

UNCANNY ECHO

SERIALIZED ROLEPLAYING

ISSUE 3: RESTLESS

WHAT THIS IS

Uncanny Echo is a serialized roleplaying game. It borrows from part of the Apocalypse World engine created by D. Vincent Baker and Meguey Baker. Games using elements of the Apocalypse World engine are often referred to as Powered by the Apocalypse (PbtA).

Uncanny Echo contains small, episodic stories rooted in mysterious or eerie events that unravel with each issue. Something somewhat normal becomes something else: surreal, unearthly... uncanny.

Each issue is a pick-up-and-play one shot, intended to form an ongoing serialized narrative that has a meta-narrative external from any given session. Within these modular experiences, each game will differ greatly with player input. Each uncanny story is of your own making, and unfolds in an emergent manner. You to play to find out what happens with as little cognitive load as possible.

These one shots will sometimes be directly connected to the next issue; other times you will decide how they fit together. They may simulate jump cuts to unrelated events, returning later to the circumstances in previous months, just as a movie or TV show would from scene to scene or episode to episode. As more are released, you may choose to play them in whatever order you choose.

In issue 0: The Heist (available for free), players robbed a bank, based very loosely on the movie *The Town*, with a twist: not all vaults are meant to contain money. What this bank vault kept secure is up to you and the other players.

Each month will be a different experience within the same game world. With each issue, you'll discover how each event relates to the one before it—a process largely determined by you.

CHANGING THE GAME

You still use stats with modifiers as in most PbtA games. Each stat line is already embedded in each playbook for you. You similarly roll two six-sided dice plus the modifier, as normal.

However, instead of gaining XP or experience, you will instead advance your character using Keys in your playbook. Each Key prescribes specific actions or fiction for your character to play out in your game. When you describe these actions or fiction, you unlock a move in your playbook.

Each Key acts as a narrative guidepost to help pace your game. When you have all your moves (or all the ones you want to use), it is time to corral the story to a conclusion.

Drive your characters like stolen cars. Remember, there is a larger fiction at work beyond this single issue. This one character you embody now might be someone you return to in a later issue, or perhaps someone you will never play again. Either way, the story will move forward.

12. 6. 27c.

Milí Mladenci!

Když jsem vaše poznání se odpočinu
 hravě přečísti rozhodl jsem se
 Mladenci Mělo jsem k vám už před
 našim stár stár pak, se vrátit se rovnou
 k práci... Mělo jsem k vám už před
 poznání jsem se stane se stane se stane
 Půjde...

Pravě



ISSUE THREE

RESTLESS

There is something not quite right at your local nursing home.

Your friends, peers, and fellow residents have been going missing recently—never to be heard from again. However, nobody seems to care enough to do something about it.

These young folks who visit the home, and the staff who work here, don't have the sense or the wherewithal to figure out what's going on. They don't have the tenacity to see the strangeness of it all. Thankfully, the fire and passion in your heart and bones never truly went away. It's time to do something about this yourselves.

Society may not regard you as its fittest or most capable citizens. But as far as these problems go, you don't need saving. You have your life, limbs, and experience to get to the bottom of the situation.

In this issue you play old folks who care enough to figure out how and why your fellow neighbors have gone missing, and you'll need no help to do it, either. These characters are competent protagonists who just-so-happen to live in a care facility for older people.

Typically, fiction places these people on the sidelines of stories. In this game, you are smart and capable, and make use of any of your peculiarities even, to solve a mystery no one else can. Embrace the idea of being just as badass and cool as other protagonists in previous issues, as well as fiction in general, while you take up your walker or cane and give this mystery what for!

This issue is meant to feel a little like *Bubba Ho-Tep*, where an unlikely protagonist is withering away in a nursing home without the fire of life he once had—until the opportunity to fight for his soul and save his fellow residents reignites his passion and joy of life again. Now he and another resident are the only people who can solve what is going on at this facility... and perhaps rescue everyone in the home from a similar fate.

Just like *Bubba Ho-Tep*, this issue also contains a catalyst for a mysterious adventure. Residents are going missing, and you are the only people brave and passionate enough to uncover this mystery! Otherwise, just as in other issues, the narrative is yours as players to play to find out.

Assumptions and procedures in the fiction for this issue:

- This is a brand new arc of *Uncanny Echo*, which means this issue focuses on an uncanny event. The next issue will be an echo—following the same patterns as issues 0 through 2.
- There is a mystery that you, the nursing home residents, are working together to solve, abstracting your progress with a *Clock*.
- You're all capable individuals, despite any limitations you may have.
- Play to find out if the uncanny event is the mystery, or if uncovering the mystery triggers the uncanny event.

