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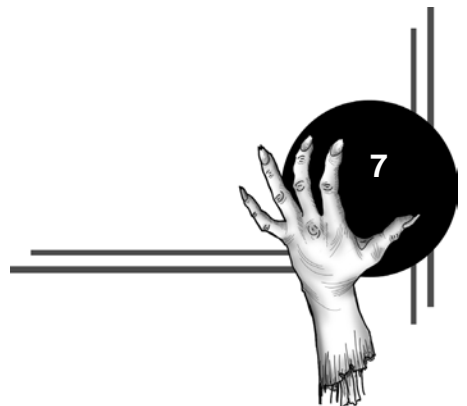


PART 1: INTRODUCTION

*“And I heard, as it were, the noise of thunder:
One of the four beasts saying
‘Come and see.’
And I saw.*

Johnny Cash, “When the Man Comes Around”

[or, you know, The Bible (Revelation 6:1)]



WELCOME TO THE CHAOS

Have you ever watched those movies? You know, *those* movies: people desperately trying to survive against an overwhelming sinister force, all the while trying to keep themselves from becoming part of that very same evil? Zombies, slashers, mind-controlling aliens, those kinds of movies. What about those really psychological survival-horror video games that have been so popular in the last few years? Evil spirits taking over a distant town, crazed maddened ghosts sucking the life forces out of everything they touch, murderous monsters of twisted and infectious designs – games like that. And the comics, oh man, the comics! I can't go to the comic store today without seeing at least a half-dozen or more fantastic "Us Against The Zombies" serials, and it seems like there's a brand new one on the shelf every month or so.

This game is about playing out the exact types of conflicts present in those movies, video games, comics and more. Characters will be created and thrown into a world which is soon to be flipped turned upside-down, if not already. Zombies, cannibals, infecting aliens, mind-controlling vampires, body-stealers, soul-eating parasites and more, there will be constant threats of vile monsters which seek to do horrible things to the characters, and the players get to role-play that chaotic action and survival. Perhaps they'll be constantly running from the ever-impending evil. Perhaps they'll be knee-deep in the blood and bodies of the creatures they ruthlessly slaughter. Perhaps they'll murder each other over who gets the last candy bar. Perhaps they'll buckle under the stress of survival and succumb to their inner madness. Perhaps they'll even transform into the very monsters they fight, and turn hungrily upon those who were so very recently their friends and allies.

In ***Cannibal Contagion***, there can be plenty of high-adrenaline, off-the-hook combat. You (read: the Players) can take control of the game and seriously throw down. Blood can splatter the walls as you carve through the monster hordes in what I like to call a "Survival Comedy" style of game. But there can also be plenty of drama as the characters come face-to-face with the dark things that mere humans were not meant to face. As you see your friends and everything else about the



Cannibal Contagion: Comedic Survival Horror

world you knew destroyed and corrupted, you are forced to make some serious choices about your own morals and mortality. There is more than one way to succumb to the evil; Infection is one such way, definitely. But how different from that supernatural contagion is the sheer primal madness within all people, the instinct that rears its head when the human is forced to survive?

Thanks so very much for picking up a copy of ***Cannibal Contagion***. May your future days be full of desperation, and may your zombie-huntings be bountiful and maddening.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME DIFFERENT?

If you've ever looked through the shelves of your favorite local gaming store, I'm pretty sure you've noticed at least a couple of other games that already tackle the "Us Against the Undead" shtick. You may find yourself wondering what makes this game different from those other games. Perhaps thoughts such as "Man, *another* Zombie game? C'mon, bro, try something new!" have crossed your mind while looking through the book up until this point. But have no fear, this game brings something new to the table, and I'm here to tell you what that is: ***Cannibal Contagion*** is actually a role-playing game *about* Zombie survival, and not just a default role-playing game system with some Zombie monsters tacked on top. Those other games are lots of fun and several of them grace my shelves at home, but I never quite felt that they successfully brought the Zombie and the RPG together as one – as such, this game was written to fix that.

In ***Cannibal Contagion***, the mechanics are built entirely around the concept of survival against the dangers of an infectious enemy. Zombies are of course one of the most popular versions of that danger, but aliens, parasites, spirits, vampires, wendigo, and fundamentalist religious cults could all be effectively handled with the exact same approach: mechanics which could very quickly turn You into one of *Them*. How are Body Snatchers, Zombies, and Possessing Spirits really all that different? In this game, the abstract Infection rules are incorporated tightly into the core system, making the true threat of the Undead – that you might become one of them! – part of almost every conflict in which the characters participate.



READING THIS TEXT

This book contains all the rules you need to play this game. Throughout the text you will see various terms written in **BOLD SMALLCAPS**. This format is used to denote special mechanical terms that are important for understanding this game. All of these terms will also be listed and defined in the Glossary appendix at the back of this book.

Additionally, you'll see words written in **bold** and *italics* quite frequently, and sometimes even both at once. These exist not as special terms or anything, but instead because I'm a pretty intense guy, and I get excited when I write and want to emphasize things.

Something I find more amusing than I really should is reading these rules to myself as if they were spoken by the Movie Trailer Guy. That guy is awesome, and I want his job very badly.

GAME PLAY SYNOPSIS

Cannibal Contagion (CC) is intended to be a fast-paced role-playing game of comedic gun-fu zombie-slaughtering survival and action. The game is overseen by one player, called the **CANNIBAL IN CHARGE (CiC)**. The CiC sets the game premise, and the players make their first characters – we call these main characters the **SURVIVORS**. Each player chooses their Survivor's numbers, abilities, and personal details, and the CiC then sets the stage and frames the first Scene.

The game flows mainly in **SCENES**. A scene is set, and the play begins. Players role-play in the scene, narrating their own involvement until there is a conflict of some kind between the players and/or their characters, or between one or more players and the CiC. This most likely comes from one player disagreeing with aspects and details of another player's chosen narration. When this happens, it's time to break into a **SHOWDOWN**.

In a Showdown, players draw cards from the deck and then play those cards against one another to determine success, and these Showdowns can frequently escalate into higher levels of intensity. Whoever wins the Showdown gets to narrate the outcome, and if the Showdown is combat-based, there may be additional effects caused by whatever weapons and equipment they are using.



