

EXIT MUSIC

An Adventure for

Active
EXPLOITS™



GHOST STORIES™
Horror Mystery Adventures

Written by
Dev Purkayastha

Thanks to my friends in
HRSFA for their creative input.
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Edited by
Matt Drake

System Conversions & Layout by
Brett M. Bernstein

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Before You Get Started

“Exit Music” is written as a short role-playing adventure to be played out in an evening’s time. Some of the text ahead may be a bit gruesome, so be forewarned before reading ahead. The purpose is not gore, but shock and terror. This adventure can be used with either Active Exploits Diceless, Impresa Express, or Ghost Stories: Horror Mystery Adventures. All systems are quick and easy to learn and play. The first two are also freely available, while the third is reasonably priced. All of them may be downloaded from the Politically Incorrect Games website (<http://www.pigames.net>).

You will also find the horror/occult supplement, The Shaded Veil, at the web site. This is available for free as well and in two different versions—Active Exploits Diceless and Impresa Express. Looking this over is optional, but certainly helpful.

This should be used as a guide for the adventure and most should be kept a secret from the players. There are also sample characters which the players may use, or they can just create their own using the desired rules set. These characters may be skilled masters of the occult or they may be average people caught in an unfortunate situation.

Best of luck.

A Note on Game Systems

Because this adventure was designed for three different game systems, there are explanations for each when necessary. Active Exploits, however, is the default system for this adventure.

Active Exploits Diceless and Impresa Express use the term “director” to describe the player who referees the game. This term may be substituted for “Gamemaster”, which is the term used in Ghost Stories: Horror Mystery Adventures.

The Setup

Tracy: “Gavin, that show in Bicksburg had better be worth the trip...”

The characters are travelling together in the same car or van. Be sure to invent some convincing pretext for this trip. Skilled anti-occultists may be traveling to Reulle to uncover the location of an ancient vampire; an average group of kids may be on their way to a

rock concert, or perhaps even investigating some “Haunted Mansion” in Shisko Falls.

Begin travelling on some highway by night: well-lit, lined by thick forest on both sides, and mostly empty. Signs of life will continually become less frequent, until finally they come to a road barrier for “construction”. The only way to go from there will be a detour that leads to a rural dirt road.

The dirt road itself is barely one-and-a-half lanes across, lined firmly with trees on both sides. Shortly after pulling onto this road, they will meet with an accident.

The Accident

Director: “The road keeps winding tightly, and the moon just barely ekes past the trees. What are you all doing?”

Jamee: “I am looking for just anything like a house or store. Maybe Gavin can check—”

Director: “Blinding headlights suddenly crest over the hill; you see a black station wagon coming your way. What do you do?”

Interrupt the players, mid-sentence, to announce a black station wagon hurtling towards them. The driver will face a **challenging** task of avoiding the station wagon; give her only a few seconds to respond.

Active Exploits

SUCCESS: The car is only grazed and everyone is safe.

FAILURE: The car is damaged, but operational; everyone receives one (1) grade of injury.

CALAMITY: The car crashes into the trees and is completely totalled; everyone receives two (2) grades of injury.

Impresa Express

SUCCESS: The car is only grazed and everyone is safe.

FAILURE: The car is damaged, but operational; everyone must make one (1) damage roll for injury. If the task was missed by more than three (3) steps, the car crashes into the trees and is completely totalled; everyone must make two (2) damage rolls for injury.

Ghost Stories: Horror Mystery Adventures

SUCCESS: The car is only grazed and everyone is safe.

FAILURE: The car is damaged, but operational; everyone receives two (2) points of damage.

CALAMITY: The car crashes into the trees and is completely totalled; everyone receives damage equal to the roll of one (1) die.

Meanwhile, the station wagon will have collided with the trees on

the opposite side. The passenger is Maggie Laine, an 8-months pregnant woman; the driver is her husband, Rodney. If the players check the car, they will find that Maggie was killed on impact. Rodney is bleeding from the forehead, but is alive and conscious.

Rodney (who may be played by the Director or by another player) is on the edge of a breakdown; he has sustained significant psychological trauma.

