



# *Terribly Beautiful*

West Wild  
**MOTEL**  
VACANCY



By Graham MacLean

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Thanks go to the playtesters:

C. L., S. L. and J. T.

Thanks for input from: Nick Wedig, John  
 Keyworth, David Berg, Kynn Bartlett, and  
 Andy Kiktowski

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## *To Touch Immortality*

It is the dream of humanity to escape death. No one lives forever, but we hope that our lives mattered, that we will be remembered by the next generation. We have a lifetime to create that legacy. All too often most of that lifetime gets squandered. We come to realize the importance of our legacy only when it is almost too late.

They are the most desirable and seductive women in the city, the women of the night. Men are willing to travel into the most disreputable of neighbourhoods to meet them, offer money and gifts for but a few hours of their time or even less. They ply the oldest profession, selling their bodies into others' fantasies.

But for the streetwalkers of the red-light district known as the Kaz, death takes its time. The disease known as the Pale stakes its claim by transforming its victims into visions of beauty, alabaster skin and elegantly thin. But beware, for death is a jealous lover, who lays claim to any who might make love to those already ill, and so they become known as the Terribly Beautiful. Shunned by society, they find each other and face the remaining days of their lives.

### **The World**

It is a world not unlike that which we live in today, with countries that war and trade. It is a city not unlike those found in many parts of the world today, with cultures that clash and blend. They are streets not unlike those that we walk in our cities every day, filled with people who have dreams both pursued and dashed.

The city sits on the water, industry and docks to the east, a thin strip of old docks leading to luxury shorefront property to the west, a downtown of skyscrapers and suburbs beyond. Nestled between them all, surrounded by stone walls, is a neighbourhood, the oldest in the city. It is called the Kaz.

### **The Kaz**

*"Ruined buildings, ruined lives..."*

Once the beautiful, prideful, majestic centre of the city, the neighbourhood called the Kaz has been brought low by age. Grassy expanses were covered over by scabs of concrete, cheap apartments grow where flowers once bloomed, and streets that once wove gracefully around estates now snarl with traffic. Only a few of the buildings remain, protected by heritage laws, but impossibly expensive to maintain. They have fallen, one by one, to the ravages of time, becoming urban legend, the source of stories of ghosts, secrets and other mysteries that refuse to die.

For all the things that have changed, it is debauchery that remains a part of the Kaz. In times past a carelessly parted blind would reveal the parties of the rich, sumptuous, opulent attire carefully put on and carelessly thrown off. Today the sliver of light through a night window reveals attire as carelessly thrown aside as ever. The Kaz has become a red-light district, a neighbourhood where prostitution is tolerated.

Around all this are the walls. Once they stood to protect the rich from would-be invaders. Indeed, they still do protect the rich, but now they do so by protecting the rich outside from having to see what the crowning glory of the city has become.

## Introduction

A roleplaying game is a way for people to tell a story together. In *Terribly Beautiful* this is done by having one person, called the gamemaster, take control of the world and most of the people in it. Everyone else controls one character each. The story is communicated by simply telling it. It does not require any acting or costumes, although that is not discouraged.

There is more than just telling a story to roleplaying games, though. Sometimes there will come points in the story where people want it to go different directions. Sometimes there will be times when the story needs some tension. Sometimes people just need a little help shaping the story and keeping that shape consistent. It is at these times that the game part comes into use.

To ease language usage in the rules, players are referred to by the female pronoun and the gamemaster by the male. Men or women should not feel restricted to either part in playing the game.

## Setup

You will need:

- one to three good friends to play with
- a deck of tarot cards (or optionally, playing cards)
- a copy of these rules
- enough character sheets for all the players

All but one of the players must design characters. The person remaining is called the gamemaster, and it is his or her job to control everything and everyone else in the story. Separate the major and minor arcana and shuffle each pile. If this is the first session, the players should either be given, or create, characters of their own.

At the start of each session deal each player a hand with as many cards as their characters' exhaustion points. These cards may be looked at by the player, but should be otherwise be kept secret. Every player also gets dealt one major arcana card face up. The gamemaster creates hands and pulls major arcana cards as needed.

## Glossary

Host: someone possessed by a demon or angel

John: someone who hires prostitutes

Kaz: the neighbourhood in which the game takes place, a red-light district

Lady-of-the-Night: a female prostitute

(the) Pale: a sexually transmitted disease that turns its victims into the epitome of beauty before killing them

Raum: the port neighbourhood that sits between the Kaz and the water

Red-light District: a neighbourhood in which open prostitution is either legal or tolerated

Simply Beautiful: a term of affection for prostitutes who are not infected

Streetname: a nickname, often chosen by someone else

Streetwalker: a prostitute

Terribly Beautiful: a prostitute who has been infected with the Pale

the Trade: those involved in prostitution or its promotion

## *The Pale*

*“Everyone dies, but that doesn’t make death the great equalizer. Sometimes you can buy yourself a stay of execution, but not everyone can afford the price.”*

The Pale is the common name for a sexually-transmitted viral disease that has been slowly eating its way through the populace. While science searches for treatments and cures, superstition surrounds the disease just as hatred becomes a jail for those suspected of carrying it. The Pale is fairly difficult to transmit from person to person. Only sexual contact or blood mixing will do it. As a result, both prostitutes and intravenous drug users are most at risk.

### **Symptoms**

There is a period of incubation where the symptoms don't exhibit. It varies greatly from person to person, but generally lasts a few months. This is why the Pale has spread so far, the infected don't realize that they're carrying the disease and pass it onto others. There are tests to detect the Pale, even in these early stages.

The first symptoms to show is a suppression of appetite. Following that are bouts of exhaustion. The person seems fine for a while, and then just collapses. This is followed by the pale skin and increasing thinness as the body and the disease eats first fat then muscle until little more than skin and bones are left. It takes months for the Pale to run its course once the symptoms appear.

In its final stage the disease transforms, turns necrotic, producing black spots that spread across the skin as it eats all flesh. Madness results as the brain decays. It only takes a few hours to a couple of days the disease does enough damage to kill what's left of its host, and it doesn't stop even there, continuing to eat until the flesh is dust over bones. It is a truly horrifying thing to watch,

and if another person's open wounds contact infected skin in this stage, the disease may transfer. The new host immediately begins this stage.

### **Treatment**

There is no cure for the Pale, but there is treatment. A cocktail of drugs can alleviate some of the symptoms of the Pale and grant a longer life. The drugs also protect unborn children from contracting the Pale if drugs are taken over the entire pregnancy. Little can be done for those in the final stage of the disease, save whatever is possible to limit their pain.

Legally, treatment for the Pale must be administered within a hospital. Patients are not allowed to inject themselves. It can cost hundreds of dollars a day, only a fraction of which actually pays for the drugs. Nonetheless, the drugs are expensive. On the black market they range from ten to forty dollars per dose, depending on how much they have been cut with other substances or if some of the medications are missing from the cocktail.

There are rumours that there is a deliberate avoidance of research that might lead to a cure, that the treatment makes too much money to be worth finding one. Unfortunately, the drugs are very expensive, beyond the means of many who need them, particularly those who are most likely to spread the disease.

### **False Hopes**

Where science does not provide, the market will. The Pale creates desperation, and desperation is just another word for opportunity to some. Many street drugs alleviate the draining effects of the Pale to some degree, but there is often a cost and a risk. Proper medications are sometimes available in part, having lesser effect than the full cocktail. Sometimes they are cut with other, more dangerous, substances.

There are also those who turn to spirituality or faith to seek a cure. They seem to

find some small solace in it, something that seems to be genuinely beneficial, but it is all too often oversold as a cure.

## **Being Terribly Beautiful**

Being one of the Terribly Beautiful is more than just a label or a disease, it is being part of a group that hides and protects its own, that struggle with their separation from society. They have their own ways. These traditions are as follows:

### **1. Protection**

Anyone revealed to society as being Terribly Beautiful is open to oppression and abuse by society. As such, no Terribly Beautiful should ever reveal another with the disease. This raises another question, about whether the society of the Terribly Beautiful should be revealed at all. Some see no harm in it, but others believe it, its structure and traditions should be kept secret as well.

Streetnames are another part of this tradition. Everyone is given a streetname when they become part of the Terribly Beautiful, so that others may refer to them without giving away their real name.

### **2. Taboo**

Sex is the destroyer. It is the act that took away the profession and the life of the Terribly Beautiful. Society fears the Terribly Beautiful because of the death that sex with them could bring. For these reasons, most Terribly Beautiful can no longer stomach the idea of sex. It has become taboo. The grey area is the question of whether or not it is okay for the Terribly Beautiful to sleep with each other. What is the threat of death to someone who is already dying?

