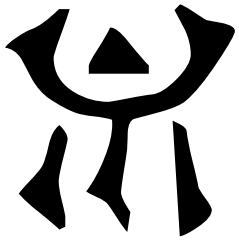
STRANGER THINGS

A GAME OF FANTASY ADVENTURE



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Written by John Harper

Edited by Philip LaRose

Illustrations by Jake Richmond (p.X), Ed Heil (p.X), John Harper (p.X), Adam Black (p.X)

Cartography by Tony Dowler

Playtested by

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ABOUT THE GAME

Stranger Things is inspired by and is a reinterpretation of Ron Edwards' game, Trollbabe. They share the same core system and procedures for play, though there are a few differences between them, mechanically. Trollbabe has different characters, setting, and situation, as well as a different premise and theme. If you like Stranger Things, though, you are almost sure to like Trollbabe, too. I highly recommend it.

Visit http://www.adept-press.com/trollbabe for more information.

This game also owes a lot to many other games which came before it, which include, *The Shadow of Yesterday, Dogs in the Vineyard, Primetime Adventures, The Burning Wheel, Universalis, Sorcerer, Puppetland, Over The Edge, Pandemonium!, The Dying Earth RPG, HeroQuest and Talislanta.* Anything good in here was probably stolen from one of those games. The bad ideas are mine.

ABOUT THE PDF

This PDF document is formatted with a single text column to facilitate on-screen reading. It is meant to be printed single-sided on a standard printer and has space in the left margin so it can be 3-hole-punched and put in a binder.

A full-color cover (if you print it at work, it's free!) can be found on the Stranger Things website, along with other extras for download.

http://www.onesevendesign.com/strangerthings

Asa Nisi Masa . . .

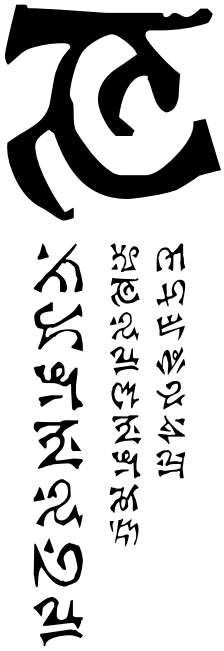
Stranger Things is copyright John Harper, 2005

The ghosts were all around her in the dark. She could feel their icy fingers in her hair, and she stifled a scream. This was no time to lose herself. She was a master of the secret flame! No ghost had yet walked that could stand against her power. But there were so many... and the night was so young... there would be more before the sun rose on her again. And if she failed, the clan war would not stop until it sent every soul beyond the grey veil.

He regarded the blood that dripped from the curved knives of the creature. It was surprisingly fast for its size, and its blades had marked him more than once. He saw black shapes at the edge of his vision, swimming there, trying to drag him into unconsciousness. He steeled himself for its next attack. He knew he did not have to defeat the creature, only occupy it long enough for the others to make it to safety. Too late, he twisted, and the cruel edge found him again.

Candles flickered, and cast sinister, dancing shadows across the weathered faces of the council. Their judgment would come soon. Everything that could be said had been said. Every plea and argument had been heard. Fate hung like a night-fog over the room, descending with inexorable slowness upon the accused. This would not be the last time an innocent was put to judgment. But how much injustice would the forgotten gods bear witness to before they once again laid their hands upon the wheel of life?

Strangers in the Night



In the City of the 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, bearing a hide like tanned leather—bright crimson—horns, 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 grant them unique abilities, such as flying or water-breathing.

Strangers are still "people," though. They do not drink blood, or fear holy symbols, or hate sunlight (however, they do prefer to sleep during the day and operate at night). They have feelings and interests just like any person would. Whether they are a "good" person or not is up to the players, but their half-demonic nature does not dispose the Strangers to evil impulses or anything of that sort.

No one, not even the Strangers, know where they come from. They may be the offspring of human/demon parents, or sorcerous experiments gone awry, or something else entirely. For the purposes of the game, it doesn't matter. What does matter is that the only Strangers that exist within the setting are those created by you and the other players. You shouldn't think of them as being a "race" of any kind. I like to think of the Strangers as similar to the non-humans in Mike Mignola's comic *Hellboy*. Abe, Roger, and Hellboy himself would all make good Strangers.

Why play? Because Strangers are neither demon nor human. They are always the outsider in any situation and have a unique perspective from which to judge both sides. They are also powerful creatures able to influence the world around them. Playing a Stranger puts you in a position to evaluate a situation, make a judgment about it, and then act to create change, for better or (sometimes) for worse. The life of a Stranger is a life of conflict, which makes for good drama, which makes for interesting games.

PRIMARY GLYPH:
Wicked tongue; twisted words

LEFT COLUMN:
Speak of the Serpent, and his tail appears.

What Kind of Game is This?

Stranger Things is a game you play with three friends (more than four players total is too many). It's not a card game like poker or a board game like Monopoly or a word game like Taboo, though. It's an "adventure game"—kind of like the "choose your own adventure" books you may have read when you were a kid. Like those books, the point of play is to confront a variety of imaginary situations and conflicts and decide how your character deals with them.

The game is about a dark, fantastic city, and the friction between the humans and demons that live there. Your character will be a *Stranger,* a half-human/half-demon that is not at home in either world and can act as a force of change among both. Your character will be faced with bloodthirstry vampire gangs, restless ghosts bent on revenge, bitter feuds and clan wars, mysterious witches in crumbling towers, kind-hearted demons that are feared because of their appearance, savage demons bent on the destruction of mankind, the human slayers who kill good and bad demons alike, and many other adventures in the City of Forgotten Gods.

As a Stranger, you will become entangled in these situations and, based on your own judgments as a player, decide what your character will do to help or hinder one side or the other.

The rules of the game (the dice rolling and numbers) will help everyone decide what happens next—a character succeeds or fails—but you and the other players will judge *why* those things happen, and what they *mean*. Each time you play Stranger Things, you will tell a story by building it up bit by bit out of all the things each person says. And, just like a book club with your friends, the game is so much more interesting if everyone has something to say about the story and what it means to them. The more you talk about the whys and meanings of the story while you play, the better it will be. If you like something, say so! If you don't like something, don't be shy, speak up.

Is This Roleplaying?

You may have heard the term "roleplaying game" before and wonder if Stranger Things is one of those kind of games. It certainly shares a few similarities to games like Dungeons & Dragons and games of that type, but it is very different in many wasy as well.

If you have played a roleplaying game before, you may be surprised by the way Stranger Things is played. It uses procedures that are not common to most RPGs.

I think it's best to think of Stranger Things simply as "a game"—like chess, or poker, or charades. It has its own procedures and rules that need to be learned and followed for the game to work right.

Whether or not you have played a roleplaying game before, Stranger Things should be pretty easy for you to learn and play.

The Director

Just like there is a Banker in Monopoly, so to is there a special job for one person during a game of Stranger Things. That special position is called the Director. The other players in the game each control the choices of one character, but the Director gets to play "everyone else" in the world of the adventure. Instead of controlling a single character for the whole adventure, the Director will take on the roles of everyone the player's characters meet: barkeeps, merchants, assassins, gladiators, doctors, magicians, magistrates, artists, craftsmen, you name it. Most of these Director-controlled characters will have their own goals and agendas and will inevitably get all tangled up with the Strangers either as adversaries, friends, lovers, or rivals.

In addition to playing NPCs (Non Player Characters) the other big job for the Director is scene management. Like a movie director, the Director decides when a scene starts and stops, what charaters are in the scene, and when to cut away to the action of another Stranger. The players will *request* certain scenes, but the Director is responsible for setting them up and managing the pacing of the game by cutting to the chase and keeping the action flowing fast and furious.

