

# MacGuffin™

## The Quidnunc and the Hounds™

### Game Rules

Version Gamma 1.0

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MacGuffin is a cooperative story improvisation game for 3 to 6 players. It provides a framework to guide you in creating a story with a real plot and character development. It is hysterical at times, tragic at others.

### Overview

One person, the Game Master, takes on the role of a busybody, or “Quidnunc”. The Quidnunc craves all the latest news and gossip about a previous escapade involving the protagonists of the story, known as the “Hounds”. The players other than the Quidnunc assume the roles of the Hounds. In this adventure, the Hounds doggedly chase down an object of vital interest, known as the “MacGuffin”. The Quidnunc drives the storytelling process by asking questions, making observations, prodding, and generally creating a nuisance of himself to extract every last detail of the Hounds' quest.

The great director Alfred Hitchcock coined the term “MacGuffin”. A MacGuffin is something that the major characters of a story, both protagonists and antagonists, are chasing. Seemingly, the MacGuffin is what the story is about. However, it is actually irrelevant to the story, which is really all about character interaction and development. The MacGuffin’s only real purpose is to bring the characters together and push them into action and competition with each other.

The movies are replete with MacGuffins. The One Ring is the coveted MacGuffin in Tolkein's “The Lord of the Rings”. Ahab relentlessly pursues his White Whale to everyone's detriment in Melville's “Moby Dick”. In “Raiders of the Lost Ark”, the Nazis hunt the magical Ark of the Covenant as a weapon of ultimate power while Indiana Jones seeks it as an artifact of tremendous historical merit.

In this game, as in the movies, MacGuffins take on many forms. Whatever its nature, the MacGuffin primarily serves as a means to link the major characters, the Hounds and their enemies, in some way. Since the characters all run toward the MacGuffin, they will invariably interact, and plots involving them can be woven into a single coherent tale whose sum is greater than their individual contributions.

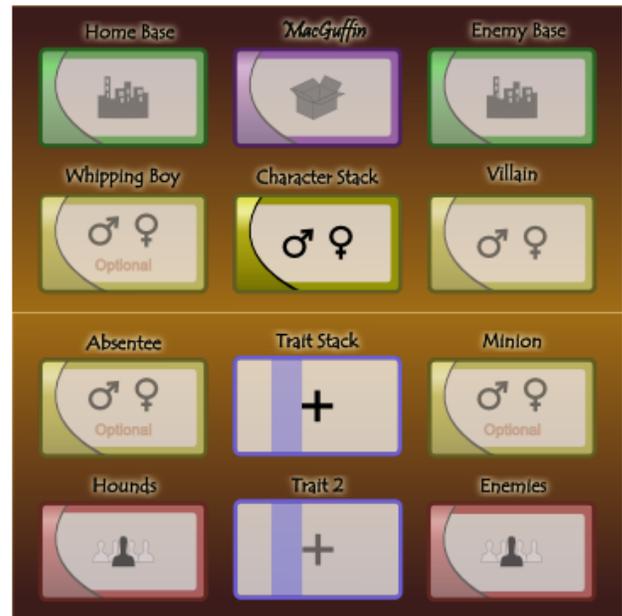
Each player has final say over a single major character in the story and shares control of the other characters with his or her fellow players. When conflicts arise between participants, they

bid on the right to narrate the result. So, this game only provides a framework for collaborative storytelling; the actual story is created by the players. Even though MacGuffin is a “game”, it is the process of telling a collaborative story that matters. So, unlike most games, the point of a MacGuffin session is not really the declaration of who won or lost, but the creation of an entirely new story.

## Gather the Props

### Boards

MacGuffin has two game boards:



These boards will help you organize the layout of the many cards used in the game.

## Fan Mail Cards

Most of the small cards are Fan Mail. Fan Mail Cards look like mail, with a big red number in the middle of them. Fan Mail is the one and only resource in the game. The cards come in denominations of 1, 5, and 10.



Fan Mail Cards

## Cards

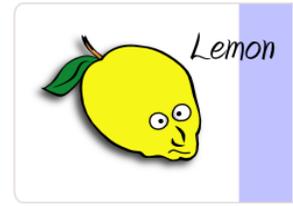
MacGuffin has a lot of cards, both large and small. Most large cards have content on both sides. The type of content is identified by specific icons as shown below.

### Card Types

Male Character		Female Character	
MacGuffin		Faction	
Setting		Trope	
Awesome		Sub-Plot	
Theme		Trait	

## Lemon Cards

Lemon Cards are a peer pressure mechanism. More on that later.



A Lemon Card

## Card Counts

The basic game has the following number of each card type:

Card Type	# Cards
Awesome	1
Character Cards	30
Faction Cards	14
Fan Mail 1 Cards	40
Fan Mail 5 Cards	20
Fan Mail 10 Cards	20
Lemon Cards	16
MacGuffin Cards	13
Setting Cards	15
Sub-Plot Cards	9
Trope Cards	22
Theme Cards	16
Trait Cards	20

## Tokens

The game comes with a purple MacGuffin token and a red Hounds token. There are also a dozen round black plastic wink tokens.

## Prepare the Stage

This section describes how to set up the game for play.

### Game Setup Overview

Here is a brief list of what needs to be done to prepare for play.

1) Choose one of the players to be the Quidnunc (Game Master). In this game, the Quidnunc has the easiest job of all. Their job is, primarily, to read off of a predefined script (the Meta-Plot questions).

- 2) Lay out the Game Boards on the table.
- 3) Lay out the Fan Mail and Lemon Cards at a couple of places around the table within easy reach of the players.
- 3) Select a predefined scenario from those listed at the end of this booklet. Make it one that looks interesting to the whole group. \*
- 4) Place any Character, Faction, Setting, Trope, MacGuffin, and Theme cards on the Board that are called out by the selected scenario description.
- 5) Have each player select a character to play from the remaining Character cards. Each player should place his or her Character Card in front of them on the table in plain view of all players.
- 6) Shuffle the remaining Character, Setting, Trope, and Trait cards in separate decks and place them in their respective locations on the boards.
- 7) As a group, select one, two, or three Sub-Plots from the Sub-Plot cards. (The number of Sub-Plots has a big effect on how long the story takes to play. So, if you want a shorter, less intricate story, select one. For a longer story, select three. Two is what most players consider optimal.)
- 8) Select one player to be the focus of each of the selected Sub-Plots and place their respective Sub-Plot cards in front of them. (These players will be referred to as “you” or “your” by the Quidnunc when asking questions about their individual sub-plots.) Have these players sit as far from each other as possible around the table. Note that the Quidnunc is not part of the story, and therefore cannot participate in a sub-plot.
- 9) Have the Quidnunc read through the setup instructions for each of the selected sub-plots from the Sub-Plots Preparation section of the Meta-Plot booklet. Follow the instructions for each of the sub-plots. As part of these instructions, roles will be assigned to the players to the left and/or right of each sub-plot's focus player. After the setup instructions are finished, make sure that every player is either the focus of a sub-plot, or plays at least one role in one. (If someone doesn't, then rearrange how people are seated, or select different sub-plots to make sure everyone has some role in a sub-plot.)
- 10) Place a round black plastic wink tokens on any empty card spots on the game board. These wink tokens indicate that other cards purchased from the various card stacks can be placed in these locations. Further, any cards at these locations can be overlaid with other cards. Any card that does not have a wink token cannot be replaced by another during the game.
- 11) Place the MacGuffin token on the MacGuffin card and the Hounds token on Home Base.

\* As an alternative to selecting a predefined scenario, have the group as a whole place cards in all of the game board spots that do not have an “Optional” indicator on them. It's generally best to start with the Factions and then pick the MacGuffin that they both seek (and why). Then, you'll need to select one of the Main Plots listed in Chapter 1 of the Meta-Plot booklet (e.g. Steal the MacGuffin).

## Game Play Overview

- 1) Have the Quidnunc read the description of the predefined scenario out loud to the group (if a predefined scenario was selected).
- 2) Note the Main Plot specified by the selected scenario or selected by the group. Have the Quidnunc look up that Main Plot in Chapter 1 of the Meta-Plot Booklet.
- 3) Look up the Main Plot or Sub-Plots sections for the current chapter. Have the Quidnunc read aloud the questions in these sections as applicable, giving the Hounds the opportunity to answer questions and provide descriptions as you go.
- 4) At the end of every chapter, reset all cards to their unrotated positions.
- 5) If the story hasn't ended yet, proceed to the next chapter and go to step 3.

## Game Play Advice

We provide some general advice here to help new players start out.

### ***What does the Quidnunc do?***

The term “Quidnunc” is an actual English word meaning busybody. This is the individual reading aloud questions from the Meta-Plot booklet, and to which all other players describe their adventures. In effect, the Quidnunc is the audience of the story, although they take an active role in that they will be asking questions about what happened in the adventure.

### ***Who are the Hounds and what do they do?***

All the players other than the Quidnunc are Hounds. The Hounds are the story's protagonists. They relate the story to the Quidnunc by making stuff up off the top of their heads.

### ***How Play Proceeds***

Play proceeds by having the Quidnunc read the questions and/or instructions aloud for the Main Plot and Sub-Plots used in the story. As the story proceeds, the players ad-lib answers to the questions and/or follow the instructions given in the chapter. This is done for every chapter in the Meta-Plot Booklet until the final chapter is finished and the story ends. The Quidnunc is expected to read the questions as if he were acting the part of a busybody, talking to the protagonists, or Hounds, in a play or movie. Players should respond to these “in-character” statements in kind. The Quidnunc is encouraged to ask any additional questions that pop into their mind to add more color and detail to the story.

During play, some of the various plot element cards will become rotated to indicate that they have been used for Fan Mail rewards and are unavailable to use again. At the beginning of every

chapter, reset all cards to their un-rotated positions to indicate that they may, once again, be used for Fan Mail rewards.

When dealing with the Sub-Plot steps, the Hound associated with the Sub-Plot question is generally allowed to speak first, but everyone is encouraged to jump in and contribute whenever they are inspired to do so, especially if another player is struggling.

## **What are the MacGuffin and Hound tokens for?**

The purple MacGuffin and red Hound tokens exist as a reminder of who is currently holding the MacGuffin and where the Hounds are located, respectively. This helps keep everyone on the same page as to what's happening in the story.

The MacGuffin token should be placed on top of the Character Card of whatever character possesses the MacGuffin at any given time. If nobody has it, place it on the MacGuffin card (if you don't know where it is), or on a Setting Card (if you do).

Similarly, the Hound token should be placed on a Setting Card to indicate where the Hounds are currently located. If the Hound token is moved to a new location, the person moving it is required to describe how the Hounds got there, and provide a description of the place when they arrive, if it is a place that has not previously been visited by the Hounds in the story. Note that the Meta-Plot questions will generally ask for these descriptions when the plot requires the Hounds to move from one place to another. But, the Hounds may move at any time as long as a mental picture is provided of how the Hounds got there and what they found when they arrived.

## **Genre and Time Period**

In the basic game, all stories start out in the fictional town of Chestnut. Characters are free to leave Chestnut, but all of the Setting Cards pertain to the town. So, if the characters leave, you're entirely on your own to improvise the setting. Similarly, at the beginning of the story, the characters are living in what can best be described as a 1950's B-movie: cheesy special effects, a script that don't take itself too seriously, and the occasional appearance of a bug-eyed monster or alien.

Make sure everyone understands the ground rules. A person's suspension of disbelief can be greatly damaged if the fundamental tenets of the setting are violated. So, make sure everyone knows what everyone else expects of them before play starts. The guidance concerning House Rules later in this manual can help in this regard.

## **The Quidnunc is a Character Too**

The Quidnunc does not appear in the story, but he or she is still a character sitting at the table with the Hounds and asking questions about their exploits. At the Quidnunc's discretion, she may even select a character card for herself. Even though that character won't ever be part of the story, the Quidnunc can portray the character with those traits while sitting at the table.

The Quidnunc should be envisioned as a trusted friend, rather than any sort of antagonist. So don't make him or her an arresting officer that is questioning suspects in a crime. An antagonist Quidnunc would put a cloud over the whole storytelling process where the participants would try to avoid answering questions openly and truthfully. Rather, it is best if the Quidnunc takes the form of a beloved confidant that has a keen interest in the events that transpired.

## **Motivate the Cast**

Good stories require more than just a good plot. They also demand character development. A character is more than just a pawn. To be believable, he or she must demonstrate the quirky traits of real-live people. Ideally, the character must also change in some way due to the events experienced in the adventure or there isn't much reason for them to have experienced it in the first place.

## **Traits**

While you are acting in character, Traits come into play. A Trait is nothing but a word or short phrase associated with a Character, Faction, Setting, Trope, or the MacGuffin. Traits exist to encourage you to describe your character or other story element in ways suggested by the Traits. Any time anyone acts out a Trait or describes a story element in accordance with its Traits, anyone else (including the Quidnunc) may simply state out loud the Trait he or she recognizes. If this is done, both the person describing the story element and the person recognizing the Trait earn one Fan Mail point.

When a Trait is described and recognized in this way, and the reward given out, the card associated with that Trait is rotated to indicate that it has been used. This is called "expending" the card. The card cannot be used again until the beginning of the next chapter of the plot, at which point the card is rotated to its original orientation, or "reset".

For example, suppose the following Trope Card is in play ...



... and Karl, a player, describes an encounter his Hound character has with a guard:

"So, there I was, with the Crown Jewel in my pocket, strolling out of the museum when I chanced upon a guard. He had a German Shepherd on a short leash, the beast I ran from only half-an-hour ago. It took one look at me and

started barking and pulling at its leash. The guard was having a terrible time controlling it.”

At this point Peter, a fellow player, recalls the “Alert” Trait on the Dog card, declares “Alert!” out loud, and expends the “Dog” Trope Card:



He and Karl both gain a point of Fan Mail.

In cases where more than one person simultaneously recognizes and states a Trait, the describing player selects which of the contenders gets the Fan Mail reward.

