

BLACK HEART



A CARLY RAE JEPSEN-THEMED CULTIST TTRPG ONE-SHOT

WRITTEN & DESIGNED BY COLIN CUMMINGS

THERE IS A WELL-KNOWN MYTH THAT EVERY 100 YEARS, THERE COMES AN OPPORTUNITY. THE VEIL BETWEEN WORLDS WEAKENS AND WITH THE RIGHT RITUALS AND DARK RITES, SHE MAY RETURN.

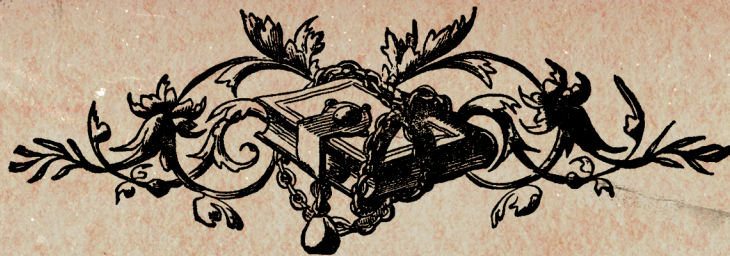
YOU ARE A MEMBER OF AN ANCIENT CULT WHO WANT TO BRING BACK THIS GODDESS TO OUR MORTAL REALM. SHE IS PROPHESED TO RETURN HUMANITY TO ITS FORMER GLORY AND YOU AND YOUR FELLOW CULTISTS WILL STOP AT NOTHING TO SEE THIS HAPPEN.

THERE ARE OTHERS HOWEVER... THAT BELIEVE SHE IS THE REASON HUMANITY'S GOLDEN AGE ENDED. THEY WILL TRY TO STOP YOU. ONCE YOU WERE A SIMPLE VILLAGER, AND NOW YOU ARE CALLED TO BE SOMETHING MORE.

YOU HAVE SEVEN DAYS.

**WELCOME...
TO BLACK HEART.**

A warning to all: beware the hanged man...



THE GAME SETUP

A GAME MASTER, 4-6 PLAYERS, 2 D6 DIE

To begin, you must choose which role to fill. The roles not chosen by players will instead be played by the Game Master (GM). Consider each position and their abilities, each one has a boon they can use once per game to gain an edge in their dark deeds. This is also the person you will occupy, a role you will play in more ways than one. Choose a name, describe your appearance, and then... you may begin.

THE ROLES

The APOTHECARY

can drink one luck potion once per game at the start of a day and add +1 to every roll made during that day.

The WITCH

can, using her tarot cards, see her future and can re-roll one dice roll per game.

The HUNTER

can check their traps once per game and get an extra scene in THE FOREST.

The SCAVENGER

thanks to knowledge past, succeeds their easy challenge during the summoning.

The INNKEEPER

is a keeper of secrets and thanks to their network of rumours and spies, can once per game automatically succeed at a failed TOWN HALL roll.

The TROUBADOUR

knowledge of song lets them re-roll their mutation roll if they so choose.

The FARMER

can, once per game, return to their farm and tend to their crops and gain an extra scene at THE FARM.

The REVEREND

has unwavering faith in the God, and can re-roll one failed challenge per game.

The MERCHANT's

network of trades and backroom deals that place them as a "trusted" member of the community, this allows them to succeed at a failed TOWN HALL roll.

The BUTCHER's

intimidating nature makes them slightly feared throughout the community, they can substitute in their strongest stat for one challenge.

The MARSHALL

can conduct an "official" investigation and gain +1 to all rolls that day.

The BLACKSMITH

can substitute their strongest stat for one challenge because they are a well rounded craftsman, needing heart, mind and soul for their craft.

THE TOWN OF ARCADIA

The game always takes place in the sleepy town of ARCADIA.

The locations below are your homes,
and dictate every action you take within the game.

THE LOCATIONS

APOTHECARY

House of healing, and of poisons.

WITCH'S HUT

The future is in their grasp.

THE FOREST

Home to all manner of things.

WORKSHOP

A museum to what was lost.

INN

Where drinks and tales flow.

TOWN HALL

The gathering storm.

FARM

A cradle of life.

CHURCH

Refuge from what lies beyond.

GENERAL STORE

Greed is always smiling here.

