

The apartment still reeks of burning carpet and melted plastic, even a year after the Fire. People don't go in there any more, not since the Andropov boy snuck in on a dare and came out sick. No one will buy the building, and so it squats on its corner lot, decaying, rotting like a corpse left in the sun.

No one goes there any more, and people cross the street rather than pass under its yawning windows—and yet, sometimes, if you glance at the right window at the right time of day, you might just catch a glimpse of an old man, sallow and sunken-cheeked, in a once-white lab coat marred with soot and scorch marks. He's only there for a moment, and if you blink you might think you imagined him.

There's something in his face though. Like he's keeping watch for something. Something he's absolutely terrified of.

COLLECTION

OF

HORRORS

FRANKENSTEIN'S MOBSTER

**A Storytelling Adventure System
anthology for Hunter: The Vigil**

WHITE WOLF PUBLISHING, INC.
2075 WEST PARK PLACE
BLVD SUITE C
STONE MOUNTAIN, GA 30087

Written by Ben Counter, Bethany Culp, Stephen Michael DiPesa, Jess Hartley, Martin Henley, David Hill, Filamena Hill, Howard Wood Ingham, John Kennedy, Matthew McFarland, John Newman, Alex Scokel, Travis Stout, Eddy Webb
Developed by Eddy Webb Audio produced by Michael Read Edited by Genevieve Podleski
Layout by Jessica Mullins Art by Aaron Acevedo, Sam Araya, Avery Butterworth, Nicole Cardiff, Karl Christensen, Jim Dibartolo, dagnation, Costas Harritas, Phil Hilliker, Vince Locke, Ken Meyer Jr, Jim Pavelec, Juan Serrano, Brad Williams, Cathy Wilkins
Special thanks to our voice actors for giving up a Saturday to help us out:
Anna Albano, Nathan Binder, David Bounds, Natasha Bryant-Raible, Priscilla Kim, Vincent Lombardo, Orrin Loria, Weston Reid, Rich Thomas, Michelle Webb

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Frankenstein's Mobster

 MENTAL ..

PHYSICAL ..

 SOCIAL ...

Overview

Professor Vissarion Yudenich accomplished something only a handful of men throughout history have done: out of death, he created life. In the wake of the Chernobyl disaster in April of 1986, Yudenich blended atomic science with bizarre alchemical formulae and harnessed the power of ultimate annihilation to imbue a human corpse with a semblance of life. Perhaps there was a flaw in his methods, or perhaps it was in his procedure, but the creature born of Yudenich's experiment was not the "new Soviet man" he had hoped for, but a grinning cadaver that leaked poison from its very soul.

Shocked and dismayed by what he perceived as his failure, Yudenich fled, abandoning his creation in the cellar of an abandoned house in Pripyat, Ukraine. The professor assumed his creation would soon starve to death or be consumed by the lingering radiation from Chernobyl, but he underestimated the creature's durability and will to live. Some twenty-odd years after the Chernobyl incident, Yudenich received a letter from a man calling himself Oleg Chernenko. The letter explained how Oleg had finally tracked down his "father" after so many years, told how he had become a powerful and influential man—and asked that Yudenich share the knowledge that had brought him into the world.

Yudenich's response was both brief and final (and can be found on pp. 35-48 of the **Horror Recognition Guide**). There was only one reason Oleg might want to know how he was created, and Yudenich wanted no part of it. Three days after sending his response, Yudenich died in a freak gas explosion. Three days after *that*, a high-level lieutenant of Mafiya boss Oleg Chernenko was found dead in the Moskva River. (Yudenich's death was supposed to look like a natural expiration; the lieutenant opened the gas lines to smother the old man, not realizing Yudenich was a chain smoker.) The explosion destroyed any notes Yudenich might have kept on the creation of Chernenko—or so the mobster believed.

The characters might enter into this scene in a variety of ways. Chernenko himself is ideally suited to being a long-term antagonist for a hunter cell, so

the characters might already have motivation to be researching Oleg. Said research might lead to the gas line explosion that claimed the life of Professor Yudenich—a story also linked to local reports of a haunted apartment block and a child contracting a sudden case of radiation sickness after sneaking into the place. Alternately, Chernenko himself might hire the characters (likely through an intermediary), particularly if they have developed a reputation for dealing with ghosts, to see if they can recover any information from the shade that supposedly haunts the building. It's also entirely possible that the characters have never even heard of Chernenko before, and are just investigating what they think is a routine haunted house.

