

S O M N A M B U L A N C E

SOMNAMBU LANCE

A Role-Playing Game by Ben Wright

**Licensed under the Creative Commons
Non-Commercial Share-Alike 2.0 England
and Wales licence**

Table of Contents

Somnambulance.....	4	The Trust Die.....	15
Definition.....	4	Gaining and Losing Independence.....	16
Role-Playing Game.....	4	Gaining and Losing Trust.....	16
Teenagers.....	4	Rule Omega.....	17
Materials.....	4		
Preparation.....	4	Adult World.....	19
Your World.....	5	The Locale.....	19
		Using Adults.....	19
Creating a Character.....	5	Getting Into Trouble.....	20
The Basics.....	5	Running Away.....	20
Attributes.....	6	Starting a Scene.....	20
Traits.....	6	Setting Stakes.....	21
Independence.....	8		
Relationships.....	8	Sleeping World.....	22
Somnambulance.....	9	The Basics.....	22
The Rules.....	11	Crafting the Mystery.....	22
The Basics.....	11	The Backstory.....	23
Task Rolls.....	11	Signs and Hints.....	23
Opposed Task Rolls.....	13	Theme.....	24
Using Traits.....	13	Stages.....	24
		Abilities.....	31
		End of the Line.....	33
		Variations on a Theme.....	33

The alarm clock radio woke me from a bad dream. I flailed around with one arm until I found it and switched it off. By the time I had done so, I was awake enough that I decided to make the best of it. Today was Saturday, but I'd been so tired the night before that I'd forgotten to reset the clock. I had nothing to do that day- no reason to head into college and nothing arranged with any friends- but I decided to get up anyway and do something with my morning for a change. I thought one of my feet had gone to sleep, but when I swung my legs over the edge of the bed I saw I had one trainer on.

I was baffled. I'd had a shower before I went to bed and I hadn't been wearing my trainers then. They should both be in the corner of the room, where I always kicked them off. Dad complained about the scuff marks on the wall, but I never listened to him. As I stood up I felt a chill. Someone had opened the window- Mum had a habit of doing that early in the morning, but since she left, well, no-one else did.

I closed the window, and saw my other trainer lying on the flat roof of the garage just outside it. It took a little while for me to reach over and pick it up, but I was glad I did as it was starting to rain. I figured that Mike, the younger brother I couldn't see too little of, had been trying to wind me up by messing with me and my trainers. I made a mental note to beat the crap out of him when I saw him next, and shambled into the bathroom in my boxers.

I'd just finished washing the sleep out of my eyes and was turning to put the towel back on the rail when I caught sight of myself in the mirror. Or rather, my back.

There were bruises all over it, ugly and fresh, and a new, livid two-inch scar just above one of the kidneys. It looked like someone has dragged a kitchen knife through me in the night. It had been bleeding, I could tell from the stain on the waistband of my boxers, but it had stopped now.

I turned to face the mirror, and noticed dark bags around my eyes.

"What did you do last night?" I asked myself. I didn't know.

Somnambulance

This is a role-playing game about teenagers dealing with the fact that strange things seem to be happening to them while they sleep.

Definition

Somnambulance is a fancy word for sleepwalking. It comes from the Latin *somnus* (sleep) and *ambulare* (to walk). A more common form is 'somnambulism'.

Role-Playing Game

This is an open-ended, collaborative game where most of the players take on the role of one particular character (Player Character, or PC) in a story. Another player, the Game Master (or GM) is responsible for playing the roles of any other people (Non-Player Characters, or NPCs), for adjudicating what happens during the game and setting up the situations the PCs have to deal with. The goal is not to 'win' so much as to tell an entertaining story.

Teenagers

The Player Characters in this game are teenagers- specifically in the early to mid teens. This game is not intended to be a teenage life simulator, but it has particular rules for some parts of their lives that are important to the story. The stereotypical surly teenager is certainly a possible player character, but it is better if the characters are pastiches of teenagers without becoming so clichéd as to become jokes. What's important to a teenager is often radically different to what's important for an adult, or even for a child, and it's that difference that makes them a different kind of character to play.

Materials

A blank character sheet is provided at the back of this book. You can make copies of it for each player. The GM will probably need some blank paper to make notes on as the game progresses, and you will need a number of dice. Six-sided, eight-sided and twelve-sided dice are needed in quantities of around four, although more will you avoid having to share dice too much. A single ten-sided die is also needed.

Preparation

The Game Master can run the game with minimal preparation if she is comfortable with improvising details on the spot, although the game can benefit from spending some time tailoring the story to the player characters and brainstorming events and situations to fit them. One possible truth behind the strange goings on is given in this book, along with advice if the GM wants to create her own mystery from the same starting point.

Your World

Your world revolves around three things- school, family and your friends. Of these, the time you choose to spend with friends is the most important to you. For one reason or another, you can't avoid the other two. This section tells you the rules of the game, including how to create a player character. Although it's only strictly necessary for the GM to be familiar with all the rules, knowing your options when you play is useful.

Creating a Character

Each player apart from the GM needs to have a character. The GM can create some ahead of time for the players to choose from, or have them create their own. In the latter case, it helps if the players share their ideas before they finalise their characters to bounce ideas off one another or make complementary characters.

The Basics

Think about the character you want to play, a teenager to whom something strange and frightening is happening. Opt for dramatic potential over ability. The superficial details such as name, sex and appearance you can decide now, or fill in when you've decided on the more important aspects of your character. It is best to avoid creating a character too similar to how you were as a teenager (or indeed still are) as it's quite likely that other player characters behave cruelly towards your character at some point or you may not be prepared to let your character behave in an unsympathetic way because you feel it reflects on you.



Attributes

Your character's basic abilities are defined by where he falls on three scales. The position you pick for the character on each of these scales not only indicates ability, but the character's preference for solving problems in that way. This is only a natural, as someone prefers to use methods they are good at, and becomes better at methods they use more often. You can pick any point on each of the three scales, as choosing an extreme makes your character better at one thing and worse at another. Each scale has a description above and below it, with accompanying numbers. These are used when the character attempts an action best described in that way. Essentially your character has six attributes, organised in pairs, with five points to spend on each pair.

Physical - indicates the strength and agility of your character, and his readiness to engage in physical conflict.

Thoughtful - indicates the level of general knowledge your character has, and how much he prefers to solve things by thinking them through.

Impulsive - says how quickly your character can react, and indicates a spontaneous nature.

Measured - says how good your character is at planning ahead, and indicates a preference for taking his time with things.

Persuasive - indicates not only how effective your character is at persuading others, but also how susceptible he is to being persuaded in turn.

Stubborn - says how well your character can resist persuasion or other coercion, but suggests a reluctance to participate even when it's in his interest to do so.

Although these attributes are used when rolling dice, they can also be used as guidance for role-playing when the GM doesn't call for dice.

Traits

Traits are simple descriptions of other parts of your character. They are divided into positive and negative traits. Positive traits are ones that generally benefit the character and negative traits, as you might have guessed, are the opposite. Traits can affect what dice are rolled when your character attempts an action, but

Side Note

The negative traits are things that, in the vicious arena of school life, your character gets teased or bullied about. This does not mean that they are disadvantages or things to be ashamed of in the wider world, just that they make the life of a teenager more difficult.

S O M N A M B U L A N C E

only if the trait is in some way appropriate to the circumstances. Occasionally, a trait may behave in the opposite fashion to usual, if the GM feels that a given positive trait would be a hindrance rather than a help at that time.

You can pick two positive traits for your character for free. For each extra positive trait you want your character to have, you must take a negative trait along with it. Your character cannot have more than six traits in total.

Traits are not described in any detail; it is up to the players and the GM to decide exactly what they mean for a particular character and when they come into play for him.

