

# IN DARK ALLEYS

## Little Boy Lost



### About This Booklet

This is a demo adventure for the RPG In Dark Alleys. This booklet contains pre-made characters, an abbreviated version of the rules of play, and one adventure. It is designed to give GMs and players a taste of In Dark Alleys.

In this demo version, the players will be playing ‘normals.’ In regular In Dark Alleys, players play ‘the touched’ people whose contact with supernatural things have left them with unusual and dangerous powers. In solving the mystery of what is happening to them, players may begin to uncover some of the terrible truths about the universe itself. In Dark Alleys is full of layers of secrets and discovery, and this Demo only barely scratches the surface.

To find out more about In Dark Alleys visit:

[www.InDarkAlleys.com](http://www.InDarkAlleys.com)



## Player Characters

### Melissa Van Dyke

**Appearance-** Short caucasian female, slightly plump, long black hair in a single braid, dark circles under her eyes as if she hasn't been sleeping well. Wears a red top, blue jeans and a blue denim jacket.

**Attributes-** AGY 9, AWR 11, CHM 9, END 11, INL 13, SPD 8, STH 7, WIL 12, BLD 5, BDY 3, INCY 4.

**Skills-** Government (1): AV 13, Math (1): AV 13, Social Work (1): AV 13, Cooking (1): AV 11, Research: Internet (1): AV 13, Storytelling (1): AV 9.

**Money & Equipment-** \$23 cash, backpack, calculator, notebook, pens and pencils, math textbook, lipstick, tampon.

**History-** You never knew your dad. Your mom has been 'weird' as long as you can remember. It was mostly up to you and your younger brother to take care of yourselves. When you were a senior in high school, the cops found your mom ranting about invisible parasites and people without souls and she was put in a mental hospital. When they let her out, she refused to come home. She said she was in danger because she "knew too much" and didn't want to put you and your brother in danger. She's been living on the streets, though you don't know exactly where.

**Personality-** You are used to having to look after yourself and not depend on anyone else. Self-control comes naturally to you now, and you are used to denying your desires. You are lonely. Your schedule doesn't give you a lot of time for socializing, and when you are with other college kids you are uncomfortable because you worry that you aren't enough like them, that you don't know how to have fun like they do.

**Motivations-** You've been living with your brother in a cheap apartment in downtown L.A. He's trying to finish up high school. Your student aid isn't quite enough to pay for rent and groceries, so you've been doing babysitting on the side. Right now you just want to pass your classes and earn enough money to keep you and your brother with a roof over your heads.

**Typical Action-** Pain/stun attack with fists at 1d20 vs. 3.

**Typical Reaction-** Dodge at 1d20 vs. 5.

### Manjish Vupari

**Appearance-** Stocky East-Indian male, neatly trimmed beard, glasses, short hair. Wears a black UCLA sweater, blue jeans. Has a deep, soothing voice with only a slight Indian accent.

**Attributes-** AGY 9, AWR 12, CHM 13, END 8, INL 13, SPD 7, STH 8, WIL 10, BLD 4, BDY 4, INCY 4.

**Skills-** Research: Academic (1): AV 13, Research: Internet (1): AV 13, Science: Psychology (3): AV 21, Psychotherapy (1): AV 13, Hypnosis (1): AV 13.

**Money & Equipment-** \$13 cash, bank card with \$2,400 limit, three ring binder with binder paper, math textbook, calculator, bus pass, pens, comb, cell phone.

**History-** You were born in India but came to the US when you were 6 years old. Your parents own a flower shop. As early as high school you had an interest in the science of psychology, of understanding how the mind works.

**Personality-** You are empathetic, but also a little bit arrogant. You are fascinated by other peoples psychological quirks and problems, but never think about the possibility that you might have your own. You have the makings of a good scientist: you are logical and skeptical.

**Motivations-** You hope to get a PhD in psychology, then get a faculty position where you can teach and do research.

**Typical Action-** Blinding strike with fingers at 1d20 vs. 9.

**Typical Reaction-** Dodge at 1d20 vs. 4.

**Mike Phillips**

**Appearance-** African-American male, short curly hair, wearing a black t-shirt and blue jeans.

**Attributes-** AGY 10, AWR 10, CHM 11, END 9, INL 11, SPD 9, STH 9, WIL 11, BLD 4, BDY 4, INCY 4.

**Skills-** Law: Criminal (1): AV 11, Auto-Theft (1): AV 11, Lock Picking (1): AV 10, Black Market (1): AV 11, Street Drugs (1): AV 11.

**Money & Equipment-** \$106 cash, dorm access card, keychain flashlight, sunglasses, breath spray, backpack, candy-bar, calculator, math textbook, notebook, pens and pencils.

**History-** You were born and raised in Crenshaw, in South Central L.A. Yours was a fairly bad neighborhood, plagued by crack and gangs. As a teenager you were a petty criminal, but unlike most of your friends you never got caught and you never joined a gang. Instead, you studied hard in school, got a scholarship and went to UCLA.

**Personality-** You're not tough, but you know how to act tough when you need to. You tend to be a bit standoffish when you meet new people until you can scope them out, figure out what kind of person they are. You like to think of yourself as a social chameleon: able to get along with all kinds of people.

**Motivations-** You're a criminal justice major. You don't know what you want to do when you get your degree. You definitely don't want to be a cop; you've seen the LAPD do too many racist and corrupt things.

**Typical Action-** Strike with fists at 1d20 vs. 6, doing ½ blunt damage is successful.

**Typical Reaction-** Dodge at 1d20 vs. 5.

**Julia McKinley**

**Appearance-** Thin, average height caucasian female. Brown hair in short dreadlocks with the tips dyed green. Wears black denim jeans, a green top with a brown leather vest over it.

**Attributes-** AGY 13, AWR 8, CHM 9, END 6, INL 11, SPD 10, STH 10, WIL 12, BLD 4, BDY 4, INCY 4.

**Skills-** Self-Defense Weapons (2)\*, History: World (1): AV 11, Research: Academic (1): AV 11, Writing (1): AV 11, Oratory (1): AV 9, Psychotherapy (1): AV 9.

[\*Self-Defense Weapons (2) gives +8 to Blinding Strike, +8 to Pain/Stun and +8 to Simultaneous Pain/Stun with Self-Defense Weapons.]

**Money & Equipment-** \$28 cash, credit card with \$1,000 limit, dorm access card, breath mints, math book, calculator, personal sonic alarm (10 difficulty distracting pain), kubaton (a pointed rod designed for self-defense, small enough to fit in a pocket; does ½ blunt damage, +4 to pain/stun, +4 to blinding).

**History-** Inequality has always irked you, probably because your parents were ex-hippies and kids in school made fun of you for being different. When you were in high school you got raped at a party. What bothered you the most was not what was done to you, it was your own reluctance to report it, to seek justice. When you came to UCLA you became a Women's Studies major and volunteered at the Women's Resource Center, an on-campus center that provides support to female students undergoing crises. The center has sponsored several women's self-defense seminars and you have attended each one.

**Personality-** You think people who are going to ask for equal rights need to believe that their own rights and happiness are worth fighting for. You try to cultivate that fighting spirit within yourself. You are outspoken, respond to any insult or threat, and never compromise when it comes to your rights.

**Motivations-** You like knowing you can defend yourself. You would like to share that feeling with other women and some day you hope to teach women's self-defense.

**Typical Action-** Pain/Stun with Kubaton at 1d20 + 11 vs. 0. -or- Blinding Strike with Kubaton at 1d20 + 6 vs. 0.

**Typical Reaction-** Simultaneous Pain/Stun with Kubaton at 1d20 + 11 vs. 0. -or- Drop at 1d20 +3 vs. 0.

### Hui Yang

**Appearance-** Skinny Asian male with glasses, conservatively cut black hair, wearing a white dress-shirt and black slacks. Speaks English with a thick Chinese accent.

