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introduction

How To Use This Book

The GUMSHOE edition of the *Book of Unremitting Horror* presents the creatures from the initial OGL edition, specially revised and detailed for use with *Fear Itself* and *The Esoterrorists*, along with completely new material in the form of five new entities Bleeder, Skitch, Empty One, Motherlode and Soliloquy.

We've also provided ten summarized Sinister Plots for the GM's use in an Esoterrorists game, along with information on how the creatures of Unremitting Horror are used in the Esoterrorist campaign for global reality breakdown. This section includes important distinctions between the World of Unremitting Horror and the Esoterrorists campaign setting.

Finally, we close with an expanded version of the scenario *The Final Case* and the new scenario *Crook's End*, both designed for use with *Fear Itself*.

New Abilities

The Book of Unremitting Horror: GUMSHOE Edition introduces two new abilities, one for PCs and one for their ghastly antagonists.

Aberrance (General, Creatures of Unremitting Horror only)

Some creatures in this book (typically the ones that hail from the Outer Black) have **Aberrance** pools. A creature's **Aberrance** ability represents the degree of intrinsic power it has to shred the Membrane protecting our world and impose subjectivity upon objectivity. **Aberrance** is similar to the human faculty of 'willpower', but is more alien and often malevolent.

Aberrance is a catch-all ability that each of the horrors uses in its own way. For example, a creature might draw upon **Aberrance** to create a supernatural effect, to alter a person's perceptions, or to travel between realities, depending upon what that creature's special abilities are.

The higher an entity's **Aberrance** rating, the more potential it has to disrupt conventional reality. A being such as the Mystery Man is a vortex of pure **Aberrance**.

It follows that the higher a creature's **Aberrance** rating is, the keener the Esoterrorists are to bring it into the world. Psychics can sense strong sources of **Aberrance**, which (in the case of Unremitting Horrors) appear as black clots of nightmare howling with a thousand voices.

Aberrance may be refreshed by the usual rules regarding creature pools (see below). Some creatures have other ways to refresh **Aberrance** during an encounter, which involve defiling or deforming the mundane world in some way. These methods are explained in the rules text for the creature.

A creature with an **Aberrance** rating is usually actively inimical to humanity; the Outsiders are the only known exception. Creatures with no **Aberrance** rating, such as Blood Corpses, simply follow their own limited agenda and only contribute to the Esoterrorists' grand campaign by increasing the level of chaos, unpredictability and fear in the world.

The Ordo Veritatis has not yet established exactly how **Aberrance** works, but its observations have led it to conclude that the supernatural horrors summoned by the Esoterrorists do have a limit to their power. This information has tactical value: it means that they can be exhausted. Bitter experience has shown that when one of the horrors retreats, it is not usually because it has suffered harm. These entities only withdraw so that they can return again, replenished.

Pathology (Investigative, Academic)

You are trained in carrying out medical examinations of living human subjects and forming diagnoses based on your findings. You can

- diagnose probable causes of sickness or injury
- identify the extent and cause of an unconscious person's trauma
- detect when a person is suffering from a physically debilitating condition such as drug addiction, pregnancy or malnutrition
- establish a person's general level of health



SOLILOQUY

Some creatures, like the Organ Grinder, exist to cause random slaughter. Others, like the Practice, follow their own insidious agenda. And a very few exist to persecute their victims, and make their lives sheer hell. The Soliloquy is one of these.

The origin of these creatures is unknown. They may be a highly evolved variety of skitch, or possibly a bioweapon from the Outer Black. Their modus operandi, however, is clear enough.

A soliloquy starts off its life very small, like a thumb-sized nub of flesh within a fuzzy bundle of lint. Two tiny, bulging, oddly human eyes can be seen under the

SOLILOQUY

hair. It latches on to one designated victim and follows him around, eating his discarded hair, skin and body fluids with its tiny puncture of a mouth. By doing this, it absorbs the victim's DNA into itself.

As the soliloquy grows, it becomes bolder. A victim might wake up to find the soliloquy licking his toes, or even lapping at his tear ducts. By this stage, it is a tiny homunculus around eight inches high, obviously resembling the target victim, though the eyes are still buggy, the limbs end in blobs of skin and there is usually a vestigial tail.

It is slowly forming itself into a duplicate of its victim. When it can speak and has fingers it will start making phone calls, speaking with the victim's voice and leaving listeners upset, angry or bewildered at what it says to them. It finds out about the victim, talks to exes and looks for the victim's trail on the internet. Friends and colleagues will begin to distrust him, perhaps even thinking that he is mad.