This scene is set in Moscow, in the burned-out ruin of Yudenich's apartment building. If you don't want to send the characters to the other side of the world (assuming your chronicle isn't set in Moscow), it's easy enough to say Yudenich emigrated to wherever the characters call home sometime in the 90s, or mailed his secret notes to a colleague in another city where Yudenich's ghost appeared upon his death, with the notes serving as its anchor.

Description

The crumbling shell of the apartment building rises three squat, ugly stories off of the street. The upper walls are blackened with soot, and the windowpanes, long since blown out by the fire, are covered with plastic tarps. In place of doors, the entrance is blocked by several boards, crudely nailed across the gaping doorways and half-rotted by exposure. A crumpled notice on grimy yellow paper is stapled to one of the boards, informing you in no uncertain terms that the building is condemned by order of the civic authorities.

The first-floor windows have been shattered and were never covered, but a quick glance inside shows no sign of recent habitation - no used needles, no discarded food wrappers, not even used condoms. Making your way inside, you feel a chill in the air that is horribly separate from the usual Muscovite weather. The light scarcely penetrates beyond the windows, casting the entire scene in an eerie half-light. Sometimes, when the traffic noises outside lull for a moment, you can hear a faint, distant clicking, like the sound of a Geiger counter registering a high level of radiation.

Storyteller Goals

This scene is primarily intended to give the characters information about the Ukrainian mobster Oleg “Wormwood” Chernenko. Although there is an element of danger to dealing with the ghost of Vissarion Yudenich and claiming his notes on the creation of Oleg, this scene should give the players a sense of accomplishment. They have (presumably) done the work of discovering the link between Yudenich and Chernenko, and now they deserve to be rewarded for that work.

Depending on how the characters interact with Yudenich’s ghost, this scene might also establish the shade as a potential contact or even ally, especially if the characters are working to thwart some plan of Chernenko’s. The ghost retains only patches of its former memories and personality, but it might be able to help in translating the encoded notes that serve as its last remaining anchor. Obviously, if the characters exorcise or destroy the ghost, this option is not available.

If you are instead using this scene to introduce Chernenko as a plot element, feel free to increase Yudenich’s overall level of hostility toward intruders. Run it more like a traditional haunted house story, and once the characters have laid Yudenich to rest, let them find his coded notes detailing the creation of life out of the death and destruction of Chernobyl.

Character Goals

Depending on how the Storyteller has used Oleg Chernenko thus far in the chronicle, this scene can have a few different goals. If the characters have already encountered Chernenko in the course of the chronicle, they probably have at least an idea that he’s more than a simple mobster, and they might even know how damn hard to kill he really is. (Chernenko is one of the Reanimated, an artificial being born of corpses and atomic fire, and he has uncanny preternatural resilience.) In that case, the goal is to find some evidence of a weakness that can be exploited. What form that weakness might take is likely not obvious, since the characters have probably never encountered something like Chernenko before; even if they have faced the Reanimated before, Chernenko belongs to an extremely new type.

If the characters know about Chernenko, but don’t know what he is (or how tough he is), they’re likely investigating in the hopes of learning more about him. They might be aware that things aren’t quite right with him, or even that he is a monster in a rather more literal

sense than the usual Mafiya boss, but they’re probably going in with a less-defined idea of what they’re looking for. If the characters have never even heard of Oleg Chernenko, they might just be looking to clear a haunted house.

There is some element of physical danger to the characters, especially if they fail to placate Yudenich’s ghost. Tier one and tier two hunters will probably be in more danger than tier three hunters, since the latter are more likely to have access to equipment and abilities to deal with the ethereal.

Actions

Although you should feel free to set a mood of eerie anticipation with ghostly phenomena (and possibly even the occasional poltergeist attack with a piece of wood or a loose chunk of masonry), the real action of this scene begins when the characters reach the ruins of Yudenich’s third-floor apartment. At that point, Yudenich’s ghost manifests, jabbering in Russian about prodigal sons and the Divine Atom and other phrases that make even less sense. He is initially hostile and will use his Numina to try to drive the characters away, but if they persist he will escalate to lethal measures. The entire time he attacks, he repeatedly cries that Chernenko will never have the secrets of his own creation and that “one abomination in this world is enough.”

Even ordinary hunters have no shortage of options for dealing with ghosts (as described on pp. 212-214 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**), and tier three hunters have several more. While abjuring or exorcising the ghost of Vissarion Yudenich are entirely valid approaches, the characters might also try to reason with Yudenich and convince him that they want to help him. Particularly if they know of Oleg and assure him that they are working against the gangster, they might have a shot at calming him down and getting some help from him.