### **3. Gossip**

A simple conversation is rarely so simple. Gossip is the glue that holds the Terribly Beautiful together. With little else from which to derive power, knowledge is a valuable thing. For that reason, whoever reveals

the juiciest secrets is held in the highest regard, which can lead to some competition. There is, however, always a balance to be found between keeping trust and revealing secrets.

### **4. Punishment**

Those who are found to be in violation of the traditions are excommunicated. No one may speak with them, or even acknowledge their existence. This is a horrible thing for a Terribly Beautiful, for that circle of friends is often the last.

Of particular note are those who ignore the taboo on sex, who still carry on their work as prostitutes despite knowing that of their illness. They embrace the image of monstrosity that society places upon them. As a result, they are excommunicated from the rest of the Terribly Beautiful. Medusa is one such individual.

## **The Faux-Terrible**

Because prostitutes and intravenous drug users are most vulnerable, the Pale is considered to be a “dirty” disease, a curse afflicting mostly those who are engaged in undesirable activities. No matter what the real reason for infection, being infected is enough to result in the person being ostracized from proper society.

Meanwhile, society is engaged in a grand hypocrisy. More and more actors and fashion models of both genders are sporting the thin, gaunt, pale look. They are the faux-terrible, with a penchant for opulent, gothic fashion. If starving themselves and makeup isn't enough to achieve the look, then arsenic wafers are taken, a little bit of poison creating much the same effect.

## *Creating a Character*

Making a character is like building a mask for the mind to wear. It is the creation of a fictional personality to assume within the fictional world created by the story. The characters are women of the Terribly Beautiful, former prostitutes now dying from the disease known as the Pale. Before they die, they hope to build a legacy, something to leave behind in the world.

Character creation has several steps, and they are presented here in an order that seems most useful, but they may be done in any order. Any cards drawn in a step should be reshuffled back into the deck after used or discarded. The character should be written out on the bottom half of a piece of paper folded top-to-bottom. This way, the top of the paper can conceal what is written on the sheet. The character name, streetname and player name should be written on the back of the top half of the sheet so it is obvious whose sheet it is, even when folded.

### **Your Legacy**

“We can cheat death, if only a little.”

Choose what sort of legacy the character is trying to achieve before she dies. A legacy should be difficult to achieve.

1. Fame: She wants the whole world to remember her fondly, to be a star that shines even beyond death.
2. Infamy: She wants the whole world to remember her and suffer for what they put her through.
3. Mother: She wants to pass on all her dreams and her wisdom to one other, in the hopes that that person need not live the same life.
4. Reputation: She wants to be treasured by those few that matter most to her, those who live around her, be they the people of the Kaz

or just the Terribly Beautiful.

5. Monument: She wants to make a physical object that will last long after she is gone. Whatever it is, it's hard to make, involving many steps to create or hard to obtain materials.

6. Other: She has something else in mind, a legacy that is all her own.

Achieving the legacy will not be easy, but the obstacles to be faced are not completely unpredictable. If the character is being made for a single session, draw three minor arcana and use two of them to inspire obstacles. Pick one obstacle that the character has already overcome.

For long games, draw five cards and use three of them. These are the obstacles which the character knows about. The type of obstacle to be overcome depends upon the suit, and players may talk with each other to develop ideas.

Cups: an enemy or overly needy dependent

Pentacles: a lack of money or property

Swords: lack of knowledge or confidence

Wands: prejudice or other societal oppression

The gamemaster must come up with one (or two, if playing a long game) miscellaneous obstacles to introduce during the story. Once all the other obstacles are overcome, the legacy is the last obstacle.

### **A Secret, a Rumour & a Lie of Your Own**

Each player draws five cards from the major arcana deck then look up their meanings on the following table. Three of the cards are used to inspire a secret, a rumour and a lie about the character. Either interpretation can be chosen, but only three cards are used. The other two cards are discarded.

### **A More Personal Practice**

Pick one of the traditions associated with the Terribly Beautiful: protection, taboo,

gossip or punishment. What is the character's interpretation of that practice? Does the character adhere to it tightly, reinterpret it somehow or violate it?

### What You Know

Deal the player a hand of five minor arcana to represent the knowledge the character gained before she became one of the Terribly Beautiful. For each numbered card the character adds one to the rumour attribute. A secret is gained for each face card. If it helps, the suits of the minor arcana may be used to inspire ideas, but they don't have to be.

1. Cups: emotions
2. Pentacles: materialism
3. Swords: forcefulness
4. Wands: spirituality

Players may design their own secrets, or they can get the gamemaster to help design them.

- someone's embarrassing/criminal secret
- a hidden past
- where to find something special (e.g. medication, uncut drugs)
- the location of someplace safe or otherwise special
- a rare bit of history
- something else (run it by the gamemaster)

Rumours are not decided at character creation, but their number is recorded. Instead they are used during play. By spending a point the player may make up a detail about something that she has heard through gossip. This temporarily overrides the gamemaster, who then has to work that detail into the story.

### How to Read Major Arcana

Number	Name	Meaning
0/0	Fool	opportunism / risk without forethought
1 / I	Magician	power over self / power over others
2 / II	High Priestess	bringing opposites together / reason over the heart
3 / III	Empress	nurturing and protective / over-protective
4 / IV	Emperor	righteousness / ambition
5 / V	Hierophant	reputation / conformity
6 / VI	Lovers	relationships / mistrust
7 / VII	Chariot	persistence / wandering attention
8 / VIII	Strength	tenaciousness / stubbornness
9 / IX	Hermit	wisdom / isolation
10 / X	Wheel of Fortune	good fortune / misfortune
11 / XI	Justice	fair judgement / corrupt authority
12 / XII	Hanged Man	sacrifice / self-seeking
13 / XIII	Death	hope for change / pain
14 / XIV	Temperance	moderation / being timid
15 / XV	Devil	servitude / self-loathing
16 / XVI	Tower	rebuilding / destruction
17 / XVII	Star	hope / overlooked opportunity
18 / XVIII	Moon	illusion / madness
19 / XIX	Sun	happiness / over-indulgence
20 / XX	Judgement	self-reflection / self-deceit
21 / XXI	World	discovery / pride



## Strengths

*"Everybody is good at something. That's their weakness."*

Pick one area where you're better than most people as a strength. It could be "good with money" or "scrappy." Whatever it is will help your character in challenges. When a card is played for a challenge that relates to the character's strength, that card may either be changed to a 9 or a face.

If your opponent figures out how to use your strength against you, one of his cards may be changed in the same way.

## Names & Appearances

Everyone has a name. The Terribly Beautiful have three names. It is normal for those in the trade to have a streetname, something they tell their johns. Part of becoming one of the Terribly Beautiful is getting a new streetname to use when speaking with others of the Terribly Beautiful. It is part of the traditions, a way to talk about fellow Terribly Beautiful in public without giving away their identity. Of course, these names aren't generally used to speak directly to someone unless it is in private, so that no one else can make the connection. It isn't necessary to describe every detail of a character's appearance, only note a couple of notable features. A good guide is to have one detail describe the character herself, and another to describe the character's fashion sense.

## Exhaustion

Once the character loses all temporary exhaustion points, he or she becomes exhausted. This status lasts for 15 minutes in real time, called rest. Every time a maximum exhaustion point is lost, add 5 minutes to the amount of real time (out of game time) that the character must spend resting. During that time, the character cannot begin or participate in challenges or do anything strenuous.

## Introductions and Extras

Once all the characters have been made, it is time to turn to the other players and introduce each character. They are roommates, people who share an apartment, paid for out of the pittance provided by social assistance, lowly jobs or minor criminal opportunities.

## Example Character Creation

Leslie is making her character in preparation for the game. The game will only run for one session. She looks over the legacies and decides that she would like to be famous, known by everyone, even beyond the Kaz. Perhaps her character could be a great singer, a voice to be recorded and remembered by future generations. She notes that as her character's strength.

She pulls five cards for obstacles, getting 2 cups, a pentacle, a sword and a wand. The pentacle she chooses to be her wardrobe, since she can't afford clothes that are considered presentable in most of society. One of the cups represents an ex-boyfriend who keeps bothering her, trying to get back together, hoping her talent will net him a fortune.

Leslie then pulls five random major arcana to use for a secret, rumour and a lie. They are: Wheel of Fortune, The World, Hierophant, Star, and High Priestess. Looking over their possible interpretations, she decides that the Star could represent the rumour that her singing is has the potential to be professional. The World could represent her lie, that she's too proud to take advice on her singing skills. Her secret is a little harder to figure out, but Leslie decides that she'll use the Hierophant, hiding that she is one of the Terribly Beautiful, only presenting her voice and avoiding public exposure.

Next up is tradition. Leslie thinks that the second tradition, never revealing the identities of the Terribly Beautiful, is pretty central to her character. Perhaps her character could take it even further, never revealing the identities, even to other Terribly Beautiful,

leaving people to introduce themselves.

