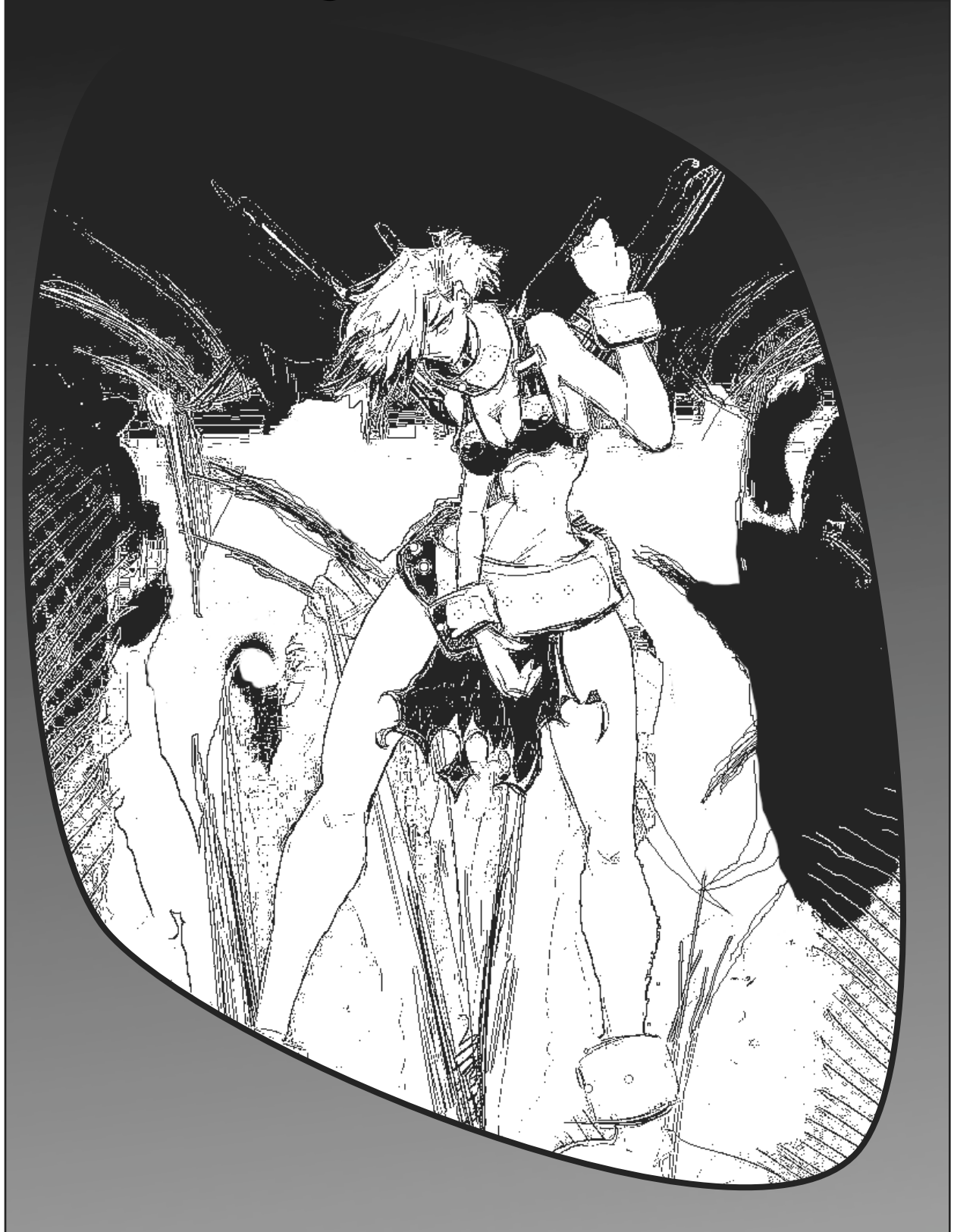


# The Cursed



Designed by: D. X. Logan

# The Cursed

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### About the System

The Curse is a diceless roleplaying system where the players take on the persona of men and women faced with a grim fate. Something is allowing them to exceed the capacities of normal humans, but it comes at a terrible price. The Curse that infects them slowly eats away at their essence every time they use it's powers, slowly weakening them until it finally gains control entirely. The more one uses the power of the Curse, the more they must rely on it to overcome challenges. A few may overcome this curse, but they are rare indeed.

