

Sample file

# 100 Horror Adventure Seeds

## Credits

Writing, layout, borders, graphics, website, promotion, ulceration, sleepless nights, sixty hour weeks, writers block, RSI and stress related illness all by James 'Grim' Desborough.

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[grim@postmort.demon.co.uk](mailto:grim@postmort.demon.co.uk)

100 Horror Adventure Seeds – 20/08/2004

## Dedication

I dedicate this book to all the friends I left behind when I quit The Camarilla LARP society. It's just a shame the way the society worked always caused more horror and reaction than the way it was played. I hope you continue to have fun with it against the odds.

Peace.

## Introduction

### Foreword

There are masses and masses of role-playing books. Simply tons of them and, with the latest d20 boom, the sheer volume of volumes has become ridiculous. There are books about places, about people, about things about technology. If you want to play a giant purple flying squid called Harold there is probably a specialised player's handbook out there written just for you. If you go a bit further and delve into the murky world of PDF publishing you'll find even more books on even more obscure subjects as well as 'reprints' of old material dating back to the Stone Age of role-playing where we only had the 'd1' and Live-Action consisted of endless games of 'rock'. Yet, amazingly, in this plethora of material you won't actually find a great deal on the Games Master's role, on how to craft these wonderful adventures that everyone is supposed to participate in.

Oh, sure there are Games Master's guides and manuals but most of them are just short little ideas, more detail on things like creatures, special powers or traps that the Games Master needs to know about and the players shouldn't see. There isn't a great deal of what I'd consider practical ideas or aids in writing or running games and even less in the way, usually, of inspirations.

To me the most useful parts of any book are the, sometimes one-line, adventure ideas or hooks. These can spark the imagination and provide you with enough for a game, sometimes even a whole campaign. These sparks are often more useful than pages and pages of text describing the habits, religion and leading figures of well-described fantasy lands and they're a lot more useful to me than your standard adventure modules.

This book is an expansion on that idea. Not a single book filled up with detailed endless dungeon passages and traps and not a railroading module that doesn't account for player creativity and stubbornness. Not just one line adventure ideas either but 100 separate, developed adventure ideas along with a few hints on how to get some inspiration of **your own**.

I hope it proves useful to you!

### Postmortem Studios

Postmortem Studios is the name of a small role-playing game studio belonging to James 'Grim' Desborough. The business has two sides. On the one side is a small, non-profit venture producing semi-professional fan-based material & on the other side more professional material produced by Grim himself.

Postmortem Studios was fully established in January 2004 for both freelancing for other companies and for the production of professional works both in PDF, which we support as a concept, & in print.

### A Word about Piracy

Hello there. Odds are, unfortunately, that the majority of people reading this will have downloaded this file as a PDF file through P2P networks or from a website without paying for it. Here is how it breaks down. For the last couple of years I have been fruitlessly searching for full time employment with the skills I have been trained in. This year I have finally given up, scraped together a little cash and am now seeking to turn the thing I love, writing, into a full time career. This is not an easy thing to do and PDF publishing does not make a great deal of money at the best of times. On this product I can expect to make, at the most, about \$800 USD over the year. After the exchange rate to British pounds that does not leave much.

Odds are you do not really give that much of a crap but it is not like I am actually charging that much for what I do is it? Do me a favour, help me eat and produce more work. I am trying to support and expose other artists, writers and people of talent as well as myself and that takes money. If you are not going to give me any cash by buying this book please support my other work by going to [www.postmort.demon.co.uk](http://www.postmort.demon.co.uk) and donating at least a single dollar to Postmortem Studios to help keep us running.

Thank you.

## 100 Horror Adventure Seeds

Creating 100 Horror Adventure Seeds has, perhaps, been the most difficult 100 Seeds book to produce so far. Horror is a much more restricted genre than Sci-Fi or Fantasy. While Sci-Fi and Fantasy can include horror elements in them it is much more difficult to include those elements in horror without, stylistically, becoming entirely one of the other genres.

Because of this a lot of horror adventures end up becoming like Buffy the Vampire Slayer's 'Monster of the week' where you just have to hope the monster is different or interesting enough to hold people's attention. Because of this difficulty the adventure seeds contained in this book are not so wide ranging or as inspirational as the seeds in the other books, for which I apologise.

Horror has also been mined out a great deal, there are fewer and fewer new ideas and the field of horror re-treads old ground with slightly new twists over and over again. It is no wonder that successful horror franchises like Freddy Krueger or Jason are trotted out again and again and again. Even the pulp horror of HP Lovecraft or the fleshy horrors of Clive Barker become rote after a while.

Much like the horror writers and film makers I found I was repeating myself in these seeds but with slightly different riffs on the material each time. There's only so many ways you can present 'chased by cannibalistic hillbillies' but I hope I have managed to create a wide enough range and some new ideas along the way as well.