You might be tempted to avoid interrupting the speaker with Trait declarations, and instead wait for him to finish talking for the sake of politeness before jumping in. Don't do it (other than letting them finish their current sentence). The story flow depends on players feeling comfortable interrupting each other whenever inspiration strikes. These rules are designed to encourage that. When playing MacGuffin, hogging the spotlight is rude. But, interrupting each other is most definitely not.

## Begging is not Allowed

Participants are not allowed to indicate in any way during play that they are currently striving for a Trait reward. The recognition for performing a Trait must come spontaneously from the other participants. Consequently, if someone ever points to a Trait card or speaks a word or phrase that happens to be a Trait for which he could be rewarded, the card associated with that Trait is expended and cannot be used until it is reset at the beginning of the next chapter. (Please note that you are free to speak aloud the titles of cards, such as “Dog”, “Amber Russet”, or “Magical Doodad”. You must only avoid speaking the Trait words and phrases themselves.)

Between scenes, you may remind others to pay attention to Traits, if you feel the need.

## Character Cards and Trait Cards

The Traits associated with the characters can be utilized by anyone. Once acted out or described through narration, they can be recognized and rewarded by anyone as well.

Additional Character Traits may be assigned to a character during play. To assign a new Trait appearing on a Trait Card to a character, place the Trait Card underneath and extending out from under the Character Card like so:



**A Trait Card Applied to a Character**

There are two ways to assign a new Trait to a character: either by buying it or by recognizing it being used in the story.

At any time, anyone can purchase one of the Trait Cards lying in the center of the table and assign it to any character. The purchase is made by spending Fan Mail. The cost equals 5 Fan Mail points.

To assign a Trait through recognition rather than through a purchase, a person must identify that another player has utilized a Trait of one of the three unassigned Trait Cards lying in the center of the table. When he recognizes that fact, the declaring person immediately assigns the Trait Card to the character he recognized as having that Trait.

Whenever this is done, another Trait Card should be taken from the top of the Trait Card stack, if necessary, to ensure that there are always two unassigned Trait Cards available for use – at least, until they run out.

Whenever a person is rewarded for acting out a Trait associated with a character, whether it is an original Trait or one added through a Trait Card, the Character Card is expended. Once this is done, no rewards for acting out Traits associated directly with that character are allowed until the beginning of the next chapter. At that point, all cards are reset.

Character Cards may be brought into play at no cost as needed. And, they may be specifically selected or randomly drawn. You can only place them on a Character Card spot, or on an Any Card spot that has a round black-plastic wink token on it. You may do this even if it covers up a card that already exists there. When you do this, place the wink token on top of the Character Card.

## Faction Cards

The Traits listed on Faction Cards work in a very similar fashion to those listed on the Character Cards. The primary difference is

that Faction Traits are shared among all members of a faction. Any player may describe any Hound character acting in ways suggested by his Factions' Traits and be rewarded by any other person. In that case, both the player providing the story contributions and the person recognizing them are rewarded with one Fan Mail point.

The Traits listed on the enemy Faction Card are fair game for any player as well. If any player describes an enemy character acting in ways suggested by the enemy faction Traits, any other person may recognize that fact by stating the recognized Trait out loud. In that case, both the acting and recognizing participants gain one Fan Mail point.

Once a Trait is acted out and rewarded, the associated card is expended until the beginning of the next chapter in the plot.



**A Faction Card**

It is allowable for a predefined scenario to call out a third faction to be placed on one of the Any Card locations. If a predefined scenario is not used, it is perfectly fine to allow the group to decide a third faction is needed and to place it on one of the Any Card spots. After the story starts, though, the crucial story element of factions are set. It would be disruptive to a story for factions to come and go throughout. They are too important for that. So, they cannot be bought like other cards, and they cannot be removed from the game by being covered by other cards.

## Trope and Setting Cards

Trope and Setting Cards are just like Faction and Character Cards. They contain Traits for which players are rewarded for bringing into play. These cards represent story elements other than characters. Setting Cards represent specific story locations. Trope Cards can represent basically any other story element that the players are encouraged to introduce and/or emphasize. The Traits on Setting Cards only apply to the setting location named on the card. So, they come into play when a player describes the setting location, or when characters are located there. Similarly, the Traits on a Trope Card only apply when describing an instance of that trope or when it appears in a scene.

At any time during play, anyone may purchase the right to add another Trope Card or Setting Card to those available for use. To do so, the person must spend 5 Fan Mail points. If the purchaser has a particular card in mind, he may rifle through the appropriate stack and select it. Otherwise, just use the one that happens to be next on the stack. You can only place a Trope Card on a Trope Card spot, or a Setting Card on a Setting Card spot

that has a black wink token on it. Alternately, you can place either on an Any Card spot that has a black-plastic wink token on it. You may do this even if it covers up a card that already exists there. When you do this, place the wink token on top of the card you just laid down.



**A Trope Card**

Players are rewarded for Trope Traits in a similar way as for Character and Faction Traits. Trope traits only apply when describing a story element that satisfies the trope. For example, the Police Officer traits of Slug, Bolt, and Flash only apply to police officers. You should not reward the description of a lightning bolt by using the Police Officer trait of "Bolt" or "Flash", even though both words could use used to describe a lightning bolt. Now, if someone describes a Police Officer shooting a tazer at a Hound, and the weapon causes sparks, then the "Flash" trait would apply since a Police Officer is involved in the narrative.



**A Setting Card**

Similarly, the traits on a particular Setting Card only apply when describing the scene at the place indicated by the Setting Card. For example, the traits of "Experiment", "Complex", and "Chilling" only apply when describing NIMBY Labs. You cannot be rewarded for the "Chilling" trait of NIMBY Labs when describing a Ghost, even though that would be a reasonable term to use in describing ghosts. The trait is rewarded when used on NIMBY Labs and nothing else.

## MacGuffin Cards

The Traits listed on MacGuffin Cards are special. They are intended to repeatedly bring up certain concepts throughout the story. Any time any Hound brings up a Trait listed on a MacGuffin Card in any way, whether the MacGuffin is currently visible in the story or not, any other person may recognize that fact by stating the Trait. In that case, both the describing and recognizing people gain one Fan Mail point and the MacGuffin

card is expended until the beginning of the next “hour” in the plot. There is one and only one MacGuffin card in play for any game.

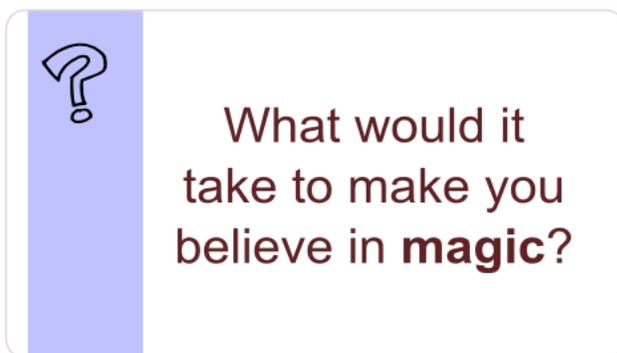


**A MacGuffin Card**

## Theme Cards

Every MacGuffin story has a single Theme Card used throughout. A Theme Card contains a question, which is always read aloud in chapters 1 or 3 and in chapter 22, but is never read aloud at any other time. The idea is for the players to concoct situations during the story's telling where the Theme question is addressed and answered over and over again in many different ways. For example, if the Theme question is, “When is stealing justified?”, the players would be expected to bring up situations where their characters are tempted to steal things, and then have their characters explicitly decide to forgo stealing, or to go ahead and steal, depending on the situation. *Note: Reading the Theme Card aloud when the Main-Plot instructs you to do so does not expend it.*

It does not matter how the players answer the question. Only that they address the question in some fashion and answer it in some way. When another participant recognizes that they have done this, they can declare, “Well, that answers that question.”, expend the Theme Card, and give themselves and the player addressing the Theme one point of Fan Mail.



**A Theme Card**

When telling the story, players are *highly* encouraged to have their characters answer the Theme question differently at the end of the story than they did at the beginning. The change in their attitude toward the question should be supported by the events that transpired in the story as much as possible. In fact, it is said by many story writers that the *entire* reason for telling a story is to see how the events of the story transform the characters. This

is your chance to give your story a deeper meaning than just a description of a random sequence of events. Note that it can be just as interesting to see how a character slides into darkness as it is to witness the reverse.

Every Theme Card has a word or short phrase in boldface. This is merely to give you some way to alphabetize the cards should you choose to organize them in that way.

## The Awesome Card



**The Awesome Card**

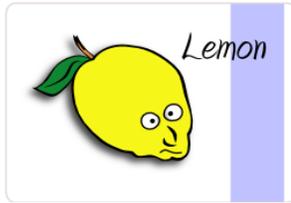
The Game Master starts the game in possession of the Awesome Card. Whenever another person says or does something that produces a hearty laugh or other emotional outburst in the other participants, the Awesome Card passes to them. When this happens, the recipient discards all of his Lemon Cards. He then assumes the duty of passing along the Awesome Card to the next worthy person.

## Lemon Cards

Lemon Cards act as a social reminder between participants to be fair and honest in handing out rewards and punishments, and to avoid being judgmental about improvisation. A Lemon Card can only be given to a person who does the following:

- 1) Breaks a game rule.
- 2) Criticizes how another person improvised something, unless it is for them having broken a game rule.
- 3) Recognizes that another person has acted out a Trait when you feel no such recognition is deserved.
- 4) Gives the Awesome Card to another person, when you feel the Awesome Card reward was undeserved.
- 5) Fails to give the Awesome Card to another person, when you feel it was highly deserved.
- 6) Gives a Lemon Card to another person, when you feel the Lemon Card was undeserved.

Note that it is absolutely prohibited to give another person a Lemon Card for “poor role-playing” or “bad story-telling”. Further, a person cannot give a Lemon Card in retaliation for having received a Lemon Card himself.



A given person can only give a single Lemon Card to another person for any given judgment. However, a person may receive multiple Lemon Cards from different people for any given judgment.

Further, giving a Lemon Card does not alter anything that has been added to the story. If you feel the story needs to be altered, use the Conflict Resolution rules to perform that task.

Each Lemon Card costs the person giving the card 1 Fan Mail. Lemon Cards have no other mechanical effect on game play. However, the person with the most Lemon Cards at the end of the game brings the drinks and/or refreshments to the next session. (Lemonade is usually appropriate.)

## **Conflict Resolution**

Most of the time, additions are made to the story and game world with only verbal interaction among the participants. Such contributions are informally known as “spiels”, which are really just facts introduced by a player about the story. Very rarely, a disagreement arises among the players about whose spiel is actually adopted. These situations are decided by a simple bidding process using Fan Mail. Whenever someone disagrees with some spiel, he must state that he disagrees while offering a number of Fan Mail points and providing his own alternate spiel. At this point, a conflict has arisen and the two people involved are the conflict's primary participants. They are the only two that may participate in the conflict. The person may either accept the revised facts and keep the proffered Fan Mail points, or reject the suggestion by handing over a number of Fan Mail points equal to one greater than what was offered. At this point, the decision is made. No further bids are allowed.

## **Accept the Spiel or Offer Fan Mail**

The Conflict Resolution rules intentionally limit a person's ability to block another person's spiel. This is a story improvisation game, and the first rule of improvisation is, “Go with the flow”. Another way of stating this concept is that players should never say, “No, but ...”. Instead, they should say, “Yes, and ...”. The rules enforce this concept by telling a person that it costs to contradict others, so it better be important to her when she does.

## **Questions are not Official Spiels until Answered**

When a Hound player asks a question, you are free to say “no” to it as long as you introduce an alternate spiel to whatever the asking person offered. For example, suppose someone asks you the question, “Was the dancer wearing an evening gown?” Without it costing you any Fan Mail, you could reply with, “No,

she was wearing a sweatshirt and blue-jeans.” However, you could not answer with a simple, “No.” This rule exists to allow people to suggest possibilities to other struggling players in a low-stress way. Even so, it is considered bad form to say “no” to questions very often. Go with the flow.

## **A Player has Control of His Hound**

There is an exception to the “Accept the Spiel or Offer Fan Mail” rule. A Hound's player can contradict another player's spiel without offering Fan Mail whenever someone else describes his Hound as being something or doing something he cannot abide. In other words, he is the ultimate authority over his Hound's actions and characteristics. Another player can place his Hound in a swamp surrounded by ravenous alligators, hit his Hound in the face with a banana cream pie, gag his Hound and tie them to a chair and it will cost the player if he objects. But, describe his Hound as saying, “Hello” and he can refute the assertion without reprisal. Unless you have a strong objection to the acts someone describes your character performing, though, it is best to just accept whatever is stated. Go with the flow.

## **Some Facts Cannot be Introduced**

For the game to function, there are some spiels that simply cannot be adopted. Any attempts to introduce these spiels automatically fail, Fan Mail notwithstanding.

## **Plot Questions are Inviolable**

The first and foremost rule is this: Anything in a Main-Plot or Sub-Plot question or description is absolutely incontrovertible. That is, it cannot be contradicted or denied. It is, after all, the various plots that give the stories their structure. Without them, a story will collapse. Any question asked on a Main-Plot or Sub-Plot step must be answered and cannot be contradicted, even if it is worded in such a way that it appears the question may be avoided or that “no” is an acceptable answer.

## **Hounds Cannot be Eliminated**

Hound characters cannot be eliminated from the story entirely. In most cases, this means that the character cannot be killed. Death may be acceptable in some stories where it merely represents a change of state. For example, a Hound may be changed into the living dead by a vampire's bite and rise the next night as an effective character.

## **Minor Characters and Required Props Last While Needed**

Minor characters can be eliminated only after they have served their purpose. If a minor character has a role to play in some plot or Sub-Plot step that has not yet been narrated, then they cannot be removed from the story. As above, this usually means they cannot be killed until their utility has ended, although exceptions can be made as long as “death” does not mean “completely eliminated from the story”. The same goes for any physical item that has been identified as a required component in a Sub-Plot step that has yet to be narrated.