When it is almost completely grown it will commit crimes, steadily escalating from burglary to assault to murder, and of course the DNA evidence will lead to the impersonated character. The soliloquy is always careful to leave plenty of evidence that can be linked back, such as saliva smears (all soliloquies are secretors), blood droplets, and possibly even sexual fluids. When the victim's friends start giving a rock solid alibi, they'll be under suspicion, too.

If the victim is accused and imprisoned too early, the Soliloquy is annoyed. The whole point is to spin out the nightmare for as long as possible. It is therefore careful to include *some* ambiguity in what it does, making it appear that other people were involved, or even committing 'copycat' crimes while the victim is imprisoned, suggesting that the real perpetrator is still at large.

It is practically impossible to outwit one. Soliloquies are crafty and inventive, and have a strange ability to pre-empt what the victim does, as if they could borrow the victim's thoughts along with his appearance. For example, if the victim tries to flee to a friend's house in the mountains, the soliloquy will get there before he does, slaughter everyone inside, and sit back to watch the fun.

Eventually, once the victim has been completely

shattered in mind and body, the soliloquy will come for him. It will only do this when the victim is alone and unable to reach help; a prisoner on Death Row is perfect. It says a single word to the victim, and then rips out his heart and eats it. Nobody is quite sure what this single word is, as the creature and its victim are always alone, but the legend has arisen that the word is 'Soliloquy', and thus the thing has acquired its name.

Evidence Collection: As one might expect, the soliloquy leaves lots of evidence for an investigative team to pick up: shed hairs, saliva and bodily fluids. If it can establish a further connection to the unfortunate human it is replicating, such as tufts of borrowed clothing or a distinctive kitchen knife, then so much the better. It will always make a *token* attempt to conceal murder weapons, so that its subterfuge is not blatant.

Fingerprinting: The first crimes the soliloquy commits are notable for a complete absence of fingerprints. This is because the subtle whorls on the tips of the fingers are among the *last* of the bodily details it can successfully replicate. Until it is fully grown, it can leave only a smudgy blur that is clearly similar to the persecuted victim's own prints, but also obviously different - sufficiently so for a fingerprint specialist to suggest that these fingerprints might belong to someone who has tried to burn his prints off with acid, or slice them off with a razor.

Once it has grown a full set of fingerprints, it will start to commit the most brutal and perverse of its crimes. The ability to leave incriminating prints makes this conclusion all the more satisfactory.

Forensic Psychology: When it turns murderous, the soliloquy targets those people against whom its victim has a grudge - or against whom people will *believe* he had a grudge. These will be bitter ex-partners, business rivals, work colleagues, and (very often) former schoolteachers. It is thus easy to make a surface connection between the murder victim and the supposed perpetrator.

I. The Maiden In The Marsh

Sinister Conspiracy: This scenario can be set anywhere there is plenty of boggy land, such as the bayou of New Orleans, or the peat bogs of Ireland.

In the lonely backwater town of Bronson's Creek, a cabal of Esoterrorists is trying to bring a Feral Drowner into being. Legends of these creatures already exist, but the Esoterrorists have never yet managed to bring one to life. So, in order to give the nightmare the best possible chance of becoming real, they are trying to engineer events so that the locals already begin to believe in it. All the ingredients are there: a marsh, an ancient Irish abbey with a sinister window, a history of disappearances. It only remains to add brutal murder, as if by an enormous goatlike beast, and babbling tongues will do the rest.

The Esoterrorist group has abducted Karen Miller, a local girl with learning difficulties, choked her to death and left her body in the marsh. To make the death seem like the work of a feral drowner, they have left plenty of bizarre clues on and around the body.

Instigating Scene: Karen's naked body lies on the borders of the marsh. The gases of decomposition have brought her corpse to the surface, just as the Esoterrorists planned it. She has clearly been strangled, and the marks of huge claws are dragged down her back and thighs.

Villagers from the nearby settlement of Bronson's Creek stand nearby with grim and solemn faces, and the police try in vain to keep them from trampling all over the area. Everyone has seen the huge cloven hoof prints that lead to and from the body. There are mutterings of diabolism; some say it's the curse of Crowhurst Abbey come back to haunt the town again.

Core Information: The goat-like elements of the murder scene turn out to be fake. There are goat hairs on the body, but the roots prove that the hairs were pulled out rather than shed. The goat footprints were made by *the same hoof*, pressed into the mud to the left and right; the only way that could happen is if it were one goat's hoof on a stick. Karen has ordinary human skin under her fingernails (from her Esoterrorist

assailants). Whoever set the murder up is clearly trying to make it seem as if some half-goat horror committed the deed. These clues lead to the Swarbrick goat farm, forty miles away.

