

HUNTERS

A BUMP IN THE DARK GAME

THIS WORK IS BASED ON
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AND BUMP IN THE DARK BY JEX THOMAS

TEXT USED WITH PERMISSION

WRITING AND LAYOUT BY JEX THOMAS

THIS GAME WAS PRODUCED USING AFFINITY SUITE

TYPEFACES ARE MARKER TWINS AND SPECTRAL

THANKS TO MIKEY, RILEY, HENDRIK,
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PREMISE

Last Pine is not like other places. Sure, it may seem like just another small town, but there are all kinds of weird things going on that the adults never seem to notice. You try to tell your parents and they just brush you off. Teachers? Same thing. It's messed up! So you and your friends have decided that if the adults won't do anything about it, you will. You're here to investigate all the weird things happening and, if you can, put a stop to them.

RULES

TAKE ACTION. Describe what you're doing and roll a die. If it's a **6**, you succeed. If it's a **4/5**, you succeed but there's a **problem**. If it's a **1-3**, you fail and there's a **problem**.

ADD DICE. Use **bonus dice**, get **help**, and/or mark **2 luck** to roll with +1 die. The highest die is your result.

GO FOR BROKE. Describe how you're pushing yourself into dangerous territory and roll your action. If there's a problem, it's a **worse problem**, but you mark **1 hope** if you succeed.

HELP ANOTHER HUNTER. You can spend your **bonus dice** on another hunter's actions, and/or mark **1 luck** to give them +1 die.

RESIST A PROBLEM. Just say "no, that doesn't happen" and mark **2 luck**. Describe how you avoid it.

TROUBLE. Campaign play only: When you mark your last **luck** box, clear all marked luck, mark **trouble**, and take an **advance**. When you mark your last **trouble**, your parents or some other authority figure force you into (very early) retirement. *Uh oh, permanently grounded!*

YOU ARE

NAME/PRONOUNS: _____

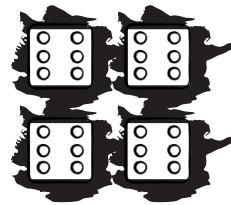
AGE: ☐ Teen ☐ Tween ☐ Child ☐ Other

LOOK: ☐ Boy ☐ Girl ☐ Ambiguous ☐ Fluid
☐ Concealed ☐ Other: _____

YOU'VE GOT

☐ BRAINS ☐ BRAWN ☐ GUTS ☐ HEART ☐ WEIRD

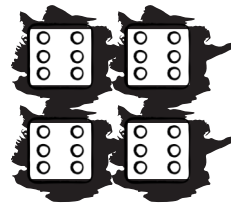
If this would help you with an action, you can cross off any amount of these **bonus dice** and add them to the roll. Once you've crossed off a die, it's gone for the rest of the hunt.



AND AN ABILITY

- ☐ **Compel** action, intimidate, lead others
- ☐ **Connect** with others, network, comfort
- ☐ **Hunt** a target, follow clues, hit from a distance
- ☐ **Rig** mechanisms/machines, assemble or disassemble, hack
- ☐ **Scramble** out of danger or into place, act quickly, climb to safety
- ☐ **Sneak** quietly, use sleight of hand, hide
- ☐ **Study** details, gather and interpret evidence, anticipate
- ☐ **Sway** with smarts, charm, or argument, negotiate, persuade
- ☐ **Wreck** stuff, act with force, fight if you have to

If this would help you with an action, you can cross off any amount of these **bonus dice** and add them to the roll. Once you've crossed off a die, it's gone for the rest of the hunt.



AND GEAR

You have whatever it makes sense for you to have, and one **special item**:

- ☐ Lucky Charm ☐ Favorite Snack ☐ Camera
- ☐ Folding Pocket Knife ☐ Idiosyncratic Toy
- ☐ Other _____

Once per hunt, when you use your special item, you may clear **1 luck** or mark **1 hope** (your choice).

LUCK



HOPE



TROUBLE



ADVANCES

Campaign play only.

You are ...

