

REAPER MADNESS

A 24-Hour Game About Dead People
By Steve Johnson



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Reaper Madness was originally created as a 24-Hour RPG. For more information on 24-Hour RPGs, visit www.24hourrpg.com.

You're Dead. Now What?

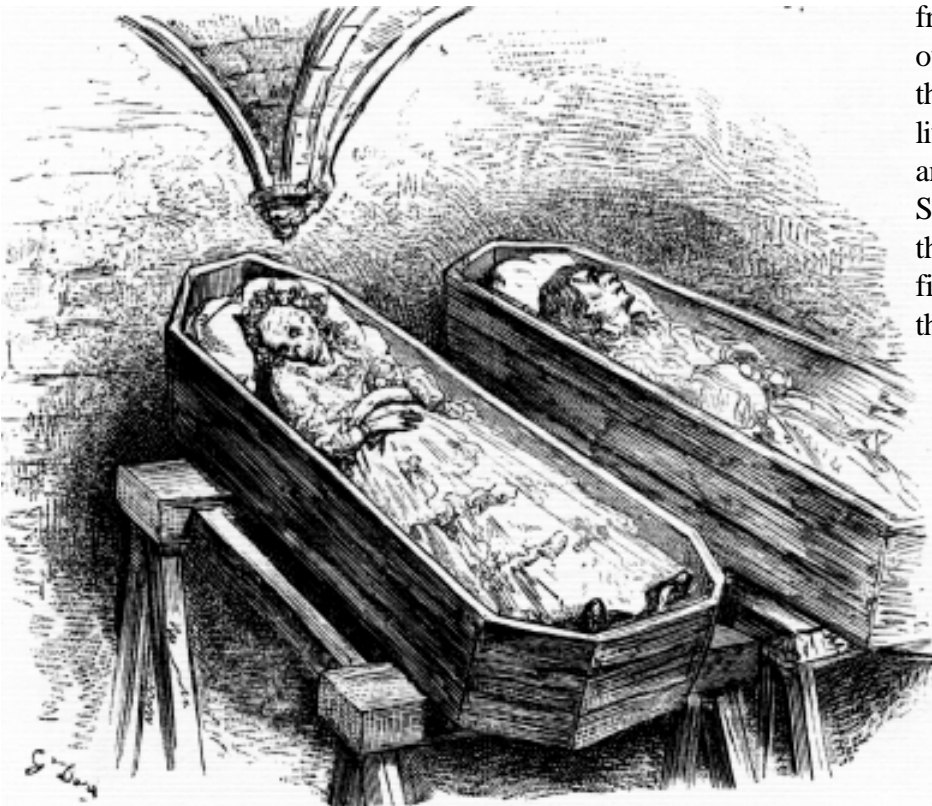
Hey now, sparky, you don't wanna go over there. It ain't pretty, and seein' your own mangled corpse sure as heck ain't gonna improve your day one bit. Good thing old Sam plucked you when he did; that woulda hurt like the dickens. Hi, I'm Jimbo, and I'm your new boss! What's that? No, you don't really have that job anymore, or at least you won't when your boss finds out about your unfortunate accident. In case the whole "mangled corpse" thing didn't give it away, you're dead. Well, not really dead, but you're not alive anymore. Some folks call it being 'undead,' but that kinda talk gives me the heebie-geebees. Anyway, since Sam's

moved on to bigger and better things, you're his replacement. Some people try to candy coat what we do and call themselves "terminal episode guidance specialists" or some such nonsense, but that's just a buncha two-dollar words. You're a Grim Reaper now, ace! Welcome aboard!

In *Reaper Madness*, players take on the roles of Grim Reapers. It's their job to help the dead move on to whatever awaits them in the afterlife. Most of the time, this is a pretty simple thing—you just walk up to the soon-to-be deceased, snatch their soul, and then try not to stare too much or hurl when they get corpsified. Sometimes, though, the dead don't want to

move on, and it's up to you to persuade them that their time on earth is through. Even simple jobs can become difficult if the Reaper gets too involved with the client before he or she dies; some people you just wish you could let live.

Aside from the whole "being an (un)living incarnation of death" thing, Reapers have other problems to contend with. First off, there's the whole "dying" thing to deal with; some people have existential crises about that sort of thing. Even Reapers who can accept death often have problems adjusting. Dying is a lot like moving to a new city. Suddenly you're all alone in a strange new situation without any of your old friends and safety nets to help you out. To top it off, Reapers have the same drives and desires as the living—they get hungry, thirsty, and horny just like the rest of us. Since Reaping isn't a paying gig, that means a new Reaper has to find some way to make money if they don't want to be miserable.



The Campaign

Since what's left of your car has local plates, I'm gonna guess you're from around here, so that'll save me from having to give you a tour of our fair city. You won't be corporeal again until your body's either burned or in the ground, so you get to start the job by taking a vacation. If you want to hang around with me, that's fine. I can tell you a little bit about what we do. You can go to your own funeral if you want to, but I wouldn't recommend it—best not cry over spilled milk, or more accurately spilled blood. You ever been to Pedro's House of Pancakes, junior? I'm headed that way right now. You can't really eat since you're all ghostly, but don't worry. You'll get to sample the whole menu once you're up and breathing again.

While it's perfectly acceptable for the Game Master (GM) to come up with the campaign background and then let the players create their characters, it's usually best to do these things as a group. When the players and GM work together to create the campaign, everybody feels more involved in the game. Also, having the entire group make characters at the same time increases the chances that the Player Characters (PCs) will fit together into a coherent group. It also helps encourage the players to establish existing relationships between the PCs, which is a big improvement on the

“you meet in a bar” scenario common in RPGs. Therefore, it's recommended that most (if not all) of the first game session be reserved for campaign and character creation. This chapter describes some of the things that the GM and players should discuss when creating the campaign.

Tone

The intended tone for *Reaper Madness* is “dark comedy,” but there's a lot of range there. While the best games will go from horrifying to zany and back again, it's a good idea to decide whether, in general, your group wants to focus more on the “dark” or the “comedy.” Knowing the preferred baseline tone will be very useful in coming up with campaign details and characters.

Setting

The default setting for *Reaper Madness* is “real-life”—modern-day planet earth with nothing weird (or at least weirder than usual) going on as far as most people know. The information here assumes this kind of setting, but others are possible. If you'd like to play a game about Reapers in 17th Century France, 24th Century Mars, or your favorite superhero universe, feel free to do so. It might take a little extra work on your part, but could be a lot of fun.

Assuming you're using the default setting, there are still a few things to figure out. First off, where does

the game take place? Most *Reaper Madness* games will be set in a particular city. That means that you'll need to come up with a name for the place, as well as a general idea of its size, character, and location in the world. A few tips:

“Stock” Cities

Some cities (L.A., New York, Las Vegas) are so common in pop culture that even people who haven't been there feel like they know what the place is like. If the game is set in New Orleans, all the players will know to expect Mardi Gras, Bourbon Street, and maybe some weird voodoo stuff. If you're using a stock city, it's best to pick one that most of the players have never been to, or have only visited briefly. Otherwise, the game could get sidetracked whenever the local expert/former resident notices something that's out of place.

Familiar Cities

Using a city that the players and GM are familiar with (your hometown or the city where you all went to college, for example), has its advantages. For one thing, everybody knows what the city and its inhabitants are like, where things are, and what bars to hang out in. Also, the juxtaposition of the familiar and the weird can help create the sense of quirkiness that works well in this kind of game. Of course, if your group has already played “My Neighborhood By Night,” this option might

not be the best. As with “Stock” cities that players have visited, sometimes reality can get in the way here, so make sure everybody understands that this is the *fictional* version of your city, especially where minor details are concerned.