Reasoning with Vissarion Yudenich

Dice Pool: Presence + Expression or Manipulation + Subterfuge vs. Resistance (dice pool 8)

Action: Extended and contested; each roll represents one turn of trying to break through the ghost’s wrath.

This action works a little bit differently than most social interactions, as Yudenich’s ghost is anything but a rational being. Rather than the character trying to persuade the ghost to come around to her point of view, she is attempting to punch through the ghost’s single-minded

focus on keeping Chernenko from acquiring the secrets of his own “birth.” To that end, the player must accumulate a number of successes equal to Yudenich’s Resistance, but you (rolling for Yudenich) must simply exceed the player’s current number of successes to win.

Hindrances: Character mentions Chernenko in a neutral fashion (-1), character mentions Chernenko in a positive fashion (-3), character expresses interest in learning how Chernenko was created (-2), character has been exposed to radiation within the past 24 hours (-1). Each of these hindrances applies to a single roll only.

Help: Character repudiates Chernenko or makes it clear they don’t work for him (+1), character indicates a desire to destroy Chernenko (+3), character mentions positive aspect of Yudenich’s mortal life (wife, children, his humanitarian work with nuclear containment and cleanup, +1), character can prove that he has fought Chernenko in the past (+2). Each of these benefits can apply to a single roll only.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: If you roll a dramatic failure for Yudenich’s ghost, its anger drains away almost visibly, leaving the spirit little more than a translucent afterimage of a frail, elderly man. Nothing the characters say at that point can incite the ghost to violence again.

If the player rolls a dramatic failure, the shade’s resolve crumbles completely. Instead of trying to frighten the characters away, it becomes convinced that the characters are Chernenko’s minions and tries to kill them with every weapon at its disposal. No other character can attempt to calm the spirit down during this scene. At that point, the characters might implement a more drastic solution, or they can come back another day; Yudenich’s ghost has little concept of memory or time, allowing the players to try again with a fresh slate.

Failure: No successes are accumulated toward the total.

Success: Successes are accumulated toward the total. If the player wins the contest, Yudenich’s spirit calms down and becomes willing to listen (but see “Consequences” for further possibilities). Should the ghost win, it cannot be calmed down by that character and will continue to rage and bluster against the characters until they leave or are killed, or the ghost itself is destroyed or abjured. Another character may attempt to calm the spirit where the first character fails, but each subsequent attempt suffers a cumulative -2 penalty to all rolls.

Exceptional Success: Tremendous progress is made toward the goal. If the player wins the contested action with five or more extra successes,

the spirit willingly gives up its anchor (the notes on Oleg’s creation) and can help with the translation of the code. If you succeed with five or more extra successes for Yudenich, the ghost’s wrath focuses on the character trying to soothe it: the ghost gains a +2 bonus on any attacks against that character for the rest of the scene.

Consequences

If the characters succeed in calming Yudenich, they can attempt to ply the ghost for information using the normal rules for social skills. Apply the Hindrances and Help listed above as modifiers to any actions, and if any player rolls a dramatic failure, the ghost becomes enraged again. Assuming the ghost can be communicated with, it can provide rough, disjointed accounts of Chernenko’s “birth” which are more metaphor than fact, and can provide help translating the notes.

If the characters destroy or banish the ghost, a search of the room reveals an old fireproof safe amidst the burned-out rubble, inside which is a cracked, battered leather binder full of grimy, hand-scrawled notes in a bizarre, alchemical cipher. Without Yudenich’s guidance, they must translate it themselves.

If the characters let it get around that they have these notes, within a week Oleg will attempt to acquire them for himself. If his relationship with the characters is neutral (or if they are unknown to him) he will offer to buy them for an exorbitant sum; if he has clashed with the characters before, it’s time for the mobsters and shambling hordes of the walking dead.

OLEG CHERNENKO

Chernenko himself does not feature directly in this scene, but he makes an excellent antagonist nonetheless. If you have access to **Saturnine Night** for **Promethean: The Created**, you’ll find Oleg on pp. 95-96. If not, you can use the stats for a gangbanger as found on p. 205 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**. Add the Merits Strong Lungs, Iron Stomach and Iron Stamina ••, up the Status rating to 3, and give him the Dread Powers Agonize ••, Balefire ••, Fury •• and Terrify ••. Finally, he has all of the abilities described under “Powers of the Reanimated” on p. 311 of *Hunter: The Vigil*.

Vissarion Yudenich, Restless Demiurge

Quotes: "Mistake! Abomination! Never again!"