It's also the Director's job to create situations for the Strangers to explore. The Director doesn't decide what will happen beforehand, however. Don't think of it in terms of story yet. The story happens when the players are involved and making decisions. It's the Director's job to set up the basic ingredients of story: character and conflict. Create a cast of NPCs that all want things, but are blocked from getting them. Set the situation at its most volatile and uncertain. Then when the Stranger is added to the mix, the elements explode into story.

Being the Director may seem like a big job, but really, in a lot of ways, it's less work than being one of the players. Being the Director is fun because you get to be the one to provide adversity for the Strangers to strive against. You create the obstacles and trials that force them to make judgments and in doing so, say who the character really is. You also get to play a new character every five minutes, with their own opinions and goals, so you're constantly in the position to make your own judgments and statements about the game as it progresses.

There's a lot more info about being the Director and creating situations and conflicts on page XX.

Before You Play

Someone will decide to be the Director. Probably the person reading this book. Hello, there. The Director has to first recruit some people to play the game with him or her. There's a player handout PDF that comes with this book that is useful for this purpose. Just email the PDF to interested folks to give them an idea of what the game is like.

Get a firm handle on the rules—all the numbers and dice rolling, sure, but the procedures too, like who says what about this and that and when. The Director will have to explain the rules to the players before you start. There's another handout PDF with a rules summary that you may want to print out and have handy during the game. The rules are pretty simple, but explaining them isn't always easy (just look at how many pages it took me to do it!). I recommend a quick overview of the basic concepts and then just go ahead and jump in. Actually trying them out is one of the best ways to learn.

The Director should follow the system on page XX to create a handful of situations and conflicts for the first game. Imagine these as your "ammo" for the game. Be ready to toss one of your charged situations at each of the Strangers to get the ball rolling. Also be ready to react on the fly if one of the players comes up with their own situation and conflict that they want to explore. Don't worry about the one you prepared; you can save it for a rainy day.

You should have character sheets and pencils ready, plus some dice. Stranger Things uses ten-sided dice, which you can find at a game store or education supply shop. One die per player is all you will usually need, though you might want a few extra around in case a die bounces under the sofa.

An adventure game is a social activity, like book club or poker night, so food and drink is good to have around during the three hours of gameplay. I like to combine the game with a potluck dinner on the weekend so everyone can relax, eat, drink, and enjoy the game together.

Choose Your Playmates Wisely

Playing an adventure game is kind of like playing in a band. If everyone is really interested in making the same kind of music, great. Even if everyone is interested in making any music together, period, then you have a shot at making it work.

But if some of the band members are just hanging around, not caring one whit about making good music, well, it can really kill any chance for the others to have any fun.

You probably know that just because you're friends with someone, that doesn't mean you can have a good time playing all kinds of games with them. Maybe you don't play poker with Frank because he can't concentrate on the cards. Since he's not invested and connected to the game experience, it makes it harder for everyone.

Same thing with Stranger Things. Play with people that are totally invested and interested in the game, the characters, and what happens next. Play with people as excited about the game as yourself, and you'll have a much better game.

The First Session

Introduce the setting and general style of the game. *"It's like Hellboy meets Arabian Nights meets Lord of the Rings in this gigantic city of towers and fog, ghosts and secrets, blood and flame and shadows ."*

Talk about the Strangers, and the point of play (to engage with knife-edge situations, make judgments, affect changes).

Create characters. This is fast and easy. Everyone should talk about their character as they're making them. Offer suggestions. Collaborate. Remember that story happens during play, not as part of some elaborate character history and/or destiny. Your Stranger will be defined by what he or she does in the coming adventures. It doesn't have to be set in stone now. Character creation is explained on page XX. (You can click to jump right to it, if you want. Keen, eh? All references in this PDF are linked like that.)

Practice the game system, by doing a sample scene and conflict roll with each Stranger. Explain how conflicts are *resolved* by dice rolls. Scenes and Conflicts are explained on pages XX-XX.

Gather 'round the map, let the players pick starting points, and get the first scene of the adventure underway.

[...]

What it Looks Like

If you've never played an adventure game before, it may be hard to imagine what exactly you're supposed to be doing. Here's a short transcript of some friends playing Stranger Things together, to give you an idea of what a game is like.

Matt (the Director): Okay, Cara, where is your Stranger, and why is she there?

Cara [points to one of the spots on the map]: My Stranger, Esfyazza, is right here, at the Carnival of Dark Delights. She knows about this slave-driver that runs the carnival and she's there to exact a little revenge.

Matt: Hmmm. Well, it sounds like that story is almost over, doesn't it? I mean, she already knows the truth and has made her decision. Maybe we could back up a bit and start the situation without any preconceived notions. Then we'll find out the truth of things (and Esfyazza's reaction) during the adventure.

Cara: Oh, yeah, I get it. Yeah, that sounds good. Maybe she just heard a *rumor* from her demon friend Ryzul that the owner of the carnival was keeping a demon in a cage and charging money for humans to look at it. She's there to find out if the story is true.

Matt: Ooooh. Cool! That can certainly go a lot of different ways. Okay, what about you, Phil? Where is your Stranger and why is he there?

Phil: Oh man, I can't think of anything! I like this one thing on the map, though, "Dry well: water fell into sky." I mean, what does that mean? There's definitely a story there, but I have no idea what it is.

Matt: That's cool. You don't have to decide in advance. Finding out the story is kind of why we're playing, after all.

Phil: True. Okay, my Stranger, Madeem, is sitting on the edge of this well, staring down into it with a confused look on his face.

Matt: Nice. Alright then, Tony, your turn.

Tony: Okay. My Stranger, Vozhu Lor, is here, outside the Inn of Last Wishes. I just lost my last coin at cards, and the innkeeper threw me out when I couldn't pay the fare for my room.

Matt is doing his job as Director by tweaking and re-stating Cara's scene request to make for a dynamic situation with lots of possibilities. Cara does her job as player by not holding on too tightly to her scene idea and supporting a direction that sounds like fun to her.

Matt: Heartless scoundrel. Alright, you're penniless outside the Inn of Last Wishes. How appropriate. That gives me ideas. And it looks like the inn and the dry well are very close to each other on the map. So maybe Vozhu Lor and Madeem will run into each other in this adventure.

Tony: Yeah. That could be fun.

Phil: Yeah.

Matt: Okay, does anyone have a request for a first scene? If not, I have one ready.

Tony: I have an idea. I'd like a scene where Vozhu Lor is perched on a rooftop, meditating about his current predicament.

Matt: That sounds good. I'll also take my Director prerogative to tweak that a bit, to sow some seeds of potential conflict.

Tony: And away we go...

Matt: Okay, we start at night, as usual. The moon is out, its light glinting off the slate roofs and gilded towers of the district. Vozhu Lor crouches on the head of a fearsome-looking gargoyle, considering his options now that his purse is empty. As you meditate, the quiet of the night is disturbed by the sound of a person trudging along the cobblestones below. When you peer down, you see a cloaked figure carrying a dim, greenish lamp.

As the figure passes beneath your perch, you can see that it is a man, with a full beard and a wide, floppy hat. He has a large bundle of rope coiled around his shoulder, and strains to carry a deep bucket. Even though he seems to struggle with the weight, you can plainly see that the bucket is empty. Just after he passes by, another green lamp bobs into view, heading back the other way. The two figures pass and nod curtly, two men on the job, acknowledging each other silently.

Tony: Hmmm. Empty buckets that are very heavy, eh? Sounds like some magic might be on the loose.

Phil: And those buckets wouldn't happen to have been filled at my "empty" well, hmmmm?

Tony: Oh, yeah! That would be great. The water went away, but there's something else in its place, maybe. Okay, I definitely want to follow the first guy and see where he goes with that bucket of... whatever. I'll creep along the rooftops, keeping his lantern in sight.

