

# Brick & Mortar: Last of the Independents

by Dan Maruschak

This game is a roleplaying game for three or four people. Each one of you will be playing characters in a stressful situation, the kind you might see in a movie. You'll need these rules, a six-sided die (each player can have their own or you can all share), some tokens (like coins or poker chips), some blank index cards, and pens or pencils. Someone needs to play The Owner and someone needs to play The Survivor. Take the rules sheet for the character you're playing and do what it says to do in the “before play” section. When everybody's ready, follow the instructions in the “when play begins” section.

An *important item* is something you couldn't find just anywhere – you'd need to get it specifically. If you were in a flower shop, a bouquet of flowers wouldn't be an *important item*, but a particular type of flower might be, based on the context. A stick of dynamite would definitely be an *important item*. A book of matches might be, based on the context. The Owner will write important items down on cards. If your character is in control of an *important item*, take control of the corresponding card.

A *plan* is a course of action that somebody's thought about that will lead to a particular goal. Some of the character sheets have instructions for when to write plans down on cards.

When you're playing your character, don't discuss hypothetical actions your character might take unless that's what your character is actually doing in the scene. Describe what your character does. You've probably got a pretty good idea of what a human would be capable of doing in the situations that come up in the game, so having your character do those things is OK. Don't say, “Would it be OK if my character grabbed took the shotgun?” Either have your character ask the other characters if it would be OK (if that's what you want your character to do), or if you just want to take it, say “I grab the shotgun.” If somebody else's character has a problem with that, maybe they'll try to stop you. Part of the fun of the game is reacting to what other characters do – if you try to get pre-approval for things you rob your friends of the fun of reacting spontaneously.

## The Characters

**The Owner:** Owning your own business has always been your dream. And you had a pretty good run for a while, too. Now that all the chains are offering lower prices than you can (and you'd rather not even *think* about Amazon.com) things are looking bleak. If things don't turn around soon you'll need to close these doors for good. At least it can't get any worse. Right?

**The Survivor:** Things are bad, but you can deal with it if you can keep your head. The first thing you need to do is get off the street. That store over there looks like it's open, maybe you can try there.

**The Regular:** You were on your way to the store when things started getting bad. *Real* bad. You need to get to a place of safety, a place you know well. Your home away from home, as it were.

**The Hipster:** You're much cooler than everyone else. Lucky for you that's pretty obvious, so you probably won't need to make a big deal out of it. There's some serious shit going down, though. There's supposed to be safety in numbers – that's probably bullshit, but what have you got to lose?

(This is rev 0.01 of the game)

# The Owner

## ***Before play:***

Answer these questions for yourself: What kind of store do you own? What's the name of your store? How long have you been in business? How far behind are you on rent?

Be prepared! On a card, list 5 things you would have in your store in case of an emergency. These are your **8 Things**.

Prepare three spaces for *important item* cards: In Stock, Supply Chain, and The Cloud.

## ***When play begins:***

Describe your store, and what you're doing in there right now.

## ***During play:***

**Customer Service:** If everybody survives, you win.

**Where can I get one of those?:** Whenever someone mentions a new *important item*, roll one die. This roll just tells you what you know about what you have. You don't have to tell the other characters anything if you don't want to.

If the item is one of your **8 Things**:

- 1: You know you had one, but where the hell is it? Write the item on a card and put it in The Cloud.
- 2: You know exactly where one is, but it's not here. Write it on a card and put it in the Supply Chain.
- 3: You've got one, essentially. Write it on a card, w/ complication, and put it In Stock. (If the important item is *a gun* and you get this result, maybe write something like *a gun with one bullet in it*.)
- 4-6: You've got one. Write in on a card and put it In Stock.

Otherwise:

- 1-2: How the hell should you know? Write the item on a card and put it in The Cloud.
- 3-4: You're pretty sure you know where one is, but it's not here. Write it on a card and put it in the Supply Chain.
- 5-6: You know exactly where one is, but it's not here. Write it on a card and put it in The Supply Chain.

**I knew it would turn up eventually:** If someone's describing a dangerous scene, and it would make it *way more dangerous* for one of the items in The Cloud to be involved, it is. Describe how that item is complicating things for whoever is in danger.

**Always in the last place you look:** If it would be bad for another character to be distracted right now, and it would make sense for one of the items in The Cloud to be easy for that character to notice but hard for that character to get to, it is. Describe what they see.

