particulars of how, why and wherefore one becomes a monster, what the nature of the Imp means for those afflicted, and the techniques and resources available to repair the damage done, those are all subject to the particulars of your fellowship. After each Chapter of your tale, you shall have opportunities to make statements about your world and how it works, and those shall be truth forevermore.

CENTRAL CONCEPTS

Here are the basic concepts upon which Imp of the Perverse is built. While you'll see them surface in various ways in play, it's important that the Editor (or whoever is teaching the game for the first time) reads over these and knows that they are available to be referenced when needed.

A TREMBLING FRAMEWORK

All but one of the players of this game are the *dramatis personae*, creating individual protagonists, each with an Imp of the Perverse on their shoulders. The other player is the Editor, who creates the monster they will hunt, as well as the web of influence the monster has over mortal society. All players have a set of principles to guide their play:

Each Player:

- ☞ creates a protagonist, still fully human but marked by their perversity
- ☞ commits to playing their protagonists struggle for humanity and with their Imp
- ☞ advocates for their protagonists success, but take opportunities to make dramatic decisions and support the other players in the characterization of their protagonists

The Editor:

- ☞ creates monsters and puts them in the same social context as the protagonists
- ☞ constructs a compelling, dark world full of challenge, doubt and wonder
- ☞ engineers specific situations for each protagonist that dare them to embrace their darker self
- ☞ demonstrates the consequences of the protagonists actions with integrity (in this order: integrity to the dark Gothic world, integrity to the characters development so far, integrity to the demands of the unfolding narrative, and ideally all three)

These principles won't always be present in every moment, and sometimes only one or two of them will make sense given the narrative, but taken together they describe the attitude each player should have as they play. Protagonist players are committed not just to success but to engaging in the struggle with their Imp, whatever that means for them; the Editor is committed not just to create monsters and provide challenge, but construct a world around the protagonists that has internal integrity, whatever that means for the story as it unfolds.

And here are some core conceits of the game:

In Imp of the Perverse:

- ☞ **monsters cannot win, and the end of each Chapter will be marked by the protagonists ending the monsters influence over the mortal world**
- ☞ **protagonists cannot die, unless the player decides to make it so as part of their dramatic struggle**
- ☞ **monsters are unique, created as a metaphorical description of their core perversity made manifest in the world; even those that share a kind of perversity embody it differently and have different portfolios of horror**
- ☞ **protagonists are always aware they have an Imp, and are also always aware of others who are similarly afflicted (how this looks and feels in play is up to you)**
- ☞ **protagonists always know when a monster arrives in their vicinity, though not the specifics of its nature or agenda; the beginning of each Chapter is marked by that knowledge dawning on the protagonists**

These are the boundaries that describe the space of play; the rest of the rules of the game can be widely interpreted to suit the nature of your tales as they unfold. If you change any of these conceits you are venturing outside of the game as presented here, so be aware!

THE ARC OF PLAY

In order to play this game:

- ☞ The Editor makes a monster to be the subject of the first Chapter of play, and the other players make protagonists. The monster can be a response to the nature of the protagonists, or can be selected beforehand.
- ☞ The Editor creates the web of the monster and places relationships of the protagonists, or the protagonists themselves, into it. Thus, every Chapter starts with some kind of connection, no matter how tenuous, from the monster to some kind of social circle the protagonists share.
- ☞ The group plays through the Chapter using the rules and procedures presented in this book.
- ☞ At the end of the Chapter, any protagonists who have fallen to their Imp take over the Editor role and create their former protagonist as the next monster.
- ☞ The other protagonists go through Ontogenesis, spending checks made during the Chapter in order to recover, grow and reveal new truths about the nature of the Shroud
- ☞ If you wish to continue playing, the next Chapter then begins (with the same protagonists or a different cast, depending on whether any fell to their perversity or you have players joining or leaving the group).

During a Chapter, the Editor presents the mystery and challenge for the protagonists, and they use the resources at their disposal to solve the mystery and address the challenge.

Each Chapter of play follows this pattern:

- ☞ First, the protagonists become aware that a monster is near, both from their innate sense of perversity and from strange, bizarre or inexplicable things happening to or around their relationships.
- ☞ The protagonists engage in Ratiocination, investigating the disturbances in their circles, gathering facts and clues, and slowly unveiling the nature of the horror and the agenda of the monster.
- ☞ As they investigate, Anxiety rises, indicating they they're getting closer but also increasing the activity of their Imps.

- ☞ Once the protagonists discover the monster and feel that they have enough information and/or motivation to take action, they engage in Exertion to change the world around them and gain advantages, stymie the monster or engage it directly.
- ☞ Eventually, the protagonists will confront the monster and resolve the horrors it is visiting upon the world.
- ☞ Once the monster is defeated (destroyed, sent back beyond the Shroud, exorcised, brought back to humanity, or however else it happens), the protagonists take stock of what they've done before returning to their mortal lives - if they can.

This is a flexible structure meant to give shape to the story without determining it beforehand. Each Chapter plays out differently depending on the nature of the monster and the protagonists, how interested the players are in diving into deep characterization or taking plot-driving action, and the particular bits and pieces of the Jacksonian Gothic world the group wishes to use as the backdrop of their story.

GETTING STARTED

Starting a Chapter requires the following:

- ☞ A cast of protagonists
- ☞ A monster to be the subject of the story
- ☞ Someone to feel confident enough in the rules of play to get started

You can use the playtest Chapter included in this document, which contains a cast of pre-generated protagonists along with a fully prepped monster and Web. Or, you can have a first session where everyone makes their protagonists together. The Editor can either make a monster beforehand, and integrate the protagonists into its Web once they are created; or, the Editor can make the monster as a response to the group of protagonists, touching on their concerns and perversities intentionally.

Either way, you'll need your cast and your monster before you get started. Then, follow the guidelines in the Editors Rules (page 55) to kick off the story.

CONTINUED PLAY

After the first Chapter ends, then what? Continuing play with the same cast of protagonists can take a lot of forms.

First, and most importantly, if any protagonists gave in to their Imp, their former protagonist becomes the subject of the next hunt. That player has the option to become the Editor for the next chapter as well; if they don't choose to take it, the Editor is still in charge of developing the new monster using the same method as any other.

If this is not the case, then the Editor generates (or chooses) another monster to be the subject of the next hunt. This involves thinking about any shifts of time and/or place - is this immediately subsequent to the last Chapter, perhaps growing out of the horrors visiting upon the innocent as part of the hunt? Or is it the next season, or the next year, when a new creature comes again? Is it in the same city, impacting the protagonists same circles? Or are they called to a new place in order to confront a new horror?

In addition, after the first Chapter the players will have had the chance to start establishing facts about the Shroud between worlds. The nature of your particular Gothic Jacksonian America will take shape through these facts and the other context established during play; you should use these facts as a framework for subsequent creatures and settings. If the Shroud begins to take form as the interaction of the prayers of the living with the wishes of the dead, say, then perhaps the next monster should center on someone who intentionally is praying for the dead to rise again. If it's more about specific locations holding power over those who have passed on, perhaps one of those locations becomes a locus of a creature still living, determined to keep its corporeal body beyond the Shroud. Use the nature of the Shroud as an incubator for your monsters.

And so, each Chapter is another revolution in this grand cycle. Play as many as you wish, until you have achieved satisfactory endings for your protagonists or simply have explored the themes of the game as far as you wish; as long as everyone has been able to engage with their protagonists perversity, learned something about what that means for that character, and had a hand in stopping at least one monster from spreading its horror into the world, you have played the game fully and well.

USING THIS DOCUMENT

This is a playtest document, containing a full-scale revision of the explanatory text of the game from previous version, along with new material that will hopefully help guide you towards getting into the spirit of the material and making thematically resonate decisions during play. It also contains some more resources and information about the time period, to help build the world of the protagonists in a way that feels like it has some relevance to the history.

The bulk of what you actual need to know in the moment to make characters and to apply the rules as you play should be contained in the reference sheets! But if you want to get the full explanation of how a rule works, the context around it, or to get the holistic sense of how everything hangs together, make sure to read to relevant section of the text.

If you are looking for:

Making Monsters - read Part Two, starting on **page 17**

Making Protagonists - read Part Three, starting on **page 25**

The core rules for play - read Processes of Play, **page 40**

What happens after a Chapter - read Ontogenesis, **page 50**

Safety tools - read **page 35** for setting initial boundaries during protagonist creation, and **page 47** for tools to use during play

Fighting, death and destroying monsters - read **page 60**

Deciding when and where to set a Chapter - read **page 66** and **page 68**

More about the history - read Part Five, starting on **page 63**



PART TWO

MAKING MONSTERS

Monsters are those who were once human, but gave in to their Imp of the Perverse. While this game is embedded in the social fabric of Jacksonian America, you are playing the game as a modern person, and the situation you create for each Chapter of play will be guided by your own ethical and moral framework. As the Editor, it's up to you to create a subject of the hunt that is worth the effort to end the horror it visits upon the world.

BORN OF PERVERSITY

All monsters start with a core perversity, the thing that, once they gave in to it, turned them into a literal creature of horror. Pick something for the monsters perversity that you think is *unacceptable*. It doesn't need to be grotesque or evil, but it should be something that you consider, well, perverse. Something that you think people shouldn't do (or at least shouldn't do to excess). Unlike the perversity of the protagonists, this could be something that truly repulses you or that you think it irredeemably evil - the monsters you create for this game are not sympathetic, even if their original form had noble intentions or ideals.

Your monster has given in to or actively embraced their perversity, rending the Shroud between worlds and transforming into a tangible expression of their perversion; but it is still embedded in the mortal world. It needs people. It uses people.

Once you've come up with the idea for the monster, you will start building the Web of those who have fallen within its orbit.

Answer these questions:

- ☞ who does it surround itself with?
- ☞ who has it hurt?
- ☞ who is protecting it (or has an interest in it being protected)?
- ☞ who does it want (or who can it not resist) and why?

Your answers create the status quo for the monster and those it influences. Make notes on people and relationships but don't try to plan out how things will happen once action is taken: the protagonists will destabilize the monster's status quo in play.

Your ultimate goal before play is to have a grasp of what drives the creature, and then to create the creature's Web, a map of the relationships it has with potential servants and victims. This Web will have blank spaces used to connect the protagonists into the monster's world, so there needs to be enough flexibility in what you have in mind to accommodate how the players choose to create their characters. (Of course, if you are playing with a returning cast this is easier and you can make a tighter Web).

You can fully detail the monster and then figure out the Web, or you can start with the Web and then come back to consider how the monster will escalate once play begins, whichever approach makes more sense to you.

THE SHROUD

Once you've outlined the monster's perversity and have an idea of who will be in its Web, you need to decide where it is in relationship to the Shroud between worlds.

If the monster is still alive, but transformed by their perversity such that they are no longer human, then it is **close to the Shroud**. It is still a creature of physical flesh and blood, though with terrible power.

If the monster has passed on to the world of the dead, but still bedevils the living, then it is **past the Shroud**. It no longer has a physical form, but can appear in and interact with the world of the living.

If the monster has crossed back in order to satisfy its horrible desires, then it is **returned from beyond the Shroud**. It clothes a fell spirit in the mockery of physical form, and there's no telling what it can do.

The less human the monster, the more appealing it is to the protagonists' own Perversities and the more influence it can have over their Imps and their ability to change the world around them.

FOR EXAMPLE

Here is an example of a monster from Kickstarter backer Osmina Deveraux: Eleanor Bradway King.

Her core perversity is a fascination with the peccadilloes and failings of others, taken to the extreme of actively encouraging new and more extreme actions in order to viscerally experience the joys of depravity without facing any consequences herself.

She's a reporter, who uses her position to gain information on potential victims (or "clients" as she thinks of them), and then blackmails them in order to drive them to worse and worse acts.