**Attributes-** AGY 7, AWR 17, CHM 12, END 7, INL 12, SPD 8, STH 8, WIL 19, BLD 5, BDY 3, INCY 4.

**Skills-** Business (3) AV 20, Law: Business (1) AV 12, Swimming (1) AV 8, Herbal Medicine (2) AV 2, Language: English (4) AV 24.

**Money & Equipment-** \$67 cash, math textbook, pencils, dorm access card, ID card, pack of sugar-free gum.

**History-** You were born and raised in Beijing. Your father was a businessman and your mother a lawyer. Your grandfather was an uneducated man from the countryside, an herbalist who had retained a lot of old beliefs. You remember his stories of spirits, demons and gods, of powerful Taoist magicians who could travel to other worlds, of Buddhist teachers who could remember past lives. He tried to teach you meditation and herbs, and he intimated that you had the talent to become a healer. As much as you loved your grandfather, though, you knew that the future of China was in business, not in old superstitions. China was rising up as a new economic superpower, and you wanted to rise with it. You studied English in high school and came to UCLA to study business.

**Personality-** Since coming to America you have become a bit shy. Your English is not as good as you thought it was, and you sometimes have trouble making yourself understood. You are hard working, optimistic and consider yourself a thoroughly modern and reasonable person.

**Motivations-** You want to learn as much as you can about business so you can get a job in a corporation's international affairs office.

**Typical Action-** Crippling Attack with fists at 1d20 vs. 10.

**Typical Reaction-** Dodge at 1d20 vs. 1. -or- Simultaneous pain/stun strike with fists at 1d20 vs. 7.

### Ruby Orland

**Appearance-** Caucasian female, blonde hair cut short and spiky, moderately pretty, wearing a black tank-top, blue jeans, with a black leather jacket. Smells of cigarette smoke.

**Attributes-** AGY 12, AWR 9, CHM 15, END 8, INL 11, SPD 11, STH 9, WIL 5, BLD 4, BDY 4, INCY 4.

**Skills-** Religion (1) AV 11, Acrobatics (1) AV 12, Driving (1) AV 12, Fashion & Beauty (1) AV 15, Seduction (3) AV 23, Street Drugs (1) AV 11.

**Money & Equipment-** \$104 cash, used car, cell phone, leather jacket\*, disposable lighter, swiss army knife (1 bladed damage), pack of cigarettes, lipstick, makeup compact, credit card with \$2,000 limit, house keys.

**[Using Armor:** Ruby's leather jacket acts as armor. The AR is 5, so any attack that succeeds by 5 or less will hit the jacket. If it does hit the jacket, the jacket's PR (1 bladed and 1 blunt) is subtracted from the damage of the attack.]

**History-** You grew up in the midwest. Your parents were religious and conservative. When you were around them you acted chaste and good. You were even a cheerleader. Yet you always knew it was an act: you were not the kind of person they wanted you to be, you never wanted their lifestyle. Moving to California to go to UCLA was a huge relief, and you started building a new life and a new identity.

**Personality-** After years of denying your desires, you're now a bit wild. You don't believe, never have, that there's anything wrong with having fun. Maybe you're being a little more careless than is wise, but that's just to make up for lost time.

**Motivations-** Mostly you spend your evenings in bars and nightclubs. You've done some experimentation with drugs. You spend very few nights in your own bed at the dorms. That leaves you very little time for school, and you've been just barely squeaking by in your classes.

**Typical Action-** Strike with swiss army knife at 1d20 vs. 4 (doing 1 bladed damage is successful).

## Simplified Rules

### Basic Mechanics

When a character is trying to accomplish something difficult, generally an attribute roll is made in the following form:

#### Applicable attribute + 1d20 (one twenty sided die) vs. Action Difficulty

For instance: Sam wishes to climb the side of a building to get to the roof. AGY is the attribute and the GM decides that the difficulty will be 20. Sam has an AGY of 9 and so needs to roll 11 or higher on his d20 in order to succeed. Say, however, that Sam has special gloves that gives him +8 to climbing – now he would roll AGY (9) +8 (gloves) + 1d20 vs. 20 (Sam only needs to roll a 3 or better).

**Opposed Rolls-** When characters are competing, two attribute rolls are made and whoever beats their difficulty by the most wins. Example: Tim and Leila are playing tug of war. Leila is standing in slippery mud, so the GM makes Tim's difficulty 20 and Leila's is 30. Tim rolls STH + 1d20 vs. 20 and gets 25, beating his difficulty by 5. Leila rolls STH + 1d20 vs. 30 and gets 31, beating her difficulty by 1. Since Tim exceeded his difficulty by the largest amount (5), Tim wins the struggle.

**Natural 1 and 20-** On any spur of the moment activity (e.g. anything that isn't planned out in advance and executed slowly and carefully) a roll of 1 on the 1d20 means an automatic failure while a roll of 20 means an automatic success.

**Savings Rolls-** Save vs. X rolls are difficulty rolls to keep something from happening that will happen unless the roll succeeds. If a PC is making a save vs. unconsciousness then the PC will become unconscious unless he or she can meet the difficulty. See the Using Attributes section (below) for more.

#### Sample Difficulties

- 10- (Easy) Notice a mosquito on PC's skin. (AWR)
- 20- (Moderate) Win a game of mah-jongg. (INL)
- 30- (Hard) Get burned and not flinch. (WIL)
- 40- (Legendary) Lift a pony over PC's head. (STH)

### Using Attributes

**Agility (AGY)-** Use AGY for athletic type rolls: catching things, throwing things, skipping rope, keeping one's balance, climbing, landing without hurting oneself, etc. AGY is also used for prowling (attempting to move through an area while not being noticed). The difficulty for prowling is based on factors such as darkness, amount of cover, how alert the opponents are, etc. The person being prowled against should get an opposed awareness roll.

**Awareness (AWR)-** AWR is used to notice details too small or subtle to be included in the GM's description of the PCs' surroundings (e.g. the man standing next to you has a small needle mark on his neck). AWR can be used to oppose attempts to do something without the PC noticing it (e.g. prowling, sleight of hand). AWR can also be used to notice when someone or something is effecting the PCs mind.

**Charm (CHM)-** CHM is used for acting, for making a better first impression than one would have otherwise, to add to the persuasiveness of an argument, and for seduction. Note that a successful seduction can make someone want a PC, but does not remove a person's free will to decide if or how to act on those desires.

**Endurance (END)-** END is used to represent the body's general health. It is used to save vs. things like hypothermia, heat exhaustion, cardiac arrest (heart attack), shock, disease contraction, disease progression and (along with WIL) unconsciousness.

END also represents reserves of physical energy. The PC starts with a “pool” of points equal to his or her END. Any of the following removes 1 point per round from this pool: Heavy Exertion, Oxygen Deprivation, Having a Mortal Injury (see below). END lost to exertion or oxygen deprivation returns 1 per round when the PC rests or is able to breathe again. When Pooled END reaches 0, the PC is incapacitated (is conscious, but cannot stand or do anything useful). After END is 0, oxygen deprivation does 1 damage to BLD per round.

**Intelligence (INL)-** INL is used for any roll involving memory, speed of thought, or performance of intellectual or creative skills. See Skills (next page) for more.

**Speed (SPD)-** SPD is used to determine a PC’s maximum running speed (SPD is approximately equal to MPH). A PC can also make a spiriting roll of 1d20 + SPD to try to increase the distance between the PC and something or someone chasing the PC. The difference between the PC’s roll and the chaser’s roll is the difference by which the distance between the two is increased or decreased. Example: *Tim rolls a sprinting roll of SPD + 1d20 and gets a total of 20, the monster chasing him rolls SPD + 1d20 and gets 25, so the distance between the two is reduced by 5 feet.* Sprinting removes 2 END per round (see END, above).