Positive Traits

Academic Success
Access to Adult Material
Class Clown
Clique Leader
Cool Musician
Criminal Skills
Dancer
Famous Relative
Fashion Victim
First Aider
Generous Pocket Money
Good Singing Voice
Influential Parents
Internet Savvy
Knows a Dealer
Looks Older
Own Transport
Popular at School
Saturday Job
Sports Team Star
Steady Boy/Girlfriend
Supportive Siblings
Tall
Tough Reputation
Well-Off Background

Negative Traits

Absent Parent(s)
Abusive home life
Bullying Siblings
Chronic Illness
Class Outcast
Clumsy
Considered Homosexual
Fashion Disaster
Foreign Accent
Gullible
Habitually Late
Hypochondriac
Juvenile Criminal Record
Looks Younger
Overweight
Physical Handicap
Poor Background
Saturday Evening Job
Short
Stammer
Unathletic
Uncool Musician
Unpopular at School
Wears Glasses
Wears Mouth Braces

If there's a specific trait you want and none of these seem to fit, then discuss it with the GM and if she approves, give it to your character as a trait.

Independence

Your character's struggle for independence is measured by a value. Independence has a maximum of ten, which is also the value it starts at.

Should it ever reach zero then your character has lost his spirit and has no fight left in him. As he now does whatever adults ask him to and no longer want to find out what's happening to him when he sleeps, he is effectively out of the game. It's very difficult to be forced into a situation where your character loses all of his Independence, so it's unlikely that that will happen. Instead, Independence acts as a sort of limit on how much your character can rely on other people and provides a reason for him to get into trouble with adults.

Relationships

Once all of the players have got this far with creating their characters you should, as a group together with the GM, decide what they think of one another and whether any of them are friends (if you haven't been discussing that already). The peculiar situation the characters find themselves in drives them together during the game, but it's helpful if they already have an existing relationship even if it isn't a particularly cordial one. Because decisions for one character can affect other characters, discuss it until you're all in agreement.

Write in the names of the other player characters, and a single word or short phrase that describes your character's relationship to them.

There is also a numeric value for how much your character trusts them. This is an abstraction, used by rules given later. To have any value greater than zero implies trust to some degree; most of your character's class-mates he wouldn't trust that much. These trust values can't be set higher than three



at this point, although they can become higher later on. For each point of trust in total, reduce your character's Independence by one point. Note that this imposes a maximum of nine total trust, although leaving your character with a little more Independence will probably make him easier to play. Like attributes, these values can also be used to guide your role-playing.

Levels of trust do not have to be reciprocated between player characters. Bear in mind that even if you chose 'friend' as the relationship between your character and another you are not required to put any Trust in the relationship. In that case, the characters are friends and enjoy spending time together, but do not necessarily trust each other. Perhaps they play pranks, or fall out frequently.

Side Note

If a player character joins the game late, say in the second session of a multi-session story, then existing character can choose to 'buy' points of trust in the new character with Independence in the same way as they did at the start. This is a one time only offer, though, to help bring new characters into the story quickly. Increasing trust in other player characters is usually a more complicated affair.

Somnambulance

Something is happening to your character while he sleeps; use the last section of the character sheet to record the most recent examples with this phenomenon. What this experience is is entirely up to the GM, and may include injury, strange marks appearing on your character's body or other evidence that your character's body has been sneaking out of bed at night. Once the rest of your character is established, you should ask the GM what to put in this section. As more things happen to your character during the course of the game, you can add more details so you don't forget anything that has happened.

Example: Ryan

<i>Physical</i>	3
<i>Thoughtful</i>	2
<i>Impulsive</i>	4
<i>Measured</i>	1
<i>Persuasive</i>	2
<i>Stubborn</i>	3

Traits:

- + *First Aider*
- + *Generous Pocket Money*
- + *Well-Off Background*
- *Short*

<i>Independence</i>	7
---------------------	---

Relationships:

<i>Josh</i>	2 - <i>Friend</i>
<i>Sandra</i>	1 - <i>Crush</i>

Somnambulance

Broken window catch, nasty wound to the lower back.

The lesson was dull as hell, as usual.

The teacher, Mr. Watkins, could barely keep order at the best of times, and with everyone excited after hearing about last night's fire he couldn't even make himself heard over the hubbub.

"It's gypsies," Josh said, "My dad told me."

"Your dad thinks gypsies are to blame for everything, including him getting flashed by a speed camera," I scoffed at him.

He shrugged. "Whoever it was, they made a mess of the place. When I went past it this morning there was nothing left but firemen."

"I heard the fire engines go past in the night," I lied. I'd heard nothing of the sort, but my brother had said he had. I don't know why I felt like I had to lie- but somehow I thought that if I said something that suggested I'd been in bed all night that would make things easier.

BAM!

Someone in the front row had sworn a little too often and a little too loudly for even Watkins, and he had slammed the board rubber down on his desk loud enough to shut us all up in shock. He escorted Keira out of the classroom, determined to take her to the headmaster.

Naturally, left to ourselves, we started acting up.

Craig pushed one of the windows open wide and jumped out.

"Don't!" I told him, "Or we'll all get detention."

He flicked the 'v's at me. "You can talk, running about in the street last night!" and he was running away across the fields. I felt a jolt of adrenaline.

"Look," Josh said, suddenly serious, "About yesterday. I know I was out of line, and I just wanted-"

"Later!" I told him, and climbed up onto the window sill.

"Sod you, then," he said.

I couldn't wait. I needed to catch Craig up and find some way of wheedling what he'd seen me do out of him. Because all I could think about was that back home, in the bottom of the laundry bag, there was a change of my clothes covered in ash.

The Rules

This section describes how to play the game in as much detail as non-GM players need.

The Basics

The story is told as a series of scenes. The GM describes how each scene starts, which characters are present and what's going on. From that point, each player whose character is present decides what he is trying to do and gives him a voice. At the start of the game, the scenes may be ordinary 'slice of life' episodes where the player characters go about their ordinary lives in relative peace. This helps the players ease into their roles and also allows the characters to come to life as more than a collection of numbers on some paper. In other scenes, there is something at stake for one of the characters- this could be something relating to the night-time mystery, a test of his independence or something he cares about for other reasons. It is these scenes that drive the story forwards and avoid it getting bogged down. Wherever possible, every scene should have one or more things at stake.

Task Rolls

For most actions you want your character to perform, the GM will be happy to let you do so. If the action is difficult, she may call for you to make a Task Roll to determine whether your character succeeds or suffers consequences. Find the most appropriate attribute for the task and roll that many six-sided dice. Find the two highest values shown and add them together- this is your score for the task. If you were only rolling a single die, your Score is what that die rolled.

The GM then compares this score to a 'Difficulty' chosen based on how challenging or how dangerous the task is:

<i>Moderate</i>	5
<i>Difficult</i>	10
<i>Exceptional</i>	15

Side Note

As a player, you may want to set the agenda for a scene during the game. This may be because you have a great idea for a short scene with lots of drama- "You know I took all those photos last night? Turns out my little brother has borrowed my camera without asking. I have to get it back before he sees them!"- or you want a scene specifically to adjust your character's abilities- "I need a scene where I row with my parents to get a point of Independence back.". The GM does her best to accommodate these requests, expand them into larger scenes involving other player characters or weave them into the scene she had intended to do next. You should only request scenes sparingly, however, otherwise the GM won't be able to keep the story moving at a brisk pace. One of the drawbacks of a story based around a central mystery is that if no progress is made in solving it, it risks becoming dull.