Winning and losing are not what this game is about. There is no board to follow or dice to roll. You must instead use your imaginations to develop the most interesting stories you can together with the other players. Maybe yours is a tragic tale where the players have sold their souls

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over and are on a downward spiral, or maybe they were thrust into circumstances beyond their control and now wish only to survive in the hope of being cured. Whatever the case, they are faced with terrible odds and an epic struggle.

## Requirements to play:

At least one rule book. (If you are reading this, you already have that.)

Several sharp pencils with erasers. (enough that everyone will have one when adjustments to their statistics must be made.)

A character sheet for each player. (Copies of the page provided in this game or sheet of paper with the statistics and other information about the character written on it.)

Two or more players. Groups of 4 to 6 work best, but any number greater than 1 will do. Warning: Groups over 6 may be difficult to work with without confusion. Playing with one person also means you are merely talking to yourself. In such an instance I suggest speaking to a mental health professional about any conversations you may be having with yourself so that proper treatment may occur.

## Lexicon of Terms

**Bid** - A number of points being stated which are chosen from a challenge statistic and the Curse statistic in an attempt to overcome a Challenge Difficulty.

**Challenge Difficulty** - How hard a given challenge is. This range will vary from one setting to the next and is determined by the person serving as the Narrator.

**Challenge Statistic** - The primary ability range used in trying to overcome a given challenge. This statistic is determined by the narrator based on what statistic they believe is most closely linked to the challenge itself.

**Conflict** - Any time where a player wishes to do something to affect another player or affect the world around them in a way that would require either luck or skill beyond the day to day requirements.

**Diceless** - Using conflict resolution which requires no rolled dice for the purpose of randomizing.

**Narrator** - The player who takes up the task of describing the initial scene and serving as a moderator in any conflict that may occur. They do not have a specific character of their own, but instead control the other beings that populate the world.

**NPC** - Short for Non-Player Character. Any being within a world that is not a PC or played by the Narrator.

**PC or Character** - Short for Player Character. These are the singular beings within the game world controlled by the players. They have statistics far better than player controlled NPCs and are an intricate part of the process of telling a story through the game.

**Roleplay** - Any game play where a player must put themselves into the role of another person.

**Session** - A single period of time where the game is played. A single game may go for several sessions or may resolve in a single session depending on the preference of the players involved.

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Scene - A single setting where events occur. The scene may be a single room, a large open area or any other place where logically events connected to one another could occur without a need to state a new setting. If you can see for fifty miles in every direction, then that is the scene. If you are only able to deal with the scope of a single room, then that is the scene.

Statistic - A numeric measure of the capabilities of a single character.

Turn - A single rotation clockwise around the table that begins with the Narrator and ends when everyone has had the chance to describe what they are doing or have done.

## The Statistics

All - All statistics range between 0 and 10. No stat may ever dip under 0 or raise over 10. A stat that has dropped to 0 may never again raise because it has nothing left to use for bids except the Curse. The Curse never drops, but only raises.

Physical - Physical is the statistic that represents ones physical prowess, dexterity and endurance. This is the stat you will use on anything involving the use of the physical body. This includes tasks such as dodging, jumping running, avoiding the effects of a toxin, etc.

Social - Social is the statistic representing the interpersonal skills and charisma of a given individual. Any time one is trying to interact in some unusual manner with one of the cast of NPCs that would have a reasonable risk of not working, this is the statistic used. Examples include intimidation, manipulation, seduction, etc.

Intellectual - Intellectual is the statistic representing the intelligence, wisdom and insight of the character. The stat called on to help resolve puzzles of the mind or when one is trying to take notice of unusual aspects of the world around them. Applications include intuition, mathematics, observation, evaluation, etc

Mystical (opt) - Mystical is an optional statistic that represents the magical capability of a Character. It is used only in certain settings where magical, supernatural or other effects beyond the scope of the mundane occur. Includes magical defense, unusual powers, magical castings, sensing magical energies, etc.

The Curse - Varies from one game setting to the next, though it is always a corrupting force. The Curse is slowly eating the character alive. Parasitic or magical, it offers the host boosts in their own abilities for short periods of time, but accepting these powers weakens the character slowly. All player characters start infected with the curse. If the Curse ever absorbs all of the player's statistics, the player is overcome by the Curse with varying effects from one game to the next. Every time the curse is employed it raises by one and lowers the statistic it was used in conjunction with by one. If the stat that it is being used with is already at 0, then it takes a point from the player's next weakest stat which still has points remaining.