SPD is also used for leaping. The difficulty to leap is the distance the PC wants to leap (in feet) times 2.

**Strength (STH)-** STH is used in opposed strength rolls (for instance, if two people are grabbing for an object), for any rolls involving lifting, throwing, breaking things, etc.

**Willpower (WIL)-** WIL is used to oppose any attempt to control or influence a PC’s mind. It is also used to save against anything that would cause the PC to act (or not act) against his or her will, e.g. pain, nausea, fear, amnesia, hallucinations, delusions, euphoria, drug cravings, etc. A failed save vs. shocking pain (any sharp or unexpected pain) means the PC loses his or her next action. A failed save vs. distracting pain (any slow and annoying pain) means the PC takes a penalty to all rolls (-1 for each point the PC failed by).

WIL is also used to save vs. psychological shock any time a PC sees or experiences something unexpected and outside the realm of his or her experience. For each point of failure, the PC suffers from a -1 penalty. Shock lasts 1 hour per point of failure.

**Sample Save vs. Shock Difficulties**

**Easy (10):** Seeing a small child driving a car.

**Moderate (20):** Seeing a dog driving a car.

**Hard (30):** Seeing a mass of spiders driving a car.

**Legendary (40):** Seeing floating globs of congealed blood connected by chains driving a car.

## Health Attributes

**In Brief-** Blades remove BLD. Crushing removes BDY (then double BLD). 0 BLD = mortally wounded, but PC can keep going until INCY or Pooled END = 0).

**Blunt Damage-** Blunt damage is crushing damage, e.g. a club, a punch, falling, being crushed, being rammed by a vehicle, etc. Blunt damage is subtracted from BDY. Once all BDY is gone, blunt damage is removed from BLD but the effect is doubled. So, if a person with 2 BDY is hit with something that does 5 blunt damage, all 2 BDY is taken away and the character suffers 6 damage to BLD (the remaining 3, times 2).

**Bladed Damage-** Bladed damage comes from anything which cuts, pierces or spills blood, including knives, guns, barbed wire, etc. Bladed damage goes straight to BLD. Many poisons and diseases also do damage directly to BLD.

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**0 BLD-** When a PC reaches 0 BLD it means he or she has been mortally wounded and without medical intervention he or she will eventually die. Even at 0 BLD or below, a PC can still do things, even fight, for a limited period of time. END effects how long the PC can continue to act, and INCY (Incapacity) effects how much more damage a PC can take before being immediately incapacitated.

**Incapacity-** When damage reduces a PC's BLD to 0, any further damage is done to INCY. INCY represents the character's last reserves of energy to act even after being mortally wounded. All further blunt damage does double damage to INCY. All further damage that would have done damage to BLD instead does damage to INCY. When a PC reaches 0 BLD, he or she loses 1 END per round (see END, p.xx).

When a PC reaches 0 INCY or 0 END it means he or she is incapacitated. An incapacitated person can not stand, make fighting actions or reactions, or initiate any kind of communication. After being incapacitated, the PC has his or her INCY + END number of rounds before brain death occurs and no known means can revive the PC.

## Skills

Different skills use different attributes, e.g. Sleight of Hand uses AGY. Psychotherapy uses CHM, History uses INL, etc. For every level above the first, the PC gets +4 to any skill roll. The AV listed on character sheets is the Action Value: the appropriate attribute with any plusses from having more than one level of the skill. The difficulty for any given use of the skill is determined by the GM based on how hard the thing the PC wants to do is.

Example: *Tim has Physics (3). Tim wants to calculate the radioactive decay of a batch of toxic waste. The GM says that this will be a moderate (20) difficulty use of the skill. Tim rolls INL +8 (because he has 3 levels) + 1d20 vs. 20.*

## Fighting

**Initiative-** At the beginning of combat, each participant makes an AWR + INL + 1d20 roll. A bonus of +5 to +15 should be given to an opponent who takes another opponent by surprise. The fighter with the highest roll will get the first action in the round, the second highest will go next, etc. The next round, initiative is the same. Initiative must be re-rolled every time there is a break in the action (e.g. fighters stop to taunt each other).

**A Combat Round-** A combat round is a period of time during which each participant gets one action and one reaction. The character's reaction is made in response to any attack against them at any time during the round. An action can be an attempt to attack someone, or it could be a non-combat action such as moving, drawing a weapon, standing up, etc. Rather than using their actions and reactions at the designated time, PCs can do any of the following:

- Wait and use their one action at the end of the round.
- Give up their action for that round in order to gain an extra reaction (no penalty).
- Turn a reaction into an action (at extra difficulty, see Simultaneous Action, next page).

### Other Types of Damage

**Burn:** When a person is burned, they take both BLD damage (1 point per point of burn damage) and must save vs. pain (WIL+1d20 vs. 10/point of damage).

**Cold:** Make saves vs. hypothermia hourly. 1<sup>st</sup> failure halves all attributes, each additional failure does 1 BLD damage.

**Electricity:** When harmful levels of electricity run through a person, four effects happen:

-Paralysis (WIL+END+1d20 vs. 20 per point of damage), paralysis only lasts while the electricity is running.

-Unconsciousness (WIL+END+1d20 vs. 10 per point of damage)

-Heart Attack (END+1d20 vs. 5 per point of damage). Failure means death unless immediate medical support is given.

-Burn Damage: 1 point of burn damage for every 4 points of electrical damage.

**Falling:** 2 blunt damage for each story fallen (a story is ~10 ft).

**Heat:** Make saves vs. heat exhaustion hourly. 1<sup>st</sup> failure halves all attributes, each additional failure does 1 BLD damage.

**Skidding:** 1 bladed and 1 blunt damage for each 20 SPD the PC is moving at.

**Resolving Combat-** A combat action is an attempt to do something to someone else during combat. The character's action fails if the player cannot match the difficulty. If the player matches or exceeds the difficulty, the action will succeed unless it is opposed by a reaction where the defender exceeded his or her difficulty by more than the attacker did. In other words, whoever does a better job, the attacker or defender, wins.

<b>Action/Reaction Example</b>	
Attacker's Action: Strike (Handheld)	Defender's Reaction: Dodge
<i>The attacker declares the action first: an attack with some handheld weapon. The defender then chooses to use his or her reaction for the round to dodge the blow.</i>	
Attacker's attributes: STH+AGY = 23	Defender's Attributes: AWR+AGY = 30
<i>Each action or reaction uses specific attributes, a handheld strike uses STH and AGY, a dodge uses AWR and AGY. The combatants add those attributes.</i>	
Attacker's 1d20 roll: 14	Defender's 1d20 roll: 5
<i>Attackers add to their attributes to the result of their roll on a 20 sided die. If the fighters had applicable skills or situational modifiers, those would be added in as well.</i>	
Attacker's Roll vs. Difficulty: Total of 37 vs. difficulty 25	Defender's Roll vs. Difficulty: Total 35 vs. difficulty 25
<i>Each combatant's combined attributes plus 1d20 roll are compared to the difficulty of the given action. Both the attack and dodge have a difficulty of 25. Here, both combatants beat the difficulty for their respective actions.</i>	
Attacker's Success: 37 - 25 = 12	Defender's Success: 35 - 25 = 10
<i>Success is the amount by which a player beats the difficulty for the action. Since the strike and dodge are opposed, the person with the most success wins. Here, the attacker's success is more than the defenders (by 2 points, making it an opposed success of 2). The attacker wins and inflicts damage upon the defender (the goal of that particular action).</i>	

<b>Combat Modifiers</b>		
<b>Blinded (Full)</b>	-15 to roll	This is the penalty when a fighter's vision is completely obscured.
<b>Blinded (Partial)</b>	-7 to roll	This is the penalty when a fighter's vision is partially obscured or blurred.
<b>Extended Action</b>	+5 to roll	The character puts his or her whole body into an action (+5) but in doing so sacrifices his or her balance (-10 to next action or reaction). Not possible with projectile weapons.
<b>Paired</b>	-4 to roll	The character is attacking with two weapons simultaneously. If the action succeeds, both weapons do damage.
<b>Prone</b>	-8 to roll	Penalty does not apply to kicks or projectile weapons. See also Stomp (p.xx).
<b>Simultaneous Action</b>	-20 +WIL to roll	The character makes an action as a reaction. The PC takes the attack directed at him or her, but makes an attack at the same time. Both actions happen simultaneously and neither are opposed. -20 to the roll, but WIL is added in as a third attribute.
<b>Split</b>	-10 to rolls	The character splits one action into two actions or one reaction in to two reactions but gets -10 to each.