Leslie then draws five random minor arcana, getting four rumours and one secret. She jots down the number 4 for rumours and then starts thinking about the secret. She decides that that her character knows a celebrity that tries to hide his identity when he comes to the Kaz. She shows these to the gamemaster, who notes them so he can make up supporting characters to go with them.

All characters start with a maximum exhaustion of 5, so that gets recorded and Leslie starts thinking about names. Petra is a pretty name, so she takes that, and decides to take a Turkish surname to go with it. Most of them are quite the mouthful, so she settles on Saban, becoming Petra Saban, which is written on the character sheet.

Finally, Leslie introduces her character to the rest of the players, keeping her name a secret and letting them choose two streetnames for her. Given her exotic heritage and legacy, they decide upon Denise for her old streetname and Peisinoe for her new.

She tells the story of how she overcame her fear of having a beautiful voice, but also having the pale at the same time.



# *How to Play*

## **Taking Turns**

The process of taking turns is often referred to in the rules. Taking turns can start with anyone, but after the first person acts other players go in order of ascending initiative.

## **Using Playing Cards (Optional)**

If no one has a deck of tarot cards, it is possible to play *Terribly Beautiful* with regular playing cards. Set aside any jokers that may be in the deck before play. Any use of major arcana for creating characters will have to be done through choice instead. As for breaking ties, just go clockwise around, starting with the person next to the gamemaster.

## **Telling the Story**

Each player is generally responsible for his or her character, and the gamemaster is responsible for the rest of the fictional world in which the characters exist. Normally the gamemaster and players can all just take turns describing what happens in the story, and as long as the story seems reasonable to everyone, then it's okay. There are, however, some situations where the story may call for greater tension to be introduced. That's when challenges are used.

## **Challenges**

Challenges are resolved through a little card game. It starts by everyone involved taking turns to either bid or call. A bid means the person describes his or her character's action and also chooses a card to put face down into his or her bid pile.

Calling can only be done by someone with at least one card in his or her bid pile. The person calling does not play a card, but all people flip their bid cards face up. Each person

adds up his or her numbered cards (1 to 10) and calls out the total. The person who had the highest total wins. If two or more people tie the higher major arcana wins.

There are a couple of ways these results may be modified. If a character has a strength, he or she may declare it to allow change one of the cards bid to a 9 or a face card, bidding the card face up. If the character declares she is using another's strength against him, it has the same effect. Similar effects are generated by declaring an advantage over your opponent.

The winner describes an effect and either magnifies or adds a detail for every face card played. After that, the turns go in descending order of totals bid. The final player, even if it is the gamemaster, doesn't get to go.

Every challenge should end with either some resolution or a chance to people to leave the situation or give up. Afterwards all the cards bid in the challenge are gathered up and reshuffled. Each player gets dealt cards according to their maximum exhaustion points (not their temporary exhaustion). The major arcana will probably never need reshuffling. If people aren't satisfied, then a new challenge may be started, but this has the effect of escalating the situation.

## **Example of Play:**

Player 1 is controlling Sarah, Player 2 is controlling Julie, and their characters are trying to obtain a building permit to restore an old building. The bureaucrat, who doesn't want to help them, is controlled by the gamemaster (GM). They begin a challenge to resolve the situation. Since the GM is the initiator, his character goes first, despite having a 15 for major arcana. Player 1 has a 17 major arcana and Player 2 has a 4.

GM: He just looks at you, straight in the eyes, arms crossed and says, "Look, you're not a contractor. I'm not going to give you a permit." (bids a face card face-up as a 9)

Player 1: Sarah pushes forwards the blueprint, "That doesn't matter, as long as we're adhering

to code.” (bids an 8)

Player 2: “And we wouldn’t be here unless we wanted to do it right.” (bids a face)

GM: “What would a coupla’ women know about doing construction right?” (bids a 7)

Player 1: Sarah has had enough. “Why don’t you take a look at the blueprint and tell us?” (bids an 8)

Player 2: Julie looks right pissed about now, too. She grabs the blueprints and shoves them physically into his chest. “Just do your job, damnit!” (bids another face)

GM: “Ooh, a temper. I like!” He starts looking over the blueprints, but his eyes wander over the bodies of the women. “Well, ‘haps I could overlook a thing or two, if maybe we could make this job a little more fun?” (bids a face)

Player 1: Sarah just stares him down, tight lipped and tapping her finger impatiently on the counter.

(bids a face)

Player 2: “Forget that. Maybe you can just do your job, or else the city can hear the soundtrack to go with the security video.” I call.

All players reveal their bids. The GM has bid 17 plus a face card. Player 1 also has 17 plus a face card, but has a higher major arcana to break the tie. Player 2 bid only two face cards. Because she has the highest, Player 1 goes first, the GM goes second, and Player 2 doesn't get to act.

Player 1: Sarah covers up as if wanting to protect herself. "Do you think they'll bother with the scandal, or just cover their own asses?" (GM records 2 exhaustion points to the bureaucrat)

GM: “You know, it’s just visual, and I’m the one with the good reputation around here...but I suppose you do have a point,” he squints his eyes and drops his eyes to the blueprints to avoid looking at her body. He heaves a sigh then starts bringing out the paperwork, shoving it towards the women. “A’ight, go ahead. In the future, try to come back on someone else’s shift.” (Player 2 and Player 1 each record a point of exhaustion)

## Maneuvering (Optional)

Instead of taking an action, the player may turn in her initiative card and draw another. The player now goes when it comes up in the sequence.

## Exhaustion

Every character begins with 5 exhaustion points (healthy people have 6). Challenges can drain a character. Even social situations cause temporary damage. Any time a character runs out of those points, she collapses from exhaustion as the Pale leaves her drained. The character is then effectively out of it, unable to engage in challenges for a number of minutes (time passing for the players, not the characters) equal to the character’s exhaustion rest.

## Drugs & Medications

Drugs and medications can hurt or help, and they often do both. All drugs have a strength rating, from mild (marijuana, strength 1) to strong (ice, strength 5), and that strength can vary a bit depending on whether or not the drugs are cut.

Stimulants cause the character regains as many exhaustion points as the strength of the drug (even beyond the maximum), but loses one point less than twice the drug’s strength once it wears off.

Depressants put the character out of action for a number of scenes equal to the drug’s strength, losing that many exhaustion points,. This can only take the character to her maximum exhaustion points minus one. If nothing important is happening, then the story may just skip over the intervening scenes. When the drug wears off one exhaustion point is recovered.

Hallucinogens have a different effect. Instead of choosing which card to bid during a challenge, select one randomly. It is still put into the pile face down until the challenge is called. The character may not take advantage of

any other bonuses.

### **The Price of Addiction**

Eventually, if a character continues to take drugs, they will take their toll on the character's health. Every time the character does drugs greater than strength 1, draw an undealt card. If the card drawn is a 1, the character overdoses.

An overdose kills the character, but death is not instantaneous. The character suffers while the others try to save her. Even if the character receives medical treatment, she is still knocked out for a number of scenes like a depressant, but doesn't recover exhaustion points. The drug acts like a hallucinogen for the same duration. The character also fails health automatically.

### **Medication**

Medication for the Pale is supposed to be taken daily via injection. It is actually a cocktail of drugs which combine to fight off the symptoms of the disease. It creates the effects of a strength 1 version all of the above types of drugs. Street versions of the medication may only have some of the drugs, and so only create one or two of the effects, but they won't hold the Pale at bay as easily. For every side effect of the medication, the chance of failing health is reduced by one card. The first gets rid of page, the second knight and the third queen. The other advantage of medication is that the character can't overdose, provided only one dose is taken per day.

### **Coping with the Pale**

The best way to maintain good health in the face of a degenerative disease is to get a good night's rest. A good sleep will bring a character back up to full exhaustion points, but sleep plagued by nightmares, interrupted, or just a short nap will recover only two points.

This doesn't always work, though. The character's health may get worse at a whim. At

the start of each session, if someone draws the Fool, that character loses a maximum exhaustion point.

There are other ways to lose health. When a character collapses from exhaustion, a card is drawn from the player's hand. If it is a face card, lower the character's maximum exhaustion points by 1 and add 5 minutes to the character's rest score.

### **Waiting for the End**

If a character's maximum exhaustion reaches 1 (for any reason), the character's disease enters its final stage. The final stage is marked by the disease turning necrotic, rapidly eating away at the character's flesh, creating hallucinations, madness, and growing blackening of the skin. The character will collapse and truly begin to die after the next challenge (whether it costs exhaustion or not), or if the character collapses from exhaustion for any reason. If none of that occurs, then the character will still die after a day or so, but it will simply be narrated out between player and gamemaster.

