

Background

This must've started off small, right? And small things can be dealt with. But for some reason the pit wasn't, and as the decades passed it grew, and to this day the geological surveys remain unconducted. Two generations, at least, have watched the streets slowly be eaten up. Watched as neighbors' houses fell in. Watched as the whole rec centre and the left wall of the movie theatre went; empty air suddenly where solid ground had been. People still go to the movies, if only for the evening showings.

Sometimes the lights go out. They get rewired after a couple days, but one poorer neighborhood's been on bottled water for two years. The school bus commute grew by a half hour last month because part of the route collapsed. Our parents just adapt. And yeah, we like stories, but this isn't a gateway to something below. It's just what our parents built sinking out from under us. What we thought would support us. The world we could depend on, disappearing.

Economically, most of the lumber mills have shut down. Allswell's been trying to reinvent itself but the experiments have been sluggish and unimaginative. Zoning never changes which gradually creates more problems, plus the housing shortage. Poorer families rent on the lip, but many whose dream homes are there haven't left them. Businesses fall in & then don't exist anymore. People talk about the excellent halal restaurant we used to have. What don't we know we're missing?

The lip's been slowly creeping across the school's soccer field. Today, the flagpole fell in. You're not supposed to climb down, but the cops just coax you out and drive you home. But can any good come from down there?

The pit is a potential metaphor for many things - global warming, a failing economy, systemic disenfranchisement of vulnerable groups, grassroots hate. You don't have to, even shouldn't, figure out which. Just play with it.

Scene Locations

- ✦ The Lip. Precarious perimeter that cuts through lawns and lives.
- ✦ Pasha's Pizza. The dining room fell in but we still do take out.
- ✦ All Parts Garage. Tran's a sweet old dude, free cans of pop.
- ✦ Tire Swing. Will today be the day the tree falls in?
- ✦ Boyden's Gap. Cars can't take Boyden now, but there's a bike ramp.
- ✦ The Wrecked Centre. Climb down to this weird old ruin.

Skins To Include

The Native Mortal from the reservation is transferring to the school in town. Is that the right choice? And will his cosplay and makeup tutorials on YouTube remain undiscovered?

The Half-Quebecois Witch comes from a line of witches but his mom left it behind & wishes he would too. Will he choose his relationship with his mom or his heritage?

The Chinese-Canadian Werewolf just moved here from Vancouver with their paramedic mom. Will playing music let them channel their emotions to stop from transforming?

The Iranian/Scottish-Canadian Ghoul stands in the wreckage her grandfather, the mayor, is making. Will the verve and passion she lost with death ever return?

The Quebecois Fae is a lover of novels and gardening, and was home schooled up until her dad became ill this year. Will their house topple into the pit?

The Native Queen takes to her bike, spreading word to resist the grown ups: the monsters who let it get like this. Will her new friends give her the power to enact real change?

Bateleur

written by Ciel Sainte-Marie

Many visitors never leave the resort... whole that is.

1,000 / Bateleur, Grenada / black af

Background

This town is all about tourism and the shimmer and shadows of performance. Most nights are filled with the light and laughter of talented rogues that wander the streets for tips and adventure. So many inhabitants dream of becoming one in the lights. Those that can't cut it make do with the more attainable glamour found in the market or the wildness found on the shores by the sea.

The economy relies heavily on the market, the supernaturally talented street performers, the tourism derived from them, and the compensation from their crowds as easy-pickings for the bird-shaped shadow that stalks folks in the dark of the... day? The town also boasts world-class conservation of their waterfalls (anybody hear that hissing in the night? whose bones are those?), a sanctuary to the endangered dove, and that landfill fire that still hasn't gone out.

Through fires, feathers, salt water, and spice... this is a lush place that also manages to be gritty, burning and sharp. Its magic is fading, possibly because of the many deaths of the island's beloved scrappy dove (spirits). Maybe it's only changing because the time of the tricky bateleur family has finally come.