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# Combat Actions

**Blinding Strike-** The goal is to damage the victim's eyes to blind him or her. Roll INL+AGY+1d20 vs. 30

**Weapon:** Anything that damages eyes or flesh around the eye or any substance that can obscure vision or make eyes shut involuntarily.

**Notes:** Most weapons only partially blind (a nail can only poke out one eye at a time, sand will only partially damage vision). Some weapons fully blind on a successful strike (e.g. a caustic chemical spray). See *Improvised Weapons: Blinding Substances* (next page) for more.

**Crippling Attack-** The goal is to damage a limb so as to make it unusable. Roll STH+INL+1d20 vs. 30

**Weapon:** Anything that can cut tendons, break bones or dislocate joints (must be able to do at least ½ point of damage had this been a normal strike).

**Notes:** A successful crippling attack cripples one limb. A person can continue to stand on one leg but is at SPD 1, -7 to all actions and reactions, and is -20 to save vs. loss of balance.

**Disarm-** The goal is to knock the opponent's weapon from his or her hand. Roll STH+AGY+1d20 vs. 30

**Weapon:** Fists, kicks or anything which can cause a wrist to loose tension.

**Notes:** Usually a strike to the wrist, though it may be a strike to the weapon itself. The victim can resist with an opposed STH feat (STH+1d20 vs. 20) as a reaction.

**Grab-** The goal is to immobilize one limb or one weapon. Roll STH+AGY+1d20 vs. 25

**Weapon:** Hands, or anything which can grab (e.g. a snare).

**Notes:** Once a limb or weapon is successfully grabbed, the grab remains until it is broken. The grabber can choose to let go, or the victim can use an action to make an opposed STH roll against the grabber. Any successful pain/stun attack against the grabber will also cause the hold to be broken.

**Grab (Strangle)-** The goal is to cut off blood and air flow through the neck. Roll STH+AGY+1d20 vs. 25

**Weapon:** Hands, anything that can be wrapped around the victim's neck, or anything hard that can pin the neck against a stable surface.

**Notes:** Grab can be broken by opposed STH roll or pain/stun attack. During the hold, the victim takes 1 BLD damage per round. If the hold is broken before the victim dies, the lost BLD returns one per round. Both the victim's hands are free during the grab.

**Knockaway-** The goal is to do damage and knock the victim backwards. Roll STH+AGY+1d20 vs. 25

**Weapon:** Anything capable of inflicting two or more points of blunt damage over a wide area.

**Notes:** Victim takes 1 point of blunt damage and is knocked back one range unit per point of opposed success. Even if the damage is absorbed by armor, the

victim is still pushed backwards. Victim must make a moderate save vs. loss of balance (AGY+1d20 vs. 20) to avoid falling down.

**Knockdown-** The goal is to knock the opponent to the floor. Roll STH+AGY+1d20 vs. 30

**Weapon:** Anything capable of hooking legs or pushing the victim over through sheer force.

**Notes:** If successful, the victim is knocked down with no save. See p.7 for more on prone fighters.

**Knockout-** The goal is to knock the victim unconscious. Roll STH+AGY+1d20 vs. 30

**Weapon:** Anything capable of doing significant blunt damage

**Notes:** If successful, the victim can make an opposed save vs. unconsciousness (WIL+END+1d20 vs. 20). If they can not successfully oppose the knockout, the victim is knocked unconscious for one round per point of the attacker's opposed success. For every successful knockout, there is a chance of serious damage to the victim, whether the attacker desires it or not. Generally, if the attacker's opposed success is more than 10, the attack also does 1d6 damage to BLD.

**Pain/Stun-** The goal is to stun the victim by causing him or her pain. Roll INL+AGY+1d20 vs. 25

**Weapon:** Nearly anything capable of blunt, bladed or burn damage or otherwise capable of causing pain.

**Notes:** If the attack is successful the victim must make an opposed save vs. shocking pain (difficulty 20). If the victim fails by a difference of less than 10, the victim loses his or her next action. If the victim fails by 10 or more, the victim loses his or her next action and reaction.

**Slash-** The goal is to cause damage, distracting pain and disfigurement by an attack on the face or any other sensitive area. Roll INL+AGY+1d20 vs. 25

**Weapon:** Anything capable of cutting or tearing long gashes in flesh.

**Notes:** Does ½ point BLD damage and the victim must make an opposed moderate (20 difficulty) save vs. distracting pain. Victim suffers a -1 penalty for each point of opposed failure on the save vs. pain.

**Stomp-** The goal is to do 2x damage to victim's lower than the attacker. Roll SPD+STH+1d20 vs. 25

**Weapon:** Feet.

**Notes:** The victim must be below the knees of the attacker. Because this attack uses the full weight of the attacker against the victim, it does double the damage of a normal kick.

**Strike (Handheld)-** The goal is to do damage to the victim. Roll STH+AGY+1d20 vs. 25

**Weapon:** Any handheld weapon capable of doing damage.

**Notes:** If successful, it does the normal damage listed for the weapon.

**Tackle-** The goal is to knock both the attacker and the attackee to the ground. Roll SPD+STH+1d20 vs. 20

**Weapon-** Body

**Notes-** If the tackle is successfully dodged, the attacker must make a save vs. loss of balance to avoid ending up on the ground. A tackle does no damage.

**Vital Strike (Bladed)-** The goal is to use a bladed weapon to damage vital areas (e.g. neck, heart). Roll INL+AGY+1d20 vs. 35

**Weapon-** Any weapon that does bladed damage.

**Notes-** Bladed damage (that penetrates armor) is doubled. Blunt damage is not doubled.

**Vital Strike (Blunt)-** The goal is to use a blunt weapon to damage vital areas (e.g. neck, temples). Roll INL+STH+1d20 vs. 40

**Weapon-** Any weapon that does blunt damage

**Notes-** Blunt damage (that penetrates armor) is doubled. Bladed damage is not doubled.

**Wing-** The goal is to damage easy to hit, but non-vital parts. Roll INL+AGY+1d20 vs. 20

**Weapon-** Any weapon capable of doing damage.

**Notes-** Aimed at exposed yet non-vital body parts (e.g. arms, thighs and ribs). Any damage which gets through the armor is cut in half.

**Improvised Weapons-** Normal objects can be used as weapons but since they are not designed as weapons they have higher difficulties to use. Many will also break after the first attack.

**Slashing Weapons:** Any object with a cutting edge strong enough to cut flesh does 1 bladed damage. The PC is at -8 to any actions with this weapon except pain/stun, blinding and slash.

**Poking Weapons:** Objects with a point on them strong enough to be driven to flesh do only ½ a point of bladed damage. The PC is at -8 to any actions with this weapon except blinding strike, pain/stun and vital strike.

**Blunt Weapons:** Blunt objects with a good handle can do between 1 and 3 blunt damage. The PC is at -8 to any actions with these weapons except strike and pain/stun.