To establish her general status quo:

- ☞ Who does it surround itself with? People who are approaching the point where they will pierce the Shroud with their own perversities, if they haven't already.
- ☞ Who has it hurt? Once she loses interest in a "client" she's blackmailing, she releases her archive of material in whatever way hurts them the most. Often, innocent people get caught up in the scandal.
- ☞ Who is protecting it (or has an interest in it being protected)? Those she blackmails will do anything to keep her from making their sordid stories public.
- ☞ Who does it want (or who can it not resist) and why? Any whisper of a new, unique depravity will summon her like a moth to flame; she gets bored easily and is always looking for new "clients"



Eleanor Bradway King is still alive, but transformed with extraordinary sensory organs; this monster is *close to the Shroud*.

THE FUTURE

Consider the monster's status quo, and then envision how the situation will escalate once the creature knows it is being hunted.

What does escalation mean? Escalation is the growth of the impact the creature makes on the world if left unchecked. Absent the interference of the protagonists, the monster's power to inflict pain and emanate the perversity that birthed it will grow and grow. Here are the three arenas in which the monster of your story will escalate it's horror:

- ☞ Escalation in Area: the physical or social area affected by the monster grows. To start, pick a geographical space or social group which the creature inhabits, hunts, or finds victims (or allies). Each escalation in area extends the borders of this starting point, or brings a new one into the monsters purview.
- ☞ Escalation in Horror: the supernatural powers the monster gained as the result of its nature. To start, describe the ability that the monster possesses beyond the ken of mortals. Each escalation makes its powers more horrible, sadistic, cruel or damaging.
- ☞ Escalation in Emanation: the terrible things that those impacted by the monsters existence are compelled to do themselves. To start, pick the baseline reaction inspired in those who see or are victimized by the creature. Each escalation twists, heightens or makes those actions and reactions more horribly spectacular.

Your monster should start with the first entry in each arena filled out, as this is what will structure the initial mystery of your story. Depending on how much time and inclination you have to prepare, you can map out the rest in advance, or leave spaces to fill in to respond to the direction of play. Escalation creates the framework aids your in-the-moment decision making during play. Of course, if the context of your unfolding story demands a certain kind of escalation that doesn't neatly fit into these categories, you should always give in to that demand!

MIND CONTROL & RELATED HORRORS

If your monster exercises mind control or some similar power, that belongs in escalation of horror, not of emanation. Emanations are the ripple effects of the monsters presence in the world; the monster directly controlling another is a horror it visits upon them. Of course, these often dovetail, with a person subject to control *then* suffering the emanation.

ESCALATION IN PLAY

During play, you will escalate the monsters influence on the word around it. Some escalations are triggered by certain milestones, and some are at your discretion (see details in the Editors Rules section). For now, keep in mind that whenever you escalate, you pick *one* of the arenas of escalation, and then move to the next step on it. If you already have that step filled out, go ahead and decide how that looks in the game. If that step is blank, or if you have a better idea now that you did during prep, fill it in when the moment is right.

FOR EXAMPLE

Eleanor Bradway King is able to heighten the desire in others to indulge in their perversity, as well as detect exactly what will force someone to act on that desire. As a reporter, she capitalizes on her normal activities in order to find new “clients.”

- ☞ Escalation in Area: To begin, a certain social circuit as her beat (like local politics, or the arts - this should be chosen in relation to the protagonists, once they are known). Escalation: an adjacent social circle, or a group of people one of her victims introduces her to. Depending on the direction of the story, you could choose either path to go down.
- ☞ Escalation in Horror: To begin, she can force others to indulge in their perversity, whatever it is. Escalation: She can bring a perversity to the surface in someone who previously did not have such urges. For the final step, let's leave it blank for now and see how things go in play.
- ☞ Escalation in Emanation: To begin, her clients get closer to the Shroud, drawing spirits to them in accordance with their terrible deeds. Escalation: first, her clients start bringing her new potential victims (with motivation depending on the person, from trying to free themselves to actively trying to enhance her powers). Second, her clients pierce holes in the Shroud, drawing Imps to themselves and (potentially) generating a whole host of new monsters! Perhaps they can be saved by eliminating Eleanor, or maybe this will create the next hunt directly out of this one.

Planning out the escalation of Eleanor's horror shows a vision of what will happen if she isn't stopped, but leaves enough flexibility that her agenda and powers can bend to the needs of the story as it unfolds.

THE WEB

Now that you have a conception of what the monster is and what it can do, you create its Web. The Web is a map of the relationships that put the protagonists into proximity with the monster and its victims. Place the creature at the center, and arrange those it is concerned with around it, drawing lines to each with a couple of words about why they're important to it, what it wants from them or why they're protecting it. Make any obvious connections now, or add any new characters you think are necessary or that the Web demands as it comes together.

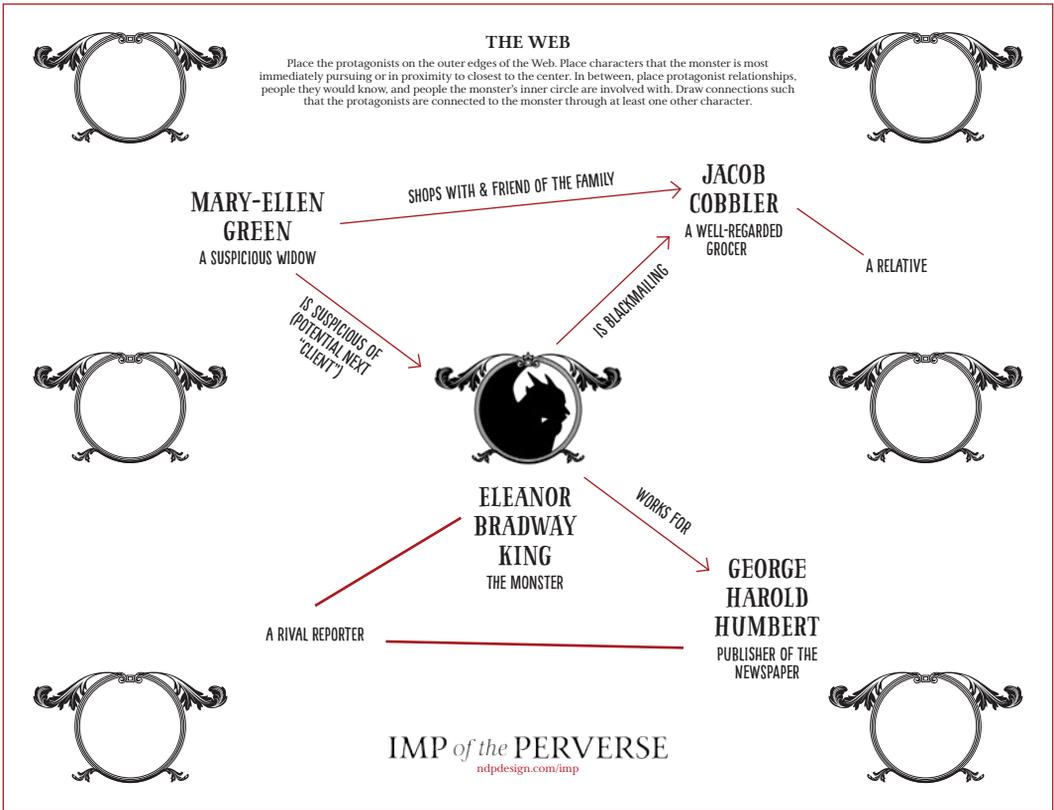
These characters are *nodes* on the Web. They are descriptive, not prescriptive - the role that they play for the monster is what's important at this stage, not demographic details about who they are and what they do. You want flexibility to swap out a particular character with someone introduced by one of the players during the Episode, or with an off-the-cuff character that suddenly makes more sense.

As you arrange the characters, think also in terms of escalation. The creature is already impacting those closest to it on the Web; as the situation escalates, it will begin to influence those farther and farther away.

Once the players make their protagonists, you will connect them into the Web through bonds of family, profession or amateur interest. None of the characters in the Web should be an island, they should all have the potential to be the lead that gives a protagonist a personal stake into stopping the monster once the horror begins to be revealed.

FOR EXAMPLE

Lets sketch out an initial Web, without having any particular protagonists in mind. Eleanor Bradway King is at the center. She has direct connections to a Jacob Cobbler, a well-regarded grocer who she is blackmailing. She works for a publisher, George Harold Humbert (at least to begin). There's a widow who's suspicious of her, Mary-Ellen Green, who is also friends with the grocer. We'll place some empty-for-now areas for some potentially useful roles, a relative to Cobbler and a rival reporter who also works for Humbert.



Once we know the protagonists, we can place them around the outside and draw the most interested connections. Perhaps one of them is also in the journalism business; they would naturally fit with Humbert and the rival journalist. A protagonist of Affairs with some kind of merchant interest could know Cobler, of course. A protagonist of Service or Leisure could be acquainted with or related to Mary-Ellen Green; you can simply change her name if she would work as a relationship. Or, someone could have been in business with her now-deceased husband, and so know her socially. In all of these cases, we would revise the Web before play with these connections, along with any new ones that come up as good fits for this monster.



*I regret to
inform*

PART THREE

MAKING PROTAGONISTS

These tumultuous times reveal those who have... troubles. Haunted by something just out of sight, they are restless, quick to anger and difficult to reason with. They keep up a brave face when in company, but when alone - well, there is little comfort to be found in a restless soul.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The Editor makes a monster, one who has already given in to their perversity; the rest of you will play one of these troubled souls who has gained the attention of an Imp of the Perverse through the appetites, desires and actions you've taken that separate you from humanity. This imp feeds on the inhuman energy released by your adjacency to the Shroud between worlds, and as your perversity grows, it twists and transforms you into an inhuman expression of the darkness beyond the lights of civilization.

There is always a choice. Your imp grows restless in the presence of rival creatures, already transformed; you are drawn to these monsters, giving you a chance to throw off your own perversion by sending those who have already fallen to a final rest.

When you play this game, you create the stories of these hunts. Your group of protagonists forms the cast of these tales, linked together through admiration for each other and the sure knowledge that those without your affliction are defenseless in the face of the horrors in the world. When a monster appears, your imps become restless and agitated, drawn to the hole in the Shroud like a moth to flame. It is up to you to take the action necessary to stave off damnation.

COMPOSING A PROTAGONIST

Each player creates a fictional resident of Jacksonian America, held apart from society by their perversity. This section describes the process, and “you” refers to players making their protagonists.

You conceptualize your protagonist through a question-and-answer survey which provides the skeleton of a person, their family, and their social and professional position. It is up to you, of course, to add flesh to these bones in a way that satisfies your mental image of your protagonist.

THE SURVEY

To make protagonists, follow the series of numbered steps on the Protagonist Creation Survey. Here’s the basic procedure for how to do this, and for quick reference. The rest of this section contains fuller explanations of each component of making a protagonist.

Numbered List Summary

☞ Choose a **CAREER**. Then:

- ① Choose whether you’re a man or a woman (or which you present as in casual society).
 - ② Choose what kind of **FAMILY** you’re a part of.
 - ③ Choose **WHERE** your family is from.
 - ④ Decide on your **MARITAL SITUATION**. Name your spouse and/or children, if you decide that you have any.
 - ⑤ Decide on whether you are **HAPPY OR UNHAPPY** in your situation.
 - ⑥ Decide on **WHETHER YOU HAVE HUNTED** a monster before.
 - ⑦ Pick a fellow protagonist to **ADMIRE**.
 - ⑧ Decide on **WHAT ELSE** is important.
- ☞ During this process, you will also discuss and decide on your **PERVERTSITY** and your **GREATEST STRENGTH**.

PICKING A SURVEY

There are two surveys at the current time, the basic one and one for Protagonists of the West. The process is the same for both, but they have different Career and Family options to reflect the differences in social fabric West of the Mississippi.

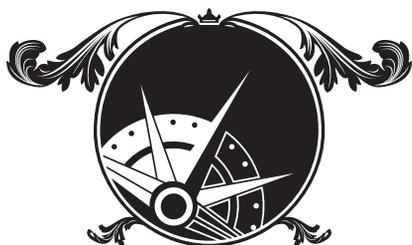
Careers

Protagonists have a careers as part of the society in which they live. The first step to creating a protagonist is to select which of eight careers they follow; this choice circumscribes the choices you'll continue to make, giving you a specific field within which your particular conception of the character will grow. Many individual professions or lifestyles could fit into different careers (a well-off academic could follow a career of Letters or of Leisure; a hard-working parish priest could follow a career of Service or of Affairs; a French fur trapper could follow a career of Exploration or Survival). The career describes a combination of the nature of their lifestyle with their overall *raison d'etre* more than the particular day-to-day of their life.