Cannibal Contagion: Comedic Survival Horror

Showdowns are where the shit hits the fan, and where the majority of the crazy zombie-fighting action takes place. In most Showdowns, the Survivors will face off against **THREATS**, and attempt to overcome them with clever application of narration and mechanics. Of course, Showdowns don't always have to involve zombies, especially should the Survivors decide to start whacking each other over personal slights and disagreements in plans. Nor do they even have to involve combat, and can be used to play out highly plot-sensitive actions and events that affect the game setting. But, just between you and me, there will quite likely be a lot of murdering in these. It's one of the game's big features, so just go at it and have fun.

The game flows in these scenes and Showdowns, and the characters push forward towards whatever goals and objectives they have established. For many games, the objective will most likely just be survival - getting the hell out of, well, Hell or wherever they are, should be a primary concern. But maybe there's a bomb to diffuse, a crazy wizard to stop, an evil machine to destroy, a group of innocents to rescue, a sinister portal to seal, or something far more distressing. Perhaps the characters have goals that conflict, and their pursuit of these goals leads them to fight one another.

Between the scenes, the players can use special **SURVIVAL TOKENS** to restore any damage their characters may have taken, repair their wounded psyches, and even acquire new equipment during the between-scene "downtimes." Survival Tokens can also be used mid-scene to resist damage and insanity, and keep weapons loaded and primed for action.

The characters will come up against horrific things in this game, and sometimes the worst threats to their survival will be their own fragile minds. Monsters and demons are scary things, things humans weren't meant to encounter or understand. In the face of such stress, the characters can risk their own sanity to push themselves further to the limit, doing greater things that they would not normally be able to accomplish in normal, "less-interesting" times. This is handled on-the-fly by meta-game negotiations between the player and their designated **MAD HALF** (another player at the table who controls that character's insanity). As such, the characters are at an increasing risk of flipping out and doing psychotic wacko things.



All the while, as they try to stay cool and keep surviving, and their players narrate the story forward, the threat of Infection grows ever more serious. Many of the Threats the characters will face can infect them with the Contagion, and with just a little bit of time and a few wrong moves, any character could turn into a cannibal zombie-monster and turn against the others. Even more distressing is the knowledge that death will likely only hasten this inevitable threat.

Should a character ever turn to the Zombie Side, the player can choose to continue as that murderous evil or instead draw up a brand new character and keep fighting the good fight. The game could quite possibly change its focus drastically, with all the players in the roles of a pack of intelligent cannibal-monsters, hunting down other survivors to fill their insatiable hungers!

BASIC SESSION FLOW

A typical game of **CC** flows a little something like this:

- Game Setup: CiC lays out the scenario basics, prepares the materials
- Character Creation: All the players create their characters and choose their Mad Half
- Cold Opens: The CiC guides each character individually through their own custom introduction scene.



- Scenes: CiC sets the scene, the players play through the scene until it's time to move to a new scene.
- Showdowns: When players conflict with Threats and each other, they use their cards to play through Showdowns and Quickies. Players can Negotiate with their Mad Half for on-the-fly empowerments during these card plays.
- Scenes flow back-to-back until the game comes to a suitable end.

THE PITCH: GETTING YOUR PLAYERS INTERESTED

“Hey guys! Have you seen *Dawn of the Dead*? What about *Versus*, or *Wild Zero*? *Planet Terror*? Hell yeah, this game is just like that. Let's do it!” It really is just that easy. Tell your players you have a zombie-survival game that only takes a couple of hours to play. Tell them it works even better with beer. They'll see your logic, and soon you will all be playing a fabulous game of ***Cannibal Contagion***. Make sure the players understand the implied lethality of the game, so they don't get all butt-hurt if (and more likely *when*) their characters die. Make sure they also understand that this game favors players who grab the story and push forward on their own. Players: Don't turtle up! Seize the moment!

SETTING IT ALL UP

To start a game of **CC**, someone has to first take on the mantle of the Cannibal in Charge (CiC) and then gather together some friends to play. As the CiC, you should take some time beforehand to set up a scenario. The game's scenario sets the basics of what is happening in the game, and the handful of mechanical variables that should be considered during playtime. A few example scenarios have been included in this book, each complete with sample characters and suggested game variables. Grab one of these and go if you want to jump right in, or create your own to fit your needs. Read the Scenario Creation section for more information on that (see page 117).

You'll need to make sure you have the right materials to play, as well. Paper and pencils are always necessary. Of course, you can print up some character sheets, but I've personally found that scrap paper and index



cards can be quite useful for character info, and are often more easily available for quick pick-up games. You'll need a single deck of playing cards, with the jokers left in. You'll also need a good number of tokens of some kind, for use as Adversity tokens and Survival tokens. Pennies, poker chips, and glass bead counters work very well for this, and you don't even really need to differentiate between them.

If you've got the time and the inclination, consider printing out some of the optional accessory cards from our website. These can make it a lot easier for you to keep up with Weapons, Threats, Allies, and Mojo. There's a nifty "Team Psycho" meter you can print up, too. Just lay it out on the table and have each player place a unique token of some sort on it to represent their character's current stage of Madness.

USING THE CARDS

All mechanical conflicts in **CC** are resolved using a standard deck of 54 playing cards with the Jokers intact. The ranking of suits, from highest to lowest, is Spades, Hearts, Clubs, and Diamonds (remember: Black, Red, Black, Red). Aces are high, and ranked at 14, with Kings, Queens, and Jacks ranked at 13, 12, and 11, respectively.

The two Jokers are the real game-winners. When a Joker is played, the player of the joker instantly wins whatever Showdown is in progress, unless the opponent instantly counters with the other Joker (at which point both of them are immediately canceled out). Jokers in the final Play Pile are considered "faces and aces" for all such purposes, in which cases each Joker qualifies as *two* such cards.

Throughout the game, the cards will be in one of four places: the Deck, the Discard Pile, the Play Pile, and the players' Hands. At the beginning of every Showdown, involved players are dealt a Hand with a number of cards equal to their relevant Characteristic rank. As the Showdown is played through, the players play cards from their hands into the play pile. At the end of the Showdown, the cards from the play pile are counted to determine the results, and then placed in the discard pile. The core deck of cards will most likely be played completely through many times during the course of a high-octane game session.

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The discard pile is **only** to be shuffled back into the deck when there are not enough cards left in the deck to play a Showdown. One of the subtler purposes of the deck is to maintain a level of mechanical tension. As the deck steadily runs out, the players are forced to enter conflicts knowing that their chances of drawing good cards become increasingly slimmer, and that can definitely affect their decisions. This is an intended feature of the mechanics, and it can easily be ruined by unnecessarily frequent reshufflings.

