Monster Squad Control

by Thomas McGrenery (Coalhada) for the RPG Geek One Sheet Contest 2015

This is a GUMSHOE scenario designed to be played via video-chat software such as Skype or Google Hangouts. You and your fellow players are Control Room Administrators for Monster Squad, an Internet-based startup that kills monsters for a reasonable fee. Most of you work from home, though hotdesking facilities are available at the branch offices, which Monster Squad has in Seattle, Melbourne, and – for tax reasons – Grand Cayman.

When working on a mission, you communicate by video conferencing. Your GM plays the Operative – your agent on the ground. You can only communicate with the Operative through audio (i.e. the GM's camera will be turned off).

Creating Characters

Individually, make Player Characters using the GUMSHOE rules system of your choice: *Night's Black Agents* and *Trail of Cthulhu* are suitable and you could also use the GUMSHOE SRD. Your PCs only have Academic or Technical Abilities. The Operative has General Abilities only – decide on these together with the other players, spending points equivalent to a single PC in your chosen GUMSHOE game. Give your Operative a name and loosely sketched background.

Playing the Game

The GM will send you a written mission briefing containing some initial leads. Once the game session begins, **everything you say or do on camera is in-character.** That will be easier than it might sound, since what your characters are mostly doing is sitting at their computers discussing the investigation. Use text chat or email to talk to the GM and other players out of character.

The Operative will relay what he/she sees and hears – it's your job as the Control Room staff to guide the Operative and undertake research by Googling for information and using Investigative Abilities. Listen to what the Operative finds, hit Google to figure out what's going on and then when you're ready, send the Operative to confront the monster:

Using Abilities

Spend your Ability points to a) get clues from the GM (pass them off as your own knowledge on camera) b) know someone helpful who the Operative can talk to or you can consult for help or c) get a clue without advancing the timeline (e.g. using Surveillance to get CCTV footage instead of having the Operative stake out a location). To do this, send a private message to the GM saying the Ability you want to use, e.g. "Anything for Chemistry?" or "Can I use Library Use so the Operative doesn't have to go to the archive?" If the answer is yes, you lose a point of that Ability. If it's no, you don't lose a point.

The Timeline

The Timeline starts at 0. Whenever the Operative moves to a new location, talks to a witness or does something time-consuming like a stake-out, the Timeline advances by 1. The further the Timeline advances, the stronger the monster gets.

The Final Confrontation

When the Operative confronts the monster, the GM adds up the Operative's points in relevant General Abilities and the value of the information you've obtained (such as the monster's lair location, habits and vulnerabilities) and actions you tell the Operative to take (e.g. wear garlic, stake the vampire through the heart). If this beats the monster's Fortitude + the current Timeline value, the monster is defeated. If not, the Operative is slain.

Monster Squad Control

First send the players the briefing. Then have them create characters (see Player Sheet). Next, turn off your camera. From now on, everything you **say out loud** is in-character as the Operative (usually an ex-special forces type, but up to you).

The Timeline
This measure of time elapsed starts at 0 and advances by 1 whenever the Operative moves to a new location or does something time-consuming. Warn the Control Room about this by saying "that'll take a while" or similar. If the Control Room still gives the go-ahead "hang up" and then "call back".

Investigative Abilities
A player may ask to spend Ability points for clues: check the clue list for the mission. If there's an appropriate clue available, send it via private message. Players may well figure out these clues by themselves – don't charge them any points if they do, just cross the clue off the list. Create clues based on the facts of the case as necessary if the player's suggestion seems reasonable.

Players can spend points to get a clue without advancing the Timeline. E.g. instead of having the Operative stake out a building overnight, a player might spend a point of Surveillance to access the previous night's CCTV camera footage.

Interviewing Witnesses
Unless you're supremely confident in your voice acting, don't do both sides of the Operative's conversation. "Hang up", and then relay the gist to the Control Room later.

The Confrontation
When the Operative confronts the monster, add up the Operative's points in the Necessary Skills and the value of the information the Control Room has obtained according to the mission information. If this beats the monster's Fortitude + the current Timeline value, the monster is defeated. If not, the Operative is slain. You may choose to breathlessly voice-act the final confrontation or simply say "I'm going in" and hang up, then describe what happened – as the Operative if the monster is beaten, or if not as a company agent reporting the Operative's demise.

Mission: Operation Salt Lake

Briefing:
A small town in (place) has suffered a series of attacks by something strange. For two months, small children and pregnant women have woken from sleep with bite marks and blood loss, one nearly every night – something has entered by an upstairs window and drained their blood. A group of worried parents has hired Monster Squad and the Operative is already on the ground.

Suggested locales: Western Australia, small town on US Pacific coast, Hong Kong, Fiji
Background: the monster is a penanggalan, a midwife called Yeni. By night she detaches her head and internal organs and flies into houses to suck the blood of the newborn/unborn. For more info: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penanggalan

Clues
Witnesses: neighbours, hospital colleagues, local cop, victims' parents // **Talk to witnesses**: newcomer to the area is an Asian lady in her 40s. She works at the hospital as a nurse. Something strange glimpsed flying at night. // **Yeni**: avoids eye contact; licks lips when near pregnant women // **Bathful of vinegar in the house**: Yeni soaks her blood-bloated organs in this after feeding so that she can fit back into her body (Occult/Biology to know what it's for)

Bureaucracy/Library Use: Yeni Ali moved here from Sabah, Malaysia three months ago // **Language – Malay, other SE Asian**: recognize writing around the midwife's house. Addresses indicate she is from Sabah. // **Language – Malay** to read her diary: notes on which local houses have children/pregnant women // **Occult/Anthropology contact**: a Bomoh shaman can give info, e.g. place thorny plants around windows to snag entrails // **Occult/Botany**: ID proper thorny plant to use // **Photography/Surveillance**: glimpse the creature on CCTV // **Traffic Analysis:** ID which house the creature is coming from based on victims' locations

Confrontation
Fortitude 10; Relevant abilities: Weapons/Shooting; Health; Stealth/Intrusion
Knowledge/Action values: Drain vinegar bath 4 / Thorny barrier 3 / broken glass poured into neck cavity 10 / stop her re-entering her body by sunrise 4