## Character Generation

Players may place points on each of their statistics as they see fit from the following list 6, 4, 3 and 1 (+ 1 to any single stat) in a game where Mystical is being employed. For a game setting where the Mystical stat is unused, the numbers are 5, 3 and 1 (+2 to any single stat or combination of stats so long as the total bonus does not exceed +2). The Curse automatically starts at 3 when play begins. A player may choose to use their bonus stat points towards raising their Curse level if they wish. (Example 1: P 3, S 6, I 4, M 1, C 3 are the statistics Joe picks for a

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social butterfly PC who never really grasped magic well. He then spends his free point on raising Social so the stats become P 3, S 6, I 4, M 1, C 3.. Example 2: Suzan wants to play a jack of all trades concept for her Private Investigator so she picks P 1, S 3, I 5, C 3, then adds the extra two to her Physical to even it out some into a P 3, S 3, I 5, C 3. Example 3 Bob feels that the curse has already started to work on his military expert, so instead of raising his stats, he puts the free points towards the curse. His final stats become P 5, S 1, I 3, C 5.)

Additional NPC characters may be given to the players by the Narrator or by the agreement of all players. These may represent friends, allies, pets, servants or any other number of background characters. They do not have the curse statistic (unless obtained through the setting) and have each other stat starting at 1 with 3 additional points to spread however the player chooses. This option may be taken only if /all/ players are given the option (players who have been offered the option do not have to take it). Such NPCs are controlled by the player and are meant to help enhance the game's story, not as a way for a player to avoid having to involve their PC. (Example: Suzan's Character's aunt has been visiting her Character for a few weeks when everything goes crazy. She wasn't cursed, but has been staying close out of fear and has a bad habit of getting in the way or causing things to become worse through her panicking.)

## Playing the Game

At the beginning of play the Narrator describes to the other players the introduction to the story. Typically this will include a bit of back story to the world that they are in and how they all came to find their way into the current scene. Once the introduction is finished, each player starting clockwise from the Narrator may describe how they came into the scene specifically and what they are doing initially. Any player may describe anything that they are doing as well as what any companion NPCs that are with them are doing. No player, including the Narrator, may describe things in any manner that would automatically force another player to take actions without a roll for the conflict to resolve if indeed this occurs. (Example: Bob has just finished describing how his character enters the scene with a limp as though he has recently suffered an injury. Susan who is next, may not describe that Bob has a gash in his leg, but may describe going over to inspect what the cause of Bob's limp is. If Bob wishes to try and hide the true cause, then a conflict occurs and a resolution must be determined.)

Conflicts are resolved through a bidding system. In cases where the conflict is with an NPC or a particular aspect of the setting (Example: Bob wants to leap from one roof to another), the Narrator sets a difficulty secretly by writing it down on a piece of paper. Players involved with the conflict must then bid a number of points that they believe will be required to best the challenge. Only points from the statistic listed as the challenge statistic as determined by the Narrator and/or points from the Curse statistic may be used in this bidding process. Once all players involved in the conflict have bid their points, the Narrator reveals the conflict difficulty. If the player has bid equal to or higher than the difficulty, then they succeed in besting the challenge and may describe their actions. Should they fail, they must describe the poor showing of their actions. The Narrator then describes how any NPC that may be involved has reacted, based both on the described action and the positive or negative difference between the number bid and the difficulty of the challenge. When a conflict has resolved, adjustments are made to the Character's statistics. (see below)

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In conflicts between two player characters (As seen in the initial example), the Narrator determines the challenge statistic and the players must then secretly bid as though they were bidding against the Narrator's hidden challenge number. This bid is written down along with the player's name and handed to the Narrator. When all involved players have handed their paper to the Narrator, he or she will announce the numbers and who has won the conflict. The conflict will thereafter be treated as any other conflict with the loser(s) of the conflict describing first and the winner describing how they have triumphed last. As with other conflicts, statistical adjustments occur after the conflict is resolved. Ties are treated as a stalemate in player verses player conflicts.

Non-conflict game play always progresses in a clockwise fashion. The game may end in several different fashions. Firstly, if the Narrator has set certain objectives in his description of the scene when the players first begin, the game may end when those objectives are reached. (Example: When the players have obtained the Scepter of Zorth or when they find the cure for the disease, IE: the Curse) Secondly the session may end when all of the players have fallen to 0 on all of their statistics. Players who have fallen below 0 before the other players have finished may be given a NPC to use until the end of the session/scene. Lastly, the game may conclude temporarily if there is no longer time to move forward. In this case, players may choose keep their characters to pick up the scene where it was left on the next session. The latter case is used only when players wish to continue with the story they have started.

