

# POCKET GEIGER COUNTER: HUBRIS

## 0. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is a game by J. Walton. This version is heavily informed by recent play of Joe Mcdaldno's game *Abnormal* with Dani L. and Jackson Tegu. Like previous versions, it is partially inspired by Bruce Glassco's game *Betrayal at House on the Hill*. Its creation is the direct result of comments from Jamie Fristrom. Produced September 8, 2013.

## 1. THE PREMISE

You are on a journey to somewhere extremely dangerous. You may have some hint of the danger, but have no idea that it will destroy most of you.

The game organizer should offer a basic premise, such as: *we are a group of space bounty hunters dropping off a wanted criminal at a maximum security prison built into an asteroid*. Ideally, the organizer should pitch the premise before the group agrees to play the game, or suggest 2-3 possible premises so the group can choose the one you are most excited about.

## 2. THE PROTAGONISTS

There are eight characters in the game, only one of two of which are likely to survive. Emphasize that the characters are not heroes, at least not yet. They're the petty, self-centered assholes that populate movies where most everyone gets killed, so we don't feel bad when they die. Only by surviving and growing as people do they become characters that don't "deserve" their terrible fate.

Distribute the character cards to the players until everyone has roughly the same number. Fill out

the blank spaces on the card in discussion with the other players and adjust names as needed. For example, Threnody could be "Rebecca Threnody," "Threnody Singh," or the cyborg "Thren-0D-X2."

Note that the Deception is something that is only true if it is triggered by events in play, but you should use it to inform your portrayal of the character, so that – if it turns out to be true – it's not completely unexpected or unbelievable.

## 3. THE TRAILER

Take turns describing super short (5 sec, 1 breath) images from a hypothetical trailer. These things may or may not happen in the actual game, but it helps set the tone and get everyone thinking.

## 4. TURNS & SCENES

The organizer takes the first turn and then play proceeds around the group. On your turn, follow the directions on the "On Your Turn" card to play out a scene. If it is your turn, you should avoid having your characters be active in the scene and instead focus on playing the menace.

It is fine to play a few scenes before the characters step over the Threshold, without the menace.

## 5. DICE & ADJUSTING THEM

If the menace attacks during a scene, roll dice as described on the Survival & Menace Dice cards. After each scene, place dice on the Survival & Menace Dice cards (or remove dice from them) according to the guidelines listed there.

## 6. IS IT REALLY DEAD?

The menace can only be destroyed for good once it has all 8 Menace Dice. Otherwise, wait a scene and then have it come back for more. Even if it has all 8, vote to see if it comes back once more.

## THE MENACE

The menace's goal is to punish humanity for their astonishing hubris, and this motley crew of assholes seems like a good target of punishment as any. The menace often is also very close to escaping from this place and threatening humanity on a much larger scale.

### MENACE TRAITS:

Every time the menace gains another Menace Die, choose a trait from one of the pairs below, slowly narrowing down what the menace is (choose trait based on what has been revealed so far):

- [solo] or [horde]
- [fleshy] or [ethereal]
- [savage] or [calculating]
- [ancient] or [newly born]
- [created] or [natural]
- [murderous] or [indifferent]
- [consuming] or [producing]

For the 8th die, when the menace comes into full form, choose one of the above traits and change it to its opposite or add the opposing trait as well, showing that the menace is taking on a new form.

### HOW TO PLAY THE MENACE:

Consult the current number of Menace Dice to decide what the menace does.

- 0-1. investigates, bides its time
- 2-3. takes out the vulnerable & alone
- 4-5. makes a probing assault & retreats
- 6-7. attacks confidently & blantly
- 8. destroys everyone and everything

## ON YOUR TURN

1. Choose a character to focus on in this scene, one that's not been the focus for a while.
2. Ask the player to move their pawn 0 or 1 space on the map board, & ask any players if they wish to shift 1 space onto or away from there.
3. Play out a scene with the characters now in that location, following any instructions on that space and focusing on playing the menace.
4. It is your job to keep the scene as short and punchy as possible. After a few moments, end it or attack.

## SURVIVAL DICE

Roll the Survival Dice vs. Menace Dice when the menace attacks, and compare the two highest dice. If Survival Dice win, the menace is destroyed for now.

When any of the following happen, place a Survival Die on this card:

- one of the eight characters is killed by the menace
- one of the characters sacrifices their lives to help save one or more others
- the Deep Core is discovered
- a character whose Deception has been revealed is killed by the action or inaction of the others

## MENACE DICE

Roll the Menace Dice vs. Survival Dice when the menace attacks, and compare the two highest dice (**the menace wins all ties**). If the Menace Dice win, all the characters involved take a Condition based on the fiction.

When any of the following happen, place a Menace Die on this card (up to a maximum of 8 dice):

- the menace appears in a scene, either openly or in the shadows
- the characters encounter evidence of the horror or the menace that's worse than what they've already seen
- the menace kills someone offscreen

### CONDITION LIST

When characters take a third Condition, they perish. Conditions can be crossed out as fictionally appropriate, relieving characters of their effects, but relieved Conditions still count for "three strikes."

- **Injured** (the default, can be taken multiple times)
- **Disoriented**
- **Freaking Out**
- **Seperated from the Others**
- **Trapped**
- **[whatever the group decides]**

When a Condition is actively affecting you, roll 1 less Survival Dice (max -2).