Tony is taking a very laid-back approach to the story, which is not a bad thing to do sometimes. He knows that Matt has prepared some potential situations and conflicts ahead of time and will be ready to drop them into Vozhu Lor's path at the first opportunity.

The important thing is that Tony is engaged. He is tossing the ball to Matt not because he doesn't want to play, but because he wants to hit Matt's return fastball out of the park.

Matt: Alright then. The man has a very furtive air about him, though. He stops at each intersection and peers around (up to the rooftops, too) to see if he's being followed. He's being quite thorough about it.

Tony: Fine, then. I call for a conflict roll! Between Vozhu Lor and the bucket guy. The conflict is to see if I can follow him to his destination without being spotted. Let's let fate decide. It's a conflict of Shadow, obviously.

Matt: Okay. So your goal is to follow him without being seen, all the way to his destination?

Tony: Yes.

Matt: Okay. His goal is to make it to his destination without being followed. So, if you fail, you will be spotted and he will shake your tail. You can have a follow-up conflict to keep tailing him at that point, but you definitely won't follow him to his original destination. That's what this conflict is about.

Tony: Gotcha. I'll set the pace at "exchange by exchange."

Matt: Okay, that's fine with me. Now it's "free and clear" time. What is Vozhu Lor doing to follow him?

Tony: Well, that depends... what is he doing to spot me?

Matt: Like I said, he's pausing at every intersection and scanning around carefully. There's also a hired bravo escorting him, but he's extremely sneaky and Vozhu hasn't seen him yet.

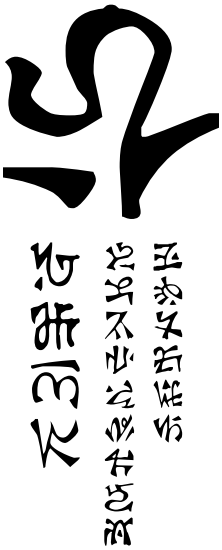
Tony: And the bravo hasn't seen me yet, either. He's not the only sneaky one.

Matt: Yeah. He'll only spot you if you fail the conflict.

Tony: Hmmm. Well, if he has an escort, the invisible bucket stuff must be valuable to someone. Maybe Vozhu can sell it to re-fill that empty purse.

[...]

The City of Forgotten Gods



All of the action of the game takes place within the City. It is also known as the City of Black Mirrors, Dark Jewel of Yudasha, The Towers of the World's End. But everyone calls it simply, "The City."

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 which 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 the sword and dagger 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 withtin the city walls. The Wild has driven every manner of creature to seek shelter from its terrors. The dark, abandonded places of the City are home to vampires,

PRIMARY GLYPH:
Watchtower; vigilance

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

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 embodiement of nightmares and folk tales.

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 magic is generally thought 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. It is a slow process, but can achieve some impressive effects.

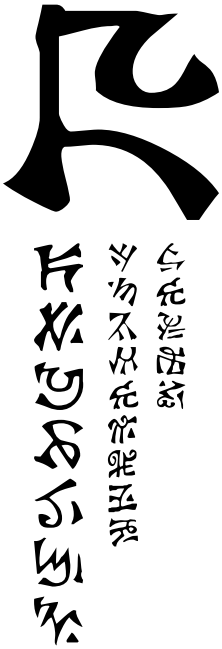
Demons have their own inherent magical powers, which are instinctive supernatural abilities rather than a studied craft. Each breed of demon has its own type of power, from creating jets of burning flame to plunging a room into inky darkness.

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 war-horse. No catalog of demon types in provided. Instead, the "Star Wars cantina" 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. Demons are generally more savage and aggressive than humans (shunning all but the most simple tools and technology as a rule) but otherwise have the full range of emotions and personality types that humans do.

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 kickstart another conflict.

The Strangers destabilize this whole equation. It's not clear whose side they are on, and so they are instantly a target—either as an enemy or ally. 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.



PRIMARY GLYPH:
Jackal; tenacity

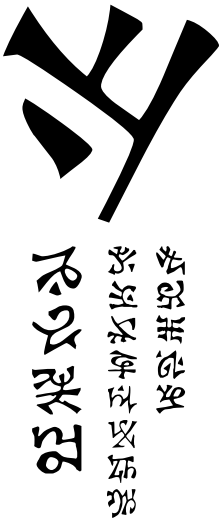
LEFT COLUMN:
Never let defeat have the last word.

Make the Setting Your Own

Most of the setting for Stranger Things is left sketchy so that you and your fellow players can embellish it during play and make the setting your own. The appendices include long lists of various elements (guilds, streets, gods, markets) with only an evocative name or cryptic phrase to get you started. The description and purpose for each thing should grow organically out of your own play, rather than any kind of faithful fidelity to an "established" setting.

Some things to consider:

- What is the Wild? Perhaps it has crept past the walls into a quarter of the city and a Stranger must confront it. Maybe a Stranger has to go outside the walls for some reason. What is so terrible about the Wild? Is it really so terrible, or just feared because it is unknown?
- Why is religion a secret practice in the City? How do the Forgotten Gods, and their secret cults, relate to the world of the demons? Do demons worship too? Is religion and faith a place for common ground between humans and demons or another way they are divided? The "true" existence and nature of the gods should probably remain an open question.
- What kinds of strife exist among the humans? There are "feuds and vendettas"—between whom? What about the demons? What do they come into conflict over among their own kind? "How can a Stranger make a difference?" is the question you answer during play, **not before**.
- What is the supernatural like? There are demons and monsters of all sorts in the City, but the players will probably prefer some kinds over others. Talk about it, and try to suss out their preferences during play. If they like ghosts and zombies, trying throwing a vampire their way. If they like giant snakes and spiders, maybe a dragon is called for! Arabian djinn, Chinese hungry ghosts, and Greek titans are fair game, too.
- What's the deal with the glyphs scattered throughout this book? They're in the illustrations too. Must be important.



PRIMARY GLYPH:
Prayer song; inspiration

CENTER COLUMN:
The bird is known by his song

How To Play the Game

Blood, Flame, and Shadow

It is said that Strangers are made of three things: blood, flame, and shadow. And it is these three qualities that govern the fate of your Stranger during the game.

You choose a number to represent your character in the game system, ranging from 2 through 9. When your character is in a conflict you'll roll a d10 and refer to the number.

If the conflict relates to **Blood** (dynamic, physical conflict) you must roll **under** your number to succeed. When the conflict pertains to magic and the supernatural, **Flame** is the relevant ability and you must roll **over** your number to succeed. If the conflict revolves around subtlety, deception, emotion, or social graces, **Shadow** comes into play. To succeed in a Shadow conflict you need to roll in the **smaller** of the two ranges, **including** the number.

Blood—dynamic, physical conflict from fighting to footraces. Roll under your number for Blood.

Flame—magic and the supernatural. Roll over your number for Flame.

Shadow—subtlety, deception, intuition, social graces, and emotion. Roll in the smaller range plus your number for Shadow.

Examples will make it clear.

> Esfyazza's number is 4. To succeed at a conflict of Blood (like a knife fight) she must roll a 1, 2, or 3 (under her number) on a d10. To succeed at a conflict of Flame (like casting a spell to make the sun rise and drive away a gang of vampires) she must roll a 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, or 10 (over her number). To succeed at a conflict of Shadow (like stealing into a tower at night to visit her demon lover in secret) she must roll a 1, 2, 3 or 4 (the smaller range: 1-3, plus her number: 4).
>
> Madeem's number is 7. For Blood he needs to roll a 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. For Flame he needs 8, 9, or 10. For Shadow, a 7, 8, 9, or 10 will do.
>
> Vozhu Lor's number is 5. Blood conflicts succeed with a 1, 2, 3, or 4. Flame conflicts succeed with a 6, 7, 8, 9, or 10. Shadow succeeds with a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5.