# The Survivor

## ***Before play:***

Before play begins, select the disastrous situation that leads you to take refuge in the store:

- Zombie apocalypse
- Blobs!
- Alien invasion
- Mysterious deadly fog

## ***When play begins:***

After the Owner describes the store, you breathlessly rush in. Tell the owner what's wrong.

## ***During play:***

**You've been through worse:** If you die, you lose.

**We Need a Plan:** Whenever you explain a plan that will save people, write it on a card, with each discrete step called out. For each step that's completed, place one token on the card. When the whole plan is completed, roll one die:

You roll less than the number of tokens on the card: The plan succeeds! Describe the results.

You roll equal to the number of tokens on the card: The plan nearly succeeds, but goes catastrophically wrong at the last second and now everything is worse. Describe what happened.

You roll less than the number of tokens on the card: You guess it wasn't such a good plan after all. Everybody that's involved in the plan right now dies. Describe how it all went terribly wrong.

**Every little bit helps:** Whenever you suggest that someone do something that will make you both safer, write it on a card and put a token on it. If and when they do the thing, they may add one to their *do something important* roll for each token they take off the card.

**Quiet! Did you hear that?:** Whenever people are engaging in unproductive bickering, mention the ominous thing you just noticed.

**Do something important:** If you're doing something important, roll one die.

1-2: It doesn't work. Describe what went wrong, and how.

3-4: If you're alone, use the 5-6 result. If you're with at least one other person, use the 1-2 result.

5-6: It works. Describe what happens.

**Avoid danger:** If you're in dangerous situation, before you do anything else, roll one die.

1: You die. Describe how.

2-4: A close call, and you're not out of the woods yet. Describe what happened and then do the thing you wanted to do.

5-6: If you're smart you'll get out of here: Do the thing you wanted to do. If it's possible to do that thing and get away from the danger, too, you do, assuming you want to.

# The Regular

## ***Before play:***

Answer these questions for yourself:

How much money do you spend at the store in the average month?

The people that work here don't know your name. They probably think of you as:

- The goth kid
- That chick with all the tattoos
- The fat guy. You know, the one that wears the t-shirts?
- I hadn't really thought about them *recognizing* me before. That's kind of creeping me out.
- Other (specify)

## ***When play begins:***

After the Survivor enters the store, and there's a lull, describe yourself coming in (The Hipster will come in at the same time in a four-player game).

## ***During play:***

**What's that?:** When there's a lull, mention the ominous thing you just noticed.

**This gives me an idea:** When you gain possession of an *important item*, if you can think of a plan that would get you, and only you, to safety, write it on a card and put a token on it. This is an idea that occurs to your character – describe it to the other players: if this was a movie, the audience needs to know that you're considering this plan, even if the other characters might not realize it yet. You may use tokens from this card to add +1's to any *doing something important* rolls you do in furtherance of the plan. If you complete the whole plan, you escape to safety.

**Every little bit helps:** Whenever you suggest that someone do something that will make you both safer, write it on a card and put a token on it. If and when they do the thing, they may add one to their *do something important* roll for each token they take off the card.

**Do something important:** If you're doing something important, roll one die.

1-2: It doesn't work. Describe what went wrong, and how.

3-4: If you're alone, use the 5-6 result. If you're with at least one other person, use the 1-2 result.

5-6: It works. Describe what happens.

**Avoid danger:** If you're in dangerous situation, before you do anything else, roll one die.

1: You die. Describe how.

2-4: A close call, and you're not out of the woods yet. Describe what happened and then do the thing you wanted to do.

5-6: If you're smart you'll get out of here: Do the thing you wanted to do. If it's possible to do that thing and get away from the danger, too, you do, assuming you want to.

# The Hipster

## ***Before play:***

Look disapprovingly at the other players while they do their *before play* sections. God, they're taking *forever*, aren't they?

## ***When play begins:***

After the Survivor enters the store, and there's a lull, describe yourself coming in (The Regular will come in at the same time in a four-player game).

## ***During play:***

**Duh:** When someone describes a plan, for each flaw or problem you point out to them that they hadn't already considered, write it on a card

**Roll your eyes:** When someone successfully addresses a problem or flaw you've pointed out, cross it off your card and place a token on the corresponding plan.