Anyway, I hope you enjoy the book and that it sparks your imagination at least a little. With the release of the new World of Darkness by White Wolf there may well be a resurgence of interest in the horror genre, especially with their new emphasis on the mortal, normal world.

Happy gaming, scare the bejeezus out of those players!



## Creating Adventures

### The Usefulness of Modules

A traditional adventure module consists of the following...

1. A brief overview of the adventure including, if you're lucky, a way to get the characters involved and/or interested in it.
2. The role-play hook and scene that draws the adventure to the character's attention, possibly some details on the town or village where they hear about this as well.
3. Some details on how to get to the site of the adventure.
4. Endless pages of maps, numbered rooms, traps and monster descriptions.
5. Some non-player-character statistics.
6. Maybe some sample characters.

A slightly more advanced module might have the following...

1. A brief overview of the adventure.
2. The social situation and circumstances at the start of the adventure between various NPC power groups.
3. Events as they proceed, effectively railroading the players into their involvement.
4. Several interlinked scenes, locations and trails of clues that lead the players between one event, group or location and another piecing together what happens.
5. A massive conclusion of some sort.
6. Some non-player-character statistics.

The traditional module might appeal to those of us who are still playing dungeon bashes with miniatures and are looking for nothing more in depth than that and the more advanced modules are typical for more social games like Vampire or the later Cyberpunk materials but they suffer from the fact that they often don't suit the groups of player-characters that get formed to play and that it becomes a game of being swept up in events rather than making them.

Ultimately, traditional modules are most useful for when you first start out running a game. They show you what the writers were intending, show their

world in operation and provide some useful pre-generated non-player-characters that you can use in your own adventures. Otherwise they suffer from the same problems that continue to separate computer role-playing games from tabletop role-playing games, linear story without much in the way of capacity to accommodate unexpected actions.

### Those Damn Players

Games Master's who set up their own games in a similar way to bought modules will soon find themselves in trouble. Even the most finely crafted and beautifully written adventures fail to fully take into account the full scope and range of the damage that players can do to derail the plot, obsess over unimportant details or find a new and unexpected way to solve the goals of the adventure within the first five minutes.

While I certainly wouldn't deny that an amount of scripting and preparation is very useful scripting out a whole adventure step by step is blatantly asking for trouble. No plan survives contact with the enemy and no game idea survives contact with the players. A much better plan is to have a rough outline of what you want to happen, the details you actually need (treasure, statistics, basic thumbnail plans if any dungeons, mazes or sites are involved) and then to improvise once play starts.

An improvisational Games Master doesn't have a completely set plan and so is free to alter details, adapt to the player's actions and even to completely change the goals of the adventure all on the sly. This is something like building a playing field that can be used for various different sports rather than just, say, football. You give yourself a little more scope.

### Finding Inspiration

Something an author is almost always asked, whether a game designer or a novelist is...

'Where do you get your ideas?'

This is likely to produce a strangled groan of annoyance from the author in question who will then give some trite answer or mumble incomprehensibly for half an



hour about nothing consequential.

Some of us can come up with a basic adventure idea within about thirty seconds to a minute, especially when the games are inherently mission based such as a military or police based campaign. Other people need a bit of help.

Nobody gets ideas the same way, what one person finds inspiring another might find draining or irritating. Here are a few ideas you might find helpful to bring about a touch of inspiration for your own adventures.

- **Compact Discs:** The title of an album or the name of a song might inspire you to come up with an adventure. Read the lyrics in the sleeve notes for more possibilities and listen to the song and album while you're writing up the notes. This works best with music that is lyric heavy and concerns itself with subjects other than teen romance but inspiration can come from the strangest places.

- **Novels:** There's no shame in plagiarising for your games provided that you change things enough that your players who have read the books don't recognise it and solve everything right away.

- **TV:** Various TV shows can give inspiration for plots though you should change things around a little so that players who watch the show don't recognise it too easily. You could also try mixing and matching elements from different shows and episodes to muddy things up a little more.

- **Keep a Notebook:** You never know when inspiration will strike. You could be on the loo, you could wake up after a dream or you could be riding the bus. When you get an idea make a note and develop it later.

- **Your Players:** Each player has things they like to play best, different styles, different things that they enjoy. Really useful players will also have written character backgrounds and will have goals for their characters that you can mine for an adventure with a pre-existing motivation for them to get involved.

- **Pictures:** Just looking at a fantasy picture, a photo, a cityscape, these things can give you plenty of ideas.

- **Take Some Time Out:** Go for a walk, have a bath, relax, think and something may well come to you.
- **Embrace the Cheese:** Not every adventure has to be an inspired epic, sometimes everyone just likes to charge into a tunnel and kill things, rescue the princess or slay the dragon. If you're out of ideas go for something simple and then embellish it as you go along.
- **The Games Master's Secret Weapon:** Don't write an adventure at all. Just set the player's up in a town or city and let them pootle around for the whole session doing whatever they want. Something might come up while you're improvising.