A career of Affairs - You are a professional, run a business or otherwise have responsibility for some kind of affair in order to keep you in the manner to which you are accustomed. Perhaps a *doctor*, a *lawyer*, a *financier* or a *smuggler*.

A career of Arms - You are trained in the use of arms and have made a career out of it, whether in battle or politically. Perhaps a *veteran* of any number of battles (War of 1812, any of the Indian Wars, skirmishes with the Mexican Army), a *mercenary* from abroad, or a *graduate* of West Point.



A career of Exploration - You journey afield or abroad, whether out of wanderlust, the search for adventure or the need to generate new discoveries for whoever employs you. Perhaps a *surveyor* of new territory, a *scout*, a *geographer*, or a *spy* for

a business concern. Protagonists of Exploration tend to be those that have a home base in the East or South, and who return there between outings.



A career of Leisure - You are independently wealthy, taken care of by another or otherwise have complete control over how you spend your personal time. Perhaps a *patron of the arts*, a *débutante*, a *socialite* or someone who *married into money*. Protagonists

of Leisure tend to live in the East and South, the West is less friendly to those with little to occupy their time.

A career of Letters - You are engaged in a world of the mind and the soul that involves writing, reading and correspondence. Perhaps a *poet*, an *academic*, a *reporter* or *editor*, or a *lecturer*.



A career of Opportunity - You seek... something. Riches, territory, a new life, a new way of organizing family or community - whatever it is, you see the possibilities of finding or making

it on the frontier. Perhaps a *gold-bug*, a *settler*, a *Utopian* or someone *fleeing persecution*. Protagonists of Opportunity tend to be defined by seeking something in the West that they can't get elsewhere.



A career of Service - You provide services to or are employed by another, whether in a domestic or labor role. Perhaps a *nanny*, a *skilled laborer*, a *journeyman* or *apprentice*, or a *butler*. This can also include those who are indentured servants and the enslaved.





A career of Survival - You live in a dangerous land, and you know how to stay alive. Whether native to the area or someone who learned it quick, you make a living off the land or by keeping those who know less than you alive long enough for them to get wherever they are going. Perhaps a *Native American guide*, a mountain man *trapper*, an isolated *farmer* or a *vaquero*. Protagonists of Survival may head East eventually, but the land they know is in the West.

SLAVERY AND PROTAGONISTS

The fictional world of the game reflects the truths of history, including the presence of slavery in America. It is up to each individual group about whether and how to engage with this in your games, but the final text will include more context, safety tools and suggestions for how to engage with that and other painful topics from our history.

Structurally, there is no barrier to playing a protagonist who is a slave. Fictionally, you'll need to decide how they logistically engage with the arc of the game - it is certainly in keeping with history that many slaves had freedom of movement within certain boundaries, for example, or you could play them as accomplished at escaping from direct oversight. Your choice of Career can help with this - Service is the obvious choice, but if your protagonist is one of Survival or, perhaps, Letters, that lends a different context to how they engage with the world.

If you are interested in playing this kind of character, make sure to discuss this with the group and make sure everyone understands the manner in which you want to engage with this subject matter. The intersection of the very real horrors of slavery with the fictional horrors that the game is designed to evoke is something that everyone should be aware of and opt-in to having in their game.

During play, make use of the X-Card and Red Mist, set up Lines and Veils, and use any other safety tools you need to help guide everyone on the same journey into exploring fictional content that is potentially harmful to the real live people at the table.

Protagonists of these eight careers can be played together in any combination, but there are two sets recommended for beginning games or one-shots, depending on where in the country you wish to set the game. Each has its own Protagonist Creation Survey.

For games set in the East or South, choose from:

☞ **Leisure**

☞ **Letters**

☞ **Affairs**

☞ **Arms**

☞ **Exploration**

☞ **Service**

And for games set in the West, choose from:

☞ **Opportunity**

☞ **Letters**

☞ **Affairs**

☞ **Arms**

☞ **Survival**

☞ **Service**

The established cities and cultures east of the Mississippi are home to many who live lives of comfort, following their particular interests; also, those who leave and return with news, riches and marvels are particularly suitable as protagonists. The nature of the frontier, on the other hand, lends itself to those who are seeking new opportunities and making a new life, and those who make a living off the land itself (whether for survival, or to guide others through the dangers of the West).

However, as long as it makes sense to you how-and-why your protagonist is in the physical location the game will take place in, there's no restriction on the career you choose.

It is recommended that no protagonists share a career for the sake of diversity in Qualities during the game, but if that is a particularly compelling idea to your group there is no prohibition on doing so.

Filling out the Survey

Once you pick a career, simply go through each numbered section in turn and choose one option from the list provided under each. Allow your choices to inspire your imagination about what your protagonist is like, what they care about and who they have in their life.

Your selections will give you:

Qualities - intrinsic, notable elements of your protagonist. Qualities have a positive rating that measures how many times you can potentially use it. You will gain specific Qualities from your Career and often from (2), (3), (4), and (5); sometimes you'll be able to create a Quality you define yourself (2) and (8); sometimes you'll be able to add +1 to an existing Quality.

Relationships - people with whom you have a meaningful connection. Each Relationship has a positive rating that measures how many times you can potentially use it. You will need to name your Relationships when you gain them, usually from (2), (4) and (8). Sometimes you'll be able to add +1 to an existing Relationship. You also have a special relationship with a fellow protagonist that you **admire**, composed in (7) - this does not have a number, but will matter during play.

Standing - your social standing, reputation and ability to talk to the right people at the right time. Your Standing has a positive rating of points you can spend for Ratiocination. Add together all choices that give you Standing for your starting total (usually from your Career, and then (2), (3), and (8)).

Resources - your material wealth. Your Resources has a positive rating of points you can spend for Ratiocination. Add together all choices that give you Resources for your starting total (usually from your Career, and then (2) and (8)).

Reason - your deductive reasoning and problem solving abilities. Your Reason has a positive rating of points you can spend for Ratiocination. Add together all choices that give you Reason for your starting total (usually from your Career, and then (2) and (8)).

Empathy - your ability to connect and gain insight into other sufferers. Your Empathy has a positive rating of points you can spend on insights into the supernatural. Your Empathy is determined by your answer to ⑥.

Edges - supernatural senses and abilities that you may have for being (too) close to the Shroud that separates the world of the living from the world of the dead. They have no number. You might start the game with one depending on your answer to ⑥.

Your Lucidity - a central number measuring where you currently stand on the continuum from fully human (6) to fully perverse (1). This is the target number for your Exertion rolls. You'll determine your starting Lucidity by your answer to ⑥.

Your Greatest Strength - your most human, most admirable trait. Your Greatest Strength has a positive rating that measures how many times you can potentially use it, starting the game at 3. You can compose your Greatest Strength at any point during the process.

Your Perversity - that which your Imp impels you to do against your better judgment. This has no number. You can compose your Perversity at any point during the process.

Once you've made all the selections necessary, transcribe your choices to a Protagonist Sheet (provided as separate documents, you can use the general one or one that matches your career), and introduce your protagonist to the table.

Final Details

- ☞ **Name your Relationships, and note them as Responsibilities or Obligations.** Do you have a responsibility for the person, or they to you? Are they obligated to you or you for them? It's up to you how this manifests in the protagonist's life, but you must check the R or O circle to indicate what each Relationship is.
- ☞ **Specify what your protagonist's lifestyle is like, and how they inhabit the career that you chose.**
- ☞ **Talk about why you chose the protagonist you admire, and what exactly you admire about them. Determine the nature of how you know the other protagonists (or whether you do at all).**
- ☞ **Start each Chapter of play with 1 Weirding die. You will get more Weirding Dice as Anxiety rises (see page 57).**

YOUR PERVERSITY

Your **perversity** is the core of your protagonist, the reason they are a part of this story. You can come up with this as the basic concept, or let it unfold as you make choices and go through the survey, but before starting play you should have a solid handle on the flaws that attracted an imp from beyond the Shroud to bedevil you.

A perversity is something that you, personally, think is unacceptable. It doesn't need to be grotesque or evil, but it should be something that you consider, well, perverse. You don't need to figure out all the details at first, and you certainly should *not* pick something that makes this protagonist unappealing to you to play. The perversity should be a source of compelling tension for you during play, something for you to indulge in when appropriate and fight against when necessary.

While your protagonist is embedded in the social fabric of Jacksonian America, you are a modern person, and your characterization should and will be guided by your personal ethical and moral framework. Don't pick something that people "of the time" would consider perverse - pick something that is relevant to right now, to be channeled through the abstraction of your protagonist and the fictional game world they are a part of.

When generating and workshopping your protagonists' perversity, think about it being "outwards-facing" instead of "inwards-facing," something that keeps the character involved in the world. One common sticking point is picking a perversity that naturally drives the character away from interacting with others in play. The two most common of these are *paranoia* and *narcissism* (and variants thereof).

This game provides tools for you to explore those kinds of issues, but you have to meet it half-way and consciously make decisions that result in the character involving themselves in the hunt, instead of shutting themselves away, in order for play to flow naturally. When workshopping (see below), come up with answers to questions like:

- ☞ How does this drive me to interact with others, instead of shut myself away?
- ☞ What habits have I made to try and mitigate my perversity, because I'm aware of what happens when it takes me over?
- ☞ What motivates me to reach out for help when I need it?

YOUR GREATEST STRENGTH

Your protagonist will struggle with their perversity, but they also strive to retain their humanity, and the source of this struggle is your **greatest strength**. This is the most admirable quality, the most human part, the thing that elicits tension when it seems to be under attack.

Like perversity, you generate any greatest strength that seems right for your character. It should be something that you truly find admirable or desirable in the real people in the world around you!

Sometimes perversity and greatest strength are flip sides of the same coin; sometimes they are opposites, pulling your protagonist in different directions as each comes to bear in the game. There is no hard and fast rule about the relationship of the two, but if you're having trouble with one, consider looking at the other and using it to inspire you. What does your greatest strength imply about your perversity? What room does your perversity leave in your personality that can be filled by your greatest strength?

THE WORKSHOP

As the players compose their protagonists, the Editor should lead a workshop conversation to delve into each characters perversity and greatest strength. Workshopping fleshes out the basic ideas, making them richer in play, and digs past the surface concept to see where it really intersects with the players feelings on that behavior, so they can be confident in their engagement with it.

Generally, this phase will focus mostly on perversity, but make sure to include the greatest strength as well! Sometimes a player will have a great idea for one but have trouble with the other. This is an opportunity for everyone to help out and really develop a good, meaty idea for them to run with. Often, players have a strong basic idea but have trouble putting it into words; the functional goal of the workshop is for each player to have a solid sentence or short phrase that encapsulates the basic thrust their perversity and their greatest strength. The nuances will develop in play, but you want to have a strong foundation to begin.

Since perversity treads into the realm of potentially triggering or harmful content, the workshop is also a negotiating space where play-

ers can ask for others to respect their boundaries or steer away from a certain perversity that will make their play experience troubling or painful. If anyone has a hard line about certain content, this is the time to say it. The Editor should ask and check in with players about setting any hard lines at this time. All perversities are public knowledge to all players, so everyone should have a chance to hear what others are thinking before things get set in stone.

To lead the workshop, the Editor asks the players to explain what they have in mind and offers suggestions to “sharpen” the idea. All the players can contribute, but it’s usually most effective for the Editor to manage the conversation.

SAFETY TOOLS WHILE MAKING PROTAGONISTS

Lines: If a player has certain content they don’t want to have in the game, that can be announced and noted now. “I don’t want to deal with sexual violence” and “I don’t want to be surprised by spider monsters” reference different kinds of content, but are both hard *lines* that should be respected in play.

