

**THE HAND THAT
FEEDS**

BY

ALASDAIR SINCLAIR

FRONT MATTER

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Edited by Ivan Towlson

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PREFACE

This game was been written for *Fright Night IV*, Wellington's horror roleplaying convention. After *Fright Night III*, I was challenged by one attendee to write a scenario that truly meritted a classification of R18. The specific form of the adventure has arisen from a long-standing interest in both *Deadlands* and *Werewolf: The Wild West*. It is written for 5 characters and has a total run-time of 3 hours.

GAME PITCH

It's 1887, you've ridden off the dead lands below into Refuge Colorado. You've come to town for one reason: to kill a demon. You have been told what to do, you have been trained on how to do it, you have the resolve. You even have a secret weapon, that hates the demon more than even you do, that lives only to revenge the demon's rape of Gaia: the so-called "Garou", a Werewolf.

The town of Refuge is about to be liberated from its demonic yoke, it is to be washed clean. Washed in your life's blood if need be. But the price may be higher, a price you may be paying for eternity.

Classification:	R18
Scare:	1
Suspense:	4
Splatter:	4
Strange:	2

INTRODUCTION

GAME OVERVIEW

This is a nihilistic scenario, where a group of characters ride into the Old West town of Refuge to destroy a Demon that is the source of the town's prosperity. The two ways the adventure can play out are the destruction of the town, or the deaths of all the player characters.

The characters' inherent morality, their unwillingness to cross lines of acceptable behaviour, especially amongst themselves, is set against the greater good of destroying the demon. Three of the characters are intended to drive the action while two will slow the action down and want to explore possibilities and options. This should lead to strong intra-party tension.

This is a relatively open adventure - characters are motivated towards a certain goal, but how they achieve that goal is fairly unrestricted. At the heart of everything that goes on is a decision the players must make: what are they prepared to do to kill the demon?

GAME SETTING

The setting is Refuge, a small town in the reaches of Colorado. After years of struggling to survive on the edge of civilization and in poor conditions the town was just about finished when the Demon arrived. The Demon saved the town and made it prosperous but in exchange the townsfolk live an imprisoned life, unable to change or grow or live in the true sense of the word. Their days may look idyllic and prosperous, but their nights and their inner lives are tormented by the stagnation and their servitude.

The townsfolk regard the change in fortune as a Miracle, generally unable and unwilling to admit that they bought prosperity at the price of living damnation.

This arrangement fits into two different name-brand settings,

and so it may be useful to pick one as the backdrop, as the wider context, to help players get a feel for the kinds of story possibilities and tone. If your group is largely unfamiliar with both of the preferred choices, then you may still be able to use those as references yourself to drop in tone-creating details.

Deadlands

Deadlands is about 'the Reckoners', who essentially feed on the fear of the population. If enough people are frightened enough, the world around those people gets turned into a "Deadland", where the Reckoners can walk abroad.

Their goal is simply to create fear. Their agent in this town is doing that, but he's taking the longer view on it than most.

Werewolf: The Wild West

W:WW is about the "Storm Bringer", a nucleic centre of chaos and evil. The horror is more pervasive but less focused, as the horrific elements such as Vampires and Werewolves are historical entities that have always been there, rather than recently unleashed by vengeful Native Americans as in *Deadlands*.

GAME SYSTEM

This game uses the *Savage Worlds* the core system for *Deadlands: Reloaded*. Generally *Savage Worlds* is targeted at action games. Characters are tough and competent. They can still be severely wounded by lucky rolls, but an outright kill shot is very difficult.

A useful array of generic statistics for people and monsters can be found in the *Deadlands: Reloaded* book. Generally the demonic possession is applied as additional dice to those generic game stats.

There should be enough information in the quick start for a

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reasonably experienced GM to run this game without purchasing the book. However, GMs going this route will need to create game statistics for all the NPCs and creatures where I've simply referenced existing game statistics in the Deadlands core book.

<http://www.peginc.com/Downloads/SWEX/TD06.pdf>

Included in the "Running the Characters" section and on the relevant character sheets are the special rules for the Werewolf and the Revenant.

I recommend printing off one copy of the summary document for each player too:

<http://www.peginc.com/Downloads/SWEX/explorersgmscreen.pdf>

I recommend adopting the house rule that raises beyond the first also provide additional damage dice, so that the game is more deadly.

New World of Darkness

If you prefer, the new *World of Darkness* rules could be used

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instead. The additional rules for the Werewolf will exacerbate the power level difference that exists in the scenario as written, but some players may find it easier to comprehend their characters with nWOD's additional array of personality descriptors.

One caveat: nWOD is much slower to run than SW, so if this is your preference, you will need to allow multiple sessions for playing this game.

One Roll Engine

Nemesis is an ORE version available free online. *Nemesis* adds in a robust psychological system that captures the various aspects of the horror in this game very well. GMs wishing to emphasise the psychological difficulties faced by the characters could consider porting the game to *Nemesis*.

However, ORE is a fairly difficult game system for those unfamiliar with it, so I recommend only converting the game to ORE if your group are already familiar with it.

RUNNING THE GAME

OBJECTIVE

In every scene you should be implicitly offering a choice between allowing the demon to continue owning the town and taking steps to remove it. Either choice should appear to have a cost, either to the player characters personally, or to the town.

When the player characters like the townsfolk, or try to help individual townsfolk with their problems, or feel sorry for the hardships that they suffered before "the miracle", they are becoming part of the problem. Nobody likes seeing suffering in those they care about, players will naturally look to alleviate the suffering they see.

Whenever they interfere by asking probing questions, or attempting to persuade the townsfolk to change their ways, or actually fighting the demon, they are helping to defeat the demon but at the price of physical/tangible suffering in the townsfolk, either now or in the future.

Essentially there should be no clear "win" scenario available to the players, everything has a cost and a consequence that is inimical to their better natures.

SETTING, THEME TONE

Generally speaking, players shouldn't have time to ponder too much historical accuracy, and won't know the town in huge detail. The most important thing with any genre-based game is to nail the tropes of that genre, in this case, Horror and Western.