Either way, when you're kicking back at the beach and showing off, you'll probably not want to wander too far off the coast... There's a hungry perimeter of sea ghosts held back only by the dubious intentions of the underwater sculpture garden.

Scene Locations

- ✦ The cluster of street stages
- ✦ The Dove Conservatory
- ✦ Crescent Beach
- ✦ The Hidden Waterfalls
- ✦ The Tourist Marketplace

Skins To Include

For each skin, I've included a Caribbean myth you could look up to get a feel for the vibe. They're not equivalent. Lol.

Mami Watah (The Queen) – Listen. Your friends worship you because you've got hindquarter scales like a serpent and you carry all the latest designs. Plus you literally feed off the worship so it's kind of a requirement to roll with you... Your family runs markets. Do you eat doves?

Papa Bois (The Werewolf) - Manicou you! Are you eating those doves? Of course not, you're a nature conservationist right? It's your family's legacy! You only want to protect them. You'd never hurt them...right?

Fairymade (The Fae) – You like to steal shadows and hoof stomp people. Dancing at the edge of the ocean, you make oathbreakers pray to the water for release from your torturous caress. You also like shoes and maybe performing?

Soucoyant (The Ghoul) – Every time you leave a hickie, someone makes a joke but you're just so hungry. You love the soft places of the body... Your family runs a restaurant at the resort soo... try to stay away from salt?

Bateleur (The Infernal) – Your small family runs the performing and thus the industry in this town. You're indebted to a predator and you're starting to become one. Doves are your natural prey. Sorry, but what's that salty liquid in your nose though?

Dove (The Witch) – You're scrappy, endearingly endangered, and your home burned down. Your people cast a spell of protection so that you can hide in un-feathered form, but still there's precious few of your kind left so you're not going out without a fight. Too bad everyone's craving your sweet flesh... Can you survive their desires...and yours?

Forbearance

written by anna anthropology

A dot-com boomtown haunted by digital monsters.

Background

They found gold in Forbearance, once. Suddenly the tiny mission was playing host to droves of prospectors. A few people ended up rich. Everyone else ended up in debt.

Now Forbearance is bracing for another invasion, but it's not gold this time – it's silicon. Windows 95 just hit the market. 56K modems are starting to sell. And Americans are logging on to the Internet for the very first time.

A few people have already struck it big. Guys with beards, thick-rimmed glasses and no business experience whatsoever are going public on Wall Street for profits that should have taken years to accrue. Everyone's caught the scent of wealth. Many have followed it to Forbearance.

Penta Systems came to New Mexico because office space was cheap and silicon plentiful, and no would-be millionaire would dare start up anywhere else. Communities that trace themselves back to the gold rush days are being displaced as neighborhoods they've grown up in suddenly become "hip."

In the new economy, locals rely on freelancing and service jobs. A kid with a bike can get a courier gig. A smart and savvy enough kid could swing a QA job at one of the startups.

And that's to say nothing of the demons. Daemons? It's unclear whether they were born on the Net or whether they're infernal opportunists, but Dark Powers haunt the modem lines, offering wealth and power to those who can do their bidding. What do they want? Maybe just chaos.

For a town in the throes of yet another transition, there's no shortage of it. In Forbearance, how will technology serve you – or you serve it?

Setup

Instead of creating a homeroom layout, decide what computers everyone camps at in the local LAN Cafe.

first the Pueblo / then the Spanish / then prospectors / now techies

Scene Locations

- ✦ John Randall High School
- ✦ Chiba City, a LAN Cafe downtown
- ✦ Juan Paolo's, the last local-owned bodega in the neighborhood
- ✦ Cosmic.com, a courier-based latte delivery startup
- ✦ An empty stretch of highway in the New Mexico Desert

Skins To Include

Forbearance is all about class conflict. The skins represent the old wealth, the new tech wealth, and the poor kids clever enough to exploit it.