Veils: Players can request that certain content be *veiled* so as not to be the focus of explicit narration (often expressed as “staying off-screen”). This often comes up during play, but can also be introduced and noted now so that everyone knows. “Can we veil explicit violence,” for example, will set a tone for the game to come that respects the players willingness to engage with the content as long as it’s not gratuitously described.

The X-Card: Place an index card with an X on it on the table, within reach of everyone. This allows players to touch it to indicate that the current subject is something they’d like to see withdrawn, without requiring them to speak up in a possibly uncomfortable situation or pull everyone’s direct attention to them at once. It may also be touched in order to start a conversation about a Line or a Veil - it’s up to the player who touches it to expand on why. If they don’t, simply move on from the X-carded topic without requiring a conversation about it.

These techniques, along with the Red Mist, should be used in play as well, though perhaps used slightly differently (as explained in the Rule of Play section).

Some key questions to ask about perversity:

- ☞ How does your perversity manifest in your everyday life?
- ☞ What does it look like when you give in to your perversity?
- ☞ How does your perversity harm you?

Some key questions to ask about greatest strengths:

- ☞ What is a time your greatest strength saved you?
- ☞ How do others recognize your greatest strength in you?
- ☞ How would it change you to lose your greatest strength?

Though perversity makes the protagonists exceptional compared to those around them who have not gained an imp, they are not super-powers. While the *player* is preparing to engage with and portray the behaviors demanded by the perversity, the *character* wants to free themselves of it in order to live a fulfilling human life.

During this workshop, the players hear each other work out their characters motivations and impulses out loud. They should certainly help each other out and offer suggestions when they have ideas. This is also the best time to note certain content that they would rather not be front and center in the game (using the safety tools presented above).

This is also a good time to summarize the possible endstates for a protagonist, so everyone knows what the stakes of their decisions are:

- ☞ **If Lucidity falls to 1, you give in to their Imp, allow your perversity to overcome you and become a literal monster.**
- ☞ **If you reach 6 Lucidity, you overcome their perversity entirely and lose the need to engage in the hunt, re-entering mortal society.**
- ☞ **It is much easier for the former to happen, but the latter is not impossible. In both cases, that protagonist is no longer playable.**

So, if a player wants to play a protagonist that rapidly spirals downward, they may wish to pick a suitably active or horrible perversity, while a player who's interested in the fight to regain humanity may compose a particularly actionable greatest strength in order to have a way to always engage in that struggle.

ADDING TO THE WEB

Once the protagonists have been made and everyone has workshoped their perversities and greatest strengths, take a break. If you have a larger group or spent a long time on the workshop, this could be the end of the session. Either way, before the first Chapter of play

begins, the Editor needs to place the protagonists, and possibly the relationships that they have formed, into the Web of the monster.

First, look for thematic resonance; for example, if the monster is violent one, and one of the protagonists has a perversity revolving around violence, see how closely you can fit them into the Web. The nature of a resonant perversity will generally put that character into the spotlight in the Chapter to come.

Second, look at the Relationships each protagonist has generated. Can any of them also serve as a node you've already placed on the Web? Can any of them be related directly to the monster, or to an existing node? Look for opportunities to assign an existing node on the Web into a Relationship, and thus to bring the associated protagonist closer to the monster.

If there are no obvious connections for a certain protagonist, just manufacture what you need. This is a short story, after all; coincidence and serendipity are two of your most useful tools. Create new secondary characters, give the monster an interest in the work of the protagonist, or simply decide that it saw them passing on the street and became enraptured; whatever you need to do to put them on the Web. It feels artificial now, but it will quickly evolve in play.

Finally, fill in any obvious connections between characters on the Web that have been created by these additions.

Seeding a Web

For a demo game or oneshot, you can “reserve” nodes on a Web that you've made before the session, and request that the players create protagonists that fit into certain slots. For example: “This game will need someone to be in the medical profession, someone involved with the theatre and someone part of or close to the military.” In this manner you can simply slot the characters into your existing Web in order to save time, maybe just changing some names or adding some other relationships that come up during the creation process.

Do not skip running the perversity and greatest strength workshop, however! Even with a set of pregenerated protagonists (like for the Quickplay Chapter in this document) the heart of the game comes from the player investment in their characters perversity and greatest strength. Even a brief workshop will help get everyone ready to play together.



PART FOUR

PLAYING THE GAME

A horrible creature of the night, and a cast of dramatic personae compelled to pursue it even as they struggle with their own demons; now it is time to discover the tale threaded throughout the particular interests, fears and abilities of the stage as it's been set.

THE BASICS

To begin the game, you must have an Editor who has prepared a monster as the subject of the hunt (**Part Two**), and a cast of protagonists each fully realized with their own perversities and greatest strengths (**Part Three**). For more about the organization and basic tenets of the game, review **Part One**.

This section contains the rules that structure each Chapter of play:

- ☞ **The protagonists discover the horrible influence of a creature;**
- ☞ **they investigate what is happening and the nature of the horror;**
- ☞ **they confront the monster in order to resolve its agenda and end the threat it poses to the mortal world.**

In addition, it covers:

- ☞ **All the tools the Editor uses to challenge the protagonists and complicate the story as it unfolds.**
- ☞ **How to determine the changes within the protagonists in-between each Chapter of play.**

The Editor frames scenes, plays the characters that interact with the protagonists (NPCs) and narrates the influence of the horrible on those affected by the monster. The players play their protagonists as they see the effect of the monster on the world around them and take action to end it. Every effort they make to find something out, discover a clue or answer a question will be rewarded; the answers lead them down into the abyss of knowledge. Then, once they feel like they're armed with the information they need, they have to *do something* to prevent the creature from harming anyone else.

PROCESSES OF PLAY

These are the two central processes that drive the game along: *Ratiocination* and *Exertion*. Ratiocination is the process of discovering clues and putting together the real story leading up to the discovery of the monster, and is done via expenditures of resources. Exertion is engaging in physical, mental or moral struggle, and is done via rolling dice.

RATIOCINATION

At the beginning of a Chapter, the protagonists know that there's something out there, but not what it is or what it's doing. As you discover the effects the monster is having on those around them, you'll need to engage in Ratiocination to discover new information. There are three broad ways to discover things:

- ☞ **Through the people you know and the institutions you're a part of (represented by Standing)**
- ☞ **Through the expenditure of material resources or leverage of your influence (represented by Resources)**
- ☞ **Through making deductive inferences that incorporate lateral thinking and sudden insights (represented by Reason)**

Standing, Resources and Reason all have a number of points you have to spend in that area, as per their Protagonist Creation Survey. When your protagonist has a question they want answered, narrate how they go about figuring it out within the bounds of one of those arenas, and spend a number of points out of it equal to the current *Anxiety* (see the Editor section - this starts the Chapter at 1, but increases through play).

The Editor may have the answer at hand, or may have to make a decision in the moment; either way, the answer *always* should be something that moves the investigation forward and brings you closer to the monster in some manner. The answer can be simply revealed, or can be a result of roleplaying out a scene.

If you don't have enough points, or you would simply rather revel in your connection to the Shroud, you can *make a deal with your Imp* instead. Spend nothing, and the information is revealed through supernatural or uncanny means. You make a **red *Ontogenesis check*** (see *Ontogenesis* for details).

Standing

Standing represents your social standing within a specific geographic or social area (a city, a region, a country, a social club, a cultural group, etc). This means that you have a reasonable chance to be acquainted with other people who are a part of the same group, and that they have a reasonable chance to be acquainted with you; in addition, you have a working knowledge of the geography, customs, and ways to get around and find things you're looking for within that area.

When you generate Standing during protagonist creation, you will either select a group you have standing in, or you'll detail it yourself. You can spend your Standing "for" any group you have Standing in, they are not limited to different groups.

If you run out of Standing points, you're run out of the social capital necessary to get favors, made too many demands of your contacts, or simply hit the limits of what you can find out through your local knowledge.

Resources

Resources essentially represent money, though many of a certain social class use the fact that they are wealthy as effectively as specie.

When you generate Resources during protagonist creation, make note about the source of your wealth. This will help give context for when it's appropriate to spend your Resource points, and what it looks like when you run out.

If you run out of Resources points, you're literally out of cash, you've overextended your credit or others know that you no longer have the ability to fulfill your promises or cover your debts.

Reason

This is a rational age. Reason represents education, experience, and the ability to put together facts, make logical inferences and draw conclusions based on evidence.

You do not have to justify or detail your Reason - it's innate logical and lateral thought.

If you run out of Reason points, you're so overwhelmed by exposure to the unknown, mysterious and horrible that you can no longer bring your logical mind to bear to solve situations.

Spending and Gaining Points

As detailed above, you spend points to find clues and uncover the mystery surrounding the monster you seek.

- ☞ Spend points out of one pool for one discovery (that is, you cannot spend 1 Standing and 1 Reason if Anxiety is at 2, you must spend 2 from the same pool).
- ☞ There is no way to regain points during a Chapter of play.
- ☞ You regain points in between Chapters (see Ontogenesis for the details).

FOR EXAMPLE

Consider a protagonist by the name of Gerard de L'Oiseau, a Creole sailor in New Orleans. He is an explorer, sometime soldier of fortune and notorious rake; he is struggling against a desire for self-harm and trying to find a way to feel alive when he's not in pain.

RATIOCINATION

Gerard has been asked by the nephew of one of his sailer friends, a young soldier by the name of Thomas Clough, to help him find his “fiancée” who has disappeared. I narrate how Gerard goes to the taverns and flophouses of his acquaintance, looking to find a woman who matches the description he's been given.

This is using his Standing in New Orleans, of which he has 2. The current Anxiety is only 1, so I simply spend 1 point from his Standing pool, and the Editor informs me of two possible leads for the location of the woman in question.

EXERTION

Discovering clues and finding the monster is essential, but what do you do when things get dangerous? What happens when you have to take action, not just lean on the resources at your disposal? Whenever your protagonist takes risky action or engages in struggle, it calls for an Exertion roll. Specifically, you *always* roll:

- ☞ When your protagonist imposes their will upon the world
- ☞ When your protagonist uses an Edge
- ☞ When your protagonist is in mortal danger
- ☞ When your protagonist puts another in mortal danger

You do not need to roll when an outcome is simply uncertain, unclear or immaterial - in these situations, the Editor narrates appropriate events in order to maintain integrity with the dark Gothic world, integrity with the nature of the characters as they've been played, and integrity with the events of play as they have unfolded so far.

Remember, if your goal is to find something out, that's a matter of Ratiocination (unless you use an Edge, in which case you always roll).

Making A Roll

To make an exertion roll, you must narrate what your protagonist is doing, what action they are taking that imposes their will or creates a mortal danger. Sometimes, to make the situation clear, you will also need to state what your protagonist is trying to accomplish, but this is not always necessary. Then, you assemble a pool of black and red dice.

To add black dice to your pool, you *risk* attributes of your protagonist:

Are you demonstrating a Quality? Take a black die for each Quality you're demonstrating. Only take 1 per Quality, even if the rating is greater.

Are you embodying your Greatest Strength? If so, take a black die. Only take one black die, even if the rating is greater.

Are you calling upon, leveraging or specifically defending a Relationship? If so, take a black die. Only take 1 per Relationship, even if the rating is greater.

And then, the Editor asks:

Does your *perversity* apply? If so, take 1 red die.

Are you calling upon an *Edge*? If so, take 1 red die. Edges are always used intentionally by the protagonist, and always requires an Exertion roll.

Does anyone want to *tempt* you? Every player has a pool of weirding dice. You can offer a weirding die to the acting player by taking on the role of that player's imp for a brief moment and describing what the imp says, promises or threatens in order to help (or "help"). Multiple players may offer dice, and the imp speaks with a cacophony of voices. It is up to the player rolling to accept any (or all) offered dice; if they do NOT accept the dice offered, they make a black Ontogenesis check (described later).

And finally:

Is the protagonist you admire involved with the situation?

If so, take a black die. This Relationship is NOT at risk.

Is the monster or its influence present? The Editor may spend one of their own weirding dice to *turn* one of the players black dice red. If the player already has all red die, then they make a red Ontogenesis check before rolling instead.