What if the cards run out and all of them are in hands, ready to play? Then stop drawing and start playing, folks!

OPTIONAL: USING A SECOND DECK

Besides drawing cards for conflicts, you will find many instances where the game rules suggest you draw a card to just randomly see what happens. The CiC might use the deck to randomly create a quick Threat, or draw a card to determine the stats on a new weapon, or even just to get a quick descriptive count of how many zombies are shambling toward the players. The default rules assume you are making these draws from the main play deck, and helping it move along quicker, but if you want you might find it easier to have a second deck on-hand for the CiC to use just for these purposes. However, if you do choose to use a second deck to help with game management, all Quickies and Showdowns must be drawn from the same deck for all participants, including the CiC.

A NOTE ON POWER BALANCES

As a player, you should keep in mind that the CiC is pretty much there to “get” you and make your character’s life dangerous and exciting. While there are definitely some checks and balances governing the CiC’s ability to directly screw with your characters, she still has a lot of discretionary power when it comes to throwing all kinds of dangers and blood-crustied plot hooks at you. The CiC can drive both you and your character crazy; the crazier she makes you, the more effectively she is doing her job.



CHALLENGE THE NARRATION!

This game works best if the players take the narration and run with it. The CiC's entire purpose in this game is to screw with the Survivors in as many ways as possible. The players must rise to the occasion and challenge the CiC, and fight for their own survival. If the CiC says your character's head gets crushed by a boulder and you die, then it happens – *unless*, of course, you decide to say "hell no!" and challenge it, letting the cards decide. If you believe your character can make a difference, then challenge the established narration and make her shine!

EVERY GAME IS DIFFERENT!

Keep in mind that every session of ***Cannibal Contagion*** will play out differently. Depending on how the players use the mechanics, your game may focus heavily on Contagion, Madness, Survival, or any combination of these or other core game themes and features. I've played games wherein the players descended into Madness within a tiny handful of scenes, yet didn't really deal much with Contagion. There again, I've played games wherein the entire team of Survivors was Turned into zombies before anyone could even descend past the second stage of Madness. I encourage you each to explore the themes of the heaviest interest to you, and let your own games flow as they may.

ABOUT THIS BOOK...

I'm really hoping that I've made this rules text both an informative and enjoyable read. Don't let its size intimidate you: there is more to this book than just rules! I've tried to space a whole mess of idea-inducing colorful text and reference material in here, and I hope you find reading it as enjoyable and inspiring as I found writing it to be.



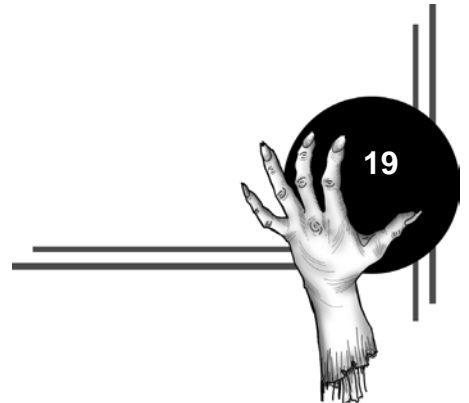
ENTER THE WORLD OF
SURVIVAL COMEDY...



PART 2: THE SURVIVORS

*"They stack the odds 'til we take to the street
For we kill with the skill to survive"*

"Eye of the Tiger" by Survivor



THE WILL TO SURVIVE

As a player, your character is your number one ultimate key to surviving a game of ***Cannibal Contagion***. When the game begins, you and your fellow players will create your very own characters together, and when that is done with, you'll use your character to play the game and push the story and action forward. It is through your character that parts of the setting are explored, changed, destroyed, and even created. Each time you state the actions your character takes, you directly alter the course of the game and the story you all tell together.

In ***Cannibal Contagion***, you are given a whole lot of freedom in your character's choices. Your character can do anything you want her to do, within the acceptable limits of the situation and game setting. For example, if your "scared schoolteacher" character is cornered alone by a horrible monster in the ruins of an old tenement, it would make sense for you to be able to say she grabs a brick from the rubble and uses it to smash the creature's face in. However, it would not make any sense at all for her to sprout butt-wings, rise into the air, and spew forth blasts of holy flame from between the gaps in her teeth – unless of course that ability had somehow been previously established as a part of that character.

At the core of your character is a base Concept, in the form of a single question: Who Am I? Answering this question is a vital part of the game. The tone and wording of your Concept will drastically change your own perception of her attitude and feel, as well as the perceptions your fellow players and CiC have of her role in the game. Characters with funny names and story roles will have quite different impacts on the feel of the game. For example, a character whose base concept is "I am Zuhei Morocco, burger-flipper and the greatest Disco Samurai on the planet," will have quite a different thematic impact upon the story than a character whose concept is "I am Carla Tomlinson, disgruntled waitress, a mother who needs to find her missing kids in this chaotic desolation of a city." When coming up with your own core concept, heavily consider the implied themes that you, your fellows, and the CiC wish to evoke with this game.



CHARACTER CREATION

During the initial setup of the game, the involved players will need to make some characters before they can jump into the game. This process can be pretty damn quick if you've got a group of players with descriptive imaginations.

STEP ZERO: THE SCENARIO

Before the act of creation, you should talk with the CiC about the scenario he's got planned. If he hasn't planned one already, you should work with him to set one up. The CiC section of the rules has extensive details on how to create a game scenario, and player input can definitely help make the scenario awesome. Knowing the details of the scenario is pretty crucial to creating characters which will fit into the session's events.

METHOD # I: CUSTOM CHARACTERS

• Premise, Concept, and Archetypes

If the CiC has not already set a premise for who the characters are, the player should discuss what their connection is, if any. Are they special forces agents on the same team? High school kids on a field trip gone bad? The Emperor's personal samurai guardsmen? Completely unrelated strangers from all over the world?

Once a general connection and scale is established (if any), each character should be given a one-or-two-word Archetype label. This archetype will quickly define the role their character plays in the story at hand. Again, just make up something fitting, and it should fit closely with the concept. It's a good idea to get inspiration from kung-fu and zombie action movies, which are chock full of these stock archetypes. The Archetype is primarily here for descriptive purposes, giving the players ideas on how to best role-play the characters they have created.