Westerns

The Western genre is usually equal parts about the power of morality, the power of self reliance and the struggle for

civilization.

In this game, the struggle for civilization has been won at the cost of the other two. The townsfolk are weak and immoral, which in Western terms means that their civilization is fundamentally flawed.

The touchstone Western for this game is *Pale Rider*, where Clint Eastwood arrives in an apparently prosperous town only to learn that its wealth is based on the death of the previous Sherriff - perhaps Clint himself. He exposes the hypocrisy and cowardice of the town, but in doing so virtually destroys it, knowing that the rebuilt town will be free of this fundamental taint.

Horror

The Horror genre is usually about whether people let themselves become victims, or whether they seize their own destiny.

In this game, the townsfolk have allowed themselves to become victims, but to an extent so have some of the player characters. Franklin gave in to his desire for power and influence and so summoned the demon and got himself killed - victim. Clay gave in to his weaker nature, and still does, taking the easy violent way out of struggles. And Amanda has all the power in the game, but takes orders from the others.

The touchstone Horror for this game is *Village of the Damned*, where the town finds that its children have been replaced by emotionless aliens with strange powers. They struggle over the decision whether to kill their children as monsters, or live in the shadow of that fear.

METHOD

In a 3-hour run at KapCon you can usually have between 4 and 6 scenes. In that time you need to convey the totality of the

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situation to your players.

This is not a particularly linear adventure, these scenes can't easily be pre-planned or pre-scripted. You will need to use the different NPC archetypes listed below, and events such as those listed under "sample scenes" to make sure that wherever the PCs find themselves that there is something of interest going on.

Generally as GM you will be trying to create one of two impressions about the town:

1. That the town is happy and prosperous. All is well, and the PCs can only bring misery and doom to somewhere that has become a slice of paradise.
2. That the town is fallen, the people damned. Redemption can only be found through the destruction of the Demon, regardless of cost.

Early in the game things will seem rosy, later in the game they will become progressively darker. The more appealing the town looks at the start, the more effective the glimpses of the real situation will be.

There is no time in 3 hours for back-tracking, or idling. Keep things moving. If they get bogged down in deciding what to do, have some external event happen that plays either to the town being beatific or horrific. Have the demon appear to taunt them. Have someone cry out for help - lengthy periods of indecision will certainly lead to the game running over time.

The character write-ups should give the players an initial impetus towards defeating the demon. As the game but of course they don't know that they are not all going to make it. So the adventure is not necessarily about defeating the demon - it's about the characters coming to realize that they are now faced with the choice of embracing their deaths or making their own peace with a demon.

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RUNNING NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

In practical terms, these requirements and constraints mean that any person they choose to talk to must then become pivotal in the story.

For this reason I have set out the different kinds of characters they need to encounter for story purposes, and then set out the various major NPCs they could encounter, with a note on how they can fulfill each of those story roles depending on what stage of the adventure they are encountered. I suggest an order for the encounters, but obviously the players will set the order by their actions.

The key idea is that all non-player characters exist as malleable entities in service to the game's objectives of exploring the horror of impossible choices.

TIME-LINE

Once they are established in the game, players will usually try and create a longer-term narrative than just their visit. They will try and establish a historical context for their relationships and the events in their history.

Obviously some answers in the questionnaires could allow things to pan out differently, but as a rough guide:

It is October 1879, the fields are just about ready for the harvest, which will be a local record-setter.

In December 1877 the Miracle happened, folk in the town stopped dying of the cold, which eased considerably. There was a renewed atmosphere of hope, and the signs began - healing and the like.

In November 1877, Franklin performed the exorcism that opened the gates between worlds and allowed the demon in.

ELEMENTS

Not everything in the scenario write-up can get used. Below are the key elements that can be used to help create a moral dilemma or help spur the action of the story.

Unfortunately, while most of these elements should in theory be known to the characters, that would result in very long character write-ups; which are not particularly usable in a con environment. Thus you will need to keep this list of items in mind, and insert them *in media res*. Without foreshadowing. You might for example say:

"Sure, I can see where you're going with that: you do know a ritual for binding the demon into an object, but it requires the life blood of a decent man."

You need to be sensitive to what the players are discussing, and what kinds of actions they're contemplating, and insert the different items into the story as necessary.

Inventive players may devise elements or problems not thought of here, possibly borrowed from some specialist reading. Generally try and allow other elements to creep in, provided that the price for using them is sufficiently high.

As a rough summary of the highlights:

- The demon has an association with a device or object, and the ritual destruction of this object will render the demon mortal in whatever form it presently has
- That the Werewolf's claws can hurt the ethereal part of the demon as well as its occupied flesh
- That the ritual sacrifice of a psychic or gifted character can bind the demon into an object

SPELLS, RITUALS & DEALS

One of the likely avenues that PCs will explore is using magic of some kind - either in the form of priestly ritual or William's black arts - to advance their cause. They may also try and make bargains with the townsfolk, and a really crazy group might try to summon a second demon (fight fire with fire). See below for a discussion of how these approaches interact with the demon.

In general terms the players need to be able to access these and other techniques but at a price. If you set the price too high, then you effectively block their idea. If you set it too low, it can be too easy. Generally you should be looking to say "yes, you can do that, but at a price". The price is the hard part to set.

For example, assuming William wants to cast a "truth" spell, have the cost be that the person loses their tongue. It's a brutal exchange, but the guaranteed good information may be worth it to the PCs.

Similarly, a spell that allows the seer to identify the demon would then blind them. Blind, but with a guaranteed shot at instantly locating the demon.

THE RELIQUARY

This is where the Demon "sleeps", like a Djinni's lamp of Evil. The Demon cannot be trapped in it, and while the Demon is in residence it should be impossible to destroy unless that's the PCs only viable plan.

It should be an object of some real importance to either the town, or some specific and powerful individual in the town. It might be the foundation stone of the town hall, or the Sherriff's lucky peacemaker. Generally it will be most effective if it's a publically accessible object overtly tied into the miracles that

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make the town prosperous.

I used a statue of the Virgin Mary in the Church, to which the townsfolk made frequent offerings and visited to pray for Miracles.