## The MacGuffin Cannot be Destroyed

Until the MacGuffin has completely served its purpose, it is impervious to destruction and cannot be eliminated. This generally means it cannot be destroyed before chapter 21.

## Raise the Curtain

Chapter 1 provides the Quidnunc with her first in-character statement to be read to the Hounds. This is the point at which play switches to in-character storytelling. The players should now all act out their roles, as if their characters are all sitting around a table and relating to the inquisitive Quidnunc all that happened to them.

The narration of the story takes place mostly in the past tense. Essentially, it is assumed all of the Hounds are sitting around a table chatting about events that happened in the past. Consequently, the only role-playing that takes place in the present tense is that concerning events happening at the table. The actual story may have taken place yesterday, last year, or even decades ago. In fact, the players could decide that the Quidnunc is a psychic holding a séance and the Hounds are all ghosts describing a story that happened to them centuries ago.

## The Timing of Scenes

If you'll note, the steps of the various plot steps are sequenced in chapters (Chapter 1, Chapter 2, Chapter 3, etc.). However, *there is nothing that says that any two chapters take place on the same day*. The Chapter 1 events and the Chapter 2 events may be weeks or even years apart. It is best to be vague about the times and dates about when events take place. All that is important is to get a general sense of what events came before other events and which ones took place at about the same time.

## Advancing the Main-Plot

When the Quidnunc reads a question of a Main-Plot step, any Hound is welcome to immediately jump in and contribute, if it makes any kind of sense to the story that he do so. If more than one Hound jumps in at the same time, the Quidnunc decides priority.

## The Flow of Time

When narrating a scene, there is nothing that says you must describe the scene's events sequentially. Remember, your character is talking about events that already took place. If you find that your character needs to have been drenched in water for some reason, then simply interject: "Oh, by the way, I forgot to tell you that it had recently rained and we were standing on the curb not two minutes before when a car drove by and splashed water all over us." So, feel free to jump forward and backward in time as needed.

Having said that, it is important that players mostly answer plot questions with descriptions of their characters helping out their fellow Hounds in some way dealing with the MacGuffin. Unless

a Main-Plot or Sub-Plot step specifically indicates that it is a Flashback, assume that it is asking about what a Hound did while participating in the pursuit of the MacGuffin. Otherwise, some players will tend to rhapsodically yammer on about their character's past escapades having nothing to do with the current story. Too much of that removes a character from the ongoing action, and the story tapestry held together by interwoven plots will unravel and fall apart.

## What can Characters Do?

It is up to a player to decide what her character can and cannot do, as long as she stays within the confines of what was agreed upon at the beginning of the game. She may describe her character performing martial arts, for example, even though her character does not possess the "Martial Artist" Trait. She just cannot be *rewarded* for describing her character performing those actions without the Trait.

## Sub-Plot Auctions

Each Sub-Plot has more than one potential ending. When a Sub-Plot has advanced to its end, the Quidnunc is given the privilege of the opening bid in an auction between himself and the players participating in the Sub-Plot. This bid may be as low as zero or as high as the number of Fan Mail points currently held by the Quidnunc. Players who participated in the Sub-Plot via a role then bid, in alphabetical order of the roles they played. Then, the player that holds the Sub-Plot card is given a bid. Each of these players is allowed only a single counter-bid, which must be at least one greater than the previous bid to have any chance of winning. Next, the Game Master gets one final bid. The winner chooses which alternate ending will be used in the Sub-Plot. If someone other than the Quidnunc wins the bid, the Quidnunc gets the Fan Mail points the winner offered. If the Quidnunc wins the bid, the second highest bidder gets the Fan Mail offered by the Quidnunc.

If she wins the bid, the Quidnunc is highly encouraged to select an ending that she believes the others would not choose themselves. Such a policy will keep the player from feeling complacent, and will push them into making difficult choices as to what they really want out of the story. It will force them to designate which is more desirable for them personally: securing a favorable Sub-Plot outcome now, or having a better chance to select the outcome of the final scenes. Without the risk of losing one or the other, the game would lack any significant sense of rising tension, much to the story's detriment. On the other hand, it is not the Quidnunc's job to completely decimate the story, either. She is just trying to keep the story from having *too* much of a Hollywood ending. If a Quidnunc can get even a single concession in a three player game, or two concessions in a four or five player game, then she should consider his job well done. The bidding rules, giving the Quidnunc both first and last bid, should provide enough firepower for him to score an occasional win even though she is ultimately pitted against everyone else.

## **Main-Plot Auctions**

Each Main-Plot also has more than one potential ending. When a Main-Plot has advanced to its climax, the Quidnunc is given the privilege of the opening bid in an auction between himself and the Hounds. Each Hound is then allowed a single counter-bid, starting with the player to the left of the Quidnunc and proceeding around the table in a clock-wise fashion. The highest bid gets the honor of choosing which alternate ending will be used in the Main-Plot. The winner's bid is discarded. It does not go to the losers.

## **Ending the Game**

At the end of the game, all Fan Mail points are discarded. They do not carry over from one game session to another.

## **Storytelling Advice**

Some people instantly understand what is expected from them in a game like MacGuffin, and have no fear or difficulty in making stuff up off the top of their heads. Others are over-whelmed by the prospect of improvising a story at the spur of the moment. They mentally freeze up and sit with a bewildered look on their faces or stumble for words to say.

If this happens, you should encourage the players to help each other out in their narration. It is perfectly reasonable, even expected, for a player to interject details into the narration of another player's Sub-Plot step, and describe actions that that character supposedly took. It is even permissible for a player to completely assume the task of narration for another struggling player, just as long as this does not happen too often and ends up blocking the struggling player rather than helping him out.

Any player can help another struggling player a great deal by embellishing their current Sub-Plot step. Hand them quirky details to help feed their imaginations. For example, if a Hound freezes up, you could say something like: "I understand that you were performing on the street corner trying to earn some money. Were you playing a banjo?" You could then follow on with more leading statements like: "From what I hear, you made a few tips at first, but someone grabbed the money and ran. Tell me about that." Make the statements more and more absurd as you go along: "Now, I heard a rumor that another musician accompanied you while wearing a gorilla costume. That must have been a sight to see. Can you describe the costume?" By putting their characters in absurd or silly situations, you are actually helping to build a mental picture for everyone, which helps people improvise.

You may experience some resistance to your statements. This is particularly common when you put characters in embarrassing situations, such as playing banjos with companions dressed in gorilla costumes. Whenever a player resists, be sure to make them use their Fan Mail to bid on the matter. Contradicting you needs to cost something. Eventually they will run out of the resources allowing them to resist the contributions of others and be forced to "Go with the flow". It generally doesn't take long for people to realize that if they run out of Fan Mail, then their

characters are at the mercy of the other players. With a little practice, those people having a hard time improvising will loosen up and get better at it.

## **Establish House Rules**

Once you are comfortable with the basic MacGuffin rules, you may decide that you would like to add additional rules to tailor stories to your group's own tastes. To do so, all a person needs to do is to propose the new rule and offer up some Fan Mail. If he can get at least one other person to contribute additional Fan Mail, then the rule becomes an official proposal. At that point, Any other participants may contribute Fan Mail to support the rule, or to oppose the rule. If the Fan Mail contributions favoring the new rule are greater than those opposing it, the rule is adopted. The Fan Mail offered by the winners are spent. They are not transferred to the loser. Write the new rule down somewhere, and record the number of Fan Mail points applied to it. This is the rule's Strength. If a person wishes to eliminate the rule in the future, he or she must garner support for the rule change with Fan Mail points greater than this value, as well as outbid the contributions of those opposing elimination of the rule at the time. If the rule elimination is outbid, though, the Strength of a House Rule will actually increase, as the Strength equals the highest single collection of Fan Mail points ever gathered at once to support it.

For example, suppose Harold wants to enforce consistency in the game fiction between game sessions. Toward that end, Harold proposes the following:

"Hey guys, it's driving me nuts that in one story, vampires and werewolves are best buds, and the next they are natural enemies. How about we permanently establish that vampires and werewolves are natural enemies. I'll contribute 10 Fan Mail to that House Rule."

Sitting across the table from Harold, Karl says:

"Sure. Why not. It doesn't matter much to me, but I'll throw in one Fan Mail toward that. Does anyone object?"

Looking around the table, nobody has an objection, so Harold writes down on the House Rules sheet the following:

"Vampires and Werewolves are natural enemies. (Strength 11)"

The same process works for other kinds of rules as well. For example, the following could be made into a House Rule:

"House Rule changes can only be proposed after the final chapter is fully narrated. (Strength 27)"

If a person believes that someone has violated a House Rule, he or she may emphasize that fact via Lemon Cards, just as they can when a person breaks any other game rule.

## Alternate Rules

### ***Shuffle and Deal the Characters***

If you want to speed up game preparation a tad, shuffle the Characters Cards and deal them out as needed rather than allow the players to painstakingly select them. Then, only allow the receiving player the option to choose which side of the card to use as their character.

### ***Conversational Trait Recognition***

Ordinarily, participants grant Trait rewards by simply blurting out the Traits they recognize. Obviously, that is not how people normally respond when engaged in friendly conversation. This rule exists to encourage a more natural interaction between participants to promote a greater sense of immersion in the story. With this alternate rule, the Trait recognition is performed in a conversational manner instead of just being blurted out.

Suppose Bill described the actions of Amarillo Golden-Feather, who has the Trait of “Gullible”, and did so in some way that fits that Trait. Further, let's say that another player, Mary, recognizes the fact that Bill did so. If this rule is in play, Mary should not simply blurt out the word “Gullible” to recognize Bill's use of the Trait. Instead, Mary should use the word conversationally to trigger a Trait reward. For example, she may say something like, “Wow, I can't believe you were that gullible!” or, “I hope you realize how gullible you were being”.

With this rule, failure to recognize a Trait in a conversational manner does not actually negate the Trait reward of Fan Mail. However, others would be well within their rights to throw Lemon cards Mary's way for her “poor manners”.

When using this rule, it is okay to recognize Traits by using another word having the same root. For example, suppose Mary described Eric Coppersmith, who has the Trait “Hornswoggle”, as having duped someone out of some money. It would be perfectly acceptable for Bill to recognize that fact by saying something like, “Boy, Eric sure Hornswoggled that guy”, or “Eric is truly a masterful Hornswoggler”.

## Story Structure

The following table gives a general overview of how MacGuffin stories are laid out. As you can see, every chapter serves a specific purpose. (Note that Main-Plot chapters are colored yellow.)

Chapter 1 	<b>Main-Plot: The Opening Scene</b> , where the Hounds are introduced living their normal lives. Sometimes the story's Theme is stated here, whenever it is crowded out of Chapter 3 due to other concerns.
Chapter 2 	<b>Sub-Plots: Setup Begins</b> , where we start to see the backgrounds of each Hound. A great many flashbacks occur here. Each sub-plot focuses on a different Hound, humanizing them by showing them doing something nice.
Chapter 3 	<b>Main-Plot: Setup Spotlight</b> , where the story's Theme is usually stated, and, often, the Enemies are introduced.
Chapter 4 	<b>Sub-Plots: Setup Ends</b> , where we finish discovering what the individual Hounds lack in their lives, sometimes in a flashback. Also, some Sub-plots start in earnest.
Chapter 5 	<b>Main-Plot: Catalyst</b> , where something happens that will push the Hounds into action concerning the MacGuffin. Any Enemies that have not yet been introduced are introduced here.
Chapter 6 	<b>Sub-Plots: Debate</b> , where the Hounds make preparations and discuss amongst themselves their reservations about being worthy or capable of taking on the upcoming ordeal.
Chapter 7 	<b>Main-Plot: Break into Act II</b> , where the Hounds state their plans and venture forth.

Chapter 8 	<b>Sub-Plots: A Strange New World</b> , where the Hounds enter into a situation that is foreign to them. All the remaining Sub-plots start in earnest, and the others continue.
Chapter 9 	<b>Sub-Plots: Complications Arise</b> , where the Hounds explore this new world they have entered, and roadblocks appear as the Sub-Plots continue.
Chapter 10 	<b>Main-Plot: Battle at Midway</b> , where the Hounds directly clash with the Enemies and attain a False Victory (or, occasionally, False Defeat). At this point, the story is pretty much half-way-through.
Chapter 11 	<b>Sub-Plots: Lull</b> , where things quiet down, giving the Sub-Plots a chance to progress.
Chapter 12 	<b>Main-Plot: Enemies Close In</b> , where the Enemies are observed to be regrouping from the earlier conflict.
Chapter 13 	<b>Sub-Plots: Tension Builds ...</b> , where the Sub-Plots introduce even more complications that the Hounds must overcome. This sets up another conflict with Enemies in Chapter 15.
Chapter 14 	<b>Sub-Plots: ... and Builds</b> , where the Sub-Plots complicate things even more. This erupts into another conflict with Enemies in Chapter 15.
Chapter 15 	<b>Main-Plot: Game Over?</b> , where the Hounds directly clash again with Enemies and suffer a False Defeat (or False Victory) – whichever is the opposite situation to Chapter 10. The battle appears to decide the final victor.
Chapter 16 	<b>Main-Plot: Passion of the Soul</b> , where the Hounds experience abject despair or joyous celebration, whichever is appropriate depending on whether Chapter 15 resulted in a False Defeat or False Victory.