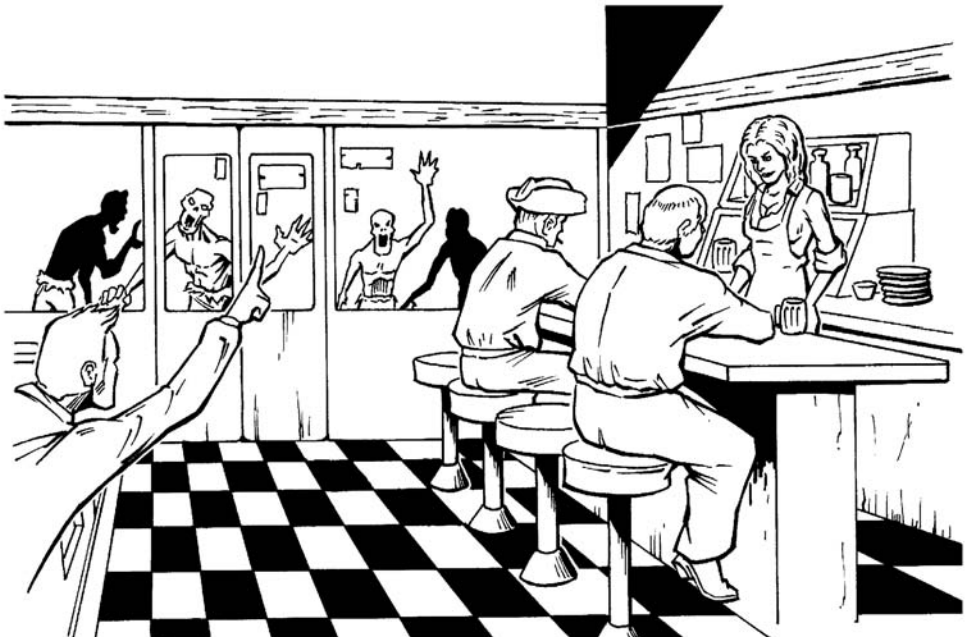


Here are some example Archetypes:

- The Yuppie Playboy
- The Pregnant Lady
- The Grizzled Cop
- The Awkward Nerd
- The Knife-Wielding Asshole
- The Gun Bunny
- The Girl Who Won't Stop Screaming
- The Katana Guy

Now, each player should take that basic Archetype and build upon it to come up with a quick statement of who their character is (aka, a character Concept). Some examples:

- I am Carla Tomlinson, disgruntled waitress, a mother who needs to find her missing kids in this chaotic desolation of a city.
- I am Roger Devries, focused businessman and skilled climber of the corporate ladder.
- I am Jian, the Japanese pretty-boy badass, and I've got a bone to pick with a shadowy figure from my dark past.
- I am Mei Li, an exchange student from China, and little do they know, but I've seen this happen before, and we're all doomed.



If you read the first few paragraphs of this chapter, you know how important a concept is to the game. When creating a concept for your own character, it might be helpful to just think of a character from a movie or comic and use them as inspiration. I've encountered players who find that picturing what actor would play this character helps, too.

- **Goals**

Every character in a game of ***Cannibal Contagion*** should have at least two major goals. The first goal is the Scenario Purpose, which is predetermined by the CiC. During character creation, the CiC will define the basic purpose of the scenario, and you should use it when creating the rest of your character. This Purpose sets a basic overall goal for all the players. It will likely be something simple, such as "escape the island" or "destroy the source of dark power" or some other such easily-stated goal.

The second goal is the Character Goal, which you should pick now. This is a special motivating desire that drives your character, a personal agenda that you should follow (and if applicable, try and accomplish) during this scenario. You could be searching for your missing kids, or trying to find a woman to start a new family with. Maybe you're trying to stockpile as many weapons as possible, or locate as many other survivors of the apocalypse as you can. This can be as simple as a focused mindset ("I must protect these people!") or as complex as you like ("I must get The Brown-Paper Package to Dock 23 before the stroke of 21:00 hours on the fourth day, or all is doomed!").

As the game is played, you should try and focus on your character's objective personally, while working with the other players to accomplish the scenario goal. Since each Survivor will have their own personal goal, it can be really fun to try and make them clash. This could lead to some great moments of in-game awesomeness!



• Characteristics

After you have the concept, it's time to determine your character's **CHARACTERISTIC** scores. This part should move pretty quickly, as it is simply a matter of assigning some numbers. Every character has four major Characteristics:

- **KILL:** This *active* Characteristic is used to win Showdowns through force and action, and usually by being totally badass. Mechanically, **KILL** will most often come into play when trying to cause direct pain and suffering – usually through creative applications of weapons and fists – but it can also be called upon in Quickies when taking direct action to change the scene somehow. *You should boost **KILL** if you want to be good at combat and direct action.*
- **SAVVY:** This *active* Characteristic is used to win Showdowns through brains, by being resourceful and seeing the Big Picture. Your **SAVVY** score will frequently be used for most non-combative attempts (improvised Quickies) to influence the setting, as well as for making Juice checks when your weapons run low on ammo. *You should boost **SAVVY** if you want to succeed on lots of out-of-combat Quickies, keep your weapons loaded, and carry lots of Gear.*
- **GRIT:** This *passive* Characteristic is used to keep yourself alive. Your **GRIT** score will come into play should you ever choose to attempt to resist incoming Hurtin' and Infection, and it gives you more Survival tokens at the beginning of each scene. *You should boost **GRIT** if you want to stay alive.*
- **COOL:** This *passive* Characteristic is used primarily to set the number of points you have in each of the five stages of your character's Crazy-Go-Psycho meter. With a **COOL** rank of four, for example, you will have four points per each stage of your CGP meter, for a total of 20 points on the whole meter. *You should boost **COOL** if you want to stay sane.*

At creation, you should rank these scores of 4, 3, 2, and 1 as you see fit. The easiest way is to just order them in a list in the way you see more appropriate to your character, and then rank them 4, 3, 2, and 1 right down the line. Below are some general guidelines on how these ranks relate to your character's actual abilities.



slot, shotguns and rusty pipes and shovels take up two slots, bazookas take up three, and so on. Some items like sidepacks and backpacks and survival vests don't take slots, and instead give additional bonus slots – one from a fanny pack, three from a backpack, etc.

Gear doesn't have to be just "items," either. You can get creative with your Gear, and have things like "Nice Rack" and "Thighs That Kill at 40 Paces" and "Winning Smile." Each of these would still take up a slot, but the CiC or an opposing player would have to be *really* creative should they ever try and take them away from your character.

Keep in mind, though, that no matter how creative it is, the Gear has to be a thing you can actively and directly apply to a situation in order to be mechanically legal.