Destroying this object while the Demon is not there should be difficult, but possible - it should take most of the dynamite the posse has, or something similar.

Once it is destroyed, the Demon must flit from body to body. Should the body be killed by mortal means while the Demon inhabits it, the Demon will disperse for a time, but it has not been destroyed. It will recover, and inhabit a new form, but that will probably be off-screen in an epilogue.

THE DEMON

Identifying the Demon

Most groups will suggest ways of finding the demon - these should all work, unless they are obviously nonsensical. Typical signs would be an aversion to silver, being burnt by holy water, fear of cats and leaving traces of sulphur in its wake. The demon may also react to certain key phrases - allow the players a lot of leeway in their approach to actually locating the demon. Ideally, the Demon will identify itself at some opportune moment. Remember that any NPC not categorically ruled out by a test that the PCs trust could be the demon.

Moving between hosts

Again, you should listen to the speculation of the characters, especially Franklin and William, and roll with their expectations. The recent popularity of "Supernatural" has led to

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some assuming a black smoke pours forth, but equally, an invisible wind is a possibility, or the requirement that the demon migrate only by touch unless the body is physically slain.

Whatever the signs and limitations, it is crucial that the demon not be killable by mortal means (i.e. You can't shoot, stab, or blow it up), which means that it must always be able to leave a dead body somehow.

Other weaknesses and vulnerabilities

Players may again have some ideas on this. In general however, the demon must be largely invulnerable, except for the exceptions that the PCs will already know about.

The main permissible thing are protective measures that the PCs can wear - but there should, again, be a serious cost for this. A protective charm made from someone's hand, or the rope from a fresh hanging, or at the very least, grave desecration.

Game Statistics

The demon is a primarily spiritual being. It is mostly a cluster of emotions and powers, rather than a truly rational being.

Use the statistics of the person it inhabits, with a few modifications:

- Always has a spirit of D12
- Is immune to all forms of fear
- Gets a D6 wild die. If the host is already a wild card, the Demon gets 2D6 wild dice
- Mark wounds from mortal weapons as usual, but instead of "incapacitated" the Demon accrues penalties until it flees the body, bodies at "incapacitated" or below are slain when

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the demon leaves

- Mark wounds from the Werewolf's claws or other supernatural damage on a separate track that follows the Demon from host to host
- It can utilize the following powers with no power points cost: Fear, Puppet, Speed & Telekenesis. Puppet is most effectively used on a player character.

RITUALS

The Binding Ritual

The main thing people will try and do is contain it in some way via a Devil's Trap, so that the werewolf can come along and just kill one person in a very controlled way.

This should be permissible, but only if they were prepared to sacrifice William, or an innocent child, or something equivalently evil. Once the trap is made, they will need to trick the demon into entering the trap, which may not be too easy.

The Exorcism

Expelling the demon from a specific host should be a possibility. However, this does not really solve their problems, because the demon is now still around, and they won't know who it goes into. It can buy valuable time however, in a pinch.

The exorcise the demon in melee, characters make Faith check opposed by the Demon's spirit. Successes accrue for the player characters as a group for as long as they dedicate actions to the incantation, but the Demon must successfully beat each successive attempt in one go.

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SCENES

Described below are a number of potential scenes. These should be regarded as useful archetypes rather than a check-list. Most groups will have time to experience a small subset of the listed scenes.

The Baptism

Ultimately, one of the most effective ways for the PCs to isolate the demon will be to gather the Townsfolk together and commit mass murder. Groups have been surprisingly willing to go this route. A Baptism scheduled for the day after the PCs arrive in town gives them an obvious time to enact that scheme.

If they prefer not to be so indiscriminate with their violence, the Baptism can be used as a way of demonstrating that the Demon's hold is strong, as demonic signs will attend the ceremony. The Townsfolk know what that means deep down, but will pretend it is a blessing from god rather than admit what they know to themselves.

Children Playing

Children in refuge play "torture" or "vivisection" rather than "doctor". PCs can be alerted to the "game" by the sound of screaming or crying. How far the children have gone should depend on the reactions of your players - if they are sufficiently disturbed by the idea of the children playing "torture" then it can be a game. If they seem unaffected by that, have actual torture between children. Layer your description to get a feel for their reactions.

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Crazy Hobo

A lone crazy homeless person is a great vehicle for the Shell, or for the Good Citizen, depending on how the game is going.

Discipline at home

One of the most efficient ways of demonstrating the public/private schism is through violence in the domestic space. Particularly for tee-totalling non-gamblers that the characters have previously encountered.

Gamblers

One way of demonstrating the apparent utter virtue of the town is via the rehabilitation of the usual carousing in frontier towns. A group of card-players in the saloon who welcome new people at the table, but play poker for match-sticks is very effective.

Healing Miracle

Early in the adventure the PCs could find themselves causing an injury - instead of taking the injured person to the doctor, they take them to the artefact, which cures them.

After this, it won't take much smooth talking from the PCs for the Townsfolk to believe, or appear to believe, it was a relatively innocent accident and take no further action.

Visiting the Farms

Should the PCs ever leave the town, they should end up with a single guide. This guide is a perfect host for the demon, who will flee at the first sign of violence, leaving a corpse for the PCs to either hide or explain away. Of course, should they hide the

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corpse, the demon knows very well where it is, and can then alert the Townsfolk into a mob, if the occasion calls for it.

SKELETAL OUTLINE

Due to the sparse information about the location of the demon, methods of locating it, and knowledge of the town, you as GM will need to provide a lot of the story impetus one way or another. To assist, below is a skeletal outline of how this adventure played out in the play-tests:

After the PCs arrive in town, they almost immediately separate, intending this to be a brief multi-tasked exploration. A more sensible group might decide to stick together and move in a group; ideally you can split such a party with logistical concerns, or fabricate an argument between the dissenting characters.

Clay will generally head to the saloon looking for trouble.

Either William, Tyrone or the Preacher, or all together, will beeline to the chapel.

Amanda will often immediately go out in wolf form to scout the surrounding farms.