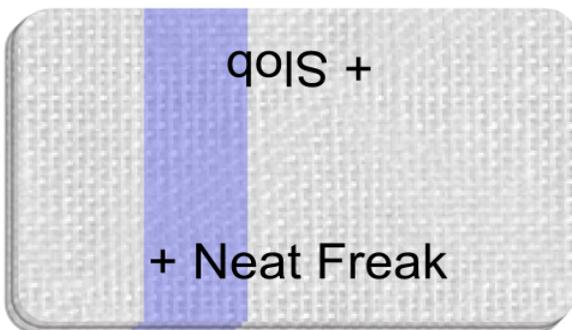
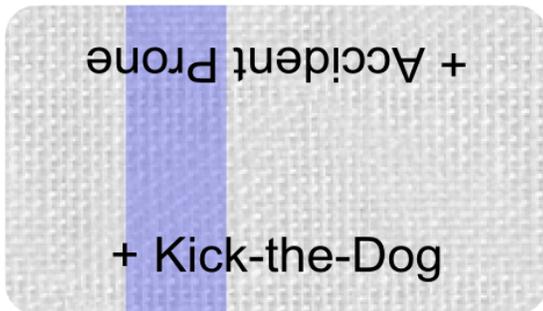
Chapter 17 	<b>Sub-Plots: Sub-Plot Auctions</b> , where the players bid on who gets to choose the Sub-Plot endings.
Chapter 18 	<b>Sub-Plots: Sub-Plot Resolutions</b> , where the selected Sub-Plot endings play out and the Hounds hopefully grow in some way.
Chapter 19 	<b>Main-Plot: Break into Act III</b> , where the solution to the Main Plot emerges. The solution is ostensibly informed by the Sub-Plot outcomes, even if that only appears as one Hound's burst of confidence and leadership.
Chapter 20 	<b>Main-Plot: Main-Plot Auction</b> , where the players bid on who gets to choose the Main-Plot ending.
Chapter 21 	<b>Main-Plot: Finale</b> , where the selected Main-Plot ending plays out. Either the Hounds or their Enemies earn a final victory over the other. This time, it's for real.
Chapter 22 	<b>Main-Plot: Reflection</b> , where the Theme is once again stated and the Hounds discuss what they learned from the escapade in a Final Scene that mirrors the Opening Scene.

## An Example Of Play

This section lists a brief excerpt showing how an ordinary game would be set up and played. Our players are: John (the Quidnunc), Ann, Carla, and Bill. (The game is really best when played with at least 4 players. But, it will usually work fine with three, and we need to simplify our example as much as possible.)

### Setup Example

John, Carla, Ann, and Bill have just received MacGuffin, and are excited to try it out. After a brief discussion, John volunteered to be the Quidnunc. The group decided to forego using one of the predefined scenarios and opted instead to create one themselves. They put the game boards on the table, and then put the Character, Setting, Trait, and Trope card stacks on the board at the proper places. They went ahead and randomly put two Trait Cards on the table in play (including the one on top of the Trait Card stack):



Being adventurous, they decided to start from scratch rather than using a predefined scenario. To do so, the instructions state that they should fill in all spots on the game board that do not have an "Optional" indicator. It advises to start with picking the Factions and the MacGuffin.

Carla, John, Ann, and Bill chose to have the Hounds' Faction be the Gaia Brigade environmentalist group. So, they chose this Faction Card:



**The Hounds' Faction**

They also chose as their Enemy Faction the Medical Ethics Directorate:



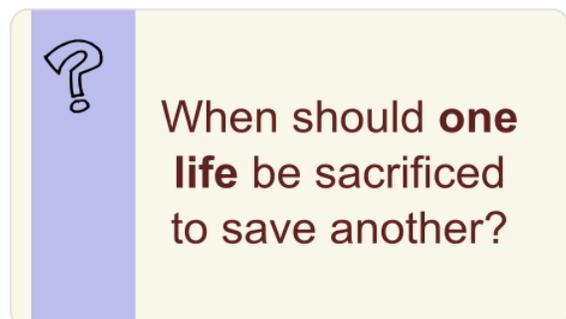
**The Enemy Faction**

To have something in which both the Gaia Brigade and the Medical Ethics Directorate would be interested, they selected the "Living Thing" MacGuffin and decided it was a chimpanzee named Bonzo that the M.E.D. was using for medical experiments and the Gaia Brigade wanted to save:



**The MacGuffin Card**

After deciding on the Factions and MacGuffin, they looked through the Theme cards and decided that the Theme question of "When should one life be sacrificed to save another?" would be the most appropriate:



**The Theme Card**

They then selected the Chestnut Zoo as the Hound's Home Base of operations:



**Carla's Character (A Hound)**

Next, they selected NAMBI Labs as the Enemy Base:



**Bill's Character (A Hound)**

Next, they selected Galena Black as the Villain:



**Villain**



**Ann's Character (A Hound)**

Next, the group looked through the Sub-Plot Preview Cards and discussed what would be fun. They selected "Love Triangle" for Carla and "Facing Your Fears" for Ann:

They then skimmed through the Main Plots in the Meta-Plot Booklet and chose "Nab the MacGuffin and Run" as their story's main plot.

Next, Ann, Carla and Bill choose characters. Carla chooses Matilda Bjork, Ann chooses Kobayashi Midori, and Bill chooses Gwayne White:



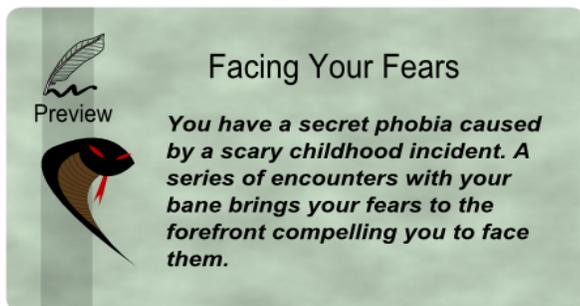
and the two players sitting next to you, so make sure they are okay with that. The player to your left is your "Adversary". The player to your right is your "Heartthrob", which you and <L: Adversary> both pursue romantically. (All three of you may want to compare your characters and swap any out for others if the matches are awkward.) These characters can participate in other sub-plots, but don't put either of them in other romantic roles.

**John:** "We've already discussed having you all involved in a love triangle, so I assume you don't have any problem being part of a romantic sub-plot, right?"

Ann, Bill, and Carla all nob in agreement.

**John:** "Okay. Since, you have the Love Triangle card, Carla, the 'you' in this description refers to you. That means Ann is to your left (since I don't count as the Quidnunc), which means her character takes on the role of 'Adversary'. Bill, on your right, takes on the role of 'Heartthrob'."

**John:** "That does it for the sub-plot setup."



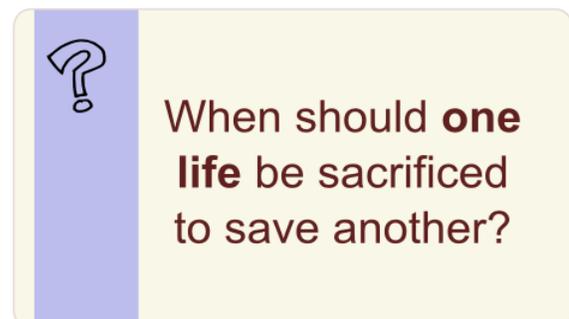
### Storytelling Example

In order to get a good feel for how the storytelling process unfolds, we jump ahead now to Chapter 3 of the "Nab the MacGuffin and Run" main plot.

...

**John:** ... "Okay. Let's move on to Chapter 3. *Since it is the beginning of a new chapter, Carla and Bill reset all of the currently expended cards by turning them to an un-rotated orientation.*

**John:** (*reading the Chapter 3 step aloud for "Nab the MacGuffin and Run"*) "At this time, some of the ... Gaia Brigade ... were gathered together when someone asked the following:"



**John:** (*reading the Theme Card*) "When should one life be sacrificed to save another?"

**John:** (*returning to the Main-Plot step*): "You answered differently then, than you would now, based on your experiences. ... Where were you? Describe the place to me, if you don't mind."

**Bill:** "We were at the zoo. As I recall, the animals were making

Next, John read through the Sub-Plot Preparation instructions in the Meta-Plot Booklet. He started with the Facing Your Fears sub-plot instructions:

#### Facing Your Fears

The player to your left is your "Friend".

In this sub-plot, the "Omen" Trope card will act as something your character fears. It is a phobia that you strive to overcome. If the "Omen" spot is not already filled, look through the Trope Cards and pick one to fill that spot.

**John:** "Hmmm ... I guess that "you" is referring to you, Ann, since you have the Sub-Plot card. The person to your left is Bill. So, that means that Bill takes on the role of "Friend" for this sub-plot. So, what trope do you want as your phobia, or Omen?"

**Ann:** "I think I'll take Dog. I don't want anything too weird." *Ann places the Dog card on the Omen spot of the game board.*



Next, John moved on to the Love Triangle Sub-Plot Preparations:

#### Love Triangle

This is a romantic sub-plot involving romance for you

quite a racket that day. The lions kept roaring and the elephants were trumpeting quite a bit as well.”

**John:** “I’m sure it was quite exotic.” (*Having just recognized that Bill described the exotic nature of Chestnut Zoo, John rotates the Chestnut Zoo card. He and Bill both grab a Fan Mail card: Bill for his narrative skill, and John for recognizing it.*)



*Bill looks pleased with himself.*

**John:** (*Returning to the Main-Plot step*): “What were the circumstances?”

**Bill:** “The Gaia Brigade was having a meeting at the zoo to discuss the desperate issue of animal poaching in Africa. Oddly enough, it was almost exclusively women who showed up for that gathering. I was exhausted after opening doors, taking coats, holding chairs, and just generally trying to make all the ladies feel welcome.”

**Ann:** Yes, he was quite gallant! (*Expend the Gwayne White Card by rotating it. Both she and Bill get a point of Fan Mail.*)



**John:** (reading the Main-Plot card) “What brought up the question?”

**Carla:** “What question?”

**John:** (Pointing to the Theme Card.) “When should one life be sacrificed to save another?”

**Carla:** “Oh. Duh. Gwayne and I started talking about how some poachers ought to be shot for their crimes, and the discussion wandered into the ethics of using animals for lab experiments.”

**John:** (reading) “How did you answer the question then?”

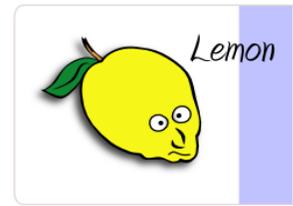
**Bill:** “I explained that I didn't like it, but the zoo got quite a bit of funding from selling its excess animals to labs. Without the money, the zoo would have to charge more admission, which would reduce its value to society. Essentially, it is a necessary evil that I was willing to put up with.”

**John:** “That answers that question!” (John rotates the Theme card and gives himself and Bill one Fan Mail each.).



**Carla:** “You know, a zoo would never actually do that – sell animals for experiments.”

**John:** (spending one Fan Mail and tossing a Lemon Card toward Carla) “That's bad form, Carla! You should never criticize the storytelling. Go with the flow, unless you want to challenge Bill in a conflict over it.”



**Carla:** (sighs) “No, you're right. Anyway, I thought Gwayne was wrong, and that no animal should ever be sacrificed in a medical experiment. Animals have just as much right to live as people.”

**John:** “... Interesting ... well, let's move on to Chapter 4”

*The players reset all the cards to their non-rotated positions.*

**John:** “We'll start with the Love Triangle sub-plot ... “

**John:** Reading from Chapter 4 of the Meta-Plot Booklet: “I'm informed that this was when you overheard ... Gwayne ... and ... Kobayashi Midori ... talking about a romantic getaway they recently took together. Needless to say, you were quite jealous. What were the juicy details you heard?”

**Carla:** “Gwayne brought in the cutest little tiger cub that he and Midori had recently acquired from a trip to Africa ... they both work for the zoo ... Anyway, they let us all pet it. I heard them talking about how inseparable they were on that trip.” *Carla sighs.*

**John:** (reading) “How would you describe how you felt when you were eavesdropping?”

**Carla:** “I panicked. I felt like if I didn't do something soon, I was going to lose Gwayne to Midori.”

**John:** (Ad-libbing) “What did you do about it?”

**Carla:** “Uh ... On his ... business card ... I wrote, ... a steamy little note: 'How about a date? ... Uh ... Friday, I'm off at eight!’”

**Bill:** (laughs) “How Adorable!” *Bill rotates Matilda's Card. He and Carla both gain a point of Fan Mail.*



**John:** (tossing the Awesome Card to Carla) “Nice.”



**Carla:** (accepting the Awesome Card with a smile and discarding the Lemon Card she recently gained.) “Thanks.”

**John:** (ad-libbing his own question) “Did Midori see you give Gwayne the note?”

**Carla:** “I don’t think so. She was too busy picking tiger-cub hairs off of her black angora sweater. She was always fastidious in her appearance.”

**Ann:** “That’s right. That tiger cub was climbing all over me, as I recall. I had hair all over me.”

**Bill:** “You might say Midori is a Neat Freak. So, I’ll apply that new Trait to her.” (Bill takes the Trait card with “Neat-Freak” on it and slides it underneath the Kobayashi Midori card.)



**Carla:** (Shrugs and gives a little nod.) “That wasn’t what I was going for, but it works.”

**John:** “Okay, let’s move on to Ann’s sub-plot”.

**John:** (Reading the Facing Your Fears step in Chapter 4 of the Meta-Plot Booklet) “I’m lead to believe that, in your childhood, you had a traumatic event involving ... a Dog. It was so terrifying that it developed into a kind of phobia that continued to plague you throughout this whole business with ... Bonzo, the chimp. ... What happened in that incident?”

**Ann:** “When I was about 5 years old, I was mauled by a vicious crazed dog. It looked friendly enough at first, but I made the mistake of trying to pet it. I remember it being very jittery, although I was too young to take that as a warning. As soon as I touched it, the beast attacked with a lightning-fast bite. It dug its razor-sharp teeth into my arm.”



**Carla:** “So, you could say that the dog was acutely alert to your presence.” (Carla rotates the Dog card and she and Ann give themselves a point of Fan Mail.)

**Ann:** “Sure.”

Noting that the last question on the card, “What was it that scared you so badly?” was already answered, John skipped it and decided to ad-lib a question of his own.

**John:** “So, what kind of dog was it?”

**Ann:** “A Pomeranian.”

John and Carla laugh out loud. Carla tosses the Awesome card to Ann.