BUTCHER SHOP

The bones of what we believe.

STATION HOUSE

Where we truly all belong.

BLACKSMITH

They masterworks all, you can't go
wrong.

Death resides here

GM NOTE: THE SIZE AND SCALE OF THE GAME'S SETTING IS UP TO YOU, IT CAN BE A SMALL VILLAGE, OR A MORE ESTABLISHED TOWN. THESE LOCATIONS ARE YOUR STARTING POINT, YOU CAN ALLOW YOUR PLAYERS TO DESCRIBE THEIR OWN HOMES WHEN THEY VISIT THEM AND BE SURE TO GIVE EACH LOCATION A GOOD SENSE OF PLACE.



GAME OVERVIEW

Over the course of **SEVEN** days, you will complete seven **DAY SCENES**, six **TOWN MEETINGS** (night scenes), and one **FINAL NIGHT** to conduct the summoning ritual.

THREE (blue) AND FIVE (purple) DAY OPTIONS: For a shorter gameplay experience, look for the alternative rules and numbers when applicable.

In addition, you have been residents in this place awhile, talk to your fellow players before starting to figure out if there are any prior relationships between you. Give your character some history and motivation. **GMs:** Provide hints to your players for the storylines you have conceived, a little push to guide them on the mysteries of the town and the necessary preparations for the ritual.

It is during these **day scenes** that you face challenges to better prepare yourself for what lies ahead, and to alter the course of both your character and the town.

During **town meetings**, you will face the collective will of the town as they try to expose those pesky cultists.

Another note: in **Black Heart**, one of the main themes is gaining power the “weirder” you get. The more you differ from the societal norm, the stronger you get. These differences can manifest in a variety of ways. While this does expose you the wrath of your fellow villagers, their punishments can never outweigh the power you can tap into as you embrace weirdness. This leads us into...

THE STATISTICS

Each character has four (4) stats:

HEART, SOUL, MIND & WEIRD

The first three are the profile of your character and are your **CORE** stats. Each core stat starts at three (3) for each character and can go up or down depending on interactions during the character's day scene.

The character's **WEIRD** stat begins at zero (0).

Note: Stats can go into negative numbers.

These three stats are added to your **1D6** roll during your day scene and determine the success of your actions during the scene.

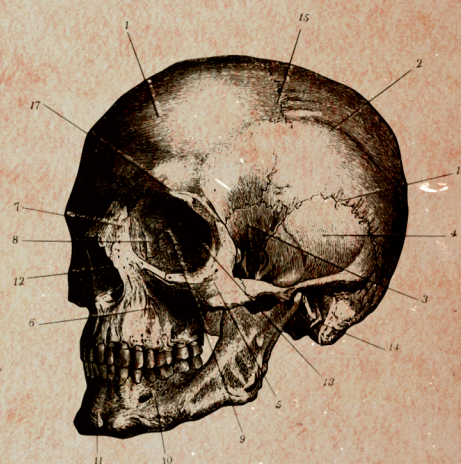
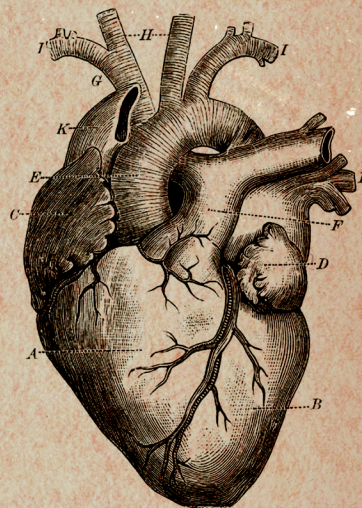


Fig. 1.

The weak can actually be the strongest among you.

THE CORE STATS

HEART

physicality, vitality,
dexterity,
physical strength

SOUL

innate magic ability,
faith, diplomacy,
connection to others

MIND

intelligence, cunning,
knowledge of
history and science



WEIRD

The final stat is our connection with
what lies beyond.

At the end of every day, as you sleep after the
TOWN MEETING, your meeting will increase by 1,
regardless of actions taken.

This reflects the veil weakening as the summoning
day draws closer.

As each day passes, stranger things begin to
emerge from every nook. Unexplainable events that
can bring miracles, but also evil.