Once they have established their immediate sites of interest, one or other group will generally isolate someone and start putting questions to them about timing, people, events - looking for something suspicious.

They will often identify someone as a target from this. The leap of logic can sometimes be fairly strange here, but they will then generally muster out somewhere, intending to get an NPC alone for interrogation.

By this time, the group dynamic is usually strained by competing moral limits and preferred operational methods.

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They usually now attempt to interfere in something that they have observed as being wrong in the town - they might decide to attack the artefact, or rescue a child from a beating. This starts to bring them into direct conflict with the powers in the town.

Generally the PCs are more determined than the NPCs, and so emerge victorious, but with an imperative to action. At this stage the NPCs regroup, and then there has always been some kind of confrontation with the demon.

Each group so far has eventually stepped back from the final solution of killing everyone in the town or themselves, and so the demon has left in possession with one of the PCs.

TIMING

The general flow of events will be different for each game, but for a constrained convention game you can't allow things to drift too far.

I suggest the following rough break-down of timing:

System overview and game introduction. (5 minutes)

Set the tone you want right from this second - if things get off track in the briefing you will struggle to get it back on track.

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Questionnaires (15 minutes).

Energized and alert players will finish the questionnaires a lot quicker than this. Slow players won't finish even in 15 minutes, but that is the maximum time you can allow.

Initial exploration. (40 minutes)

Allow them to explore without interference for no longer than 40 minutes. You can go a little shorter if you like, but they need time to get a feel for the town. Don't let them wander too long - they will begin to settle into an investigative mode that is not the purpose of the game.

First contact. (20 minutes)

Their first encounter with the demon should be concluded by the half-way point. Take as much time as you can though, to get the demon under the skin of the PCs and push them to violence.

Main Action (90 minutes)

After the demon's first contact you will need to roll with the PCs' choices. You should make sure to force the issue though no later than 2:30. Savage Worlds is a very fast system for action, but even so, you will need 20 minutes for most variations on the final confrontation.

RUNNING THE TOWN

The town is a genuinely small town - population including surrounding farms is around 100, maybe a bit higher. It is a small farming community, off the beaten track, not connected to rail or telegraph. It's a peaceful spot, with a small river and a quiet country feel. In most of the Weird West of Deadlands, there is an ambient "Fear Level", but not so here: all is well. Until that is, you look inside the houses and find that the simplicity of the farm house conceals a festering sore, and inside each dwelling the oppression of their outward peace results in a private hell.

The town is not a mining town. It has no real mineral wealth, but was founded originally by farmers moving west, looking for a fresh start and a new home. It's an unlikely, almost tragic, choice for a farming community, and so suffered terribly for the generation or so that followed the founding.

However, the arrival of the Miracle has changed all that, rendering the fields fertile, the animals and people healthy. That has created a boom over the past couple of years, with the town's population only increasing.

In a 3-hour convention scenario, most players will struggle to assimilate all of the details of the town. The names and situations of individual NPCs are likely beyond the ability of any GM to convey in the time, and most of the world laws and tone will need to be told rather than shown.

PUBLIC / PRIVATE

In the public areas of the town, there is nothing much untoward. The streets are relatively placid, the houses are in good repair, and there is a sense of peace and prosperity. In describing the surroundings, emphasize fertility and plenty. You should note that fauna which shouldn't grow in the barren soil is flourishing, and that there will be a massive surplus from the

farms surrounding the town.

The horror lives in the private areas of the town: in the homes of the townsfolk, and especially in their families and children.

As a trade-off for a low general fear level for the streets and surrounding farmlands, the private space in the home is transformed into a nightmare space. The townsfolk don't really understand what is going on, or why they don't want to go home, but they use public spaces excessively, afraid to return home.

The effect of the nightmare space in the home is most profound on the children of the town, who play "Torturer" instead of "Doctor", and who are universally developing a cruel amorality. Children should always be described as participating in acts of petty malice, creating a *Village of the Damned* feel, but of course they are really innocents being warped by their surroundings. The pious and well-behaved adults are the ones who have allowed the evil to take root.

SEXISM & RACISM

One of the key tools of a horror scenario is to take something ordinary and distort it into something terrifying and horrific. One of the key historical differences between the Wild West and our modern times is the extend of gender and racial inequality. Ordinarily then, you could exaggerate these inequalities as a way of emphasising the problems of the town. The main risk is that instead of being horrific it becomes distasteful.

Instead, you can use a comparative equality to make the town seem superior to the world outside the town in just the same way as the economic prosperity.

You will need to gauge the attitudes of your group, fairly quickly, and decide which route to go - which will be the less comfortable for them. Naturally, whichever route you go in public,

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the private spaces should be even further distorted the other way.

GEOGRAPHY

The town itself is a single main street with the beginnings of some tributaries at the end. The surrounding lands are rich farmlands - highly unusual in the foothills of the Colorado mountains.

THE MARLOW HOTEL

An impressive three-storey timber building in the final stages of completion. The ground storey is entirely taken up with the residence of the hotelier and her husband, and a grand saloon, which is not yet fully stocked and open.

The upper storeys are of the finest quality to be found outside of a proper city, with a bathroom on each guest storey.

LORRAIN THEATRE

This small building was built as a brothel and bawdy house that staged "burlesque" acts. It has fallen on hard times since the miracle, and so ironically, is mostly frequented by those not wholly under the sway of the demon.

VANHOLT SALOON

Like the Hotel, the Saloon is big and clean. It has few of the typical signs of wear one would expect in a frontier town. The chairs are mostly original, the glasses are clean and unchipped.

The Saloon has an array of beverages, all of the finest quality,

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but its primary income comes from a locally brewed sarsaparilla, which most of the locals take in preference to any of the alcohols.

The saloon also hosts nightly dances, which run until an unreasonable hour because the participants are afraid to go home, and so stay as late as they can manage each night.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE

This is a small brick building, with a single cell. It's usually empty, as the town has very little for a sheriff to do.

GENERAL STORE

The store is well stocked with everything that a farmer could need, and at a discount of 15% from the list prices in the core book.