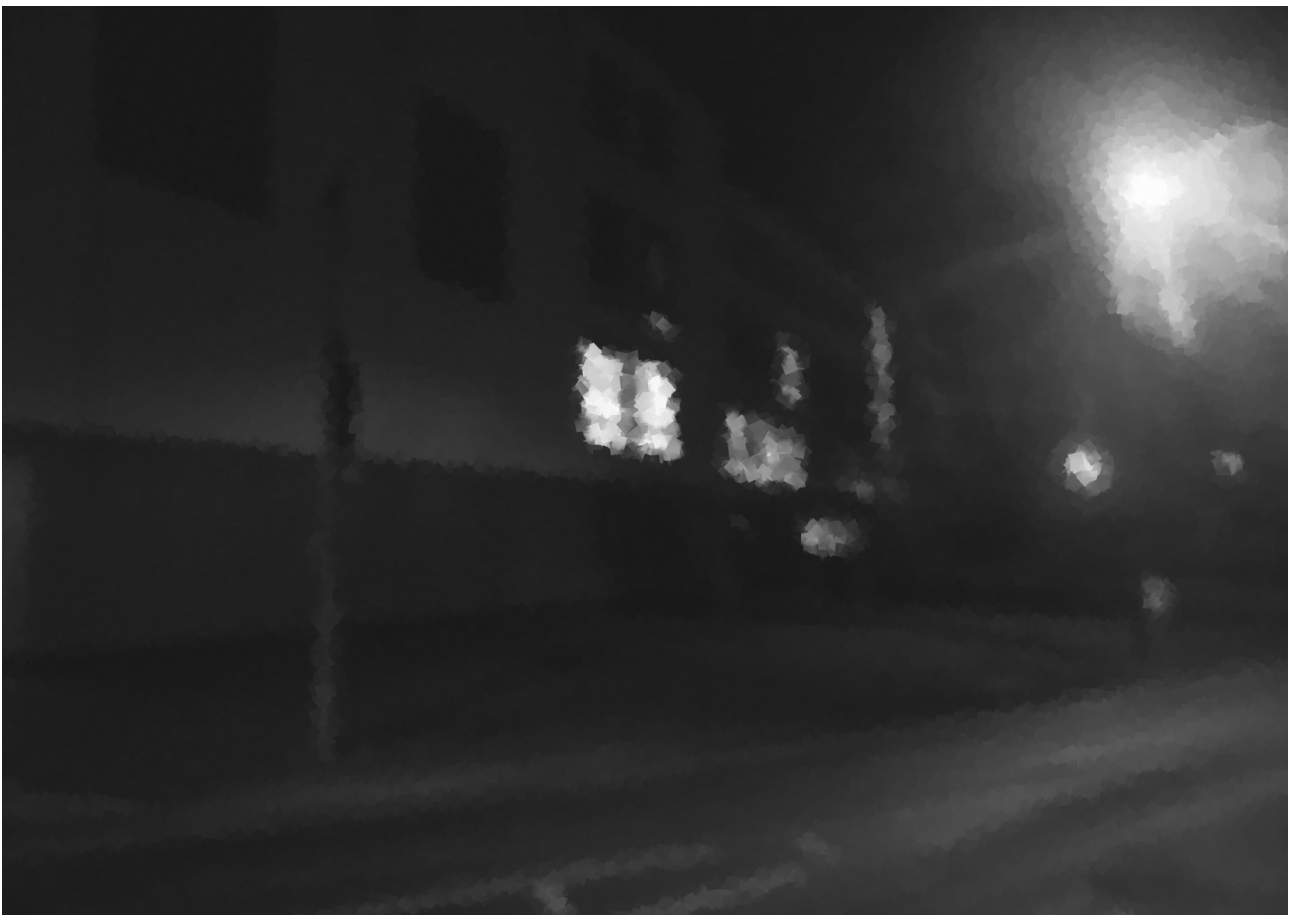
S O M N A M B U L A N C E

If your Score is greater than or equal to this Difficulty, then your character has succeeded at the task. If the Score is less than the Difficulty, then your character suffers consequences. Note that Exceptional tasks are not possible with the total of two six-sided dice- there are ways of getting a higher score described later. There is no number for 'Easy'- if the task can be described as easy then the GM should let you succeed without having to roll.

If your character suffers consequences, this does not necessarily mean that he has failed at the task. It may mean that, but it may also mean that he completed the task but at some cost. The key thing that the GM should bear in mind is that both outcomes of the Task Roll should be interesting- just calling the roll a failure without any additional complication stalls the scene. Failing at the roll should create problems without impeding the story.

Example: The Fence

Ryan wants to climb over a fence. The most appropriate attribute is Physical, and he has 3 points of it. He rolls 3 dice, getting 10. The GM had decided that as the fence was topped by razor-wire, then it was a Difficult Task Roll, but 10 is enough to succeed. The GM tells Ryan's player that he gets over the fence without too much difficulty. Had the roll been lower, then Ryan would have suffered consequences. The GM might have said that Ryan cut himself badly on the razor wire, dropped his mobile phone into the brambles at the bottom of the fence or been seen and challenged by a security guard. In any of those alternatives, Ryan might still have got over the fence, if the GM said so.



Opposed Task Rolls

If an action is in opposition to a player character or non-player character, then there is an opposed roll. Both players (or the player and the GM) roll the same number of dice they would have for a Task Roll. The GM decides which attribute each character uses. The character with the higher total on two dice succeeds. The losing player then has a choice- accept the loss as is, or bring down consequences down on both of them. These consequences don't change the outcome of the contest, but they are a spiteful way of making the victory come at a cost. The losing player can suggest consequences, but the GM makes the final decision as to what they are.

In the event of a tie, something happens that interrupts what is going on or otherwise renders the roll moot.

Example: The Jackson Kids

Ryan's late to meet Sandra in town, but the Jackson kids are giving him grief because he tried to take a short-cut through their estate. Ryan's player wants to push past them and run away. The GM says that taking them by surprise in this way uses the attribute Impulsive. Ryan's player rolls 4 dice and gets a score of 12. The GM rolls for the nearest Jackson kid, taking 3 dice and rolling a score of 9. Ryan wins, and gets past them. However, as the loser, the GM chooses to introduce consequences. The Jackson kid gets pushed to the ground, losing face with his gang, but two of Ryan's school books slip out of his bag and he has to leave them behind.

If the roll had been tied, then the GM may have had the Jackson kids' step-dad come out to see what the noise was and stop the trouble, or say that a sudden rainstorm sends everyone running for cover.

Using Traits

Traits can influence the number of dice rolled, if they are appropriate. If a character is making a roll and one of his positive traits is appropriate, he gets an extra die to roll, but still only counts the highest two when working out his score. If more than one positive trait fits, there is no additional bonus.

If a character is making a non-opposed Task Roll and a negative trait is appropriate, then he gets one fewer die to roll. If there is more than one negative trait that comes into play, only one die is lost. You always roll a minimum of one die, even if a negative trait comes into play on an attribute with a score of 1.

If a character's opponent in an Opposed Task Roll has a negative trait that is appropriate, then he gets an extra die to roll. This is in addition to the die for his positive traits, if any. Multiple applicable negative traits provide no additional bonus. In Opposed Task Checks, negative traits do not reduce how many dice you roll.

As stated earlier, sometimes a positive trait can act as a negative trait and vice-versa.

S O M N A M B U L A N C E

Example: Detention

Ryan has been given a detention. The teacher has left momentarily to deal with an argument in the corridor outside. Ryan wants to seize this opportunity to sneak out through the window. The GM says that as speed is the issue here, that Impulsive is the attribute to use. However, the GM also says that as Ryan has the Short trait, it is more difficult to drop down outside. Ryan's Impulsive attribute is 4, so his player rolls 3 dice for the task.

Example: Waiting for Him

One of the Jackson kids is waiting after school to have a fight with Ryan. Ryan tries to take an alternative route home, to avoid the confrontation. The GM says this uses the Thoughtful attribute. Ryan's player says that with the Generous Pocket Money trait Ryan has enough money to catch the bus instead. The GM agrees, and decides that as the Jackson kid has the Habitually Late attribute, he's unlikely to spot Ryan doing so. Ryan's Thoughtful attribute is 3, but he gets 2 extra dice for the traits. His player rolls 5 dice in total.



The Trust Die

Then ten-sided die is the Trust die. It comes into play when the trust between two player characters is used.

The most usual way of using the Trust die is when one player character helps another in performing a Task Roll, Opposed or otherwise. In order to do this, the your character must have at least one point of Trust in the character helping him. If your character is being helped by more than one other character, only count the most trusted character.