Unfamiliar Cities

Tired of stock cities and “Rage Across My Backyard?” Just decide what size you’d like your city to be, and what part of the world you’d like it to be in, then look at a map. The advantage here is that you can use real-world facts and news for flavor (city government and chamber of commerce websites are great) without worrying too much about the details.

Fictional Cities

If the there options above don’t work for you, you can always set your game in a fictional city. Just determine the basic flavor of the place (“Anytown, USA,” “Suburban Hell,” “The City”), come up with a few interesting details, and make up the rest as you go along.

Globe-Spanning Adventure

While most Reapers will operate in a specific city, there’s no reason the team can’t travel all over the world. Maybe they’re responsible for reaping soldiers who are killed in action, or specialize in plane crashes, earthquakes, or similar disasters. This kind of campaign leads to exotic locales and new places, but running a game without permanent locations and characters can sometimes be difficult.

The Crew

Once you’ve figured out the basics of the city your characters will be living in, it’s time to decide a few things about the PC group. Start off by deciding what kinds of relationships the characters have with one another. Are they one big happy family? Do they see one another as strictly co-workers? Are there love triangles or blood feuds? As the crew takes shape, players will get a better idea of what sorts of characters they want to play, and how those characters fit into the group. In addition to the basic

group dynamics, you’ll want to think about a few other details:

The Boss

Every crew has a boss. He’s the guy who hands out assignments, handles problems, and makes the rules. For the time being, you’ll need to have a general idea of his leadership style and personality. Is he everybody’s pal? A pointy-haired moron? A pompous ass? You’ll also need to decide whether the boss will be a PC or a Game Master Character (GMC). While the boss role is well suited for GMC status, making a PC the boss also has its advantages. It’s up to the group as a whole to decide which option will work best for them.

The “Office”

Most crews will have a base of operations, where they meet to get their assignments for the day and discuss business. They might meet at the same bus stop at the appointed time, or conduct business over a pool game at Zeke’s Bar. Some crews even operate a real business (perhaps a



private detective agency or consulting firm), which provides them with both income and a cover for their real business.

Specialties

Reapers can reap any sort of soul, but some crews and individuals specialize in a particular type of reap (murders, accidents, pets, terminal diseases, etc.). While making the group “general practitioners” allows for more variation from game to game, some groups (especially those who travel all over the world) may prefer the “specialist” approach.

Rules

Certain rules apply to all Reapers, and are described later. For now, you just need to decide what guidelines the crew (or just the boss) has decided to follow. Typical work rules like “no dating” and “the last one to leave turns off the lights” can apply, but you’ll probably want a few “Reap Rules” (“get permission before you take another Reaper along with you” or “no trading”) as well. Since Reapers can’t really be fired (though they can be transferred), you’ll also need to figure out how the boss enforces the rules. Will characters who break the rules be yelled at? Given an “I’m very disappointed in you” speech? Punched in the mouth?

Assignments

How are assignments doled out? Does the boss just tell everyone about their Reap and expect them to either write it down or remember the details? Does he write

Reap details down on the back of napkins, hand them out in sealed envelopes, or send them via email? Also, determine if the boss lets the Reapers have input about what types of assignments they’re given. Maybe everyone is allowed to choose one type of assignment they won’t take (“no kids,” “I won’t go to Queens”), or are allowed to trade Reaps. On the other hand, some bosses may require that everyone do the job they’re given, or randomly assign Reaps.

Activities

Finally, decide if there are any non-Reaping activities the crew does as a group. Maybe the boss constantly forces them to do “team-building” activities, or they always go out drinking Wednesday night, or get together to crash funerals whenever the opportunity presents itself.

GMCs

Your GM is no doubt fully capable of coming up with characters on his own, and good players will end up with half a dozen or more GMCs before they finish character creation. Still, it doesn’t hurt to come up with a few recurring characters as a group. When everyone contributes, you’ll usually end up with characters who are far more interesting and believable than those created by a single person. A few possible character types to consider here:

The Boss

If the boss is going to be a GMC, let the players have some input.

Other Reapers

If there are other Reapers or crews in the city, come up with some details about them. How do they operate? Who are they? How do they get along with your crew?

Other People “In the Know”

Though it’s rare, there are a handful of regular people who know about Reapers, have abilities that allow them to communicate with disembodied souls, or have other powers related to dead people. A few possibilities are described later, on page XX.

Regular Folks

These are people who have no idea that Grim Reapers walk among the living. Examples include the bartender at the local pub, the bum who hangs out near the bus stop, and that smarmy guy with the tattoos. Coming up with a few colorful characters will make the game more fun.

Your Character

*Lookin' good there, Skippy!
'Course, the last time I saw you,
you had that sucking chest
wound, so I guess some
improvement's to be expected. I
bet you're hungry after all that
wandering around without a
body. Here, have some pan-
cakes. They're so delicious they
just gotta be bad for ya, but I
guess that don't really matter;
what with us bein' dead and all.
Once you've got some food
down your throat, you can tell
me a little about yourself. It
might stir up some memories
about your old life, but that's
ultimately a good thing. Now
that you're one of us, that life is
over. It's best for you to accept
that right now. Otherwise you're
gonna run into problems.*

Bring Your Character to Life

It's best to start out by creating your character on the day of her death. Don't worry, we'll be killing her off soon. For now, don't bother with figuring out character stats, just focus on who the character is, what her life is like, where she comes from, and what her personality is like. If you're having trouble, try answering the following questions:

- What does she do for a living?
- Where does she live
- Who are her friends?
- How does she dress?
- Where does she come from?
- What does she want out of life? (not that she'll get it, since she's about to die)

- What does she do in her spare time?
- Is she outgoing, shy, or somewhere in between?
- What do other people think of her when they first meet her?
- What makes her happy?
- What ticks her off?

Add Word and Numbers

Characters in *Reaper Madness* have the following Words (also known as stats):

- **Body** describes the character's general physical health.
- **Brain** describes the character's mental abilities, including innate intelligence and education.
- **Nerve** rates the character's self-confidence, courage, and willpower.
- **Job** describes what the character's does. In some cases, Job is an actual occupation that the character uses to earn a living ("investment banker," for example), but it can also describe the character's lifestyle ("hobo"), role in society ("housewife"), or even dream career ("aspiring actress").
- **Gimmick** is a special talent that generally cannot be learned. You either have it or you don't. Gimmicks can range from "dumb human tricks" ("can open beer bottles with her teeth") to phenomenal cosmic powers ("omnipotent"). Unless your game is set in a world very different from our own (for example, a fantasy world) or the GM gives you special permission to have some freaky psychic power or magical

ability, you'll want to stick closer to the "dumb human tricks" side of things.

- **Weakness** is the character's fatal flaw. While the character's Weakness doesn't have to be the cause of her tragic downfall, it should at least be a major inconvenience. Think Shakespearean tragedy and Greek mythology here. Avoid annoying personality traits ("spits when she talks"), minor inconveniences ("afraid of gum"), and "one-shot" Weaknesses ("dark secret"). While it's fine (and, in fact, encouraged) for characters to have all of these traits, they don't really work as Weaknesses.