There are a few more details, like combining two or three conflict types, re-rolls, and more, but we'll cover that stuff a little further on.

Note that the Director never rolls a die. The game is about the Strangers and their conflicts, not about the success or failure of the NPCs the

Director controls. The Director will play the NPCs passionately, trying to achieve their goals and acting in their interests, but this is only so that the NPCs can oppose and highlight the conflicts of the Strangers. When two NPCs are in conflict with one another, and there is no Stranger involved, the Director should simply decide how things turn out. Odds are, the player will favor a certain outcome, and will insert her Stranger to influence the event one way or the other. If not, the conflict may not be interesting enough to spend any time on, anyway.

Scenes

Stranger Things is played as a series of scenes. A scene is a small slice of the story, usually focusing on the action of one Stranger. During a scene, a Stranger may travel somewhere, meet some people, learn new things, get into trouble, get out of trouble, run away, start a fight, prepare a magic spell, or do any number of other things. Each Stranger will have many scenes during one evening of play.

Some scenes are meant to be slower-paced and thoughtful, to give the player a chace to re-charge her batteries and maybe show-off their character a bit in a low-pressure situation. The purpose of most scenes, however, is to **establish and resolve a conflict** for the Stranger, which drives the story forward and keeps up the pace.

Running the Numbers

You may have noticed that it's possible for a Stranger to have a very high chance of success (80%) with Blood or Flame (numbers 9 and 2, respectively) but it's not possible to have such a high chance of success with Darkness (the largest range is 1-5 or 6-10, i.e. 50%).

This is by design. It is not fully in the nature of a Stranger to be as subtle and manipulative as a human or demon can be. Strangers are not fully part of either the mundane or supernatural worlds and they find it difficult (if not impossible) to "blend in" and act behind the scenes. Their lives are generally more overt and confrontational as a result.

How a Scene Starts and Stops

The Director is responsible for starting and stopping all scenes. Play proceeds in turns, starting with a scene for the player to the left of the Director, then going clockwise around the table. You don't have to finish one scene before you cut away to another. In fact, it's a good idea to stay in one scene until the action is reaching a dramatic moment, then cut to the next player and leave the first player in suspense until the order comes around again.

It's not usually okay to pass your turn as a player. Even if your "spotlight time" is very short, you should so *something* to advance the story of your Stranger. If you're drawing a blank and are not sure what to do, talk to the other players! They'll have plenty of ideas—some good, some bad—but whatever they say just might spark something with you. It's also okay to talk in general goals if you can't think of any specific action to take. Like, "I really want to teach that nasty vampire gang a lesson!" Everyone will kibbitz and toss out a dozen ideas for you to choose from in no time.

You can have your character enter a scene when it is not your turn. Just say how they enter. You have free rein to describe your entrance any way you like. It doesn't have to make perfect sense. Your Stranger may have been miles (or years!) away during your turn, but they can still arrive in the current scene if you want them there. The best example of this happened during a game in which Clinton asked Matt how his character entered the scene, and Matt simply said, "From above."

The Buck Stops Here

When a Scene is being established, the Director has final say over what characters are present and what is going on. Players may request a scene and make suggestions about the scene location and purpose, either for their own Stranger or for another, but the buck stops with the Director. Once everyone has had a chance to share ideas, the Director will decide the details of the beginning of the scene and then narrate a kind of "opening shot" (like a movie). The Director has final say over when scenes begin or end.

Good Scenes

A "good scene" for Stranger Things is a lot like a good scene in a book, movie, or TV show—important, snappy, and to the point. The scene should be about something that really matters to the Stranger *and* to the players around the table. It should represent the next "chunk" of that Stranger's story, not just "what's happening to them now." It's usually best to rapidly skip over all the mundane things a Stranger needs to do (or cut them out entirely) in favor of jumping right to the heart of the next beat in the story. If a Stranger leaves the tavern to look for the trail of the serial-killer, then—bam!—jump right to the moment where they're crouched down in the alley, looking at a dark stain on the cobblestones. There's no need to meticulously cover every moment of the character's experience from one second to the next. Think about the techniques your favorite writers and filmmakers use to cut from action to action to action, keeping the excitement and interest alive.

This kind of cutting takes a little practice, so don't be too hard-nosed about it at first. If a player says, "Whoa, I don't want to be there yet! Can we have a scene where I'm skulking about and using my skills as a tracker? There might be something out here hunting me,

All Alone

It's not a requirement for each Stranger to be isolated on the map, doing their own thing. That's one common way of playing, but it's perfectly fine if the players want their Strangers to be friends and allies who tend to hang around together.

The game works best if each Stranger still has their own story, though. The game system is meant to resolve the goal of one Stranger at a time, so if your group of characters shares only a single goal, you may find that some of the dimension is missing from your stories.

Let's take the example of a troublesome vampire gang. All of the Strangers know of the gang and have come to this district to deal with them. But, instead of walking around together like a three-headed uber-hero, the Strangers "team up" by dividing the job among the group. Esfyazza starts to work the magical angle, Madeem goes for brute force, and Vozhu Lor attempts some "liquid diplomacy" with the local humans.

The vampire gang may ultimately be driven off, but in the process, each Stranger will deal with their own issues and tell their own small slice of the story.

too, you know…" then by all means go with it! Cut as much as possible, but if players object or seem unhappy, ease off and take things a little slower. You'll find the right speed for the group in short order.

Conflicts & Goals

The purpose of most scenes is to **establish and resolve a conflict** for the Stranger. Some conflicts will be simple and quick, others will be more elaborate and slow to build. The players and the Director have a lot of control over how simple or complex a given conflict will be.

A conflict is a turning point for the Stranger's story. They will succeed or fail at their goal, and the story will branch one way or the other depending on the outcome. The outcome of a conflict is always a branch into a new part of the story. A conflict should never cause the story of a Stranger to stop or get stuck. A story should not depend on a roll going a certain way. The "story" is made from player-choices and the *results* of all of the conflict rolls, not some pre-determined plotline.

There are six phases to a conflict:

1. Establish the Conflict
2. State Goals
3. Set the Pace
4. Free and Clear
5. Die Roll(s)
6. Narration

Phase 1: Establish the Conflict

The Director or any player with a Stranger in the scene can establish a conflict. When you establish a conflict, you say a few things about it:

- Say which characters are involved. If a player establishes the conflict, their Stranger must be involved. Also say which NPCs are involved, if any.
- Say what the conflict is about. This can be amended and expanded during the "free and clear" phase, below.
- Say what the action type is: Blood, Flame, or Shadow.
- Players whose Strangers are not involved may choose to join the conflict now if they wish. Say how your Stranger enters the conflict.

Basically, the person establishing the conflict provides a general overview so everyone knows who is facing whom, and about what. The Director has no special privileges when it comes to establishing conflicts, and can-

not veto or override another player when they are establishing a conflict.

Establishing a Conflict: Examples

[...]

PHASE 2: STATE GOALS

All the characters in a conflict must have clearly stated goals. Your goal should be stated as a desired *outcome* of the conflict, not just a task you will perform.

Here are some more sample goals for different action types. This is by no means an exhaustive list.

Good Goals	Bad Goals
"Slay the monster."	"Hit the monster with my spear."
"Drive the monster away."	"Poke at the monster and yell."
"Make the monster surrender."	"Grab the monster."

Blood: Subdue, incapacitate, kill, impress, get there first, escape, protect, break, hunt, endure, build

Flame: Get information, kill, subdue, protect, travel somewhere, communicate, influence, silence

Shadow: Inspire, convince, bargain, console, terrify, attract, intimidate, get information, deceive, sneak

All three action types may be offensive or defensive, as well as honest or deceptive. For instance, Shadow may be used to convince someone of the truth, to lie to them, or to spot whether they are lying.