**Ann:** “Great. And me without any Lemon Cards. A lot of good that did me. And, anyway, it's not funny! The rotten little monster actually broke the skin. There was blood. Well, a drop or two anyway... *I was five!*” *Ann feigns indignation and smiles.*

**John:** “So, let me get this straight. You work at a zoo, handle lions and tigers all day every day, and you are afraid of dogs?”

**Ann:** “Not all dogs. Just Pomeranians.”

*John, Bill, and Carla burst into laughter again.*

**John:** (*wiping a tear*) “Okay. Let's move on to Chapter 5.”

*John, Ann, and Bill reset all of the expended cards on the table.*

...

## MacGuffin Scenarios

This section contains a number of starting scenarios to help catapult you into the creation of thrilling and hysterical stories of your own making. All of these scenarios take place in the fictional town of Chestnut in the 1950s, where all kinds of bizarre and conspiratorial happenings occur. The stories do not focus on any single group or faction. Rather, they span all walks of life and many perspectives set as a parody of 1950s B-Movie Sci-Fi / Horror. Think *Eureka!* meets *Shawn of the Dead* meets *The Twilight Zone*.

### A BAD CASE OF ZOMBIEITIS

**Logline:** When a drug developed by the military to enhance a soldier's effectiveness unleashes a plague of music-loving zombies, Bravo Unit must perform for their lives!

**Theme:** When should fear of death keep you from *living*?

**Main Plot:** Uh Oh. *We're* the MacGuffin!

**MacGuffin:** The Hounds

**Factions:** Bravo Unit (Hounds), Zombies (Enemies) – Use the Zombie trope card as if it were a faction card.

**Setting:** Chestnut Military Base (Home Base / Enemy Base), NAMBI Labs (Any Card)

**Tropes:** Commando (Vocation), Rad Scientist (Dream)

NAMBI Labs has been working with the military to perfect a biologic drug capable of preserving a soldier's life if injected soon enough after injury. Unfortunately, the drug worked too well. The commandos used as test subjects became violent and attacked the researchers. Their saliva apparently contained the same pathogen that was in the original injection, accidentally giving birth to a new genetically engineered plague. Initial attempts at containment failed, and now zombies have overrun the entire military base! Anyone bitten by an infected person comes down with a debilitating fever. The subjects then enter a state of complete mental detachment, save for an insatiable hunger to eat human flesh and an odd sense of rhythm that surfaces in the presence of music.

### BALM OF THE DEAD

**Sequel To:** A Bad Case of Zombieitis (assuming Bravo Unit survives)

**Logline:** When NAMBI Corporation denies they have a cure for a zombie plague infesting Chestnut, Bravo Unit enlists the help of music-loving zombies' to steal it.

**Theme:** What cost is too great to save *yourself*?

**Main Plot:** Steal the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Miracle Cure

**Factions:** Bravo Unit (Hounds), NAMBI Corporation (Enemies)

**Setting:** Chestnut Military Base (Home Base), NAMBI Labs

(Enemy Base), Official Cannon Park (Hangout)

**Tropes:** Commando (Vocation), Rad Scientist (Dream), Zombie (Creature)

**Characters:** Priscilla Nicchi (Villain)

Chestnut Military Base has been overrun by zombies! Fortunately, the barbed wire fence surrounding the base seems to be keeping the zombies from invading the rest of Chestnut for the time being. For some reason, NAMBI Corporation has already taken measures to quarantine the base, saying that a platoon returning from overseas was infected with the Ebola virus.

As the platoon that just returned from abroad, you know that is total crap. Further, in investigating the zombie infestation, you discovered a communique from an anonymous source stating that a cure for the zombie plague already exists at NAMBI Labs. NAMBI Corporation emphatically denies any knowledge or liability concerning the plague, which any preexisting cure would obviously disprove. Since NAMBI management cannot be convinced to come clean, you have been ordered by your superiors to kill everyone infected with the disease. This does not sit well, since you have worked with many of them for years. Your only hope of saving your fellow soldiers is to disobey orders and stop the spread of the zombie plague by acquiring the cure yourselves.

Unfortunately, you just received an unsubstantiated rumor that zombies were spotted wandering throughout the nearby Official Cannon Park. So, time is of the essence.

## BLOOD DRIVE OF THE DAMNED

**Logline:** When a painting possessed by their insatiable founder's sleeping spirit is offered as a blood-drive prize, some abstinent vampires risk going dark-side to win it back before He awakens.

**Theme:** How much of your own *soul* would you sacrifice to save a loved one?

**Main Plot:** Win the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Cursed Artifact (Crying Boy Portrait)

**Factions:** The Nosfera Troupe (Hounds), Bequest for the Arts (Enemies), M.E.D. (Any Card)

**Setting:** The Cabernet Cabaret (Home Base), Travis T. Hooke Museum (Enemy Base), Michael E. Vellian Sanitorium (Haunt)

**Tropes:** Inferno (Any Card), Riot (Any Card), Storm (Omen), Vampire (Creature)

**Characters:** Lord Dennis Concorde (Villain)

The Medical Ethics Directorate (M.E.D.) has sponsored a blood drive in Chestnut to replenish their dangerously low supply. To bring in as many donors as quickly as possible, M.E.D. is offering an old masterpiece painting titled The Crying Boy as a prize to the team that brings in the most blood. The painting was unexpectedly found in a dark closet in the basement of the Michael E. Vellian Sanitorium, and the M.E.D. thought it could be put to good use in this fashion. It is down to the last day of the competition, and only two organizations are neck-in-neck

contention for the prize: The Nosfera Troupe and Bequest for the Arts.

The Nosfera Troupe was horrified when they heard the news, which is saying quite a bit, since aside from being Chestnut's Community Theater group, they also happen to be vampires.

Their horror arose from the fact that The Crying Boy houses the spirit of the founder of their vampiric line, Noferatu. At present, he is sleeping. But, the more the painting is handled, the greater the chance of him waking. Up to this point, the painting has lain undisturbed in a dark closet in the basement of the asylum, Nosferatu's old hangout. The Nosfera Troupe has been more than content to let it lie there.

Although the Nosfera Troupe members revere their founder, they recognize that his waking would foreshadow bloodshed as has not been seen in a century. He would also be quite put out with his progeny as well, since they have all sworn off drinking human blood and content themselves exclusively with animal blood. Vampires that imbibe human blood almost immediately go "dark-side" and suffer from an unending craving for more human blood. Any such vampire cannot go unnoticed for long, as the body count quickly mounts. So, the Nosfera Troupe has a strict animal-only policy on blood consumption. It is certain that Nosferatu would not condone such a pansy attitude were He to waken. So, the Nosfera Troupe absolutely must regain the painting before that happens. Unfortunately, they also know that Nosferatu will begin to dream as he slowly wakes, and those dreams will begin to exert themselves on anyone nearby in increasingly horrific ways. Riots, fires, and storms are sure to ensue.

Bequest for the Arts also has their sights set on gaining the painting for themselves. It is a true masterpiece, and it would be a great addition to the Travis T. Museum. When it comes to art, they are fierce competitors and fully intend to win the competition.

## BRAIN SCAN

**Logline:** When a tabloid obtains medical proof that extraterrestrials exist, the staff must flee for their lives from aliens and their Earthly allies to defend the public's right to know.

**Theme:** What would it take to make you believe in *Evil*?

**Main Plot:** Flee with the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Computer Media (Brain Scan)

**Factions:** Conspiracy Sleuth (Hounds), M.E.D (Enemies), Deep Threat (Any Card)

**Setting:** Nutgraf Tower (Home Base), Michael E. Vellian Sanitorium (Enemy Base), Penning University (Hangout)

**Tropes:** Alien (Creature), Flying Saucer (Omen), Men in Black (Dream)

**Characters:** Keller Periwinkle (Villain)

Some anonymous source sent a computer tape containing a massive amount of data to the Conspiracy Sleuth tabloid. After examining the tape using the research computers at Penning University, the staff determined the tape to contain a brain scan. The image is so detailed that the neural interconnections can be clearly seen in detail. The thing is, although the imaged brain is highly evolved, it is clearly not human. In fact, it must be otherworldly. This will make for a great story! Unfortunately, the Medical Ethics Directorate will stop at nothing to ensure the tape is destroyed. Murder is quite clearly on their agenda.

## **BRAVO UNIT VS. THE CRETACEOUS PERIOD**

**Logline:** When voracious dinosaurs invade NAMBI Labs and Bravo Unit is called in to exterminate them, they must both contend with and defend the rapidly dwindling numbers of environmentalists protecting the reptiles as endangered species.

**Theme:** When should you *defy authority*?

**Sequel To:** NAMBI Labs vs. The Cretaceous Period

**Main Plot:** Posse for the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** The Enemies

**Factions:** Bravo Unit (Hounds), Dinosaur (Enemies - use the Dinosaur trope card as if it were a faction card), The Gaia Brigade (Any Card)

**Setting:** Chestnut Military Base (Home Base), NAMBI Labs (Enemy Base)

**Tropes:** Rad Scientist (Dream), Wild Carnivore (Creature)

Dinosaurs have inexplicably overrun NAMBI Labs. There is a pack of ravenous meat-eating reptiles that must be dealt with. Bravo Unit has been called in to take care of the situation. Due to the highly unusual nature of the quarry, orders are to capture them alive, if at all possible. If that weren't enough, members of The Gaia Brigade are intervening to ensure the rare dinosaurs are taken unharmed. Unfortunately, the insatiable carnivores apparently have no such compunction against harming succulent protestors.

## **THE CRYSTAL SKULL**

**Logline:** When a small cult of misfits steals a cursed artifact believing it to be a holy item of their religion, they must contend with both the museum staff and space aliens for possession of the uncooperative relic.

**Theme:** What cost is too great for *immortality*?

**Main Plot:** Steal the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Cursed Artifact (Crystal Skull)

**Factions:** Scheherazadians (Hounds), Bequest for the Arts (Enemies)

**Setting:** Nirvana Ranch (Home Base), Travis T. Hooke Museum (Enemy Base), Woodchuck Wood (Haunt)

**Tropes:** Alien (Creature), Beatnik (Vocation), Flying Saucer (Omen)

**Characters:** Lord Dennis Concorde (Villain)

The Travis T. Museum has recently acquired a priceless Aztec artifact: an ancient Crystal Skull. Unfortunately, it seems to be cursed, as mishaps seem to constantly happen near it, and even U.F.O.s and aliens seem to be taking an interest. The Scheherazadians have heard of the curse, and believe that the skull is a long lost relic of their religion. They believe the skull is merely punishing the non-believers surrounding it. Their mission is to steal the skull and restore it to its proper people. If successful, they shall all surely be granted entrance into heaven when they die. Unfortunately, the skull has other ideas.

## **EAU DE LOVEGRAFT**

**Logline:** When villainous forces steal a formula that summons horrific otherworldly monsters, a group of geeky kids rushes to destroy their inadvertent discovery before it desolates the world.

**Theme:** Who bears responsibility for the implications of *scientific discoveries*?

**Main Plot:** Destroy the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Super Weapon

**Factions:** Chestnut Science-Club (Hounds), Chimera (Enemies)

**Setting:** Chestnut High School (Home Base), NAMBI Chemical Plant (Enemy Base)

**Tropes:** Alien Space Bats (Creature), Commando (Dream)

**Characters:** Nigel Black (Villain)

The Chestnut High School held a Science Fair a while back. As part of that activity, the Science Club did some chemical experiments with pheromones to try and develop a perfume that would improve the wearer's romantic prospects, which they dubbed "Eau de Lovecraft". Unfortunately, they didn't have time to test it out before the Science Fair, so their first tests were held during the presentation to the Science Fair judges. Within a minute after spraying the perfume on one of the judges, an Alien Space Bat appeared out of nowhere and began attacking them. If it weren't for the quick thinking of a fellow Science Club member dumping the contents of a nearby sea-monkey exhibit on the Alien Space Bat's prey, the hapless judge would likely have been killed. Word of this incident made it to Chimera, an anti-American conspiracy. Intrigued by its military potential, Chimera stole the perfume formula to use as a potential new chemical weapon. The Science Club members are horrified by this development, as there is no telling what a wide-spread infestation of these creatures could do to the world's ecology. Consequently, they all made a pact to ensure the formula's destruction.

# EINSTEIN'S BRAIN

**Logline:** When NAMBI Corporation steals the brain of a beloved genius for nefarious purposes, The Chestnut Historical Society intervenes before the great boon it may provide humanity is lost forever.

**Theme:** When should you dispense your own *justice*?

**Main Plot:** Fetch the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Human Organ (Einstein's Brain)

**Factions:** The Chestnut Historical Society (Hounds), NAMBI Corporation (Enemies)

**Setting:** Penning University (Home Base), NAMBI Labs (Enemy Base), St. Vitus Hospital (Any Card)

**Tropes:** Cyborg (Omen), Rad Scientist (Dream)

**Characters:** Priscilla Nicchi (Villain)

In conjunction with Penning University, the Chestnut Historical Society has managed to get the brain of Albert Einstein loaned to St. Vitus Hospital for medical research. It is an excellent opportunity for them to study first-hand the cerebrum of one of the most brilliant scientists of all time, even if it has been pickled in a jar of formaldehyde. Dubbed Project Algernon at the request of a mentally retarded happy-go-lucky janitor working at The Official Cannon Park's Visitor Center, the research may develop a form of gene therapy that reverses the effects of retardation in many patients, including Algernon himself.

The occasion has not gone unnoticed by the researchers at NAMBI Labs, however. They have been working on perfecting cyborg technology in order to extend the human lifespan. To date, they have been able to remove a human brain from a living body and replace it with a computer module that keeps the body alive. The animated body can even obey simple commands, although nobody would ever accuse them of having sparkling personalities. They mostly just shamle around, and occasionally become highly angered at the slightest provocation.

