

UNCANNY ECHO



SERIALIZED ROLEPLAYING
ISSUE 7: FRACTURED

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.

FRACTURED

ISSUE SEVEN

When events and echoes of the uncanny occur there are consequences felt in the world. Most of the time Takers come and scrub the event clean, consuming it in its entirety and making it seem as though it never happened at all; events going on as normal.

But Takers do not always succeed and when that happens the universe takes things into its own hands; ripping these events, people, and the items on their person from reality. As though a snapshot at that moment is taken. The person excised.

The timeline edited to remove all trace, history, and knowledge of everyone who was within the event or echo. These people reside in the timeline but have no history. No one remembers them. It is as though they never existed. Their possessions expelled along with them, take on uncanny qualities, able to alter reality.

And, drawn to one another, they name themselves the Watchers; congregating and drawn to uncanny events, echoes, and Fractures. Their objects of uncanny origin and ability, as well as they themselves, lacking purpose beyond bearing witness.

You are one of them but have an altogether different purpose: to assemble Objects and other like-minded Watchers in the hopes of preventing future Fractures from occurring.

This issue is inspired loosely by the Sci-Fi miniseries, *The Lost Room*.





HOW TO BEGIN

First Step: Make two six-sided Clocks for a 3-4 hour game, or an eight-sided Clock for a slightly longer game. One Clock represents the abstracted progress of the characters' plan to stop a Fracture from occurring. The other is used by the MC to abstract the amount of time the characters have before the Fracture occurs.

Each time the plan moves forward in the fiction, a segment of the Clock is filled in to represent that progress. The Clock's progress does not need to be exact; it is merely a helpful pacing tool in service to your fiction.

Second Step: Answer the Questions in order on page 9—both before and after you create your character using the one playbook available.

Third Step: Choose a stat line; assign modifiers to Tenacity and Insight, mixing and matching each modifier as you prefer to the stat:

-1, +2

0, +1

-2, +3

Fourth Step: Begin investigating a Fracture and attempting to stop it from happening, marking progress via segments on the Clock as you advance.

Fifth Step: When you need to use an Object to make headway create your uncanny Object, but refrain from telling other players about the origins of it and your own particular experience becoming a Watcher.

Objects are mundane items that were on your person when a Fracture took place. Now though, they alter reality. Choose something from the list or roll 1d6, then choose what it does or roll 1d6.

Use the results to inform what you create, it is not a restrictive list, they are merely examples.

Object:

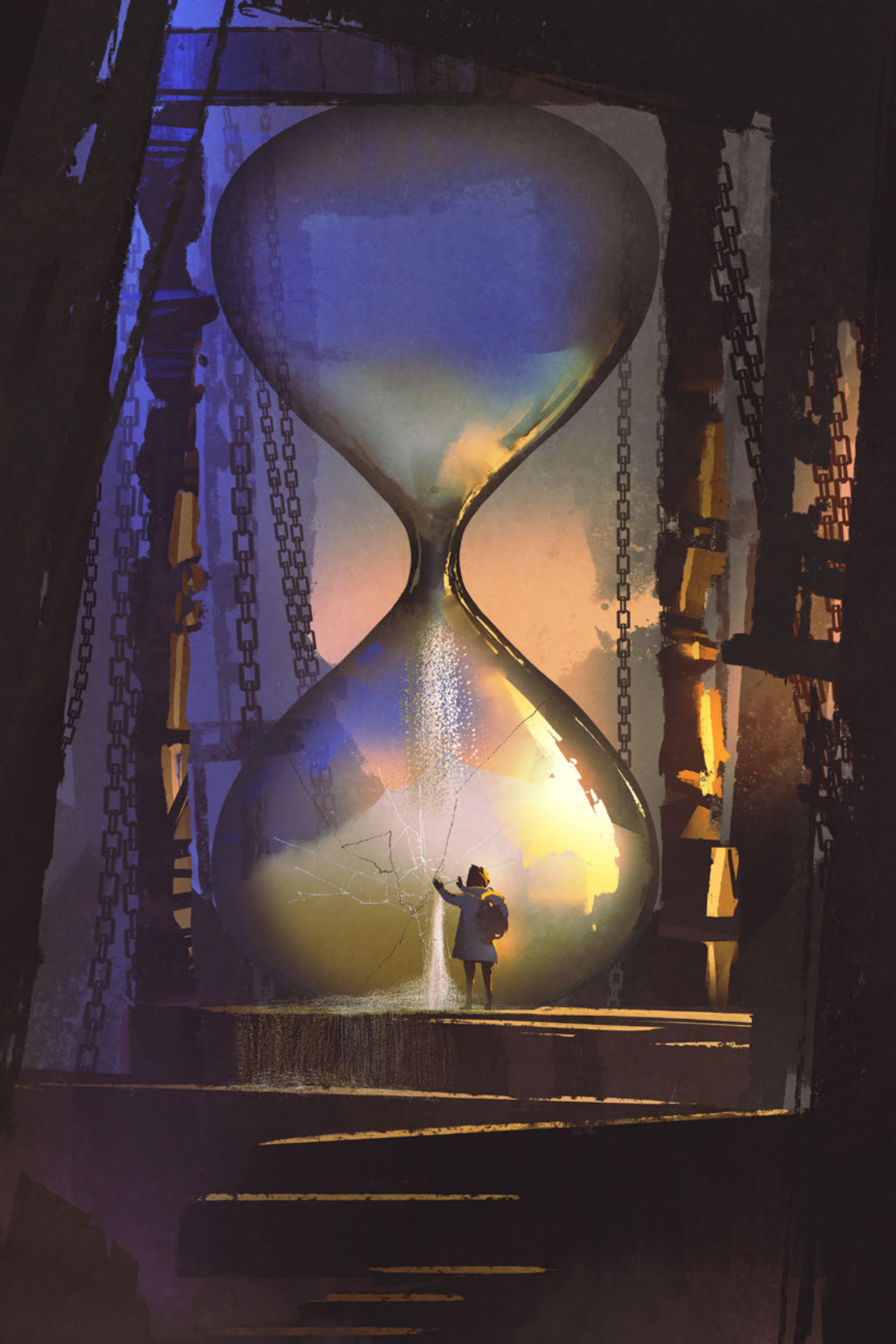
- 1)Pen
- 2)Quarter (or change)
- 3)Glasses
- 4)Watch
- 5)Key
- 6)Coat