You now have a small pool of red and black dice. Roll them, and compare each die to your Lucidity.

Every die that equals or exceeds your Lucidity is a *hit*:

If you have no hits - something terrible happens. Anxiety increases by 1. The situation resolves against you. Since you have no hits to spend (see below), everything you risked on the roll loses 1 from its rating.

If you have any hits - spend your hits on two things: success, and maintaining your humanity. Each attribute you risked loses 1 from its rating unless you spend a hit to maintain it. Any hits left over represents your degree of success.

Then, compare your red and black dice that are hits:

If you have more *red* hits than black hits - you lose your composure, and narrate how we get to see a glimpse of your Imp come out. Make a *red* Ontogenesis check.

If you have more black hits than red hits - you maintain your composure. Make a black Ontogenesis check.

If they are tied - Look to highest number for whether the Imp comes out or not; you *choose* whether to make a red or black check depending on how you narrate the result of the roll.

USING EDGES

Any use of an Edge is an exertion roll, even if the goal of the protagonist is to gain information, find a clue or otherwise engage in what's normally covered by Ratiocination. If the player wants to find something out in a supernatural manner that does not fall under any of their Edges, that is "make a deal with your Imp" under Ratiocination.

After the dice have been cast but *before* narration of the outcome, you can **choose to embrace the imp**. When you do this, immediately lower your Lucidity by 1, then recount hits. Narrate how your imp emerges through you to resolve the situation. Anxiety increases by 1.

- ☞ You can only embrace the Imp once per roll.
- ☞ You can embrace the Imp even if you have hits, if it will give you more hits.
- ☞ You cannot embrace the Imp if it would not gain you any hits.

Success, Failure & Maintaining Humanity

If you get no hits at all, the situation, whatever it is, resolves against you or your interests. Anxiety increases by 1. If you get hits, you have two things to spend them on:

- ☞ Success
- ☞ Maintaining Humanity

Spending hits on success means that the situation resolves in your favor, to a degree corresponding to hits spent. This is contextual to the situation; a single hit spent on success means you basically get what you want, with more making your success more and more heroic.

Why not spend all your hits on success? *Everything* you risked on the roll (that is, each Quality, Relationship and Greatest Strength you called upon to gain a black die) goes down by 1 unless you spend a hit on maintaining it. The hunt grinds away ceaselessly.

- ☞ Anything you spend a hit to maintain retains its current rating.
- ☞ Anything you do NOT spend a hit to maintain loses 1 from its current rating, except for Relationships, potentially (see below).
- ☞ When you get no hits at all, everything you risked loses 1 (and Anxiety goes up by 1).

When something you have a rating in hits 0, make a **red** Ontogenesis check. Your protagonist has lost this part of themselves to the hunt, and can no longer risk that thing on Exertion rolls. You should also use this to guide the play of your protagonist for the rest of the Chapter. What does it mean to lose that Quality? How do they react to the end of that Relationship?

You may be able to recover these things, or replace them, after the end of this Chapter through spending black Ontogenesis checks (page 50).

Finally, note that losing a “negative” Quality (like Unhappy) may be a welcome outcome! Not all parts of the protagonist are ones they want to have. Strategically risking specific things in order to lose them is a productive and valid choice for play.

FOR EXAMPLE

Upon following one of the leads to the nave of a small, abandoned church, Gerard hears a scream! He rushes in through the rotting door and comes upon a woman, bloody and unconscious, in a heap on the floor. Her breath is slowing, and I declare that I want to keep her alive, as it seems that she is quickly slipping towards death. This is Gerard imposing his will upon the world. He has the Quality of “Exploration”, which doesn’t really apply. His Greatest Strength is “Never Backs Down” which certainly does, so I pick up 1 black die. Gerard has no Edges, and his Perversity of a masochistic desire for pain doesn’t seem immediately relevant - but I say “I’ve grown up with all kinds of strange gods and spirits around here, I use my knife to cut my palms and use my blood to anoint her face, trying to call a loa to help me. I only need a drop of blood but I slice both palms, just spraying blood everywhere.” The Editor agrees that that’s in keeping with his perversity! So have 1 red die and 1 black die in my pool, with a current Lucidity of 5.

Seeing this, another player offers me a red die from her weirding dice, which I accept - as my Imp, she says that the blood I smear on her face seems “delicious,” and I narrate how hesitantly lick some of it off as part of my invocation to a healing spirit (gross!).

I roll my 3 dice, getting 2, 4, 5. I have one hit (the 5, equal to my Lucidity), which means I have more red hits than black. I make a red Ontogenesis check. I only have the one hit to spend, either on success or on maintaining my Greatest Strength (the only trait I risked). I think it’s more dramatic and important for her to live, so I spend the hit on success, and Gerard’s Greatest Strength goes down by 1. If I’d wanted to, I could have embraced the Imp and lowered my Lucidity to 4, which would have given me 2 hits - but I’m saving that for later.

SAFETY TOOLS WHILE PLAYING

As Anxiety rises, the Editor ramps up the horror of the monster, and the protagonists use their Edges and choose whether to give in to their Imps, the likelihood of players introducing harmful or painful content can grow. The nature of this game is such that everyone should be ready for some gross, weird or disturbing things. But players don't always know in advance what is going to hit them viscerally or trigger an emotional response that takes them out of the game. Here are some tools to help navigate this kind of content.

The Red Mist: This technique is meant to integrate with the themes and flow of the game, as well as be a tool to manage difficult moments. When it seems to you that a scene or moment is heading towards a place you don't want to engage with, reach out to touch the Anxiety die (or the X-Card) and say "a red mist rises." From the perspective of an outside audience (i.e. your group as you describe things in the game), a red mist obscures the action of the scene. When it drops you only see the aftermath. You can bring in the red mist to your own scene, or to obscure the details of another; you can do it for your own comfort, or because you can see that someone else is uncomfortable but doesn't want to make it an issue.

Whoever was narrating the scene should take a moment to think through where they were going, and then they describe the aftermath or result of the scene, eliding the details of what happened in the mist.

The X-Card: Place an index card with an X on it on the table, within reach of everyone. This allows players to touch it to indicate that the current subject is something they'd like to see withdrawn, without requiring them to speak up in a possibly uncomfortable situation or pull everyone's direct attention to them at once. If someone touches the X-Card, roll back what was just introduced into the game and move on without discussion. Logistically, it may also be touched to raise the Red Mist (in which case the player announces that as well as touching the card).

Lines: Respect all lines drawn during protagonist creation by not introducing them in play. If something comes up that happens to be a line that hadn't come up yet, and someone wants to draw a new one, respect that as well.

Veils: Keep all veiled content behind the veils drawn during protagonist creation. If a situation comes up that someone wishes to be veiled in the moment, respect that as well. This differs from the Red Mist in that you skip the aftermath as well, just outline what happens behind the veil and move on.

HELPING & HINDERING EACH OTHER

If you want to help another protagonist when they make a roll, you must say so before they roll the dice. Pick a single one of: your Qualities, your Greatest Strength, or a Relationship that applies to the situation, and hand the player you're helping a single black die.

If the roll is a total failure, with no hits, you lose 1 in what you risked to help.

If the player gets hits, they *choose* whether to spend a hit on maintaining what you spent (along with what they risked). If they do so, they get a black Ontogenesis check in addition to any others stemming from the roll.

In addition, whatever Ontogenesis check they make as a result of the roll, you make as well. If they get an additional black check as described above, you do not make that, just whichever one they make for more black or red hits.

If you want to hinder another protagonist, you must say so before they roll the dice. You do not specify an element on your sheet; rather, simply narrate how you're interfering, take one of their black dice out of their pool. If they have no black dice, take a red die. If you would take the only die they have to roll, they count as failing the roll with no hits. You make a *red* Ontogenesis check whenever you hinder another.

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships are the people that matter most in your protagonist's life, and so you can call upon them for Exertion rolls for black dice. You have an additional option if you choose *not* to spend a hit to maintain a Relationship: instead of losing 1 from its rating, you can switch it from *responsibility* to *obligation*, or vice versa.

This switch must have some reflection in the events of play or come directly out of the nature of the Exertion result. Describe the nature of the change and how it changes the timbre of the relationship. If there is no obvious way to reflect the change in the fiction, then you cannot take this option, and must lower the rating as normal.

When you lose your last point in a Relationship, cross it off your sheet. It is destroyed forever.

The exception to this is the fellow protagonist that you *admire*; the black die you gain from that Relationship is not at risk, and does not need to be maintained with a hit.

EMPATHY

In addition to Ratiocination and Exertion, you may also need to use your protagonist's powers of Empathy to discover a monster's weakness, unveil what it wants in the mortal world, or otherwise make a decision about how to confront the creature.

When you are in the presence of the monster, or with a horror that it has visited upon the world, you can spend 1 Empathy to narrate how something connects with what they are facing, and ask the Editor a question. This question can be about the nature of the monster, about what it's planning or doing, about a weakness, or how to put it to rest.

The Editor answers the question. This is a *true* answer, as whatever the Editor brings in is immediately understood to be helpful and relevant to the question asked. This answer does not have to be pre-determined, and in fact often will be something that the Editor hasn't yet considered. This is OK! The Editor answers in accordance with their principles: to maintain integrity with the dark Gothic world, integrity with the nature of the characters as they've been played, and integrity with the events of play as they have unfolded so far. This is a moment where the player and the Editor work together to determine how the protagonist can find a way to end the creature's time on this earth.

When you spend Empathy, make a black Ontogenesis check - or, if you have any, you can *erase* a *red* Ontogenesis check. This is the only way to get rid of checks during a session.

FOR EXAMPLE

Later in the Chapter, the soldier Thomas has re-united with his fiancée, Matilda - but as she tenderly strokes his face, it erupts with malignant fungus! Gerard pulls Matilda away as Thomas screams, and she starts mumbling that "Madam Catoire will be pleased". Finally, Gerard knows who has been haunting Matilda, and I feel like this is an opportune time to use his Empathy to find out more. I simply spend a point of Empathy and ask the Editor "Why isn't Matilda consumed by the fungus like the other victims I've seen?"

The Editor uses Matilda to answer in a trance-like voice: Madam Catoire, a vengeful spirit that delights in the decay and destruction of young men and women, sees Matilda as her new material body. She is keeping it pristine until she is powerful enough to return from beyond the Shroud.

I could erase a red Ontogenesis check, but I decide to make a black one - Gerard is motivated to save Matilda!

LUCIDITY

Lucidity is a central part of your protagonist, tracking the progress of their slide towards perversity or their climb back to humanity. Measured from 1 to 6, your current Lucidity is always the target number for your Exertion rolls.

In addition, you will sometimes have the option to embrace the imp to gain more hits; this lowers your Lucidity by 1 immediately (and you recount your hits for that roll).

Finally, there is an Ontogenesis roll at the end of each Chapter, which will either raise or lower your Lucidity by 1. After this roll, you determine whether your protagonist is still on the hunt, has turned into a monster, or finally managed to free themselves from their imp. Sometimes, the protagonist you admire will hit 1 or 6 Lucidity before you do. You gain or lose 1 additional Lucidity depending on their fate.

ONTOGENESIS

Ontogenesis tracks your protagonists long-term trend towards either giving in to their perversity or regaining their humanity. You'll have seen reference to making black or *red* checks as the result of certain choices or die rolls; these checks contribute to an Ontogenesis roll at the end of the Chapter, after the story has been resolved.

MAKING CHECKS

Making checks means making a literal checkmark in the corresponding black or *red* circle on your protagonist sheet under Ontogenesis.

Here are all the times you make black checks:

- ☞ If you have more black hits than red on an Exertion roll.
- ☞ If you have equal black and red hits on an Exertion roll, and you choose to resolve the roll without the imp.
- ☞ If you reject a weirding die from another player for an Exertion roll.
- ☞ If another player helps you by risking one of their traits for your Exertion roll, AND you spend a hit to keep that trait from dropping.
- ☞ If you help another player by risking one your traits for their Exertion roll, AND they get a black check as a result of the roll.
- ☞ If you choose to when you spend Empathy.