When a player reaches 5 (2/3) WEIRD. They will
gain one of twelve possible manifestations of
power. Mutations that alter their very being.

There is power in being different.



THE MUTATIONS

The true source of our power. Embrace it.

In Black Heart, mutations are new bonuses to your character's stats and in rare occasions, may change how the game is actually played. Each mutation draws origins from the original ancient texts that the cult draws its strength from.

You get **one** mutation per game, and it is determined by a 2d6 roll once your character reaches 6 WEIRD.

GM NOTE: EACH MUTATION COMES WITH A DESCRIPTION, FEEL FREE TO LET YOUR CHARACTERS ROLEPLAY WITH THESE POWERS, OR EVEN HOLD THEM TO THE DRAWBACKS THAT MAY COME WITH THEIR NEW ABILITY.

2. IN YOUR HEAD AND I WON'T STOP

Lets the player enter the minds of fellow townspeople, and expose them to the full WEIRD of what lies beyond.

+ 1 Weird, +2 Mind

4. I GO CRAZY, SEE RED WHEN SHE'S TOUCHING YOU

The player during moments of intense anger will disappear beyond the veil momentarily, only to return covered in blood.

+2 Weird, +2 Heart, -1 Mind

6. WHO GAVE YOU EYES LIKE THAT? SAID YOU COULD KEEP THEM

Suddenly, your view shifts, everything looks off, but suddenly more right than it has ever been. You know now you are seeing the world in ways it was never meant to be seen. It reveals all of its secrets.

+1 Weird, +3 Mind, -2 Heart

7. I TRADE MY SOUL FOR A WISH

You wake up the next morning and you feel smarter, stronger and more capable you ever have. This new-found power though, comes at a cost.

+1 Weird, +1 Heart, +1 Mind, -1 Soul

3. I COME ALIVE WITH YOU

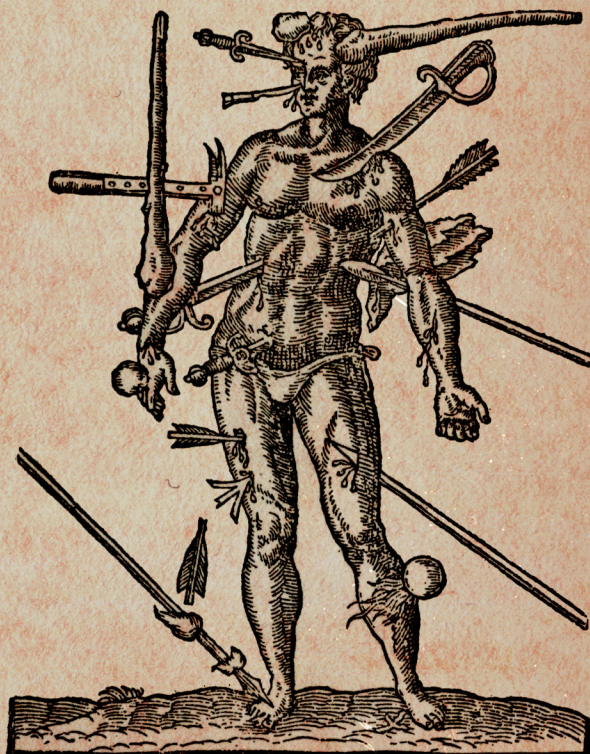
You can slowly sap the life of the people around you. The change is subtle, but over long periods of time and exposure, shortens the life span of people around you while amplifying your own.

+1 Weird, +3 Heart, -1 Soul

5. THE SOUND

The Sound is always there. At times, it's barely perceptible, and at other times it vibrates through your very soul, and threatens to engulf you in madness.

+1 Weird, +1 Mind, +1 Soul



8. YOU'RE HOLDING ME STRONGER, STRONGER THAN I'M USED TO

Suddenly, you have newfound strength and power flowing through your body and muscles. Almost too much to control. With this newfound power comes the desire to crush all those who are weaker than you.

+1 Weird, +2 Heart, -1 Soul, -1 Mind

9. I'LL BE THE MAGIC YOU WON'T EVER SEE

You find everyone liking you more, quickly and abruptly, like a moth to a flame. An undeniable charisma, everything you do seems to be touched by magic.