Ability:

- 1)Inhibiting or inciting Combustion
- 2)Transmutation of one thing to another
- 3)Navigate from one point to another
- 4)Stopping or fast-forwarding time
- 5)Restore or destroy organic/inorganic matter
- 6)Perceive something in a different time but in the same space

A typical session will have the players create characters, choose or create an echo or event that is happening and will cause a Fracture, generally choosing an echo or event that has happened in a previous issue so the players can riff off of the uncanny things that happened previously will be more satisfying and cyclical; perhaps issue 0?

The characters then attempt to gather information about it and then alter events to stop the Fracture from occurring; creating and deploying their Object's abilities as needed in order to make progress and marking segments of the Clock as they do so.



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

1) What kind of uncanny are you going for? Dark, gritty, intense, scary, etc.

2) Do you have a particular uncanny event or echo in mind, such as a previous issue of *Uncanny Echo*?

Create your characters, then answer:

1) Are Takers aware of the Watchers? If so, do they attempt to get rid of you as though you yourself were an uncanny event or echo?

2) Can Objects and the Watchers die or be hurt? Are they mutually exclusive? If one is damaged, harmed, or "killed", what happens to the other?

3) Does becoming a Watcher alter your senses in any way?

BASIC MOVES

Interpret A Situation: When you try to understand a situation from your own perspective roll+Insight. On a 10+, ask 2. On a 7-9, ask 1. On a hit, take +1 Hold.

- What do I notice despite an attempt to conceal it?
- Is this going to get worse before it gets better?
- What is the biggest threat to _____?
- How could I get ____ to _____?

Act Despite Risk: When you continue with a course of action that is dangerous, either for you personally or another, tell the MC what you hope to avoid in your actions and then roll+Tenacity or +Insight, depending on how you plan to circumvent the danger.

- On a 10+, you circumvent the problem without issue.
- On a 7-9, in order to do it, you will first have to make a hard choice or you otherwise do it but there are consequences and complications caused by your actions.

Help or Hinder: When you spend 1 Hold in order to 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 entangled in the result of the roll.

Inflict Or Receive Harm: When Harm is taken or done by you, roll 2d6. On a 10+, choose 1. On a 7-9, you choose one and the MC chooses 1. On a miss, the MC chooses 2.

- 1d4 Harm is dealt
- Someone else takes 1d4 Harm
- Mark a segment on the appropriate Clock
- Something important is misplaced, dropped, or broken

THE WATCHER

Name: Minakshi, Mila, Bozsi, Desmond, _____
Look: Forlorn, Empathetic, Nervous, Resolute, _____
Ethnicity: Asian or South Asian, Black, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, _____
Gender Identity: _____
Fashion in keeping with your Look and your uncanny Object (You Detail).

KEYS

When you do the following in the fiction, you hit one of the following Keys:

- Gain knowledge regarding preventing a Fracture
- Stand in defense of yourself or another using your Object
- Conceal or express ulterior motives concerning a Fracture
- Sacrifice or destroy something precious to you
- Reveal how you came to be a Watcher

When you hit a key you gain 1 Hold (max 2). Spend it 1-for-1 to add a new fact about the world or to use the Help or Hinder move.

MOVES

Alter Reality: When you use your uncanny item to bend reality, tell the MC what you wish to accomplish and they will describe the obstacle you face in order to succeed; if you face it down...

...with perseverance, grit, or strength; roll+Tenacity.

...by applying knowledge or quick thinking, roll+Insight.

On a 10+, you do what you set out to, describe what happens. On a 7-9, you do it but your effect has unintended consequences; a Fracture is exacerbated or hastened; the effects of your alteration are fleeting or lessened, or in the doing someone is Harmed.

HOLD

TENACITY

INSIGHT

HARM

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

AGENDA

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

- Uncover how the players became Watchers
- Reveal more lore if they choose to interact with an event or echo previously played out in a different issue
- Forge a self-contained story about these individuals that still ends with a question or two unanswered, hanging there
- Play to find out
- Uncover the kind of tone the players want while doing so

PRINCIPLES

Your best practices for this fiction are as follows:

- Make the fiction feel real and lived in
- Create a Fracture that feels and reacts like a person, rather than an event
- In terms of the mystery surrounding a Fracture, follow where they lead
- Respect the boundaries of the players and considerate of the subject matter
- 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.

- Shroud or reveal a mystery concerning a Fracture
- Tie the uncanny to both a player and a Fracture
- Complicate a moral decision
- 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 word, there is a vertical white line of the same height as the text, which is a characteristic element of the Patreon logo.

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.

Developmental Editing: Jason Cordova

Layout, Design, Writing: Fraser Simons

Cover: Cherednychenko Ihor—Other Art: By Tithi Luadthong

Special thanks to: Yoshi, Lauren, Ellen, Jason, and Lu for helping me playtest this issue, couldn't have done it without you all!!