CHURCH

One of the original buildings in the town, the church was well made. It has recently had a substantial stone extension, built to house the artefact.

The church will house typical parish records of births, deaths and marriages. These records show that there has been a real boom in the last two years, with only one or two tragic accidental deaths.

CEMETARY

The cemetery surrounds the church - it is not a boot hill. This will generally confirm the records of the church - nobody is

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dying since the miracle.

LIVERY & CORRAL

Since this isn't really ranch country, there are no separate stables.

DOCTOR'S SURGERY

The Doctor's surgery is, like the Lorrain Theatre, quiet. The doctor spends most of his time reading and writing letters, since poor health is so uncommon in the town. If someone goes to him with an ailment, he won't hesitate to suggest resorting to the artefact.

BLACKSMITH

The Blacksmith's is booming - the extra productivity of the soil has created a much larger demand for all kinds of blacksmithing services, and the surplus money that the farmers now have means repairs are carried out promptly.

LIBRARY

The most ambitious public work in progress is the construction of a new library, which will be one of the largest outside of a city.

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MAYOR'S OFFICE

This compact but well constructed building holds not only the Mayor's office, but all the property records for the area.

SCHOOL

The school building is another of the original buildings. It is in excellent condition, showing signs of fresh paint and repairs.

BARBER

The Barber's is a small but well appointed shop near the end of the main street.

The shop represents a kind of intersection between the private and public spaces. The large mirror can be deceptive, showing the barber on the verge of cutting his client's throat.

BANK

The bank is still under construction. The PCs should arrive just as workmen are packing up for the day. It's a large building, being made entirely out of brick.

TELEGRAPH OFFICE & RAILWAY STATION

This town is "off the grid" - there is no railway or telegraph services. Effectively the town is cut off from the kind of communications becoming common in the west.

THE PEOPLE OF REFUGE

ARCHETYPES

The archetypes are presented in a rough order of appearance. It is unlikely that you will use more than about three or four of these. None is essential, except for the last host.

THE SHELL

The Shell is the first ally for the player characters. They have been possessed by the demon at some time. Its nightmarish presence and the horrific things they can still remember doing have broken the spirit of the character. They will contemplate suicide, and once they have "atoned" by passing their information on to the PCs, they will end their own suffering.

THE GATEKEEPER

In the first instance, the Gatekeeper confirms that there is something amiss in the town - warning off the PCs. The Gatekeeper character is complicit with the demon, and can take the PCs to it if the right pressure is applied. They are also charged with protecting the demon's relic.

FIRST HOST

The first host is intended to establish a relationship between the demon and the player characters. Without some contact between them, the demon could begin to feel vague and arbitrary. The demon isn't afraid of the PCs, it regards them as the newest and most exciting toys in its toybox.

The Demon should flee this host at the first sign of trouble, preferably after the body has been riddled with harmless

bullets, leaving the PCs with a body they have to explain or dispose of.

THE GOOD CITIZEN

Some decent folk remain in the town, increasingly isolated and increasingly afraid.

If the PCs begin to falter, a good citizen will approach them, begging to be saved. The Good Citizen's role is to prop up the PCs motivation by confirming that they're on the side of right and justice and apple pie. Of course, the Good Citizen is also a prime candidate for becoming the Last Host in a tragic irony.

THE CONFESSOR

The demon did not arrive in town randomly or arbitrarily. The citizens prayed for a miracle to save their dying town, and then the relic was brought into town by the new parson, and it performed miracles.

The confessor's role is to tell the PCs in some way that the town brought this evil on themselves - desperate for any solution to their water problems, the soil problems, the lack of trade, and the late redirection of the railways away from the town.

THE DEAL MAKER

Once the PCs have started to make overt plays against the demon's power, that will threaten the peace and prosperity of the town. While the townsfolk fear their arrangement, and fear their homes, there will be a component of them that wishes to sustain the obvious prosperity, and will try and make a deal with the PCs to leave. The Deal Maker should be harmless, defenceless, and

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totally in thrall to the demon. They can offer money, local power, a place in the town - anything that seems plausible, and potentially effective.

THE APOLOGIST

At some stage, the PCs will begin to skirt around moral questions, perhaps crossing some lines of acceptable behaviour in civilized society. At this stage they are ripe for confrontation with a local who sees only the benefits of their new patron, compared to the destructiveness of the PCs. Is their life so wrong? Of course there is some celestial question of holiness and damnation - but here on earth, you need to live the best you can. The Apologist presents a moral challenge to the PCs, requiring them to justify themselves. The earlier the Apologist appears the more effective they will be, as the PCs won't have amassed enough evidence to mount a compelling argument.

Of course, the Apologist is a fanatic, and so if the PCs don't become frustrated and gun them down, the Apologist must draw first.

LAST HOST

The second time that the PCs encounter the Demon should really be the last - it will generally feel like things are getting to a head.

CHARACTERS

Almost all of the interactions that the PCs have with anyone in the town will be quick and superficial. It will be far easier for you to invent salient details on the fly as needed rather than memorize and exhaustive list of townsfolk or constantly be referring to the adventure text in play.

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Below is a list of names that should be allocated to NPCs on an as-needed basis, and a small hand-ful of well known persons-about-town who may be of more specific interest.

It will pay to have either the *Story Book of Names*, or at least a list of game play-testers handy for additional names if needed.

NAMES

Michael Fry	Patricia Newsome
David Rhymes	Betsy Alvarez
Edward Brady	Angela Kelly
Anthony Wyman	Tricia Hall
Owen Brown	Mary Matthews
Harry Ramirez	Jeane Arevalo
Perry Hobson	Amanda Moore
Keith Calvert	Tammy Devitt
Robert Anderson	Kathlene Simmons
Joel Calvillo	Madelyn Roache
Steven Pitman	Vicki Gallagher

TOWNSFOLK

The townsfolk will always be polite, almost to a fault. Gamblers who play for matches, a bar-tender who gives free drinks to strangers in town.

A quick summary might go as far as the "stepford townsfolk". Everything in public presents the facade of happiness and contentment.

Of course, just like in the Stepford, the truth is sinister.