+1 Weird, +2 Soul

10. GOLD VEINS GLISTEN ON MY SKIN FOR YOU

You skin, especially your veins, seem to glow. You look as if you made of gold. While many will toss an odd glance your way, you find that this change has sharpened your reflexes and has given you a clarity of self.

+2 Weird, +1 Heart, +1 Soul

11. BOY TROUBLE, WE'VE GOT DOUBLE

Suddenly you find that you can be in two places at once. While your echo is incapable of complex tasks, you find that their experiences a boon to yourself. You can now perform one easy challenge in an extra location every day.

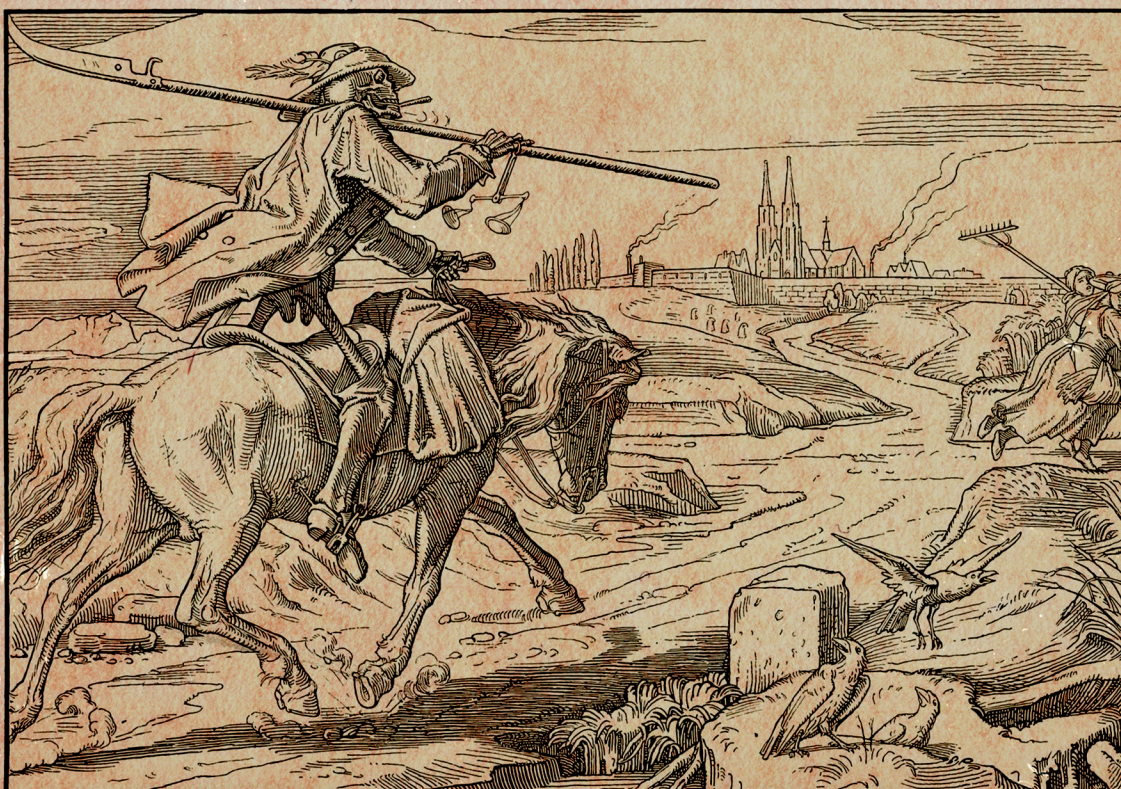
+3 Weird

12. WARM BLOOD, FEELS GOOD, I CAN'T CONTROL IT ANYMORE

You have become a creature of the night. You are very aware of how appetising everyone around you looks. You thirst for blood. You fear the sun.

You no longer choose a daytime location, you now pick a place to hunt after every town meeting. Gameplay modifies slightly and you now only face one hard challenge a night: feeding on whoever resides in that location. Failure at this challenge leads to -1 for each core stat, as well as weird. Success is +1 in each of these stats, including weird.

+3 Weird, +3 Heart, +3 Mind, +3 Soul



THE SEVEN DAYS



THE DAY SCENE

The heart of the gameplay of Black Heart is the **seven DAY SCENES** your character will embark on each day. By choosing a location, the GM will present your character with a variety of challenges that fit that location. These events will get weirder as each day goes on as the veil weakens. You may also find that the choices you make here carry on from day to day, across locations and characters, and even games. Each day scene has three dice rolls: an **EASY, MEDIUM, and HARD** challenge.