The Queen, whose great-great-grandfather John Randall built this shitpile of a town into what it is today. When your family's wealth no longer impresses your peers, what will you do to keep control?

The Infernal, whose sponsorship by a powerful online entity has made them into a digital oracle and trendmaker, with all the power that entails. What does your benefactor demand in return?

The Ghost, who stays hidden in the computer lab, communicating entirely through emails and chat windows. When was the last time someone saw you in corporeal form? Do you ever forget that you even have a body?

The Witch, who flings hexes as skillfully as she hex-edits a database. Your friends don't realize that the littlest scrap of information is all you need to ruin their lives. Who bad-mouthed you on their Livejournal?

The Vampire, a gifted youth whose cold, calculating attitude earned them a place in the industry it suits best: technology. It's easy to be a child prodigy when you've had centuries of practice. How do you see Forbearance in a hundred years?

The Fae, a being from cyberspace who has taken on, experimentally, a humanoid avatar. It's not an easy form to maintain. What happens when the people tagging "DIE TECH SCUM" discover you're a construct?

Los Ranchos

written by Marissa Kelly & Mark Diaz Truman

A southwestern desert town divided by race and class.

population 11,327 / Los Ranchos, New Mexico / colonized territory

Background

Los Ranchos didn't exist until the federal government decided it needed a remote location to house a secret nuclear weapons program. Until 1942, the town was a single ranch built upon lands that were once home to the Tewa Indians, but the government built Los Ranchos National Laboratory (LRNL) to house scientists and engineers dedicated to stopping the Nazis.

After the war, the Lab remained open, recruiting America's best and brightest scientists (and their families) to the remote desert of Northern New Mexico. As the town grew, locals from Albuquerque and Mexican immigrants—both documented and undocumented alike—began settling in the town as well, filling the jobs no one else wanted to tackle.

The immigrants initially kept to themselves, but some held hope for an integrated community. Those hopes died in 1962 when Dr. Wallach—one of the men who developed the original nuclear bomb—killed his daughter's Mexican boyfriend. While he was convicted of the murder, his claims of self-defense caused the city council to “take steps to keep residents safe,” including new segregation laws that kept Mexicans from owning property east of the tracks.

Fifty years have passed... but the memory of Los Ranchos is long. Hispanic families, even those that have been in New Mexico two or three generations, stick to their side of town, and the (mostly) white folks who work for the Lab whisper about the dangers of crossing the tracks after dark.

But the lines that have been drawn are blurring. The courts struck down segregation laws in the 80s, and the newest scientists to come to the labs are mostly Asian. Native pueblos local to the region, emboldened by protests across Indian Country, are making more demands of the city council, and the consistent inequality that the Labs represents is less popular than ever.

Everything is changing. Are you willing to cross the lines...or even erase them altogether?

Scene Locations

- ✦ The abandoned LRNL test site
- ✦ Mesa Roja, towering above the town in the distance
- ✦ Asmiov Science Museum, hours after closing
- ✦ Ophelia's restaurant, the best tamales in town
- ✦ Diego's house party, this Saturday, *cabrón*

Skins To Include

This list focuses on division and segregation, emphasizing connections and barriers across the lines of race, sex, and gender.

The Chosen, who moved here from the East Coast when her mother joined the LRNL staff. How will you survive when Los Ranchos is so far away from everything that matters?

The Ghost, whose death laid the lines for the current turf wars. Why do you want this conflict to continue? What have you see at the LRNL that scares you even beyond death?

The Infernal, who's been cleaning up the messes at the Labs as a part-time janitor. What will you do with your top security clearance? What secrets have you already discovered?

The Vampire, whose family has always protected this region from an ancient force. What are the Labs close to uncovering that might release it? What will you do to stop them?

The Werewolf, whose gang affiliation runs back generations. Is this town still your home? Or is it just a waystation while you look for bigger and better prey out in the wider world?

Purgatory High

written by Kieron Gillen

You thought school couldn't get any worse. Then you died.