Here are all the times you make *red* checks:

- ☞ If you have more red hits than black on an Exertion roll.
- ☞ If you have equal black and red hits on an Exertion roll, and you choose to resolve the roll by allowing the imp to appear.
- ☞ If you give into your perversity in order to drop your Lucidity and get more hits on an Exertion roll.
- ☞ If you help another player by risking one your traits for their Exertion roll, AND they get a red check as a result of the roll.
- ☞ If you already have all red dice in your Exertion pool, AND the Editor spends one of their weirding dice on your roll.
- ☞ If you make a deal with your imp to find something out by supernatural means without spending any points on Ratiocination.

Here is the only time you erase a check during a Chapter:

- ☞ If you choose to do so when you spend Empathy, you can erase a red check INSTEAD of making a black check.

Checks do nothing for you during a Chapter, but you use them to make your Ontogenesis roll after the Chapter ends. The results of this roll are what you use to renew traits, gain new ones, gain new Edges and add details to the nature of the Shroud in your story.

THE ONTOGENESIS ROLL

At the end of a Chapter, once the creature has been defeated or its perversity resolved, the story ends. Then, each player makes an Ontogenesis roll for their protagonist. This represents their gradual development over time, either closer to regaining their humanity or closer to their imp and the world beyond the Shroud.

Total up the checkmarks in your two circles, and roll a corresponding number of black and red dice (so, if you have 2 checkmarks in red and three in black, roll 2 red dice and 3 black dice). Sum the dice in each color. In the unlikely event that someone ends up with no checks, they simply roll off one red and one black die, and let the winds of chance take them (they still have no checks to spend, however - see below).

- ☞ If black has a higher total, add 1 to Lucidity.
- ☞ If *red* has a higher total, subtract 1 from Lucidity.

Each player narrates how the change looks in a brief epilogue scene.

If this would bring your Lucidity to 6, your protagonist has found a path towards shedding their perversity and rejoining humanity as a singular being! Describe how they get the Imp off of their shoulder and regain their human life. If you would like to continue playing, make a new protagonist, or take over as Editor for the next Chapter.

If this would bring your Lucidity to 1, your character gives in to their Imp and their perversity finally pierces a hole in the Shroud, turning them into a monster. Describe how this happens, and what the character turns into. If you wish, you take on the role of the Editor for the next Chapter of the game, and create your late protagonist as the monster of the next hunt! The last Editor makes a protagonist to join the next Chapter. If you aren't comfortable with this and wish to keep playing, simply make a new protagonist for yourself. The Editor still preps your former character as the next monster, however.

If the protagonist you admire hits 1 Lucidity and gives in to their imp, this has a fallout effect on you. You lose 1 Lucidity in addition to your Ontogenesis result, and cross that Relationship off of your sheet. If you are still on the hunt (i.e. this does not also bring your Lucidity to 1), you gain 1 Empathy - your insight into the monster that was so recently your fellow is a valuable weapon.

If the protagonist you admire hits 6 Lucidity and regains their humanity, this has an uplifting effect on you. You gain 1 Lucidity in addition to your Ontogenesis result. If you are still on the hunt (i.e. this does not also bring your Lucidity to 6, your Relationship with them turns from admiration to a standard one (of either responsibility or obligation) with a rating of 2. Even if they are no longer on the hunt, they are someone in your life that may be valuable to you.

GAMES WITH 1 OR 2 PROTAGONISTS

In games with fewer players, they'll be making more Exertion rolls. If you find that players are getting so many checks that they can easily restore all of their traits after every Chapter, go ahead and institute this rule:

After making the Ontogenesis roll, but before spending checks, each player erases a total number of checks equal to the final Anxiety score of the previous Chapter, as evenly divided between red and black as possible (players choice as to where to erase odd numbers).

GROWTH AND CHANGE

If you reach neither end of the Lucidity spectrum, your protagonist is still on the hunt. You spend your Ontogenesis checks in order to refresh, revive and grow your character in preparation for the next hunt.

If you have black checks:

- ☞ Spend 1 to gain a new Relationship with someone your character gained a bond with through the events of the last Chapter. This starts with a rating of 1, and you choose whether it's a relationship of responsibility or obligation.
- ☞ Spend 1 to add 1 to any existing Quality or Relationship (if you have one of these that dropped to 0 during the Chapter, it is no longer existing - to get it back, you have to spend 2, as noted below).
- ☞ Spend 1 to add 1 to your Greatest Strength (even if it's at 0).
- ☞ Spend 1 to bring a single Ratiocination pool (Standing, Resources or Reason) back to its starting level of points.
- ☞ Spend 2 to gain a new Quality (starts at 1) that describes something you've learned about this character, or something that they've learned, through the events of the last Chapter.
- ☞ Spend 2 to add 1 point to the starting level of a single Ratiocination pool (Standing, Resources or Reason).
- ☞ Spend 2 to bring your Empathy back to its starting level.
- ☞ Spend 3 to add a point to the starting level of your Empathy.

If you have *red* checks:

- ☞ Spend 1 to create a fact about the Shroud, and the relationship between the world of the living and the world of the dead. Narrate a scene demonstrating this fact, and from now on it's true in your Gothic world.
- ☞ Spend one more than your current number of Edges to gain a new Edge. This can be selected from the starting list if you have no Edges. If you already have an Edge, then generate an Edge that reflects your character's perversity and demonstrates how your Imp is coming closer to the surface.

If you end up spending for everything you want and still have checks remaining, erase them before the next Chapter begins.

FOR EXAMPLE

Madam Catoire has been banished from Matilda and thrown back to the land of the dead, and it's the end of the Chapter. Gerard finds himself with four checkmarks in his red Ontogenesis circle, and six in his black circle. I roll 4 red dice and 6 black dice, getting: 3, 4, 6, 6 on the red dice and 1, 2, 2, 4, 4, 5 on the black. My totals are 19 to 18! Gerard's Perversity has a slight edge, and his Lucidity falls from its current value of 5 to 4.

I have six black checks to spend. I lost 1 from Gerard's Greatest Strength, and also from a Relationship, so I spend 1 each to restore those. I also feel like he's been demonstrating a new Quality, doing noble things out of a sense of responsibility for others. I spend 2 checks to take a new Quality of Noble 1, and my last 2 to bring Reason and Standing back to their starting levels (spending 1 on each pool).

Finally, I have four red checks to spend. Whenever my imp made an appearance in play I narrated how the women around Gerard reacted more to it than the men, and I think that's an interesting detail. I spend 1 to establish this fact about the Shroud: "Women are closer to the Shroud, and more sensitive to those beyond it." I spend another to create a new Edge based on the contradiction in Gerard's behavior that emerged over the course of the Chapter, where's he's acting more noble but his imp is trying to make him more lascivious. I call the Edge "Hedonistically Attractive" - I envision that he will call on it in situations where he wants to gain the attention of another, no matter what they are doing or who they are normally attracted to. It costs 1 because I have no Edges currently (if I'd already had 1 it would cost 2, and so on). I then erase my final 2 checks, as I'm out of inspiration for things to spend them on.

Gerard is now ready for his next hunt.

EDITORS RULES

The protagonists live in a world of horror and madness, barely restrained by the onrushing engine of humanity hurling itself into the future. The veneer of civilization dissolves as they get closer to the monster at the heart of the story; no matter what they do, they are changed by the hunt itself. That's your job, to make them change.

MAKE IT DARK, MAKE IT WEIRD

The Editor has two umbrella duties: to prep the monster that will be the subject of the Chapter of play, and then to manage pacing and revelation of the horror during play. Coming up with the monster and its Web is covered in Part 2. This section covers what you do during play.

There is no question as to whether the protagonists will find, and ultimately defeat, the monster. You've given it an agenda (driven by its perversity) and people around it (on their Web) that intersect with the social and personal circles of the protagonists. Everyone knows there's a monster out there when the game starts. So, in play, you set characters and events motion in order to give the protagonists more things to care about as they chase down the monster, and then monitor the pace of the game as the players take action.

Some techniques that this game calls for include:

- ☞ Strong, direct scene framing to bring the protagonists face to face with horror and perversity.
- ☞ Rapid cutting between protagonists, when they are separated, to keep the action going for all players and keep story threads together.
- ☞ Create NPCs on the fly in order to fulfill any dramatic role called for in the moment.
- ☞ Narrating the horror of the world in visceral detail to the extent required by the events of the game and the escalation of the monster's horror.

You have an agenda, at all times:

- ☞ Construct a compelling, dark world full of challenge, doubt and wonder.
- ☞ Engineer specific situations for each protagonist that dare them to embrace their darker self
- ☞ Demonstrates the consequences of the protagonists actions with integrity (in this order: integrity to the dark Gothic world, integrity to the characters development so far, integrity to the demands of the unfolding narrative, and ideally all three)

GETTING STARTED

This will depend a lot on the protagonists, your monster and its Web, and the overlap between the agenda of your monster and the interests of the players. Especially for the very first time you play the game, everyone is getting used to their character and the rules at the same time as getting into the story, and it's appropriate to take some time to simply build the specific world around the protagonists and let them inhabit it for a little while before the monster rears its ugly head.

The reason that protagonists are created the way they are, through the survey that gives them a career, family, a specific place of origin and relationships, is because the horror of the game comes from the growing gap *between* normal life and the horrors that await society once the monster takes action. The first couple scenes of the game should present normalcy, with the undercurrent of tension (since they know a monster is out there), and then shatter it by showing how someone (ideally a Relationship) is suddenly and awfully impacted by a horrible act of the monster.

RULES DURING PLAY

You never roll dice or spend points. You have a few things to keep track of, and you can spend your Weirding Dice to represent the presence or influence of the monster. All of these are below, along with guidelines for how to interact with the rules the protagonists have. But, generally, your job is to frame scenes, answer questions and showcase the world in accordance to your principles above.

ANXIETY

Anxiety refers to the growing sense of disassociation from the human world as the protagonists get closer and closer to the monster (and take advantage of the powers afforded them by their imps).

Anxiety is represented by a special die, ideally large and imposing, placed on the table where everyone can see it. Each Chapter starts with Anxiety at 1. Anxiety rises as the result of things that happen in the game, and generally tracks how close the protagonists are getting to the monster at the heart of its Web.

Increment Anxiety up by 1 when:

- ☞ The protagonists first glimpse the monster, or the horror it is creating in their world.
- ☞ The protagonists first take decisive action to destroy the monster.
- ☞ Each time a protagonist embraces their imp as part of an Exertion roll, losing 1 from their Lucidity.
- ☞ Each time a protagonist fails an Exertion roll (getting no hits at all).

The effects of Anxiety are:

- ☞ Every time Anxiety goes up, every player (each protagonist player AND the Editor) add a Weirding Die to their pool.
- ☞ Current Anxiety is how many points a protagonist needs to spend on Ratiocination to answer a question.
- ☞ The horror of the monster escalates, either to something you prepped or to something new that grows out of the events of play so far.

There is no hard limit on Anxiety, but generally a 3 or 4 means its probably time to move things along to encountering the monster, if they haven't gotten there already.

ESCALATION

The protagonists actions in a Chapter are going to disrupt the monsters status quo. This means that the general situation, static before the protagonists start poking around, will change and push the monster to taking more and worse actions of its own as its little world begins to crumble around it.

The horror of the Chapter escalates as the creature feels threatened, lashes out and generally uses terrible abilities and appetites to try to

neutralize the threat it faces. This escalation is tracked for everyone by the Anxiety die, *and* the monster moves through its own areas of Escalation as the protagonists get near.

What does escalation mean? Pick one arena of Escalation that you already prepped for your monster (Era, Horror or Emanation), and implement the next stage (or invent it based on the events of play so far, if you didn't come up with it beforehand). Compose a scene highlighting or demonstrating the new addition to the monsters arsenal, change the behavior of a Relationship or simply describe something that happens "off-camera" to bring the players into what's going on, so they can orient their protagonists towards it with their play. Escalation is a good time to introduce an abrupt change, bring in new NPCs, or stage a dramatic death in order to showcase how serious things are getting.