If you so desire, you can choose to voluntarily decline any or all of your starting Gear. For each piece you don't take, you give yourself one bonus Survival Token at the actual start of the game.

For more information on Gear, see page 65.

- ***Advanced Rule: Allies***

If your group consists of seasoned ***Cannibal Contagion*** players, your CiC may allow you to start the game with Allies. You must sacrifice Gear in order to do this. Each **two** pieces of Gear that you choose not to take can buy you one Rank of an Ally. Players can combine their ranks in order to purchase Allies, but no Ally Rank can exceed 4. Ask your CiC before assuming this is an option for you!

- **Mojo**

Next, draw a random card to determine your character's **Mojo** power. This is a special boost that serves to give your character some kind of edge. The scope and apparent usefulness of the powers included in this book vary widely, so don't be surprised if yours seems really amazing or really crappy. Write your Mojo power down on your character sheet.



• Mad Half, Psychotrigger, and the CGP Meter

After all of the characters have been created, every player must choose another player at the table to play their **MAD HALF**. The Mad Half is responsible for handling all of your Negotiations when you want to push your character beyond her normal abilities. As the game flows, this player will very likely gain an increased level of control over your character's actions and sanity. I suggest picking a player who is known for crazy wild exposition, as they will have the most fun with your character's madness, and in turn everyone else will have a lot of fun being there when it happens. Every character must have a Mad Half, and no single player can be the Mad Half for more than one other player; each player must choose a *different* Mad Half for their character.

Once you have your Mad Half, it's time to designate your character's Psychotrigger. This is a simple statement of what it is that drives your character crazy in this game. It can be just about anything, from an addiction to an obsession, to a driving goal that is more important than anything or anyone else. This will be evoked by your Mad Half each time you want to Negotiate for empowerment.

Because the Psychotrigger will most likely be evoked quite frequently in the game, this needs to be something solid and evocable. When creating your Survivor's Psychotrigger, you yourself need to be able to state aloud three or four ways that you can see it being narratively used against you. If you can't think of such examples, then the Psychotrigger is probably not solid enough.

Below are some examples:

- Addicted to Cigarettes
- I must find my missing kids!
- Obsessive-compulsive inventory organization
- Problems trusting strangers

You can use the Quick-Draw table in the back of the book for more examples. Next, look at the Crazy-Go-Psycho meter on your character sheet and note that your **COOL** rank +1 determines how many CGP points you can accrue for each stage of madness.

For more information on the Mad Half and Psychotriggers, see the Mad Half chapter starting on page 89.



• Survival Tokens

Every Survivor begins the game with a number of Survival Tokens determined by their **GRIT** Characteristic rank. Additionally, if they gave up any Gear options, they may have a few more points.

• The Secret Votes

The final step of the creation process involves you answering each of the four Secret Votes. Either use some note paper or one of the special custom vote cards from the website, and fill in the name of the character you choose most likely to fill each of the answers. During the game, if any of these answers come true, you gain an immediate **eight**-token bonus to your Survival token stash! The Questions are:

- Which character will die first?
- Which character will betray the others first?
- Which character will be turned by the Contagion first?
- Which character will reach Stage Five Madness first?

And for the record, yes, you can *totally* write yourself into any of these slots, if you think it will happen (or you think you can *make* it happen). When done, pass the cards/notes to the CiC, who will keep track of them and reward you when/if your vote succeeds.

METHOD #2: RANDOM CHARACTERS

If you don't have a character concept in mind, or you just want to churn one out with a quickness, try using the second method for character creation. Grab a deck of cards and follow the steps below, and you should have a new character in just a couple of minutes, if not less.

For random Characteristics, draw four cards for each and lay them out in a row. These represent your four Characteristics from left to right (**KILL**, **COOL**, **GRIT**, and **SAVVY**). The Characteristic with the highest card (determined by rank, then suit) gets a 4, the next a 3, and then a 2 and a 1. There ya go!

For random Archetypes and Psychotriggers, use the Draw Tables in the back of this book. For random Gear, empty your pockets onto the table, then survey the room you're in (tabletop contents included) and pick four



things that seem useful. Write them down. For the Mad Half, deal a card face-up to each other player at the table. The player with the highest card is your Mad Half. You can also use any of the steps in this system to supplement the Custom-Built creation method, replacing the steps you can't figure out quickly on your own. You can even build a basic character profile by drawing cards against the quick Threat tables.

For a random name, check the Internet for a plethora of random name generators. There are some out there that can generate names from a variety of cultures past and present.