- **Skills** are talents, abilities, and knowledge that aren't necessarily related to the character's job. Skills primarily reflect the character's hobbies and interests. Your character's Skills don't need to reflect her entire knowledge and life experience, just things she knows a lot about or does regularly. All the other stuff is covered by Body, Brain, and Nerve. Each character starts the game with three skills.

- **Health Points** are used to track the amount of physical punishment the character can take. Since Reapers can't die, Health Points (or, more precisely, lack of Health Points) are primarily used to determine how much pain the character is in at any given moment.

- **Yum Yums** are tasty pieces of candy, but don't start eating them just yet. They can be used to do

cool things in the game, which will be described later, quite possibly on page XX or in Appendix YZ.

• **Tag Line** is a witty phrase that tells others something about your character. You don't have to use it frequently or often. In fact, doing so can become very annoying very quickly.

• **WWPHTM?(Who Would Play Him/Her In The Movie?)**

If you were making a movie about the game, who would you cast to play your character? [Note: If your Tag Line and WWPHTM match (for example "Come Get Some" and "Bruce Campbell"), you should probably work on your character a little more.]

• **Dumb Fact:** Some random tidbit about your character: favorite band, brush with greatness, secret perversion, etc.

Understand what all the Words mean? Great! Now it's time to assign numbers to (some of) them. To determine your Numbers, roll d10+6. Now do it again. Continue until you've got five Numbers between 7 and 16. Assign these Numbers to the following Words (in any order you like): Body, Brain, Nerve, Job, and Gimmick. Your character's Weakness Number is the same as her Gimmick Number, and her Health Points are equal to her Body Number. Now roll a d20 and divide by 5; that's how many Yum Yums you have at the beginning of the game. Skills have Bonuses rather than Numbers: assign a +3 Skill Bonus to one skill, +2 to another, and +1 to whatever's left. Tag Line, WWPHTM?, and Dumb Fact don't need Numbers.

Your Untimely Demise

Now that you know what the character was like when she was alive, it's time to kill her off. Since death is a significant event in a person's (un)life, you'll want to come up with some juicy (and possibly graphic) details here.

While it's perfectly acceptable to kill your character through "normal" means (car crash, terminal illness, bad oysters), coming up with something unusual and quirky is recommended. A cool or amusing death might earn you some extra street cred with other Reapers ("When her decapitated

head went flying across the room, it scared Colin Quinn so bad he jumped out the window to his death! It was AWESOME!"), or at least give you a dumb nickname ("Mr. Auto-Erotic Asphyxiation").

In addition to deciding how your character died, you'll need to think about how death has changed her. While a few people are shallow, stupid, or just plain mean enough to survive death unchanged, most will have emotional scars. Even those who can accept their death may have

SAMPLE WORDS

Your character's Job, Gimmick, Weakness, and Skills can be whatever you want them to be, as long as the GM agrees (or you can convince him) that they're appropriate for the campaign. Since this sort of open-endedness intimidates some people, I've provided a list of Words that should work well in a *Reaper Madness* game. It's up to you and the GM to determine the specific game effects for your character's Words.

Jobs: Aspiring Musician, Bartender, Career Temp, Computer Nerd, Con Artist, Dead Celebrity, Door-to-Door Salesperson, Drag Queen, Drug Dealer, Exotic Dancer, Funeral Director, Goth, Hippie, Meter Maid, Outdoorsman, Petty Criminal, Preacher, Real-Estate Novelist, Reporter, Short Order Cook, Slacker, Teacher, Used Car Salesman, Veteran, Waiter/Waitress

Gimmicks: Always Find A Parking Space, Citizen of the World, Clue Magnet, Empathy, Everybody's Buddy, Green Thumb, Hard Boiled, I've Seen Worse, King of The Road, Lifetime of Experience, Prepared For Anything, Well-Read, Wisdom of Solomon

Weaknesses: Addict, Coward, Dames, Emotional Scars, Flashbacks, Gullible, Low Pain Threshold, Old, Phobia, Punching Bag, Really Creepy, Uneducated, Unlucky, Weak Stomach

Skills: Acting, Breaking & Entering, Eavesdropping, Chess, Cooking, Drug Lore, Freeloading, History, Internet Junkie, Lip Reading, Reaper Lore, Register Jockey, Seduction, Self-Defense, Snappy Dresser, Stealth, Useless Trivia, Video Games, Violinist, Wilderness Survival

trouble letting go of their old life. Decide how death changed your character's life.

Livin' La Vida Muerta

Since you're dead, showing up at your old house or day job might cause a wee little problem. Even if you could somehow hide your death from the people you once knew, there's another problem: you no longer look the same. While other Reapers and a few folks with special powers see you as you were in life, most people see you differently, or rather don't really see you. To regular people, Reapers look plain and unremarkable. Reapers who were extremely good-looking in life can still manage to turn heads, but it takes a lot of work. The appearance change serves two purposes: It keeps people that Reapers knew in life from recognizing them, which could be awkward; and their new, average appearance helps Reapers "blend in," which makes the job easier.

Reapers can't die, so being hungry and homeless won't kill you. But that doesn't mean it's not miserable. Unless you want to stand out in the cold all day listening to the increasingly disgusting noises your stomach is making, you'll need to come up with some way to earn a living. Here are a few tried-and-true methods of post-death survival:

Squatting

Since you can't take it with you, most dead people won't mind if you take their wallet and crash at their old place for a while. The biggest drawback to this living

arrangement (aside from the occasional brain matter in the carpet) is that it's temporary. Sooner or later, the money's going to run out or the apartment will be rented out to somebody new.

Crime

There's no record of your new fingerprints, face, and name anywhere in the system, so it's possible to make crime pay. Until you get caught, that is. There's no diplomatic immunity for Reapers, and once you get busted you're going into the system. To make matters worse, there's a chance that those nice fellows from the IRS will show up at your door wanting to know why you haven't paid taxes since, well, ever.

Cash Money

Some employers are more than willing to pay you in cash without ever asking for any form of identification. With this option, you can explore such exciting careers as drug mule, migrant worker, and crack whore!

Buried Treasure

Good luck!

Get A Real Job

Not as glamorous as some of the other options, but it is more reliable and generally less dangerous. You'll have to find a way to create a new identity for yourself (complete with documents and references). Since medical degrees, bar admissions, and other documentation for glamorous jobs are tough to forge, being a highly skilled professional won't necessarily get you into a higher

tax bracket. But assuming you've got some marginally marketable skills, you can probably find work. You'll just have to juggle the demands of Reaping with the bone-numbing tedium of wage slavery.

Your Life With The Thrill Kill Kult

In addition to determining the details of your character's new lifestyle, you'll have to figure out what she's like as a Reaper. Is she kind and caring to her clients, or distant and emotionless? Are there certain kinds of jobs that she refuses to take, or certain sorts of clients that she prefers? How does she feel about being a walking minion of death? You'll also need to figure out how she fits in with the crew of Reapers she's working with.