The following text will go into more detail.

HOW TO BEGIN

First Step: Make a six-sided Clock for a 2-3 hour game, or a eight-sided Clock for a little bit longer of a time period. This Clock represents the mystery in the home, which the players uncover through the fiction. Label it “mystery”.

Second Step: Ask and answer any of the questions below that interest you and the other players to flesh out the world and the mystery. Save the second set of questions for after character creation.

Third Step: Players choose from any of the four playbooks below and fill them out. The following is brief intro to each playbook:
Note: People can select the same playbook if they so choose.

The Schemer has a friend they play cards with, who can come to the Schemer’s aid in many situations. They think strategically, trying to predict the outcome of an action and what someone might do next.

The Borrower has a habit of taking things and storing them in their pockets for later. They can materialize things from their pockets at opportune moments for a cost. They can also lay claim to items around the home as their own, and know instantly if someone else touches them. The TV remote, Reader’s Digest, you know—whatever.

The Muzzled was placed in the home unwillingly, and modified in some way to obscure their true identity. They are a mystery in their own right, and have more narrative control when puzzling things out.

The Brave has been around the block and doesn't take crap from people. You intimidate people, but that doesn't necessarily mean that you're a jerk, either. You have a commanding presence and voice, you can hold your own in a fight, and you probably don't take any sass!

Fourth Step: Finally, check out the Keys on each playbook and do a vignette scene targeted at hitting a specific Key to highlight the lives of each character before beginning play. When you hit that first one, you choose your first move.

A typical session of Restless plays out like a mystery drama. Begin your story by finding out why the characters care about the other missing folks, establish rumours about why folks are going missing in the first place, and then go looking for the answer. As the players progress in unraveling this mystery, the Clock moves forward.

You'll note in this issue there is no opposing Clock. Protagonists discover the mystery, with obstacles introduced as normal, and figure out what is happening through play, ultimately.

During play, remember the peripheral move: Weave In The Uncanny. As the fiction progresses, ask for details about the home, and pepper in your own, regarding the uncanny, strange, and mysterious things happening in the fiction. Then use those ideas to create the actual mystery, integrating anything interesting that comes up in play.

End the issue with the characters giving an epilogue for each of their characters.

THE QUESTIONS

As in the format of adventure starters in The Gauntlet's monthly zine, Codex, some of the fiction should be devoted to evocative questions about the specific scenario, circumstances, or location. Choose from any of the following questions to answer, or pose some of your own after character creation.

- 1) **What kind of uncanny are you going for?** Dark, gritty, intense, scary, etc.
- 2) What is the name of the old folks' home, nursing home, care facility, etc.?
- 3) What rumours have made the rounds about what is happening to the missing folks?
- 4) Is there a nurse, orderly, etc. That is particularly despised or beloved?
- 5) How are residents treated in general?

After creating characters, then answer:

- 1) Have any characters changed their disposition toward the home since becoming a resident?
- 2) What is each character's favorite room or activity in the home?
- 3) Why does each character care personally about the missing residents?

BASIC MOVES

Hold Your Own: When you try to push through something despite fear, danger, or risk, roll+Gutsy. On a 10+, you do it, no problem. On a 7-9, you do it but also stumble, hesitate, flinch, or a cost or complication occurs—for you or another.

Take A Gander: When you bring your considerable life experience and knowledge to bear on a problem, situation, or person, roll+Crafty. On a 10+, ask 2. On a 7-9, ask 1.

- Is this going to get worse before it gets better?
- How could I get _____ to _____?
- Where would I probably be able to find _____?
- Is there anything here out of place or suspicious?

Go To The Mattresses: When you go to lay someone out, or something like that, roll+Tough. On a 10+, you inflict Harm as established. On a 7-9, you are also harmed, someone you wouldn't want knowing your location, does; or it works, but it also exacerbates a different problem.

Remember The Good 'Ol Days: When you try to recall something you may already be privy to or use something else in order to find more information, roll+Crafty. On a 10+, the MC gives you something interesting and something useful. On a 7-9, they give you one or the other but don't tell you which.

PERIPHERAL MOVES

Weave In The Uncanny Whenever a scene is described, by you or someone else, tell the table what is occurring in the scene that is surreal, uncanny, or mysterious.

Help or Hinder: When you help someone they roll 3d6 instead of two and take the highest two to get the sum; if you Hinder them the same, except they use the lowest two. No matter the outcome, you are implicated and face the same consequences as the person you are Helping or Hindering.