RATIOCINATION

When the players spend points to figure things out, simply tell them what they want to know! Sometimes you'll have a specific answer from your prep. If you don't, use it as an opportunity to build in more weirdness and integrate the players interests into your scenario.

If you don't have an answer on hand, you can also just describe the consequences of their inquiry, and then ask the player what they find. This technique (called Fishing) can be helpful when players go off in a direction that strains your creativity, or if you just don't know what they're aiming at.

If a player makes a deal with their Imp in order to avoid spending points, make sure to tie the supernatural means of discovery into the monsters portfolio of horror, if you can find any way to do so.

EMPATHY

The purpose of Empathy as an option for protagonists is two-fold: first, and most importantly, sometimes the players find themselves in a situation where they have no clear fictional path to handling the monster. Empathy allows them to overcome this hurdle by making a connection to the monster and thus learning something about it. Second, it's an opportunity for you to adjust your conception of the monster based on the events of play.

Since they ask you a question, and whatever you say must be true, you can use this to tell them the secret you've embedded into the monster from the beginning or to come up with something totally new, but

inspired by how the story is going and where you'd like to see it end.

Whenever you answer an Empathy question, make sure it's something *actionable* - it should always lead the protagonists to try something once they've processed the information. And if they extrapolate from it to something you hadn't considered, that's fine! Go with it.

WEIRDING DICE

You start with Weirding Dice (*red* dice) reflecting how horrible your monster is, per what you chose when you prepped them.

Near the Shroud - start with 2 weirding dice. The creature is still mortal, but unalterably changed by its perversity.

Past the Shroud - 3 weirding dice. The creature departed the mortal world, but continues to trouble the living.

Returned from beyond the Shroud - 4 weirding dice. The creature passed, but has returned, whether as a spirit or clothed again in vile flesh.

During Play - you gain one Weirding Die whenever Anxiety goes up (along with the protagonist players).

When a protagonist makes a roll in the face of the horrible, you may spend a Weirding Die to turn one of their black dice to *red*. If they already have all red dice in their pool, they make a *red* Ontogenesis check before they roll, instead.

In addition to using your judgment, these triggers *demand* a Weirding Die, if you have any remaining and a player is making a roll:

- ☞ **To represent the creature's influence over a seemingly innocuous situation.**
- ☞ **Upon the first appearance of the creature in full view.**
- ☞ **When a protagonist's actions are in tune with the monster's portfolio of horror (whether it is present in the scene or not).**
- ☞ **To demonstrate the truly horrible, gruesome or traumatizing nature of a specific act of horror, regardless of source.**
- ☞ **Any time it would make dramatic sense for the protagonist's Imp to come to the surface, whether because of the monster or because of their own actions.**

At the end of each Chapter, discard any Weirding Dice you have remaining. There is no reason not to use them all in the course of a single Chapter.

FIGHTING & DEATH

There are no rules specifically about how to kill a monster, or otherwise resolve its presence in the world. Often, there will be a confrontation that feels like the climax of the story, and someone will make an Exertion roll to try to deal with it. If they succeed, they do it, and the monster is dead! If they fail, it's time for Escalation, and the monster gets even more dreadful. They'll have to try something else. Eventually, though, they'll make that roll (or otherwise engineer a fictional situation that ends the threat of the monster), and that's that.

There is no health or wound system for protagonists either. If a protagonist is in a fight, they will probably be making an Exertion roll, in which case you let the dice guide you as to how it all comes out. If this isn't appropriate, then you simply decide what happens in accordance with your principles, like anything else that is in question. And of course, if they choose to use an Edge to handle a dangerous situation, that's always a situation ripe with opportunity for the imp to make an appearance.

There's no way to kill a protagonist, unless the player puts themselves in a situation where their death is the only dramatically satisfying outcome. Then it's up to the player whether they die. If they choose to die, and the main story is continuing on, they can still participate by spending their Weirding Dice on other players rolls!

CHANGING EDITORS

At the end of the first Chapter, there's often a moment of analysis while everyone takes in how their Lucidity has changed over the course of the game, and what that means for their protagonist. Sometimes, one of them has already gone all the way down to 1! More likely, after two or three Chapters, the inevitable decline of a protagonist who has indulged in their perversity will lead them to that state.

Regardless, when a protagonist is down to 1 Lucidity, they turn into a monster themselves. This is an invitation for that player to prep their former protagonist as the monster for the next Chapter, and take on the Editor role! In a way they continue to play that character to their inevitable end, after all.

If the player is comfortable being the Editor, then it's a simple transition - maybe you help with the prep in some way, or explain specific things about the world that you've been using the inform your

portrayal that haven't become literal text in your story yet. Certainly refer them to the parts of this text that you find helpful. Ideally, they'll have observed and absorbed the way you have exercised the duties of Editor so far, and be ready to add their own unique take on the role.

If they are not comfortable or simply not interested in being the Editor, then you go on as usual - perhaps you ask for their input on creating the monster, and the Web will probably be pretty easy to compose. If it seems like too much to go straight into the hunt for a former comrade, do a different monster first, or jump ahead in the protagonists timeline.

Similarly, if a protagonist attains 6 Lucidity, they have fully divested themselves of their perversity, and they can rejoin humanity (with, perhaps, some terrible stories that they hope never to have to tell). This is also an invitation to change Editors, if that player wishes to try out the role of the hunted rather than the hunter. In this case, they would make any monster they wished, rather than one based on their former protagonist - but note that that character may still be present in the Chapter to come, especially if they are a Relationship to another protagonist.

Whenever a protagonist comes to the end of their story, and the same group of players wish to continue playing together, than whoever is now without a protagonist simply makes a new one to introduce in the next Chapter. They could have a relationship to the exiting protagonist, or to someone else still on the hunt, or be a stranger drawn by the pull of the monster in the world; regardless, they are made the same way as any starting protagonist, and choose one of the current protagonists to admire.



PART FIVE

JACKSONIAN GOTHIC AMERICA

The modern world! It's a wondrous time. Amidst diminishing echoes of revolution arise fresh ways of ordering society. A wondrous new invention promises to enable communication across entire nations in only seconds. America explores (and exploits) the vastness of its land. Europe grapples with the collective identity of the worker while taking a deep breath between conflicts. Industry takes root and factories rise, building the framework of an entirely new world to come. This marvelous progress is built on the fresh graves of those who had their native worlds suddenly upended. For every mechanical invention, a new disease arises; for each innovation in finance and trade, land and bodies are sold and stripped of value. The cities and ports bustle and grow, but in forests and farmlands, mountain caves and sheltered canyons, in the flickering shadows left by gaslight and candle, there is an ancient darkness. Waiting.

WHY NOW?

The inspiration for this game springs forth from the intersection of morbid romanticism and acrimonious social commentary embedded throughout the work of Edgar Allan Poe, who bookends this span of time neatly - his first published prose (*MS. Found in a Bottle*) was in 1833, and he died (of causes still unknown) in 1849.

These two decades cover a significant shift in the nature of America itself. Many of these trends would continue to develop over the course of the 19th century, of course. But the changes brought by westward expansion, the accelerating transition from rural to urban life, the growing mercantile class, the leaps and bounds of everyday technologies, and the growth of political and social movements devoted to a myriad of causes pulled America into the burgeoning industrial age and set the stage for the idealized memories we have of our past.

This swirling maelstrom of change, and the anxieties and fears that come along with it, is what creates the cracks for perversity to grow in this world. Thematically, the horror of a monster springs from the tension between its primal perverse essence and the modernity in which it sits; monsters pull back the veil of progress and show us that humanity itself has enduring darkness within, darkness that cannot be driven out no matter how bright the surrounding lights.

Thus, inspiration and thematic heft dovetail, and 1830s and 1840s America, the Jacksonian era, is the fertile ground within which to plant your monsters and your protagonists, and watch them grow and change as they explore the world around them and take action to make their world just a little bit better - and in so doing help themselves.

USING THIS SECTION

This is a game, not a history lesson. However, part of creating the horror of the dark Gothic world around the protagonists is creating a baseline of normalcy, and then demonstrating how perversity and the monsters that spring from it disrupt and damage that human world. The protagonists immediate context is embedded in the survey you use to create them - career, family and marital status are all key things to know to situate them in their social circles, which then create the nodes that connect the protagonists to the monster.

This section gives a broad overview of the nature of the world around the protagonists at different points during the Jacksonian Era. This current playtest text does not yet contain all the inspirational details and specific touchpoints to help you bring exciting verisimilitude into your game; eventually, details about the world relevant to specific parts of the game will be included alongside that material.

JACKSONIAN AMERICA

The period from Andrew Jackson's election in 1828 until the early 1850s is considered "Jacksonian," as the changes in America reflect the agenda and ideology that he embodied as President. Though Jackson was succeeded by Martin Van Buren in 1836, it was his (idealized) vision of an America where the everyday people knew what was best for themselves, and his distrust of government as a tool for change that shaped national policy and party politics for decades.

Jackson died in 1845, His influence lingered in the Democratic Party that he founded as it morphed into the party of slavery and segregation, ushering in the next great conflict; but this era saw America coming into its own as a nation before breaking apart into the Civil War. Despite a significant recession in 1837, this was a time of transition from agrarian to industrial economies, the incubation of radical new technologies and ideologies, and the exploitation of seemingly unending resources of the land itself.

Between 1830 and 1850 the United States of America expanded geographically as well as economically, essentially adding the entire Western third of the continent to its map. While most people lived intensely local lives, the explosion of new communication and transportation technologies made the world smaller even as square mileage grew. Magazines and periodicals carried the news of the day anywhere a postal carriage could go.

Of course these influences changed the texture of everyday life, but each region of the country was strongly rooted in the traditions and mores of how it came to be, creating significant variation in lived experience between wheat farmers in Massachusetts and cotton growers in Georgia, fur trappers in Illinois and flatboat handlers on the Mississippi, Senators in Washington DC and Generals in California.

For our purposes here, we're going to explore Jacksonian America along the twin axes of time and space, each giving three major areas of significant variation within which to set a game of *Imp of the Perverse*. These are not hard limits; you can abstract the general sense of the time to whatever level you feel comfortable. However, if you want to leverage the specificity of history in order to portray the world around the protagonists, decide: is your game early, middle, or late in the period; and is your game in the East, the South or the West?

CONSIDERATIONS OF TIME

It is not necessary to pick a specific date in which to play; using the general melange of tone you pick up from this overview along with specific details that jump out to you as interesting is totally valid. However, there are two break-points worth noting here that mark significant shifts in the tone and tenor of the times: 1837 and 1845.

↻ **Early Jacksonian Period: 1830-1836**

↻ **Mid Jacksonian Period: 1837-1845**

↻ **Late Jacksonian Period: 1846-1850**

Each individual Chapter of play will be more strongly framed by the geographical place you choose to set it in than the year or date; however, by using the tone and tenor of the general period, you can add a lot of texture and detail to your games the enhance the deeper themes of play. In the sections to follow, you will find an overview of each region of America (the East, the South and the West), organized roughly chronologically, and using these three time periods as touchpoints.

Setting Your Game Before 1837

The most literal period of Jacksonian America, this time is defined by the nature of the president in many ways. He campaigned against elites and aristocrats, casting himself as a man of the people. The creation of the Democratic Party (with him at the head) began the two-party system that defines American politics to this day. He was victorious at the Battle of New Orleans, a national hero to those who saw that victory as a final repudiation of the British; he signed the Indian Removal Act that led to the Trail of Tears, the forceful expulsion of tens of thousands of Native Americans from their lands in the south to the west. His election was the result of direct democracy, his electors chosen by popular vote in almost every state; he was a land speculator who owned slaves on his plantation in Tennessee. To paint with an extremely broad brush, the tone of this period was of exuberance, a sense that America finally had its proper place in the world, that the democratic ideals of its founding were finally being fully expressed - for those who had the ability to enjoy them.