**Blinding Substances:** Any substance which can be thrown in the eyes. PCs can make a blinding attack with these substances at no minuses. They can be thrown only within a range of 5 ft. Most of these substances can be avoided by closing one's eyes (a dodge at +8). A successful attack, though, will fully blind the opponent (-15 to all actions/reactions) for a length of time depending upon the causticity of the substance. Extremely caustic substances (like bleach) will not only blind but act as a pain/stun strike on a successful blinding attack.

## Combat Reactions

**Dodge-** The goal is to sidestep the path of the weapon. Roll AWR+AGY+1d20 vs. 25

**Notes-** After a successful dodge, the defender is still in roughly the same place as he or she was before.

**Entangle-** The goal is to stop and trap the weapon. Roll INL+STH+1d20 vs. 30

**Notes-** Requires something that can stop and trap the weapon (e.g. chain, meat hook, trident, jacket, folding chair). If successful, the action is blocked and the attacker must use another action to unentangle the weapon.

**Drop-** The goal is to drop below the path of the weapon. Roll AWR+AGY+1d20 vs. 20

**Notes-** Whether successful or unsuccessful, the defender ends up on the floor at the end of the reaction.

**Jump-** The goal is to jump out of weapon's range. Roll SPD+AGY+1d20 vs. 25

**Notes-** Unlike the Noncombat Action: Jump, this is in reaction to a specific attack. If the defender beats the difficulty but doesn't beat the opposed action, the PC gets hit but ends up out of weapon's range at the end of the reaction.

**Parry-** The goal is to block the attacker's weapon. Roll STH+AGY+1d20 vs. 25

**Notes-** Be sure to declare what you are blocking and with what. If you block a knife blade with your bare hands, for instance, you will take some damage (though not as much damage as the strike would have done unopposed).

### Fighting Non-Humans.

Sense should be used in fighting non-humans. For instance, a blinding strike would be silly against a creature that does not depend upon its eyes. When dealing with an alien creature, PCs who want to do a vital strike, blinding strike or pain/stun attack must first guess what part of the creature's anatomy contains vital organs, eyes or are sensitive to pain. If the PC guesses wrong, than the attack does no more damage than a normal strike.

## Adventure

### Character Introductions

**Introduction For All PCs Except Melissa-** *“You’re an undergraduate at UCLA. You’re taking Algebra 2. The class has been kicking your ass, so you and a group of your fellow students have been meeting to study before each major test in the class. You meet in the apartment of Melissa. It’s a crappy little apartment in a bad part of town, but at least you can all fit there, unlike the dorm rooms where most of you live. Melissa is the best at math, the one who figures out most of the problems, even though she claims to be as clueless as the rest of you. As the study session for the upcoming test was approaching, Melissa called at the last minute and said she needed to do some babysitting job, but the kid’s bedtime was 9 pm, so to come to the house a few minutes after that and you could study for the test the next day.”*

**Melissa’s Introduction-** *“Yesterday you got a call from a friend of someone you often babysit for. She said she heard you were good, and that they badly needed a babysitter for the next evening but were having trouble finding one on short notice. You told her you had a study group scheduled, to study for a math test the next day. The woman said that her son goes to bed at nine, and as long as you weren’t too loud you could have your study group over after 9. You couldn’t really say no to the extra money, so you agreed.*

*You showed up at seven. The parents greeted you warmly. They seemed thankful that you were able to come. They showed you briefly around the house, gave you the number of Kai’s pediatrician and their cell phone number. They warned you that they might not be reachable on their cell (they were attending a party in the San Gabriel mountains). They introduced you to Kai. Kai is a 7 year old boy with shaggy blonde hair; wearing Spiderman pajamas and no shoes or socks. Kai’s parents cautioned him to do whatever you said. They told him he didn’t get to watch any more TV tonight and that he had to go to bed at exactly eight-o’clock, no staying up late. Then they left.*

*You played with Kai for a while. He seemed like a nice kid, and very bright, but you could tell he was testing you. He didn’t do anything really bad but several times he didn’t do exactly what you told him to, or he delayed doing what you told him to. You thought there might be a problem at bed time, that he might refuse to go to bed. Yet at 8-o’clock you told him to go to bed and he went. You tucked him in and turned off the lights. Then you went to the bathroom. Just as you were almost done you heard the doorbell ring. You washed up quickly and left the bathroom, but as you were heading to the door you noticed Kai sitting on the living room couch watching TV. After quickly telling him to go to bed you went to answer the door.”*

This is where the game starts. Melissa has just opened the door. Her study group are all there. By the time she looks back in the living room, Kai will be gone and the TV off, yet she didn’t hear him going up the stairs. The mystery now is for Melissa, and her study group, to find Kai.

### Around the House

**Backyard-** A small square backyard, accessible via a sliding glass door in the kitchen. It is surrounded completely by a high wooden fence (too tall for Kai to have climbed over). In the back yard is a lawnmower and small gas tank under a green tarp. There is a small plastic tool shed is locked with a padlock (the key to which is hanging on a hook in the kitchen). In the shed is a bottle of weed killer (caustic enough to cause blinding and pain if splashed in someone’s eyes), a hose, a hatchet (2½ bladed damage), a gas powered weed-whacker (2 bladed damage, +4 to pain/stun attacks) and a toolbox with screwdrivers (½ bladed damage poking weapons) and wrenches and hammers (1 blunt damage weapons).

**Kitchen-** Useful items include steak knives (2 bladed damage, 1 in 20 damage of snapping on each hit), a meat cleaver (2½ bladed damage, -4 to strike), a key to the tool shed in the back yard, bleach under the sink (caustic enough to cause blinding and pain if splashed in someone’s eyes), and a broom and mop in the broom closet (if the mop or broom heads are removed, they could be used as 1 blunt damage weapons).

**Downstairs Bathroom-** The only item of any use to PCs is a can of hairspray (with a lighter it can be made into a makeshift flamethrower that does 1 burn damage, see p.xx).

**Living Room-** In between the front door and the kitchen, the living room is host to the stairs leading to the second floor. There are some bookshelves with books, CDs and DVDs on them. There is a couch facing an entertainment center. The entertainment center has a stereo, DVD player and a fairly large TV. There is a normal remote on top of the entertainment center and a grey remote (see The Remote, next page) lying face down on the floor in front of the TV. The TV is off. If PCs turn it on manually or with the normal remote, it will be on CNN.

**Office-** A small room upstairs, mostly taken up by boxes containing old clothes, old papers, old Christmas ornaments, etc. There is a golf bag with several golf clubs (can be used as 2 blunt damage weapons). There is a desk, and in one of the drawers there are some papers relating to Kai. There are bills from a child therapist, report cards (teachers note that Kai is bright and creative but worry about his penchant for lying, stealing, wandering off), and a report from a school therapist. The report reads as follows:

*“Kai is a bright, imaginative child with a lot of potential. Yet he seems unable to distinguish between reality and fantasy. He describes visiting fantastic places and is unable to or unwilling to distinguish between these daydreams and reality. It is also troubling that the content of these daydreams is rife with alien or nihilistic symbolism: abandoned places, giant insects, vast expenses or featureless blackness. I can only guess that this symbolism indicates a deep depression that he manages to keep hidden.*

*Also troubling is his propensity to lie. Apparently he has left school grounds several times during recess, but he denies having done so. He has also been found in possession of things (e.g. jewelry) that he could only have stolen, yet he claims he found them just lying around. He seems to have no concept that lying is wrong. This could be the early signs of antisocial personality disorder.*

*My recommendations: He should be treated with antidepressants. The school should continue having staff observe Kai at recess and lunch to make sure he doesn't wander off. Teachers and parents should continue to emphasize, and show through examples, that lying and stealing hurt people. More intensive therapy with a private therapist may be necessary to get Kai to open up and share his true feelings.”*

**Upstairs Bathroom-** There is a semi-professional first aid kit in the upstairs bathroom. It contains bandages, gauze, medical tape, butterfly bandages, disinfectant wipes, disinfectant spray, cold pack, gloves, CPR mouth-guard, eyewash, scissors, tweezers, ipecac and aspirin. PCs with the Emergency Medicine skill can perform easy (10 difficulty) tasks with this kit.