The challenges you face are always against one of your **CORE STATS**. You will roll a 1d6 and add whichever stat you need to solve the challenge (chosen by the GM). The ranges needed for success are listed below.

Success means an increase in stats and other potential boons. A failure can mean a loss in stats, and something going awry.

EASY CHALLENGES (5+)

Success: +1 in challenge stat.

Failure: Turn ends.

MEDIUM CHALLENGES (7+)

Success: +1 in challenge stat.

Failure: Turn ends.

HARD CHALLENGES (10+)

Success: +1 in ANY stat.
+ 1 Weird.

Failure: Turn ends,
-1 in challenge stat.

In addition: you may work with your fellow cultists. This can happen in two ways: **ASSIST** or **VISIT**. By **assisting**, any number of players may visit the same location and roll for the challenges they face there. You will take the highest D6 roll and add that to the player whose turn it is. This has a downside of limiting the locations you visit, missing out on potential stories and clues.

You may also **visit** another player's location (each role matches up with the corresponding location listed on pages 2+3). By **visiting**, the residing player can assist in the challenges there in the same manner as **ASSIST**, but without using their turn.

Hard challenges are generally where your **WEIRD** stat comes into play. **Medium and Easy** challenges where your **WEIRD** stat comes into play become more regular as time passes in the game and the town gets weirder.

By **DAY FOUR** weirdness should affect your medium challenges and by **DAY SIX** even some of your easy challenges should be affected by the weirdness in Arcadia.

Finally, you can always back out from a challenge. This will always result in -1 **WEIRD** but may be essential as you face a challenge too difficult to see through.



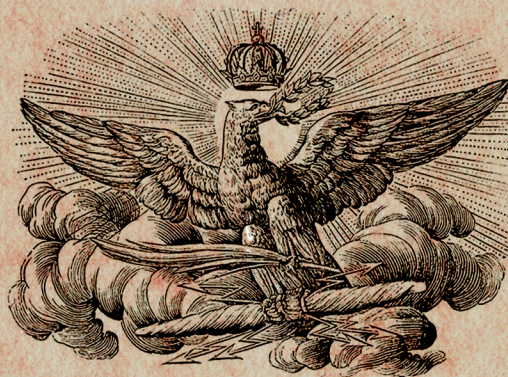
EXAMPLE DAY SCENE:

PLAYER goes to the village farm.

EASY CHALLENGE: The farmer needs the player's help bringing in the day's harvest.
(+ 1 heart)

MEDIUM CHALLENGE: While working on the harvest, a fellow farmhand gets injured.
You go to help them. (+/- 1 mind)

HARD CHALLENGE: While taking in the harvest, you notice that one of the cows is giving birth to a calf. You notice that the calf has two heads while being born. Do you do nothing, (-1 weird), do you try to quickly study it (mind challenge), or do you attempt to set it into wild to avoid the farmer finding it (heart challenge)?



THE TOWN MEETING

Every NIGHT the town assembles at the town hall to root out the evil. The town conducts their own ritual challenging each townsperon individually. This is the town's WILL vs the player's WEIRD. These are tests that examine a person beyond their heart, soul and mind. If a person is found to be too close to the powers that seek our world through the veil, the town slowly begins to exile that player.

The player rolls a 1d6+ WEIRD. The GM represents the TOWN and rolls a 1d6 + DAY NUMBER (the town's will is measured by how weird the whole town is).

If the player's roll is LOWER than the town's, they escape detection. If it is higher however, the must roll a 2d6 and refer to the location list (page 3) to see which location they lose access to.

This loss represents the player's slow drift away from village life and into the fringes of society. While this may mean certain storylines will be hard to pursue, there is power and knowledge beyond the edges of human civilization.



THE FALLEN ORDER

The failure of a chapter of our order. Do not repeat their mistakes.

