

# FROSH WEEK

# Fear Itself

A One Sheet GUMSHOE scenario by Robin D Laws

**Spine:** The player characters, all college-age young men and women from underprivileged or marginalized backgrounds, arrive for the first time at the exclusive university that has granted them scholarships. Weird events escalate as they are subliminally groomed to become enthralled servitors for the school's legacies. These supernatural beings, from society's top 1%, survive and prosper by draining human life essence.

## Character Backstories

Instead of the worst things they ever did, players specify for their characters the **grounds for their scholarships**. Disallow sports scholarships: servitors (or Renfields as their predators call them) grow physically debilitated during the transitions, and athletes receive too much media attention. Players also specify the **source of their isolation**. The school hands these scholarships out to applicants lacking significant social networks. If they sicken, die or drift away from their former lives, no one will notice or care.

## Antagonists

Although their powers and relationship to prey individuals somewhat parallel vampire mythology, the Uppers, as they call themselves, are not undead. Instead they belong to a mutant variant of the human species. Since the Dark Ages the Uppers have ruled mankind from within, perpetuating wealth and power over generations. Uppers founded this prestigious university (pick a real one of your choice, or thinly fictionalize) and use it not only to establish the mundane connections that will propel their offspring through life, but to provide them with Renfields who will feed them life energy and serve their perverse needs.

Match one of the following new Upper students to a player character they will attempt to enthrall:

- Terry Leverett: piercing eyes, speaks in business jargon
- Nick Mills: sybarite, always organizing the next party
- Emily Caine: obsessive A-type, shoo-in at her sorority
- Brandon Gawthorne: pretentious future film director
- Jessica Shepley: presents herself as an activist, but has to be the one in charge

*Set this outside the US by changing cultural details to fit elite universities of your locale.*

## Other GMCs

Samantha Gawthorne, Brandon's older sister, an initiated Upper in charge of matching this year's incoming Uppers to their scholarship program Renfields

Mareeka Stevens, orientation liaison to new scholarship students. A Renfield enthralled to Samantha. Grew up poor in inner city Baltimore, now a mouthpiece for the economic contributions of the ultra-rich. She introduces the PCs to their new situation, checks in on them as needed, and generally stage manages their transformations.

- Gideon Bench, dean of scholarship affairs and the highest-level university administrator the PCs can hope to meet with. Also an Upper.
- Rafael Martinez, head of the campus police. Gideon's Renfield.
- Paw Chang, another scholarship student. First member of her Hmong family to go to university.

## Events

Orientation mixer, at which each scholarship student is paired with an incoming legacy in a program supposedly designed to break down social barriers between haves and have nots as the school. Actually designed to pair Uppers and Renfields. Nick focuses intently on Paw Chang before switching attention to a PC.

- Distant sighting of woman being hustled into truck. When they come of age, Uppers get rid of the nannies who serve as their childhood Renfields. This is Julia Paredes, formerly Emily's nanny.
- Paw grows increasingly sick as the Renfield process fails to take (as it does in a percentage of cases) and instead starts to eat her up.
- PCs suffer blackouts and evidence of having done weird or sinister things.

- One wakes up with a severed hand under her bed. It's Julia's. She was ordered to get rid of her and shit went sideways.
- Paw dies in horrific fashion.
- Even as they learn enough to know better, PCs find themselves falling under the thrall of their Uppers.
- Do they fight back and find a way out before their personalities fade out?
- When they do, the Uppers train their burgeoning supernatural abilities to push back against them. They're too enticing to kill outright unless they're on the verge of discovering all, but have to be frightened into good behavior until the effect completes itself.



## Clues and Investigations

**Medic:** Track the group's fevers, bursts of missing time and other subtle physiological symptoms and bodily changes.

**History:** Hit the library to learn how far back all the Upper families go, and how their old, old money connects to slave-trading, atrocities, and bursts of insane good fortune.

**Photography:** Notice how Uppers appear even sharper, clearer and better looking in photographs than face to face.

**Occult Studies:** Find parallels between Uppers and vampire mythology.

**Social Science:** Note the ease with which the Uppers use subliminal dominance techniques to gain cooperation even from strangers.

**Social Science:** Realize that all of the scholarship group have one thing in common: extreme disconnection from others.

**Bureaucracy:** Confirm that there's something funny about the scholarship selection process. They were actively vetted to make sure they had no external connections to fall back on.

**Architecture:** Spot the way angles are constructed throughout the university's architecture to impose on individual identity and encourage obedience to authority.

**Computer Science:** Discover the government-level encryption and security the Uppers maintain on their laptops and tablets – far from the casual disregard of most students.

**Research:** Uncover the suppressed truth of a campus shooting a few years ago. Portrayed as a lone gunman rampage by a mentally ill former student, it actually wiped out a crew of scholarship students. They figured out that they were being groomed as Renfields and were close to revealing the truth. Find Linh Tran, terrified lone survivor of that incident, who fears that the Uppers will track him down and finish the job.

**Reassurance:** Once they find her, get Trinh to open up.

**Fleeing/Scuffling:** Survive the anti-terror tac team that bursts onto the scene as soon as Trinh talks. The Uppers have been using the PCs to find her! You don't need to be told that she dies in Stability-shredding fashion.

**Impersonate:** Gain info from totally enthralled Renfields by pretending to also be completely controlled.

**Science:** Get a DNA sample from an Upper, find that it isn't quite human. Compare samples to tell Uppers from ordinary members of the ruling class.

## Final Confrontation

In the big showdown, low-Stability PCs succumb and switch sides. Does it end with Uppers splattered all over, or a chilling downbeat epilogue in which all the main characters have lapsed utterly into eternal subservience?