The final point about conflicts is that failed goals are failed goals. It doesn't matter whether the consequences do not injure or kill the character—that particular goal cannot be achieved by that character in this scene. Thus, losing a fight means losing it, even if the character is all right afterwards; she cannot simply "attack him again" in the same scene. You can launch a **follow-up conflict**, though, which we'll get to a little further on (page XX, to be exact).

And while we're on the subject, what about death and injury? Can the Director set a goal for an NPC to "kill the Stranger" and then, pow! the Stranger dies after the roll? No. A Stranger can only die under very special circumstances that are completely within the player's control. A Stranger can become injured only as a result of failed rolls. See **Injury** on page XX.

PHASE 3: SET THE PACE

Next, the group must decide the **pace** of the current conflict. Pace refers to the number of rolls that will be made to resolve the conflict. There are three different paces to choose from:

Whole Conflict (1 roll)

Exchange by Exchange (win 2 out of 3 rolls)

Action by Action (win 3 out of 5 rolls)

The pace determines the amount of "screen time" that the conflict will get, not how long it takes in game-world time. A conflict that takes two months could be done as a single roll, or a conflict that takes place during a flash of lightning could be Action by Action.

The player that establishes the conflict sets the initial pace. One other person (the Director if a player established or a player if the Director established) can adjust the pace up or down one level. Only these two people may set the pace, even if other players become involved in the conflict.

Whole Conflict

This is the simplest pace. You roll the die once and read the result to find out how the conflict goes.

Exchange by Exchange

At this pace, the Stranger needs to get two successes out of three rolls. In this case, you roll and narrate as normal, but instead of narrating the end of the conflict after the first roll, you only narrate an "exchange" of the conflict—one clash between the two opposing forces in the conflict. After the last roll is made (the second failure or second success) then you narrate the outcome of the whole conflict.

Action by Action

At this pace, the Stranger needs to get three successes out of five rolls. Just like exchange by exchange, you narrate a little bit of the conflict with each roll, and then the whole outcome at the end (after the third failure or third success).

PHASE 4: FREE AND CLEAR

It may sound like an ad for allergy medication, but the "free and clear" phase of a conflict is actually the most important part of the process.

During this phase, everyone can discuss what the characters are doing, without committing to any "actions" in the game world.

It's during free and clear that you make those "action" statements like, "Madeem is clubbing the monster with his staff, like, ki-ya!" or "Vozhu is swinging around on the rope and popping off shots with his pistols." Just enough detail so everyone can picture how the scene is arranged. The action hasn't "happened" yet (that comes later with narration after the die roll). This is the stage-setting and declaration phase.

Feel free to revise your statement based on something someone else says. If the Director says that there is a ghost under the stairs that will clutch greedily at the Stranger's feet when he comes down, the player can change his mind and say that the Stranger feels a cold chill near the stairs and proceeds carefully. Stuff like that. Everyone gets to revise and refine until they're happy with the way the scene is set up.

PHASE 5: DIE ROLLS

No dice are rolled until everyone involved understands the Goals and "free and clear" parameters, and has had a chance to revise their statements if they want. If anyone is unhappy with the nature of the conflict, negotiate things until everyone is satisfied. Then you can roll the dice.

PHASE 6: NARRATION

Only those things discussed during Goals and "free and clear" can be included in the narration after the roll. There are no "surprise events" that can be tacked on after the conflict has been decided. If you want it to be part of the scene, talk about it now. That's why the Director has to talk about elements even if the Stranger is not yet aware of them.

THE BUCK STOPS HERE

When your Stranger fails to achieve his goal, you (the player) have final say over how he fails, and why. Everyone is allowed to offer suggestions and you should feel free to use the ideas of the other players if you want to. But the buck stops with you. Once people have said their peace and you've made up your mind, narrate the action the way you see it in your mind's eye. Think of it like a really cool scene in a movie—with lighting, special effects, and dramatic music. The more evocative you can be with your description, the better everyone else can imagine what you're imagining.

When your Stranger succeeds at her goal, the Director has final say over how she succeeds, and why, based on the Goal you established before the roll. Again, everyone is allowed to offer suggestions (especially you, the player of the Stranger in question). But in this case the

buck stops with the Director. Once everyone has offered their ideas, the Director will make up his mind and then narrate the action, based on your character's Goal.

The important thing to remember about the "buck-stopper" is that they are not the only person allowed to talk after the die is rolled. All the players are encouraged to get involved in the conflicts of the other characters and offer suggestions, comments, and opinions about what is going on. It's the *responsibility* of the buck-stopper to take what is offered from everyone else and then use his or her own taste and judgment to come up with a cool final narration—the thing that "happens on-screen" in the world of the adventure.

Injury

When you fail a die roll, your Stranger gets Hurt. Mark the first unmarked hurt box on the character sheet. If you mark the Incapacitated box, your Stranger is taken out of the action for the rest of the scene. You automatically lose a conflict when you become incapacitated.

Hurt Boxes

☐ Bruised

☐☐ Injured

☐ Incapacitated

At the end of a conflict (if you are not incapacitated) you may remove one hurt mark.

Since you become injured only when you fail a die roll, the player always gets to describe the nature of the injury during narration. And yes, there are such things as "social" injuries from a conflict of Shadow—loss of confidence, terror, being shunned by others, etc. The exception is incapacitation. The Director will describe your fate if your Stranger is incapacitated, and will most likely frame your next scene by putting your Stranger in a compromised position as a result of her failure and incapacitation. This kind of thing happens to heroes all the time.

Recovery

Your Stranger can recover from her wounds, of course. When you wake up from being incapacitated (in the next scene), you automatically heal two hurt boxes (so you have one mark in Bruised and one in Injured). You can also recover a hurt box by requesting a scene of relaxation and recreation for your Stranger. If the Director agrees, you are free to frame the scene as you wish, describing how your Stranger chooses to spend her free time taking it easy and having fun.

A recovery scene takes several hours of game-world time, so it may not always be possible to have such a scene in the middle of an adventure.

The Director makes the final call on whether or not a recovery scene is appropriate.

You also recover one hurt box at the beginning of a game session.

Funky Conflict Tricks

Creating Adversaries

Sometimes, the player's stated action actually brings the conflict into existence in its entirety, including the presence and intent of opponents. For example, stating that the Stranger is being watchful for enemies essentially requests that they be present. Failure means that whoever-it-is must have successfully got the drop on the Stranger!

The way a Goal is stated really matters here. If the player says, "My goal is to make sure that no one is following me," then success means that no one is following them. If, on the other hand, they say, "My Goal is to see if anyone is trying to poison me," then success means that yes, someone is trying to poison them!

Playing Chicken

The good thing about establishing a conflict is that you get to choose the conflict type. So, you can pick your best trait when you're trying to win or your worst when you're trying to lose. It's risky though, because you have to cast the die and trust yourself to fate. It's possible to "play chicken" with the other players, by simply stating actions that achieve your goals, without establishing a conflict and rolling first. If your goals don't conflict with the goals of the Director (or a player if you're the Director), you just might get away with it for awhile. Of course, you run the risk of stating actions that conflict with someone, and then *they* will establish a conflict to oppose you, taking the initiative and choosing the conflict type they want.

Still, this is a pretty good tactic for the Director to adopt early on, to give the players a chance to establish most of the conflicts. Just say things like, "The witch slips a drug into your drink when you're not looking, and it knocks you cold..." and see how fast they jump to establish a conflict! Unless getting drugged was all part of their plan, of course....

Getting Things Done

One nice thing about a conflict roll is that it *resolves* the situation. After the roll, everyone knows the outcome. This can be tricky to do if everything is done by "just talking."

Player: "I pry the jeweled skull from the wall."
Director: "It's stuck fast."
Player: "I have superhuman strength! I rip it out."
Director: "Nope, it won't budge."
Player: "Fine. I take out my prybar and lever it out."
Director: " The niche is too small for you to get the prybar wedged in."
Player: "Arrrrgh!"

