

MATT

Okay, it's time to start playing. I'll explain things since I've played before.

ANDY

That would be good. I've never done anything like this. It's all kind of intimidating. We're just going to make up stories on the spot?

EMILY

Yeah. That sounds tricky to me, too.

MATT

It's not as hard as it sounds. And the game procedures will help us along the way. We don't have to create stories out of nothing. First we'll create some characters and the situations they're in. The stories will come later.

EMILY

Okay. I'm game. What do we do first?

MATT

First, I'll talk about the game in general and explain what it's about and what kinds of things we'll be doing when we play. Then, we'll each create a main character and a situation that the character is involved in. Those situations come from dreams that our characters have had. I'll talk more about the dream stuff later. First, the **City of Forgotten Gods**.

ANDY

Oh yeah, you sent us those pages about Strangers and the City. It reminded me of *Hellboy*, kinda.

MATT

Yep. I got those pages from the website for the game. They're like an introduction for new players. Even though you already read those, I'm going to go over that stuff again.

EMILY

Good! I kind of forgot to read that stuff beforehand.

MATT

No problem. Here, I'll just read the first sheet to get us in the mood.

All of the action of the game takes place within the City of Forgotten Gods. It is also known as the City of Black Mirrors, Dark Jewel of Yudasha, the Towers of the World's End.

Check out hellboy.com

Intro pages and other game sheets can be downloaded from strangerthings-rpg.com

MATT, CONT'D. (READING)

The City is vast. It stretches in every direction. Its spires, covered walkways, and minarets reach to the heavens. It is a dense maze of twisting cobblestone streets and hissing gaslights, interrupted by the occasional park or bridge across the canals. There are many districts and boroughs, teeming with a wide variety of humans of every type.

Imagine all the old cities rolled into one: the canals of Venice, the grand edifices of Rome, the crowded rooftops of Prague, the charming boulevards of Paris, the night markets of Barcelona, the foggy atmosphere of London, the grandiose towers of Baghdad, the dense cacophony of Hong Kong.

It is an ancient place. Older than written history. Scholars say that before there were men and demons, darker creatures dwelt within the titanic walls. Things that may still lurk in the great, black cisterns beneath the cobbled streets.

The City is not especially high-tech. There are gaslights and indoor plumbing, but that's about it. Travel in the city is by foot, rickshaw, gondola, or carriage. Flintlock rifles and pistols are in use, although swords and daggers remain popular weapons. Clothing is a mix of many cultures rubbing elbows for generations, though the weather of the City is generally cool and often rainy, so long coats, cloaks, hats, scarves, and high boots are common.

Religion is a private, even secret, practice in the City. The 'Forgotten Gods' are still worshipped by dozens of sects and cults whose members meet in hidden places, wearing masks to conceal their true identities. Most humans worship in some way and even wear a small trinket or mark to subtly indicate their deity of choice, but it is considered in very bad taste to discuss faith openly in public.

Beyond the walls of the City is the Wild. Few who venture there ever return. It is said that the earth is taking back what is hers, and the City is almost all that men have left.

But humans are not the only ones taking refuge within the city walls. The Wild has driven every manner of creature to seek shelter from its terrors. The dark, abandoned places of the City are home to vampires, witches, goblins, ghosts and monsters of all kinds. The humans call such things demons. Demons are not a race per se, but they are a breed apart—the living embodiment of nightmares and folk tales.



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PRIMARY GLYPH
Watchtower;
vigilance

CENTER COLUMN
*The old broom
knows the corners of
the house.*

MATT, CONT'D. (READING)

Practical magic exists in this setting, but it is rare. The common people of the City are superstitious (making signs to ward off the evil eye and the like) and generally consider magic to be tainted by “fell spirits.” Still, a few lone magicians practice their craft, and despite the bad reputation, usually find their services in high demand. Sorcery involves the incanting of magical phrases, drawing runes, and brewing potions.

Demons have their own inherent magical powers, which are instinctive supernatural abilities rather than a studied craft. Each breed of demon has its own type of power, from creating jets of burning flame to plunging a room into inky darkness.

Demons come in a wide variety of colors, shapes and sizes, from frog-like creatures the size of a small child to behemoths the size of a warhorse. No catalogue of demon types is provided. Instead, the “Star Wars cantina” (a.k.a. Buffy the Vampire Slayer) method of demon making should be used to create any sort, as needed, on the fly. Some demons are undead, taking the form of a vampire, zombie, or ghost. Others resemble pixies or imps. Virtually any creature from myth or legend can form the basis of a demon type.

Despite their name, demons are not inherently evil, or associated with “devils” or “evil spirits” (though some humans—and demons!—believe otherwise). In fact, there is no such thing as inherent evil in the setting.

The setting is designed as a pressure-cooker for the two peoples. There’s really nowhere else for them to go, so they are forced to confront one another within the walls of the City. There are those on each side that just want to be left alone, and so retreat as far away as possible. Along the borders between the demon and human areas of the city, some trade and even outright cooperation occurs periodically, though this is usually the perfect excuse for extremists on both sides to kick-start another conflict.

The Strangers destabilize this whole equation. It’s not clear whose side they are on, and so they are instantly targets—either as enemies or allies. They face fear and prejudice as well as hope and trust in almost equal measures from both sides. Their choices will help shape what the City becomes, for good or for ill.

I describe demons vaguely in the intro sheet. You’re encouraged to customize the nature of demons for your own stories.

EMILY

Ah, I see. That’s cool. We’re going to make characters that are Strangers. So we’ll be caught in the middle of this human/demon conflict in the City.

MATT

Yep. That’s the idea. We’ll also make some choices about what human and demon stereotypes are like and then maybe challenge those in play.

ANDY

And we get to use the map tiles to build our own city, right? I really like those tiles... I can’t wait to use them.

MATT

Yeah. I downloaded the map tiles from the website, too. I printed them out on cardstock and cut them out already. We’ll use those in a little while to put together a little neighborhood of the City.

ANDY

Sweet. There was a sheet about the Strangers, too. Are you gonna read that one?

MATT

Yeah, that’s next. Here’s what the Strangers info sheet has to say:

In the City of Forgotten Gods, there is talk of creatures that prowl the fog-shrouded streets and rooftops. They are neither man nor demon, but something in-between. They are the **Strangers**.

In the dim light of a candle, wrapped in a hooded cloak, a Stranger may pass for human. They have two arms, two legs, two eyes, a nose and the like. Up close, however, a Stranger’s half-demon nature is plain to see. For each, the demonic features are unique. Some are subtle, such as fires burning deep within the eyes and breath made of smoke. Others are more grotesque, with horns, a bright crimson hide like tanned leather, and a whip-like tail. Fur, wings, spines, shimmering auras, animate shadows... the variety is endless. Despite their unusual appearance, however, Strangers are never mistaken for demons.

All Strangers, regardless of size or sex, have supernatural reserves of strength and endurance. They can bend iron bars or run for a day and night without tiring. They never get sick and do not appear to age. Their half-demonic bodies some-

The map tiles are little squares illustrated with buildings, canals, and other parts of the City. Each player gets to pick a tile or two to build a little city map for the first story. City tiles are discussed more on page XX.