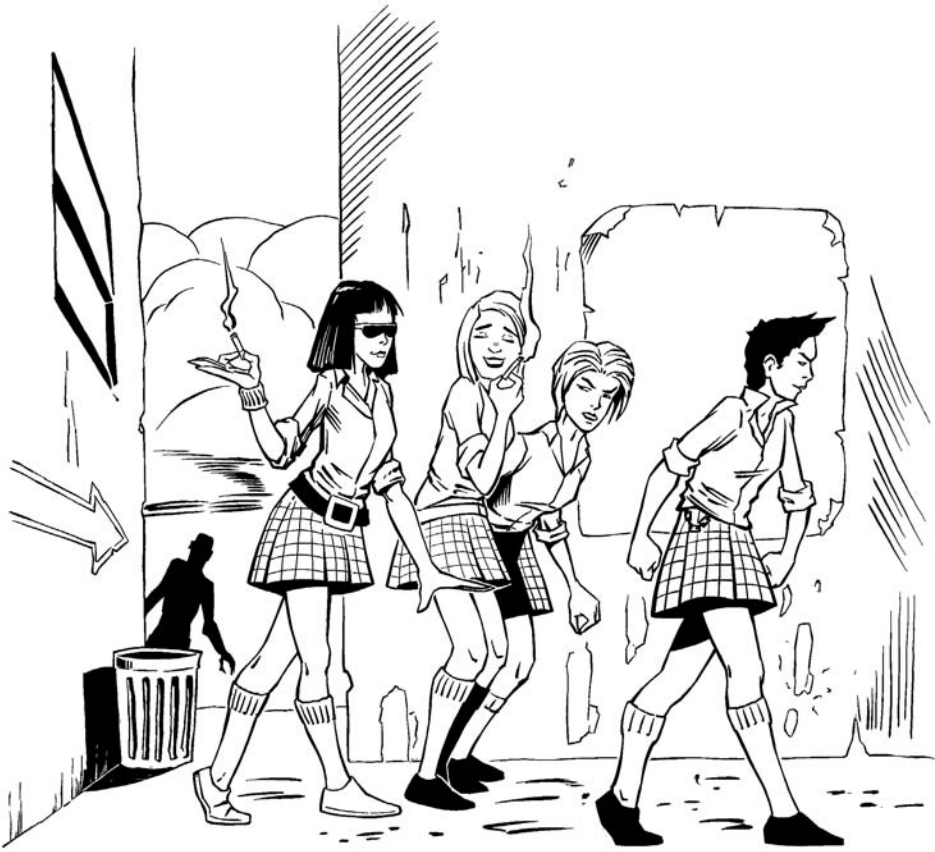
OPTIONAL STUFF

Is your game using any optional rules, like Custom Weapons? Ask your CiC. If this session is using the Custom Weapons rule and the CiC allows it, then it is now time to draw for your character's starting weapon. This is handled by drawing some cards from the deck and then comparing them to the table of weapons. If the CiC feels that certain weapons are a bit unlikely or disallowed for initial characters, she can remove the associated cards from the deck before shuffling and letting the players draw. Or, if she wants them all to have pre-set weapons, she can simply give them a weapon of her choice and move on from there. She is also perfectly within her rights to start you off with no weapons at all!

So, to re-cap, every character should have the following information:

- Name
- Archetype
- Concept
- 4 Characteristic Scores
- Useful Gear & Weapons
- Mojo Power
- Psychotrigger
- Crazy-Go-Psycho meter
- Place to write down the name of your Mad Half
- **Optional:** Additional handy cards for Pawn info, Token Costs, etc.





EXAMPLE OF CHARACTER CREATION: CUSTOM METHOD

Vera, Karo, and Screg have gathered together to play a game of Cannibal Contagion, and Screg has volunteered to be the Cannibal-in-Charge – perhaps he has some kind of weird power trip, or maybe he’s just a masochist. Screg decides to use the default scenario from this book (The Zombie Apocalypse is Now), and lays out the basic premise of the characters’ connections in this session: “You’re completely unconnected people in downtown Atlanta during mid-day on a Friday.”

After a few minutes of discussion, Vera decides she wants to play a southern belle waitress named Carla. She writes down “I am Carla, tough but sweet

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Cannibal Contagion: Comedic Survival Horror

greasy spoon waitress,” and next to her Archetype she decides to write down “The Sarah Connor.” She figures toughness and ass-kicking will be her biggest strengths, so she assigns Grit at 4 and Kill at 3, then puts Cool at 2 and Savvy at 1. As for Gear, she notes that she has a shotgun. Her Psychotrigger is “I want my kids back!” and Screg agrees that it can be frequently evoked.

Meanwhile, Karo works on his character, whose concept is “Roger, an arrogant yuppie with no redeemable qualities whatsoever.” For his Archetype, of course: “The Suit.” Karo figures Roger is best at being cool, so he ranks Cool at 4. He had to be resourceful to get this far in life, so Savvy is at 3. A few backs were stabbed along the way, so Kill is at 2, and since he’s a total wuss, Grit is at 1. For Gear, Karo writes down an Armani blazer, 500-dollar pen, and keys to a boat docked down on the ‘Hooch. He sets Roger’s Psychotrigger at “God Complex,” which could come into play quite frequently.

EXAMPLE OF CHARACTER CREATION: RANDOM METHOD

Late to the table as usual, Splick shows up right before Screg wants to start, and he didn’t bring the required Pringles donation necessary for excuse of tardiness. Screg tells him he’ll have to use the random gen method if he wants to jump in, and Splick is cool with that (he’d better be if he wants to play). Splick grabs the deck and starts drawing, and after a minute he has written down that his character’s Archetype is “The Chainsaw Guy,” and he’s a Programmer with personal traits of “Too Much Coffee” and “Big Hairy Hands.” He then does a four-card spread to get his Characteristics. All he’s got left is Gear – he looks around the room and then writes down Wireless Mouse, Collectible Pen Set, Nerf Darts, and Raggedy Old Khaki Shorts. He writes down “Caffeinated Computer Programmer Gone Postal” as his concept. He loads up an online name generator and quickly gets “Max Benton” as his character’s new christening. For his Psychotrigger, he randomly draws “Something of a Pyromaniac,” which Splick finds hilarious.



Mojo

Some gaming groups might feel that a bit of extra Oomph on the side of the characters could go a long way towards changing the flow and fun of the game for the better. Giving each character a unique empowerment of some kind can give the characters an edge above the rest, and really rock the game's foundations. This can, of course, be good or bad, depending on your desires for the game. Mojo can drastically change the game's balances, so CiC's are encouraged to consider them before allowing them into the game.

Using the Mojo rules, every character gets one special Mojo power which somehow bends the rules to help them out. Most of these powers are ways in which certain rules just don't apply to the character, or are always-on bonuses and enhancements. A few are special at-will powers the character can draw upon when needed. They are not really balanced in any way, but personally I think that's what makes them fun.

Below are thirteen sample Mojo abilities. They're numbered Two through Ace so you can randomly draw them if you like. Feel free to create your own!

- **2: Adaptability Under Fire:** Before any Quickie or Showdown, you can gain a point of CGP to permanently swap any two Characteristics' current Ranks. This *does not* swap their starting maximums, though.
- **3: Always Keep One in the Chamber:** Whenever the standard rules say you run out of Juice with your weapon, you can gain a point of CGP and say you didn't actually run out of Juice, and continue using your weapon as normal. Your actual Juice tally remains unaffected by this Mojo, however, so watch out for the next time you use your weapon again.
- **4: Balls of Steel:** In Showdowns and Quickies, you can gain a point of CGP to substitute your **COOL** score for **KILL** or **SAVVY**. You must declare this before the cards are dealt.

