

INTRODUCTION

EDNA

Whatever killed Edna Van Dyke sucked all the moisture out of her fragile, aged body. When it had finished feeding on her, she was tossed down a flight of stairs like a corn husk bent at harsh, unnatural angles.

It was pretty terrible to see, but you've seen worse. Plenty worse.

When you were younger – just a kid, really – you spent the best years of your life putting an end to monsters like the thing that killed Edna Van Dyke. Shadowy things that skulked around the edges of the world; things most people didn't know about. Most people thought the *Nazis* were the real monsters, and to be honest that was all for the best.

Better that they not know about the vampires living beneath the warehouses along Baltimore harbor, the ones who were not on board with the war effort, the ones that caught and turned your best friend. Or the Z-gas, and your last stand against the zombies in that French orphanage. Or Antarctica, and the Focke-Wulf saucers, and the dinosaurs, and the Heisenberg bomb. You'd helped put it all down, and bury it deep, far away from the bright-eyed children with hope for the future, and the hard-working men and women building a new, better world. God willing, those memories would die with you and your team.

You'd had a good, productive life. Raised a family and never talked about the war; left the horror behind. You'd grown old, and when the time came, your government pension paid for a place for you to spend your last few years, a quiet place among friends.

But now those friends are with you, standing above the dessicated body of Edna Van Dyke, and you all know she didn't just fall down the stairs. That is what the nursing home administrator will say, but the nursing home administrator hasn't fought shape-changing fascist partisans in the High Tatras.

No one says a word. You had all hoped for peace and quiet in your sunset years, but that is not to be. You may be half-crippled and half crazy, but no God-damned monster is going to use your nursing home for a feed lot. It's time – God willing, the last time – to kick some supernatural ass.

BEING SOMEBODY

Your character is elderly, confined to a nursing home, and under the care of doctors, nurses, orderlies, and administrators. He is probably not in the best condition, physically, mentally, or spiritually, and will only deteriorate over time. You do have two things going for you, though.

First of all, you have your friends – fellow fossils, many of whom fought with you in World War Two and beyond. You’ve all seen the worst and craziest the world has to offer, which is your second advantage – where a nurse might dismiss a resident’s malady as anemia, you know a vampire bite when you see one.

CHARACTER GENERATION

New characters have 6 points to spend on three attributes (mind, body, and soul), gifts, and problems. Attributes are ranked by level, from Terrible to Excellent. Each has a corresponding die roll bonus associated with it, from +0 to +6. For reference, a healthy young adult will be excellent across the board. Gifts provide special favors or advantages in play. Problems add special challenges. Taking a problem grants an extra point that can be “spent” elsewhere.

LEVEL	COST	DIE ROLL BONUS
Terrible	0	+0
Poor	1	+2
Good	2	+4
Excellent	3	+6
Gift	1	n/a
Problem	-1	n/a

EXPLANATIONS OF ATTRIBUTE LEVELS

Terrible (+0)

Body: You cannot walk and require a wheelchair. Your body breaks in spectacular ways with little provocation. You are perpetually exhausted.

Mind: You are senile, probably delusional, and have a hard time using the toilet, much less participating in any complex scheme.

Soul: You are ready for death.

Poor (+2)

Body: You need a walker to get around, and are easily winded – a trip of 100 yards is a major strain. You are easily hurt.

Mind: You are easily confused and constantly misplace things. Your short-term memory is spotty and you are unlikely to notice anything subtle.

Soul: Whatever spark you possess is fading fast, and nothing much surprises you any more. You are probably depressed, cynical, or bitter.

Good (+4)

Body: For your age, you are quite fit. You can walk unassisted and even jog short distances.

Mind: Your mental faculties are in good shape. You are reasonably observant and can remember details just fine. With effort you can call up old skills.

Soul: More often than not you are cheerful and energetic, although you have down days too.

Excellent (+6)

Body: You are as fit as someone half your age. Hell, maybe one third your age!

Mind: You are as alert as a twenty year old. Scratch that; you are more alert than most twenty year olds. You retain all your professional skills and experience.

Soul: You are fully alive and filled with passion, squeezing every drop of experience out of your days.

Attributes can go beyond excellent, in the case of athletes, cultists, and various horrors. But no octogenarian will be going there.

SOME COOL GIFTS

Feel free to make up more. If you can convince your GM, go for it.

Electric wheelchair

You own a motorized wheelchair or scooter that can zip around with surprising speed. It is quite heavy. You need not be tied to its use – you can be reasonably fit and still take this Gift.

Foot Locker

You still have your crisply-pressed dress uniform, and it still fits. You also have your regulation sidearm, and some musty old ammo. The two items are inseparable – if you want to use the gun, which you probably do now and then, you've got to wear the uniform.