When being helped in this way, your character automatically loses a single point of Independence. However, you can roll the Trust die alongside your usual supply of dice. If the value shown on the Trust die is less than or equal to the Trust your character has in the character helping him, then you can re-roll the Trust die as many times as you need until it is higher. As usual, only count the two highest dice; the Trust die will probably be one of them.

If, on the other hand, your character wants to betray another player character, then you can roll the Trust die for that if the character you are betraying has at least one point of Trust in your character. As above, you can re-roll the Trust die until it is higher than the amount of Trust that character had in yours.

So, placing a lot of Trust in another character means that your character is a lot more effective when working with her, but at the risk of suffering more if she turns on him.

Side Note

Sometimes it may be confusing to work out which character is performing the task, and which is helping. In this game the important thing to work out is who is trusting who at that point, even if this runs counter to the most natural interpretation of the situation.

For example, if your character is being hauled up onto a roof by a rope, it would normally be considered a Task Roll for the character pulling on the rope. However, your character is trusting her to get him onto the roof, so you make a Task Roll (probably Physical, to keep hold of the rope) with Trust in the character at the top.

Of course, you are never compelled to place Trust in someone, as doing so costs independence, and in that case the character pulling on the rope would make a normal Task Roll with no help. It's entirely acceptable to strategically decline help if letting someone else try alone is more likely to succeed.

Example: Sleeping Over

Ryan has persuaded Josh to stop over at his house for the night, to try to catch Ryan if he starts sleep-walking. Ryan wants to find out what is happening to him. As this involves an element of planning and waiting, the GM says that this uses the Measured attribute. Ryan would only get to roll 1 die, but the GM says that as Josh is helping him and Ryan has 2 points of trust in Josh, he can roll the Trust die. Ryan's player rolls a 4 on the normal die, and a 2 on the Trust die. The Trust die is rolled again, getting 7. The Score for the task is 11. Ryan, however, loses 1 point of Independence for accepting help from someone else.

Gaining and Losing Independence

The GM decides when a character loses or gains a point of Independence. As a general rule, every time a character defies parents, teachers or other adults in a way that probably causes trouble for him later, he gains Independence. Every time he is forced to succumb to the authority of adults or voluntarily compromises his independence to rely on someone else, he loses a point Independence. Loss or gain can only happen once per scene.

Often, the things that gain Independence cause trouble for the character, and later on the result may be a loss of Independence. As a psychologist might say, the characters are testing boundaries- seeing how much they can get away with before there are any repercussions.

There are no rules for physical injury, although it is quite likely that a character becomes hurt at some point. If it's a minor wound, they can probably wash it at home and stick a plaster or a bandage over it. More serious injuries involve a trip to hospital- this is an event that costs a point of Independence as the process of waiting, being treated and (possibly) getting a telling off undermines anyone's self-confidence.

Examples of Gaining Independence:

Rowing with your parents
Bunking off school
Sneaking out after curfew
Coming home late
Ignoring police instructions

Examples of Losing Independence:

Going into hospital
Detention
Grounded
Questioned by the police
Having your parents called to the school

Gaining and Losing Trust

Any player can drop their character's Trust in another character by as much as they want at the end of any scene. The player announces the fact to make sure the GM knows about the change. Because this is at the end of a scene, it doesn't let you reduce Trust to zero when you learn that another player character is betraying you. In fact, you are forced to ride out the rest of the scene with that disadvantage.

Gaining Trust is rather harder. During a scene, a character can 'Reach Out' to another player character. This is an invitation to become better friends, a gesture of vulnerability towards someone else. This, in itself, does not cost Independence. The character who is being Reached Out to has a choice. If he accepts the gesture, the character who Reached Out gains a point of Trust in the target. If he rebuffs

S O M N A M B U L A N C E

the gesture, then the target gains a point of Independence but the character who Reached Out loses a point of trust in him, if he had any. A character can only Reach Out once per scene, but two characters can Reach Out to each other during the course of a scene.

Reaching Out does not have to be a grand gesture. It can be something small, almost trivial, as long as it's an earnest attempt to get on better terms with someone.

Examples of Reaching Out:

Taking someone's back in a fight

Buying a meal

Relating some part of your past you generally keep secret

Taking the blame for something

Doing something you wouldn't normally do just to please someone

Rule Omega

No set of rules can deal with every situation that could crop up in play. For example, the rules as stated say that even if a character leapt out of a aeroplane in flight, the worst that could result is a trip to the hospital. If a situation occurs that the rules don't seem to cover, or for which an exact reading of the rules doesn't make sense, the GM makes a judgement call.



Putting away the equipment after PE was boring work, but I reckoned that if I took long enough about it I'd miss the start of maths and have a good excuse for being late. Of course, I would still be sat next to Josh, and I didn't know what to say, if anything. Whatever he'd been about to say, I'd pissed him off enough that he'd not said a word all the way through geography.

It was a two-man job, so I was stuck with Shirley helping. I didn't talk to her much, well, at all. She wasn't popular, and even if I didn't have any problem with her she got a lot of stick from Hannah's crowd and I didn't need that kind of trouble.

So, we both put away the racquets and the balls in silence, not even glancing at one another. She had come with some kind of note from her parents, so she hadn't even had to take part in the lesson. We were dropping tennis balls into their box when I saw something that made my blood run cold.

"What's that?" I asked Shirley.

"What?" she said, suddenly self-conscious.

"On your arm-" I began, but she drew away and pulled her sleeve down hurriedly.

"Let me see," I said, but I had to grab her wrist to stop her pulling away. She glared at me with a mixture of defiance and fear as I rolled up her sleeve.

On her fleshy part of her inner fore-arm, there was a strange mark, a vivid purple like a bruise but with no swelling. It could almost have been a tattoo, except that it had the organic look of a birthmark. I only got a glimpse of it before she snatched her arm away and retreated towards the door. I was afraid she'd run to a teacher, so I rolled down one of my PE socks and showed her my ankle. Her eyes opened wide at the sight of a similar, but subtly different mark.

"Y- you have one too?" she said.

I grabbed her arm again, the fear and uncertainty of the last few days welling up inside me and bursting out of my mouth.

"What's been going on?" I demanded, "What is this mark? Tell me!"

"I don't know!" she shouted back, loudly enough to echo around the sports hall, "I don't know what is happening and I don't know why! Just leave me alone!"

The commotion seemed to have attracted the attention of the PE teacher, so we hurriedly put away the last of the tennis balls and hurried to our next lessons. Before we went our separate ways, though, we exchanged glances. We would have to talk about this again- both of us had to find out if the other knew anything.

Adult World

If your world revolves around your friends, your home and your school, the adult world is pretty much everything else. This section provides more details of the business of running the game for the GM, describing how to introduce non-player characters, how to set up scenes and how to decide what is at stake. This section is not 'GM-only'- other players are free to read it and it gives away no secrets.

The Locale

Pick an area that all or most of the players are familiar with in which to set the game. Being able to name-check local landmarks makes the game seem more vivid. Avoid including *people* familiar to the players in the game, as that reduces the freedom you have for characterisation. There is also the danger that the game will simply name-check people and organisations in the real world. The locality is there to avoid having to work out petty details beforehand or during play.

It can help with atmosphere if you try to divide locations up by what world they are a part of. The school, PC's houses and places they hang out can be the settings for scenes concerned mostly with their world. Places like the headmaster's office or the hospital are certainly part of the adult world. For the sleeping world, a lot depends on the mystery itself, but anywhere that's off-limits (like a building site) is fair game, and there is plenty of potential in places that become sinister when deserted at night- even the school itself.

Using Adults

The game centres around the player characters. All other people, adults, teenagers and children are only there to interact with the PCs. It's important for the GM to keep the focus on the PCs rather than spend a lot of time on NPCs. When a player wants to play out a scene with his family or other adults, she should ask herself if a scene with another player character would work better. In this game adults are not so much people as a force of nature- at least to the eyes of a teenager- being difficult to understand, capricious and inconvenient.