If players all move to some other portion of the world in which the game is being played, this is considered the start of a new scene. Scenes always begin on the narrators turn and are often used as a stopping point in a session when a game is to take multiple sessions. At the beginning of each new scene, the Narrator will describe this new scene to all of the players. Multiple scenes may occur at once in the instance that PCs separate from one another. Each scene resolves simultaneously without a change in the order of player narration. Any time difference issues are resolved by the Narrator or the players themselves within reason.

\* Narrator-less option: If players all wish to resolve conflicts without the use of a designated Narrator, they may simply begin play with any player setting the scene. If a player chooses to describe something which would require conflict resolution, the player across the table from them may set the challenge statistic and difficulty. Should the conflict occur between two of the players, then a player halfway between those involved who is not involved may pick the challenge statistic and the players involved then write their bids as normal. The bids are placed in the center of the table with the player's name and turned over when all have bid. All conflicts resolve statistically as normal. Narration of new scenes is handled by the last person to exit the previous scene.

## **Statistical Adjustments**

If the Curse was employed by the player to overcome a challenge, regardless of success or failure, then the challenge statistic automatically drops by one point and the Curse goes up by one. If the challenge statistic is already at 0 and the Curse is used, then the next lowest statistic with at least one point in it drops by one. No player may bid a statistic that has 0 unless they also bid points from the Curse.

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A player who has bested a challenge without the Curse successfully by bidding at least one less than their maximum available points may raise the challenge statistic by one point for each point under your maximum. (Example: If the hidden Challenge Difficulty was 3 and you bid 3 of your 5 available points in your Challenge Statistic, then you would raise that statistic by 2 for having won the conflict with less than your maximum.) Should the player fail the challenge without use of the Curse, they may raise the challenge statistic by one. In both cases, do not adjust the Curse, as it was not employed.

The reason that non-Curse usage causes statistical raises is to help facilitate roleplay that is based in the wise application of force. Failure is not entirely a loss, because it can lead to very enjoyable roleplay. Characters grow when they fail or when they learn to apply their abilities wisely. You are more likely to win a challenge by bidding everything you have, but it takes no thought to do this and nothing is learned from regular success. It is the hard fought battles and the life lessons taught from failure that truly improve our understandings.

## **Difficulty Guidelines:**

What is and isn't within the scope of these levels is up to the Narrator. It should be based on the game world the players have chosen. A gritty real world style Zombie setting would make jumping from tree to tree hard at the absolute least, yet if the players had went with an Anime-style ninja game, then it would be a moderate ability, or difficult at worse. A good rule of thumb is that if a player is saying they are doing something that you would not expect any problems to occur on (Any task where their primary stat is at least 1.5 times greater than), don't bother with a roll. A player with 6 in Mental isn't going to have difficulty grasping basic math, but a person with a mind of 2 might.

Challenge Difficulty	Nature of the task being performed
0	Tasks that require no roll because they are fundamental. (chewing, drawing in a breath, walking, etc)
1-3	Simple tasks that would require only average levels of ability.
4	Moderate tasks requiring above average abilities.
5-7	Difficult tasks requiring competence and fair ability.
8	Hard tasks that are stressing and require strong abilities.
9-10	Tremendous tasks that stretch the human capacity to its limits.
11-13	Seemingly impossible tasks that go beyond the scope of human ability.
14+	Impossible tasks that go well beyond the scope of human ability.

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## Example of typical play:

This would be an example of a Zombie based game between three players. Typically there would be many rounds involved, but for the sake of brevity, we will list only the initial setting of the scene and a resolution based on the examples earlier in the text. Some players may prefer to use first person, third person or a blend of the two for their characters. This is entirely up to them.

**Narrator** - Night has come and the sounds of gunfire can be heard in the distance. Yesterday it all began with a few reports of attacks by crazed individuals. No one realized until it had already spread through half the town what was occurring. By then it was too late for it to be stopped without drastic measures. A state of emergency was called and the military was brought in to evacuate any citizens that they could as well as quarantine the city. Most of the city has been cleared out by the time night falls and while there are a few pockets of people still fighting with the wandering dead, most of the streets are empty of living beings.