**Hate to break it to you:** Whenever everything looks like it's sorted out, mention the ominous thing you just noticed.

**This gives me an idea:** When you gain possession of an *important item*, if you can think of a plan that would get you, and only you, to safety, write it on a card and put a token on it. This is an idea that occurs to your character – describe it to the other players: if this was a movie, the audience needs to know that you're considering this plan, even if the other characters might not realize it yet. You may use tokens from this card to add +1's to any *doing something important* rolls you do in furtherance of the plan. If you complete the whole plan, you escape to safety.

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1: You die. Describe how.

2-4: A close call, and you're not out of the woods yet. Describe what happened and then do the thing you wanted to do.

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# An Example of Play

Ollie is playing The Owner. Sara is playing The Survivor. Ralph is playing The Regular. Harry is playing The Hipster.

Ollie: I'm a balding middle-aged dude, and I run a bookstore. It's called Endpapers. There are two signs in the windows, one says "Sale! Huge discounts!" and the other says "Ask about our loyalty program! Free carwash!" I'm at the register, thinking about maybe closing early today, since there haven't been any customers since noon.

Sara: This twenty-something girl comes in. She's really thin, with short brown hair, in kind of a pixie cut. She like bursts through the door and pushes it closed behind her. She's totally out of breath and doubled over with her back against the door.

Ollie: Can I help you?

Sara: Oh my god! Did you see them? Did you see the blobs? They're all over the place! There was this one guy, I saw a blob ooze right over him and he was just like *gone*!

Ollie: What are you talking about?

Sara: The blobs! They're out there, oozing all over the place. I saw one the size of a bus!

Ollie: I just stand there with my mouth open.

Ralph: She's still got her back against the door?

Sara: Yeah.

Ralph: OK, this heavysset guy in a Star Wars t-shirt runs up and start banging on the door from outside. I'm shouting, "Jesus Christ, let me in!"

Harry: There's another guy right next to him, looking all around, waiting for the door to open. He's got sideburns and a vintage suit.

Sara: I let you guys in, but as soon as you're inside I push the door shut again. Is there a lock on this thing?

Ralph: Yeah, lock the door! Don't let those things in here!

[Sara realizes she should have invoked "Every little bit helped" when she implicitly suggested locking the door. She grabs a card and writes "lock the door" on it, and puts a token on it.]

Harry: What the hell, you think doors are going to stop those things? They can just ooze underneath.

[Harry writes "Blobs can ooze under door" on a card]

Ralph: Well put something down there. Like a towel or something.

[Ollie doesn't think that you'd normally find a towel in a bookstore, so it counts as an important item. He has to roll for *Is it in stock?* Since "towel" is on Ollie's list of 8 Things he rolls on the first table. He gets a 5. He writes "towel" on a card and puts it in his In Stock area.]

Ollie: I grab a towel from behind the counter, pull my keys out of my pocket and I go over and lock the door.

Harry: I guess the towel that takes care of this.

[Harry crosses “Blobs can ooze under door” off his card and puts a token on the “lock the door” card]

[Ollie rolls for *do something important*. He gets a 3, but with the two tokens on the card he boosts it up to 5.]

Ollie: The door locks, and I lay the towel along the bottom and kind of kick it into place, wedging it into the crack under the door.

[Harry thinks everything has been sorted, so he invoked *Hate to break it to you.*]

Harry: Hey, did you guys hear that? It was kind of a slurping noise from over there. What's that, the back room?

Ollie: Yeah, it's the stockroom.

Ralph: Well you'd better go check it out man, we don't want one of those blobs getting in here!

[Ralph invokes *Every little bit helps* and writes “check the stockroom” on it, and puts a token on the card.]

Ollie: Crap. I go over to the stockroom and look inside.

[Ollie rolls for *do something important*. He gets a 1. Even with the token boosting it to 2, he still gets the “It doesn't work” result.]

Ollie: So these blobs... Are they kind of purple and gloopy? Cause I think I just saw one coming through the back window.

Ralph: Well go in there and get rid of it!

[After a second Ralph realizes that's effectively an invocation of *Every little bit helps* and writes “push blob out back window” on a card and puts a token on it.]

Harry: What the hell, man? It's not like he can just pick the thing up!

[Harry writes “can't touch blob” on his card.]

Harry: And even if he could, it would just ooze right out of his hands again.

[Harry writes “blob is too liquid to hold” on his card.]

Sara: Maybe you could freeze it.

[Sara invokes *Every little bit helps* and writes “freeze the blob” on it and puts a token on it.]

Harry: Yeah, I'm sure can just lure it into the walk-in freezer you find in every bookstore.

