



# HOODOO BLUES

## THE GAME IN BRIEF

**Style-** Hoodoo Blues is steeped in the ambience of America's deep South, with the unique feel of its places and people. The PCs aren't just people living the South, they are living embodiments of Southern history and culture.

The South is a place haunted by its tragic past, where some wounds run too deep to truly heal. Like the story of the South itself, the stories of Hoodoo Blues characters are not stories of triumph after triumph and good versus evil. They're stories of mistakes made, of battles lost, of having done evil and trying, perhaps in vain, to make amends.

And finally, out of the entire nation, the South is the true home of the scary story. Every corner of the South is peppered with stories of monsters living deep in the swamps, vengeful ghosts that haunt old houses, of lone eccentrics who wield frightening and dangerous powers. All these stories, in Hoodoo Blues, are true.

**Hoodoo & Voodoo-** The most important belief systems at work in the Hoodoo Blues cosmology are those of Hoodoo and Voodoo. Both are syncretisms, admixtures of African, Native American and European beliefs. Both were invented by African slaves in the New World, although it is by no means only Black people who believe in and practice them.

Voodoo (which is influenced by, but distinct from, the Haitian religion of Vodoun) is how African beliefs survived (and mixed with other beliefs) in Catholic society in the South. African spirits became "saints" and are still worshiped and called upon for aid.

Hoodoo is the survival and mixture of beliefs in a Protestant society in the South. Protestants did not allow the worship of saints, so African slaves lost their spirits and had to utilize the magical properties of everyday items and the power of the human will.

**Player Characters-** PCs are ageless Southerners, who have seen and participated in up to two centuries of Southern history. In addition to agelessness, all PCs have powerful supernatural abilities. A PC's character class defines the source of the PC's abilities:

**Crossroaders** gained power as part of a deal with the Devil.

**Hags** were gifted/cursed with power but must continually consume the vigor of youth.

**Hoodoo Doctors** are powerful practitioners of Hoodoo.

**Loups Garoux** were gifted/cursed with the ability to turn into an animal, but hunger for human flesh.

**Medicine Workers** are powerful Native American supernatural specialists.

**Voodoos** are powerful practitioners of Voodoo.

It is assumed that each PC has done horrible things in his or her past (including, for many, aligning themselves with or

indebting themselves to the Devil) but each is also assumed to be searching for redemption. In fact, it is this search for redemption, more than anything else, that has kept most of them going over the decades and centuries.

**Flashbacks-** Most of game play takes place in the present, yet it is possible to play during "flashbacks" of the characters' shared past. Players may, then, find themselves adventuring during the era of slavery, during the Civil War, during the era of jim crow and lynching, during the battle to desegregate the South, or even during the disastrous days of Hurricane Katrina.

**Dangers-** Some of the hazards PCs face are: evil ageless, diabolists (humans who gain power by serving the Devil), those who want to reveal the PC's supernatural natures to the world, ghosts, racist hate groups and a variety of inhuman monsters that inhabit the deep swamps and forests of the South.

Much of the action in Hoodoo Blues is not physical violence or running away from monsters, but a more subtle (though no less harrowing) form of magical duel. Each opponent attempts to destroy the other with a variety of hands (curses) while simultaneously trying to find and remove the hands placed on them before they, themselves, are destroyed.

**Character Creation-** Players choose a character class, which sets skill costs to buy supernatural and mundane skills. Players then decide how old the PC is (measured by decades that have passed since the PC reached adulthood) and describe, briefly, what the PC was doing for each of those decades. Decades can help make the PC more powerful (giving skills, willpower, wealth, allies) but also make the PC more world-weary. The player must then choose motivations: unrequited passions or unfinished business that are capable of piercing the veil of world-weariness. Next, players buy equipment for PCs, then use advantages and disadvantages to round out the character. Experience points, earned during game play, can be used to increase attributes and skills.

**Game Mechanics-** All mechanics are based on a simple system: The sum of attribute + skill or other factor + 1d20 must be equal to or higher than the difficulty of the proposed action. Conjuring (magic) is done using the skill system. Just as repairing a car might require skill, parts and time, conjure might require skill, components and time to perform a ritual. Both mundane and magical skills have a GM-assigned difficulty depending on the arduousness of what the PC is trying to achieve. Opposed rolls are made when two actions are in conflict with each other: each party tries to get more above their difficulty than the other party. Fighting is made up of opposed actions and reactions with different difficulties and effects. In combat, for each round each character gets one action to make against an enemy and one reaction if someone else does something to them.

INTRODUCTION