Inside of this small store, safety has been found for the time being by at least a few people. One of them is a mother who clutches her child to her as the baby cries. Her eyes have been wild with terror, but her voice just repeats comforting sounds for the baby. Also there is an old man, apparently the owner of this small grocery, who holds a shotgun in hand and peers out the window where the shelves that have been pressed against it haven't fully covered the glass. From the back room, a commotion was just made.

**Bob** - A man wearing a military uniform and carrying a semi-automatic rifle comes in from the back of the room. He walks with a slight limp that he had not had when he went into the back. "I'm sorry." he says to the older man. "Your employee is dead. He turned into one of them after stopped breathing. Knocked the gun from my hand before I could shoot him. Don't worry, I got him with a piece of a broken broom to the temple." He doesn't speak with pride, only disgust.

**Susan** - Seeing the limp, I'm going to ask, "Is everything alright? You were injured." My character, Betsy, rises from where she is sitting and moves towards Bob's character. Aunt Sophia continues to rock back and forth hugging her knees as she has been doing for the last few hours. "Let me look at it please."

**N** - The old man shakes his head and starts to cry. "Johnny was a good man. You know he had a kid on the way? Best worker I ever had and a better friend you never met. It was quick I hope?" though he doesn't turn to face away from the window. The mother's eyes tighten at the mention that someone in the building has turned, but her voice only wavers a moment. The baby clutched to her chest can feel the tension however and continues to cry.

**B** - "Back off. I am fine." Mac says as he makes a motion with his hand to shoo Betsy off. "I don't need any help or any sympathy. What I need is for my unit to get here like I asked on the radio an hour ago. They are taking longer than they should."

**S** - Betsy is going to go ahead and try to check his leg anyway regardless of what he says. *(narration rotation temporarily suspends until the conflict is resolved.)*

**N** - Bob, are you going to resist this?

**B** - Yes, Mac is too tough to want anyone realizing how badly his is injured.

**N** - Alright, both of you make your bids. The challenge statistic is Social. <Pause waiting for the players to hand over their bids. Suzan bids her social as 2 since she knows that Bob's



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character is socially inept. Bob however believes that his character is frustrated and prideful enough that he is going to bid the full 1 of his Social and the 5 from his Curse for a total of 6. After both are turned in, the Narrator will state the winner of the challenge.> Alright, Bob, you won the bid by several points. Susan, please describe your attempt and Bob, please make your winning rebuttal.

**S** - Betsy tries to move in close and offer soft words. "Listen, I am just trying to help. I don't have the best medical training, but I do have some. I might be able to make it feel better if nothing else." She tries to make herself seem motherly and caring.

**B** - Mac puffs up his chest in response to her tone. "Listen, I don't need you or anyone else to help me out. I am not some pansy civilian who cry when they get a paper cut. I am trained military and no minor pain is going to slow me down." He lets his eyes go fierce in a show of intimidation. "Now, back off or I am going to have to get irritable with you."

**N** - Alright, Both of you please adjust your character sheets accordingly. Bob, don't forget that since you used your Curse statistic, it goes up and your Social goes down despite your success. Since it was Susan's action, the turn ends. <Bob's social is now a 0 and his curse goes up to a 6. From here forward, bob will have to bid with curse to use his social attribute.>

(Narration of the story always picks up with the next player after the person who initiated the conflict)

The woman with the baby suddenly dips her head at this show of aggression from Mac and the old man actually turns around to look back at what is going on. "Nobody let the tension get to you. We are all a little stressed at the moment, but we just gotta hold on and we will get through this." he keeps his back to the window now, no longer watching what is going on outside.

**B** - "Look old man, I am better than that. I don't let my emotions get the better of me." Mac is saying this in a very angry voice by the way, "I am just tired of people always thinking I can't handle things. The last thing I want is someone babying me while I have a job to do."

**S** - Betsy backs down, deciding that maybe she doesn't really need to check his leg. She still would like to and it shows in her eyes, but she decides that maybe now isn't the best time. She is clearly uncomfortable with the show of intimidation from Mac. Looking to Aunt Sophia I say, "Are you alright still? I know you got a scare when that one almost got us outside the door."

Play would continue in this rotating fashion until another conflict occurred either with an element of the game world or with another PC. Most games should focus more on conflicts with the world rather than between players, as the story may have trouble progressing if there is regular conflict between the PCs.