### **Male Characters and Other Genders (Optional)**

While *Terribly Beautiful* is created for all female characters, this is not the only way to play it. To play with male characters, you have to be aware of the different power dynamics. This form of play will be easier if the character is marginalized in another way, such as homosexuality.

Opening the door to male characters also opens it to alternative genders. I leave it to you to explore these other genders on your own.



## *Being the Gamemaster*

*Terribly Beautiful* is like a danse macabre with its sensibilities turned on its head, where death may be bribed to hold off for just a little longer. The game explores many unpleasant things, but running it should not be unpleasant for the gamemaster.

Being the gamemaster in *Terribly Beautiful* is not completely different from being a player. Certainly, the gamemaster's responsibilities are different. He must describe the world and control of all the people in it. Still it is a game for the gamemaster as much as it is for the players. It might be easiest to think of the world as the gamemaster's character. Even more precisely, it is the neighbourhood, the Kaz itself, which reflects the gamemaster's point of view.

*Terribly Beautiful* can be run quickly for one session or over multiple sessions. If the longer story is played, some planning ahead should be done to keep the game alive over that time.

### **Good Ideas and Character Creation**

Usually it is alright to allow these ideas, even if they don't line up with the cards. There is, however, a tendency to take things too far. A couple of good ideas helps a character, but so does demanding randomness. That way the player will be forced to choose things he or she didn't predict.

### **Legacies & Obstacles**

The first path that characters may follow is to build their legacies, to create something that will outlive them. The legacy is, itself, an obstacle to be overcome, but only once all other obstacles have been dealt with.

The player should have already provided a few ideas for obstacles that the character must face. That doesn't mean that there can't be other obstacles. The gamemaster should introduce at least two unforeseen

obstacles for every character.

Obstacles relating to legacies are usually simply difficulties to be overcome, a straight line towards a goal, and most of the time, that's what they should be. The complication arises when the achievement of that goal may result in problems for others. Then the question becomes, what is someone willing to do to reach their goals? That becomes a question of identity. If a character is willing to do anything, then the goal itself should be corrupted.

One idea that is worth exploring is an obstacle which all players must face. An example is the police looking to crack down on prostitution. A raid might be handled with one hand of cards representing all the police.

If a character fails to overcome an obstacle, it generates a new obstacle. In all likelihood the new obstacle will appear before the character has had time to fully recover from the first challenge.

Thus, in the example above, the cops could arrest one or more characters. The characters would then face a judge and have to plead their case. If that is failed, the other prisoners start to pick on the character. It goes until either the character is defeated entirely, or a challenge (or possibly a series of challenges) is won.

### **Creating Fear**

Terror is the fear that something bad will happen and there is nothing you can do to stop it. This is the Pale in its initial onset. Horror is the visceral reaction people have to the violation of the body, be it their own or merely witnessed. This is the Pale in its final stage. There are other ways to generate fearful situations, but fear plays a big role in *Terribly Beautiful*.

The cycle of fear should not be unrelenting, though. Always allow the characters to find something to care about. Deciding on whether or not to threaten that triumph will be a part of your job.

## **Injury and Death**

Fights aren't usually about killing people, they're about declaring dominance and maintaining ego. Someone who collapses from a fight (loses all their exhaustion points) will face a failing health check, even they are not sick with the pale, representing the possibility for permanent injury. For death to occur from violence, either it requires some manner of deadly weapon (a knife or gun) or some effort. The opponent must be collapsed from exhaustion. The victor must declare that he or she is seeking to kill. The chosen victim will then be killed if nothing is done to stop the killer.

Death is not usually something that happens quickly. People bleed out over minutes or even hours. Painful infections can spread over days before the end comes. If a character is dying, then exhaustion points will not recover, even though consciousness may come and go.

## **On Tracking Money**

It's a niggling detail, but one that is likely to arise. At this point you make a choice. For most things it isn't necessary to track how much money a character has, so it isn't worth the effort. There are, however, times when cash is tight, or a little bit of cash could matter. In these cases, pull two cards from the major arcana. That's how much money the character has, in dollars, euro, or whatever your local currency is. Count everything, even the change, and make sure it all matters, that the character has to make choices about what to buy and what to do without.

## **Obstacles**

Sometimes a character may try to overcome something that isn't another person. Obstacles don't take actions, but they can still take several steps to resolve in a challenge. If the gamemaster allows it, the player may bid a card to try.

For example, a character is trying to kick open a door, playing a card. The gamemaster could say it's firmly bolted and strong, playing a card in opposition. The character then takes a running charge at the door, bidding a second card. If the character charges, then the gamemaster needs to decide whether that is enough (calling) or if the character really needs to get some tools out to knock down the door (playing another card).

## **Between Life's Excitements**

Each gathering of all the players is called a session and it is usually dominated by one opportunity or calamity that sparks what is called the adventure. If possible, try to end each session with the adventure more or less concluded. The Pale does not advance overly quickly, and it is likely that days, weeks, or even months pass between those few times when life provides opportunity or calamity.

## **Talismans & Faith**

In a world with demons and angels, the spiritual is not without its power. If a character holds to a ritual or believes in a talisman, even when it does not do anything, it may develop a power for them. Once per session a talisman or ritual may prevent the loss of an exhaustion point. This can lead to delaying death by the Pale, however little it may help, for if those who reach exhaustion less often may keep their health a little longer.

## **Groups of Supporting Characters**

Sometimes you will control a group of people, be they mobs, gangs, crowds, cats or whatever. It is easiest to just treat these groups as one person, using only one hand of cards, but getting the equivalent of one free face card in addition to whatever cards were bid. They scatter once the situation allows, usually at the end of a challenge.



## More on Secrets

A secret or rumour usually has one detail, but it doesn't have to. Extra details may become extra secrets. By breaking up a secret into several parts and having the characters follow it, it can create a mystery.

## Adventure Hooks

1. An Old Acquaintance: A former john of one of the characters meets up with the characters and wants to get reacquainted.
2. Hunting the Hunted: One of the predatory johns (Piotr or Jack) is on the prowl. Can the players reveal him as a monster and put a stop to his activities?
3. Unwanted Secrets: A secret is discovered, but it is about someone who is cared about. What to do with it or do about it?
4. Looking for Victims: Someone possessed by a demon has come to the Kaz to look for someone to give it to. Possession by a demon may be a curse, but it is a curse that provides opportunity.
5. Martyrdom: Someone possessed by an angel makes their sacrifice by saving one of the characters, and the angel picks a new host. Living with an angel is not as much of a blessing as one might think.
6. Contraband Shipment: A lot of smuggling goes through the old docks beneath the Kaz. Perhaps this time it's drugs, medication, immigrants, or something else entirely. Whatever it is, the Kaz will be more lively for a bit because of it.
7. Crackdown: the police are looking to make a good show for law & order, and the Kaz is the place for it. For the next while they'll be looking for drug dealers and other criminals to bust, and journalists will be looking for a show.

## When Does It End?

If *Terribly Beautiful* is played over several sessions, when should the story end? There are two criteria for ending the story:

1. When all the original characters have built their legacies.
2. When all the original characters have died.

When a character dies, the gamemaster should decide how close to the end of the story the game is. If it's just about to end, then it might be better to have that player take on the role of a supporting character. If there is significant play time left then a new character may be created, but this is excluded from the ending criteria. There will always be someone new with the pale.

If a character manages to create her legacy, it may seem that the story is over for the character, but the lack of a legacy puts more emphasis on the humanity of the character, especially if the character ends up helping the others with their legacies.

Players will find their characters going on a downwards spiral towards death. They will have to learn not to despair, to find hope where they can. *Terribly Beautiful* is not a pleasant story, it is horrific and terrifying. It is about people dying in degrees while struggling to achieve something spiritual.

## *Supporting Cast*

Supporting characters are controlled by the gamemaster and brought into the story as needed. Alternately, the gamemaster may choose to randomly bring in a character (such as who might be walking down the street one day) by drawing a card from the major arcana deck. The number / roman numeral and character name is listed below. Not all characters are on the list, as certain characters do not regularly wander the streets of the Kaz.

### **Random Street Encounters**

The Kaz is a busy place, but it's not uncommon to see a familiar face amongst the crowds. Every now and then the gamemaster may draw a card from the major arcana deck and look on the table below to see who is there to meet.