NAMBI's research in transplanting human brains into mechanical bodies has hit a brick wall, though. Try as they might, the NAMBI scientists can't seem to find a brain robust enough to come through the operation sane. Their best guess is that they have simply not been able to acquire a specimen with a great enough mental capacity. Due to NAMBI's recently patented reanimation technology, the procedure does not actually require the brain to be alive. So, Einstein's brain would be an ideal candidate for implantation into their next generation cyborg prototype.

Unfortunately, the secret nature of the project has made it impossible to obtain such fine specimens through legal channels. So, other means are required if the research is to progress any further.

# Etherium

**Logline:** When a cult of peace-loving misfits steals a "holy"

substance from black-marketeers before it is sold to the Mafia, they feud with both factions for the prize.

**Theme:** Is it more honorable to live humbly or to *die gloriously*?

**Main Plot:** Nab the MacGuffin and Run

**MacGuffin:** Unobtanium (Etherium)

**Factions:** The Hooligoonz (Hounds), The Mafia (Enemies), Chimera (Any Card)

**Setting:** Ogotogo Swamp (Home Base), Coffeehouse Casino (Enemy Base), NAMBI Chemical Plant (Any Card)

**Tropes:** Invisibility (Any Card), Thief (Vocation)

**Characters:** Rinaldo Nicchi (Villain)

The Mafia has apparently come into possession of a remarkable material: Etherium. It is a block of matter with a negative index of refraction, which is techno-babble for "invisible". A box made from Etherium would completely cloak anything it contains.

The Mafia offered to sell the Etherium to Chimera for a ridiculously large sum of money, figuring they could make good use of it. Chimera agreed, provided they could see it beforehand to make sure it wasn't some kind of trick.

The Hooligoonz hear about the magical material, though, and conclude that it surely must be a super-secret government experiment. Unable to get any adults to listen to them, the Hooligoonz, decide to steal the Etherium themselves before it is lost to the Enemy.

# The Gaze of Nyarlathotep

**Logline:** When religious fanatics threaten to deface an artistic masterpiece they claim is a gateway to hell, Bequest for the Arts absconds with the painting to save it from destruction.

**Theme:** What would it take to make you believe in *Evil*?

**Main Plot:** Flee with the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Masterpiece (The Gaze of Nyarlathotep)

**Factions:** Bequest for the Arts (Hounds), The Moral Crusaders (Enemies)

**Setting:** Travis T. Hooke Museum (Home Base), Trinity Cross Church (Enemy Base)

**Tropes:** Alien Space Bats (Creature), Demon (Omen), Elder Ones (Any Card), Riot (Any Card)

**Characters:** Aideen O'Neill (Whipping Boy - The Artist), Rev. Gavin Winters (Villain)

Bequest for the Arts has just obtained a new masterpiece to be added to the Travis T. Museum's collection. The new work is a large painting by Conor O'Neill entitled: The Gaze of Nyarlathotep. It is a very disturbing painting of myriad eyes of different sizes. The artist is apparently a master of optical illusion, as they eyes seem to float and waver as if obeying some otherworldly laws of geometry. The painting is framed by glistening tentacles. Rumor has it that the artist went insane

creating the work. The work is considered seminal in the development of a new realism horror movement. It is a true masterpiece and a credit to the museum.

Even so, the Moral Crusaders does not approve of the new acquisition. They believe it to be a portal into hell, and if someone gazes into its hypnotic eyes too long, will summon demons from beyond. The work is an obscene abomination disgorged by a person of questionable sanity that should be purged from existence. As such, the Big Brotherhood intends to crash the unveiling party being held at the museum. Once there, they will deface the masterpiece by slathering holy symbols of various sorts on it using fast-drying acrylic paint on the canvas in order to seal the supposed gateway.

## GRAVE DESIRE

**Logline:** When amateur horror buffs enter into a movie production contest against the makers of a romance, they are terrified to learn their opponents are vampires.

**Theme:** What cost is too great for *immortality*?

**Main Plot:** Win the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Award (Production Contract)

**Factions:** The Fiction Diction Coalition (Hounds), The Nosfera Troupe (Enemies), Bequest for the Arts (Any Card)

**Setting:** A Twist of Rhyme (Home Base), The Cabernet Cabaret (Enemy Base), Tranquil Plots Cemetery (Haunt)

**Tropes:** Magic (Dream), Vampire (Omen)

**Characters:** Jazdia Corbeau (Villain)

Bequest for the Arts has decided to sponsor a movie production in Chestnut to promote art awareness in the region. A production contract will go to the winner of a contest, which will be the organization that comes up with the most original screenplay. Apparently, the promotion was sorely needed, because only two organizations signed up: The Fiction Diction Coalition and The Nosfera Troupe. The Fiction Diction Coalition, a local book club, wants to create a horror flick, while the Nosfera Troupe, a professional acting group, wants to create a passionate romance. Things go well at first for the amateur horror buffs. They hold their own against the more experienced opponents until they learn that their unusually charming competitors are vampires.

## GRAY OOZE

**Sequel To:** Pink Scourge (assuming the pesticide is used to eradicate the Scourge)

**Logline:** When an ever growing blob escapes NAMBI Labs and invades the mine-shafts criss-crossing Chestnut, its desperate creators confront enemies who want the “experiment” to continue running.

**Theme:** What cost is too great to save *yourself*?

**Main Plot:** Race to the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Computer Media (Fail-Safe Program)

**Factions:** NAMBI Corporation (Hounds), The Illuminati (Enemies), Chestnut Police (Any Card)

**Setting:** NAMBI Labs (Home Base), Michael E Vellian Sanatorium (Enemy Base), Catacombs (Any Card), Chestnut Military Base (Haunt)

**Tropes:** Blob (Creature), Rad Scientist (Vocation)

**Characters:** Galena Black (Villain)

NAMBI Labs reverse engineered nanotechnology from some alien artifacts they somehow acquired. The technology is decades ahead of its time, and NAMBI is still grappling with how to handle it. Unfortunately, a small sample escaped its contained area and has started to grow out of control, creating a gray ooze that is consuming resources in the Catacombs, a network of abandoned mine-shafts under Chestnut. When it comes in contact with living creatures, it reprograms their brains, causing them to go out and gather more resources to create more gray ooze.

The Chestnut Police Department were alerted to an oddly behaving bobcat, which was stealing car parts from a local junk yard and was taking them into the Catacombs. The police caught it and took it to NAMBI Labs, thinking it might be a lab animal. When the scientists at NAMBI Labs dissected it, they unexpectedly discovered their own nanotechnology in its brain. It was apparently no mistake, though, as the nanobots had been reprogrammed to do this somehow. Unbeknownst to them, the Illuminati had altered the nanobots' programming to behave this way.

Being conscientious researchers, the NAMBI Scientists had the foresight to write a fail-safe program in case something went wrong with their nanobots. This program will completely disable the reproductive capabilities of any nanobot it encounters and will spread like a virus through the entire nanobot population. Unfortunately, the Illuminati wants to stop them from using the fail-safe. They wiped the program from the NAMBI Labs databanks. The scientists' only hope is to get to the off-site backups at the Chestnut Military Base before the Illuminati does.

## THE GOLD NUGGET MINE

**Logline:** When a note indicating a treasure map's location is uncovered at a charity event, a race ensues for whoever can reach it first.

**Theme:** When is *betrayal* justified?

**Main Plot:** Race to the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Treasure Map (Map to the Gold Nugget Mine)

**Factions:** The Chestnut Historical Society (Hounds), The Fiction Diction Coalition (Enemies)

**Setting:** Official Cannon Park (Home Base), A Twist of Rhyme (Enemy Base), The Old Rostrum Estate (Haunt)

**Tropes:** Spending Spree (Any Card), Hot Rod (Any Card)

**Characters:** Melanie Smith (Villain)

The Chestnut Historical Society and the Fiction Diction Coalition held a charity event at the local bookstore to raise money to restore the Old Rostrum Estate and use it as a much needed library. The celebration started with the reading of a recently discovered old dusty diary of Henry Rostrum. As the diary was read, a slip of paper with writing on it fell out of the cracked binding. The person reading the diary picked up the note and read it aloud: “Jake, I dun trakd down the sorse o the dust I fond at Ogopogo. Tis a vein richur n any I evr seen. Soon as we git the Silver-Tongs mine runin smooth like, we kin start diggin fer gold. We gonna be richr n Jehova! I buried a map to the klame in a sigar boks undr the basmunt stars sos we dunt fergit where it is.” After the speaker finished reading the note aloud, the event quickly ended as the various members of the two groups suddenly remembered various pressing tasks they had forgotten to take care of.

## High Expectations

**Logline:** When the Autolygium smuggles opium in an art exhibit for the Mafia, a handful of police risk life and limb to shut down the local drug trade.

**Theme:** When is *stealing* justified?

**Main Plot:** Posse for the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** The Enemies

**Factions:** Chestnut Police Department (Hounds), Mafia (Enemies), The Autolygium (Any Card)

**Setting:** Chestnut Police Station (Home Base), Coffeehouse Casino (Enemy Base), Travis T. Hooke Museum (Haunt)

**Tropes:** Dog (Omen), Police Officer (Vocation), Thief (Dream)

**Characters:** Rinaldo Nicchi (Villain)

The Chestnut Police got a tip that the smuggled in a large shipment of opium in an art exhibit that is already at the Travis T. Hooke Museum. The opium will be handed over to the Mafia at 4pm today. Obviously, the police want to nab the perpetrators red-handed, and figure that apprehending the criminals during the trade-off will implicate both the Mafia members and art smugglers in one fell swoop.

## Little Devil

**Logline:** When a baby is kidnapped by self-righteous religious zealots, a desperate mother enlists the aid of a rough-and-tumble biker gang to save him.

**Theme:** When is *murder* justified?

**Main Plot:** Rescue the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Baby (Brenton Lumbre – Use the Brenton Lumbre character card as a MacGuffin Card)

**Factions:** Satan's Minions (Hounds), The Moral Crusaders (Enemies)

**Setting:** Big-Top Pitstop (Home Base), Trinity Cross Church

(Enemy Base), Tranquil Plots Cemetery (Haunt)

**Tropes:** Demon (Creature), Greaser (Vocation), Inferno (Omen)

**Characters:** Isabella Lumbre (Whipping Boy)

**Characters:** Rev. Gavin Winters (Villain)

The Moral Crusaders heard a rumor that Isabella Lumbre, who recently gave birth, was possessed by the devil. As such, her baby is undoubtedly the antichrist and therefore must be slain before he brings about the Apocalypse. As evidence, they note that Isabella is a New Age Wiccan who is a member of the “Satan's Minions” biker gang and the baby has a birthmark resembling a pitchfork. Their research into the matter has told them that the evil demon possessing the baby will linger to cause mischief unless he is baptized on holy ground prior to his death. Since killing is a messy affair, they decide to perform the ritual at the Tranquil Plots Cemetery rather than their own pristine church.

## MACGUFFINOMICON

**Logline:** When a dark ancient text ensorcells an unknowing book club, a secretive government agency intervenes to save Chestnut and gain the grimoire for themselves.

**Theme:** How much of your own *soul* would you sacrifice to save a loved one?

**Main Plot:** Steal the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Ancient Text (the Necronomicon)

**Factions:** Echelon (Hounds), Fiction Diction Coalition (Enemies)

**Setting:** Chestnut Military Base (Home Base), A Twist of Rhyme (Enemy Base), The Old Rostrum Estate (Hangout), Michael E. Vellian Sanitorium (Haunt)

**Tropes:** Alien Space Bats (Creature), Elder Ones (Omen), Magic (Dream)

**Characters:** Melanie Smith (Villain)

The Fiction Diction Coalition is occasionally allowed access to the Rare-Book section of the local used book store. About a month ago, the club started reading through a large battered tome entitled, “The Necronomicon”. This book describes a number of bizarre and inexplicable facts about the universe. It is part religious text and part science-textbook. The members of the club did not take it seriously until one of the members tried out one of its simpler “spells”, which made their eyes glow with an eerie blood-red cast. Since that time, they have been pouring over the book with barely any time for sleep. They have already managed to learn how to conjure alien space bats to do their bidding, and they are making preparations in the basement of the old Rostrum Estate to summon one of the Great Elder Ones to satiate their ever-growing lust for power.

Their preparations have not gone unnoticed, however. One of the club members was pulled over while driving erratically, and would only speak in an incomprehensible language that the police had never encountered before. When the car was searched, a human heart was found in a cardboard box in the

trunk. Inexplicably, it was still beating. The club member is currently being held in a padded cell at the Michael E. Vellian Sanitorium.

The police report caught the attention of Echelon at the nearby military base. Echelon has encountered the strange language before in previous incidents where they learned of the Necronomicon. They are aware of its implications, and have identified anyone speaking it to be the gravest national threat. Their goal is to obtain the Necronomicon at all costs, and bring it back to base for further study.

## THE MIND MASTERS

**Logline:** When some employees learn their employer is concealing the addictive nature of their addiction cure, they struggle to get evidence to the press before corporate agents can stop them.

**Theme:** What would it take to make you believe the world is an *illusion*?

**Main Plot:** Reveal the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Evidence (Test Results)

**Factions:** Deep Threat (Hounds), Medical Ethics Directorate (Enemies)

**Setting:** Penning University (Home Base), St. Vitus Hospital (Enemy Base)

**Tropes:** Commando (Dream), Mind Control (Omen)

**Characters:** Keller Periwinkle (Villain)

The Medical Ethics Directorate (M.E.D), in conjunction with researchers at Penning University, has created a nearly perfect brain/computer interface that gradually cures all addictions of the subject. It does this by stimulating the subject's brain with recorded brain waves of healthy non-addicted brains.

Ironically, there have been a number of complaints that the treatment itself is too enticing and people are becoming addicted to the very experience that cured them. One poor soul actually died of starvation standing in a corner when a lab assistant forgot to terminate an experiment when he left for vacation. Needless to say, the assistant was reprimanded with a sternly worded memo.

