



This is a self-contained horror-themed adventure, perfect for an evening of fun with friends. Each player chooses a character and explores a manor house that rapidly turns haunted.

The story is driven by the players' discovery of clues, and their assumptions and decisions about what to do with those clues. As a result, the identity of the antagonist is a matter of group consensus, and may be different for different groups.

The adventure is divided into three acts. In [Act 1](#), the player-characters are introduced to each other and the setting, culminating in a murder. In [Act 2](#), the characters investigate the murder, learning many clues about the manor's inhabitants, ending with an attack by whichever suspect seems the most likely. In [Act 3](#), the murderer is defeated and the group escapes.

The story can be set at any time in the 20th century.

About the System

This game uses the brilliant [Risus](#) system.

Each player chooses a character. Characters are made up of clichés, each of which is represented by a few six-sided dice, as listed in that character's description.

When a player is presented with a challenge, the player rolls the dice in the corresponding cliché, and adds the result. Equalling or beating the target number succeeds. Getting close yields a partial success. Rolling lower than the target number removes a die from the cliché used. Lose all the dice in one cliché, and a character is knocked out.

Players can *team up* to meet a challenge. The player leading the temporary team rolls normally. The others support by rolling their dice in an appropriate cliché. Any sixes rolled by supporting players are added to the leader's roll. So, if one supporting player rolls 6, 5, 4, and another supporting player rolls 6, 3, 2, 2, a total of 12 points are added to the leader's roll.

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Characters

<p>Professor Fleming</p> <p><u>4</u> Amateur sleuth <u>3</u> Dashing gentleman <u>2</u> Heir to the Fleming fortune <u>1</u> Fits of rage</p> <p><i>Possessions: Magnifying glass, pipe, tobacco, box of matches, small pistol</i></p>	<p>Miss Moreau</p> <p><u>4</u> Femme fatale <u>3</u> Surprisingly effective with a blade <u>3</u> I know what you did last summer</p> <p><i>Possessions: Dagger, letters, makeup</i></p>
<p>Captain Alan Hancock</p> <p><u>4</u> Crack shot <u>3</u> I was in the war! <u>2</u> I have a plan! <u>1</u> I can feel it in my bones</p> <p><i>Possessions: Revolver, silver cigarette case with premium cigarettes, book of matches, handkerchief</i></p>	<p>Madame Wu</p> <p><u>3</u> Ancient Chinese secrets <u>3</u> I know somebody... <u>2</u> Martial artist <u>2</u> Multi-lingual</p> <p><i>Possessions: Hairpin</i></p>
<p>“Mac” McKean</p> <p><u>4</u> Mob boss <u>3</u> Nobody's fool <u>2</u> Impeccably dressed <u>1</u> Soft spot for kids</p> <p><i>Possessions: Revolver, flick knife, quite a lot of cash</i></p>	<p>Mistress Volyana</p> <p><u>4</u> Gypsy fortune-teller <u>4</u> Keen eye <u>2</u> Quick on my feet</p> <p><i>Possessions: Broken pocket watch, scarves, a small ball of twine</i></p>

Dice in the cliché

Act 1

The characters are invited to the large manor house of their mutual acquaintance, Doctor Chamberlain. All of the characters know Doctor Chamberlain socially as a pleasant and helpful, though eccentric, retired doctor. None of them have visited his house before.

They are greeted by a gaunt butler named Haversham. He directs the characters to a waiting room and says that Doctor Chamberlain is “taking care of some business” but will be with them shortly.

Use this time to get the characters familiar with each other.

After a few minutes of (uncomfortable) socializing, from above them they hear a man's scream. There's a crash, and something flies by the window, heading down. It is Doctor Chamberlain, who lands outside with a sickening crunch.

As the characters near his body, the ghost of Doctor Chamberlain rises and, with a scream, rushes back into the house! And it disappears just like that.

Act 2

This part of the story involves investigating the house and finding clues. Once the characters have investigated enough of the house to get a clear handle on the murderer, Act 3 will begin.

The Doctor's Study

This room is directly above the sitting room, and was witness to the doctor's final moments.

Investigation may reveal a few things.