SUMMONING THE GOD

WHAT LIES WITHIN IS ONLY FOR THE EYES OF THE GAMEMASTERS



*This is
the end.*

TIPS FOR GAMEMASTERS

To properly prepare, create a handful of challenges for each location, come up with storylines for the remaining townspeople and have your players face moral challenges that may force them to face injustices, strange occurrences, and more. Have the townspeople move around the town as well, to keep locations fresh. Come up with three or four storylines that will spread over multiple days and locations, letting the players have small story arcs within the game.

Give the remaining townspeople personalities, histories and even relationships with the players, and let that seep into your storylines.

As the game progresses, amp up the *weirdness*. Possession, ghosts, fantasy creatures, nightmares, mysterious deaths, shady back stories, occult artifacts. All of these are great examples to make your game more spooky and weird.

On that note, don't be afraid to kill off townspeople or destroy locations closer to the end of the game. Actions have consequences. Have the player's choices carry weight and affect later days, and even later games.

This game mixes both old technology and magic together in the setting. The degree to which both exist and have power is up to you. I recommend subverting tropes wherever possible to keep the players surprised.

If your group has also played **BOY PROBLEMS**, or is planning to, this game can act as a sequel or prequel to that one-shot. Civilization has fallen and it is now post-post apocalypse as the descendents of your characters attempt to summon Carly Rae Jepsen. Or have success in this game lead into a technological revolution in which **BOY PROBLEMS** could be set. Characters and their legacies can carry on between games.

Encourage the players to experiment, ask questions, and be adventurous. Always keep them alive (but maybe wounded a little) and always keep the story moving forward.

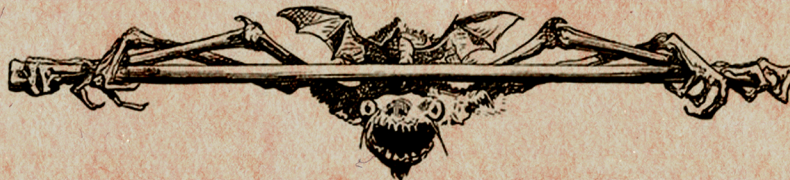


THE SUMMONING

After 7 DAYS and 6 TOWN MEETINGS, the cult is now prepared to

S U M M O N T H E G O D

Our players are no longer simple townsfolk,
but each play a new role in order to SUMMON THE GOD.
This is what the stat building has lead up to.



THE NEW ROLES

The players are no longer simple townsfolk. They shed their previous identity and assume their role within the cult. Thanks to their previous efforts, some players will be better suited for some roles over others. In the event of a tie, move to the next role on the list and resolve that one, then return to the previous role. In the event of a tie in stats, resolve with a 1d6 roll. The new roles are...

To be assigned in this order:

The player with the Highest MIND stat becomes **THE SEER**

*This person is responsible for safely placing The God
into their new physical vessel.*

The player with the Highest HEART Stat becomes **THE DISCIPLE**

*This player is responsible for making sure that the ritual is undisturbed,
and protecting their fellow cultists.*

The player with the Highest SOUL Stat becomes **THE ARCHON**

*This person is responsible is to prepare the ritual and
maintain the connection to the beyond.*

The player with the Highest WEIRD Stat becomes **THE CONDUIT**

*The person with the most connection with what lies beyond the veil.
Is responsible for calling out to The God and speaking their words.*

The player with the lowest WEIRD Stat becomes **THE EMISSARY**

*This person keeps the ritual grounded,
and watches too much weird interrupting the ritual.*

The last remaining player is **THE HANGED MAN.**

This role must be assigned. This character will be sacrificed for The God.

Just as during the DAY SCENES, each role faces an **easy, medium and hard challenge**. The GM will determine what the specifics of the challenges (think ritual) but they will always challenge the role's associated stat (**Exception: The Emissary can use any stat they choose**). Success or Failure determines which ending you receive.

The success of summoning the God is not determined by an individual's success, but the overall success of the group. Each challenge earns the cult a certain number of points.

EASY challenges earn the group **+1 point**.

MEDIUM challenges earn the group **+2 points**.

HARD challenges earn the group **+3 points**.

The Hanged Man's **DEATH** earns the group **+6 points**.

To successfully summon The God, a cult needs to earn a certain number of points, determined by the number of players involved. Just like day challenges, a failure means missing out on the harder challenges.

In addition, each challenge now has a higher threshold for success. Players also now roll **2D6**.