M.E.D. sponsored further experiments to show that the accusations of addiction were unfounded, but the experiment ended up showing that there actually is an addiction problem with the equipment. M.E.D. is trying to cover up the experiment results to protect their investment, but Deep Threat is trying to get the test results to the reporters of Conspiracy Sleuth.

## THE MIND MINIONS

**Sequel To:** The Mind Masters

**Logline:** When cybernetics researchers commit a young beatnik

to an asylum to conceal blundered experiments, her greaser friends wrangle her away to the lab where she can “jack in” to the computer to free the other test subjects.

**Theme:** When should you dispense your own *justice*?

**Main Plot:** Nab the MacGuffin and Run

**MacGuffin:** Character (Jetta Fabre – use the Jetta Fabre character card as the MacGuffin)

**Factions:** Satan's Minions (Hounds), M.E.D. (Enemies)

**Setting:** Big-Top Pitstop (Home Base), Michael E. Vellian Sanitorium (Enemy Base)

**Tropes:** Computer (Any Card), Cyborg (Creature), Greaser (Vocation), Mind Control (Omen)

**Characters:** Jetta Fabre (The MacGuffin), Keller Periwinkle (Villain)

The Medical Ethics Directorate (M.E.D.) is doing research into creating a long-range brain/computer interface using cybernetic implants. The implants have a helical communications antenna, which is wound between the eyeball and the eye socket of the subject. Unbeknownst to the public, these experiments involve mind control, that go well beyond the addiction cures they have advertised to the general public.

Jetta Fabre was a key test subject in these experiments. Jetta is the first subject M.E.D. has experimented on that has been completely resistant to their mind control experiments. What's more, she showed some ability to mentally connect with other test subjects in the same experiments, via the long-range links, who then started to demonstrate their own resistance to the mind control experiments.

To keep her from further contaminating the experiments, and to keep their nature secret, Jetta was shipped off to the Michael E. Vellian Assylum for “long-term observation”. The members of Satan's Minions hear about their friend's plight, and decide to grab Jetta and return her to the cybernetics lab where she believes she can free the other test subjects and put a stop to the research for good. The asylum staff pursue.

## THE MONSTER EGG FROM OUTER SPACE

**Logline:** When evidence hinting at an alien invasion appears at a tabloid, the staff tussles with apparent conspirators and its own low journalistic standards before printing the story.

**Theme:** When is *cheating* justified?

**Main Plot:** Reveal the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Living Thing (Monster Egg)

**Factions:** Conspiracy Sleuth (Hounds), The Illuminati (Enemies)

**Setting:** Nutgraf Tower (Home Base), Michael E. Vellian Sanitorium (Enemy Base)

**Tropes:** Alien (Omen), Fiend-Zilla (Creature), Flying Saucer (Any Card)

**Characters:** Galena Black (Villain)

The Illuminati are in league with a malevolent alien race intent on invading Earth, as they have been promised great influence in the New World Order that will result. As part of the invasion preparations, the Illuminati have set up a hatchery in the bowels of the local insane asylum to care for a collection of other-worldly eggs given to them by the aliens. Someone at the asylum has apparently retained some scruples, and has sent some photos and a brief explanatory note to the Conspiracy Sleuth tabloid: "Hatchery of alien monsters at the insane asylum. Not even the Illuminati know the true danger."

Even the Conspiracy Sleuth Tabloid staff is dubious about the scant evidence provided. Having nothing else available to print, they are sorely tempted to go ahead print it. However, they decide that the story needs further embellishment. At the very least, they need photos of the insane asylum inmates, and so venture out to gather whatever they can dig up.

## Motherbot

**Sequel To:** The Perfect Soldier (assuming L15A-White escapes)

**Logline:** When an outlaw pacifist android begs the Hooligoonz to help it rescue its "mother", the sympathetic kids break into NAMBI Labs to free the quirky robot.

**Theme:** When is *stealing* justified?

**Main Plot:** Nab the MacGuffin and Run

**MacGuffin:** Gizmo (Motherbot)

**Factions:** Hooligoonz (Hounds), NAMBI Corporation (Enemies)

**Setting:** Ogotogo Swamp (Home Base), NAMBI Labs (Enemy Base), Sad Tire Junk Yard (Haunt)

**Tropes:** Commando (Vocation), Robot (Dream), Spending Spree (Any Card)

**Characters:** Priscilla Nicchi (Villain)

NAMBI labs has created a "Motherbot", a robot programmed to repair other robots. They imbued it with artificial intelligence, so that it could follow technicians around, obey commands to handle tools, perform chores, and autonomously go about its business.

On one particularly difficult repair job on a military prototype robot, the Motherbot had to replace the robot's entire processing unit, along with its memory. As it did not have another memory unit from which to copy the newly repaired robot's operating instructions, it used the only memory unit available: its own. Needless to say, a repair robot's operating instructions are far different from those of a military robot. As such, the newly installed program had to perform massive adjustments to its own configuration just to run.

The result was L15A-White, a military robot who gained an interest in botany, turned pacifist, and escaped into the wide world. L15A entreated the Hooligoonz, a small group of kids who often tromp about Ogotogo Swamp, to help it free its creator from slavery.

Unfortunately, NAMBI Corporation would rather destroy its robotic servants than risk its competitors getting hold of their technology.

## NAMBI LABS VS. THE CRETACEOUS PERIOD

**Logline:** When a radiation experiment to create a plumper chicken goes horribly awry, a flock of poultry genetically regresses into a pack of ravenous velociraptors with a penchant for tasty researchers.

**Theme:** At what point is *scientific progress* too risky?

**Main Plot:** Uh, Oh. *We're* the MacGuffin!

**MacGuffin:** The Hounds

**Factions:** NAMBI Corporation Researchers (Hounds), Dinosaur (Enemies) – Use the Dinosaur trope card as if it were a faction card.

**Setting:** NAMBI Labs (Home Base / Enemy Base – NAMBI Labs is used for both, so this frees up a Setting Card spot)

**Tropes:** Radioactivity (Omen), Rad Scientist (Vocation), Wild Carnivore (Creature)

NAMBI Corporation has been performing radiation research on various forms of livestock, in order to produce food animals that grow larger and fatten quicker than any available today. Unfortunately, radioactivity is still poorly understood, as was demonstrated by a group of researchers at NAMBI Labs. One of their genetic trials on chickens triggered a genetic response that regressed the birds' genetic code by millions of years. The result was that the entire chicken flock undergoing the experiment transformed into a pack of voracious velociraptors. Needless to say, the chicken-wire cages used to contain the poultry were completely inadequate against the claws and teeth of so dangerous a predator. After feeding on the nearby livestock, the dinosaurs quickly learned that the NAMBI researchers are equally delectable.

## Ogotogo

**Logline:** When the police capture a mysterious sea monster frightening off tourists, incredulous kids set out to rescue their shy aquatic friend before it is permanently imprisoned at the zoo.

**Theme:** What would it take to make you believe in *magic*?

**Main Plot:** Rescue the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Living Thing (Ogotogo Monster)

**Factions:** Hooligoonz (Hounds), Chestnut Police (Enemies)

**Setting:** Ogotogo Swamp (Home Base), Chestnut Police Station (Enemy Base), Chestnut Zoo (Haunt)

**Tropes:** Dinosaur (Any Card), Magic (Dream), Police Officer (Omen), Swamp Horror (Creature)

**Characters:** Duncan MacGregor (Villain)

## THE ORPHIC EGG

Some kind of bizarre land/sea monster appearing at Ogopogo Swamp is devastating Chestnut's tourism trade. The Chestnut Police are sent to deal with the matter, and are able to capture the timid beast with far less trouble than they expected. They plan on delivering it to the Chestnut Zoo, figuring it might actually help draw tourists to town.

The Hooligoonz, who use Ogopogo Swamp as one of their favored stomping grounds, witnessed the capture and are horrified. Long ago, they befriended their beloved Ogopogo, who they named after the swamp, and have taken care of it ever since. Not knowing what else to do, they pursue the kidnappers hoping to rescue their misunderstood companion.

## THE OPHIDIAN LIST

**Logline:** When someone dupes the police into handing over a list of all their undercover agents, they desperately pursue the thief before he delivers it to the Mafia.

**Theme:** What cost is too great to save a *friend*?

**Main Plot:** Fetch the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Secret Document (List of Names)

**Factions:** Chestnut Police (Hounds), Mafia (Enemies), Echelon (Any Card)

**Setting:** Chestnut Police Station (Home Base), Coffeehouse Casino (Enemy Base), Chestnut Town Hall (Haunt)

**Tropes:** Police Officer (Vocation), Men in Black (Dream), Thief (Any Card)

**Characters:** Ormond Redman (Any Card – the Echelon agent), Rinaldo Nicchi (Villain)

The Chestnut Police have been conducting an undercover investigation into organized crime in town. Through much hard work and patience, they have infiltrated the Mafia, and placed three undercover agents in key positions. Obviously, their names are highly sensitive, since the Mafia would immediately kill the agents if they discovered their true identities.

The government agency Echelon somehow learned of the investigation and, for some reason, demanded the names of the undercover officers. Despite the strong protests of the Chestnut Police Department, the mayor exerted vigorous political pressure on the department to accede to the request. They had no choice but to hand over the names. They were told that an Echelon agent would show up at the police station and identify himself with the password, "Ophidian" to take possession of the list.

On the day specified, a man in a black suit showed up, identified himself with the proper password, and was reluctantly given the list in a sealed envelope. A few minutes after he left, another similarly dressed man showed up, identified himself with the same password, and demanded the list.

The Chestnut Police had been duped, and the lives of their agents hang in the balance. The list must be retrieved and handed over to Echelon before the agents' lives are forfeit.

**Logline:** When misfit cultists pursue the black-marketeers that stole their ancient holy relic, they question their faith upon learning it is merely a priceless decades-old masterpiece.

**Theme:** What would it take to make you *question* your faith?

**Main Plot:** Fetch the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Religious Relic (Orphic Egg)

**Factions:** The Scheherazadians (Hounds), The Autolygium (Enemies)

**Setting:** Nirvana Ranch (Home Base), Pigments of your Imagination (Enemy Base)

**Tropes:** Dog (Creature), Thief (Vocation)

**Characters:** Lady Violet Concorde (Villain)

The Autolygium has learned that the Scheherazadian cult has a magnificent jeweled egg, which they revere as a sacred holy relic. The Scheherazadians believe their "Orphic Egg" grants the gift of prophesy on those having faith in its power, as it did for their sacred prophetess Scheherazad, whose stories will all one day come true. The members of the Autolygium, on the other hand, recognize the bauble as a long-lost Fabergé egg that will fetch a sizable sum on the black market. Ordinarily, the Scheherazadians keep the relic hidden. But, today the egg will be removed from its hiding place and used in a ritual that takes place every 1001 nights. The Autolygium would rather not leave a body count, since that would attract the attention of the authorities. However, they are willing to use deadly force to obtain it, if absolutely necessary.

## The Perfect Soldier

**Logline:** When a wayward military android turns pacifist and escapes NAMBI Labs, some impish kids attempt to get it to safety before the military hunts it down.

**Theme:** When does a machine qualify as a *person*?

**Main Plot:** Flee with the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Character ( L15A-White – use the character card as a MacGuffin card)

**Factions:** Hooligoonz (Hounds), Bravo Unit (Enemies)

**Setting:** Sock Hop Malt Shop (Home Base), Chestnut Military Base (Enemy Base)

**Tropes:** Police Officer (Omen), Rad Scientist (Dream), Riot (Any Card), Robot (Any Card)

**Characters:** L15A-White (The Robotic MacGuffin), Sgt. Irvin Wilds (Villain)

The Army is conducting research into artificial intelligence and robotics to create the perfect autonomous soldier. The third generation of robots, the White series, has been particularly successful. However, one of the White-series prototypes has malfunctioned, has taken on a feminine pacifist personality, and has gone rogue. L15A escaped the lab and erratically drove an army truck off the military base. Careening uncontrollably down

the highway, L15A swerved to avoid crashing head-long into a small group of mischievous kids, who rescued the robot from the burning vehicle and adopted it into their club. The army, meanwhile, has become aware that one of its most advanced weapon prototypes is missing. They will stop at nothing to ensure it does not fall into enemy hands, and view the robot's destruction as the most expedient means of attaining that goal.

## THE PINK SCOURGE

**Logline:** When science students study a bizarre fungus, they discover it may consume all plant-life on Earth. Unfortunately, a pesticide withheld by NAMBI Corporation is the only way to eradicate it.

**Theme:** At what point is *scientific progress* too risky?

**Main Plot:** Steal the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Miracle Cure (Pink Fungus Pesticide)

**Factions:** Chestnut Science Club (Hounds), NAMBI Corporation (Enemies), Deep Threat (Any Card)

**Setting:** Chestnut High School (Home Base), NAMBI Chemical Plant (Enemy Base), Woodchuck Wood (Haunt)

**Tropes:** Inferno (Omen), Rad Scientist (Dream), Toxic Waste (Any Card)

**Characters:** Priscilla Nicchi (Villain)

A strange bright pink fungus has started growing on plants in Woodchuck Wood, and has gotten way out of control. The Chestnut Science Club has studied the fungus and determined that it inexplicably produces oxygen at a remarkable rate. Unfortunately, it consumes its host plant within a week and, if left unchecked for much longer, it will be impossible to keep the scourge from consuming all plant-life on the planet.

A mysterious man identifying himself only as Deep Threat informed the investigators that NAMBI Labs has a pesticide that will eradicate the fungus, but is not using it for reasons only known to them. Consequently, the Chestnut Science Club has decided to steal it.

## The Ruby Necklace

**Logline:** When a ghostly Confederate doctor begs The Chestnut Historical Society for help, they risk life and soul to bring peace to his fiance's restless spirit.