Active Exploits

Witnessing any gore or supernatural sights will cause Rodney to gain one (1) grade of dementia. Upon reaching a Delirious state, he will suddenly run screaming into the forest or into some dark corner. He will then emerge in a violent werewolf form.

Impresa Express

Witnessing any gore or supernatural sights will require a reasoning based composure roll. Upon failing four (4) rolls, he will suddenly run screaming into the forest or into some dark corner. He will then emerge in a violent werewolf form.

Ghost Stories: Horror Mystery Adventures

Witnessing any gore or supernatural sights will require a composure roll. Upon failing four (4) rolls, he will suddenly run screaming into the forest or into some dark corner. He will then emerge in a violent werewolf form.

He was arguing with his wife at the time of the accident; he will probably feel guilty, and occasionally babble about his wife and the unborn child. Rodney will follow the characters on the pretense of finding a hospital or police station. Rodney has a history of explosive anger and alcohol abuse; at the time of the accident, the smell of cheap whisky should be very obvious on his breath.

On Terror and Horror

Director: "As you approach the scene, you can see the windshield, perfectly spidered from the impact. Blood runs a thin trail from the car... down to your feet."

For game purposes, horror is a scene of gore, cruelty or perversion that stirs our most basic notions of disgust and revilement; Terror is defined by the lack of clearly defined horror, and is "terrifying" precisely because our imagination is forced to draw the outlines of horrors we only barely see.

Horror is witnessed suffering—a gory decapitation or the living undead. Terror is suggested suffering: trickles of blood on splintered glass, faint flashes of light over the horizon, undetectably quiet weeping.

Use both, in balance.

On Dreams

Gavin: "Maybe a liquor store or something could help us get direc—"

Director: "You actually just passed one a minute ago."

Gavin: "We missed that?"

Director: "Yeah, you guys just blew on by."

From this point onward, it shall remain nightfall, the moon shall remain full, all watches and digital devices will be non-functional, and ultimately, they will have to follow this road to it's end.

Why?

When Maggie Laine was killed, the child, a potent telepath, grabbed its parents' final fleeting thoughts, and projected a dream-like state onto the surrounding world, changing the rules of causality and time for this localized area. As in a dream, this entire episode will ultimately represent only a few moments in "real time", but the dream cannot end unless she chooses to end it.

The key motif of the dream-state is an everpresent surreality. For example, when the player makes a suggestion, feel free to initiate it on the spot—if they are looking for some sign of a hospital, point out a "Hospital" sign, even if it's erroneous. If they are looking for a liquor store or gas station, show them a liquor store and gas station, in that order. The world around them should be described in contradictory and inconsistent terms.

The Road

Gavin: "So we just drove on road A for five miles, and then took a left turn B for seven more miles, and now we're back on road A. In that case, if we just turn around, we should get back onto the highway in no time."

The dirt road is an arbitrarily long infinite loop. If the characters search for any sideroads or detours, they will find them, but even these will only bring them to this (same) infinite loop of road. A cruel Director may even encourage the players to map out this impossible road.

Introduce various recurring objects along to the way: illegible signs, abandoned houses, crashed cars, gas stations, liquor stores, and so on. Except for these few recurrences, the road is entirely lined with trees. Beyond one shoulder of the road (always the closer shoulder), there should be a sharp decline; if they players go

downhill (through the Forest), they will come to the Graveyard. If they go uphill, they will come to the Chapel. Some of the people they meet along the way may mention these places in passing; as a hint, you can also give them some occasional glimpse of light above or below them.

The Forest

Jamee: "Ick. Why is this a good idea?"

The Forest can only be entered on foot. Upon returning, if the players do not specifically "go back to the car", they will not find it when they get back. (Of course, a particularly strong act of faith or will may allow them to coincidentally find it again.)

The characters must follow the incline or decline of the hill to come to the Chapel or Graveyard. From the Chapel or the Graveyard, they will find themselves on a hill, from which it is only possible to go downhill (and back to the road).