- Difficulty 10: One drawer of the doctor's desk was hastily closed, and not locked. Within is a new diary, in which the doctor is expressing “grave concerns” over “the project.”
- Difficulty 13: The carpet shows two sets of footprints. With further clues, they could learn the footprints match the Doctor and Haversham.

Sarah's Room

Next to the study is a closed (but unlocked) door that leads to a pink room. Judging by the toys and frilly sheets on the bed, it is supposed to belong to a small child, but based on the thick layer of dust, it hasn't been used in a decade.

Investigation can reveal some interesting clues.

- Difficulty 8: There is a photo on the sideboard of Doctor Chamberlain standing in the manor's front yard with a frail girl about 8 years old. The Doctor appears to be a few years younger than he is now. If the characters have already visited the Séance Room, they will see that the girls match.
- Difficulty 12: The party finds a diary, written in a childish hand. The front is labeled “Sarah's Diary.” The entries reveal that she is very sick, and that the Doctor is very kind to her, but acts increasingly strange. The diary ends with no further information.



Haversham's Room

One of the upstairs doors is locked tightly. If the characters manage to break through it, inside they'll find a small bedroom, its walls covered in newspaper

clippings. The clippings are all about Doctor Chamberlain's research into the human body, skin regeneration, and other such strange biological experimentation. Judging from the clothes hanging in the wardrobe, this room belongs to Haversham.

The Chambermaid's Room

The chambermaid's door is unlocked. That's okay with her; she's dead. She's lying on the bed, strangled.

The Seance Room

Those with appropriate *spiritual* ability can attempt a séance.

If attempting to contact Doctor Chamberlain, on a successful *6 spiritual* check his spirit will race into the room, where he will scream and rage about “the injustice of it all.” He apparently feels he was wronged. That's all anyone can get out of him before he flies out.



If attempting to contact the chambermaid, the characters must succeed on a *8 spiritual* check. She is a mournful, but lucid, young woman. She was grabbed from behind and held in the crook of a man's elbow, then thrown down on her bed and choked; she couldn't see who did it. She can confirm that the Doctor would spend long hours in his basement laboratory; she wasn't allowed into the basement at all.

If no particular spirit is desired, a *spiritual* check will result as follows:

Difficulty 10: A half-formed spirit appears, and babbles insanely about being locked in “the room” with “the others.” It screams occasionally.

Difficulty 12: The ghost of a thin man appears. He barely responds; it's like he's drugged. But he does reveal that he was a day laborer, who was kidnapped and chained in the basement of this very house.

If a séance fails, the room falls dark, and malevolent spirits enter the room and begin clawing at the characters. Pieces of furniture also fly about on their own.

Strange Spirits

(Treat as one enemy)

4 Malevolent rage from beyond the grave

2 Telekinetic powers

A particularly perceptive individual, or anyone who investigates (difficulty *12* on each), will notice that laying beneath the séance table is a photograph of a young

girl. It's the same girl as the one in the photographs in Sarah's Room. In this photograph, she's laying in the bed in Sarah's Room, staring out the window, looking worried.

The Kitchen

The kitchen is huge and ridiculously well-stocked. There are gleaming knives held in butcher block. Everything is in its place.

There's even a walk-in freezer with enough frozen meat to last six months. Whole frozen turkeys. Twenty frozen chickens.

One door opens onto a larder which contains huge bins of potatoes, onions, and other root vegetables.

Everything is *scrupulously* clean, and everything is in its place...except for one set of knives, which is obviously missing its meat cleaver.

Hanging by the door is a jacket. Searching the jacket will reveal a check, made out by Doctor Chamberlain to a Chef Le Fevre for "services rendered." With the check is a set of gambling tickets, each of which at least equals the amount of the check.

The Basement Laboratory

Half of the basement is absolutely typical for a house of this size: concrete floors, old furniture, *etc.* But the other half is sealed behind brick walls and a locked iron door. Finding the key is left as an exercise for the GM and the players' patience.

Behind the iron door is a huge operating room. Cages line one side; one contains the body of a man. Two entire walls are faced with shelves that contain jars of human organs suspended in brightly-colored fluid. Various lab books are scattered about, and reveal that the Doctor was performing gruesome experiments on live humans.