And Now For Some More Crunchy Bits

Now that you're dead, you get a couple more words to add to your character sheet. The first is a brand-new Job: "Reaper." This Job is used for Reaping souls, and using the special abilities that come with being a Reaper: hiding in plain site, healing really fast, spotting bogies, and the like. These are described in section QZ, which you can find on page XX. The Reaper Job can also be used for things like recalling bits of Reaper lore and checking to see if you know anyone in the Reaper community that can help with a particular problem. Your Reaper Job Number is something that you and the GM will need to negotiate based on your

character's concept (and the number of Yum Yums you've got lying around), but here are some guidelines:

Body Still Cold: 6

Newbie: 8

Knows What She's Doing: 11

Old Hand: 14

Should I Call You "Grim" or "Mr. Reaper?": 18

The other word you'll need to add is *WWPDHITM?* (*Who Would Play Dead Him/Her In The Movie?*). Since most people see Reapers as completely average folks, you'll probably want to avoid A-list (and possibly even B, C, and D-list) actors here. If you don't know the actor's name, don't worry. Most people will know who you're

talking about when you say "that guy who played Nancy's dad in *Nightmare on Elm Street*." (John Saxon, in case you're wondering).



ANATOMY OF A REAP

We meet here at Pedro's every morning at 8 a.m. sharp, rain or shine. Anybody who's late owes me breakfast. Unless you've got a good memory, bring a pen and something to write on. I'll give you the details about your reap: name—at least as much of it as I know, address, time of death, and final thought. The address is where the death takes place, not where the client lives, but you probably already figured that out, right kiddo? For your first Reap or two, there'll be somebody along to help out and show you the ropes. After that, you're on your own. Don't even think about trying to get out of Reaping. Interfering with Management's plan only causes problems. You're stuck here Reaping until Management decides to move you up, so it's best not to rock the boat.

The Boss Gets the List

All bosses have an indirect line of communication with someone or something working for Management (the generic term for the entity or entities responsible for death). While no face-to-face contact with “middle management” is permitted, each boss has some control over how assignments, transfer requests, and the like are communicated. The most common method of communication, especially when it comes to older bosses, is to arrange a safe drop box where the two parties

can exchange information. More tech-savvy bosses send and receive information using email, text messaging, and faxes. In any case, at some pre-appointed time each day, the boss receives a list of the people his crew is responsible for Reaping in the next 24 hours. The client's full name is never on the list (nobody really knows why). Usually, each entry will include a first initial and last name, but occasionally the Reaper doesn't even get that much.

Clients Are Assigned

Each boss has his own method for determining how clients are assigned. Some try to match the Reap to the Reaper, others let the Reapers pick and choose, or assign clients randomly. There are probably also a few particularly sadistic bosses who assign clients to the Reaper most likely to have difficulty accomplishing the job. Reapers are given the client's (partial) name, final thought, and time of death, as well as the location where the death will take place.

The Job Site

It's a good idea to arrive at your client's place of death a little early, because you'll need to figure out a number of things if you want to do your job successfully. The first order of business is figuring out who your client is. Since for some reason Management doesn't like to give out clients' full names,

you'll probably have to ask some questions and do some snooping to determine who you're supposed to Reap (family reunions can be particularly tough). You'll also need to try to guess how the client is going to die: sometimes it's obvious, but this is unfortunately rare. Look around for potentially deadly situations, and keep an eye out for bogies—the demons who cause death [described on that magical, mystical page XX]. If you see them, it's a safe bet that the death will be suicide, homicide, or accident. The bogies that cause disease and “natural” death are long gone by the time the client actually kicks the bucket.

The Reap

Once you've figured out who you're supposed to Reap, you'll need to yank their soul. You can do this at any time, but it's best to do before the time of death, especially if you think the death will be messy. All you need to do to pluck a soul is touch the client. Once the soul's out, the rest of the spirit will join it as soon as the body dies. If for some reason the client doesn't show up for the Reap, that means Management has for some reason changed The Plan and the person gets to hang around a little longer.

Helping the Client Deal

Once the body's dead, the mind, spirit, personality and other non-fleshy parts will join the soul,

resulting in what most people call a ghost (for more detail, see ancient and honorable page XX). It's your job to explain what happened to them and help them accept the fact that they're dead. Most people accept their fate relatively quickly, but some will hang around for a while. Since you've got to deal with them until they move on, it's best to do what you can to help them deal with their deceased status.

Sending Them On

Once the client has accepted that they're dead, the gates of whatever comes next will open up to them. The gates look different to different people: some see the traditional bright tunnel of light or deity of their choice, while others see vast libraries or lush paradises full of virgins. Essentially, they see whatever they think "Heaven" should look like. Who knows whether this is actually what they get in the afterlife. Since most people probably wouldn't enter a hellish wasteland full of demons willingly, there's a good chance this is just a fancy light show.

Tough Reaps

Sooner or later, every Reaper runs into problems. Sometimes the complication is because the client doesn't want to move on, sometimes it's because the Reaper screws up or has a sudden existential crisis. A few complications that the Reaper can run into are described below, along with what happens when a Reap goes south.

- If the Reaper fails to pluck the

client's soul before death, the soul is trapped in the body until somebody plucks it. Being in the body at the time of death is very traumatic, especially if the death isn't exactly peaceful. Being trapped in a lifeless corpse is even worse. Just to put icing on the cake, any scars or disfigurement that the body suffers at the time of death are carried on with the soul into the afterlife. So if you fail to Reap a person before they get blown up, they'll have to spend eternity as tiny chunks o' soul. Even if you're not too concerned about the effect your screw-up will have on the client's immortal soul, it's useful to realize that traumatized ghosts sometimes have a hard time moving on to whatever comes next.

- If the Reaper gets stupid and saves a person from dying when it's their time, the soul wastes away. Think of it like keeping milk around past the expiration date. If the soul stays in the body longer than Management decides it should, it spoils. People with rotten souls inevitably turn into either ambitionless, lifeless automatons or mean-spirited sociopaths.

- Clients who miss their appointments are given a "stay of execution," and their souls don't rot away like those who are unexpectedly saved from death. But it's not a good idea for Reapers to "arrange" for a client to miss his appointment. For one thing, Management doesn't like this, and will send bogies to torment the Reaper for seven days and

seven nights. If you've never been tormented by sadistic minions of death, you'll just have to trust that it's unpleasant. Causing a person to miss an appointment that Management expected them to make can also cause a chain reaction, with additional people dying as a result of the client's continued existence. That can mean extra-long workdays for Reapers until Management gets his plan back on track. Like many rules, this one has an exception: if a D-Vu [described on most wonderful page XX] gets involved, you're allowed to help them make sure the client misses his appointment.

- Refusal to Reap is the one thing that can kill you. Even if the clients are handled by other Reapers, Reapers who consistently shirk their duties cease to exist. No light show, no whatever comes next, just oblivion.

- Some ghosts won't want to move on as quickly as you'd like them to; they want to accomplish one final task, or send a message to a loved one, or just don't want to leave. When this happens, you have to act as their bail bondsman, keeping a constant eye on them until they're ready to move on. If you let a ghost give you the slip, you're responsible for hunting him down and convincing him to move on. If you fail to do so in a reasonable time period, Management will let the bogies have their way with you until the soul moves on.

Other Death-Related Careers

We're not the only things that go bump in the night, tiger. You've already heard a little bit about ghosts and bogies. There are also the sixers, who can see dead people. Sometimes they can actually help us out when it comes to making ghosts move on, but sometimes they stick their noses where they don't belong and become real pains in the butt. Then there are the D-Vus, who cause people to miss their appointments. If you ever feel like you've already done everything you're doing, there's probably a D-Vu around somewhere. There are also zombies, but not the rotting walking corpses you're thinkin' of, and maybe even a few things I don't even know about.