EASY: 13+ (10/12)

MEDIUM: 15+ (11/13)

HARD: 18+ (14/16)

The **HANGED MAN's** death is the final act in completing the rite, but before they are sacrificed, they are offered a choice.

They hear a voice through the veil that tells them, *"You are the key to completing this rite. However, you can also turn on your fellow cultists and end this here and now."*

This player now has two paths:

LOYALTY and BETRAYAL.

LOYALTY has 100% success rate. You die.

BETRAYAL has its own own **easy, medium and hard challenge**. If The Hanged Man succeeds at all three challenges, they disrupt the ritual and cause the cult to fail.

If they fail any of these challenges, the Hanged Man's score is a 0 and the Hanged Man dies.



When the HANGED MAN chooses to betray the cult, both players will roll a 2D6 and add the stat that is challenged.

The **easy** challenge faces THE ARCHON directly challenging their lowest stat.

The **medium** challenge faces THE DISCIPLE and their lowest stat.

The **hard** challenge faces THE SEER and their lowest stat.

If THE HANGED MAN succeeds at all three challenges, they disrupt the ritual and cause the cult to fail. If they fail any of these challenges, the Hanged Man's score is a 0 and the Hanged Man dies.

# OF PLAYERS	TOTAL SUCCESS	PARTIAL SUCCESS	FAILURE
4 players	19+ points	10-18 points	0-9 pts
5 players	21+ pts	12-20 pts	0-11 pts
6 players	23+ pts	14-22 pts	0-13 pts

Getting a total success is a challenge, but not impossible. Instead, most games will end with a partial success. GMs, use this grey area to be creative narratively. Have the group summon the wrong god, have the god be summoned but only at a great cost. Have reality warp and shift. Make a failure appropriately dark and compelling.

You will also find most games rely on the Hanged Man being a willing participant. for either a partial or total success. Keep an eye on who is consistently failing challenges and has low stats going into the summoning. They hold a lot of power, as they haven't throughout the game.

Then... the storm disapates, the candles burn out, and the world is changed.



THE AFTERMATH

This is the ending montage of the game, the closing shots regarding the successes and failures of the summoning and how you have left the world off after the events of the game.

In this section, some story will come from the GM's interpretations of the events, but generally the world will enter into 1 of 3 states:

FAILURE TO SUMMON

The basic gist: the cult has failed, the members have scattered, and the legacy left by THE GOD turns from legends to rumours to whispers to silence. Humanity remains in a dark age and each character spends the rest of their days wandering and seeking purpose. However, in the shadow of failure, comes the chance of rebirth and perhaps the cycle will continue and there will be another chance... Silence will be deafening.

PARTIAL SUCCESS

The God has returned... but not in the way she was expected. Sacrifices were made, morals were compromised, and perhaps, The God has taken a different form than you had originally anticipated. Either way, great change is on the horizon, but it is now up to you whether that change is promising or horrifying.

SUCCESS

She is back. The legends were true, and her light has returned to this world. Very quickly, you realise that what you thought was a God, many saw as a great intelligence. While she is not omnipotent, with her guidance, you claim the lost years since her downfall and breathe life back into an aging humanity. It is still unknown if these new discoveries are magic or technology, but Glory has been restored.

FOR GMS:

Please give every character a relevant conclusion. Consider their actions during the game, the stories they have begun telling and give each of them a fitting resolution for all they have done in pursuit of The God. If a character did not survive, please speak to their legacy. Give them each a role in whatever new society has formed.*

*Decide early on whether all the mutations during the game were the result of magic or technology. You can now also use this as an opportunity for the cultists to try again in another game of BLACK HEART or to carry on their legacy in a game of BOY PROBLEMS.