If the characters examine the trees in particular detail, they may notice that several of the details are sharp enough to cut open human skin. Also, the soil will feel warm and moist, and leave a crimson stain on skin.

Random encounters with spiders, wild dogs and other creatures are entirely possible. If Rodney's werewolf form has escaped earlier, it may reappear here.

The Gas Station

Jamee: "Maybe we should have asked for directions FIRST, Gavin."

A small and nearly empty gas station. A single attendant is on duty, and is immediately suspicious of the characters. The attendant may clumsily mention the Chapel or the Graveyard, but otherwise he is mostly useless. Most likely, the players will encounter the Cops here.

The Liquor Store

Gavin: "I don't think they have Zima here, pretty-boy."

A small store, operated only by a single liquor-store owner. Inside, the light is dim and reddish, and the players should feel

slightly light-headed while inside the store. The store-owner will glare down on the players from an awkwardly high cash register, and sneer at them to "drink lots of our BEEEEER!" Every wall is fully stocked with anonymous brown bottles simply labeled "BEER"; oddly enough, these bottles are filled only with cheap whisky. A player drinking this liquor will not feel intoxicated, but will act increasingly angry and aggressive.

Also, there is a lone biker, fixing his Harley outside of the store. He will ignore the players unless they engage him.

The Cops

Joel: "Look. Let's just explain everything."

The cops look like stereotypical state troopers, hidden behind dark shades and a uniform; they always travel in pairs. They may attempt to pull the characters over, or could be called into the Gas Station or Liquor Store. As soon as they arrive, they will be suspicious of the character's motives, and cross-question them mercilessly. If the characters do not give satisfactory answers, they will be ordered to remain in their vehicle while the cops check "records" over the radio; this will take an infinite amount of time, and the characters will remain stuck here unless they take action.

The Chapel

Gavin: "I don't know. Bad experience with churches."

Jamee: "What—"

Gavin: "Bad experience."

From the exterior, the Chapel will seem like a small country chapel, no larger than a very small house. However, the inside looks like a much larger Catholic cathedral. Near the back of the pews are several tall statues of the saints; the statue of the Virgin Mary (representing Maggie Laine) has fallen.

The vestment rooms (behind the pulpit) will be filled entirely of broken crosses, while there should be a baptismal bath next to the pulpit filled with holy water. On the pulpit itself should be six silver bullets and a revolver seemingly made of wood. (This revolver is functional and, in fact, blessed.)

Finally, the weeping of a child should echo throughout the chapel. After some searching, they'll eventually find her in the balcony.

The Child

Child: "It's quiet up here. I'm not broken up here."

The Child, the avatar of the unborn child's will to live, will be found crying in the balcony, clutching her bible. The pages of this bible are filled with nothing except the Lord's Prayer, repeated over and over again. She will be crying because the "wolf" (father-avatar) smashed her mother's statue (mother-avatar).

The Child is shy, but eventually warms up to the characters. She is very perceptive and curious, and will continually ask the characters questions about "the outside world" and themselves. Ideally, talking with the Child will be some sort of lens through which the characters consider their own personal issues. The Child will never speak to Rodney or look at him directly.

The Child will follow the characters' journey in an attempt to understand if her will to survive is justified. What little she knows of her parents' life is dreadfully unhappy, and needs to be taken back to the Graveyard in order to go back to sleep.

The Graveyard

Child: "She wants me to go back to sleep."

If the characters enter the graveyard without the Child, they will find it mostly empty, and almost pleasant. There are two recent adult-graves, and one open child-sized grave beside them.

If the characters enter with the child, they will find a mirror image of the Child standing on the opposite side of the child-sized grave. She is the Other, an embodiment of the Child's desire for oblivion.

To this end, the Other will use her necromantic powers to raise zombie-like creatures from the soil to bring the Child to the grave. If the characters have convinced the Child that life is worth living, she will resist; otherwise, she will walk solemnly to the grave, and use her powers against anyone that tries to stop her.