Bogies

Bogies are the demonic creatures responsible for causing death. When clients experience “unexpected” deaths (a death that nobody saw coming), bogies are usually on the scene at or shortly before the time of death. They're the ones who weaken the rope that's hauling up that safe, drop banana peels in particularly dangerous places, blow out pilot lights, and cause “mechanical malfunctions” of all types. Bogies are rarely around for deaths that everybody knows are inevitable (natural causes, terminal illness). Their work was done when they helped the client smoke that first cigarette or get his cushy job at

Asbestos, Inc.

Bogies are very good at not being seen (usually you see something indistinct out of the corner of your eye, if anything), which is a good thing, because they're ugly as hell. Imagine a gremlin (from the movie) crossed with a hairless rat and you'll have a good idea of what they look like. Most living people can't see bogies at all. The only exceptions are crazy people and people with special powers (D-Vus, Sixers, and the like).

When they're not coming up with new and unique ways to off people, bogies spend their time tormenting Reapers who have annoyed Management (usually by screwing up The Plan). A Reaper who has been unfortunate enough to receive their special attention will attest that bogies are sadistic little buggers.

D-Vus

D-Vus (as in “déjà vu”) are otherwise normal humans who help out dead people who are late for dinner (trapped in their bodies at or after the time of death). When a D-Vu encounters such an unfortunate, the soul inevitably asks for help, often in a very creepy *Return of the Living Dead* sort of way. When this happens, time suddenly “rewinds” itself to “earlier this morning” and the D-Vu's job is to help make the client miss their appointment. The D-Vu is the only person who's fully aware that the day is

repeating itself, but occasionally the Reaper who was supposed to pluck the client will notice that everything seems awfully familiar. Whenever time is rewound, both the client and the Reaper get a second chance: the client may miss his appointment and live a little longer; the Reaper gets a chance to fix a Reap that went bad. D-Vu intervention is the only time a Reaper is allowed to help the client miss his appointment without getting special attention from Bogies.

Ghosts

As mentioned previously, a ghost is whatever's left of a person (soul, intelligence, personality) once his body stops working. Everyone who dies becomes a ghost, at least for a little while. Reapers remain ghosts until their bodies are disposed of, at which point they assume their new corporeal form. Regular dead people remain ghosts until they're ready to accept death and move on. Most people do this in a reasonable timeframe, but some want to hang around. When this happens, it's up to the Reaper to keep tabs on the ghost and help it work out its issues. A few ghosts “jump bail” and give their Reaper the slip. When this happens, the Reaper has to find the ghost before Management gets mad and sends in the bogies.

Ghosts are completely incorporeal and are normally invisible to

regular people. Even though they have no physical bodies, all ghosts have latent telekinetic powers which they can use to affect the material world. They may also make themselves visible to regular people for short periods of time. Using these abilities tends to scare the crap out of people, but it can sometimes be therapeutic for the ghost.

Sixers

Sixers are living humans who see dead people. In addition to being able to interact with ghosts of all varieties, Sixers see zombies, Reapers, and other “special” people for what they really are, or at least as something that’s not normal. Most people who publicly claim that they can see or

speak with the dead are not Sixers (they’re just frauds).

Snitches

Snitches are regular people who have been given some special insight into The Plan. When there’s an unexpected change in the plan, snitches can sometimes provide a few tips on how to set things right. Snitches are usually really damn creepy.

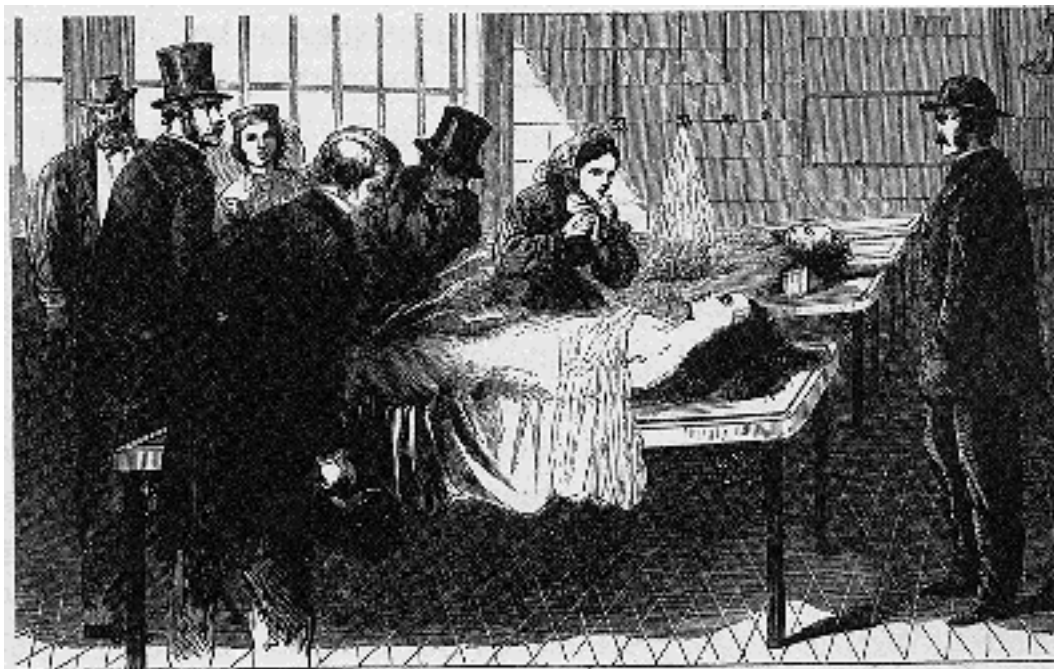
Special Agents

Remember how we said that some people who live past their expiration date become sociopaths? When those sociopaths inevitably go on their killing sprees, they’re known as special agents. It should be noted that not all mass murderers, genocidal

maniacs, and madmen are special agents. Many terrorists, hit-men, and government officials have perfectly functional souls, they just don’t know how to use them.

Zombies

When most people hear the word “zombie” they think of the walking corpses in all those great George Romero movies. In the world of *Reaper Madness*, however, a zombie is a person whose soul has been removed from its body through unnatural means, usually by an evil magician of some stripe. Since Reapers are skilled in the care and feeding of souls, they can sometimes help make things right again.



Game Rules

Since *Reaper Madness* is a very character-driven game, it's possible to go entire sessions without ever resorting to rolling dice and doing math. Still, there will be times when you need to know whether a character can actually do whatever it is she wants to do. When this happens, you'll need to roll a d20. This roll is compared to the character's Number for whatever Word governs the action (as determined by the GM). If the character has skills that are appropriate to the action, or if the GM decides that outside factors will positively or negatively influence her chance of success, these modifiers are added to the Number. If the character rolls less than or equal to his Number (including modifiers), the action is a success. Higher rolls are better. Think of it like *The Price Is Right*—you want to get as close as you can to the Number without going over.

While a simply rolling under the appropriate Number can often determine an action's success, there are some cases where the roll must be higher than a particular Difficulty Number (DN) in order for the action to succeed. The most common instances are described below.

• **Opposing another character:** If two characters are actively challenging one another, they each make the appropriate roll; if both rolls succeed, the higher roll wins the contest; if one fails and one

succeeds, the character who was successful wins; and if both fail their rolls, neither gains an advantage. Essentially, the character's DN is his opponent's roll.

• **Performing A Difficult Task:** Even if nobody's trying to impede the character's progress, some tasks are too difficult to settle with just a simple roll. Therefore, the GM may at any time rule that the character must beat a set Difficulty Number for an action to succeed. Simple tasks should have relatively low DN's (5), while truly Herculean tasks will involve DN's in the 15-20 range. If the DN is higher than the character's Number, the task is impossible without spending Yum Yums (since all successful rolls will be lower than the DN).