Population: Uncertain. The Afterlife, Apparently.

Background

Purgatory High is open to (and, in fact, compulsory for) all young dead people to prepare them for their future afterlife. Really? Most drop out into the fiery pits. You can't be entirely sure you've escaped damnation until you head out of the gates and disappear in a whiff of sulphur or beam of light (to your beatifically boring white-halo job).

Until then, class. How many students are at the school? Hard to tell. The corridors seem to stretch as eternally as the Double-Math class, historically anachronistic mobs rushed along them, guided by the crisply suited teachers. Angels? Devils? Monsters? Whatever the teachers are, you just *know* they're not like you.

Still, after-school could be worse, even if Drama class's obsession with Faust does get a little tiresome, and the regular school dances with everyone miraculously crammed onto a single pinhead are nightmarish. Then there's the football matches between the Hereafter Heretics and the Afterlife Angels, which *always* end up a draw...

Actually, no, after-school is rubbish. But at least it's not hell. Not yet. And it's not too late to discover what's going on – with yourself, and this whole place...

Monsterhearts traditionally uses urban fantasy characters in a mundane environment to explore issues of teenage identity. Purgatory High keeps the character-as-metaphor approach, but has a fantastical setting that satirises normality. You could play this as comic. You could play this as existential horror. The choice is yours. Personally, I'd go Kafka.

Secondly, by implication, unless a character is a certain sort of Christian, their beliefs about the afterlife seem to be mistaken. That seem to be could be important. Even those who do believe in Purgatory almost certainly didn't believe it was an infinite High School. Nevertheless, delineating such content with any people of faith in your group is necessary. One option could be switching things up entirely, and using a different limbo. For example, consider Ancient Egypt, with Thoth as a headmaster, weighing students' hearts upon graduation...

Scene Locations

- ✦ Religious Studies class (otherwise known as "Current Affairs").
- ✦ The Library and its terse Librarian, Merlin.
- ✦ The School Gates and security guard, Pete. Impassable. Made of Pearl.
- ✦ Underneath the bleachers, where the floor is oddly hot to touch.
- ✦ The dormitories, stretching in rows like tombstones.
- ✦ Debate class. Always heated, often literally.

Skins To Include

It's worth remembering: despite the unusual setting, the vast majority of the skins are not normal students. They are, by their very existences, rebels and anomalies.

The Infernal, sold their soul and knows exactly where they're ending up after graduation. What can they do to escape it? What won't they do? They have contacts...

The Ghoul, lived their life restrained, resisting all those pleasures of the flesh. Now, with this second life, their passions are unleashed. It's not too late to taste everything.

The Ghost, who graduated. They were out... and then they were back here, lingering. They've long since forgotten how long ago that was.

The Vampire, has no soul. They shouldn't even be here. But they are. What else about being a vampire is a lie? The hunger remains, but is it real?

The Queen, ruled high school, in life. You were more afraid of what came afterwards. Purgatory High may be their heaven. May it never end...

The Mortal, is extremely confused by absolutely everything. And you would be too.

Sindale

written by Avery Alder

A mining town where the dead refuse to rest.

population 10,000 / Sindale, Nevada / Western Shoshone territory

Background

Sindale, Nevada was a bustling mining town for generations. Nestled at the base of the Ruby Mountains, just west of Secret Peak, it's a few hours drive to any major city.

When there was work, it was steady. Lots of men rolled into town alone, penniless but strong and willing. Many of them built homes there during the hopeful post-war economy.

Now, all three dig sites are inactive. The elders tell strange stories about the southeast tunnel, though its hard to give their words much credence. What is known for sure, though, is that in the late sixties a great tragedy fell upon the town of Sindale. It's not clear exactly how many people died when the tunnel collapsed, because most of the people who were alive back then refuse to talk about it. Definitely more than a few, probably more than a dozen.

At this point, two generations have lived through widespread unemployment and a sense of despondancy. A lot of the old miners have turned bitter and mean. There has been no sense of justice.