The dream will end with the Child's death if she is buried alive; however, if the Other is buried in the grave, or if Prayer from the Child's bible is read aloud, then the dream will end with the Child's acceptance of life. In either case, the entire graveyard will erupt into a thick mist. When the mist clears, the [surviving] characters will find themselves several yards away from the original crash site of the black station wagon, now surrounded by several emergency vehicles.

Epilogue

If asked, the rescue workers will explain what happened at the accident. The driver and passenger (Rodney and Maggie) are both dead. If the dream ended with the Child's acceptance of death, then the unborn baby will have died with her mother. However, if the Child accepted survival, then there is a chance that the unborn child can survive, even if the mother cannot.

Soon after, a police officer will begin to aggressively interrogate the remaining characters over what has happened. Chances are, there is nothing that they can say that anyone would believe; the players will have to deal with the legal consequences of "abandoning the site of an accident". If any characters remained dead or missing, manslaughter charges may also apply.

Of course, none of these possibilities are a perfectly happy ending.

Fade to black.

Suggested Soundtrack

Radiohead - Exit Music (for a film)

Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds - Red Right Hand

Paris Burning - Signal to Noise

Thou Shalt Not - Soren Grey, The Weakness of Words

Voltaire - All the Way Down

Nine Inch Nails - La Mer, the Frail

Joy Division - Dead Souls

Sample Characters

Jamee, Tracy, Gavin and Joel are driving to a rock show in nearby Bicksburg. According to Gavin's directions, they're only a half-hour away from where they are; of course, Gavin said that about three hours ago.

Jamee Lin

It's been a tough year for Jamee. Her last relationship ended with her lover overdosing on ecstasy; ever since, her compulsively controlling nature has only gotten worse. She looks down on anyone who uses alcohol or drugs, but goes through cigarettes like a chimney on acid. Jamee is still working the graveyard shift at Kinko's, but one of these days she's really going to get her writing career back on track...

Active exploits	Impresa express	Ghost stories
Fitness +1	Fitness 3	Fitness 3
Brawling A	Brawling 4	Brawling 4
Driving A	Driving 4	Driving 5
Awareness 0	Awareness 2	Reasoning 2
Creativity +1	Creativity 3	Art History 3
Reasoning 0	Design 3	Computers 4
Art History A	Reasoning 2	Literacy 4
Computers P	Art History 3	General Knowledge 3
Literacy P	Computers 6	Empathy 3
Luck 4	Literacy 5	Negotiation 2
Discipline 2	Influence 1	Willpower 3
Ambition COMMITMENT	Luck 3	Reaction 6
Drug-Free COMMITMENT		Stamina 12
Control COMPULSION		
Cigarettes COMPULSION		

Active exploits	Impresa express	Ghost stories
Fitness 0	Fitness 2	Fitness 2
Driving A	Driving 4	Driving 4
Awareness +1	Awareness 3	Reasoning 4
Creativity 0	Creativity 2	First Aid 4
Performance (PIANO) P	Instrument (PIANO) 5	Survival 5
Reasoning +1	Performance 2	Christianity 6
First Aid A	Reasoning 3	Empathy 3
Survival A	First Aid 4	Performance (PIANO) 6
Christianity P	Survival 4	Willpower 2
Luck 4	Christianity 6	Reaction 7
Discipline 2	Influence 1	Stamina 8
Follower INCLINATION	Luck 3	
Guilt* COMMITMENT		
Approval COMPULSION		
Dominated COMPULSION		
Indecisive COMPULSION		

Tracy Reynor

Jamee's current girlfriend. She and Gavin had been dating for years; she even dropped out of college to fit into Gavin's lifestyle. It took a mistake that bad to realize how much she needed to get away from Gavin. Then again, Jamee might actually be just as controlling as Gavin. Tracy needs to figure out what she really wants, but she has no idea what that might be.

* Tracy suffers from guilt due to her religious upbringing.

Gavin Nero

Tracy’s ex-boyfriend. He’s the sort of long-haired pretty boy who’s always the lead singer for this week’s doomed rock band. He suggested this trip to the concert to help patch up the “friendship” between Tracy and him; the fact is, he can’t deal with being replaced by someone else. This entire trip is an attempt to get back Tracy, or at least re-establish his machismo.