ENDING THE SESSION

When you solve the mystery you are done! Was the uncanny event founded in the rumours going around, or was it something else? In this issue, unlike in issue 0 where the opening of the vault was the event, there was more space to determine what the event might be.

The answer to the mystery can be the uncanny event, or the act of solving the mystery may cause the uncanny event. Make sure each character gets an epilogue scene at the end to complete the session. However, leave room to let the unexplained linger, as an echo of this will follow for the next issue

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THE SCHEMER

Name: Michael, Susan, Joyce, Earl, Bill, _____

Look: Sad, Wanderlust, Jubilant, _____

Ethnicity: Asian or South Asian, Black, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, _____

Gender Identity: _____

Choose one if you wish: A walker (indiscreet 1 Harm hand), a wheelchair (indiscreet 2 Harm hand), or a cane (discreet 1 Harm hand)

KEYS

When you do the following in the fiction, you hit a Key. When this happens you unlock any playbook move of your choosing.

- Reveal why you were placed in a home (or checked into one).
- Disclose what happened to the previous friend you used to play strategy games with, or who you played with before going there.
- Show how it is important to think before acting first.
- Divulge why playing strategy games is important to you.

MOVES

- Ahead Of The Game:** When you Take A Gander you may also ask, “What do they plan to do next?” in addition to the other options.
- Checkmate:** When you are within the grounds of the home you can never be surprised; when you would be, you instead act before they do.
- Leisure Time:** You have a friend who you play a strategic game with on a frequent basis (You Detail). At the start of the session take 3 Hold. Spend your Hold to have them:
 - Have them fight for you (1 Harm hand)
 - Have them be your eyes and ears in a scene you aren't in
 - Have them tell you something they think you want to know

CRAFTY

2

TOUGH

-2

GUTSY

1

HARM

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THE BORROWER

Name: Vernell, Venita, Paige, Les, Zoe, _____

Look: Trendy, Eccentric, Retro, Pop, _____

Ethnicity: Asian or South Asian, Black, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, _____

Gender Identity: _____

Choose one if you wish: A walker (indiscreet 1 Harm hand), a wheelchair (indiscreet 2 Harm hand), or a cane (discreet 1 Harm hand)

KEYS

When you do the following in the fiction, you hit a Key. When this happens you unlock any playbook move of your choosing.

- Reveal why you were placed in a home (or checked into one).
- Give someone an item only you could provide when they need it the most.
- Trust someone with why it is you borrow things.
- Find and give something to the Muzzled that proves their story.

MOVES

Bottomless Pockets: At the start of the session roll+Crafty. On a 10+, Hold 3. On a 7-9, Hold 2. On a miss Hold 1. Spend your Hold 1 for 1 in order to produce an item that would help you and then roll 3d6 instead of 2, taking the highest result.

Mine!: When you touch any object and let the table know that it is important to you, the very next time it is touched by anybody else, you know about it—immediately.

Not Lost; Misplaced: When you Take A Gander and roll a 6-, it is considered a 7-9 but the MC still considers it a Golden Opportunity.

CRAFTY

1

TOUGH

1

GUTSY

-1

HARM

□	□	□	□	□
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THE MUZZLED

Name: Ty, Imogene, Cleve, Ina, Val, _____

Look: Resilient, Reserved, Angry, Feisty, _____

Ethnicity: Asian or South Asian, Black, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, _____

Gender Identity: _____

Choose one if you wish: A walker (indiscreet 1 Harm hand), a wheelchair (indiscreet 2 Harm hand), or a cane (discreet 1 Harm hand)

KEYS

When you do the following in the fiction, you hit a Key. When this happens you unlock any playbook move of your choosing.

- Reveal who put you in a home to shut you up—and why they did so (were you famous, a leader, etc.?)
- Believe something someone else tells you that seems like it could not possibly be true.
- Refuse to be silenced or encourage someone else not to be.
- Divulge how a minute detail could also be a part of the cover up that placed you in the home to shut you up.

MOVES

Now See Here!: When you Remember The Good 'Ol Days you are the one who tells the table the details or impression regarding the information, not the MC.

Plausible Deniability: When you're Holding Your Own by lying to someone you always roll 3d6 instead of 2 and take the highest result.

Trust In Me: When they put you in the home they also altered you somehow—now no one knows your real identity. When someone else believes who you really are, you may choose to give them 1 Hold and they may spend it at anytime to have you appear in any scene they are in, with or without a clear explanation why.