If an NPC is involved in an Opposed Task Roll, then the GM decides how many dice he should roll, in the usual range from one to four. This avoids having to keep track of all the attributes for all the NPCs in the game. The players can ask the GM if their characters know much about the NPC, and whether he has any particular strengths and weaknesses. This means that the PCs may choose an approach that leaves the NPC with fewer dice than he would otherwise have.

Most NPCs do not have traits, positive or negative, as keeping track would be a chore. However, the GM has the option of noting down traits for NPCs if they appear in more than one scene. The second time an NPC appears, the GM can give him a single trait. If he appears in future scenes, the GM can give him one extra trait at a time until the GM thinks he has enough. This means that NPCs that appear time and time again become better defined, without having to draw up all the details the first occasion they are encountered. The GM need not be completely consistent with what dice get rolled- partly to avoid the chore of creating abilities for every NPC encountered, but also because often the circumstances warrant a slight adjustment to how much of an obstacle an NPC is.

NPCs that are children or teenagers roll dice in the same way as player characters. Adults, however, are generally bigger, stronger and more experienced. Instead of six-sided dice, they roll eight-sided dice for Opposed and non-opposed Task Checks. This means that in most situations where a PC is acting against an adult, the adult has the advantage. Teaming up and using Trust may be the only way to beat a competent adult.

Getting Into Trouble

Some PCs will be the kind of teenagers that are always getting into trouble. Some PCs will start getting into trouble in order to gain more Independence. Others will only start getting into trouble when they start investigating their nocturnal activities in earnest. Some unfortunate player characters will find that those activities have got them into trouble somehow, and they don't know why.

The important thing for the GM to bear in mind is that the repercussions should be suited to the trouble. Players are encouraged to start small, because serious trouble involves the police and is likely to drain all of their Independence very quickly. In the worst case scenario, a character may have to run away from home- leaving behind any potential punishments from parents, the school or the police but opening up a whole new set of problems.

Running Away

Running away from home is a serious matter- in the real world it is very dangerous. In this game, though, it more resembles the 'running away' in TV series and films, where the teenager finds somewhere nearby to hide out and relies on friends, saved money or shoplifting to get by. As far as the game is concerned running away is an attempt to withdraw entirely from the adult world.

In terms of game mechanics, Independence becomes fixed. It cannot be gained or lost, even if the PC has a run in with the police or gets taken to hospital. On the other hand, he can no longer benefit from Trust in other people, as he has decided to not rely on anyone else. The most serious mechanical ramification is that if he ever returns to his parents, voluntarily or as a result of police intervention, he immediately loses all of his Independence. Therefore, if there is a danger that his parents come to get him back, he has to risk everything on escaping. The GM should be lenient in allowing this to happen, to avoid pushing the player out of the game.

The extreme step of running away should probably only be taken as a last resort near the end of the game- buying time for the story to reach a conclusion when there's a risk that a PC will lose all of his Independence soon.

Starting a Scene

As mentioned before, you should strive to make each scene meaningful. The most obvious example is where the scene deals with some part of the mystery. Because the players probably begin mostly in the dark as to what is going on, it's quite likely that their investigations won't bear fruit at first. What you can do, however, is throw some morsel of information to them to help steer them in the right direction. Their hunch may have been wrong, but in finding that out they have uncovered a new avenue of enquiry. Whatever the nominal purpose of the scene, you can throw in one or two

S O M N A M B U L A N C E

additional elements designed to bring about character interaction- class mates, adults or a reason for two player characters to argue. Naturally, the other players will come up with their own ideas for how a scene can develop that you can build on.

By making each scene serve at least one purpose, a number of different plot threads become part of a single story. Not only that, but it also gives each PC in the scene a moment in the spotlight.

Setting Stakes

When you consider asking a player to make a Task Roll for her character, you should decide what is at stake should he fail. In most circumstances there will be a very obvious consequence for failure, but you should get into the habit of making it clear to the player what will happen if the character fails. In particular, if you think that a loss of Independence is a likely consequence, either immediately or at a later date by getting into trouble or becoming injured, you should give the player a chance to back down and try something else if she doesn't want to take that risk.

For Opposed Task Rolls, usually one character will instigate the roll. You should make sure that the other party's intent is not simply to stop the first character's effort. The character on the defensive should also have a goal to achieve. For example, if an NPC attacks a PC, ask the player what her character is doing apart from trying to avoid being hurt. Running away or attacking back are both perfectly acceptable.

If, in the process of negotiating what both parties want to achieve, it becomes clear that both characters are more concerned with the completion of their own actions than in stopping the other's, it may be better to turn the Opposed Task Roll into two separate Task Rolls.



Sleeping World

The sleeping world is the world that the player characters find themselves dragged into during the course of the game. Sleepwalking is just the start.

This section deals with the mystery itself, and as such only the GM should have unfettered access to its secrets. As the next section describes, though, players being familiar with the contents of this section is not a game-breaker.

The Basics

The mystery of what happens to the player characters when they sleep is central to the game. There are several ways this can be handled.

- ◆ Complete mystery- the players haven't read this section.
- ◆ Informed mystery- the players have read this section.
- ◆ Partial mystery- some of the players have read this section
- ◆ New mystery- the GM has made up a mystery different to the one presented here.

The important thing to bear in mind is that it is not essential for the truth behind the mystery to be unknown to the players. If the players are aware of it, they are free to introduce dramatic irony using what they know, and work with you to unravel the mystery for their characters. If they are as much in the dark as their characters there is the risk they will unintentionally derail matters or jump to unfounded conclusions only to become confused when they turn out to be false later. Which mode of play you use is down to personal preference and practicality.

Crafting the Mystery

If you are creating your own mystery for the game, there are several important things to bear in mind.

Firstly, the mystery should be in stages. That is, there's a sequence of hints or facts that the players can discover, only revealing the truth near the end of the game. If the mystery can't be broken down like this, then it's difficult for the character to make progress towards solving it without finding out the truth all at once.

Secondly, there should be 'signs' that mark out the characters affected by it. Not only can these signs be what alerts the characters to the fact that something strange is going on, but they can also be a form of recognition that allows a character to spot that another character is going through the same thing. This is useful because it's a way for you to get two PCs to co-operate on the problem even if they would not normally have anything to do with one another.

Thirdly, there should be a 'theme' to the mystery. This can be as ambitious as an attempt to say something meaningful about life as a teenager or as simple as a common thread to all parts of the mystery.

Fourthly, it can be useful to have some idea of 'hints' you can drop to the players as the game progresses. Because the characters do not know what they have been doing while they've been asleep, these hints can help direct them to investigate things that they may have done. The hints can be local news stories or rumours running around school. Of course, some of them can be red herrings to throw them off the scent.

Finally, you should have some idea as to what happens after the mystery is solved. Naturally, a lot will depend on how the players characters react to the truth, but having a rough concept for a final showdown or test of resolve to finish the game on a dramatic note is useful.

You do not have to create the entire mystery from scratch- you can simply change a few of the details of the scenario in this section. If you do that and you have players who have read this section you should let them know that some details have changed (although not necessarily which details) otherwise you may work at cross-purposes with them.

The Backstory

An alien spaceship has landed somewhere in the locality and hidden itself under the ground. A number of alien parasites followed it down and have infected teenagers in order to control them. Their goal is to find the 'Mothership' and take the secrets it contains. The parasites can only control people who have not fully grown up, and have deliberately picked individuals close to that threshold in order to maximise their effectiveness. Their means of control is not perfect; they can only do so when the individual is asleep. They have a means of keeping their host asleep while they act for a few hours at most, but they cannot force him to fall asleep. Unless they are active, they cannot see what the host sees or hear what he hears. However, the parasites do not necessarily take control of the host every time he sleeps- sometimes they choose to let him sleep normally in order for him to recover his strength.