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and for the memories. You will always have a Dedicated fan.**

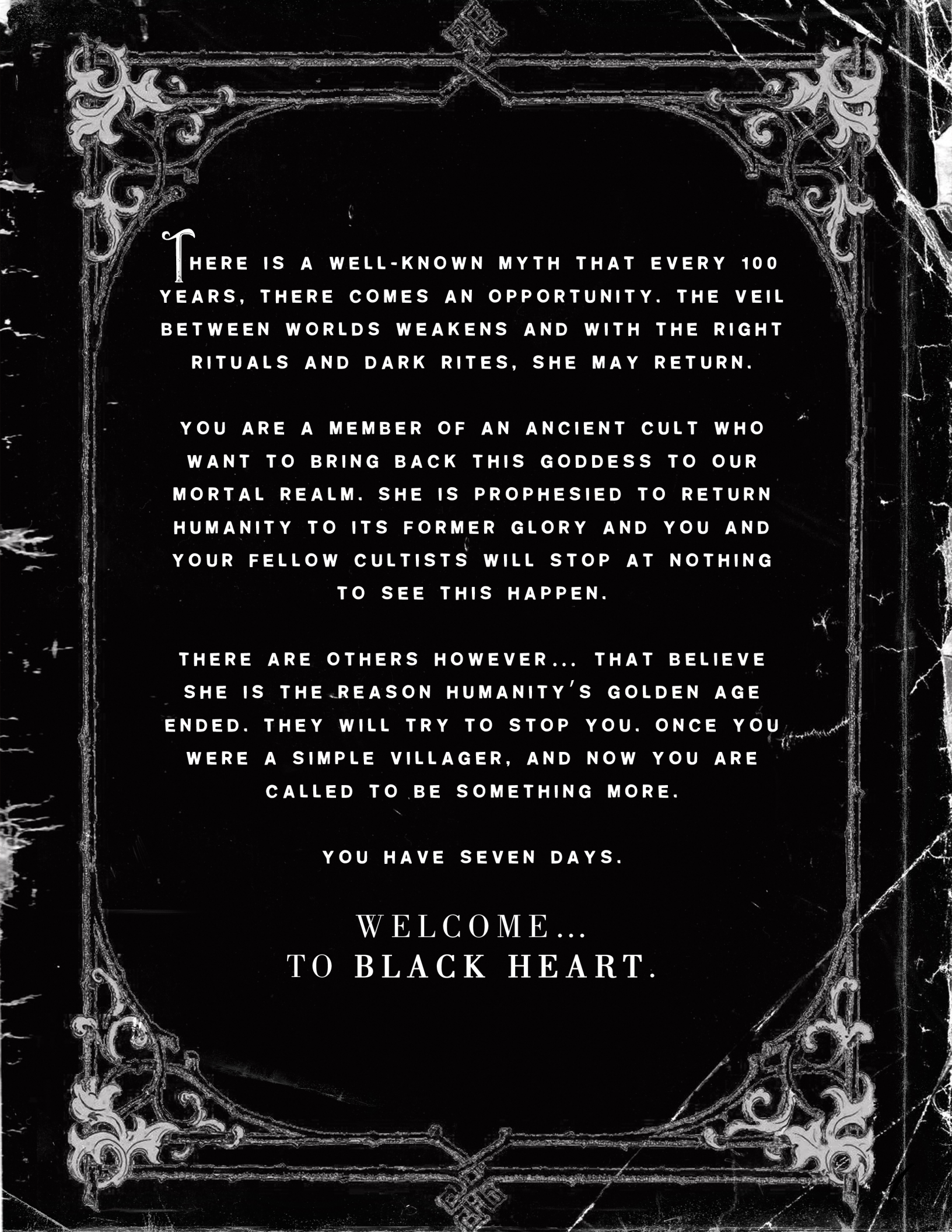
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**BLACK HEART
SPOTIFY PLAYLIST**





THERE IS A WELL-KNOWN MYTH THAT EVERY 100 YEARS, THERE COMES AN OPPORTUNITY. THE VEIL BETWEEN WORLDS WEAKENS AND WITH THE RIGHT RITUALS AND DARK RITES, SHE MAY RETURN.

YOU ARE A MEMBER OF AN ANCIENT CULT WHO WANT TO BRING BACK THIS GODDESS TO OUR MORTAL REALM. SHE IS PROPHESED TO RETURN HUMANITY TO ITS FORMER GLORY AND YOU AND YOUR FELLOW CULTISTS WILL STOP AT NOTHING TO SEE THIS HAPPEN.

THERE ARE OTHERS HOWEVER... THAT BELIEVE SHE IS THE REASON HUMANITY'S GOLDEN AGE ENDED. THEY WILL TRY TO STOP YOU. ONCE YOU WERE A SIMPLE VILLAGER, AND NOW YOU ARE CALLED TO BE SOMETHING MORE.

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