## Possible Setting Ideas

Statistics help facilitate the way a game plays, but it is the settings that really drive the game itself. Different settings and words can present unique goals or challenges to the players. Numerous books and movies have been made where the protagonist is in some way cursed, much as is the case with this game. How each character handles it and what is within the typical limits of their world differs from one movie to the next. In the example above, Zombies were

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roaming the streets of the city and those trapped within were in a struggle for survival. It is a scene we see over and over in video games and movies. Each setting of that sort has a few basic things in common, but how the events play out differ. Draw from the stories you have read or watched for inspiration when playing a setting.

Narrators play the greatest role in this, but the players each bring something to the table from their own experiences. Try to use what each person is doing to inspire new and intriguing story twists. For first time players, setting a goal that can remove the curse would help give them a direction, while more experienced players might feel that the characters can go in many directions without the need for any such motivator. Look for what everyone will enjoy and don't be afraid to change directions to follow what interests the players. Is there some minor NPC they passed that caught the attention of one of the players? Delve into the background of that character and maybe use them to add some new twist in the plot. Do the players seem to abhor violence? Give them a challenge that allows them to outwit the enemy or bypass them somehow rather than a direct confrontation. Above all, this is a game of building interesting stories. Let that guide how you develop gameplay.

Roaming Dead - Zombies roam the landscape. You are one of a handful of survivors, but you have been infected. Unless you can find a cure, you are doomed to become one of the mindless horde eventually. Most of the infected simply grow sick, but you are some of the rare few who can tap into the disease as it eats away at you. Maybe there is no cure and you are just fighting to make sure that those around you make it through safely.

Sorcerer's Soul - Demons offer such sweet temptations. They rarely tell you the cost until you have already signed on the dotted line. If you could save yourself, it would only be by destroying the contract. Unfortunately your true powers are growing weaker forcing you to rely more on the powers of the demon. You would need strength to face down the demon on it's own terms.

Fantasy Hero - Your flesh and even your very soul have been infected by the hatred of a dying monster. Even now you feel it tearing away at you from the inside. It is only a matter of time before it kills you, but maybe you can make a difference in the world before it does. You take up arms against some injustice, perhaps the injustice that drove the monster in your direction to begin with.

Ninja School - Your school was attacked in the night. You and a few of the other students managed to escape, but not before the darts hit their mark. Whatever poison tipped them was meant to kill instantly, but you didn't get enough to finish the job right away and your strong Chi has managed to hold the effects from progressing. You set off to gain your revenge, but each time you draw on the inner strength to see you through a trial, it gives the poison another chance to lash out from the cage that holds it at bay, further weakening you.

Horror Detective - Paranormal sleuthing has long been a hobby, but now it has become a necessary part of your life. Something you found when you were in that place has wormed its

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way inside your soul. It seeks to overtake you, to become you, to use you as it's vessel for entering our world. You could kill yourself, but that doesn't mean it wouldn't still come through. What will you do? What can you do?

Modern/Future military - Experimental Unit 002 is the strongest fighting force ever to enter the field of combat. Special enhancements have accelerated their abilities and allow them to do what no other unit can. Dodging bullets, tearing open steel doors, deciphering codes that a computer would take years to do and even altering their vocal patterns to lull the enemy into doing what they want. They are unstoppable. What they are only now realizing is that each time they draw on these abilities, their minds and bodies are being broken down.

Darker Side - There is a force inside each of us that allows us to control the world around us. Every culture has it's own name for this force, but for most, there is a constant struggle to find a balance in the lighter and the darker sides. For a few however, the balance is no longer important and they have chosen to embrace the darker side of this force within themselves. They have great power from this choice, but it is coming at an even greater cost to themselves.

*Thanks to all of those who have contributed their time:*

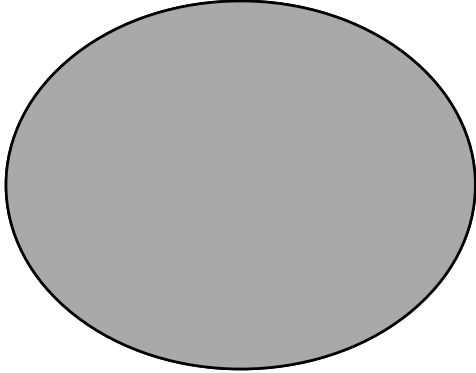
*Becky Brown*  
*name*

*Phaedra Logan*  
*name*

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## The Cursed Character Sheet

The Curse



Description

Notes

Statistic	Value
Physical	
Social	
Intellectual	
Mystical	