There have always been stories, but lately it seems like there are more of them. Baneful whistling coming from deep inside the tunnels. Gurgling from the tailings pond. Dead miners shambling through the night fog, talking without sound, pointing toward nothing at all. Apparitions. Faucets running red with blood, or maybe it was just rust? It was probably just rust. Still.

There's something rotten in Sindale. Are you willing to dig deeper?

Scene Locations

- ✦ Sindale City Cemetery
- ✦ The old burial site by Tailing Pond B
- ✦ Rutwen's Emporium, right after class
- ✦ Diego's, the abandoned restaurant just off Carson St.
- ✦ The pit, a seedy party spot nestled in the bluffs

Skins to Include

This list focuses on internal and social horror, downplaying physical violence and self-motivated gumption.

The Queen, whose family owns the mine and is responsible for the great tragedy that occurred there decades ago. You've got wealth and have been groomed for power. What will your legacy be?

The Ghost, whose death was never accounted for during the great tragedy. Why were you even there on that fateful day?

The Infernal, who found something eldritch and alien submerged in the recesses of the abandoned southeast tunnel of the mine. What is it capable of, and why did the miners never retrieve it?

The Vampire, who fled an angry mob in his last town, and the town before that. Despite its dreary monotony, this place is safe to call home. How long can you lay low and keep your fangs in?

The Mortal, a naively hopeful transfer student who has no idea what this town has been through. Who's cute around here?

Springfield

written by Kira Magrann

Where bigoted humans are the scariest thing around.

Population 12,301 / Springfield, Ohio / Oppressively White foothills of Appalachia

content warning: *when I dreamed up this setting it was before the Trump election, and now neo-Nazism in America is an even more real threat. Play with sensitivity, set the dial on the real scariness and violence wherever your group sees fit, and have a discussion about racism and homophobia and what people feel comfortable with ahead of time. Constantly adjust this with iterative consent.*

Background

Springfield used to be a flourishing Midwestern waystation known for its high quality tool factories and plentiful corn crops. It was a safety hub in the North American Underground Railroad, and hosted women's rights conventions at the turn of the century. Unfortunately, when the industry left in the 80s, so did its progressiveness, leaving it in a declining rust belt ruin.

Sandwiched between the Appalachian Mountains and Amish farmland, this small Ohio town has seen better days. Industry has waned and thrust its mostly white population into a state of poverty. Desperate people turn their frustrated energy to hatred in the form of conservative Christianity and Racist Skinhead culture. The kids do their best to navigate these cultural minefields, but many of them just mimic the life they're exposed to. The high school suffers for the ignorance and hopelessness that the town itself oozes.

The Springfield community itself is small, tight-knit. There are a few outsiders but they've got it pretty rough. Not everyone here is full of anger. A few townspeople are trying to rebuild what was lost. People who want to restore the righteous history of this old place. They're in the minority but they're a small glimmer of hope in the gray skied wasteland.

Springfield is the bleakness of the cornfields saturated with chemicals, empty buildings in disrepair, bitter cold winds and relentless ice, old barns that have collapsed under the weight of neglect, swastikas painted on garage doors. Racist music culture, people in desperate poverty, and a willfully ignorant Christian bigotry are the very human monsters that live in this town.

Punk Lingo

skinhead punks = not racist

racist skinhead punks/nazi punks = racist

Scene Locations

- ✦ Your house that has secret underground railroad spaces and rooms
- ✦ The Amish Farmers Market
- ✦ The old barn where the Nazi skinhead punks throw ragers with bonfires and opiates
- ✦ That old haunted covered bridge in the Appalachian foothills
- ✦ A civil war graveyard with lumpy cold dirt
- ✦ The old church where punk shows happen

Skins To Include

The Werewolf – you're a punk activist who wants to kick all these racist skinheads out of town. What did they do to you personally to make you hate them so much?