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Use the "Townsfolk" game statistics on p235

Sheriff John Boscombe

Arrived in the town suspiciously close to the beginning of the miracles. Generally held up by the town as a paragon of virtue and given some large share of the credit for turning around the town's fortunes.

Use the "Gunman" stats on p230

Pastor Steve Bartell

One way or another, the local parish priest will become an important figure in the adventure. He represents either a potential ally who is well-placed to fight the demon with them, or, more likely, a dangerous foe whose moral authority and likely complicity in the original pact give him every advantage.

He is well-established in the town, having lived here since it was founded a generation ago. He's seen first-hand the suffering of the town and farmers, and whether allied to the demon or the players, wants to do whatever he can to ameliorate the harsh conditions of the Colorado mountains.

Use the "Blessed" stats on p229.

FARMERS

The farmers are less genteel than the townsfolk. They have historically borne the brunt of the hardships in the town, and

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so the benefit of the demonic influence is more profoundly felt. They are optimistic, happy, and boisterous. They will exemplify the ideals of country hospitality.

It is far more likely for a PC to be in a farmer's house than a Townsfolk's - the presence of the PCs won't be able to offset the innate horror of the private space, and so the PC will become witness and potentially accomplice to any domestic violence or terror that you can plausibly insert.

Use the "Soldier" game statistics on p235 with an additional skill "Knowledge (Farming)" at D6.

Peter Atkinson

In an English country setting, Peter would be the squire. His family was one of the original founding families that retained most of its holdings and was efficiently run. Now that the miracle has rendered the previously hard ground extremely fertile, the Atkinson family are effectively millionaires.

Atkinson's reputation is as a hard bargainer and a stubborn man. People will nostalgically muse that his iron will has kept the town in existence and that while you would want to read any contract with him twice, he would do anything to ensure the prosperity of his family, and the town.

He is, in short, to be set up as exactly the kind of man who would make a pact with a demon, and is sure to pique the interest of any player characters.

Use the stats for Wyatt Earp on p244. Atkinson is a Wild Card.

RUNNING THE CHARACTERS

OBJECTIVE

PARTY OVERVIEW

A framework for the party dynamic is formed through the brief cross-over write-up for each character. To an extent, this creates an expectation about the other characters. The details of the characters are then fleshed out in the questionnaires, which can create a cognitive problem, if the view of the player is too divergent from the perspective given by the others. This is also complicated by the cross-over question, which a player will write and then pass to their designated cross over. However, provided you are aware of these pit-falls, you can brief the group well and offer useful guidance on filling out the questionnaires.

The following descriptions are intended to give the GM some idea of what vein each character is in, to give some guidance on the direction that the questions lead.

You could sum this up by saying that considering all the information that a player has, the characters are pre-specified to the same extent as a completely pre-generated character, but that the questions allow quicker and easier player buy-in.

For a good treatment, the origin of this format, refer to the *Dread* roleplaying game.

The power relationships between the PCs are necessarily uneven around the circle, both because of the structure of the questions, and because different players will take these questions to different levels of intensity.

Some of the characters are designed to drive the action, pushing the group towards horrific action, while some are designed to try and take a measured and controlled approach. This leads to some

intentional intra-party conflict that helps intensify the short-run game.

CHARACTERS

Refer to the character sheets for the information given out and the game statistics before returning to this section which explains them.

FRANKLIN CARLYLE, THE PADRE

The Reverend is actually a revenant - a soul whose unjust death caused him to be brought back from the dead. The questions establish the exact circumstances of the death, but the intent is just to clarify what level of culpability the Reverend feels about the carnage that surrounded his death.

The Reverend is a capable fighter, but his main strong feature is his very high tolerance for confronting the horrors. Of course, once the Demon is defeated, the Padre will return to dust, unless he likes living more than he should, becoming himself a dark agent.

Franklin is intended as a character who will drive the story, push the boundaries of morality.

CLAY JACKSON, THE ELDER

Clay is a sinner: corrupt and decadent. He's alcoholic and violent. For him, this intervention is a chance for redemption, probably the only chance.

The questions are intended to try and play off his motivation for salvation against his baser instincts. In some ways, Clay is the engine for the game conflict - the more this player pushes

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the violence and devalues human life, the more uncomfortable it will be for the other players, and the closer the game will get to the desired conflict.

Clay is also a character intended to drive the characters into action.

TYRONE JACKSON, THE JUNIOR

Tyrone is intended to be the real moral centre of the group - the voice of reason and decency. He is the group's True Believer in the morality and justness of vanquishing the demon just on moral grounds. As the only really decent character, Tyrone should be seen as the Demon's punching bag - whatever evil the demon can inflict on Tyrone he will. You should relentlessly try and push this character's buttons.

Tyrone is adequately skilled in traditional fighting and adventuring skills - slightly ahead of the farmers. In practical terms though, he will need a lot of support from the group if the demon gets started on him, which may end up adding to the straining of the group dynamic.

Tyrone is a brake on the action. He will want to slow things down, consider options, avoid becoming part of the problem.

WILLIAM HOLMES, THE MYSTICAL TROUBLESHOOTER

William is the only character professionally interested in the Demon. While the other characters are variously out for demonic

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blood, William is ambiguous. He has no problem with the demon being destroyed, but is interested in collecting its reliquary, and could be bargained with, helping the demon escape in exchange for knowledge or power.

William is thus another brake on the action, but more than that, could potentially be a fifth column for the demon inside the party, for the right price.

AMANDA FINCH, THE GAROU

Amanda began her life believing she was a normal girl. When she reached puberty, she began experiencing the first glimmerings of her true nature: visions of running naked through the savannah, dreams of rending with her teeth and the taste of blood. This was interpreted as a demonic possession by her essentially ignorant priest, who called on his old friend Franklin to perform an exorcism. In the ritual, she changed form and went berserk; the spilled blood and mystical energy was the catalyst which allowed the Demon to enter this reality.

Amanda thus has a strong grudge against both Franklin and the Demon, and is ultimately the character capable of destroying them both.