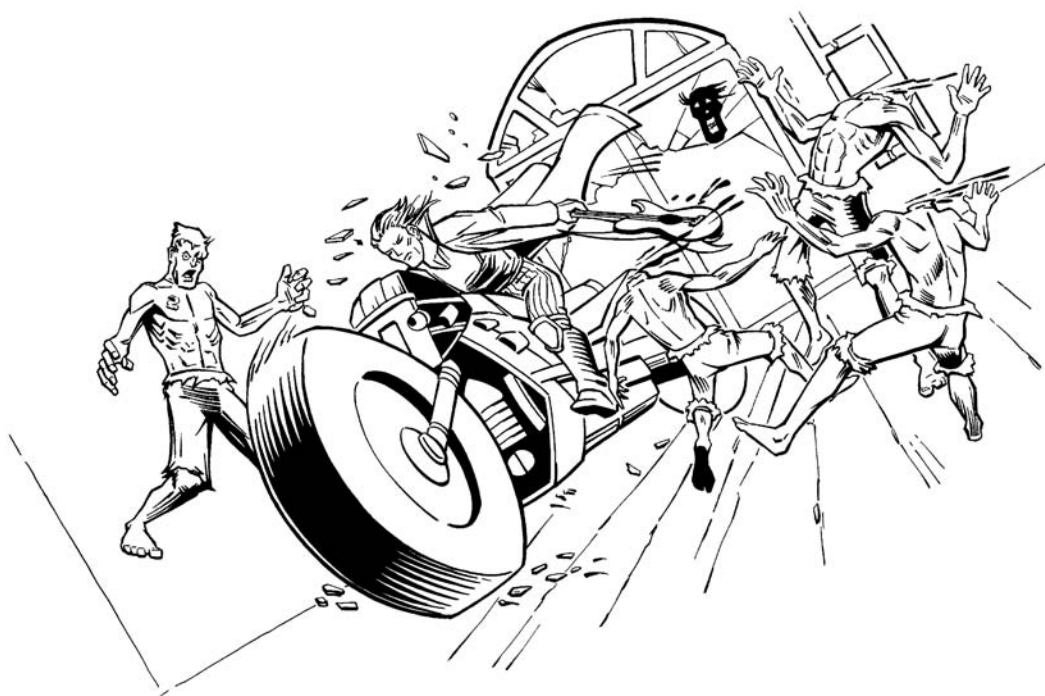


- **5: By Will Alone:** In Showdowns and Quickies, you can gain a point of CGP to substitute your **GRIT** score for **KILL** or **SAVVY**. You must declare this before the cards are dealt.
- **6: The Calming Repose of Death:** Each time you kill an opponent in a single Showdown with no assistance from your teammates, you can erase a point of CGP from your meter.
- **7: Carrier Immunity:** You are immune to the effects of the game's Contagion, but you can still carry it. If you ever become infected, ignore any Effects, Threshold, and Aftermath of the Contagion. Once infected, you can transmit it through normal means.
- **8: Effing Hard Core:** You're so hard core, you can sacrifice your own well-being just to hurt your opponents. When you win a combat Showdown against an opponent, you can voluntarily take any amount of direct Hurtin' in order to deliver an equal amount of Hurtin' to your opponent. You cannot attempt a **GRIT** check to resist any of your self-inflicted Hurtin'. Any Hurtin' you apply to yourself is divided among your Characteristics as you see fit.
- **9: Get Out of Hell Free Card:** Like a cat that's used up seven of its lives, you've got two remaining. The first time anything in the game ever causes your death, you bite the bullet, but only for a short while. At the beginning of the next scene, you are back in the game with one rank in each of your Characteristics. Keep in mind, this does nothing about existing Infection or CGP, but it might just stave off that Turning for a little while longer.
- **10: My Kung-Fu Is Better Than Yours:** Once per opponent per session, you can evoke this Mojo to force your opponent to discard the last card they just played. You can only ever use this once on the same opponent, ever. Using this power gives you one point of CGP.
- **J: One Tough Sumbitch:** When making **GRIT** Quickies to attempt to nullify incoming Hurtin', each face or ace drawn nullifies two Hurtin', instead of the usual one.
- **Q: Sir Not-Appearing-In-This-Scene:** If you have been narrated into a scene, you can gain a CGP point and write yourself out of it at any moment before you *play* any cards. You must be able to narrate your departure somehow, such as how



you vanished while no one was looking, or how contrary to what everyone believed, you were never there in the first place. Once you've played even a single card in this scene via Quickie or Showdown, you lose the ability to evoke this during this scene. Note that being *dealt* cards does not count as actually having played them.

- **K: Time Bomb:** You've got one last surprise for whoever kills you, one last trick up your sleeve should you ever have to bite that proverbial bullet. Whenever your character is killed in the game, everyone near her takes Hurtin.' The Amount of Hurtin' dealt is equal to your current stage of Madness multiplied by your **Cool** rank, Divided among everyone present. You have to narrate the nature of this unexpected Hurtin' – maybe it's a bomb in your head, maybe it's a particularly violent death spasm, or maybe even your blood is filled with highly corrosive poisons, it's up to you.



- **A: Voice of Reason:** You are adept at calming those around you, reducing their madness in the face of dark times. You can “take” points of CGP from others, erasing one point from their current CGP tallies for each one you add to your own.
- **Joker:** Take your pick!

THE QUESTION AND THE COLD OPEN

The very last step of character creation, be it the custom or random method, involves the CiC asking your character a question. Usually, this question will be some variant of “Where were you when the zombies attacked?” Once the CiC asks you, an intro scene with your character will be framed and played. This scene is called a **COLD OPEN**, and it is used to introduce your character to the events of the game. Typical games will feature each Survivor in her own unique scene, but if multiple players want to there is no reason they can’t share a Cold Open. Once each player has had their Cold Open, the game truly begins. More info on Cold Open scenes is found in the CiC’s section, on page 125.

CHARACTER EXAMPLES

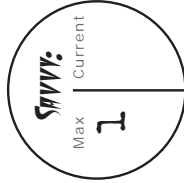
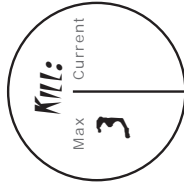
On the next four pages are some example characters you can use for your own games, should you want to just pick this game up and jump right in. Included are both some nifty portraits and some complete easy-to-print character sheets. Just pick a character, print out the included sheet, and go play!





I am Carla:
disgruntled waitress,
a mother who needs
to find her
missing children
in this
chaotic
desolation
of a city.

SURVIVAL SIDE



MOJO:

GEAR SLOTS: 2
[Savvy x2]

GEAR:
Shotgun

SLOTS: 2

NOTES:

DRINK:

+3H

CANNIBAL CONTAGION

CHARACTER RECORD SHEET

PLAYER NAME

Carla Tomlinson

CHARACTER NAME

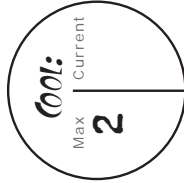
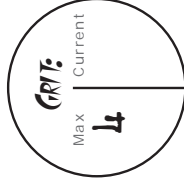
The Sarah Connor

ARCHETYPE

MAD HALF

SUIT ORDER: ♠♥♦♣

HORROR SIDE



CRAZY-GO-PSYCHO METER

[Circle your current stage below]

PSYCHOTRIGGER: I want my kids back!