The Fae – you're too tender for this town, but just what it needs. You see its beauty and share it in the photos you take. What is the most beautiful thing here to you? Can you save it?

The Ghost – you died saving your sister from a hate crime and your vengeance is palpable. Is revenge really what you want though?

The Ghoul – your family is part of the police force here, so you know where to go for all the best body parts. Why are you starting to care more about the calls coming in?

The Mortal – your mom is super Christian and owns an antique shop in town. All this restriction's got you ready to burst, though. How are you about to rebel?

The Vampire – the local vampire gang is also the biker gang that gives the racist skins their drugs. There's more of them than you, and they're terrifying. How are you distracting yourself from vampire politics at the high school?

The Summer Folk

written by Naomi Clark

Beach towns come alive in summer... but what if the season never ended?

Potter's Neck, NJ / Atlantic barrier island / Municipality / Lenape territory

Background

Potter's Neck used to change with the seasons. In summer, part-timers from the big cities would flood down the long barrier island, from the wealthy estates at its north tip to the cheaper rentals to the south. Longer days and sunlight brought crowded beaches, noisy streets and customers for local businesses, always open late.

As the autumn rains began, vacationers vanished with the warm weather; surf shops closed, midway lights went dark, and boat tours dropped anchor. Year-round residents became the only patrons of the local shops: Italian and Jewish communities who'd grown this town over the buried ashes of a Lenape fishing village, joined recently by browner faces who'd immigrated from South and Central Asia to settle in nearby suburbs.

On a day none remember, the cycle stopped. For a reason none can tell, it's now and forever summertime in Potter's Neck. Autumn hangs in the future, but never quite arrives. Time seems to pass, but those who leave and come back can't remember what they did outside—or perhaps they never left at all. How long can this go on? We may wish the summer heat would last, but on Potter's Neck the boats are never repaired, the amusements never close, and the seeds have no turn to sleep in the earth.

Setup

At the island's midpoint, near the only bridge to the mainland, Playland sprawls from the docks to Main Street's shops. Some of you work here: hawking chewy local delicacies or souvenirs, operating harbor tours or amusement rides, quietly handing over narcotic packets, or just sweeping up. Do you linger in the air-conditioned racket of skeeball and arcade games, under the shadows of the Ferris wheel, or amidst the briny smell of the bay? Draw a rectangle on a piece of paper. Take turns answering these questions: *Where do you hang at Playland, and why? Who or what else tends to pass through or linger?* Draw this location in the rectangle.

Scene Locations

- ✦ The old lighthouse at the northern tip of the island
- ✦ The long, long, pale-sanded beaches
- ✦ Baja Surf Stylings, an uncool surfboard and bike rental shop
- ✦ The Cedars, a gated development at the wealthy end of Potter's Neck
- ✦ Bay Shore Pavilion, the closest large mall on the mainland, a half-hour drive
- ✦ Bay Shore High, near the mall; most island teens attend, or would if it wasn't summer

Skins To Include

The Werewolf, whose family is long on local history but short on status, their fortunes ebbing and flowing with the whims of wealthy tourists. Sometimes, your friends and relatives talk about getting out of Potter's Neck. Why do you insist they stay?

The Hollow, kept in a large, empty house used by her parent as a retreat, or a workshop, or a laboratory. When she can't stare at the sea any longer, she slips into town. What are you looking for in Potter's Neck?

The Ghost, who died in one of the shipwrecks that litter the sea floors and has lingered on the shores and streets ever since. What uncomfortable truths have you seen?

The Serpentine, scion of a family that was powerful in their home country, stolidly middle-class in the suburbs near Potter's Neck, and unused to being cast as intrusive newcomers. What have you brought to be proud of?

The Infernal, who made a bargain to leave Potter's Neck, but has yet to fulfill his end of the bargain or claim his final prize. What is the price you must pay?

The Fae, who revels in the endless summer and owes allegiance to the Queen Under the Waves, who must certainly have *something* to do with the strangeness of seasons.