They are exploring the area trying to find where the Mothership has hidden itself. They are in deadly competition with each other and attempt to kill any other parasite-infected individual they encounter. Because of this, drawing attention to themselves might endanger them, so where possible they keep a low profile. When roused the parasites have the ability to draw energy around themselves- creating bursts of light and heat or vastly increasing the speed at which their host can move. It's those techniques that make them dangerous.

Signs and Hints

The most obvious sign is the evidence of sleep-walking. Two further signs are physical injuries sustained during the night and local news reports about strange goings on. The latter may not always have an obvious link to the player characters, but if some-one wakes up one morning with gravel rash on one arm to read a story in the newspaper about police being called to a disturbance at the local quarry, they may put two and two together. The example that player characters can recognise in one another, however, are strange marks that appear on their bodies- on the arms, neck or legs. These marks are a deep red colour, and resemble letters from an unknown alphabet.

As the game progresses, it can be useful to drop in snippets of local news. Some of these refer to the nocturnal activities of the PCs, and other teenagers in their situation. Others could be clues as to the location of the Mothership, subtle enough that the parasites don't notice them but the teenagers, with their knowledge of the area can pick up on. Naturally, there should also be the occasional red herring thrown in there. Because this is a mystery game, every piece of information you inject into the story will be assumed to be significant somehow. Take advantage of this to let the players create as much of the details for you as you can.

Theme

The theme is 'reversal'. The abilities of the parasites are the opposite of the PC's attributes (or, if you prefer, swapping over each pair). If a PC trusts another PC, then his parasite is a sworn foe of her parasite. The teenagers often feel weak and powerless in their world; the parasites have tremendous power and are prepared to use it. Perhaps most importantly, the teenagers want to break out of their family environment and go it alone, but the parasites want to become one with the Mothership. Wherever possible, make the Sleeping world the opposite of the real world.

Stages

There are several possibilities for import stages the investigation can go through. It's not essential (or necessarily desirable) for the story to wind through all of these, but each offers a lot of potential to create drama. Some of these events can take place at any stage of the story, as they deal with the consequences of the situation rather than pushing the main story forwards. These stages are not exhaustive summaries of particular encounters but instead ideas for interesting things that can happen during the story. You can prepare a more detailed version customised to your story and players or run the game off-the-cuff to the loose outline given here.

Several of these stages have an opportunity for one PC to be the one that makes a major breakthrough, opening up possibilities for other PCs. The reason for this is that having one PC struggle to achieve some goal is interesting, but forcing the others to jump through the same hoop becomes boring. So, once one PC has cracked it, it comes naturally to the others. Because being the character to make one of these breakthroughs is major reward of sorts, you should see to it that the glory is spread around the player characters as much as possible. If you want to avoid it seeming arbitrary, then invent a reason related to the character's personalities that suggests that only that character was capable of making that leap forwards.

Meeting Each Other

The first step is for the PCs to identify one another. If two PCs have Trust in one another, then one of them bringing up the problem is a natural thing to do. Even without Trust one character can choose that moment to Reach Out to another, seeking help with the situation he finds himself in. If the established relationship between one PC and another is decidedly antagonistic, then you can use the marks that are appearing as an excuse for two PCs to realise they are going through the same thing. A scene at school is ideal for this purpose as it's a situation where characters who wouldn't choose to

be in the same place can find themselves thrown together- packing away P.E. equipment or carrying boxes for the teachers. Scenes like that also provide a situation where no other pupils are around to see the marks or overhear the conversation.

Solo Efforts

Some characters may take steps to try to stop their sleepwalking by themselves. This may involve locking a bedroom door, leaving booby traps around or even setting up a video camera to record what happens. These are all sensible strategies, but what you want to do is force them to rely on each other. For that reason you should make sure that any such attempt fails. The parasite does the minimum required to guarantee it can leave. Its extra-normal powers mean it may be able to smash locks, short out electrical equipment or leap unnatural distances to do so. Of course, each such action only gives more clues as to what is going on, so it would be a mistake to consider it a 'wasted' scene.

Another alternative is trying to avoid sleeping. This can only work for a finite amount of time, no matter how hard someone tries to stay awake. Performance at school likely suffers, and it's not hard to spot someone seriously sleep deprived. Extended periods without sleep can lead to hallucinations, which might make solving the mystery more difficult than it has to be. When the character inevitably falls asleep, it may be somewhere inconvenient, such as in class.

Waking Up AWOL

Most of the time, the parasites return their hosts to their bedrooms before morning. It may be, however, that it is prevented from doing so- by injury or by an enemy. If the character wakes up somewhere unusual (and probably outside) he has to deal not only with the disorientation but with a possible scolding if he can't sneak back home before anyone notices. This is a good thing to spring on someone if you want to throw a small spanner in the works of a PC plan, or want a way of raising the stakes to bring the players' attention back to the central problem.

Watching Each Other

The only way to actually find out what is actually happening is for one character to have another watch them when they fall asleep. From the character's perspective, it needs to be someone they trust (whether you enforce this mechanically is up to you based on how long you want the game to last). There's also the practical matter of arranging for someone to sleep over- this may prove problematic if the chosen 'buddy' is of the other sex or is disliked by the parents. The alternative is to have someone waiting outside- but that probably relies on predicting which exit from the house the sleepwalker uses.

Because this is one of the most significant steps in finding out what is going on, you shouldn't place obstacles in the way of the experiment, by forcing Task Rolls out the characters. Letting the attempt fall flat on its face (by saying that the watcher falls asleep herself) stalls the game.

There is plenty of potential to milk the situation for drama. The player whose character is asleep has the most invested in what is going on, but you will have control of his character. The parasite in question will be probably be unaware that the other person is also carrying a parasite, and thus ignores them. The sleepwalking character simply leaves as quickly as possible without causing

S O M N A M B U L A N C E

unnecessary fuss. If watching character tries to talk him him, she is ignored. Any attempt to prevent him from leaving will be dealt with at first with a physical altercation, but if the watching character is successful at stopping him then the parasite starts to use its extra-normal powers to get away.

What happens next is up to you. If you want the experiment to only be a partial success, then have the watching character make Task Rolls to keep up with the sleepwalker as he moves through the darkened streets. If she falls behind, then she can arrive at a scene of a parasite battle just after it has finished and the winner left, perhaps being confronted with someone who is injured or dead. On the other hand, if you want a short game then you can move straight into the 'Breaking Out' or 'Taking Control' stages. If the watching character does manage to stay with the sleepwalker, then the spectacular battle between parasites presents far more questions than the surveillance answered.

Sooner or later the sleepwalker returns to where he fell asleep (unless you mix in Waking Up AWOL). Let the watching character explain what went on, don't let the players assume a full and frank account is given. If you like, you can ask the player of the sleepwalking character to leave the room while the previous scene plays out to increase the suspense.

Mothership Portents

The Mothership is important at the end of the story, so you should lay some groundwork for its location early on. It has to be somewhere that is mostly deserted at night (because no-one saw it land). The Mothership itself has a means of burying itself underground without disturbing the surface, but opens a door should any parasite and host combination approach it with the parasite 'active'. The characters can only learn of the existence of the Mothership near the end of the story, and your goal



is to see to it that when they do they instantly know where it is and can move onto the next part of the story. Possible locations are abandoned quarries, shopping malls and schools- anywhere that is mostly deserted at night but not closely guarded.

Sleeping In Class

It's possible that one of the player characters falls asleep during the day. If this happens, then the parasite takes over. Someone leaving the school grounds without permission certainly causes a commotion. As with *Watching Each Other*, the parasite only uses its exceptional abilities if it absolutely has to. If the other player characters have already learned what is going on at night, then they may be motivated to follow him or try to stop him. Someone appearing to walk out of school in a trance, or indeed anywhere else, will attract attention. The parasite finds a way of shaking any pursuit by adults, even if it has to use the full range of its powers. Naturally, player characters can manage to follow it somehow so it becomes their problem to deal with.