CRAFTY

2

TOUGH

1

GUTSY

-2

HARM

□	□	□	□	□
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THE BRAVE

Name: Vito, Karol, Essie, Dolly, Butch, _____

Look: Bitter, Annoyed, Lively, Respectful, _____

Ethnicity: Asian or South Asian, Black, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, _____

Gender Identity: _____

Choose one if you wish: A walker (indiscreet 1 Harm hand), a wheelchair (indiscreet 2 Harm hand), or a cane (discreet 1 Harm hand)

KEYS

When you do the following in the fiction, you hit a Key. When this happens you unlock any playbook move of your choosing.

- Reveal why you were placed in a home (or checked into one).
- Disclose who or what taught you to be become brave.
- Stick up for someone who couldn't otherwise.
- Inspire bravery in someone else.

MOVES

○ **Stone Cold:** When you Hold Your Own against someone or something, no matter the outcome, they are always frightened, dismayed, or impressed by you.

○ **Penetrating Eyes:** When you can see whatever you're talking to you and they lie—you know it.

○ **Hold Forth:** When you reveal something about yourself that is in the past earnestly, no one can do anything but listen to you, giving you their full and undivided attention. You may choose to exempt people from this as you choose.

CRAFTY

-2

TOUGH

2

GUTSY

1

HARM

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AGENDA

Above all else, behind every Principle and Move you do, you need to make this Agenda the root of it all:

- Discover if the uncanny event is making residents go missing from the home, or if solving the mystery unearths the uncanny event.
- Make the PCs badass and competent while subverting expectations and tropes around old people in fiction.
- Uncover the kind of tone the players want while doing so.
- Forge a self contained story about these individuals that still ends with a question or two unanswered, hanging there.
- Play to find out.

PRINCIPLES

Your best practices for this fiction are as follows:

- Make each resident feel unique, vibrant, and possessing of a living, interesting history if the players engage with them.
- Make the nursing home uncanny, surreal, mysterious, or strange.
- Address the player character, not the player.
- Centralize the fiction on them.
- Name everyone.
- Linger on details; when you have the time to do so.
- Ask questions of the players and then incorporate the details.
- Give them a chance to think.
- Spotlight all the players.
- Show your moves through the fiction, do not speak them.

ALWAYS SAY

Like all Powered by the Apocalypse games, *Uncanny Echo* runs best when you keep your Agenda and your Principles in mind when you're making your moves—both soft Moves and hard ones.

- ...what the Principles demand.
- ...what your Agenda demands of you.
- ...what the consequences and risks are.
- ...what honesty demands.

MC MOVES

You make a Move when a miss is rolled, when you tell them the consequences and they act anyways (a Golden Opportunity), or when they look to you to see what happens next.

- Insert the uncanny into a scene and invite the players to also do so.
- When the Mystery Clock increases, also increase the stakes.
- Radicalize the atmosphere of the home (nefarious or loving).
- Make an ordinary activity or event feel and seem uncanny.
- Tell them the possible consequences and ask what they do next.
- Foreshadow something bad coming in the fiction; now, or later.
- Offer an opportunity, with or without strings attached.
- Separate them.
- Inflict harm or trade it, as established in the fiction.
- Put someone in a tough situation.
- Turn one of their own moves back on them.
- Take something away from them.
- Make a small problem a big one.

PATREON

If you like this product, consider helping me out on Patreon, without which this project wouldn't exist. You can find an actual play ongoing podcast exclusive to subscribers of myself and other folks of The Gauntlet gaming community playtesting each issue every month. Find out how our story unfolds, and how it differs from yours!

I also have a blog, Consuming Cyberpunk, where I review and talk about all things cyberpunk (go figure). Additionally, I also edit other podcasts—if you are looking for an individual to provide those services, contact me!

Finally, if you want to support me in any or all of these things, simply click the logo below and become a patron. It would mean a lot to me if you did, hope to see you around soon!

The image shows the Patreon logo, which consists of the word "PATREON" in white, uppercase, sans-serif font, centered within a solid red rectangular background. To the right of the text, there is a vertical white bar of the same height as the text, which is a stylized representation of the Patreon logo's vertical line.

PATREON

CREDITS

This product and other Powered by the Apocalypse games are hacks of Apocalypse World, which is a product by D. Vincent Baker and Meguey Baker—both of whom have a Patreon of their own. Click on their names in order to be taken to each of theirs, respectively.

This game and all of my games are always played with the wonderful Gauntlet gaming community. Come game with us! The community is always looking for more people to run games, as well as players. They produce their own zine: Codex, too! It features terrific content every month, with a professional layout designer and fantastic art.

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