Loving Family

You have children who occasionally visit and can be called on to provide contraband or unusual items.

Nice Guy

You give double raises to your friends when you fail.

Personal Library

You've got a small collection of useful books and manuals gathered over a lifetime, with a heavy bias toward the occult. Chances are good that there is some useful morsel of information about any paranormal threat in there, if you dig long enough.

Power of Attorney

You remain in control of your finances and can rustle up cash when you need it, although not quite enough to rise above your surroundings or buy anything really spectacular.

Spry

Despite ill health, you can still get around just fine, not requiring a wheelchair or walker. You are still frail, easily winded, and so forth, but can walk on your own just fine.

Team Player

All raises you receive are doubled.

Well-Behaved

You have a reputation for being easy to deal with. More often than not, you are given the benefit of the doubt. Occasionally, you can negotiate special priveleges.

With It

You have kept up with the times and are hip to the latest trends. Technology does not frighten you. You know how to use a digital clock radio and what a “stone fox” is.

SOME INTERESTING PROBLEMS

This is not an exhaustive list. Like gifts, if you can come up with a new problem and obtain GM buy-in, you are surely in for a fun time.

Clueless

You didn't fight in any super-secret ghost-buster unit in World War Two, you were a clerk at Fort Belvoir who never saw action overseas (or you were a taxi-dancer in Virginia Beach, or whatever). All this yammering about vampires and mummies is just crap-ola.

Deluded

Perhaps you think you are Teddy Roosevelt, or that Mrs. Palczyk in 8-A is a succubus, or that denture cream is poisonous. Whatever it is, you won't shut up about it. The more interesting and fun the delusion, the more likely it isn't a delusion at all.

Fragile

When you are hurt, you will never fully recover. This means that each time you are hurt, the effected attribute will never rise to the level it was before the injury, but effectively stops at the next-lowest level.

Frequent Visitor

You have a family member who is constantly visiting and has a close relationship with the nursing home staff and administration. This person is always meddling in your affairs and dropping by unexpectedly to make sure that you are “getting the peace and quiet that you deserve”.

Hard Case

You have a reputation for giving staff a hard time. You are continually under scrutiny and are never given the benefit of the doubt.

Hard of Hearing

You are nearly deaf, even with hearing aids. Anything softer than a shout will be lost to you.

Hardware Dependent

You require extra equipment to survive. This could include an oxygen bottle, monitoring gear, an intravenous drip, or anything else that is cumbersome, inconvenient, and vital. Without your gear, your body level slips by one level each day.

Loner

You cannot receive raises.

Low Vision

Even with glasses, you can see very little, and cannot read without a magnifying glass.

Misanthrope

You do not give raises to others when you fail.

Pill-Head

You are kept lucid by drugs. Without daily medication, your mind slips by one level each day. Your medication is kept under lock and key and is administered by nursing staff.

Shaky

You lack a certain amount of fine motor control and are generally wobbly. Anything requiring precision or dexterity is pretty much out the window.

Sleepy

You could sleep through a tornado, and wake up ten hours later still tired. Late night shenanigans will be a major problem for you.

Smoker

You love the occasional cigarette or, better yet, cigar. The staff know this and try to keep tobacco away from you. You cannot resist an opportunity to smoke.

Ward of the State

You have no family or friends and rely on the government to keep you alive and fed. Since the government is pretty poor at this, all sorts of idiotic complications frequently arise, and there are frequent visits from various caseworkers.

CHARACTER DEGENERATION

You're old; your systems will eventually fail. Just pray that you can take out a few more of the bad guys before you finally buy the farm.

After every completed adventure (not necessarily every session of play), each character must either lose a level in an attribute, lose a gift, or add a problem. If this becomes troublesome,

consider playing a little more aggressively. The point is to face ever-increasing challenges with ever-dwindling resources, and to go out in a blaze of glory.

DOING STUFF

You'll want to do things; here's how. Not everything you are hot to accomplish will be possible or even advisable. Senior citizens who take on the forces of darkness tend to miss the Friday social hour; sometimes permanently. But then you knew that.

SENIOR MOMENTS

Before each session, the GM should allow each player to draw a senior moment – tape these to index cards or just hand out slips of paper. If a player successfully integrates a senior moment in an entertaining way, their character should enjoy a spot of good luck and GM largesse in the form of a few extra raises that evening. Here are some suggested senior moments:

A Short Nap

All this running around makes you drowsy. You briefly fall asleep, possibly standing up.

The Urge

You have to find a bathroom, fast.

Where Am I?

You are temporarily confused, unsure of what is going on.

It Was Right Here...