Other Victims

The player characters are not the only hosts. There are many throughout the area, but you should use them only as potential foes and casualties of the parasite battles. The player characters are the focus of the story and you should strive to keep them as such. If the PCs encounter other hosts, they may well attempt to enlist their help. Instead of just slamming a roadblock down in front of them, you can use to your advantage to create drama. If they learn that the lad from the next school over that they thought they had enlisted as an ally died in mysterious circumstances, it'll be clear that somehow his death was connected to the sleepwalking. For a darker edge, you could have the character appear under parasite control as an enemy; with the only way to defend themselves being to kill him.

You're A Killer!

It's already been mentioned that marks are appearing on the PCs. In actual fact, each such mark represents one 'kill' of another parasite. In order to do so, the host is either also killed or is very seriously injured. In order to find out what the marks mean, it's probably the case that one of the PCs engage in combat with another parasite and emerge victorious. As the enemy falls, a new mark mysteriously appears on the killer's arm. Learning the truth behind the marks is something that can be played to the hilt, particularly if up until this point it's not been clear exactly how violent the parasites can be.

If there's no opportunity for that scenario, then after *Speaking With the Alien* the parasite can tell the host what the marks mean for a similarly brutal revelation.

Hospital Trip

It's possible that one of the PCs suffers an injury that requires hospital treatment. Aside from the already stated consequences regarding *Independence*, if someone carrying a parasite has an x-ray or MRI scan of his head, the parasite will show up clear as day. Of course, the natural response of the doctors is a biopsy or attempted removal (assume that the parasite is sufficiently deeply embedded that surgery is required just to get at it). In any hospital context, once the character goes under

general anaesthetic the parasite assumes control and very definitely prevents the surgeons from damaging it. The chaos when a patient believed sedated jumps up from the operating table and runs away has to be seen to be believed.

Breaking Out

Once one of the PCs has been told what happens to him when he sleepwalks, on future occasions when the parasite takes control he has a dreamlike perception of what his body is doing. Not only does this avoid excluding the character from scenes with his parasite once the first stage of the mystery has been solved, but the character can exert some influence over it. In particular, the PC can attempt to stop his parasite from attacking someone he has Trust in. Whether or not you want this to require a Task Roll depends on whether you think failing to stop the parasite would make for an interesting story without stalling the progress of the plot. At this stage, such interference with the parasite's control is only temporary- it's the knowledge of what is happening that allows the PC to kibitz and jog the parasite's arm, as it were.

Taking Control

The next step is for a PC to assume total control over himself when the parasite is active. This can only be done if at least one other PC has successfully interfered with a parasite's control already. As above, it's up to you to decide exactly how it can be done- the players will probably come up with some ideas themselves for how to tip the scales in their favour. Such ideas may be mental exercises to keep control or preparation designed to help the character resurface during the sleepwalk. If it looks like the players are struggling to come up with any, or the story is dragging, feel free to set up a situation where the player character is utterly opposed to whatever the parasite is attempting- threatening another PC or an NPC the PC cares about is a good start, but raise the stakes as much as you can. The reprieve for the target is when the PC overcomes the parasite's control at the last moment.

Once a character has taken control in this way he does not have access to the parasite's abilities, but he can take control of himself during any subsequent sleepwalk. Taking control is not quite the same as waking up, as the parasite is still active, but a character can attempt to force himself to wake up (perhaps by making a Task Roll) from this state.

The Secret Gets Out

One of the common conceits in this kind of story is that the truth behind what is going on (alien incursion) is never known by the authorities. Instead the explanation is mental illness, a bizarre medical condition or attention-seeking teenagers acting up. You can abandon this conceit if you wish, constructing an elaborate conspiracy that is well aware of the aliens or if the events of the sleepwalks become impossible to explain away as something ordinary. Similarly, an NPC classmate or relative may actually witness one of the player characters' sleepwalks and blab the secret to anyone who would listen.

S O M N A M B U L A N C E

The common theme in all of those options is that the goal of the PCs moves from trying to get things done under the noses of the adult world to becoming actively opposed to it- needing to escape its influence to avoid being exploited or hurt. You can play it such that the adult forces have some inkling of what is going on, but don't know the details or who, exactly, is affected. That paves the way for scenes where one of the PCs 'wakes up' to find himself being chased by the military.

Speaking With the Alien

A player character being able to break out of the parasite's control at will is a serious problem for its agenda. When it cannot force its host to do its bidding, it has to fall back on persuasion. The parasite can communicate with its host mentally, albeit only after the parasite has triggered the 'sleepwalking' state. The parasite can only be heard by the host. The parasite knows little about its host, hitherto having little interest in him, but the parasite is ruthless, cruel and manipulative when it comes to using what it finds out. It exploits any perceived weakness or insecurity to get what it wants- unification with the Mothership.

On the other hand, the PC can now ask the parasite to use its extraordinary abilities on his behalf. The parasite may demand concessions from the character in return, which complicates the situation further. Even though the parasite 'holds the purse-strings', you should let the player make rolls when they are used.

Sooner or later one of the parasites tells its host about the existence of the Mothership. It may lie about why it wants to find it- and in fact you can make up any reasoning you want as there's no need for the parasite to be truthful.



Military Interest

Even if the military has no clue what is going on, it is more-or-less bound to take an interest if the battles between the parasites start causing real damage. The deployment of armed men to try to stop the 'terrorists' probably only makes the parasites more violent.

If the military have some conception as to what the parasites are capable of, then the goal may be to capture one of the PCs alive for testing or for use as a secret weapon.

Although the military is nominally the most dangerous and well-organised group the player characters may have to deal with, they are better used as an ever-present but background threat, another way of dragging the problems of the Sleeping World over to the teenagers' world. Curfews, arrogant officers abusing adults and the use of live ammunition are all ways of making it clear that the stakes have been raised even if direct conflict between the army and the parasites does not happen. It can be a way of increasing the urgency of the situation if it looks like the story is stalling.

Finding the Mothership

Once the player characters learn of the existence of the Mothership, with any luck they can put together the clues you've been dropping and leap straight to a guess at where the Mothership is. Of course, knowing the approximate location where the ship has buried itself does not translate into being able to get into it. When the Mothership detects an active parasite near it (whether or not this requires the parasite to use one of its extra-normal abilities is up to you), an entrance opens somewhere. Finding the entrance in an unfamiliar place may take time and effort.

The obvious outcome once the Mothership is found is for one of the parasites to merge with it. However, the parasites each want that honour for themselves, and it's not clear what happens to the host if one succeeds.

Ending

There is no fixed end-point for the story. A lot depends on what the player characters want to do. Your job is to bring the game to conclusion when just about everything that can be discovered about the mystery has been. This probably means that the story comes to a head around the time that the Mothership is found. Exactly what happens when the Mothership fuses with a parasite is up to you. There are several alternatives that you can pick from to make a satisfying end, some of which are not mutually exclusive, or you can come up with whatever you feel is appropriate.

- ◆ The host may be taken into the Mothership along with the parasite, and the Mothership leaves with him.
- ◆ The host may be ejected from the Mothership, sans parasite, as the Mothership leaves.
- ◆ The Mothership could remain, inert, suggesting that there is another stage yet to come as some unspecified point in the future.
- ◆ The other hosts could be left with their parasites, but the parasites have lost their extra-normal powers and can do nothing but communicate with their hosts.
- ◆ The other parasites could die when the Mothership leaves.

- ◆ The other hosts keep their parasites with the extra-normal powers intact, with all kinds of repercussions in the future.

If one player character wishes to fuse with the Mothership, try to make sure it's a dramatic sacrifice. Even if you decide that the host is returned unharmed, he may not know that. If a PC's life has got to the point where everything seems hopeless (probably as a result of the parasite interference), joining with the Mothership may be a noble sacrifice or a shot at a better, different life. The reason for the sacrifice is up to you- it could be as obvious as saving the Earth from a full-scale alien invasion, or it could be as subtle as self-sacrifice to stop the killing on the streets at night.