**Theme:** How much of your own *soul* would you sacrifice to save a loved one?

**Main Plot:** Nab the MacGuffin and Run

**MacGuffin:** Jewel (Ruby Necklace)

**Factions:** The Chestnut Historical Society (Hounds), Ad-Hoc Faction (Enemies)

**Setting:** Official Cannon Park (Home Base), Villa Inn (Enemy Base), Tranquil Plots Cemetery (Haunt)

**Tropes:** Ghost (Creature), Vortex (Omen)

**Characters:** Melanie Smith (Any Card - Ghostly Bride-to-be), Dr. Sky Neelam (Any Card - Ghostly Groom-to-be). Also, use the Demon trope card as if it were a character card (Villain), Slate Fabre (Minion)

The members of the Chestnut Historical Society have been performing a study of the battlefield located at Official Cannon Park. One of the more interesting artifacts that they unearthed was an old field-doctor's medical bag.

As the members began studying the contents in the park's visitor center, a ghostly apparition of a Civil War officer appeared. He introduced himself as Dr. Sky Neelam, a confederate field doctor who was killed in the battle at this location. He explained that his spirit is unable to rest, because he was killed before he could give his beloved bride-to-be, Melanie Smith, the ruby necklace he bought her to celebrate their engagement. Dr. Neelam then asked the Chestnut Historical Society members to retrieve the necklace and bury it at his beloved's grave at the Tranquil Plots Cemetery.

The necklace is hidden in his old room at the Villa Inn, an old dilapidated hotel in Chestnut. The jewel is behind the floorboard under the window of Room 21. Sky then gave one final warning: the Villa Inn is possessed by a demon, who jealously guards everything associated with the hotel. It will not part with the prize willingly. Further, the malignant fiend brings great misfortune to any soul spending a night there. Sadly, his beloved Melanie fell victim to the demon, and hung herself after hearing about Sky's death. Delivering the ruby necklace to her grave will allow her tortured soul to finally rest.

## THE SONIC DISRUPTOR

**Logline:** When villainous forces steal a dangerous weapon prototype from the military, a rebellious rock band tries to grab it for themselves to enhance an upcoming rock concert.

**Theme:** What would it take to make you believe in *Karma*?

**Main Plot:** Chase the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Gizmo (Sonic Disruptor)

**Factions:** The Rock-a-Byes (Hounds), Chimera (Enemies), Bravo Unit (Any Card)

**Setting:** Sock Hop Malt Shop (Home Base), NAMBI Chemical Plant (Enemy Base), Woodchuck Wood (Haunt), Chestnut Military Base (Any Card)

**Tropes:** Commando (Any Card), Greaser (Vocation)

**Characters:** Nigel Black (Villain)

The military recently developed a new weapon, known as a Sonic Disruptor, that will blow out the ear-drums of any person within 100 yards when activated, causing permanent deafness. Chimera has infiltrated Bravo Unit with an agent of their own, who has stolen the prototype. He plans on handing the device over later today. The hand off is supposed to take place somewhere deep in Woodchuck Wood. Until that happens, the

weapon is hidden in the bowels of the NAMBI Chemical Plant. However, The Rock-a-Byes overheard discussions about the hand-off at their favorite hang-out, the Sock Hop Malt Shop. Realizing the enormous potential that the weapon has for enhancing the sound system of their upcoming rock concert, they decide to acquire the device for themselves.

## THE SPOILS OF WAR

**Logline:** When rambunctious kids unearth a treasure-trove of antique toys which will save them from summer-school, they defy the adults demanding they hand it over and flee with their loot.

**Theme:** When is *lying* justified?

**Main Plot:** Flee with the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Treasure (Chest of Spoils)

**Factions:** Hooligoonz (Hounds), Chestnut Historical Society (Enemies)

**Setting:** Sad Tire Junk Yard (Home Base), Official Cannon Park (Enemy Base)

**Tropes:** Police Officer (Dream), Dog (Omen)

**Characters:** Gracen Smith (Villain)

Every weekend for the past month, the Hooligoonz have been spending their time at the Official Cannon Park trying to earn extra credit in history. As their mischievous pranks throughout the year had earned the wrath of their history teacher, it would take a significant find to keep them all out of summer-school. They have been scouring the old battlefield with a metal detector borrowed from one of the Hooligoonz's parents. The first few weekends, all they found was a few nails, a rusted knife, and a cannonball. Today, though, they found a small dilapidated chest. The lock was rusted away, so the box was easy to open. Inside was a treasure trove consisting of a pristine antique collection of Confederate and Union lead soldiers. They had hit the jackpot!

Unfortunately, the Chestnut Historical Society was out on the battlefield that day. They were practicing their reenactments celebrating the anniversary of the famous battle that had taken place there. When the Hooligoonz opened the chest, some of the Historical Society members witnessed the event. With a gleam in his eye, one of the amateur historians commented, "That collection is worth a fortune! Oh, and it would make a wonderful exhibit for the visitor center." The adults demanded the box, claiming it had too much historical significance to be entrusted to the hands of children. Believing the collection would disappear before they could get proper credit for its discovery, the Hooligoonz weren't going to give up their prize easily. They picked it up off the ground slowly, as if to hand it over, kicked the nearby Chestnut Historical Society members in the shins, and ran for the hills with the loot!

## STRADIVARIUS

**Logline:** When a priceless violin is stolen, some music buffs race to retrieve it to save their beloved music department and unwittingly learn the thieves are flighty vampires.

**Theme:** Can love survive *unbridled pride*?

**Main Plot:** Fetch the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Masterpiece (Stradivarius Violin)

**Factions:** Bequest for the Arts (Hounds), The Nosfera Troupe (Enemies)

**Setting:** Travis T. Hooke Museum (Home Base), The Cabernet Cabaret (Enemy Base), The Old Rostrum Estate (Haunt)

**Tropes:** Thief (Omen), Vampire (Creature)

**Characters:** Jazdia Corbeau (Villain)

Bequest for the Arts arranged for a maestro violinist to hold a seminar for advanced orchestra students at Penning University. To get her cooperation, agreed to loan her the use of a Stradivarius violin possessed by the Travis T. Hooke museum.

Unfortunately, one of the Nosfera Troupe just stole the Strad, claiming it to be the very violin that his relatives robbed from him when he died. The instrument is precious to him, and he will not be parted from it a second time. After revealing himself to be a vampire in an overly melodramatic monologue, his claim seemed less preposterous than it first sounded.

The president of the university is furious, as the loss of so valuable an instrument entrusted to their care will damage their school's reputation greatly. As such, the president has threatened to shut down the struggling music department if they don't recover the venerable masterpiece.

## THE TERRIBLE TASTE OF ZOMBIES

**Logline:** When their leader is ensorcelled by a witch doctor, a furious werewolf pack battles zombies to break the curse before they are all enslaved. The problem is, zombies taste terrible!

**Theme:** Is a *quick death* preferable to a long life of suffering?

**Main Plot:** Destroy the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Cursed Artifact (Voodoo Doll)

**Factions:** Unionized Log Fellers (Hounds), Zombies (Enemies) – Use the Zombie trope card as if it were a faction card.

**Setting:** Ideal Log Sawmill (Home Base), Woodchuck Wood (Enemy Base), Tranquil Plots Cemetery (Haunt)

**Tropes:** Magic (Omen), Werewolf (Vocation), Zombie (Creature)

**Characters:** Zuri Langalibalele (Villain - Enemy Witch Doctor)

A Haitian witch doctor has found her way into town. She has created a voodoo doll that is spiritually linked to the leader of the Unionized Log Fellers through sympathetic magic. Anything done to the doll is also inflicted upon the cursed U.L.F. leader.

The witch doctor has been using it to gain leverage over the werewolves in the U.L.F. membership. Obviously, the U.L.F. cannot allow the situation to continue, as it would eventually lead to the subjugation of the entire pack. Unfortunately, they are going to have to get past the rotting zombies the witch doctor commands to do anything about it.

## THE TRANSMOGRIFIER

**Logline:** When The Conspiracy Sleuth Tabloid hears rumors that a new transportation technology is transforming people into bug-eyed monsters, they contend with NAMBI Corporation to gather evidence.

**Theme:** Can money bring *happiness*?

**Main Plot:** Reveal the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Evidence (Test Results)

**Factions:** Conspiracy Sleuth (Hounds), NAMBI Corporation (Enemies)

**Setting:** Nutgraf Tower (Home Base), NAMBI Labs (Enemy Base), Michael E. Vellian Sanitarium (Haunt)

**Tropes:** Bug-Eyed Monster (Creature), Men in Black (Omen), Rad Scientist (Dream), Thief (Any Card)

**Characters:** Priscilla Nicchi (Villain)

NAMBI Labs has created a new transportation device. Simply step into a pod in one location and step out at another. The technology works by transforming the subject's body into a high energy bio-matrix, transmitting the bio-matrix to the destination, and reconstructing a duplicate from the bio-matrix at an amazingly fast speed. There is one minor detail that is being kept from the public until the kinks are worked out: The duplicate's bio-matrix is mixed with that of any other critters that happen to be in the disintegration chamber.

If the bio-matrix is contaminated, the result is oftentimes a natural abomination terrifying to behold, although this is not always immediately apparent when the subject steps out of the re-integration chamber at the destination. Sometimes, the transformation takes hours, days, or even weeks to complete its course. The scientists working on the project don't think this is too much of a problem, though. Bugs can almost always be kept out of the transportation chamber. Almost.

The Conspiracy Sleuth has heard rumors of the horrific implications of the transportation device, and are seeking test results that prove the rumors to be true. This is especially troubling to one of the tabloid's staff, as they recently volunteered as a test subject for the transportation device.

## THE WHITE WOLF

**Logline:** When environmentalists abduct the magnificent white wolf mascot of the local logging union to free it from captivity, the union scrambles to retrieve the increasingly unamused leader

of their werewolf pack.

**Theme:** What would it take to make you believe in *Fate*?

**Main Plot:** Fetch the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Living Thing (A white wolf – who won't transform back into human form until Chapter 21, and maybe not even then)

**Factions:** Unionized Log Fellers (Hounds), The Gaia Brigade (Enemies)

**Setting:** Ideal Log Sawmill (Home Base), Chestnut Zoo (Enemy Base), Woodchuck Wood (Hangout)

**Tropes:** Fiend-Zilla (Creature), Werewolf (Any Card), Lumberjack (Vocation)

**Characters:** Prof. Holly Wilds (Villain)

The Unionized Log Fellers (U.L.F.) is commonly seen being escorted by their mascot, a beautiful large wolf with a pure white coat of fur. It is a magnificent creature that the members of The Gaia Brigade wholeheartedly believe should be running free through a forest somewhere. As such, when the U.L.F. lumberjacks were preoccupied with cutting down an old-growth tree, the environmentalists somehow managed to capture the wolf and cart off with it. Despite the fact that wolves are notoriously difficult to domesticate, the canine was unusually calm, and almost seemed to have a smile on its face.

When the lumberjacks saw their beloved white wolf being abducted, they were horrified. Despite appearances, the wolf is not actually their mascot. Rather, it is the leader of their werewolf pack. The pack is doing its best to blend in to society, and is trying to lay low as much as possible. So, the wolf knows better than to transform back into human form when any outsider can witness the act. But, a werewolf can only be pushed so far before its savage side takes over. As such, the lumberjacks scramble to get him back before that happens.

## WISHBONE

**Logline:** When villainous forces steal project Wishbone from the government, Echelon dispatches its most trusted agents to retrieve the enigmatic briefcase and tells them to keep it locked no matter what.

**Theme:** Can *unreciprocated trust* survive?

**Main Plot:** Chase the MacGuffin or Steal the MacGuffin

**MacGuffin:** Mystery Box (codename: Wishbone)

**Factions:** Echelon (Hounds), Chimera (Enemies)

**Setting:** Chestnut Military Base (Home Base), NAMBI Chemical Plant (Enemy Base)

**Tropes:** Men in Black (Vocation), Hot Rod (Any Card)

**Characters:** Nigel Black (Villain)

Echelon has been informed that Chimera has stolen something of tremendous importance to the government. The details of what was stolen are classified, but what you can know is that failure to reacquire it may result in the deaths of millions. You may refer

to the target by its codename: Wishbone. Under no circumstances are you to open the briefcase in which Wishbone is stored, and you are forbidden from destroying it. Your mission is to bring Wishbone back intact. Use of deadly force is authorized. Good luck.

## Credits

The following people made this game possible.

**Game Design:** Whitson John Kirk III

**Play Testers:** Kier Ivan Arnold, Ty A. Arnold, John Celino, Michael Domino, Aaron Gresham, Chris Hyde, Melissa Kirk, Matt “Mattlock” Lucklin, Adam Reid, D. Brad Talton Jr., Randall Wall, Steve Smoogen, Nathan Wallwork, and Glenda Wright

**Artwork:** [openclipart.org](http://openclipart.org), [www.clker.com](http://www.clker.com)

## Inspirational Sources

The following sources provided ideas and inspiration for the final design of this game:

[The Extraordinary Adventures of Baron Munchausen](#) by James Wallis, for showing that ordinary folk really can make up entertaining answers to any kooky question posed to them.

[Impro](#) by Keith Johnstone, for explaining how to encourage improvisation.

[Inspectres](#) by Jared Sorensen, for its Structured Story design.

[My Life with Master](#) by Paul Czege, for its Structured Stories and Narrative Rewards.

[Primetime Adventures](#) by Matt Wilson, for Fan Mail.

[Save the Cat!](#) by Blake Snyder, for providing the basic structure of MacGuffin's Main Plots.

[TV Tropes Website](http://tvtropes.org) ([tvtropes.org](http://tvtropes.org)), for many of the character archetypes.

[20 Master Plots \(and How to Build Them\)](#) by Ronald Tobias, for identifying and laying out the basic requirements of (most of) MacGuffin's Sub-Plots.

[Universalis](#) by Ralph Mazza and Mike Holmes, for the basic technique used to formalize House Rules.

And, of course, the venerable Alfred Hitchcock, who popularized the term “MacGuffin”.

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Version Alpha 1.3, October 2013

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