0/0 Fool	Stray
1 / I Magician	Eternity
2 / II High Priestess	Tia
3 / III Empress	Alicia Shine
4 / IV Emperor	Saffron
5 / V Hierophant	Lilith Dark
6 / VI Lovers	a cat
7 / VII Chariot	Todor
8 / VIII Strength	Maisarah
9 / IX Hermit	Arnold Wink
10 / X Wheel of Fortune	Nabo
11 / XI Justice	Navjot Singh May
12 / XII Hanged Man	Tapin
13 / XIII Death	Medea/Medusa
14 / XIV Temperance	Baba Yaga
15 / XV Devil	Matthew Hurst
16 / XVI Tower	Dusty Hines
17 / XVII Star	Kim
18 / XVIII Moon	Mohinder Ramesh
19 / XIX Sun	Dr. Leigh O'Biern
20 / XX Judgement	Father Wright
21 / XXI World	Clayton Smart

## **Who Are All These People?**

### **0. Stray**

Every community has a wandering animal or two, a pet that decided it was better to switch homes every night. Stray is such a creature, but he is a far larger dog than what normally attempts it. Stray adopts people for a day, following them around, hoping for scraps. The people of the Kaz consider it a spectator sport when Stray picks a tourist for this treatment. Stray's scarred body and ragged fur makes him an intimidating sight, and his sheer persistence, along with the locals' tendency to allow him to wander into stores, restaurants and even sometimes onto buses, means that Stray is always nearby. It only ever lasts a day. When a new day dawns, Stray forgets his old master and seeks out a new one. Stray is a person just like any other, with his own desires for attention, leadership, and food. He is also vulnerable to possession, and the possessors usually change hosts as soon as they realize his limitations. Nonetheless, he is just a stray dog, trying to get through the day like everyone else in the Kaz.

Strength: loyal (as far as his memory goes)

Exhaustion: 5 Rest: 15 minutes

### **1. Eternity**

She once had another name on the streets, but Eternity is what everyone knows her as now. She gained her new name by being that one-in-a-million, a carrier. She is unaffected by the Pale, though she may still infect others. Dressed in dreadlocks and punk clothing, Eternity is part of the Terribly Beautiful and also not. She follows the traditions to their tightest interpretation, but she does not feel them, and she does not seek to build a legacy. Instead, she is afraid, afraid that violence or accident will cut short her miracle. Eternity has one more thing to lose than any of the Terribly Beautiful, a long life.

Strength: natural beauty

Exhaustion: 5 Rest: 15 minutes

Lie: Being unaffected by the disease has given her new hope for life

## 2. Tiamat (Tia)

Tiamat is pregnant, and, from the size she's grown to, there will be more than one. Tiamat has used every chance she has to get the medication needed to protect her unborn children from the Pale that infects her, but until they're born, she won't know if missed injections will leave them born dying. With only a month or so to go, Tiamat is at her wits end, anxious beyond what she can stand, fearing that tomorrow she might not be able to afford the next shot.

Strength: motherly

Exhaustion: 4 Rest: 20 minutes

Lie: She gets her medication by prescription

## 3. Alicia Shine

The Bean There cafe sits on the corner. It is a bit messy, walls adorned with work by local artists, couches at one end and nice glass-topped tables surrounded by cheap chairs. A very beautiful young woman acts as waitress and barista. Her makeup carefully creates the look of the faux-terrible. Alicia is not one of the faux-terrible, for she really has the Pale, contracted through a dirty needle. At the end of the workday, all she wants to do is fall off her feet, but in order to become a model, she knows she must go out. She turned to drugs for the energy to do that.

Strength: absolutely gorgeous

Exhaustion: 5 Rest: 15 minutes

Secret: her use of drugs

Lie: she is one of the faux-terrible

## 4. Jimmy Fly (Saffron)

For a good time, just look for the man in the yellow smoking jacket. Jimmy Fly is what he calls himself, and Saffron is what everybody else calls him. The nickname comes from his wearing buddhist prayer beads, instead of the gold necklaces that would complete his image. It stuck, and as much as "Jimmy Fly" didn't fall in love with the nickname, he grinned and bore it.

Jimmy Fly's girls work the clubs, particularly the Lair, a darkwave and technopop club where booths provide semi-private spots

where the action can happen and the bouncers can conveniently forget to check. He doesn't like his girls taking johns to hotels, in part because he can't keep an eye on them, and in part because quick jobs make for more money. If the club is slow, then Jimmy isn't above taking one of his girls for a little fun, sharing some weed for their trouble.

Strength: accidental grooviness

Exhaustion: 6 Rest: 10 minutes

Secret: Jimmy's girls aren't the only ones that are quick. He only needs a couple of minutes to get off.

Lie: Jimmy is actually a buddhist monk (or once was), which is why they call him saffron

## 5. Lilith Dark

Lilith Dark isn't a streetname, she actually changed her legal name to match her image. Her shop, Under the Cover of Dark, is an occult shop, selling mostly books, but also a lot of random trinkets taken from every religion. She professes to believe in it all, and she does believe in most of it, overlooking those elements that contradict one another. She does brisk business in charms to protect from demons and angels, incense that is supposed to boost the immune system, and books on meditation, chakras and health.

Strength: good with money

Exhaustion: 6 Rest: 10 minutes

Rumour: Lilith isn't quite as smart as she used to be, probably caused by drugs

Lie: Lilith is a satanist

## 6. A Cat

They're everywhere in the Kaz, or at least everywhere that Stray, the dog, isn't. Cats are forever looking for attention from passers-by and staying in different homes each night. One cat is a cute thing, but when many of them gather, the power of a cacodemon may emerge (see the section on demons & angels).

Strength: quick

Exhaustion: 2 Rest: 30 minutes

Rumour: cats know all the hidden places in the city; one cat is cute, but a gang of cats is

spooky

Secret: the cats are haunted by demons

#### 7. Todor

There isn't a single cab company in the city that doesn't operate in the Kaz to some degree. Todor works for Chessley Cabs, and his vehicle is built to take the beating that a night of drunken customers can deal. There's bulletproof glass on the front windows and between the front and back seats. There's even a panic button he can kick to tell the cab company he's in trouble.

Like many taxi drivers, Todor is an immigrant. He is a medical doctor, but his degree isn't accepted by the government until he goes through years of processing, paperwork, testing and upgrade courses. The process for bringing in his wife looks like it will take twice as long.

Strength: medicine

Exhaustion: 6 Rest: 10 minutes

Rumour: Todor is actually a doctor

#### 8. Maisarah Khartoon

Ten pounds of crazy in an eight pound box, Maisarah will wander into a bar brawl just to take a drink before it gets spilled. Decked out in a white suit, white wingtip shoes, white porkpie hat, white tie and black shirt with plaid suspenders, and a pimped-out low-rider bicycle painted cherry red, she stands out in almost any crowd in the Kaz. She runs with a gang near the seaboard wall called the Raum who engage in a mixture of protection rackets and prostitution. It's her job in the gang to push any new female recruits to turn tricks to give the gang money.

Unlike many pimps, if somebody roughs up one of her girls, Maisarah goes berserk. The john had better be able to get out of the Kaz fast, because Maisarah can run down a taxi before it gets up to speed and has been known to go through car windows to get at someone, wrench in hand.

Strength: scrappy

Exhaustion: 6 Rest: 10 minutes

Rumour: Maisarah protects her girls

Lie: Maisarah will kill people for crossing her

or anyone in her gang

#### 9. Arnold Wink

Front clerk at the West Wind Motel, where rooms can be had for an hourly rate, though it isn't listed anywhere on the official ledgers. Arnold has seen it all, or rather, has heard it all through the cheap construction of the motel's walls and floors. He is largely beyond caring now, for often it's his job to clean up afterwards, and it's not a job he enjoys.

To pass the time he reads novels, lots of novels. They used to pile up behind the desk until his boss threatened to sell them all off. Arnold thought this was a great idea, and so now he sells them for a buck apiece. Not only that, but because he has read them all, he can often suggest books to people after asking them a few questions about what they might like.

Strength: patient

Exhaustion: 6 Rest: 10 minutes

#### 10. Nabokov (Nabo)

So many start young, not innocent, but still naive. Nabo is such a girl, and though innocent she may not be, she plays the role oh so well. It never stops, not even when dealing with others that know she isn't, and eventually it grates on everyone's sensibilities. Still, there is a brightness in her eyes and her constant friendly chatter that inspire forgiveness.

Nabo's lively eyes are the result of her absolute sense of indestructibility. She seems to have the luck of the devil, and nothing has hurt her too much thus far. The others in the Kaz watch her, holding their breath, waiting for something horrible to happen.

Strength: luck of the devil when trouble's around

Exhaustion: 6 Rest: 10 minutes

#### 11. Navjot Singh May

The Kaz has its own satellite police station, staffed twenty-four hours a day. Despite that, there is only one police officer who lives in the Kaz. Navjot Singh is a beat cop now, but his past saw him as a detective. He went

undercover to investigate narcotics trafficking, and a lot of people say he went dirty fast. He only barely survived being found out by arranging some very fast arrests. Once back with the regular force, he was a wreck, and it wasn't long before he was busted back down to the beat. It's not like there's a worse neighbourhood in the city to ship him to.