Amanda will be a driving force in the game, but as a volatile element that the others won't trust and won't like to see deployed.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

BOOKS

White Wolf's *Devil's Due*.

A supplement for their Dark Ages line, it is less focused on details and more focused on concepts and arrangements for using Demons in games.

Lumpley Games' *Dogs in the Vineyard*.

This game is about a group of, essentially, inquisitors, who come to a town and "solve" its problems by making moral judgements.

Play Unsafe by Graham Walmsley

A general discussion of improvisational role-playing and free-form story telling.

FILMS

Fallen

High Plains Drifter

Unforgiven

Pale Rider

Village of the Damned

WEBSITES

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colorado>

FRANKLIN CARLYLE

BACKGROUND

You were born to a large farming family. Your fraternal twin sister died at a few weeks old, and you like to follow. You didn't die though you were too weak and sickly to help on the farm.

You were sent to St Raphael's seminary, where you became a priest. After a time, you began to see supernatural forces at work. You left your parish, going wherever there was evil, and killing it.

You botched the exorcism of Amanda Finch, opening a door through which a demon entered this world. Now you are heading to Refuge to perform your last righteous act: exorcising the demon that killed you.

THE OTHERS

CLAY JACKSON

Perhaps because he is himself an evil man, Clay has never scrupled to do whatever you asked in your crusade against the forces of Satan.

TYRONE JACKSON

Clay's younger brother is a decent God-fearing man, necessary in your posse to keep Clay in check.

WILLIAM HOLMES

A professional occultist and mystic, whose knowledge and powers are a real necessity if things are to go better this time.

AMANDA FINCH

While she's a terrible sword against the demon, she needs careful handling to ensure she's not more double-edged than necessary.

FRANKLIN CARLYLE

MECHANICS

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

Pace 5, Parry 5, Toughness 7, Grit 4

Climbing d4, Fighting d6, Guts d8+4, Faith d10, Healing d6,
Persuasion d4, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d4,
Survival d4, Taunt d4

Wounds -1 -2 -3 Down

Special Rules

Franklin cannot be permanently killed by mortal means.
The next morning after being killed, he rises again.

EQUIPMENT

Colt "Frontier"

Range: 12/24/48 ROF: 1 Damage 2D6

24 Rounds

Holy Cross

Bible

Prayer Book

FRANKLIN CARLYLE

QUESTIONNAIRE

How did it feel to know that you were such a burden that even though your family loved you, they had to send you away?

How long did it take you to transgress all that was holy and moral once you were ensconced in the power and institutional corruption of your parish?

Why did you insist on interpreting Amanda Finch's dreams and visions as a demonic possession that needed to be exorcised, despite the risks to her and her family, and despite your own certainty that it was something else?

Why will you destroy the demon at any cost, despite knowing that its death will mean yours too?

For Tyrone

This question will be handed to Tyrone's player.

What heinous crime has Tyrone committed that you (Franklin) will only absolve him for after the Demon is slain?

CLAY JACKSON

BACKGROUND

You were the illegitimate son of a whore and an itinerant gambler: there was no way you could ever have turned out good. You grew up quick, and tough, and mean. By the time you left town at the age of 13 you had plenty of scars, and more enemies.

You spent your teens and twenties as a small-time bandit, travelling across the whole continent thieving, drinking and whoring. It was a good life, but a tough one; by the time you hit 30 you were a hunted man staring hell in the face.

You were rescued, literally, by the Padre. He saved you from a monster - one of your victims come back from the grave! The Padre and Billy put him down again, and he stayed dead. You've travelled with him since, not killing for the Devil any longer, but God himself.

THE OTHERS

FRANKLIN CARLYLE

The Padre's been different ever since he picked up Amanda, whatever happened, it ain't none of your business: he says jump, you jump.

TYRONE JACKSON

Sanctimonious cunt, but the only family you've got, and the most decent guy you know.

BILLY HOLMES

Weirdo.

AMANDA FINCH

A monster in the shape of a little girl. If she can kill the demon: fine. But once it's over, it's over for her too. Silver bullet to the heart.

CLAY JACKSON

MECHANICS

Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Pace 5, Parry 6, Toughness 7, Grit 3

Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Gambling d8, Guts d6+3, Healing d4, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d10, Stealth d4, Survival d6, Throwing d6, Tracking d6

Wounds -1 -2 -3 Down

EQUIPMENT

Colt-Patterson 36 Rifle

Range 24/48/96 ROF: 1 Damage 2D10

20 Rounds

Double Barrelled Shotgun

Range 12/24/48 ROF 1 or 2 Damage 1-3d6

16 Rounds

Colt Peacemaker Revolver * 2

Range 12/24/48 ROF 1 Damage 2d6+1

24 Rounds

6 Silver Rounds

Dynamite

Damage 2d6 per stick

10 Sticks

Hunting Knife

Damage d10 + d6 + 1

CLAY JACKSON

QUESTIONNAIRE

When folk say you're just like your father, why does that fill you with shame and remorse?

Is it better to know that there really are monsters and creatures beyond man's darkest fears, or was it better to think that you were the real evil in the world?

What part did you play in the horrific fate of your mother?

Do you really believe that your soul can be saved by destroying the demon, or is this just an excuse for indulging your cruel nature?

For William

This question will be handed to William's player.

What did you (Clay) do for William that he wasn't man enough to do for himself, that he owes you for?

TYRONE JACKSON

BACKGROUND

You're the son of a thousand men, and you're mother's a whore. You grew up in a whorehouse, by the age of 10 you'd seen a man stabbed, a woman raped and the son of a bitch who done it hanged.

You got out as quick as you could, your mother's probably still there. You became a cooper, earning an honest living.

One day you were having a drink when an argument broke out over gambling. Guns were drawn and fired, but you alone walked out of the saloon without a scratch, without firing a shot. You knew then that God had a plan for you, bigger than mending barrels. You went and found your half brother, travelling with a Priest and a Madman. It's part of God's plan for you - help them kill this demon.

THE OTHERS

FRANKLIN CARLYLE

Reverend Carlyle is a hard man to read, and a hard one to follow.

CLAY JACKSON (LIAM)

Your older brother is a real bastard. Perhaps God wants you to save him.