Any character who succeeds on a *6 spiritual* check feels the presence of malevolent spirits. If so desired, a fight could break out between the player-characters and the ghosts of those killed here.

Vengeful Ghosts

(Treat as one enemy)

5 Hate-filled spirits from beyond the grave

Act 3

There are several people who might be causing the strange events in this house. As the group played through Act 2, they probably narrowed the list to a few suspects. Pick one and go for it.

Doctor Chamberlain's Ghost

The Doctor was murdered by Haversham, who was horrified at the Doctor's actions, pushed him out the window, then ran when the Doctor's ghost appeared. The Doctor is hunting down the player-characters now that they've learned his secret.

If you're going for this angle, the player-characters could find Haversham's body, with Doctor Chamberlain's ghost floating above it laughing maniacally, as the turning point into Act 3.

The Mad Doctor

7 You will not leave my house alive!

Haversham

The Doctor realized the enormity of his sins, and committed suicide. Haversham, attempting to protect his master's secret research, is silencing all witnesses. Once everyone's dead, he'll burn down the house.

Haversham, Loyal to the End

4 I will find a way

3 I know every inch of this house

Le Fevre

Le Fevre shows up with a meat cleaver and two of his assistants. He's seen what goes on in this house, and realizes that the Doctor must be very wealthy to keep this all a secret. He's been blackmailing the Doctor, who today refused to pay. So Le Fevre killed him, and plans to kill the characters, find the Doctor's valuables, and burn down the manor.

Le Fevre, the Mad Chef

4 Precision with a knife

2 The devil's luck

André and Dominique

(Treat as one enemy)

4 Strong arms and hearty physiques

A Laboratory Victim

One of Doctor Chamberlain's victims came back as a vengeful ghost. The Doctor, already having second thoughts about his experiments, was so horrified at this vision of his sins that he ran headlong through the window of his study.

This spirit will now begin to attack the characters, since they were friends of Chamberlain.

The Laboratory Victim

4 Chilling touch

3 Frightful presence

The spirit, however, cannot be destroyed, unless its body is given a decent Christian burial. This is the dead body locked in the cage in the laboratory.

As a result, the player-characters may have to face this spirit several times.

Sarah

The spirit of a young girl, appearing to wear a simple sun dress, begins appearing before the characters at random intervals. She is confused and attempting to communicate with them, but her words are muted, and she fades away after a few moments. The girl is clearly Sarah.

The characters must complete a séance in the Séance Room, as they all hold one of Sarah's photographs. Sarah will appear, able to communicate.

She was Doctor Chamberlain's grand-niece, and very ill all her life. He pledged to cure her, but failed, and she died when she was 9 years old.

In the last year of her life, the Doctor became increasingly frantic to find a cure. Fearing that she was somehow responsible for the Doctor's change in personality, her spirit could not rest when she died. Afterwards, she saw his experiments, was horrified, and finally managed to apparate in front of him earlier today. He screamed and ran away, heading through the window of his study.

The characters must now convince her that none of this was her fault. She will then be at ease and will fade away. As she does so, the characters will smell smoke. Haversham, driven thoroughly mad, has set fire to the manor, and as the characters run out of the burning building, they see him dancing on the lawn and shouting, "Burn! Burn it all away! Tee hee!"

A Few Notes About Running This Game

This game should require relatively little of the GM, save some imagination about the contents of a typical haunted mansion.

However, at the end of Act 2, you must make a judgment call. Which suspect does the group seem to think is most likely the murderer? (Note that you can ask the group this question outright.) Who would be the most fun to face?

I decided to leave the identity of the murderer up to the group because this is a mystery story. If there was a “real” trail of clues to follow, the players would inevitably miss some. After all, the players are not actually detectives.

Instead, the group can follow its intuition. It's a lot more fun that way.

Credits

This little adventure was written by [Brent P. Newhall](#), who runs the [RPG Doctor blog](#), as an entry in [jffdougan](#)'s blog festival *[On a Night in Lonesome October](#)*.

The brilliant [Risus](#) system was written by the equally brilliant [S. John Ross](#).

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