Navjot Singh doesn't care about that. The Kaz is his home, and while many on the streets don't trust him for what he did in the past, he's still one of them, a local, and not an outsider like the other cops. The Kaz protects its own against the rest, and Navjot Singh protects the Kaz.

Strength: strong survival instinct

Exhaustion: 6 Rest: 10 minutes

Rumour: he is dirty from his days when he used to work narcotics

Secret: he still uses hallucinogens, and knows about demons and angels

## 12. Tapin

Tapin was never into other men, but they were into him and he was into their wallets, so it was all okay as far as he was concerned. At least, it was until he became infected with the Pale. The Pale changed everything for him. While he could no longer sleep with his former patrons, he gazed upon the Terribly Beautiful and knew he had new patrons.

What he didn't expect was the rage. Though thin to the point of emaciation, the Terribly Beautiful held a strength borne of pure emotion, and Tapin found himself the target of that. The first time he left covered in bruises and scratches, nursing a broken wrist and barely able to walk. Now he is reconsidering his position.

Strength: seductive

Exhaustion: 4 Rest: 20 minutes

Rumour: he was never homosexual, despite catering only to men while in the trade

Lie: he regularly breaks the tradition of "no sex" upheld by the Terribly Beautiful

## 13. Medusa (Medea)

There were few on the streets of the Kaz more beautiful than Medea. She knew her own beauty and built upon it with poise and culture. The pale has made her more perfect than ever, and she draws stares just walking down the street. One of those stares did more than linger, and she was taken. When that man discovered that he, too, had become infected, he tried to have Medea charged. The court case was slanderous for both, and though the charges were eventually dropped, Medea had suffered greatly at the hands of the other prisoners and her jailors.

If are allowed to be nothing but a monster, then a monster you may as well be. Medea once again began walking the streets, taking only the most vain of clients. Her search for revenge got her excommunicated from the Terribly Beautiful, but she didn't care when they began to call her Medusa instead of Medea. She had her legacy of death to build.

She reads men well. To those absorbed in vanity and wealth she is Medea, looking for a hero to rescue her. To those seeking danger, she introduces herself as Medusa, offering to turn them to "stone."

Strength: seductive

Exhaustion: 3 Rest: 25 minutes

Rumour - Medusa violates only the one tradition of the Terribly Beautiful, and adheres to the others

## 14. Baba Yaga

Most nicknames are given by the street, but Baba Yaga was given hers by the media. She ran a hostel, but it lost its business when it was revealed that some of the women were prostitutes there and rumours spread like wildfire when Baba Yaga was revealed to have the Pale herself. She was labeled, first a madam, and then some journalist came up with the name Baba Yaga for her scarred face and it stuck. Now she is closing the final stages of the Pale, getting ready to die.

Like Medea, Baba Yaga embraced a bit of what society made her out to be, taking in prostitutes, giving them beds. She became a heroine in the Kaz, and established the

traditions of the Terribly Beautiful. Those traditions are her legacy, and she teaches them to the younger infected. She also grants the new Terribly Beautiful their new names, pulling names from the books on ancient mythologies that line her walls.

Strength: caring

Exhaustion: 2 Rest: 30 minutes

Secret: Injecting drugs is how she gained the Pale

Rumour: Baba Yaga's face is scarred because of vitriolage, an act of throwing acid in someone's face to spite them

Lie: Baba Yaga is a madam

#### 15. Matthew Hurst

Matthew spends more time in the Kaz than he ever wanted to. As a paramedic it is his job to pick up the pieces of whatever tragedy has occurred and cart them off to the hospital. He has gone through partner after partner in his ambulance, but only he has stuck with it. There's something mad about Matthew that just won't let him say the words, "dead on arrival," something grim that makes him joke about his own name and about how he drove a hearse once, but never again. A lot of people think he means he lost a patient once, but he actually used to drive a hearse from a funeral home. Any way it's taken, it gives him the determination to keep coming back every night.

Strength: adrenalin junkie

Exhaustion: 6 Rest: 10 minutes

Rumour: he once worked for a funeral home

Lie: he's looking to replace someone special he couldn't save

#### 16. Dusty Hines

Dusty wants nothing more than to step through one of the gates at the edge of the Kaz and never turn back. Like most people in the Kaz he knows that it's going to take a lot of money to do that, and that's why he turned to dealing drugs. Dusty sells hard drugs, not weed or bootleg tobacco, and that means he has to pay off the local gang. What they don't know is that he sometimes gets his hands on medication

for the Pale, and he doesn't cut them in when he sells that.

Dusty has a regular job, too, working for minimum wage in a music shop named Grooved. He has a passion for vinyl and punk bands, but his real collection is his record players, of which he has dozens.

Strength: resourceful with money

Exhaustion: 6 Rest: 10 minutes

Secret: he can sometimes get medication for the Pale from Mohinder for special clients

Rumour: he cuts his drugs sometimes, but not all the time, and he won't say when

Rumour: he has to pay off the local gang

Lie: he tries the drugs to see if they're good or not

#### 17. Kim

Kim gave up trying to get the locals to properly pronounce his Korean first name. He runs a corner variety store, selling junk food, magazines, cigarettes and condoms. The condoms he keeps behind the counter, not because he wants to limit their use, but because they used to be the most stolen item in the store.

Kim keeps a pot of soup behind the counter, simmering away. The smell drives people to buy more junk food, and he'll sometimes give a bowl of it to any friend who drops by to chat.

Strength: caring

Exhaustion: 6 Rest: 10 minutes

#### 18. Mohinder Ramesh

Mohinder is the highest paid person in the entirety of the Kaz, which isn't saying much, but he would be considered very well off anywhere else, too. As the pharmacist, it is his job to ensure that medications are properly dispensed, and secured at all other times. The pharmacy was built inside a former bank, converting its safe into a drug storage room that can be securely locked at night. As a result of being so well paid, Mohinder also pays a lot of income tax, and he complains about it incessantly. To make a little bit of money on the side, tax free, he has been known to sell the

occasional bit of drugs onto the black market, forging prescription slips, shorting customers or using other scams.

Strength: sincerity

Exhaustion: 6 Rest: 10 minutes

Secret: he sells drugs to the black market

Rumour: he sometimes shorts people on their prescription

Lie: he's into the drugs himself, and that's why he sometimes miscounts prescriptions

#### 19. Doctor Leigh O'Biern

When Dr. O'Biern decided to take over the Gabriel Health Clinic, he thought that he might do some good for a community desperately in need. Instead, he found himself doing mostly paperwork and fundraising. The clinic doesn't get much funding, and so he goes to both government and private agencies, knocking on their doors, asking for money to pay for rent, to replace worn equipment and used supplies, and to pay staff.

The clinic runs a needle exchange, disposing of old needles and giving out new ones for free, no questions asked. This, along with free condoms, is part of an effort to stop the spread of the Pale. It's also the most controversial activity engaged in by the clinic, and sometimes money is lost as a result, but Dr. O'Biern refuses to give up on the program. One thing Dr. O'Biern has given up on is keeping medications in the clinic. After one too many break-ins (the last pulled an entire safe out of the building), he now lets the pharmacy take that role.

Strength: medicine

Exhaustion: 6 Rest: 10 minutes

Lie: there are drug "samples" provided by the drug companies that are kept in the clinic

#### 20. Father Wright (Father Father)

Father Wright is the local priest who fulfills his duty to the community by running a soup kitchen on Thursday nights with the help of some volunteers. He accepted this parish only grudgingly, wanting instead to have some suburban church where the parishioners are more respectable. His sermons are often little

more poorly aimed rants, treating everyone in the Kaz as if they all committed every conceivable sin. This rapidly earned him the enmity of the local populace until one day he did something that won him at least partial redemption.

While Father Wright may look down upon the people in the community around him, he takes his vows seriously, particularly his vow of secrecy regarding confessions. One day the police came to him, demanding to know what one of the prostitutes that frequented his church might have confessed to. Father Wright refused to answer and it earned him a beating and then a night in jail. When word got around, Father Wright became known affectionately as Father Father.

Strength: loyal

Exhaustion: 6 Rest: 10 minutes

Secret: he had slept with the prostitute he protected

Rumour: he sometimes takes a prostitute into his side of the confessional

#### 21. Clayton Smart

Clayton didn't set out to be a sensationalist reporter, but his newspaper editor gives him deadlines and word counts, and Clayton needs to fill them as quickly as possible or else he'll find himself out of a job. That means there's no time for real investigative reporting. To make matters worse, any human interest stories he writes are just forgotten the next day. It's only his salacious work that gets noticed or remembered.