**Parent's Room-** There is a PC with an internet connection in the parents' room.

**Kai's Room-** On the walls of Kai's room are children's drawings. Most are of normal things. One, however, shows a large office building with a waterfall cascading down the side. Another shows a headless person with eyes and a mouth in its chest.

Kai's school books and papers are in a pile in one corner of the room. Among his papers are two pages, written by Kai, corrected and graded by a teacher (with remarks like “very creative, good job!”). They are as follows:

*“Once upon a time I was in a store with my mom. I got lost. I didn't know where my mom was. There were a lot of Chinese people. They all spoke a funny language. I left there and went outside. It was night. I was surprised! I looked for somebody to help me but there wasn't nobody around. The buildings was dirty. All the windows was broken. I crawled through a hole and was back in the store. I heard my mom calling me. She was very mad I got lost. I told her I didn't mean to. She said no TV and no dessert because I am bad. The End.”*

## Little Boy Lost

*“One day I was lost and in a funny place and I found a nail. It was black. Whenever I touched it I laughed a hole bunch even though nobody said funny stuff. I put it under my bed. In the middle of the night the bed broke and it woke me up. My night shirt also had a big tear in it. I thought the nail did it so I threw the nail away. The next day I got red blisters on my hands like where I touched that nail. The end.”*

Under Kai’s bed is a cache of interesting items:

A WWII Japanese Ammo Box with live ammo inside.

A child-sized skull with no eye holes.

A World Trade Center Security Badge for Guadalupe Diego (internet research will show this was a WTC janitorial employee who was presumed to have died during 9/11 but her body was never found).

A white teddy bear with no tags or other markings on it. It is ice-cold to the touch. It cannot be warmed up, even if put in the oven. It cannot be burned, cut, torn or otherwise damaged in any way. When nobody is looking at it, it’s position and appearance may change slightly.

A 3 ft. length of jet-black chain. When someone picks it up, it slowly wraps itself around their hand then slithers up their arm and then around their neck. While it is doing this it takes a 10 difficulty STH feat to remove is (STH + 1d20 vs. 10). If it makes it to a person’s neck it starts squeezing harder and each round the difficulty to remove it increases by 10 until the person is dead. The chain is inanimate when not touching human flesh. Like the teddy bear, it is indestructible and may change location and appearance when nobody is looking.

## The Remote & Channels

**The Remote-** A fairly large grey plastic box. There are no markings or labels anywhere on the remote, nor are there any seams or any place batteries might go. There is only one button: large, square, grey and in the center of the remote.

When the button is pressed, the remote emits a humming noise that steadily rises in pitch. After thirty seconds, the remote will activate. Anything that is part-way through the portal when the ‘channel’ changes will be chopped cleanly in half. Roll 1d6 to find what ‘channel’ the remote switches to. If you roll 6, the remote turns ‘off’ the portal and the TV screen becomes a normal TV screen again.

Like the teddy bear and chain the remote cannot be harmed by any physical force and may make minor changes in location and appearance when nobody is looking.

If PCs concentrate on the channel they want, have the PCs roll WIL +1d20. If the person holding the remote can beat 20 or a person nearby can beat 30, the remote will change to the channel they are concentrating on. The PCs must have a specific channel in mind (not just ‘the channel Kai is in,’ ‘the least dangerous one,’ etc.). If the PC nearest the remote rolls 1, though, the channel will change to whichever channel that PC is most afraid of.

### Melissa’s Memory

It may be very important for Melissa to remember exactly what she saw and heard between the bathroom and answering the door (specifically, that Kai was holding a large grey remote and watching a scene on TV showing idyllic green hills). There are three ways to do this:

**Pure Memory:** If Melissa can roll 1d20 + INL and beat 30, she can remember any pertinent detail. If she waits more than 5 minutes to try this, the difficulty will increase.

**Hypnosis:** If Manjish can use his hypnosis skill to put Melissa in a suggestive state (20 difficulty) then Melissa only has to beat 1d20 + INL vs. 20 to remember any pertinent detail.

**Halls of Memory:** While there (p.15), Melissa can concentrate on that memory, open a door, and review every detail she remembers.

### Channels

- 1: Burbalows’ Bubble
- 2: Surgeon’s Lab
- 3: Land of the Dead
- 4: Halls of Memory
- 5: Deserted City Apartment
- 6: Off

**Channel One – Burbalows’ Bubble-** *“On the screen you see an improbably idyllic looking landscape. The sun is bright and warm, the sky is blue with fluffy white clouds. You see gently rolling hills covered in short green grass and a sprinkling of wildflowers. There is faint music, sounding like children singing, but without words, just ‘la la la la.’”*

If PCs crawl through ‘the screen’ they will see this idyllic landscape in every direction. The only non-natural looking feature is a small trail in the grass, leading up and over a small hill and disappearing behind it. That direction sounds like it is where the music is coming from. Whoever is in this realm will feel an urge to follow the trail towards the source of the singing. At first the urge is barely noticeable (30 difficulty AWR roll to sense it) but as players get closer to the Burbalows the urge will get easier to notice and then progressively harder to resist.

Urges		
From Entrance	To go towards singing.	AWR vs. 30 to notice.
From Top of Hill	To go closer.	WIL vs. 20 to resist.
Within 100 ft. of Circle.	To go closer.	WIL vs. 25 to resist.
Within 10 ft. of Circle.	To sit down in circle.	WIL vs. 30 to resist.

At the top of the hill, the PCs can see the trail leads down to the bottom of a shallow valley where Kai and several balloon like creatures are sitting in a circle, playing a game.

The creatures look like four-foot-tall water balloons, all bright primary colors with small heads on top with hair that looks like yarn and two black vertical slits for eyes. They have no mouths or appendages. They have voices of children, but speak in what sounds like a baby’s nonsense babbling. They move by bouncing. If cut open, they will be found to be filled with blood and “flesh” but no bones or distinguishable organs. The black slits are their eyes and are the only part of them vulnerable to pain/stun or blinding attacks. Their heads are the only part vulnerable to vital strikes.

The game the Burbalows are playing is a form of “duck-duck-geese.” One of the Burbalows bounces along on the outside of the circle, saying “da, da, da” and then, choosing a participant at random, will say “goo” and leap upon that participant and proceed to absorb him/her/it. The first time this happens the victim will be one of the Burbalows, but in the subsequent rounds of the game Kai or any of the PCs sitting in the circle are just as likely to be eaten.

This place has a “script” that any human that enters it is compelled to follow. The script is that the PCs enter, approach the circle, sit down in the circle, and then wait helplessly to be eaten by a Burbalow. The PCs can do things like talk or toss items to each other, but doing anything that contradicts the script (e.g. running away, attacking a Burbalow, pulling someone from the circle) requires a 30 difficulty WIL roll. Any PCs who successfully resists the script will have the closest Burbalow leave the circle and try to chase down and kill him or her. The Burbalows will attempt to chase their victims through the portal, but they are large enough that it will take them several seconds to squeeze through the portal.

### **Kai Blakely**

**Appearance-** Caucasian, 7 year old boy with shaggy blonde hair, wearing Spiderman pajamas, barefoot.

**Attributes-** AGY 12, AWR 10, CHM 3, END 6, INL 5, SPD 7, STH 2, WIL 3, BLD 7, BDY 3, INCY 3.

**Behavior-** If freed from the circle, Kai will try to run screaming from the circle, find his way back to the portal, crawl through it, and go hide under his bed. Kai is frightened almost to the point of senselessness but will follow a sensible-sounding command from anyone who seems like a normal adult.