The process of joining may not be smooth- NPC hosts may suddenly appear, controlled by their parasites, intent on stealing the prize for themselves. One of them may even merge with the Mothership, raising the question of whether the PCs lost a great opportunity or had a narrow escape.

Once the extraordinary matter of the parasites and the Mothership is dealt with, you should concentrate on more mundane consequences. The PCs may have to make up a lot of time at school, or be faced with months of detentions and/or being grounded for their actions while they were solving them mystery. The resolution of these earthly matters should not be rushed over- they bring the player characters back down to earth after the strangeness they have lived through.

Abilities

In keeping with the theme of reversal, when a parasite is in control of a character that character's attributes are swapped over in their pairs. So, Physical and Thoughtful are swapped over, and so on. When the parasite uses the host normally, it rolls six-sided dice. You should gloss over the fact that a spindly character suddenly becomes much stronger when the parasite is in control- bear in mind that attribute reflect not only ability but predisposition to using that ability.

The parasites' extra-normal abilities are very much stronger than teenagers' or adults'- roll twelve-sided dice for them. The six extra-normal abilities are each tied to one of the normal abilities. If an attribute is only one or two, then the parasite cannot use the associated extra-normal powers. In this way, each parasite has exactly three powers, one for each pair of attributes. Interpret these powers fairly liberally, as they are supposed to be far beyond normal capabilities. If one of the players finds a way of turning one of them into some sort of unstoppable super-power, remember that the parasite is the one doing the work, and you can use the parasite as your proxy to rein in its use.

Physical -> Telekinesis: The parasite can move heavy objects such as cars through thought alone. The host must be able to see the object directly (not in reflections or through images), and using telekinesis doesn't grant the object any more structural strength than normal.

Thoughtful -> Energy beams: The parasite can project beams of energy from the hands of the host. These beams break down chemical bonds in matter, turning most objects into dust or gas of some kind. The beams are clearly visible, in a colour particular to the parasite.

S O M N A M B U L A N C E

Impulsive -> Speed: The parasite can move the body of the host with incredible speed and strength. This makes a blow from the host capable of smashing apart brick walls. As part of this ability, the parasite can make sure the host's body is tough enough to survive the impact.

Measured -> Awareness: The parasite can perceive the environment around the host with perfect clarity, seeing without light and through any substance. As part of this ability, the parasite can process the available information at an enhanced rate, making it impossible to be taken by surprise.

Persuasive -> Illusion: The parasite can insert erroneous information into what a character sees. It cannot construct an illusion that completely replaces a target's perception of the world around him, but it can change details or add spurious elements. The parasite needs to be specifically use illusion against a target it can see, and cannot affect what recording devices capture.

Stubborn -> Nullify: The parasite can suppress the extra-normal abilities of other parasites within a small area around itself.

When a parasite is on control, don't bother making rolls unless at least one player character is present and conscious of what is going on- battles with other parasites that are only revealed by later evidence can end however you choose, as long as it keeps the story moving and isn't unduly harsh on the player character.

Side Note

Illusion can mess things up if you're not careful. If the parasite uses Illusion to slip past a PC watching the host, then that PC might receive a lot of misinformation. If you want additional layers of confusion in a long game, then this need not be a problem. If you are running a shorter game or are worried that the players might never get back on track after being derailed, remember that the effect stops as soon as the parasite-controlled host leaves the room, and the watcher can probably catch up to him and watch unobserved if she is careful.

Example: Ryan's Parasite

<i>Physical</i>		2
<i>Thoughtful</i>	<i>(Energy beams)</i>	3
<i>Impulsive</i>		1
<i>Measured</i>	<i>(Awareness)</i>	4
<i>Persuasive</i>	<i>(Illusion)</i>	3
<i>Stubborn</i>		2

Attitude

The levels of trust the host has become not distrust, but active hatred one parasite has for another. If two active parasites encounter one another, the levels of Trust between the humans become how much the parasites want one another dead. Of course, if one parasite identifies a deadly foe it will not be above trying to kill the enemy's host even if that parasite is not active. This can lead to dramatic situations where a PC inexplicably inexplicably tries to close friend with terrifying supernatural power.

Independence

A PC's Independence has no direct bearing on the parasite he is host to, but if a PC is ever reduced to an Independence of zero, the parasite takes over the body permanently. Note that this contradicts the explanation in 'Your World' that says that losing all of your Independence leaves you a spiritless husk. Well, not entirely a contradiction, but certainly a more severe problem.

End of the Line

Although the game is structured so that it's quite difficult for a player character to lose all of his Independence, it might happen. Perhaps he suffers so many injuries that his Independence runs away very quickly- or maybe his player is struggling to enjoy playing his character and chooses to let him dwindle. It may even be the case that letting the character 'die' seems like a satisfying mid-game tragedy, bringing home exactly what is at stake. If the player wants to leave the game at the same time, there's no problem. Otherwise, the player should not be left out in the cold for long. Have her create another character- perhaps from a different school- as if she had joined the game late. Even if the story is nearing its conclusion, it's worth introducing another protagonist (or even antagonist) to keep the player involved until the very end.

Variations on a Theme

Of course, all the practical advice in the world may not be enough to fire your imagination for different mysteries for this game. Here are some suggestions you could develop yourself.

Themes

Individuality – the struggle against conformity

Exaggeration – attributes either very high or non-existent

Maturity – the Somnambulance mirrors the characters' lives, and reflects inability to adjust to the adult world.

Retribution – The Somnambulance is some kind of karmic retribution for crimes the character committed in a past life- the only way to remove it is to find some way of making amends.

Mysteries

The souls of legendary figures possess the characters to re-enact their tragic fate.

An outbreak of demons.

The characters are brain-washed assassins, and their parents are in on it.

The characters are dead, the world they see purgatory.

Other Approaches

The characters are younger, not yet into their teens.

The characters are older and vaguely remember something like this happening to them before, but none of the details.

Everyone else in the world has disappeared, for reasons unknown.

The characters all have vivid memories of dying recently.

S O M N A M B U L A N C E

I listened to the buzzing for quite some time before I realised that it was my mobile on vibrate. It looked like I'd been spared any wanderings that night, at least. I was half expecting the message to be spam, but when I opened it I saw it was a message from Shirley.

plz come 2 supersaver carprk josh hurt need hlp

I swore. I had wanted to be 'on watch' for him that night, as he seemed to have been having some rough nights when the sleep-walking took him, but Dad had put his foot down and had threatened to ground me for a month if I didn't stay in and look after my brother while he was away on business. That little shit wouldn't hesitate to do me in if he got the chance. I had no idea why Shirley was there, though.

The muffled music from the next room told me Mike was playing games on his phone again- something that would get him into trouble if Dad found out. I wondered how much slack I could blackmail him into giving me. Not much, I decided. At least he'd have the headphones in, which made my task easier. To think I'd been a little scared the first time I'd dropped down off the garage roof, well, the first time I did it when awake, anyway...

I arrived at the SuperSaver car park after only ten minutes or so. I couldn't see anyone there, and wondered if they'd gone on to the hospital or something. Then I heard a low moan from the bushes.

Lying on the old crisp packets and scratch-cards, Josh was clearly in a bad way. There was blood all over his T-shirt and he was holding his belly like he was afraid bits would fall out. Shirley was kneeling over him, ineffectually trying to staunch the bleeding. I pushed her out of the way and tore the sleeve off my jacket to try to make a half-decent bandage.

"Have you called for an ambulance?" I asked Shirley.

She shook her head, then looked away. I saw there was blood all over her arms. Not just from trying to apply pressure, but spatter up to the shoulders and across her glasses. I narrowed my eyes.

"What did you do?" I snarled.

She shook her head again. "Nothing. I- don't remember..."

"Which is it?" I was ready to hit her. She backed away, tears sparkling in her eyes, then she turned and ran.

As I dialled for an ambulance, I couldn't help but wonder if there was some way I could prevent Dad from finding out I'd left Mike on his own.