"The prodigal son, no, no brothers, no sons for the prodigal son!"

"The Red Star was born a child in a manger in Pripyat. Oh god, the fire! The words of the angel!"

Virtue: Charity. Yudenich believed throughout his life that it was the duty of the gifted to help those less fortunate than himself.

Vice: Pride. Yudenich, especially in his youth, was possessed of the kind of arrogance that would lead a man to scorn the laws of man and God alike in his effort to create a new form of life.

Background: Vissarion Yudenich was a brilliant Soviet nuclear physicist, born in Ukraine and educated at the Soviet Academy of Sciences. In the 1950s, he was stationed at the top-secret "science city" of Seversk, where his theories on nuclear containment were alternately considered brilliant or insane (often both at once). At some point during this phase of his career, he came into possession of a journal reputedly belonging to Victor Frankenstein, detailing his creation of life through the use of a force he called "Pyros."

Yudenich at first scoffed at the idea, but upon reading the notes he realized that, though Frankenstein's science was crude, with a modern understanding of nuclear containment it just might work.

He got his chance to try in April 1986, while working to help contain the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl. Stealing the body of a victim of the radiation, he enacted his experiment—and created something wholly new and wholly monstrous. Horrified at the creature he had "birthed," Yudenich fled while the thing remained insensate, and quietly retired shortly thereafter. It was nearly 20 years later before the creature contacted its creator, hoping to learn how to make more

HUNTER THE VIGIL

Name: Vissarion Yudenich
Concept: Restless Demiurge

Virtue: Charity
Vice: Pride

Power ●●●●●○○○○○	Finesse ●●●●●○○○○○	Resistance ●●●●●●●○○○
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SKILLS	NUMINA	Dice Pool	CORPUS
<input type="checkbox"/> 00000	Ghost Sign	10	●●●●●●●●●●
<input type="checkbox"/> 00000	Magnetic Disruption	N/A	□□□□□□□□□□
<input type="checkbox"/> 00000	Radioactive Blast	10	●○○○○○○○○○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> 00000	Telekinesis	10	□□□□□□□□□□
<input type="checkbox"/> 00000			WILLPOWER
<input type="checkbox"/> 00000			●●●●●●●●●●
<input type="checkbox"/> 00000			□□□□□□□□□□
<input type="checkbox"/> 00000			●●●○○○○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> 00000			□□□□□□□□□□
<input type="checkbox"/> 00000			ESSENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 00000			□□□□□□□□□□
<input type="checkbox"/> 00000			□□□□□□□□□□
<input type="checkbox"/> 00000	INFLUENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 00000		00000	Morality <u>6</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> 00000		00000	Aspect _____
<input type="checkbox"/> 00000		00000	Rank _____
<input type="checkbox"/> 00000		00000	Size <u>5</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> 00000		00000	Speed <u>20</u> (species factor 10)
<input type="checkbox"/> 00000		00000	Defense <u>5</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> 00000		00000	Initiative Mod <u>13</u>

NOTES

Radioactive Blast: The ghost spends a point of Willpower and rolls Power + Finesse minus the target's Stamina. Each success inflicts one point of bashing damage. On an exceptional success, the damage is lethal.

like itself. When Yudenich refused, the creature had him killed. Now his ghost haunts the burned out ruin of his Moscow apartment block, anchored to the last surviving copy of the notes he used to create his abomination.

Description: The ghost of Vissarion Yudenich appears much as the man himself did in life: a small, sickly-thin man with sallow skin and a few wisps of stringy, black hair still remaining. He appears dressed in a conservative, 1950s-era suit and wears thick, horn-rimmed glasses.

When roused to anger, his appearance becomes a horrific caricature of himself: the glasses merge with his face, becoming great, bulging white eyes, and his skin becomes red and parchment-like, resembling that of a man exposed to intense radiation.

Storytelling Hints: Yudenich's only remaining goal is to prevent the creation of more creatures like Oleg Chernenko. His spirit attempts to scare off or kill anyone who comes close to finding his notes—which has included several of Chernenko's goons. Due perhaps to the lingering energy of Chernenko's creation, the ghost has some power over radiation, and can use it as a potent weapon.

Prop

Translated Cypher

...the power of the atom is the key to
his life. Denied this, the creature
cannot live, and yet with an abundance
it might once again.
Only total dissolution
I think.

curious that Fire seems to wreak havoc
on the containment of the Divine Atom.
cannot isolate the cause, but sufficient

fatally disrupt the matrix.