This kind of "and then..." back-and-forth could go on for a long time, while the players try to guess/negotiate their actions. The conflict roll system lets the players (or Director) short-cut this process when they want to resolve a situation once and for all.

Player: "Okay! Conflict roll! Action type is Blood. My goal is take posession of the jeweled skull."

We toss a die, and we get an answer. The Stranger either gets the skull, or he doesn't. The specific hows and whys can come after the resolution, instead of bogging it down before it even starts.

Conversely, if you're not ready to resolve an issue, don't establish a conflict. It's okay to let it play out a bit and explore possibilities first.

Fate

When a conflict arises, we cast a die to determine the fate of the Stranger, using the method outlined above. It is important to remember that the casting of the die (and its result) does not represent the capabilities or actions of the Stranger. The die roll merely tells us whether or not the Stranger manages to achieve his goal or not. It is the narration surrounding the die roll (both before and after) that establishes the details of what happened—*why* the Stranger succeeded or failed. The player of the Stranger will shape the nature of these narrations, so that she can present the character in any light she likes—a skilled and resolute hero, an uncertain and fumbling novice, or anything in-between.

> For example, Vozhu Lor's number is 5. His player, Tony, imagines Vozhu Lor as a master duelist and pistolier. He enters into a conflict of Blood, with the goal of "Make my way into the inner sanctum of the Red Wizard." Tony rolls a die and gets a 7—a failure. Fate has not smiled on him tonight. This failure, however, can be described in any number of ways. All we know for sure is that Vozu Lor has not made his way into the inner sanctum.
>
> Tony chooses to describe his defeat as a series of moments from the pitched battle between Vozhu Lor and the black-clad swordsmen guarding the Wizard's keep. Vozhu cuts, parries, leaps, flips, and shoots, laying a score of enemy out in a bloody trail behind him. But the further he goes, the more frenzied grow the defenders, as do their number. They finally overwhelm Vozhu Lor in a sea of blades and burning eyes, leaving him no choice but to leap from the wall of the keep into the rushing waters of a canal below.

As you can see, even if Fate does not look kindly upon your Stranger, they may still act the part of the hero. A failed roll does not necessarily mean a failure of talent in your character. Likewise, a successful roll can represent a stroke of luck or coincedence rather than heroic ability, if you like.

Can I Do That?

Since the game system for Stranger Things resolves the **outcome** of a conflict only, it does not say what specific actions your Stranger can or cannot do. Those actions depend on the descriptions during the "free and clear" phase and the narration after the roll.

The precise capabilities of the Strangers are a matter of group consensus and personal preference. For example Strangers are said to have "supernatural strength." What does that mean exactly? Can a Stranger smash a large boulder by kicking it? Maybe. Can they leap over a six-story building? I don't think so, but maybe your group has just watched *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and really wants to have rooftop-flyin' Strangers. If everyone is into it, go right ahead.

On the other hand, if you have your Stranger win a Flame conflict by talking to her fairy godmother and the other players all wrinkle their noses and go "No way!" then maybe you need to revise things a bit. Everyone will have their own vision when it comes to the abilities of a Stranger (this is good!) but the game will go more smoothly if everyone is willing to compromise a little to keep a kind of "group vision" going, too.

Conflict Overview

Establish

Anyone can establish a conflict. A player must have their Stranger in the scene to do so. The person who establishes the conflict says three things about it:

1. Which characters are involved
2. What the conflict is about
3. The action type

Pace

The establishing player sets the pace (whole conflict, exchange by exchange, or action by action). Either the Director or the player (whoever did not establish) can adjust the pace up or down one level.

Goals

Every player involved in the conflict states the goal of their character.

Free and Clear

Actions and responses are discussed during "free and clear" (including things the characters may not be aware of) until everyone is satisfied.

- The Director indicates what she is willing to narrate if the conflict is a success (negotiate if necessary)
- Players may indicate (if they choose) what they are willing to narrate if the conflict is a failure for their Stranger (negotiate if necessary)

Die Rolls

Once every involved player is satisfied, cast the die. Cast once for whole conflict pace. Cast up to three times for exchange by exchange (need 2 wins out of three rolls). Cast up to five times for action by action pace (need 3 wins out of 5 rolls).

Injury

Mark a hurt box each time your Stranger fails a die roll. If you are Incapacitated, you automatically lose the conflict at hand.

Narration

If the conflict is a success, the Director narrates the outcome, based on the goals involved and the "free and clear" discussion.

If the conflict is a failure, the player narrates the outcome, based on the goals involved and the "free and clear" discussion.

Example Conflict

[...]

Re-Rolls

So far, we've been assuming that the players are willing to let their Strangers be buffeted by the cruel winds of fate, taking whatever result the dice give them. Most of the time, this is how the game will go. However, when the players are really invested in the outcome of a conflict, they may exercise some influence over fate in the form of **Re-Rolls**.

After any roll of a die, the player who rolled may choose to check off a **re-roll item** on his character sheet and re-roll that die. The player must incorporate the re-roll item into their narration to explain how it influences events. The item does not have to be used in a literal way.

There are 25 re-roll items—five columns of five items each:

Faith	A Chain	The Stars	Silver	Demonic features
Hope	A Book	A Forgotten God	Smoke	A supernatural gift
Love	A Key	A Secret Sign	Iron	Carried item (human)
Despair	A Stone	A Hidden Way	Water	Carried item (demon)
Cruelty	A Ring	A True Name	Bone	A geographic feature

During one game session you may:

- Use up to one re-roll item from each column **- OR -**
- Use up to five re-roll items from a single column and none from the others

The result of the re-roll replaces the result of the original roll. **However, it is important to remember that every time you roll a result of failure (including re-rolls!) your Stranger gets hurt.**

> For example: Madeem is in a conflict of Flame. The pace is whole conflict. He rolls, and gets a failure. He loses the conflict and marks a hurt box. However, Madeem's player, Phil, really doesn't want to lose this conflict, so he checks off a re-roll item: A supernatural gift. Phil says, "Madeem summons up the energy of the burning glyphs that mark his body, funneling it into a power that crashes against his enemies!" Phil re-rolls the die. Again, he gets a failure. He marks **another** hurt box for Madeem, and describes his failure. Undeterred, Phil checks off another re-roll: Despair. "Though filled with a black despair, Madeem redoubles his efforts and expends the last of his power...." This last re-roll comes up success! Madeem has won the conflict, though it has cost him.

There's another source of re-rolls, in the form of **Relationships**. They get their own explanation, on page XX.

Conflict Extras

Now that you have the basics down, let's talk about some extra twists and spin you can put on conflicts. There are two extra things that we're going to cover: **Multiple Action Types** and **Follow-Up Conflicts**. You won't use these all the time, but they can add some depth to a conflict when you want it.

Multiple Action Types

[...]

Follow-Up Conflicts

Once a conflict is resolved, it's resolved. The result stands. You can, however, launch a related follow-up conflict later if all three of the following are true:

1. The time and/or place is different.
2. The action type is different.
3. The Goal of the conflict is related to, but is different from, the original.

Follow-Up Conflict Examples

[...]

Character Creation

Your characters are the only Strangers. There are no others in the city.

Follow these steps to create your Stranger.

1. **Choose your human appearance.** Then add one or more **demonic features**. These must be obvious and all but impossible to hide. Horns, scales, bat wings, elemental forces, a tail, etc. Your demonic features give you a **supernatural gift**, such as fire-starting, walking on air, stony skin, etc.

2. **Choose your number.** (see page XX)

3. **Choose your fighting style:** Human training (usually with a weapon) or Demonic instinct (usually with tooth and claw and tail)

4. **Choose your magic style:** Human sorcery (studied in books with written spells and potions) or Demonic power (innate magical talents). Human magic is Slow. Demonic magic is Fast (see **Magic**, page XX).