Supplementary Information: The local abbey of Crowhurst was either shipped over from Ireland stone by stone (if the adventure is set in America) or dates from Norman times. A single stained-glass window depicts a horned, goggling horror rising up out of the waters, held at bay by Saint Michael who hovers serenely above. The horned creature is strangely unsettling to look at and carries a limp female figure in one arm. The scroll beneath reads 'From the pestilence that walketh in darkness, good Lord deliver us.'

Legend has it that the Abbey was once used as a refuge by a young woman who was walking alone by the marsh, heard heavy footsteps and harsh breath behind her and fled behind the Abbey's stout oak doors for protection. There are still deep trenches gouged into the wood where something (so it is said) clawed at the doors and tried to reach her, but could not enter the sacred ground.

All this is so much hokum, of course; the investigators can find out (and prove) that the Abbey's doors were damaged as recently as 1921, but that does not stop people from believing in the stories.

Later Scenes: At the goat farm, run by Swarbrick and Sons, the investigators discover that a goat has indeed been stolen (and lab reports prove it was used to fake up the crime scene.)

Investigating the goat farm allows the investigators to pick up the Esoterrorists' trail, and pursue them to their base of operations, a trailer parked up on the far side of the marsh. They are pretending to be botanists, studying the effects of pollution on the local newt population.

Antagonist Reactions: Once the story of the half-goat killer has begun to ferment, the Esoterrorists plan another killing. They still have plenty of goat hair and the hoof on a stick. They also collected some goat

Scenario Outlines

semen from the unfortunate animal. Perhaps it is time for the manufactured 'feral drowner' to do more than just kill its victim.

Climax: Now that everyone believes in it, the Esoterrorists try to summon the Feral Drowner into being. They take a skiff out into the marsh, focus their will, and use their foul rite to bring the creature bubbling up from under the surface. Unfortunately for them, they have done their work too well; it is raging wild, and rapes and kills all of them before turning towards the town.

2. ... And I Shiver The Whole Night Through

Sinister Conspiracy: The principal of Hobsgate High School, Mr. Carslake, is an Esoterrorist with extensive knowledge of the occult. His shadowy superiors have given him the task of tapping the enormous reservoirs of psychic energy latent in high school students, especially female ones. The more they can be encouraged to believe in spooks, monsters and witchcraft, the thinner the local Membrane will become.

Over the last three years, Principal Carslake has steadily been dropping very precise references to the practice of hoodoo and folk magic into his classes (under the guise of educating the students in American folklore) all the while expressing the strongest possible disapproval of these dabblings. He believes that if he tells them *not* to do these things, they will want to. This attempt at reverse psychology has gone extremely well, and a cabal of young girls led by the dumpy, bespectacled Miranda Jeffries have now managed to summon up Strap Throat, who has not yet claimed any lives but will do so soon. The cabal's intended target was Clarissa Lang, a beautiful and vicious girl who has been making younger students' lives miserable.

Unfortunately, Carslake's hints have also resulted in the formation of a would-be band of white witches, led by the 15 year old Jessica Crane. Jessica has learned of the summoning of Strap Throat and has promised to do something about it. Unfortunately, the most reliable protection spell she has discovered involves mummy

Aftermath: Legends are not easy to kill, and that stained glass window really is centuries old. Maybe there already *is* a Feral Drowner in Bronson's Creek, buried beneath the stones of the abbey...

As for the veil-out, the obviousness of the hoax (once the dead goat's foot on a stick is discovered) helps with the official story that it was all a sick joke that went too far, perpetrated by a gang of weekend Satanists.

dust, and the only mummy is located in the town museum.

Instigating Scene: Someone has broken into the town museum, broken open the glass case that held an Egyptian mummy, and unwrapped it. The Ordo Veritatis is concerned that Esoterrorists may be trying to bring a new manifestation of the Practice into being. There are several bizarre elements to the robbery. Nothing precious seems to have been taken, and a jar of supermarket honey has been left inside the case.

Core Information: The honey is Jessica Crane's attempt to give something in return for the mummy dust she took, in accordance with occult laws of equilibrium. She left a partial fingerprint on it, enough for a match if the investigators suspect her. An imprint of a sneaker sole reveals that whoever broke in was likely to be a teenager, which points the investigators towards the High School. Fabric tufts can also be used to identify the perpetrator as a high school student.

At the school, the investigators can pick up on rumors of something sinister going on with the seniors. Carslake offers his help, presenting himself as a staunch Christian who knows a lot about the ways of Satanists, as he has studied them for years - 'know your enemy', he says.

Jessica Crane's protective spells will not work, of course, and Strap Throat will claim her first victim