**Kai’s Story-** Kai knows that he sometime gets lost and wanders to strange places and finds strange things (yet he does not think of this as ‘supernatural’). He hides these objects from his parents, fearing he will get in trouble. His latest acquisition was the remote. He couldn’t sleep so he decided to play with the remote. It opened a portal to a place that reminded him of a kid’s show, so he crawled in, dropping the remote as he left (inadvertantly depressing the button). He found himself drawn to the circle. By the time he realized what was happening, he couldn’t resist.

### Burbalow

**Attributes-** AGY 8, AWR 4, CHM 0, END 5, INL 2, SPD 8, STH 20, WIL 5, BLD 3, BDY 0, INCY 2.

**Special Abilities-** Immune to blunt damage. Can roll down a hill at 15 SPD (although with little ability to change direction, slow down or stop). If a Burbalow can get on top of a person it can absorb him or her completely. If victim has Burbalow on top of him or her for more than 1 round, he or she is absorbed and dies. It takes a STH +1d20 vs. 30 roll to wriggle out from under a Burbalow. It takes opposed STH + 1d20 rolls to roll a Burbalow off someone.

**Psychology-** The Burbalows aren't actually sentient. They are just actors following a script, and the script is of humans being eaten by monsters that look and act like something from an especially disturbing kid's show. They will follow this script with their dying breath.

**Typical Attack-** First a knockdown at 1d20 vs. 2, then (next round) a jump on top of the opponent at 1d20 vs. 2.

**Typical Reaction-** Dodge at 1d20 vs. 13.

**Channel Two – Surgeon's Lab-** *“You see a small room. The walls, once white, are caked with stains, most of them reddish-brown. There are no visible doors or windows. There are old style gas lamps, stained with soot, attached to the walls, but they aren't lit. The room's lighting comes from a loudly buzzing rack of fluorescent lights bolted to the ceiling. Stacked up in the corners are what looks like medical equipment, although most is old and rusty. In the middle of the room, a tall figure in bloodstained green surgical scrubs is operating on a human figure lying on his back on a gurney. The patient's entire spine has been exposed.”*

The room truly has no doors or windows. It is the lab of a Surgeon, a non-human creature who comes here via portals it creates and uses the space to do experiments on humans. Right now it is doing an autopsy on a human it has run experiments on. It is concentrating on its work and not expecting visitors, but if the PCs make any noise it will get an AWR roll to notice the portal and the PCs. If it does notice the PCs it will try to crawl through the portal and kill the PCs.

### Typical Surgeon

**Appearance-** A tall human-looking figure in bloodstained green surgical scrubs, with a green cap and facemask (under the facemask is blank skin) leaving only yellowish staring eyes showing. If cut it will turn out to be a fleshy shell filled with a black tar-like substance that smells of rotting fish.

**Attributes-** AGY 15, AWR 13, CHM 2, END 10, INL 17, SPD 6, STH 25, WIL 10, BLD 20, BDY 10, INCY 10.

**Behavior-** It can speak human languages with halting, broken speech and an unidentifiable accent, but prefers not to speak.

**Psychology-** Surgeons are driven by loyalty and curiosity. They have no empathy and very little emotion. It takes a lot to make them express any fear, anger or joy. They think of humans as nothing more than machines to be taken apart and experimented on.

#### Abilities

-Can unlock locks by touching them.

-Cannot be captured on film or video (appear only as a blur).

-Can make people fall asleep by staring at them (victims must save vs. unconsciousness at 10 difficulty the first round, then 20 the 2<sup>nd</sup>, then 30 the 3<sup>rd</sup>, etc.). Victim does not have to be looking back.

-Can see through solid objects (including human flesh) as if they were transparent.

-Can open a temporary portal between this world and its lab.

**Special Skills-** All Medical skills at 4.

**Typical Reaction-** Causing Unconsciousness by staring at the enemy.

**Typical Reaction-** A simultaneous Crippling Attack with hands at 1d20 vs. 5.

**Channel Three – Land of the Dead-** *“You see a dark canyon, surrounded by sharp rocks rising up high on both sides, with a black starless sky above. A loud wind is roaring. The canyon is packed with thousands of human-shaped figures, all walking in the same direction. As figures pass near the screen, you can see that they are only blurry translucent human shapes.”*

Within seconds after the portal opens, some of the blurry shapes from the canyon will run into the portal and crawl through it. The shapes are mindless: their only goal is to keep moving. They are mostly intangible: if they pass through a human the human will feel something akin to a strong breeze. They might make faint, frightened moaning sounds. They will take no notice of anything the PCs do, will run straight through a wall and will disappear. Figures will keep coming out as long as the portal is open.

If the PCs crawl through the portal into the canyon, and if they do not go in the same direction as the blurry shapes, then within 1d20 seconds a huge monster with bat wings will fly out of the dark sky, grab a PC and fly off. The PC will be mutilated and killed and the body will be dropped elsewhere in the canyon. The flying creature has no interest in the portal or PCs on the other side of the portal. It’s only job is to make sure that any being in the canyon keeps moving in the right direction.

**Channel Four – Halls of Memory-** *“You see a long hallway that stretches far into the distance with no visible end. The floors are highly waxed hardwood. The walls have wood paneling. On the ceiling are old-style gaslight fixtures that provide dim but consistent lighting. At regular intervals in the hall are unmarked wooden doors with brass handles. In the distance you see something that looks like chains on one of the doors.”*

The halls of memory are a part of Melissa’s subconscious, the part where her memories are stored. Behind the doors are fully 3D scenes that the PCs can walk through and inspect. Any details gone from Melissa’s memory are replaced with a grey fog. None of the memory characters will acknowledge the PCs’ presence. If the PCs physically manipulate the memory characters or objects, Melissa’s memory will suddenly change (e.g. if the PCs overturn a table, Melissa will remember the table overturning for no reason). PCs who open doors at random will be exposed to random memories of Melissa’s:

- Teen Melissa lying on her bed, listening to music on her walkman. Many parts of the room are grey and blurry.
- Melissa, about seven, in bed at night, awake but with her face hidden mostly by the pillow. Her mom is standing over her hissing ‘get off my daughter’ again and again.
- Teen Melissa walking home from school, in the rain without an umbrella.
- Melissa, about four, sitting in a booster seat at the kitchen table, watching her mom spray bug-spray in the air, as if chasing some insect that can’t be seen.

The chained door represents a memory Melissa has repressed (specifically, of being molested by a friend of her family when she was 7). If PCs try to remove the chains, it will immediately summon Melissa’s Ego who will warn the PCs angrily not to mess with the door. If the PCs keep messing with the door Melissa’s Ego will attack. She will use lethal attacks on any of the PCs except Melissa (on whom she will use pain/stun and knockouts). If Melissa’s Ego is killed, Melissa will go suddenly and irreparably psychotic.

Melissa’s Ego will answer questions honestly, but can’t really explain what she is, what this place is, or what her relationship is to Melissa. She only knows that she is the “peacekeeper,” that she makes and enforces compromises between “the others” and in doing so keeps Melissa safe. One of the compromises she enforces is that certain memories should remain locked up, which is why Melissa’s Ego patrols the halls of memory. Melissa’s Ego does not know that she is a part of Melissa or that she lives in Melissa’s subconscious (although such a revelation would not shock or bother her).

## Little Boy Lost

If PCs travel long enough in the halls of memory they will exit it into a chaotic, dream-like world peopled by weird and dangerous characters. The world is constantly changing and if PCs lose sight of the halls of memory it is unlikely they will be able to return.

### Melissa's Ego

**Appearance-** Like Melissa, but wearing simple conservative clothing and with a dour expression on its face.

**Attributes-** AGY 15, AWR 20, CHM 15, END 15, INL 15, SPD 10, STH 10, WIL 20, BDY 0, BLD 24, INCY 0.

**Psychology-** The Ego is a peacemaker and negotiator, always trying to figure out what others want and to find solutions that fit everyone's needs. It won't tell people things that might upset them and it feels like it has the right to do anything in its power to protect people from things they don't need to know. The Ego is an accomplished liar, actor and manipulator.