• **Relying On Blind Luck:** Whenever an action mostly involves luck, rather than skill or superior ability, the GM rolls a d20. The result is the character's Difficulty Number.

Most actions can be handled using the rules described above, but there are a few common types of actions that require some additional rules. These are described in the following sections.

Weakness Rolls

Weakness rolls work just like regular rolls, but in this case a failed roll is preferred. Basically, the Weakness Number represents the power the Weakness has over

the character. If the roll succeeds, the character suffers the negative effects of her Weakness.

Reaping

In most cases, no roll is required to pluck a soul, since all the character needs to do is touch the client. If for some reason the GM feels that this isn't as easy as it sounds (the client is surrounded by bodyguards, afraid of the reaper, etc.), he may require that the Reaper make a Job roll in order to pluck the soul. If the client is actively avoiding the Reaper, the roll is resisted by the client's Body roll. If the difficulty is due to other factors (bodyguards, crowds, etc.), the GM should set a DN based on the situation.

Blending In

Because most Reapers look like movie extras to the living, they have an innate ability to blend in with a crowd. As long as there are other people around, the Reaper is not doing anything to draw attention to herself, and the observer is not specifically looking for the Reaper, she can use this ability to avoid notice from people who are looking for "anything unusual." The observer makes a Brain roll, which is resisted by the Reaper's Job roll.

Spotting a Bogie

Unless bogies are actively tormenting someone, they tend to hide themselves pretty well. The living can't see them at all, and

even Reapers have a hard time noticing that they're around. Whenever a Reaper looks for bogies, she makes a Job roll, resisted by the bogie's Gimmick roll.

Combat

As might be expected, combat is handled by a resisted roll between the two characters who want beat each other up. There are two types of combat: hand-to-hand and ranged. Hand-to-hand combat includes brawling, fencing and other up-close and personal types of combat. If the combatants are throwing, shooting, or spitting things at one another, use ranged combat.

The main difference between the two forms of combat is that in hand-to-hand combat, both parties have the ability to cause damage. The outcome of the roll determines who gets the upper hand and who gets hurt. In ranged combat, only the person shooting, throwing, or chucking the weapon can cause damage. If the defender wins the roll, he simply avoids getting hit by whatever's coming towards him.

Damage is determined by subtracting the losing roll from the winning roll. If the loser failed his roll, treat it as a zero for purposes of calculating damage. If both rolls fail, nobody causes damage. As noted previously, only the attacker can cause damage in ranged combat. If the winning character is using a weapon, the damage is increased by 1 to 5 points, depending on the size, deadliness, and coolness of the weapon being used. Damage is subtracted from the character's

Health Points. Since Reapers can't die, and other people only die if there's a Reaper assigned to them, reaching zero Health Points usually means that the character is badly hurt, but will probably pull through.

Healing

One of the benefits of being undead is that you heal quickly. Whenever a Reaper takes damage, he may roll his Job Number each day. If the roll succeeds, he gets back a number of Health Points equal to his roll. The living heal a lot slower, but since this is a game about Reapers, we'll leave the details as an exercise for the GM.

Yum Yums

You know that Yum Yums are delicious pieces of candy, but you're probably wondering what the heck they have to do with this game. Simply put, they are the single most important mechanic in the whole game. What can you do with Yum Yums? Anything you want, as long as you can talk the GM into it. To use Yum Yums, simply give some of your candy to the GM. A few common uses for Yum Yums include:

- Re-rolling an unsuccessful roll.
- Increasing the value of your roll.
- Increasing damage inflicted upon an opponent.
- Decreasing the amount of damage you take from an injury.
- Subtly altering reality in your character's favor.
- Improving your character
- Food (this has no game effect)

The specific effects of Yum Yums are entirely up to the GM. In general, players who come up

with cool uses for Yum Yums, or neat explanations of how the Yum Yum expenditure fits into the story should get more out of Yum Yums than players who just hand them over and say "I'm gonna use them to reduce that damage."

Character improvement is the exception to the "up to the GM" rule mentioned above. If you want to raise your character's Body, Brain, Nerve, Job, or Gimmick Number by one, or decrease your Weakness Number by one, it'll cost you 3 Yum Yums. Raising a skill bonus by one costs 2 Yum Yums. New skills can be learned (with a +1 Skill Bonus) for 3 Yum Yums. New Jobs cost 15 YYs, and have a starting Number of 7. If you want to get a new Gimmick, you have to spend 20 Yum Yums. The starting Number for a new Gimmick is 5. New Weaknesses are free.

Earning Yum Yums

Since you only got 1-4 Yum Yums during character creation, I'm guessing you've already figured out that it's possible to earn more during the game. How do you earn Yum Yums? Simply put, by contributing to the game. A few popular methods of earning Yum Yums are:

- Good role-playing.
- Coming up with a creative solution to a problem the characters encounter.
- Accomplishing one of your character's goals.
- Creating interesting GMCs, locations, and other campaign elements.
- Saying something really funny (preferably in character).
- Buying the GM beer.

Running the Game

As the GM, you've got a tough job. While everybody else just has to worry about role-playing a single character, you've got to role-play every single GMC that the characters meet, often with little or no preparation. Not only that, you've got to come up with interesting plots, create or research background information, set the mood, decide how to apply the rules to situations in the game, settle arguments and disputes between players, and (most of all) make sure everybody has fun. This may sound a little intimidating at first, but once you get the hang of things, you'll do just fine. While time and space considerations make it impossible to explore the fine art of Game Mastering in depth here, this section does provide a few tried-and-true tips, as well as some information that seems particularly useful for a game like *Reaper Madness*.

Let the Players Help

Just because you're the GM doesn't mean you've got to do everything yourself. Most players prefer games where they feel they have input—it makes them feel that they have “ownership” in the world. Use this to your advantage. For starters, encourage the players to come up with details about the setting—GMCs, locations, plot ideas, whatever. Whenever they contribute something to the game, reward them with praise and Yum Yums. This will not only encourage them to

help out even more, it might convince other players to come up with a few ideas. Just make sure that the players understand that you have veto power over some setting information.

When actually running the game, let the players do some of your job for you. If a player's character isn't in a particular scene, have him take on the role of a GMC or help you run combat. Not only does this keep you from having to do everything, it keeps everyone involved in the game.

Plan Just Enough

At the very least, you need a rough idea about what's going to happen in the next game session. Who are the clients? How do they die? What's the tone of this session? What impact will it have on the ongoing story? For some people, these vague ideas will work just fine—the rest can be improvised. Others will want to go into a bit more detail, and maybe even write some stuff down. That's perfectly ok, but be careful; too much planning can be just as bad as too little. Too much scripting can make the characters feel railroaded, and too much time spent working on the game can lead to burnout. The key is to discover the right amount of planning for your group's gaming style and the game you're playing. This takes a little experimentation.

Communicate

If you're not sure how the players

feel about the game, ask them. Find out what they like about the campaign, what they don't particularly care for, and where they'd like the story to take their characters. It could be that what you thought was a lovable GMC annoys the player to no end, or your players were expecting something a little less dark. Listen to their concerns about the game, and do what you can to fix problems and increase everyone's enjoyment.

