

You Need a Monster!

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A place of natural beauty near your town is about to be destroyed. You've tried everything to stop this and no one seems to care. You need a miracle. You need a monster!

You play as a group of concerned citizens who, through community spirit and a few spadefuls of trickery, have banded together to invent some folklore for a place that you hold dear. In this top secret meeting, you'll come up with a story worthy of tourism. It's time to create your monster and save the day!

Safety Tools

This game is relatively light in tone. However, there is still the potential to explore distressing or tragic themes. Your group should have a discussion about what tone you want to set. Suggestions for additional safety tools are : a lines and veils discussion before the game starts; an open door policy ; and an agreed upon way to stop, discuss and redirect play if anyone is uncomfortable.

Technical notes

This is a game for 4-6 players. It is estimated to take between 2 and 3 hours including character, town, natural place and monster creation.

There is no age limit. If younger players (or anyone for that matter) want to join in with some aspects of the game and not others, that's fine.

You will need a few materials. These are listed below:

- Paper to draw on and write notes.
- Pencils and colouring pencils for drawing.
- Craft materials (e.g. craft paper, cotton wool, fabrics) and craft tools (e.g. scissors, glue ,tape) to make "evidence" of the monster. These should be things that are easy to obtain or cheap to buy. This is an underfunded community project after all.
- Optionally, biscuits, beverages and snacks to fuel your creativity.

The term "monster" is used loosely to refer to any supernatural creature or cryptid that you might find in a spooky folktale or urban legend. For the purposes of play, the ghost of a grey lady is considered just as much a valid "monster" as Mothman.

Town and natural place creation

Decide together what the name of your town is. Then each player describes something notable about the town. Examples of things that you could talk about are:

- Particular crafts that your town is known for e.g cheesemaking, car manufacture etc.
- Local features of note such as an ornamental church or a world famous factory.
- Famous people who lived there such as a famous historical poet or criminal.
- A flaw that the town has. Maybe the buildings are particularly ugly or it's prone to infestation by vermin.

Then do the same thing for the place of natural beauty. Name it, decide what types of natural site it is e.g. a lake, a forest, a swamp etc and each describe a notable feature. For example:

- Types of vegetation that grow there.
- Any notable natural features.
- A particular type of unusual animal or plant that can be found there.

Whatever you decide, make sure to bring some of these elements back when you tell your stories. For example, if your town has a famous factory, maybe the monster was once a worker there. Or you saw your monster flying late at night, as a shadow through the smoke of the factory.

Character Creation and Introductions

You can create characters by answering the following questions :

- What is your name?
- What is your gender identity (pronouns etc.)?
- Roughly how old are you?
- What's your fondest memory of the place of natural beauty?
- What about your community, the place itself, or both inspires you to protect the place of natural beauty?
- What would other members of the group likely know about you as a resident of the town?

Then, everyone should take turns introducing themselves in character.

Once introductions are finished, take a bit of time to get to know each other, reminisce about your good times in the place of natural beauty and talk about why you're so passionate about saving it. As with most discussions during community meetings, this conversation and any during the game can be accompanied by non alcoholic beverages and biscuits if available.

Making your monster

Now it's time to make your monster. This should be a whole group discussion, though you may like to nominate someone to write down your ideas. Here are some questions to consider. They aren't exhaustive but should hopefully help to spark ideas :

What type of creature do you want to create?

- Are they alive, dead or undead?
- Is there a particular time when the monster is most likely to be seen for example, at a particular time of day or a particular time of year?
- Where in the place of natural beauty do they live, for example, in the water, on land in the trees?

What do they look like?

- Do they have animal features?
- Do they have features of plants or fungi?
- Do they have features of something entirely non biological such as buildings or vehicles?
- Are they humanoid?
- Were they once human but have been transformed into something else?

What kind of special powers do they have, if any?

- Do they have physical powers e.g. are they super strong or super fast?
- Do they have mental powers e.g. can they move things with their mind or read thoughts?
- Are they magical in some way?
- How do they hide so effectively?

What is their personality?

- Do they intend to cause harm or scare people?
 - If they don't intend to cause harm, do they still cause harm unintentionally or are they harmless and simply misunderstood?
 - If they do intend to cause harm what sort of harm do they intend to cause?
- What is the scariest thing about them?
- What is their name? (I know that's the hardest part. That's why I put it last)

While everyone should vaguely agree on what the monster looks like and its general attributes (though there might be discrepancies here and there and that's ok), it's perfectly reasonable for people in the group to conflict on their interpretation of the personality and motives of the monster. If one person in the group thinks that the monster is completely evil and another thinks they are misunderstood this makes for interesting storytelling. Let your different perceptions colour your story and add layers to your myth. After all, real life folktales and urban legend about monsters are often not set and are open to variation and interpretation.

Drawing your monster

Now that you have a good idea of what your monster looks like, it's time to draw them. A picture is worth 1000 words, after all. Everyone has 10 minutes to do this.

Once everyone is finished, show your drawings to the group. You should be positive and complimentary about other people's drawings as sharing art is sometimes scarier than monsters.

If you want to make drawing the monster a more collaborative experience, you might each like to take a part of the monster to draw, e.g. an arm or a leg etc and then stick all the body parts together.

Creating your monster's backstory

Any good monster worth their salt has a backstory, whether it be tragic, terrifying, or downright silly. Together, come up with a backstory for your monster incorporating elements from your previous discussions.

Here are some points you might like to consider while constructing your story:

- Did the monster always live in the place of natural beauty?
 - If yes, how did they become known to people of the town?
 - If not, how did they come to live in the place of natural beauty?
- Was there a particular incident that led to them becoming seen as a monster?
- If they transformed into a monster, how did the transformation come about?
- Do they have any motives? Do they want to wreak vengeance on the town perhaps, or prove they're not as scary as they've been made out to be?

Don't be afraid to rely on tropes while creating this story or any of the other stories in the game. Scary things often happen on "A dark and stormy night" for a reason.

Once you have come up with a backstory you should tell it as a group, letting each player tell a part of the story. This is practice for when you tell the story to your fellow townspeople. Try to be as dramatic as possible but don't worry if you forget something or stumble over any of your words. It's only a rehearsal after all.

Again, you should agree on the base backstory and events but if you want to portray the monster more or less sympathetically, give them different motives or add some additional details, please do. This is how stories develop and grow in the telling.

Sightings

Now each player in turn will tell a story of a sighting they had of the monster. This is to add further credibility to your story. Give everyone around 10 minutes to prepare for this and then give everyone a chance to tell their story.

Again here are some things to consider when constructing your story.

- Where did you see the monster?
- When did you see the monster?
- What was the first thing that you noticed when you saw the monster? Its eyes, its teeth, its expression etc.
- Did the monster see you? If so, how did they react?
- How did you feel when you saw the monster?

Little sensory details make a story of this kind more believable and immersive so try to add in elements relating to not just what you saw but also things you could hear, smell, feel (such as a cold wind on your skin) and (if relevant) taste.

Evidence

Finally, it's time to use your craft materials to manufacture evidence of your monster. You will have up to 20 minutes for this. There are any number of things you could make here.

For example:

- Footprints
- Ectoplasm for more ethereal monsters
- Physical things that the monster could have left behind such as teeth, fur or claws
- A mask of your monster to scare unsuspecting passerbys on dark nights
- Important items from your previous stories

Your imagination and your craft materials are the limit. As with the other sections, there is no such thing as a bad creation. Whatever you say you are making is what you are making.

When you have finished you should collect your evidence together with the drawings from before and admire your handiwork. You can also discuss where you are going to leave the evidence to make your stories even more believable.