Active exploits		Impresa express		Ghost stories	
Fitness	+1	Fitness	3	Fitness	3
Athletics	A	Athletics	4	Athletics	4
AWARENESS	0	AWARENESS	2	Finesse	3
Subterfuge	P	Subterfuge	5	REASONING	2
CREATIVITY	+1	CREATIVITY	4	Mechanics	4
Performance	P	Performance	6	General Knowledge	4
REASONING	0	Design	2	EMPATHY	4
Mechanical	A	REASONING	2	Performance	6
Drama	A	Mechanical	4	Design	4
LUCK	4	Drama	4	WILLPOWER	2
DISCIPLINE	2	INFLUENCE	1	REACTION	5
Cigarettes	HABIT	LUCK	2	STAMINA	10
Ego	COMMITMENT				
Insecurity	COMPULSION				
Machismo	COMPULSION				

Active exploits		Impresa express		Ghost stories	
Fitness	0	Fitness	2	Fitness	2
Martial Arts (Aikido)	P	Brawling	6	Brawling	4
AWARENESS	0	AWARENESS	2	REASONING	5
CREATIVITY	0	CREATIVITY	2	Philosophy	3
REASONING	+2	REASONING	5	Local Legends	6
Philosophy	A	Philosophy	4	Medicine	2
Local Legends	A	Local Legends	4	Indie-Rock Knowledge	6
Herbal Medicine	A	Medicine	3	General Knowledge	4
Indie-Rock Knowledge	P	Indie-Rock Knowledge	4	EMPATHY	2
LUCK	4	General Knowledge	4	WILLPOWER	2
DISCIPLINE	2	INFLUENCE	1	REACTION	8
Solipsism	INCLINATION	LUCK	2	STAMINA	8
Sarcasm	INCLINATION				
Self-Abuse	COMPULSION				

Joel Zimmer

Tracy’s brother’s boyfriend’s roommate: seemingly a typical indie-rock snob, decked out in his “Joy Division” t-shirt and Doc Martens. The other three don’t know him so well, but his friends suggested he go along, if only to get out of the house. There was a nasty breakup almost a month ago; he hasn’t left the house since. Joel suffers from self-abusive tendencies.

Rodney Laine

The driver of the unlucky station wagon. He begins the game somewhat disturbed from the shock of his wife’s death. If he becomes delirious (see The Accident), he will transform into his werewolf form (stats below)—at this point, there is nothing human left. All that can be done is to kill him, restrain him, or run...

Active exploits	Impresa express	Ghost stories
Fitness +4	Fitness 6	Fitness 5
Athletics P	Athletics 6	Athletics 6
Brawling P	Brawling 6	Brawling 6
AWARENESS +1	AWARENESS 4	REASONING 0
CREativity 0	CREativity 0	emPATHY 5
REASONING 0	REASONING 0	WILLPOWER 4
LUCK •	LUCK •	REACTION 2
DISCIPLINE 5	INFLUENCE 0	StAMINA 18

* Use whatever rating is remaining from before he transforms into a werewolf.

Active exploits	Impresa express	Ghost stories
Fitness +1	Fitness 3	Fitness 3
Brawling A	Brawling 4	Brawling 4
Driving A	Driving 4	Driving 4
AWARENESS 0	AWARENESS 2	REASONING 2
CREativity +1	CREativity 4	Mechanics 4
REASONING 0	REASONING 2	emPATHY 4
Mechanical A	Mechanical 3	WILLPOWER 2
LUCK 4	INFLUENCE 1	REACTION 5
DISCIPLINE 2	LUCK 2	StAMINA 10