### ALICIA

DESCRIBE YOURSELF:

NAME YOUR ROLE ON THE TEAM:

CONDITIONS:

- 1. [ ]
- 2. [ ]

DECEPTION (*only if triggered*):  
Is Infected by the Menace and Will Soon Become Something Like It or Something Far Worse

### CHOI

DESCRIBE YOURSELF:

NAME YOUR ROLE ON THE TEAM:

CONDITIONS:

- 1. [ ]
- 2. [ ]

DECEPTION (*only if triggered*):  
Has Nihilistic or Religious Sympathies for the Menace & Its Apparent Goals, Desires to See Them to Fruition

### GHEZO

DESCRIBE YOURSELF:

NAME YOUR ROLE ON THE TEAM:

CONDITIONS:

- 1. [ ]
- 2. [ ]

DECEPTION (*only if triggered*):  
Scientist Responsible for Cultivating or Strengthening the Menace and the Experiment Isn't Over Yet

### KANADA

DESCRIBE YOURSELF:

NAME YOUR ROLE ON THE TEAM:

CONDITIONS:

- 1. [ ]
- 2. [ ]

DECEPTION (*only if triggered*):  
Works for the Corporations and Must Bring Back Samples of the Menace for Study and Weaponization

### MATHIEU

DESCRIBE YOURSELF:

NAME YOUR ROLE ON THE TEAM:

CONDITIONS:

- 1. [ ]
- 2. [ ]

DECEPTION (*only if triggered*):  
Is Mentally, Sexually, Emotionally, or Physically Enthralled by the Menace and Desires to Join with It

### ROTHCHILDE

DESCRIBE YOURSELF:

NAME YOUR ROLE ON THE TEAM:

CONDITIONS:

- 1. [ ]
- 2. [ ]

DECEPTION (*only if triggered*):  
Will Now Attempt to Abandon or Betray Everyone in the Interest of Self-Preservation or Wealth

### THRENODY

DESCRIBE YOURSELF:

NAME YOUR ROLE ON THE TEAM:

CONDITIONS:

- 1. [ ]
- 2. [ ]

DECEPTION (*only if triggered*):  
Totally Loses It, Freaks Out, and Does the Worst Possible Things, Putting Everyone at Greater Risk

### ZEPHYR

DESCRIBE YOURSELF:

NAME YOUR ROLE ON THE TEAM:

CONDITIONS:

- 1. [ ]
- 2. [ ]

DECEPTION (*only if triggered*):  
Is a Robot, Spy, or Plant and Will Now Attempt to Destroy All Evidence of the Menace and Everyone Else

ENTER WHEN READY

THE MUNDANE

Everything is as you would expect it to be, though potentially still dangerous; show us life before the menace.

WHENEVER YOU ENTER, NAME IT:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

DURING ALL SCENES HERE, INTRODUCE A MUNDANE TROUBLE THAT WILL COMPLICATE MATTERS.

THRESHOLD

When you are here, you should be safe; you stand at the edge of the abyss and can turn away... only you won't.

WHEN YOU ENTER, NAME IT:

NOW OR LATER, NAME THE THING THAT PREVENTS YOU FROM LEAVING:

THE MECHANICS

This is a place full of gear & equipment, engines, huge machines, systems of all sorts, a cathedral of human (?) ingenuity.

WHEN YOU ENTER, NAME IT:

WHEN TECHNOLOGY BREAKS, FAILS, OR IS SPENT, COME HERE TO REPAIR, RESTORE, OR RELOAD IT.

IF THIS PLACE IS COMPROMISED OR DESTROYED, INDICATE HOW:

PASSAGES (1)

Corridors, tunnels, fields, woods, being lost and alone in the dark: these liminal places are where the menace often lurks.

WHEN YOU ENTER, NAME IT:

AS THE SCENE ENDS, SHOW US A BRIEF AND UNCLEAR VIEW OF THE MENACE.

THE CRUX

This place is central to the completion of your original objectives, which may or may not soon be irrelevant.

WHEN YOU ENTER, NAME IT:

NOW OR LATER, NAME THE STEPS TO ACCOMPLISH YOUR MISSION OR CROSS OUT IMPOSSIBLE STEPS:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

PASSAGES (2)

Corridors, tunnels, fields, woods, being lost and alone in the dark: these liminal places are where the menace often lurks.

WHEN YOU ENTER, NAME IT:

DURING ALL SCENES HERE, NAME SIGNS OF THE MENACE YOU FIND:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

THE ESCAPE

There is one real possibility of getting away without destroying the menace, and it's right here. Not all of you will make it.

WHEN YOU ENTER, NAME IT:

NOW OR LATER, NAME THE PRICE THAT MUST BE PAID IN BLOOD BEFORE ESCAPE IS POSSIBLE:

DEEP CORE

This is the lair of the menace, its chapel, sanctum, the place that it has made its own, whatever it was before.

WHEN YOU ENTER, NAME IT:

DURING THE SCENE, SAY WHAT WILL SOON DESTROY EVERYTHING:

DARK SECRETS

A laboratory, a room of documents, someone's private quarters; the secret origin point, this place shows clear signs of prior knowledge and involvement.

WHEN YOU ENTER, NAME IT:

DURING SCENES HERE, NAME A CHARACTER AND TRIGGER THEIR DECEPTION:

- 1.
- 2.

EXIT IF YOU CAN