5. **Choose your social style:** Direct, Inutitive, Seductive, Boistrous, Charming, Bold, Deceptive, Comforting, Aggressive, Inscrutable, Sardonic

6. **Choose two carried items:** one that represents the human world and one that represents the demon world. You may carry any other weapons or equipment that you want, but these two items are special to your Stranger.

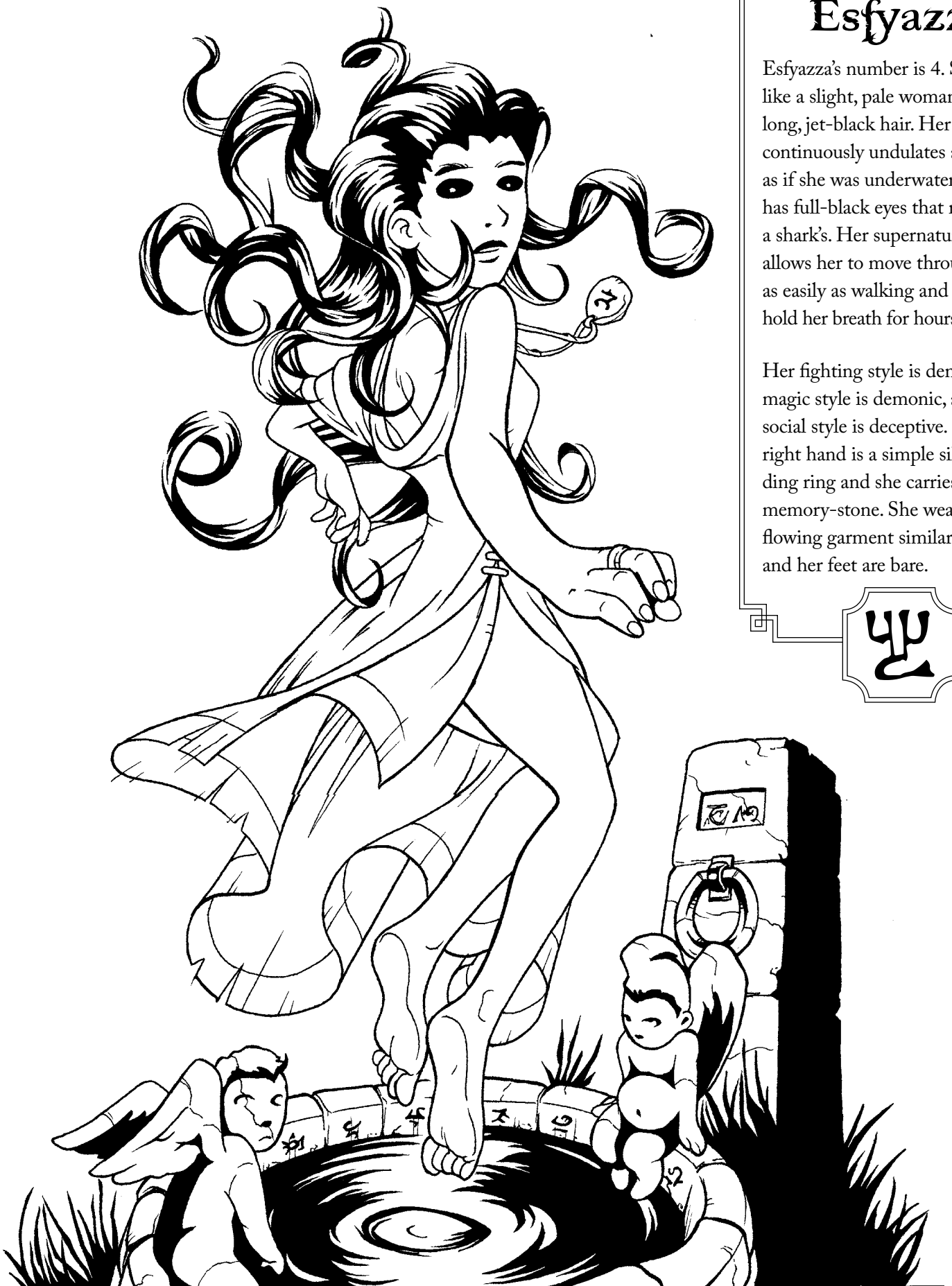
7. **Choose your clothing** and say whether it favors human styles, demonic styles, or a combination of the two.

8. **Choose your name.** This can come at any point in the process, of course. There are lists of human and demon names on page XX.

9. **Place your map tiles.** Before the session starts, the players and Director place geomorphic city tiles to make up a little district of the city (or several seperate districts) where the action of the adventure will take place. Players can stick to their own little area or link up sections into a continuous whole. Characters may interact directly or never even meet, depending on what the players choose.

PRIMARY GLYPH:
Scorpion; betrayal

RIGHT COLUMN:
Love is whatever you can still betray



Example Stranger

Esfyazza

Esfyazza's number is 4. She looks like a slight, pale woman with long, jet-black hair. Her hair continuously undulates around her as if she was underwater and she has full-black eyes that resemble a shark's. Her supernatural gift allows her to move through the air as easily as walking and she may hold her breath for hours.

Her fighting style is demonic, her magic style is demonic, and her social style is deceptive. On her right hand is a simple silver wedding ring and she carries a demon memory-stone. She wears a loose, flowing garment similar to a sari, and her feet are bare.

Example Stranger

Madeem

Madeem's number is 7. He is a tall, dark-skinned young man with a piercing gaze. He is covered in runic symbols that resemble tattoos, but they appear to smoulder like glowing embers in a fire. He smells strongly of ash, and smoke issues from his mouth when he breathes or speaks. Heat of any kind cannot harm him and his touch can start fires.

His fighting style is human (staff), his magic style is demonic, and his social style is bold. He wears the wire arm wrappings of a shadow-fiend warrior and carries a lucky coin given to him by a fortune-teller friend. For clothing he needs only a simple belted tunic since he is always warm regardless of the weather.

Example Stranger

Vhozu Lor

Vhozu Lor's number is 5. It appears to be a hairless, indigo-skinned being of indeterminate sex with almond shaped eyes and long, pointed ears. Its voice contains the sound of more than one speaker. It can mimic any sound it hears and scream loud enough to split stone.

Its fighting style is human (rapier), its magic style is human sorcery, and its social style is deceptive. It carries a finely crafted pocketwatch and a small pouchful of sacred glass beads. It wears finely tailored human clothing with a long silk scarf, greatcoat, tall boots, and dueling gloves. It keeps a rapier at its side, along with a matched pair of fine dueling pistols tucked into a belt-sash.

Relationships

[...]

Magic

Magic in the City of the Forgotten Gods comes in two varieties: Human sorcery and Demonic power.

Human sorcery is Slow. Sorcery is slow because it requires a great deal of preparation. Runes must be consulted in musty books, signs and portents must be correctly divined, and magical elixirs must be concocted. Since it is slow, sorcery may not usually be used to resolve a conflict during the same scene in which the preparations for magic were begun. In other words, in order to use sorcery normally, a player must call for a scene to prepare the casting of the spell (this does not require a roll) and then actually cast the spell (and roll the conflict) in a subsequent scene.

Demonic power, on the other hand, is Fast. Power is fast because it is an instinctive ability, as simple as flexing a muscle. It is not necessary to prepare demonic power before it is used. This kind of fast power has a price, however. After a Stranger uses demonic magic, she becomes drained, and suffers a -1 modifier to her next conflict roll (of any type). If the next roll is a Magic conflict, the penalty does not increase, but it remains until the *next* conflict.