[Harry invokes *duh* and writes “no freezer” on his card.]

Ralph: Fire extinguisher! The CO2 kind! They cool things down when you shoot them at things.

[Ollie thinks the fire extinguisher is an important item, so he needs to roll on *Is it in stock?* Ollie didn't think of fire extinguishers when he was putting his 8 Things together, so he has to roll on the second table. He rolls a 5, so he knows exactly where one is, but it's not here. He writes “fire extinguisher” on a card and puts it in his Supply Chain area.]

Ollie: Oh, shit! I just had it recharged, but I forgot to bring it into the store! It must still be in the trunk of my car!

Ralph: Well go get it!

Ollie: No way! You guys all said there are lots of those things out there. I'd rather take my chances with one in here than however many are out there.

Sara: Fine, I'll go. Give me your keys.

Ollie: Yeah, sure. I give you my keys.

Sara: I kick the stupid towel out of the way, open the door, and go out.

Ollie: You see my car in the parking lot. It's a blue 1983 Monte Carlo.

Sara: I run over there and open the trunk.

Harry: There are blobs all over the place out there, I think this is dangerous.

Sara: Yeah.

[Sara rolls for *avoid danger*. She gets a 3: *A close call, and you're not out of the woods yet*. She's also *doing something important*, so she rolls for that. She gets a 5: *It works*.]

Sara: OK, I'm at the car fiddling with the trunk, and everybody else can see a blob is creeping up on me from around the corner of the building, but I don't see it. I unlock the trunk and open it up.

Ollie: The fire extinguisher's in there.

Sara: I grab it and I'm planning to sprint back to the store, but while I've been messing with the trunk that blob is like right up next to me.

[Sara rolls for *avoid danger*. She gets a 6: *If you're smart you'll get out of here*. She's also *doing something important*, so she rolls for that. She gets a 3. Since she's alone, that's the *It works* result.]

Sara: As I'm lifting the extinguisher out of the trunk, I finally see the blob. I start cursing up a storm, but I pull the pin on the fire extinguisher and shoot a blast of CO2 at the blob as I back away from it toward the store. It doesn't seem to be following me, so I turn and run. You guys open the door for me and slam it shut behind me.

Ralph: And I stick the towel back into the crack under the door.

[Ollie hands the "fire extinguisher" card to Sara.]

Ralph: Now go get the one in the back!

Sara: What the hell, do I have to do everything? Why don't you get the one in the back? I shove the fire extinguisher into his hands.

[Sara hands the "fire extinguisher" card to Ralph.]

[Ralph looks at the card and thinks of a plan as *This gives me an idea* tells him to do. He writes "Run away, shooting the extinguisher at any blobs that get close" on a card and puts a token on it.]

Ralph: As I'm holding the extinguisher, I realize that it can keep me safe from the blobs if I just ditch the rest of you guys and run for it.

Harry: I see the look in your eye, and I say, if you're thinking of running off with that thing, you're going to have to deal with the three of us.



Ralph: I think you just pointed out a flaw in my plan.

Harry: Dammit, you're right.

[Harry writes “get past rest of us” on his card.]

Ralph: Oh man, I guess I need to decide how much of a jerk I want to be... Screw it, I blast the fire extinguisher in your faces and run for the door.

[Harry grumbles and crosses off “get past rest of us” and puts a token on Ralph's card.]

Harry: But you still need to get past us, that's dangerous.

Sara: Yeah.

Ralph: Fine by me.

[Ralph rolls to *avoid danger*. He gets a 6: *If you're smart you'll get out of here*. He's also *doing something important*. He rolls a 3. Normally that would be a failure since he's not alone, but he uses the two tokens on the card to boost it to a 5, which is a success.]

Ralph: The rest of you are too freaked out to respond in time. I'm through the door before you even realize what's happening. One of you grabs onto my t-shirt, but you can't hang on, and then I'm booking across the parking lot with the fire extinguisher cradled in my arms. Woohoo, I'm safe!

Ollie: And the rest of us are still here in the store with the blob in the stockroom.

Harry: So what are we going to do about that?

Ollie: I don't know, I liked the fire extinguisher plan.

Harry: Have you got another one?

Ollie: I think I would have mentioned it if I had a spare one, dude.

[Sara thinks this is unproductive bickering, so she invokes *Quiet, did you hear that?*]

Sara: Knock it off you two! I just heard something heavy falling over in the stockroom. That blob's up to something.

[They continue playing.]