ATONEMENT MYSTERIES

THE CORE IDEA

The essence of an atonement mystery is that the problems derive from a mistake, crime, sin, or wrongdoing that someone (or something) committed. The hunters will need to figure out what that was to understand and stop the monster or phenomenon.

Then the hunters need to somehow make it right, make recompense, or arrange some compromise to make the problem go away. That replaces the **WEAKNESS** as the key to solving each mystery.

CREATING A MYSTERY

Building a mystery works largely the same, with the wrongdoing in place of a weakness:

Begin with a basic concept. This might be a certain type of monster, an idea for a situation, or inspired by another story.

- What was the sin or wrongdoing that created the problematic situation? Who suffered? Who was to blame?
- The hook: What's the event that brings it to the hunters' attention?
- Think about what sorts of things the hunters might do to fix the problem created by that crime.
- What are the impending dangers? Use these to create a **COUNTDOWN**.
- What are the main threats (monster or phenomenon, and minions)?
- What locations are involved? What bystanders are involved?

PHENOMENA?

Phenomena are an alternative to threats first introduced in *Tome of Mysteries* (page 24) and subsequently included in the hardcover edition of *Monster of the Week* (hardcover page 326). Phenomena mysteries give hunters the chance to investigate an increasingly dangerous source of weirdness rather than a monster.

CONCEPT

Begin with a broad, simple concept. Do you have an idea for a monster? A triggering crime? A general situation to fix?

If you don't have a concept in mind, use one of these:

- Some kind of monster you would like them to encounter.
- A wrongdoing with a difficult moral dilemma to navigate.
- A loose end from a previous session.
- The next stage of an arc countdown.

At this point, the concept should be very simple and general. You'll fill in the details over the next steps.

THE SIN OR WRONGDOING

Instead of a **MONSTER WEAKNESS**, each atonement mystery has a **SIN OR WRONGDOING** that created the problem. This can be any moral wrong or error that somehow created the monster, brought on the phenomenon, or caused it to become dangerous. You can also have wrongdoings that don't have a moral element: a monster may usually be harmless, but somebody annoyed it and the reaction is violent or dangerous.

You can use the sin to determine the style and the theme of the mystery, although you don't have to do so in a simple and direct way.

Examples:

- A ghost wants revenge on the people who murdered her and her family.
- A scientist experimented on unwitting victims secretly, trying to develop a drug that provides extended life.
- A teenager stole a magical artefact, and is now cursed.
- A factory is dumping toxic waste into a wetland.

Like a weakness, the mystery can't be completed until the wrongdoing is resolved. The destruction of the monster is not the usual—or best—way to resolve a mystery. The hunters need to make it right, make recompense, or otherwise sort out the problem that started it all.

When the hunters have somehow made up for the wrongdoing, then things will return to normal. Perhaps the werewolf's curse is broken and they return to normal life, the demon returns to its hell-dimension, the phenomenon's effect slowly fades away.

If the hunters kill a monster, this may even be a new crime to be addressed. You could use this as the basis for a later mystery.

Here are some example resolutions for the wrongdoings we just listed:

- The ghost is appeased after the murderer is revealed and brought to justice.
- The hunters get the scientist to create an antidote, so that the mutated victims can be cured and return to their normal lives.
- The artefact is respectfully returned to its owner, and some extra price is paid for the trouble.

- The company is stopped and forced to repair the damage done, and close down this polluting factory.

There's a common theme here of coming to an agreement about the resolution. Your monster hunters may be brave and smart, but the final resolution of each mystery must be a consensus-based, restorative solution that leaves the world better for both humans and the supernatural forces that threatened them. For cases where there's no way to fix things to all parties' satisfaction, you can use rituals to expiate guilt, purify corruption, etc.

THREAT TYPES

The threat types remain the same, but make sure you take the wrongdoing into account when picking them. In particular, the monster's motivation should reflect its relationship with the original wrongdoing.

For example:

- A trickster could be taking revenge for disrupting the supernatural order.
- An executioner hunts down the culprits for a terrible revenge.
- A bubble phenomenon could be trying to keep things inside because something got taken outside.

EVERYTHING ELSE

For atonement mysteries, aside from what's noted here on this sheet, the process for building all the other elements of the mystery—and playing it—doesn't change.