Setting the Mood

Some sessions will only work (or will work a lot better) if you can create the right atmosphere. This is especially true of games that are especially dark. There are lots of tricks you can use to help set the mood: music, special lighting, props, and a lot more. Figuring out how to make those sorts of things work will go a long way. Unfortunately, no matter how hard you work to set the mood, it won't work if the players aren't into it. A single out-of-character comment can completely ruin the mood you've so carefully established. The best way to keep players in the right frame of mind is to reward those who get into the spirit of the game, while minimizing the distractions from the less considerate.

The “Mini-Solo Adventure” Problem

Since most Reaps are single-character affairs, some scenes will focus on a single character. With a

little luck, the players who aren't involved in a scene will be so interested in the ongoing story that they'll happily sit back and watch the action when their character is off screen (as long as you make sure every character gets his fair share of game time). If someone starts fidgeting too much, you can always give them a GMC to play. More likely, characters who aren't involved in the scene will start talking amongst themselves, playing video games or CCGs, and generally distracting you and the player currently involved in the action. There are few ways to handle this problem:

• **Set Up A “Waiting Room”:**

Depending on where you're playing, you might be able to just send players who are bored to another room, preferably one where they can find something to occupy by their time while waiting their turn. The key to making this solution work is to make it clear that the players who aren't currently involved are free to stick around and watch the scene, but are expected to keep distractions to a minimum. Players who aren't interested in the scene are welcome to go play video game or throw darts or whatever in the other room—going to the “waiting room” is a way to keep from being bored, not a punishment for disrupting the game.

• **Actual Solo Adventures:** If you expect a particular solo scene to be particularly time consuming or uninteresting to the other players, have the player come over before the game or on a different night to role-play the

scene. As long as everybody can keep the timeline straight, this will allow in-depth character development without losing players to boredom.

• **Play By Post/Email:** Since many scenes in a *Reaper Madness* focus on a single character, the setting is especially suitable as a play-by-post or email game. If you don't want to do the entire game online, you can always do the solo stuff via email or post, and save the game time for interaction between the characters.

Death Scenes

Before you start the regular campaign, you might want to consider running solo “death and early Reaper life” adventures for each player. This will give both you and the player a chance to better understand what the character's life was like, how he died, and how he dealt with making the transition from living human being to Grim Reaper. Death Scenes can be anything from short, ten-minute summaries to complete solo adventures. It's up to you, the player, and the gods of spare time.

Dark Secrets of the Reaper Madness Setting

After reading through the information about Reapers and all that good stuff in the earlier part of this book (you know, page XX), you've probably got some questions about how everything fits together. For example, who or what is Management? How does he decide when a Reaper gets to

move on to whatever comes next? What exactly is “whatever comes next?”

Those are some great questions, but I'm not going to answer them. Death is the great big mystery, and in the world of *Reaper Madness*, dying doesn't necessarily solve anything. In fact, it can make death even more incomprehensible. I feel that keeping “the truth” about death ambiguous is important to making the game work. Too many details takes out all the mystery and makes the setting a lot less interesting. If you don't agree with my thinking and want more details, that's your prerogative as a GM. But you'll have to come up with them on your own, because I'm not telling.

Plot Ideas

The plots and stories in your game will ultimately depend on your setting, tone, and (especially) characters. Still, some of the basic concepts of the setting suggest a few general types of plots that you can use in your game. A few are detailed here.

Bail Jumper

A ghost escapes from one of the Reapers, and it's up to the crew to track him down and bring him to justice (or maybe his eternal reward).

Busy Day

For some reason, an unusually high volume of people are slated to die today, and it's up to the crew to make sure they all get where they need to go.

Death Takes a Holiday

Every seven years, Reapers and bogies get a day off and nobody dies. How will the crew spend their well-earned vacation?

Fresh Meat

A new Reaper joins the crew, and it's up to the PCs to show her the ropes.

Funeral for a Friend

A well-liked friend of the crew will die today. How do you know? The boss got the information this morning, and one of you has to Reap him.

Group Reap

The crew are assigned to handle an accident or catastrophe with a particularly high fatality rate.

Happy Death Day to You

It's the anniversary of a Reaper's death. Celebrating death seems kind of weird, and it's hard to mourn someone who's standing right next to you. So how does the crew mark the occasion?

Past Lives

One of the Reapers runs into someone or something that reminds her of her ante-mortem life. This could make her re-examine her outlook on being a Reaper, and might require her to decide whether or not to interfere with the life of a friend or relative from her previous life.

The Real World

The characters encounter problems with the non-Reaper aspect of unlife: personal relationships,

jobs, money, and all the other problems that normal people face everyday are fair game for this plot.

Rewind

One of the Reapers wakes up with a strange recurring feeling of déjà vu. That's because she's already lived through today once before. She botched a reap yesterday, and a D-vu has set the clock back in order to save the client.

Those Meddling Sixers

A Sixer interferes with a Reap, and the crew has to fix the problem.

Upright Citizen

One of the living (perhaps a police officer or tabloid reporter) notices that one or more of the Reapers has a bad habit of showing up wherever people turn up dead. In addition to their normal Reaping duties, the crew may have to deal with uncomfortable questions, unwanted publicity, or a police investigation.



Sample Characters

Jimbo (Reaper Boss)

Body: 12

Brain: 11

Nerve: 13

Job: Cowboy (11); Reaper (15)

Gimmick: Everybody's Buddy (12)

Weakness: Not As Young As I Used To Be (12)

Skills: The Great State of Texas +3; Fishing +2; History +1

Tag Line: "You understand what I'm sayin', Sparky?"

WWPHITM? Tommy Lee Jones

WWPHDITM? An extra from *Blazing Saddles*

Dumb Fact: Never wears a hat.

Jimbo was born in the 1923 on a cattle ranch in East Texas. After serving in World War II, he joined the rodeo, where he won a few buckles for bull riding. When he started to get to old for that sort of thing, he took a job tending to the animals. In 1977, Jimbo was trampled to death by a bronco when the bolt broke on the animal's stall. He's been a Reaper ever since. Jimbo is likable, honest, and hard-working. If he wore six-shooters and a ten-gallon hat, he could easily be mistaken as an aging Texas good ol' boy right out of central casting.

Wayne Foster (Sixer)

Body: 10

Brain: 13

Nerve: 12

Job: Funeral Director (14)

Gimmick: Sees Dead People (12)

Weakness: Addict (12)

Skills: Drug connection +3; Pick Up Hookers +2; Scrabble +1

Tag Line: "Leave me alone!"

WWPHITM? Oliver Platt (think *Huff*)

Dumb Fact: Cocaine's a hell of a drug.



When five-year-old Wayne Foster told his parents that he talked to dead people, they chalked it up to combination of overactive imagination and life in a family-run funeral home. But Wayne knew what he saw, and has got older the spirits become more demanding and frightening. By the time he was 12, Wayne's parents had sent him to therapy, a mental hospital, and even church hoping that someone could make him stop imagining that he could see the dead. Eventually, Wayne figured out that it was best to pretend he couldn't see the ghosts. They were still there, but at least staying quiet kept the shrinks at bay.

Given his "gift" for seeing ghosts, the last thing Wayne ever wanted was to become a mortician, but Foster & Sons is four-generation old family business, and the old man wouldn't even entertain the idea that Wayne would be anything but a funeral director when he grew up. When his parents died, Wayne inherited the business and all the ghosts that hang around the place. At least the booze and drugs help ease the pain.