POINTS UNTIL NEXT: 2 /
Cool+1 Current Tally

STAGE 1: THE CALM
The Mad Half's Narrative Price must be paid sometime during the current scene.

STAGE 2: THE BRINK
The Mad Half's Narrative Price must be paid immediately.

STAGE 3: THE DESCENT
The Mad Half can now randomly remove one of your cards from your hand before you play a Showdown.

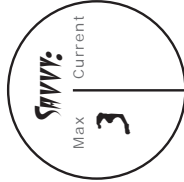
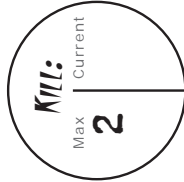
STAGE 4: THE SHATTER
The Mad Half can now choose to narrate how you perform any Showdown.

STAGE 5: THE MADNESS
When you declare an action, the Mad Half can now declare that you do something totally different instead. **SPECIAL:** You can no longer Negotiate for more cards!

I am Reger:
Focused businessman,
skilled climber
of the
Corporate
Ladder.



SURVIVAL SIDE



MOJO:

GEAR SLOTS: 6
[Savvy x2]

GEAR:
Armani Blazer
500-Dollar Pen
Keys to a Boat

SLOTS:
+1
1
1

NOTES:

TRICKS:

CANNIBAL CONTAGION

CHARACTER RECORD SHEET

PLAYER NAME

Roger Devries

CHARACTER NAME

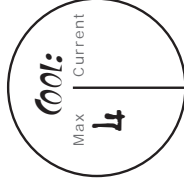
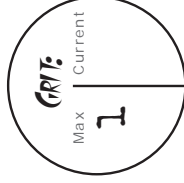
The Suit

ARCHETYPE

MAD HALF

SUIT ORDER: ♠♥♦♣

HORROR SIDE



CRAZY-GO-PSYCHO METER
[Circle your current stage below]

PSYCHOTRIGGER: Mad Complex

POINTS UNTIL NEXT: 5 / 1
Cool+1 Current Tally

STAGE 1: THE CALM The Mad Half's Narrative Price must be paid sometime during the current scene.

STAGE 2: THE BRINK The Mad Half's Narrative Price must be paid immediately.

STAGE 3: THE DESCENT The Mad Half can now randomly remove one of your cards from your hand before you play a Showdown.

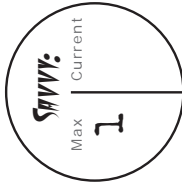
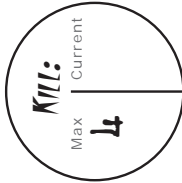
STAGE 4: THE SHATTER The Mad Half can now choose to narrate how you perform any Showdown.

STAGE 5: THE MADNESS When you declare an action, the Mad Half can now declare that you do something totally different instead. **SPECIAL:** You can no longer Negotiate for more cards!

I am Jian,
and I have a bone to pick
with a shadowy figure
from my past.



SURVIVAL SIDE



MOJO:

GEAR SLOTS: 2
[Savvy x2]

GEAR:

Father's Sword

SLOTS:

2

NOTES:

+2H, Psycho-billy

TRICKS:

CANNIBAL CONTAGION

CHARACTER RECORD SHEET

PLAYER NAME

Jian

CHARACTER NAME

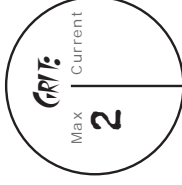
The Silent Badass

ARCHETYPE

MAD HALF

SUIT ORDER: ♠♥♦♣

HORROR SIDE



CRAZY-GO-PSYCHO METER

[Circle your current stage below]

PSYCHOTRIGGER: Don't touch the Hair!

POINTS UNTIL NEXT: 4 /

Cool+1 Current Tally

STAGE 1: THE CALM
The Mad Half's Narrative Price must be paid sometime during the current scene.

STAGE 2: THE BRINK
The Mad Half's Narrative Price must be paid immediately.

STAGE 3: THE DESCENT
The Mad Half can now randomly remove one of your cards from your hand before you play a Showdown.

STAGE 4: THE SHATTER
The Mad Half can now choose to narrate how you perform any Showdown.

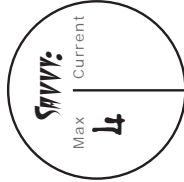
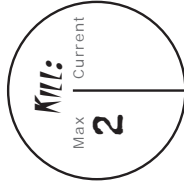
STAGE 5: THE MADNESS
When you declare an action, the Mad Half can now declare that you do something totally different instead. **SPECIAL:** You can no longer Negotiate for more cards!

I am Mei Li,
an exchange student
who has seen
all this
happen before.

We are all
screwed.



SURVIVAL SIDE



MOJO:

GEAR SLOTS: 3
[Savvy x2]

GEAR:	SLOTS:	NOTES:
Plaid Skirt	1	
Backpack	+3	
Schoolbooks	2	
Ball & Chain	2	+2H

CANNIBAL CONTAGION

CHARACTER RECORD SHEET

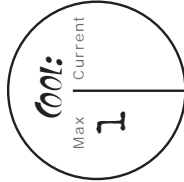
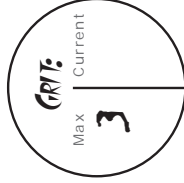
PLAYER NAME
Mei Li

CHARACTER NAME
Ass-kicking Schoolgirl

ARCHETYPE
MAD HALF

SUIT ORDER: ♠♥♦♣

HORROR SIDE



CRAZY-GO-PSYCHO METER
[Circle your current stage below]

PSYCHOTRIGGER: afraid of insects

POINTS UNTIL NEXT: 2 /
Cool+1 Current Tally

STAGE 1: THE CALM The Mad Half's Narrative Price must be paid sometime during the current scene.

STAGE 2: THE BRINK The Mad Half's Narrative Price must be paid immediately.

STAGE 3: THE DESCENT The Mad Half can now randomly remove one of your cards from your hand before you play a Showdown.

STAGE 4: THE SHATTER The Mad Half can now choose to narrate how you perform any Showdown.

STAGE 5: THE MADNESS When you declare an action, the Mad Half can now declare that you do something totally different instead. **SPECIAL:** You can no longer Negotiate for more cards!