Setting Your Game between 1837 and 1845

Things quickly changed as a result of the Panic of 1837. This was an economic crisis that stemmed from the lack of a centralized national bank (a concept that Jackson hated and successfully managed to destroy while he was in office) along with rising tariffs, rampant land speculation, and a poor growing season for southern crops. Martin Van Buren, Jackson's Vice President and newly elected to the Presidency, was a strategist but not a great orator; his efforts to resolve the economic fallout of Jackson's policies without diverging from the Democratic Party's stance against central banking did not have great results. From 1837 through the mid-1840s, most of the country was in a recession, with unemployment soaring even as cities swelled with the influx of laborers and immigrants thrown off their land or fleeing their own problems. The defining tone of the 1837-1845 period was pessimism, growing factionalism and the sense that there were riches out there to be had, if only one could figure out how to get to them.

Setting Your Game After 1845

In 1845, the United States annexed (by request) the independent Republic of Texas, laying the stage for the Mexican-American War to kick off in 1846. The end result of this war was an immense addition of land to the US: what are now the states of California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico were all subsumed into America by 1850, creating (along with the Oregon Territory in 1846 and Minnesota Territory in 1849) the map that we are familiar with today. This triggered a major wave of westward expansion - the ability of settlers to stake claims to 160 acre homesteads in the west, the establishment of the Oregon Trail and the beginning of the California Gold Rush all happened in the late 1840s. While there was a sharp division in opinion between those for and against the war with Mexico, the sudden addition of so much land to explore and potential wealth to claim transitions the tone of this period back to one of optimism, but tempered with the apprehension of exploration and conflict along the way.

APOLOGIES

From here on, this section is more of a set of outline notes than composed text. This is the main section that is still being written for the manuscript. Hopefully, there's enough here to give you a sense of this world for playtesting purposes.

CONSIDERATIONS OF SPACE

One thing that will drive your choice of location or region will be the protagonists in play (as some are more suited to the West than others), but generally, the game flows easily if you place it in an urban center of some kind, where the social relationships can naturally connect the monster to the protagonists. The general tone of your game can be strongly influence by the regional culture and concerns; these are briefly touched on below.

Regions

Any state or territory is a good choice for the “regional” choice when making a protagonist. Below are general comments on what parts of the map the region covers, and then notes on relevant events and trends that occurred in that region.

The East

The eastern seaboard, strongly British and Dutch in origin, Puritan and Catholic, and generally Whiggish. Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, Delaware. Functionally, Ohio. Maybe Maryland, DC, Michigan, Indiana.

- ☞ Conflict: The Broad Street Riot occurs in Boston in 1837 - a conflict between Irish mourners and Yankee firemen on Broad St. sparks a riot that comes to include 1000 people and is only resolved when Mayor Samuel A. Eliot sends in 10 military companies to restore order and patrol the streets.
- ☞ Conflict: The Aroostook War (also called the Pork and Beans War) was a border dispute between Maine and New Brunswick (still part of the UK at the time) in 1838-1839. While it did not lead to armed conflict past informal militia skirmishes resulting in injuries and the capture of several British soldiers, it required serious diplomatic negotiations to fix a permanent border in 1842. The dispute concerned things like logging rights and the use of public lands, huge issues to the residents of the area (many of whom were French-speaking and did not consider themselves members of either country!).

Good cities to set a game in - New York City, NY; Boston, MA; Philadelphia, PA

The South

The mid-Atlantic and Southern slaveholding states, French and Spanish influenced, and generally Democratic. Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana. Functionally, Kentucky, West Virginia. Maybe Maryland. Florida Territory (becomes a state 1845).

☞→ Conflict: Nat Turner's slave rebellion occurs in 1831, in Southampton County, Virginia. 60 whites and around 100 blacks died, Turner was executed, and the event triggered new legislation tightening restrictions on free and slave blacks across many Southern states.

Good cities to set a game in - Richmond, VA; Baltimore, MD; New Orleans, LA

Notes on Everyday Living in a Eastern or Southern City

- ☞→ Urban centers are lit by gaslamps at night.
- ☞→ The first centralized municipal police forces emerge (Philadelphia organized a 24-hour force in 1833; the Boston Police was established in 1838); most policing is a watch system of volunteers (or petty criminals serving sentence) plus constables empowered by the city or municipality to serve warrants alongside other duties.
- ☞→ Fire and medical emergency services were similarly a patchwork of community volunteer groups and for-profit private enterprises.
- ☞→ People got around cities by walking, riding horses, or taking stagecoaches (some on fixed paths, like a bus service, and some more like a taxi). People of means might have a private coach or horses depending on where their home is positioned in an urban area.
- ☞→ Mail service is effective and reliable, with local stagecoach operators generally living on their government contracts to carry mail. Postal rates are high compared to cost of living, but stamped postage could be reasonably expected to be delivered. Dense urban areas could see delivery of mail up to 4 days a week, while farther-flung regions would see a mail coach once a week or a less.
- ☞→ Cities were dirty! Sanitation was poor, with most people sharing outdoor privies, garbage piles and drainage ditches. Packs of dogs, pigs and goats scavenged freely, as they dealt with a lot of the refuse.
- ☞→ Cities were growing really fast (up to 60% growth over 10 years), and the poorest inhabitants did end up in packed slums. Craftspeople were no longer living with their masters and labor was becoming less of an artisanal process and more of a commodity, so the "working-class" neighborhood was forming as well.

The West

Border states, former territories and the land opened up by the Mexican-American war. Thinly populated, culturally integrating with local and indigenous populations, with a frontier mentality then generally cared about land policies over party. Illinois, Missouri, and many territories (their year of admission into the Union is in parentheses): Michigan Territory (1837), Wisconsin Territory (1848), Iowa Territory (1846), Minnesota Territory, Arkansas Territory (1836), Oregon Territory (has a local Government 1843, becomes territory 1848). Texas annexed 1845; territory from Mexico added 1848, California added 1850, Utah and New Mexico territories added 1850.

- ☞ The Texas Declaration of Independence is signed in 1836. The Republic of Texas gained independence from Mexico after Gen. Sam Houston wins the battle of San Jacinto. This is the conflict that includes the famous stand at the Alamo, also in 1836. It was annexed into the United States in 1845, one of the actions that precipitated the Mexican-American War. See more about that under National Conflicts.
- ☞ The Mississippi is a huge deal, not only bisecting the country but also providing the main way that trade goods got from north to south, and vice versa. It's essentially a frontier society all of its own, even as it touches on regions of the East, South and West in turn. Cities on the river would have a "lower" or "new" section dedicated to docking, trading and night life for sailors, (Vicksburg Landing, Natchez-Under-the-Hill) and an "upper" or "old" section, farther away and home to permanent residents and civil authorities (Vicksburg, Natchez-on-the-Hill). The river people (or voyageurs) had their own river-driven society, coming together into boat cities, competing for trade, driving off (or becoming) river pirates, jumping on and off of boats depending on the winds of fortune, and generally living a brutally difficult life trying to stay alive and make a profit on the biggest river on the continent.

Good cities to set a game in - St. Louis, MI; Santa Fe, NM, Chicago, IL (established 1833); Houston, TX (established 1836)

National Concerns

It is impossible to touch on everything that might be interesting or relevant to a particular game set in a particular location or year; thus, the notes below are under the broad umbrella of things relevant relatively

universally. Of course, the distribution of the effects of any particular event or trend was uneven, but here are some good things to know about the world around your protagonists.

Notes on National Politics

- ☞ This era was the true establishment of the two-party system in American politics. Jackson (and, arguably even more importantly, Martin Van Buren) hardened the Democrats into a more cohesive party, valuing Jackson (specifically), presidential power (broadly), sovereignty of the people, farmers and laborers, Manifest Destiny, and laissez-fair economics. The Whig Party coalesced from members of the older National Republicans and the Anti-Masonic Party to counter the Jacksonian Democrats. Whigs are the party of Congressional power, modernists, protectionists, Protestants and the emerging urban middle class. Both parties have internal divisions between those who support and oppose slavery, including those who unite (sometimes across party lines) to keep slavery and abolition off the table as voting issues in Congress, in order to keep that fault line from splitting the parties.
- ☞ Patronage (placing political supporters into appointed offices as rewards for the support) was a widespread and accepted practice, and extended from national politics down to local municipalities, often fueled by family ties.

Notes on National Conflicts

- ☞ Jackson signs the Indian Removal Act in 1830, establishment of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and directly leading to the unforgivable brutality of the Trail of Tears. Conflict with Native Americans is ongoing: some notable conflicts include the Black Hawk War (Illinois/Wisconsin, 1832) and the Second Seminole War (Florida, 1835-1842).
- ☞ The Mexican-American war breaks out in 1846, following the annexation of the Republic of Texas into the Union. President Polk sent troops to support the American interests, arguable baiting the military forces of Mexican President Valentín Gómez Farías into attacking them and starting the war. It concludes in 1848, with Mexico ceding enormous amounts of territory to the US, and receiving \$15 million in compensation for war damage. There's a lot of really weird and interesting things about this war, including the American-side politics of President Polk not really trusting General Zachary Tay-

lor and a strange double-cross by former President Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, in exile in Cuba, working both sides to essentially get American help to return to the presidency of Mexico with promises that he'd end the war on favorable terms; he reneged and continued the war, ending up having to surrender once Major General Winfield Scott captured Mexico City.

Notes on National Economics

- ☞ Jackson, an ardent enemy of central banking, vetoes the re-charter of the Second Bank of the United States in 1832. This put the onus of funding the growth of the American economy on state and local banks, (many of which were poorly run if not outright frauds).
- ☞ The first labor union in the US, the National Trades Union, was established in 1834. By 1836 it had 300,000 members. Employers were bitterly opposed, and the legal right for Unions to exist wasn't recognized by the Supreme Court until 1842.
- ☞ In 1835, a 7-month long strike led to the national movement for the 10-hour work day, leading to its establishment at the federal level for public works projects (in 1840) alongside some state laws.

Notes on Social Trends

- ☞ An explosion of newspapers and magazines at local scales, as well as with state-wide, regional or national distribution, accelerates not only the dissemination of news, and the factionalization of political and interest groups, and literacy rates in the general populace.
- ☞ Abolition emerges as a united ideological force. The iconic abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator* is first published in 1831 by William Lloyd Garrison, in Boston (and continues weekly publication until the Civil War). Abolitionists make a moral argument for immediate emancipation of slaves and the end to segregation, a more radical position than the moderate gradualists who saw emancipation as an eventual end-point, and the Free Soilers who argued that new territories must be free but slavery could remain where it already existed.
- ☞ America is on the cusp of transitioning from an agrarian to an industrial society. Mass communication is coming into being (between the telegraph, steam engines and cheap mass publications), but most urban areas are still geographically isolated and dependent on local agriculture for support. Most of the south is dependent on slave labor for goods.

- ☞ The sense of America as not being as “advanced” or as “good” as Europe is strongly entrenched in many elites.

Notes on Technology

- ☞ The Colt revolver is patented in 1836.
- ☞ Samuel Morse patents the telegraph in 1837. The technology quickly becomes adopted for business and official dealings, and eventually links the country from coast to coast (by the early 1860s).
- ☞ The daguerreotype is invented in 1837, announced to the world in 1839 and rapidly becomes the first widely-available image reproduction technology. 1839 is considered to be the “birth year of photography”. Daguerreotype comes to America in 1840, promoted by Samuel Morse.
- ☞ Railroads are built in earnest across America; the Baltimore and Ohio railroad opens in 1830, and mill owners in the northeast invest in railroads in order to get better shipping rates (compared with canal boats). There’s an explosion of local routes in the south (the Wilmington and Raleigh Railroad and the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad both begin construction) along with longer ones meant to connect regions of the country.

Notes on Literature and Culture

- ☞ On the Continent, Charles Dickens, Victor Hugo and Hans Christian Anderson are all writing and publishing.
- ☞ In America, notable literary minds of the time include Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Caroline Kirkland, and of course E.A. Poe; in addition, the influential newspapers *The Southern Literary Messenger*, *Knickerbocker Magazine*, *The New York Herald* and *Graham Magazine* are all established.
- ☞ The novel as we know it today has yet to be fully established. Serial stories published in magazines, poems and books of poetry, essays on social, political or literary topics of the day and biographical sketches of figures of note make up the majority of published work.

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