Elizabeth Warren (D-Vu)

Body: 12

Brain: 12

Nerve: 12

Job: Crime Scene Investigator (11)

Gimmick: D-Vu (10)

Weakness: Short Fuse (10)

Skills: Trivial Pursuit +3; Skiing +2; Drinking Games +1

Tag Line: “Shut the hell up!”

WWPHITM? Liv Tyler

Dumb Fact: Favorite movie: *Gone With the Wind*

Up until a few years ago, Liz Warren was a typical crime scene analyst. She believed that everything could be explained by science, and that ghosts and other paranormal phenomena were just old wives tales. When the victim whose murder she was investigating grabbed her arm and asked for help, she was more than a little surprised, but a few minutes later she woke up safe and warm in her bed. The next day was amazingly similar to her previous night’s “dream,” up to and including the suddenly animated corpse. When she woke again and subbed her toe for the third time in a row, she realized that something was very wrong with the world. Deciding to honor the corpse’s request, she took what she knew about the case and tracked down the victim before his death and slashed his tires. That night, she didn’t get the call, and the next day time returned to normal. A few similar incidents have happened since. Liz doesn’t have the faintest idea of what’s going on, but is confident that sooner or later she’ll find a way to explain her strange time slips.

Jimmy Douglas (Snitch)

Body: 15

Brain: 11

Nerve: 9

Job: Cemetery Man (12)

Gimmick: Knows When You’ll Die (13)

Weakness: Batshit Crazy (13)

Skills: Knows A Lot About Death +3; Horror Movies +2; Soap Operas +1

Tag Line: “Jimmy knows secret things. Do you want Jimmy to tell you about them?”

WWPHITM? Tony Todd

Dumb Fact: Favorite movie: *Faces of Death IV*

Jimmy Douglas has always been fascinated with death, and not in a particularly healthy way. Throughout his life, Jimmy has studied death in all its forms, from horror movies to ancient mythology. Eventually his research paid off, allowing Jimmy to get a glimpse of what Death has in store for a person just by looking at them. Given his favorite topic, it’s not surprising that Jimmy took a job as a grave digger when he was 15, eventually working his way up to Cemetery groundskeeper. This work suits him well, mainly because it involves almost no contact with the general public. His morbidity, lack of communication skills, and borderline schizophrenia tend to creep people out.



Michael William Throgmorten (Special Agent)

Body: 12

Brain: 12

Nerve: 10

Job: Serial Killer (13)

Gimmick: Nice, Quiet Boy Who Keeps To Himself (14)

Weakness: Sociopath (14)

Skills: Torture +3; Stealth +2; Cooking +1

Tag Line: "Would you like to play?"

WWPHITM? Christian Slater

When Mike was 12 years old, he nearly drowned, but was saved at the last minute by a kindly old man. Shortly after the accident, Mike became increasingly withdrawn, but parents and teachers just chalked it up to puberty. Though he was an above-average student, Mike skipped college and has spent most of his adult life working dead-end jobs. Michael is a polite, well-groomed young man, but otherwise he doesn't leave much of an impression.

What most people don't know is that Mike is a sick, twisted cannibal. For years after his near-death experience, Mike felt that he was missing something in his life. When he was 16, he found it. A beautiful little girl named Suzie. Her screams were like music to his ears, and her spleen tasted like prime rib. Mike has killed plenty of children since that day, but there's just something special about your first time.

Creature Stats

Bogies

Body: 9

Brain: 12

Nerve: 15

Job: Minion of Death (14)

Gimmick: Semi-Invisible (17)

Weakness: Sadistic (17)

Skills: Break Things +3; Wreak Havoc +2; Bite +1

Ghosts

Ghosts have the same stats that the person had in life, but their invisible, incorporeal form makes it difficult for them to use most of their abilities. A ghost can appear to the living by making a successful Nerve roll, resisted by the victim's Brain roll. In addition, all ghosts have latent telekinetic ability. If they want to use this ability to affect the material world, they make a Nerve roll against a DN determined by the GM based on the task they're trying to perform.

Zombies

Body: 17

Brain: 0

Nerve: 0

Job: Mindless Slave (18)

Gimmick: Hard to Kill (19)

Weakness: No Free Will (19)

REAPER JARGON

Appointment: The time and place of a person's death.

Big Day: A day with a particularly high volume of Reaps, often the result of a chain reaction.

Bogies: The creatures that set things in motion for a death to occur.

Boss: The leader of a Reaper crew.

Chain Reaction: A series of unplanned deaths that result from an unauthorized change of plan. Also known as a "hiccup."

Change of Plan: When a person fails to die because of a missed appointment.

Client: A person whose soul the reaper takes.

Crew: The term I decided to use for "PC group," largely because the only "flavorful" option I could come up with was "Murder," (as in crows) which sounds dumb.

Day Off: Every seventh year, there's a single day during which nobody dies. It's a day off for both bogies and Reapers.

Death Day: The anniversary of a Reaper's death. Some crews treat it sort of like a birthday.

D-Vu: A person with the ability to "rewind" time in order to prevent a person from dying.

Expiration Date: The time at which a person is fated to die.

Ghost: What's left of a person after the body dies.

Group Reap: A job that requires multiple reapers, usually a major traffic pile-up, explosion, fire, or other event with a high casualty rate.

Hot Bogie Lovin': Being tormented by bogies as punishment for screwing up The Plan.

Late for Dinner: Term used to describe a soul that is still in the body at (or after) death.

Management: Culturally neutral term for the entity or entities that Reapers work for. Other popular names for this person (or people) include Death, God, Hades, Allah, The Grim Reaper, Yahweh, The Powers That Be, The Goddess, The Grim Reaper, Osiris, The Man Upstairs, The Angel of Death, and Lemmy.

Middle Management: People or creatures that act as messengers between Management and bosses. Even the bosses are not allowed direct contact with them.

Reap: When used as a noun, a single soul-taking assignment; a job. When used as a verb, to remove a person's soul.

Reaper: One who reaps; A Grim Reaper

Rotten Soul: The soul of a person who has been allowed to live beyond his allotted time on earth.

Pluck: To remove the soul of a person who is about to die. Also known as reaping or popping. Some call it yanking or jerking, but these terms are rare because they sound dirty.

Sixer: A person who can sense the dead.

Snitch: A normal human with supernatural knowledge about Management's plan.

Soul: A person's essence.

Special Agents: People with rotten souls who engage in mass murder, serial killing and other exciting pastimes.

The Plan: Management's cosmic schedule of life and (especially) death.

Whatever Comes Next: The afterlife.

Zombie: A person who has had his or her soul removed.

Inspirational Material

Recommended Viewing

Dead Like Me
Six Feet Under
Tru Calling
Twin Peaks
The Sixth Sense
Final Destination (1 & 2)
Cemetery Man
Soul Survivors
The Serpent and the Rainbow
Very Bad Things
Heathers
American Beauty
The Addams Family



Recommended Listening

The Black Rider, Tom Waits
Bone Machine, Tom Waits
Murder, Johnny Cash
Prince of Darkness, Alice Cooper
Bark At The Moon, Ozzy Osbourne
Murder Ballads, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds

Recommended Reading

Stiff, Mary Roach
Death: The High Cost of Living, Neil Gaiman
QAGS 2nd Edition, Steve Johnson & Leighton Connor
Spooky: The Definitive Guide to Horror Gaming, Steve Johnson
Unknown Armies, Greg Stolze & John Tynes
Lost Souls, Joe Williams and Kathleen Williams
Over The Edge, Jonathan Tweet with Robin D. Laws