If a Stranger has an opportunity to relax and recharge for a few hours before his next conflict roll, the -1 modifier goes away. Such relaxation would also meet the requirements for refreshing his re-rolls (see **Refreshing Re-Rolls** on page 8).

Range

Demonic power can have an effect only within the Stranger's immediate area (i.e. on the same map tile as the Stranger when the power is used).

Spells of human sorcery can have an effect at a distance beyond the sorcerer's immediate area. Any location on the current map can be a target of sorcery.

Magical Effects

Magic & Relationships

Running the Game

The Structure of a Session

Ideally, the first scene for each Stranger will introduce them to a situation that is balanced on a knife's edge. The central problem may or may not be immediately apparent, but *something* should hook the player's interest. Note that it is the interest of the player that is important. The Stranger may be interested in nothing more than a good meal and a warm bed. But it is the player that is participating in the creation of the adventure, so they must be hooked by the first scene.

What if they're not hooked?

Sometimes a player will ignore the hook that the Director lays out for them. This is fine. When this happens, it usually means that the player has their own idea of what they want their Stranger involved in, and will try to include it by way of their next scene request. The Director should pay close attention to what that scene request is, and try to respond to it on the fly to come up with a new situation for the player to connect with.

Creating Adventures

[...]

Stakes & Consequences

[...]

Scale & the Map

The Scale of the session (see Trollbabe, p. 35) determines how many map tiles are used to build the adventure area before play. See the table below to find out how many tiles each player gets to place for a given Scale.

Scale	Map Tiles (per player)
Person or Small Group	1
Organized Group	2
District	3
Borough	4
City	5

After the players place their tiles, the GM may place her tiles, numbering one per player. Once all of the tiles are placed, each player chooses a tile in which to begin play by pointing to the tile and talking about what their Stranger is doing there.

Adventure Seeds

People are turning up dead in this neighborhood. Terrible wounds; claw marks, missing limbs. A gang of goblins has been seen in the old bell tower, and the humans are blaming the deaths on them. In fact, one of the residents stole a sacred relic from the goblin shaman, and it has cursed him to transform into a blood-drinking fiend when the moon shines.

A human has come in to the city from the Wild.

[...]

STREETS & AVENUES

The Street of Bells, Riddle Way, The Avenue of Nets, Candle Street, Keep Street, Beggar's Way, Silk Street, Stone Way, The Street of Dancers, Saints Way, The Street of One Eye, The Gate Road, Salacious Alley, Heartbreak Square, Lesser Bolge, East Sump, Embalmer's Row, Gold Street, Wound Way

DISTRICTS & BOROUGHS

Watchwater, The Forge, Glassdown, The Hollow, The Chancel, The Bogslum, The Dun Hew, Smuggler's Cove, New Thwart, Stonetown

CANALS & WATERWAYS

The Bridge of the Saints, The Lower Quaal, The Upper Quaal,

TOWERS & KEEPS

The Spire of the Moon, The Tower of Silence, Belaq's Citadel, The Dreadstone,

TAVERNS & INNS

The Silver Eel, The Half-Coin, The Lion's Paw, The Twin Sisters, The Horse, The Drowned Man, The Six Arms, The Inn of Last Wishes, The Blue Door, The Nail and Bottle, The Compass Rose, The Stone Casket

MARKETS & SHOPS

The Anvilwerks, Zyja's Gray Market

TEMPLES & HOLY PLACES

The Well of Fire, The Star Pillar, The Waters of Tomorrow, The Temple of Six Blessings, The Cave of Winds, The Rune Tree

GUILDS & SOCIETIES

The Slayers' Brotherhood, The Cyanites

GODS & MONSTERS

Elenka: goddess of ropes, Skro: god of inks, Yah: goddess of wounds,

PEOPLE & PROFESSIONS

Lamplighters, Bravos for hire, The Mistress of Gates, The Heartsmith,

VILLAINS & ROGUES

SIGNS & CONSTELLATIONS

The Burning Wheel, The Adept, The Hounds of Judgment, The Goat, The Dog's Ear, The Chanter, The Master, The Ram's Head, The Paladin, The Chimera, The Muse, The Witch

Names in the City

Humans usually have a common first name and a second name based on their profession (or their family's) or the district of their birth, like Adric Cooper or Hali Glassdown. Some have ancient surnames whose meanings are now lost. If you need more names, I recommend a mix of traditional Muslim, Albanian, Hungarian, and Czech names for the right flavor.

Demons usually have one name, but will sometimes take a second (or even third) to commemorate a great tragedy or achievement in their life. Beware the demon of four names.

Human Names, Male

Aamir
Adric
Alsando
Ayid
Dobromir
Domin
Eldy
Fareed
Fylos
Haromir
Imaad
Khalid
Krasna
Kushtim
Lazaar
Madeem
Milo
Morlaan
Mustav
Nafiz
Odys
Rafil
Raoud
Rusad
Samad
Stevet
Vakob
Vedeen
Wahid
Yasir

Demon Names, Male

Abzu
Afaza
Iezzu
Lor
Nyzul

Human Names, Female

Alkelda
Amra
Ceria
Hali
Peline
Elira
Esabet
Isina
Isul
Jadia
Maadi
Sarika
Senoni
Tana
Yelena
Zamira
Zannah

Demon Names, Female

Chana
Esfyazza
Eszti
Nadezda
Vozhu
Vyra
Zekris

Human Surnames

Deseri
Eruska
Hattai
Hyun
Jaavlo
Kindim
Kyala
Naska

Inspirations

All of these were inspirational to me during the development of Stranger Things.

Fritz Leiber

The stories of Lankhmar

Swords And Deviltry
Swords Against Death
Swords in the Mist
Swords Against Wizardry
Swords of Lankhmar
Swords and Ice Magic
The Knight and Knave of Swords

Robert Howard

Tales of Conan

The Tower of the Elephant
Red Nails
The City of Skulls
The People of the Black Circle

Ron Edwards

Roleplaying games

Trollbabe
Sorcerer
Sorcerer & Sword

Clinton Nixon

Roleplaying games

The Shadow of Yesterday
Paladin

Keith Senkowski

Roleplaying game

Conspiracy of Shadows

Mike Mignola

Hellboy graphic novels

Seed of Destruction
Wake The Devil
The Chained Coffin & Other Stories
The Right Hand of Doom
Conqueror Worm

H.P. Lovecraft

Tales of the Mythos

The Cats of Ulthar
Dagon
The Doom That Came to Sarnath
The Nameless City
The Quest of Iranon

Looking Glass Studios

Video games

Thief
Thief II
Thief III

Jordan Mechner

Video game

Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time

Tom Waits

Albums

Rain Dogs (especially "Singapore")
The Black Rider

Stranger Things Player Handout

[...]

北刃孜伏伎安史少伊示北伏史伏伎刃孜史伏示北少伊刃孜伏伎刃孜史伏示北少伊刃孜伏伎刃孜史伏示北少伊刃孜

Selwyn's
Heartbreak Square
rune tree
TP
Stables
Park Menagerie
Murder Mews
West Hall
lesser bolge
East Swap
Lovers Meet
embalmers row
Gold Street
Lark Quarry
the Hearthstone
Stinky Road
Key
Belagis Citadel
Dusty End
Ogre Hut
Preobstone
Theatre Viande
Dubbet's Mill
Wyn Quarry
bottomless?
Mysterious
Tinsmith

Cursed Tavern
The Chancel
Cymnites
Zuja's
Grey Market

Gnarefrog
Lake
TO Gingal
Saint Insouciance
Meet by
the statue

New Thivar
the Stone
Casket
Stonetown
Salacious Alley

The Gymnasium
Bogswan Gate
Gypsy Camp

Lesser
Wind Cave
Smuggler's Cave
The Bun Hew

Dubious Stairs
Bottomless?
Madame Oe's
Orphanage
The Hint Shop