- ☐ ☐ **Adept.** Take another ability (up to 2x)
- ☐ **Alert.** Twice per hunt, you can **help another hunter** without marking **luck**
- ☐ **Attuned.** You're always aware of supernatural entities in your presence
- ☐ **Charming.** Mark **1 luck** to cause any hostile parties nearby to pause while you speak
- ☐ **Clumsy.** Mark **1 luck** to stumble into something useful, now. The keeper will tell you what.
- ☐ **Lucky.** Once per hunt, you may clear **1 luck** and re-roll any single die
- ☐ **Prepared.** Once per hunt, you can flashback to set up a trap, cause a distraction, or **help another hunter** without marking luck
- ☐ **Savvy.** You always know when someone is lying to you
- ☐ **Tough.** Once per hunt, you can ignore a **problem**



FOR THE KEEPER

Hunters, Inc. is a lightweight version of *Bump in the Dark* designed for one-shot and short series play in the style of *Scooby-Doo* (particularly the 2010 series *Mystery, Incorporated*), *Gravity Falls*, *Trollhunters: Tales of Arcadia*, *Paper Girls*, and maybe a PG version of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. The game focuses on kids and teens investigating supernatural mysteries around the town of Last Pine. For more information about the setting, check out *Bump in the Dark*!

YOUR JOBS

SETUP. Print sheets, bring a handful of six-sided dice, explain the premise, set expectations and boundaries, etc.

PACING. Cut to the fun stuff, use montages, hand out problems to scare and thrill them, propel the story forward.

TONE. So, this game isn't *Scooby-Doo* but asking which *version* of the classic cartoon your game is most like will be useful. Are things zany or more serious? Is the supernatural real? How bad can hunters get hurt? Regardless, they can't be killed and they shouldn't kill other people. If you want grittier than that, you can try it, but *Bump in the Dark* might be a better fit.

DECISIONS. Say no if you need to maintain tone, fairness, or excitement. Otherwise say yes and/or ask for a roll.

DANGER. Set up obstacles and dish out problems. They need you to do this for them. Don't be afraid to go hard.

BE A FAN. The hunters are the stars. You want to see them succeed, but success is only meaningful if they have to fight for it. Be interested in the characters and excited about their victories while presenting the world honestly.

PROBLEMS

When a hunter rolls a problem, you can:

- Introduce danger, like a monster or an adult
- Reveal a looming threat they hadn't noticed
- Complicate the situation
- Take away an opportunity
- Inflict a condition (*winded, scared, etc.*) that takes them out of the scene for a moment

For worse problems:

- Separate them
- Break their gear
- Inflict a condition (*knocked out, terrified, etc.*) that takes them out of the action for an entire scene
- Endanger someone they care about (such as another hunter of a beloved NPC)
- Deal out two or more standard problems

THE HUNT

To be able to face off against the monster that's causing trouble (or whoever is posing as the monster, as the case may be), the hunters will search for **clues**. They do this by **taking actions**. For an easy hunt, prepare 3-4 clues. For a harder hunt, prepare 5 or more. When they've found all of them, they're ready for the **showdown**.

THE SHOWDOWN

When the hunters have found all the clues, ask them who or what the monster is, what it wants, and how they can stop it. When they come up with an answer everyone finds satisfying, ask every hunter to make a **showdown roll**.

They each roll one die and the highest result counts for everyone.

If it's a **6**, they start off with an advantage when they face off against the monster and everyone marks **1 hope**. If it's a **4/5**, they're on even footing. If it's a **1-3**, the monster has the upper hand and there are **problems** for everyone.

THE MONSTER

In this game, you don't prepare your monster ahead of time. In fact, you won't know what the monster is for sure until the showdown roll and the hunters tell you. That's okay! Just be ready to think on your feet and think about what obstacles the hunters will need to get past in order to defeat the monster during the showdown and what abilities make sense based on how the hunters put the clues together. And remember, fighting is one way to deal with a monster, but it's not always the most effective way. The hunters should use a variety of tactics to take the monster down and save the day.