**Behavior-** It is calm and observant. It speaks in a dry, slightly annoyed tone as if someone explaining something to an idiot.

**Special Abilities-** The Ego can make anything or anyone, including itself, appear to be anything or anyone else of roughly equal size or shape, just by waving its hand at the thing.

**Typical Attack-** The Ego will make a surprise attack whenever possible, making itself look like an ally and attacking with a weapon that doesn't look like a weapon. The Ego will make an extended Vital Strike with a bladed weapon at AGY (15) + INL (15) +5 (extended) +1d20 vs. 35 (or 1d20 vs. 0) doing 4 bladed damage is successful.

**Typical Reaction-** A dodge at AWR (20) + AGY (15) -10 (from extended attack) +1d20 vs. 25 (or 1d20 +10 vs. 10).

**Channel Five – Deserted City-** *“You see what appears to be the front room of an abandoned apartment. There are no lights on. The only light is from a street light coming in through a cracked and dust-covered windowpane. The wallpaper is peeling. Dust covers everything. The only visible furnishing is an old couch which has been overturned and is full of holes. In the distance you can hear repetitive sounds that sound like something being slapped or smacked over and over again.”*

If PCs enter they will find themselves in an abandoned apartment. In the bed room, behind a closed but unlocked door, Father Murphy is sitting and praying as he beats himself across the back with his belt. Everything inside and outside the apartment is, like the remote, strangely unbreakable. If PCs leave the apartment they will find themselves on the street of a deserted city. Like the apartment, it looks like everyone in the city left, taking anything of value, and the place has since decayed. It is night, but no stars are visible in the sky. The buildings seem like a random mismatch of every type and style of building (a tar-paper shack might be sitting right next to a skyscraper). Wandering in the streets is the Deserted City Creature, who will immediately get a chance to sense the PCs as soon as the PCs open the door.

If PCs leave the apartment and go wandering around the city, they will soon become lost. No matter how well they retrace their steps, they will never get back to the abandoned apartment (and the portal to the mundane world). Eventually the Deserted City Creature or some other, equally bizarre monster, will get them.

### **Father Steven Murphy**

**Appearance-** Thirty-something white male with long scraggly hair and a long unkempt beard. Shirtless, wearing dirty black pants and black leather shoes. Across his back are a series of welts, cuts and scars, mostly starting at his shoulders and going lengthwise down his back.

**Attributes-** AGY 9, AWR 16, CHM 2, END 14, INL 15, SPD 16, STH 17, WIL 15, BLD 4, BDY 4, INCY 4.

**History-** As a young catholic priest in the 1970s, Steven Murphy was recruited into a secret sect within the priesthood that believed that the physical world, its laws and leaders, are a distraction from God and are essentially unholy. A few years after joining he was asked by the sect to investigate strange phenomenon in public restrooms in a park. In one of the stalls someone had drilled a hole and when he stuck his finger through the hole it burst into flames. The flames spread out to engulf his entire body and he passed out from the pain. Later he awoke, unburned, in a deserted city. For some time he wandered around, searching for a way out, but he kept running into strange monsters and only barely escaping them. After a while he decided the best thing to do was hole up someplace safe and wait. He expected to die of thirst and hunger, but that didn't happen. He's not sure how much time has passed, but he knows its been years. He has spent most of his time in prayer and self-flagellation.

**Motivation-** Father Murphy only wants to escape this terrible place. He regrets joining the strange sect he once belonged to, and more than anything he regrets getting lost in this strange and horrible place. He thought his investigations of the supernatural would bring him closer to God, but now he thinks it did the opposite. He will trample over anyone to get back to the real world. He has been alone so long he has forgotten how to talk rationally to people and he knows it.

**Helping PCs-** Father Murphy will not want to help the PCs in any way that subjects him to even the remotest possibility of being trapped in an alien world or attacked by an alien creature. However, he is willing to help PCs speculate on what's going on. He will readily admit that he doesn't understand much that he's experienced, but he is certain of the following:

-People in the mundane world can have supernatural powers, sometimes earned through meditation and study, sometimes that they are born with.

-The mundane world is not the 'real world,' it is something akin to a prison or a hallucination.

-There are other worlds, created for other purposes than the mundane world. Some or all of them are dangerous.

**In The Mundane World-** Before he became lost in the deserted city, Father Murphy removed parts of his body as part of a ritual for his secret sect. If Father Murphy crawls through the portal and back to the mortal world, as soon as he passes through parts of his body will disappear. Father Murphy is missing his left eye, his right hand at the elbow and his left leg at the knee. The scars from the amputations look old and look to have healed well. Father Murphy abandoned his prosthetics long ago and will be surprised and annoyed to learn that his limbs are still missing in the real world.

### **Deserted City Creature**

**Appearance-** A human body, naked, pale, covered in dirt and grime, walking on all fours. There is no head or neck, no genitals or anus, only blank skin where those parts should be. Floating above the middle of the back, rotating slowly, is a human head. It is androgynous, racially ambiguous, hairless and wide-eyed with the mouth hanging open.

**Attributes-** AGY 17, AWR 5, CHM 0, END 20, INL 2, SPD 7, STH 15, WIL 5, BLD 5, BDY 2, INCY 2.

**Behavior-** The creature spends its time tromping up and down the streets. It is attracted to human (and animal) exhalations. It can sense human breathing at about 20 ft. It takes a 1d20 vs. 10 roll to track a breath to its source, less if the person is breathing hard or shouting. If the person is holding his or her breath, the creature does not notice them. If it can trace down the source of breath, it will grab the person, clamp its mouth over the person's nose and mouth and try to suck out as much air as possible. The creature does not know how to open doors and will not be able to break down a door to get to the PCs.

**Special Abilities-** Can sense human breath. Immune to fear and pain. It can bend its limbs like a contortionist.

**Typical Attack-** Grab at 1d20 vs. 0. Then, next round, bringing victim's mouth to its mouth and sucking. Sucking does oxygen deprivation damage and 1 BLD damage per round.

**Typical Reaction-** Simultaneous grab at 1d20 vs. 15.

## **Aftermath & Player Debriefing**

Kai's parents will return around 12:30 AM, by which time Kai will either be dead (eaten by a Burbalow) or brought back through the TV by the PCs. Unless they are shown evidence, it will be very difficult to convince them that anything supernatural happened. If they are convinced, their first priority will be to get rid of the supernatural objects, and then to try to make sure that word doesn't get out that Kai has dangerous abilities. They will try to convince Kai never to use his abilities and never to pick up strange objects again.

If PCs keep track of where the supernatural objects were taken, they will find out that about a week later the place or places unexpectedly fell into a sinkhole and that 'nothing could be recovered.'

If players are curious about how what they experienced fits into the In Dark Alleys universe, you can read them the following:

*"In the full version of In Dark Alleys players play the touched, people with bizarre supernatural abilities. One of the types of the touched are the Lost, people who, when they don't know where they are, can travel to other parts of the world or even other planes of existence. Sometimes children have Touched abilities and Kai Blakely was one of the Lost.*

*One of the realms that the Lost can visit is called the Deserted City. Visitors to the Deserted City sometimes find objects that look like normal everyday things but exhibit supernatural properties or powers. The chain, the teddy bear and the remote were all Deserted City objects. The remote's special ability was to open a portal to different planes of existence.*

*When playing with the remote, Kai had the misfortune of wandering into a bubble. A bubble is a scene, usually a very simple one, that had such emotional resonance for the person imagining it that it began to exist as a sort of pocket universe floating outside this reality. Most bubbles are harmless and eventually fade away. Yet the remote allowed Kai to physically enter the bubble and become subject to its laws."*

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