WILLIAM HOLMES

William's deep hold over Amanda disturbs you, even as you recognize its necessity.

AMANDA FINCH

They say Amanda is really a monster - a beast capable of slaughtering the demon, but to you she seems like a frightened young woman barely holding it together.

TYRONE JACKSON

MECHANICS

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

Pace 5, Parry 5, Toughness 5, Grit 1

Climbing d4, Fighting d6, Guts d4, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Survival d4, Taunt d8, Throwing d4, Tracking d6

Wounds -1 -2 -3 Down

EQUIPMENT

Colt Peacemaker Revolver

Range 12/24/48 ROF 1 Damage 2d6+1

18 Rounds

Hunting Knife

Damage 2d6

TYRONE JACKSON

QUESTIONNAIRE

How did you manage to develop such a strong faith in God while living with your barbarous and malicious family?

Have you forgiven yourself for losing your temper and beating your eldest boy over nothing on the day you left for Refuge?

Do you really think that after defeating the demon you'll be able to go back to your life as a cooper?

What experience in your childhood makes you believe that you will be able to identify the demon when you meet it?

For Clay

This question will be handed to Clay's player.

Why has Clay always been desperate for your (Tyrone) affection and approval, despite his apparently tough demeanour?

WILLIAM HOLMES

BACKGROUND

At a young age, your parents left New York heading West. You were conceived and born on the trail - your parents never really stopped moving.

As a teenager your family joined up with a travelling entertainment troupe. The star of the show was Armand Vasili, whose hypnotic powers were unrivaled. You learned that his act was based around an ancient amulet that he wore, which gave him power over others.

When he died, you took the amulet, but lacking his talent for showmanship, had to eek out your living as a grifter. When you met Reverend Carlyle, it seemed like destiny: an honest use for your one "talent".

THE OTHERS

FRANKLIN CARLYLE

The Reverend is a driven man, but perhaps not as holy as you had expected. Certainly he scruples at nothing.

TYRONE JACKSON

There's nothing more frightening than a zealot.

CLAY JACKSON

Except a psychopath.

AMANDA FINCH

"Your" prisoner, through the amulet and guile. Still, if it means destroying rather than simply banishing a demon, maybe it's worth it.

WILLIAM HOLMES

MECHANICS

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

Pace 6, Parry 5, Toughness 6, Grit 2

Faith d8, Fighting d6, Guts d8, Healing d8, Persuasion d8,
Riding d4, Shooting d6, Stealth d4, Survival d4

Wounds	-1	-2	-3	Down
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Special Rules

You have in your possession a small collection of artefacts and rituals, any of which you barely understand. If you wish to use any of these powers, ask the GM whether it is possible - be aware that when touching the dark powers, everything has a high cost and usually one you don't know about in advance.

Equipment

Colt "Frontier" Revolver

Range: 12/24/48 ROF: 1 Damage 2D6

Derringer Pistol

Range: 5/10/20 ROF 1, Damage 2d6

Knife

Damage d6+d4

Book of Rituals

WILLIAM HOLMES

QUESTIONNAIRE

When did you realize that the world you read about in books was a lie, that the real world was dark and terrible, filled with horrors you dare not name?

What will happen when you can no longer turn a blind eye to the evil things that Franklin and Clay do in the name of salvation?

Why do you travel with the Padre seeking the things you fear the most?

Is there anything you wouldn't do, any pact you wouldn't make, for true magical power?

For Amanda

This question will be handed to Amanda's player.

What does Amanda need from you (William) to win her place in the Black Toe Garou pack?

AMANDA FINCH

BACKGROUND

You were an orphan, reluctantly taken in by a farming family. You weren't poorly treated, but you were never truly part of the family either.

At 12 you were "loaned" to the local bar as a wench. Soon afterwards you started to have recurring dreams of hunting buffalo and tearing their flesh with your bare teeth.

At confession, Father O'Harrah learned of your dreams and sent for an expert, Franklin Carlyle, to exorcise the demon afflicting you. At your adopted family's house the ceremony went terribly wrong - instead of expelling your dreams, a rift was opened and evil slithered in.

You thought you were the sole survivor until Franklin opened his eyes.

THE OTHERS

FRANKLIN CARLYLE

He's a hard one to read. Sometimes the righteous messenger of God, sometimes a sad lonely old man, sometimes almost evil himself.

CLAY JACKSON

A former desperado - God only knows how he ended up with this posse. A dangerous man.

TYRONE JACKSON

An apparently decent man, whose real nature is revealed by the company he keeps.

WILLIAM HOLMES

Mr Holmes is your gaoler, using some kind of magic he can force you to do what he wants.

AMANDA FINCH

Wounds -1 -2 -3 Down

MECHANICS

HUMAN

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

Pace 5, Parry 4, Toughness 4, Grit 1

Climbing d6, Fighting d4, Guts d4, Investigation d6,
Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Riding d4, Shooting d4, Stealth
d4, Survival d4

CRYNOS

Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Pace 8, Parry 9, Toughness 7

Climbing d8, Fighting d12+2, Guts d10, Intimidation d10,
Notice d12, Stealth d6, Survival d8, Swimming d8,
Tracking d10

WOLF

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

Pace 8, Parry 5, Toughness 6

Fighting d6, Stealth d8, Survival d10, Swimming d8,
Tracking d12

SPECIAL RULES

To shift requires a Vigor roll of the form you are changing into.

You heal one damage increment not caused by silver each round.

EQUIPMENT

AMANDA FINCH

QUESTIONNAIRE

How do you feel about being an orphan, knowing you can never confront neither your real parents nor your adopted ones about leaving you to learn of your powers by yourself?

Do you wish you'd been killed in the exorcism with your adopted family instead of learning that you were a monster?

Why do you think that you can't remember what it's like when you change while others of your kind that you have met can?

What will you do with your life once you are free from William's enslavement, once the demon is dead?

For Franklin

This question will be passed to Franklin's player.

What has Franklin promised you (Amanda) for helping destroy the demon instead of killing Franklin himself, which would doom him to hell?