Clayton was the one who came up with the nicknames for Baba Yaga and the Terribly Beautiful, both of which other media outlets grabbed onto. He is rather proud that they stuck, since that helped his career a fair bit. He was even able to do a bit of television work, but the producers don't like showing the ruined Kaz too much, so back to uptown they went, leaving Clayton behind.

While Clayton may live beyond the walls he spends more and more time in the Kaz, trying to be a part of his community. Unfortunately, his reputation has been wrecked.

Strength: a way with words

Exhaustion: 6 Rest: 10 minutes

Secret: he is a married man, but his wife hates his obsession with the Kaz

Rumour: he's here all the time, but he's really an uptowner, not part of the local community

## Villains

Piotr Raskov (Vladimir)

Piotr Raskov is a man with a waxed moustache, a waxy complexion and the poise of a blackguard and a scoundrel. Piotr became infected with the Pale as a result of his indiscretions. He knew that the official treatment was no cure, and so he cast about for something, anything, that might be an actual cure, and he had enough money that offers of cures came. Doctor Fieldman was one of those offers.

Because of her position outside of the medical field, she was unable to acquire the blood supplies she needed, and so Darius stepped in. Now he prowls downtown for those he can seduce, people who might not be missed by the authorities, and hands them over to Dr. Fieldman.

Strength: seductive

Exhaustion: 6 Rest: 10 minutes

Secret: he has the Pale and keeps it at bay with a treatment involving blood transfusions

Secret: he kidnaps people for Dr. Fieldman to use in her research and treatments

Rumour: he has a huge mansion uptown, and likes to take prostitutes of either gender back there

Lie: he keeps a harem of women in the mansion where he lives

Doctor Eleanor Fieldman

Doctor Fieldman offers a treatment that medical science wants nothing to do with. She still has her license to practice, but that is more because she has had no interest in publishing or promoting her work, preferring instead to act as a doctor for the few rich clients, like Piotr Raskov, that she has. While Piotr knows she is conducting her experiments illegally, and is

supplying her with people to do it with, even he does not realize that she kills her victims in the process. Dr. Fieldman is happy to let Piotr believe that she pays the people for their assistance and lets them go home.

Her treatment doesn't really work, but it does seem to. It eliminates some of the paleness of the skin, at least temporarily.

Strength: sincerity

Exhaustion: 6 Rest: 10 minutes

Secret: she is engaged in illegal experiments, and killing people to do it

Rumour: she has developed a treatment that makes patients look healthy again

Lie: she has developed a better treatment for the Pale

Jack

There is a badly constructed rhyme on the street that goes, "Jack is a john, who calls himself George, but should be called Tom." The rhyme refers to jack the ripper, the slang for a prostitute's client (john), and two prison slang names designating people who are okay (George) and not okay (Tom). Actually, he changes his name, along with his clothes and haircut, in the hopes of avoiding being recognized. This is all because he has the Pale, but refuses give up his habit of hiring prostitutes. There are many who would like to take revenge upon him for that. He always seems to disappear for a few weeks or months before showing up again and targeting a new streetwalker.

Strength: vicious

Exhaustion: 4 Rest: 20 minutes

Secret: his real name is Hank Jones

Lie: he can be identified by a purple mark on his left shoulder



## Creating Supporting Cast and Villains

There are several elements to a good character. It is often best to leave names to last. It is often easiest to start with what the character does for a living. Is the character from the Kaz, or from uptown. Is he or she part of the trade, one of the Terribly Beautiful, a john, an animal or a worker? Most characters should have a quirk, an unusual but not too important habit. They should usually also have something about them that makes them more humane and also a flaw, usually hidden. Each character also needs a secret, rumour, or lie, possibly all at once.

At this point a little physical description, including fashion, might be useful. Finally pick a name, which can be anything (a phone book may be helpful), and maybe a nickname, which should reflect what the character is like.

## Dopplegangers

There is one type of supporting character that must be designed by the gamemaster called the doppleganger. A doppleganger is someone that looks a bit like one of the player characters, has had a similar life, but made one very important choice differently. The choice should be one that was made during play. The doppleganger should provide the opportunity to reflect on that choice.



## *What Lurks*

*“Every city and every heart has their shadows.”*

Even as it crumbles, the once majestic Kaz is creating a legacy of its own, sustaining its history of passion and debauchery by opening doors onto other worlds even as its own walls fall. Through those doors emerge the spirits, bodiless demons and angels who lurk unseen around those they choose to guide, their hosts, whispering suggestions and secrets. For their part, the hosts mutter back to the demons and angels, a conversation in which only one side can be heard by others.

Demons work their plans by encouraging selfishness at the expense of others. Angels promote self-sacrifice and martyrdom to the benefit of the world around.

Angels are the tougher of the two to be possessed by, for they ask for sacrifice, even sacrifice of things that might help achieve a legacy. An angel thinks nothing of its host, only of its goal.

Demons and angels both pose difficult choices for characters, but, from the point of view of telling a story, they are more than just villains. They make manifest the emotional struggles that occur within characters. Because of this, they should be carefully crafted to fit with the characters. There is another effect created by demons in particular. Most people in the Kaz have something likeable about them, but anyone can become a villain if they act selfishly and with disregard for others. Even Stray, the big, friendly dog of the Kaz, can become quite the monster if driven to it by a demon inside. This can shatter relationships and create mistrust. Not only that, but there is always the question, are they doing this because the demon tells them, or is the demon just giving excuses to do what they really wanted to? Will they revert to their old selves when the demon is gone, or will they keep behaving in the ways of self-gratification? Demons and

angels don't control people, they just provide secrets and suggestions.

## **Cacodemons & Choirs**

Choirs (angels) and cacodemons (demons) are special, lesser spiritual beings. Individually they are all but silent, but when they gather, they form a powerful whole that can work together towards a goal. The cats of the Kaz are an example of a cacodemon. Individually, the cats are just cats, but when they gather, they form the Wyld Hunt, driven by their demons to behave so.

## **The Power of Whispers**

Demons angels grant the greatest power to those they possess by telling secrets, but their whispers may build in influence, too. Every time a character does what a demon or angel asks, it's influence grows by 1. Influence may be used when whispering, allowing the demon or angel to trade a card to their host, much like using a secret. Each influence may be used only once per session.

Angels and demons know a lot, but they can't read minds. Nonetheless, their hosts need only mutter for the demon or angel to hear. The player should indicate this is what is being done by cupping her hand beside her mouth as if whispering into someone's ear. The gamemaster should inform the players of how to do this when it arises in the story.

## **Transference of Possession**

*“What does it take to be rid of you?” he cried.  
“Blood,” came the whisper.*

Demons and angels do not simply go away until their plan is complete. If a host wishes to rid themselves of an angel or demon, then he or she must commit an act of submission. For demons this is an abusive act, and for angels this is an act of martyrdom, both of which must involve another person who will become the new host and the spilling of blood.

The demon or angel will then move on to the other person.

Death is the other way to rid the world of the possession, as the demons and angels take shreds of the soul back to their respective realms.

While demons normally outnumber angels, that imbalance is even more pronounced in the Kaz. Abuse tends to occur from the powerful to the weak.

### **Bad Trips**

Anyone under the influence of hallucinogens may receive clues that tell of the presence of demons and angels. These could be a different set of eyes behind someone's face (like they're wearing a mask of their own face), or the sound of somebody whispering (though words cannot be made out). Hallucinations do not give the ability to tell demons from angels.

When a choir or cacodemon gathers, this changes. They can smell the hallucinogens and whisper through the hallucinations so that the drug-influenced individual may be taken into the mob. If the person suffering the hallucinations chooses to participate, then one of the demons may transfer to that person.

### **Using Demons & Angels**

The most common use of a demon or angel is to encourage a player to talk more about the emotional struggle the character is going through. The best way to have this happen is to have a demon or angel possess a character that has failed to overcome some obstacle, offering secrets that could help, or pushing the character to try a new direction.

A demon or angel may also be a legend, an urban legend that is passed from generation to generation. Such a demon or angel is more useful to explore a character that has begun to explore her own humanity.

### **Designing Demons & Angels**

Draw 4 major arcana and interpret them

with the help of the list from character creation. Choose one of the cards to inspire the personality of the angel or demon, what it tries to transform the character into. Another card is chosen to inspire the tragedy, that which it seeks to destroy. The remaining 2 cards are discarded.

The demon and angel knows all of the secrets and lies, but reveals only what is necessary to accomplishing its goals.

Demons and angels should be created specifically for the adventure. The goals they have should affect the character in some way, either by suggesting an alternative to a character's legacy, or outright opposing the legacy.