Active exploits	Impresa express	Ghost stories
Fitness 0	Fitness 1	Fitness 1
AWARENESS +2	AWARENESS 5	REASONING 5
CREativity +2	CREativity 5	emPATHY 5
REASONING +2	REASONING 5	Telepathy 8
esp +4	INFLUENCE 0	WILLPOWER 5
Telepathy E	LUCK 2	REACTION 6
LUCK 4	esp 6	StAMINA 12
DISCIPLINE 1	Telepathy 8	

the Child

Active exploits	Impresa express	Ghost stories
Fitness 0	Fitness 1	Fitness 1
AWARENESS 0	AWARENESS 2	REASONING 2
CREativity 0	CREativity 2	emPATHY 2
REASONING 0	REASONING 2	WILLPOWER 5
necromancy * +4	INFLUENCE 1	Necromancy 8
Animate* E	LUCK 2	REACTION 9
Banish* E	necromancy * 6	StAMINA 12
LUCK 4	Animate* 8	
DISCIPLINE 2	Banish* 7	

the Other

* See The Shaded Veil (Active Exploits or Impresa Express version) for this skill or ability.

Cop

An anonymous state trooper, in dark shades and standard police garb; armed with a handgun, and usually a shotgun in the back. Usually travel in pairs.

Active exploits	Impresa Express	Ghost Stories
Fitness +2	Fitness 5	Fitness 5
Driving P	Driving 6	Driving 6
Firearms P	Firearms 6	Firearms 6
AWARENESS 0	AWARENESS 2	REASONING 1
CREATIVITY 0	CREATIVITY 1	EMPATHY 3
REASONING 0	REASONING 2	Investigation 6
Investigation P	Investigation 6	WILLPOWER 3
LUCK 4	INFLUENCE 2	REACTION 4
DISCIPLINE 2	LUCK 2	STAMINA 16
Authority	Authority	

Lone Biker

Slightly fat, but highly muscular; dressed in a leather jacket and a grimy t-shirt. May hang around liquor stores or gas stations. However, if approached properly, he may be non-antagonistic.

Active exploits	Impresa Express	Ghost Stories
Fitness +2	Fitness 5	Fitness 5
Driving P	Driving 6	Driving 6
Brawling A	Brawling 4	Brawling 4
AWARENESS +1	AWARENESS 4	REASONING 1
CREATIVITY 0	CREATIVITY 2	Mechanics 2
REASONING 0	REASONING 1	EMPATHY 3
Mechanical A	Mechanical 3	WILLPOWER 4
LUCK 2	INFLUENCE 1	REACTION 4
DISCIPLINE 3	LUCK 2	STAMINA 18

Gas Attendant

Slow-thinking, but highly suspicious. Has a noticeably hunched back and a squinty left eye. He will call the cops if anything remotely strange happens.

Active exploits	Impresa Express	Ghost Stories
Fitness -1	Fitness 0	Fitness 0
AWARENESS +1	AWARENESS 3	REASONING 0
CREATIVITY 0	CREATIVITY 1	EMPATHY 2
REASONING -1	REASONING 0	WILLPOWER 2
LUCK 4	INFLUENCE 0	REACTION 10
DISCIPLINE 1	LUCK 1	STAMINA 4

Liquor Store Clerk

Highly suspicious, always aware, and has an annoying means of pushing his wares. He also has a shotgun behind the counter if he smells trouble.

Active exploits	Impresa Express	Ghost Stories
Fitness 0	Fitness 2	Fitness 2
AWARENESS +1	AWARENESS 4	REASONING 3
CREATIVITY 0	CREATIVITY 2	EMPATHY 4
REASONING +1	REASONING 3	WILLPOWER 3
LUCK 4	INFLUENCE 0	REACTION 6
DISCIPLINE 2	LUCK 3	STAMINA 10

Animated Corpse

Zombies, raised by the Other Child in order to bring the Child to the grave, and thus fulfill her wish for sleep.

Active exploits	Impresa Express	Ghost Stories
Fitness +1	Fitness 4	Fitness 4
AWARENESS 0	AWARENESS 1	REASONING 1
CREATIVITY -1	CREATIVITY 0	EMPATHY 0
REASONING 0	REASONING 1	WILLPOWER 4
LUCK 2	INFLUENCE 0	REACTION 8
DISCIPLINE 4	LUCK 2	STAMINA 16
Tolerance to Pain	Tolerance to Pain	



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