That thing you were supposed to have with you? You don't.

Back in '44...

This is a perfect time to reflect on the good old days with a long story.

ACTION RESOLUTION

Roll one six-sided die. Add the relevant attribute, and add any raises you choose to use. Compare the result with either a target number assigned by the GM (for unopposed tests) or your opponent's roll (for opposed tests). If you beat either, you succeed.

RAISES

Raises are die roll modifiers that you can use to influence the results of your actions. Since you are old and frail, without them you will continually fail at many things you attempt. The nice thing is that failure can really help your friends out.

Each time you *fail* an important roll, you earn a raise that you must immediately give away to another player of your choice. Hopefully, they will be doing the same thing for you, and this pool of raises may allow you to transcend your infirmity in moments of heroism and inspiration. It is important to note that success is its own reward – raises arise from failure alone.

Young people typically start with a pool of raises to work with, depending on their level of competence and health, that ranges from 0-12. And remember, the default attribute scores for 20- and 30-somethings are excellent (+6).

Use coins or glass beads to keep track of your raises. The GM should give these out for good roleplaying, clever use of senior moments, and as general encouragement when times get tough.

DIFFICULTY LEVELS

Here are some guidelines for difficulty levels. Obviously, adding raises will increase the chances of success dramatically.

4: Very easy. Half the people with a terrible attribute who attempt this will fail. Anyone with a good or excellent attribute will automatically succeed. Hide under a bed, find your meds, locate something you misplaced, control your temper.

6: Easy. Half the people with a poor attribute who attempt this will fail. Anyone with an excellent attribute will automatically succeed. Sneak down a hall, conceal something in your clothes, memorize a phone number, rise above a petty failure or embarrassment.

8: Challenging. Half the people with a good attribute who attempt this will fail. Break down a locked door, disarm a security system, recall important information, sweet-talk an orderly or nurse, bury your fear.

10: Hard. Half of the people with an excellent attribute who attempt this will fail. Climb a vine-covered wall, use a computer for research, impersonate an orderly or nurse, overcome panic.

12: Very hard. Only one in six people with an excellent attribute who attempt this will succeed. Run a mile, program a VCR, remember an obscure fact, shake off the death of a friend.

14: Impossible. It will take a lot of raises for anyone to achieve success. Jump out a second-story window and land uninjured, outrun a ghost, understand your medical bills.

EXAMPLES OF ACTION RESOLUTION

Leroy Preston is smacking a vampire with his walker. If he succeeds, he'll knock the monster into the rest home basement incinerator, which is a good thing. Leroy's player decides to use three raises (+3) he's been given to augment his body level of poor (worth a +2), so he rolls 1D6+2+3 to determine his success. He'll compare the result to the

vampire's roll, and hope for the best. If he succeeds, the vampire is toast. If he fails, he'll have a raise to share, although he'll probably join the walking dead...

Art Dobbs needs to remember where he left the key to the Administrator's office. The GM calls this easy, so Art needs to meet or beat a six. Since his mind level is excellent (+6), he'll automatically succeed. Go, Art!

USING YOUR ATTRIBUTES

Mind, body, and soul should all be used in unopposed tests frequently – to spot hidden objects, lift manhole covers, and so forth. Soul tests involve confronting and overcoming intangible obstacles, like fear, panic, and revulsion. Some tests may involve multiple attributes, and you may be able to persuade the GM to apply a different attribute to a particular test, based on how your character would handle it. It's always worth a try.

You have a past, and should feel free to use it – the chances are excellent that at some point in your career, you did everything from machine-gunning giant ants to wiring bridges for demolition. Of course, that was a long time ago, and remembering all the details may be a challenge...

BEAT-DOWNS

When in hand-to-hand combat, you have two choices – attack or defend.

If you attack, make a body roll, modified by any raises, and hope that you succeed by beating your opponent's roll. If you do, you hurt him. If you don't, he hurts you.

If you defend, you *double* your body bonus roll, but will not injure your opponent if you succeed. If both sides elect to defend, you just circle menacingly for a moment.

GUNPLAY

Shooting guns and crossbows is effectively unopposed – the GM will determine a target number based on cover, movement, and other factors. People who can dodge bullets don't hang out in nursing homes, but sometimes other things do...

GETTING HURT

Damage is serious; you are not a kid any more. If you are hurt, and you will be, your attributes will be temporarily lowered, and the bonus associated with that attribute is likewise lowered. In most cases, you may choose to lower any attributes – mind, body, or soul – in any combination. Getting hurt can easily impact any of these. The dangerous exception are the vitality-, brain-, or spirit-sucking attacks of certain awful monsters, which attack one attribute exclusively.