### **Example of Designing a Demon**

The GM, Phil, decides that a demon will feature in the next session, so he pulls 5 major arcana, getting the Hanged Man, Justice, Hierophant, Tower and Fool. The character he has plans on possessing has been dealing a lot with social status issues, having trouble fitting in with richer crowds. With that in mind, Phil finds the Hierophant an obvious choice, revolving, as it does, around conformity, meaning the character will have to dress properly, even if she has to steal the clothes. The Fool seems another obvious choice, with its meaning of risk without forethought, perhaps crashing an exclusive party. Finally, the inverted meaning of Justice, corrupt authority, seems to suggest that the character might try to gain position within a social group by driving someone else out through ridicule or other means.

For the demon's knowledge, Phil draws 7 minor arcana, getting 3 numbered cards, 3 face cards, and an ace. He notes the ace as 1 history to be used when needed during play. Two of the face cards are swords, indicating something aggressive. Phil decides they represent a couple of streetracers, ultra-competitive, but they don't actually know anything about mechanics. One of number cards is a pentacle, so Phil makes that the

identity of the mechanic that one of the above streetracers uses to tune his car. There are two wands, one face, one numbered, so Phil figures it might represent sisters, one a good girl, and the other pretending to be, but going out with the streetracers at night. The final card is a numbered cup, which Phil decides is a mother's fear that her boy might come home with the wrong sort of girl, which is hidden behind her scolding him for playing with his fast car.

### Example Demons & Angels

#### The Cats (cacodemon)

Cats are not known for being sociable to one another, but sometimes they do gather. A collection of cats in downright sinister, especially those in the Kaz, for many of the cats are host to a cacodemon that emerges only when they are together. When that happens, they recreate the Wyld Hunt. One of them elects to be the hunted and begins running, while the others give chase, tearing apart the hunted once the catch is made. To get rid of the cocademon, the host must play the hunted and either escape or survive.

Cats know secrets, too. Though they pay little attention to the affairs of humanity, they know all the hidden places in the city. To gain a demon from a cat is to gain access to an interesting collection of secrets, not only about the city.

#### The Oracle (angel and cacodemon)

She lives behind a door down an alleyway off an alleyway, in a building that was expanded until it turned into a labyrinth of hallways. She is the veiled prophet, the one who knows more than anyone should. No one knows for sure if she is really one of the *Terribly Beautiful*, but she seems to follow the traditions. Lifting the veil would make it apparent that she isn't, but it would not reveal her true affliction. It would take hallucinogens to reveal the truth, and none have been so disrespectful as to enter her presence under their influence.

The Oracle is host to innumerable

demons. Her head is a cacophony of voices that would overwhelm anyone else. When no one is around, she removes her veil and treads out into the night. She is part of the trade, a prostitute, who seeks out johns that are tormented by demons, taking those demons into herself. She does this because of the voice of her angel that guides her to become a sin-eater, taking the sins of others unto herself.

Exhaustion: 9 Rest: 3

Secret: the oracle is a sin-eater who calls herself Mascha

Rumour: the oracle lives within the most labyrinthine part of the Kaz

## Conclusion

The hardest lesson of all is to accept people for both their virtues and their flaws. *Terribly Beautiful* puts the players in difficult situations with characters that may be difficult to relate to, but empathy may bridge that gap. The hope is that the players will come to see something human in their characters, then perhaps they might also see the humanity within others outside of the game.

*Terribly Beautiful* was made for the 2008 *Game Chef: Artists First!* game design contest. It was based upon the artwork created by George Cotronis, also made for that contest.

## *Sample Adventure*

The actions of the characters provide most of the story, but that doesn't mean you have nothing to do. Whenever the characters are scrambling, possibly losing challenges, the police decide to raid the neighbourhood.

### **Police Raid**

The police start raiding the Kaz for anyone who looks like a prostitute. They do not, however, have a very good idea of what prostitutes look like, so instead they're going after anyone who has the pale.

A really good success means that not only does the character avoid getting caught, but she may help others from getting caught. (one person per face card).

If anyone gets caught in the raid (fails), their problems get worse. Bailing a fellow person out of jail will probably take more money than what the characters possess.

When it does make its way to court, the judge may be convinced that the characters are not prostitutes. If they're very successful, he may even turn against law enforcement.

Prison is a dangerous place to be. It doesn't help that the characters are visibly weak. The characters will be assaulted verbally first, then physically afterwards.

### **Winning and Losing**

Unlike a game that goes several sessions, only a single legacy need be completed for the adventure to end.

There is also the possibility of losing. If even one of the characters dies, the adventure also ends.



## *Terribly Beautiful*

New Streetname: Peisinoe

Player: \_\_\_\_\_

Old Streetname: Denise

Real Name: Petra Saban

Max. Exhaustion: 5\_\_\_\_\_ Exhaustion: \_\_\_\_\_ Rest: 15\_\_\_\_\_ minutes

Legacy: to become a famous singer

Strength: can sing beautifully with unrefined potential

Appearance: Long, straight black hair, diminutive body, she looks frailer than she actually is. She is very pale despite originally having darker skin.

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Rumor: she's good enough to become a professional\_

Lie: she thinks she's too good to take advice on her singing

Secret: she know the secret identity of Thomas Wilson, a movie star who comes to the Kaz

Tradition: Petra won't reveal the identities of any of the Pale, ever.

Obstacle: lack of confidence with her appearance (the pale) led her to hide while she was singing

How she overcame it: She realized that the most popular singers were faux-terrible, and that she would blend right in.

Obstacle: opportunistic boyfriend, named Mick Yaney, wants to make money off her upcoming fame

Obstacle: (not used because this is only an introductory adventure)

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Rumors: 4 \_\_\_\_\_

Secrets & Miscellaneous: She knows the secret identity of Thomas Wilson, a movie star who frequents to the Kaz.

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## *Terribly Beautiful*

New Streetname: Athena

Player: \_\_\_\_\_

Old Streetname: Martinique

Real Name: Aimee Boulanger

Max. Exhaustion: 3\_\_\_\_\_ Exhaustion: \_\_\_\_\_ Rest: 25\_\_\_\_\_ minutes

Legacy: to get drug coverage for others with the pale

Strength: good negotiator

Appearance: Her curves have been reduced to angles by the pale. She speaks with a french accent, and attempts to cover her illness with makeup.

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Rumor: She makes love to people, but doesn't engage in casual sex.

Lie: She once worked as an intern for a law firm.

Secret: She contracted the disease through Tapin before he knew he was infected.

Tradition: She sleeps with others who have the pale, but not Tapin.

Obstacle: her frequent travels between the Kaz and the courts put a drain on her modest budget

How she overcame it: she was able to gain money for a transit pass through a charity looking to help the impoverished

Obstacle: she is not an actual lawyer, and so faces trouble because of her lack of credibility

Obstacle: (not used because this is just an introductory adventure)

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Rumors: 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Secrets & Miscellaneous: She knows that a rich lawyer, Ivan Golubkin, is influential with the council and frequents the Kaz. She also knows that a particular contractor, Ramiro Porra, who tries to rebuild the Kaz, has a politician in his pocket, but she doesn't know which one.

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## *Terribly Beautiful*

New Streetname: Jezibaba

Player: \_\_\_\_\_

Old Streetname: Simone

Real Name: Yelena de Wijs

Max. Exhaustion: 4\_\_\_\_\_ Exhaustion: \_\_\_\_\_ Rest: 20\_\_\_\_\_ minutes

Legacy: to restore an old, sculpted fountain in a square in the Kaz

Strength: careful with money

Appearance: In her thirties, she would have had to retire from prostitution soon. She tries, as best she can, to maintain the appearance of a respectable housewife.

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Rumor: she will take over from Baba Yaga after she is dead

Lie: she sneaks away to use illegal drugs

Secret: she loves Tobor, a married cabbie, and sneaks away every chance she can to be with him

Tradition: she won't have sex with anybody, not even Tobor

Obstacle: she tried to be everyone's mother within the Terribly Beautiful

How she overcame it: she accepted that was Baba Yaga's role for now, and that she would inherit it after her death

Obstacle: she needs to get the entire community interested in her cause

Obstacle: (not used because this is just an introductory adventure)

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Rumors: 5 \_\_\_\_\_

Secrets & Miscellaneous: \_\_\_\_\_

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# *Terribly Beautiful*

New Streetname: \_\_\_\_\_ Player: \_\_\_\_\_

Old Streetname: \_\_\_\_\_ Real Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Max. Exhaustion: \_\_\_\_\_ Exhaustion: \_\_\_\_\_ Rest: \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

Legacy: \_\_\_\_\_

Strength: \_\_\_\_\_

Appearance: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Rumor: \_\_\_\_\_

Lie: \_\_\_\_\_

Secret: \_\_\_\_\_

Tradition: \_\_\_\_\_

Obstacle: \_\_\_\_\_

Obstacle: \_\_\_\_\_

Obstacle: \_\_\_\_\_

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Rumors: \_\_\_\_\_

Secrets & Miscellaneous: \_\_\_\_\_

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