DOWNTIME

After a hunt, hunters can spend their **hope** on cool moments and describe them. *In a one-shot, this will be their epilogue. In a short series or campaign, this is what happens between hunts.*

1 HOPE

- Cut loose with another hunter, NPC, or the whole crew
- Make a discovery, have a revelation, or find a lead related to an ongoing plot
- Share a memory you'll cherish ... or one you hope to forget

2 HOPE

- Have a heart-to-heart with another hunter, NPC, or the whole crew
- Demonstrate significant personal growth or advancement of one of your character arcs
- Find a new connection, ally, or love interest

3 HOPE

- Smooth things over with the adults of Last Pine (for now)
- Flashback to a pivotal moment in your life before hunting monsters

4 HOPE

- Foil a dark conspiracy that's been brewing in the background, either single-handedly or with the crew's assistance



THE HUNT

A session of *Hunters, Inc.* plays out like an episode of a “monster of the week” TV show, starting with a hook that pulls you into the mystery, then some investigation, followed by a showdown with the monster (or whoever’s really responsible for what’s going on in Last Pine this week). Then, after the monster is defeated, there’s some downtime. This whole “episode” is called a **hunt**.

EXAMPLE HOOK

There have always been rumors that the **Eternal Gardens Labor Memorial** has been haunted by the ghosts of disgruntled miners, but lately strange occurrences have been harder to explain away. Visitors to the monument have been scared off, and **Erland Givens**, the longtime grounds-keeper, was recently injured trying to run away from what he claims was a 8-foot tall apparition. You’ve managed to convince the school not to call off this year’s field trip to the monument, hoping to figure out what’s *really* going on.

PEOPLE

- **Miss Lach** (she/her, *energetic, skeptical, kind*) is leading your class’s field trip this year. She’s glad they didn’t cancel since all this ghost stuff is bogus anyway.
- **Eddie** (he/they, *concerned, interested, kind of strange*) wants to see a ghost and he’ll pay you five dollars if you can make it happen.
- **Sam** (he/him, *shy, a little scared, nice haircut*) is sure ghosts don’t exist but okay listen but what if they did?
- **Nakeisha** (she/her, *curious, steadfast, bookish*) knows a lot about the history of the monument. Like, *a lot* a lot.
- **Dr. Andrews** (he/him, *brainy, eccentric, paternal*) is the representative from the Historical Society leading the tour. If anyone can make historical labor disputes interesting, it’s ... not this guy, sorry. So boring!
- **Mr. Givens** (he/him, *old, cranky, crackpot*) broke his arm trying to get away from what he swears was a ghost. But if he was so scared, why is he back at work already?
- **Eleanor Hilgart** (she/her, *anxious, demanding, dismissive*) owns the Christmas tree farm across the street. She says she saw the ghost and even took its picture.

CLUES

Make the clues fit the developing narrative, not the other way around. Don’t prepare where or when they’re going to be found or what they mean. Instead, give them context as they’re discovered by the hunters in play. Remember that clues aren’t breadcrumbs to follow, bringing you to some preordained solution, but a web that players pull together when they make the **showdown roll**.

- The smell of coffee
- Broken stones
- Muddy footprints
- Crushed pine needles
- Tales of glowing eyes
- Torn bed sheet
- Key ring with dozens of keys
- Halloween mixtape
- Green luminescent ooze
- Secret tunnels

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

If you’re struggling to think of ways to complicate the investigation, try one of these:

- Someone shows up at the monument trying to stir up trouble
- Classmates share contradictory ghost stories and possible explanations
- Eleanor’s photograph is blurry and indistinct
- There are clear signs that the ghost sighting was faked – but could they be red herrings?
- A gaggle of ornery geese have made the monument their home and make investigation nearly impossible without dealing with them first
- Someone at the scene is trying hard to interfere with the investigation

EXAMPLE OBSTACLES AND MONSTER ABILITIES

After the hunters have made the showdown roll, you’ll know what the monster is, what it wants, and how they expect to get rid of it. With this information in mind, you should be able to improvise the monster’s actions and reactions during the showdown.

If you’re having a tough time, consider some or all of the following:

- The monster is nowhere to be found; the hunters must track it down first
- Someone at the scene is trying to protect the monster for unknown reasons
- The monster is seemingly able to phase through walls and structures, evading capture
- The monster is supernaturally strong
- The monster can possess or control people temporarily
- The ghosts of dead miners appear and must be dealt with before facing the monster
- The monster is intent on hurting an innocent bystander