Being tossed around by a mummy, clocked with a baseball bat, or hit in the head with a frying pan would cause one level of damage.

Getting ganked with a knife, mauled by a giant shrew, or shot with an arrow would be good for two.

A gunshot, the aether-beam of a dimensional harvester, or an explosion causes three levels of damage.

Immolation, chainsaw attacks, or unspeakable horrors from beyond time can all cause four or more levels of damage in a single attack. Consult your GM.

SEVERE DAMAGE AND DEATH

When any attribute reaches zero, you instantly fall unconscious. You may wish to fade out sooner, and that is certainly allowed. Assuming you survive, immediately add a problem that results from your injuries.

If two attributes reach zero, it is curtains for you. If your soul is one of these, it has either been scattered to the winds or transformed into a sad and clueless ghost. Mazel tov!

RECOVERY

It takes a week to recover a level in each attribute, and it can occur simultaneously across attributes. While this is not realistic, it is more fun to get back in the action as soon as possible.

MONSTERS AND MAYHEM

If you'll be playing Fossils, you ought to stop reading now. What follows is the meat and gristle out of which your GM will craft adventures. You'll have more fun if you leave it alone.

MUNDANE THREATS

Young Person

All attributes are excellent (+6), with half a dozen raises to use as necessary. Most orderlies and nurses meet this description.

Middle-Aged Person

All attributes are good (+4), with a few raises to use as necessary. Most doctors, janitors, and administrators meet this description.

Street Thug

Body fabulous (+8), mind good (+4), spirit poor (+2). They carry knives (2 damage) and guns (3 damage). Give the leaders a few raises to use.

Soldier/Nazi/Cultist

Body and mind excellent (+6), spirit fabulous (+8). Gung-ho berserkers answering to the United States government, the Fourth Reich, or their unseen masters beyond space. They carry knives (2 damage), guns (3 damage), and occasionally heavier weapons. Give the leaders a few raises to use, depending on how elite they are.

Attack Dog

Body excellent (+6), bite for 1 damage, and repelled once they have taken 3 damage.

Venomous Snake

Body poor (+2), bite does no damage, but victim loses on body level per hour until dead or antivenin is administered. Snakes tend to hang around with mummies.

PARANORMAL THREATS

Many of these adversaries are seriously played out, so be sure to spice them up in unusual ways, or combine archtypes, or invent your own. It is important to note that there is *absolutely nothing* that will convince nursing home staff that something is genuinely amiss. A

rampaging horde of zombies will be dismissed as a teenage prank, and the GM is encouraged to remove all physical evidence. All paranormal threats should have bunches of raises to use, no fewer than six. These villains will either mesmerize or terrify innocents, and facing them can cause both fear and panic even in experienced monster-hunters. Soul tests with a steep difficulty target are appropriate upon first encounter, and should get progressively easier.

One curious feature of most horrors is that they are rarely worried about old people interrupting their plans. It is entirely possible for them to go about their evil business, arrogantly ignoring the prying eyes of a senior for a while. Once the oldster begins to interfere, the gloves will come off, but at first they will be roundly ignored as a harmless nuisance.

Vampire

Typically soulless bloodsuckers feeding off the body attribute of innocent victims, but soul-sucking vampires, or even mind-robbers, are possible and entirely badass. The key point is that all damage in a specialized attack is done to a single attribute, leading to rapid destruction. Vampires are typically in excellent shape or better (+6) physically and mentally, and have no soul. They can, of course, use rusty fire axes and shotguns when prudent.

Shape-Changer

Lycanthropes need not be restricted to the hoary old werewolf – any number of suspicious animals or horrible half-animals could do the trick. A man in wolf form would have an excellent body (+6), bite for 1 or 2 damage, and have poor mind and soul (+2).

Zombie

Deteriorating stockpiles of Nazi Z-gas still crop up occasionally, usually buried next to graveyards for some reason, and the result is zombies – zillions of ‘em! Body poor (+2), mind terrible (+1), no soul. They can claw and bite for one damage. They are slow and dumb, but there are a zillion of them.

Mummy

Mummies are tough and single-minded. Give them a fabulous body (+8 or more) but no mind or soul. They usually command small armies of snakes and vermin.

Ghost

Incorporeal, a ghost has no attributes but can wreak havoc by tossing stuff around and being generally spooky.

Boss

This is a catch all for hellspawn, Elder Things, extradimensional terrors, and marauding aliens – very tough, very dangerous foes. They may do 4 damage in a single swipe, and they may possess +8, +10 or higher attributes. The miserable details are up to the GM, who should ensure that they can in fact be defeated – perhaps with the ultimate sacrifice. They will have minions, and they will have buckets of raises.