Keeton Manor

Ezra Keeton returned from the war far richer and more vigorous than his neighbors thought natural. He spent the remainder of his life building a huge mansion atop a granite mountain, adding wings and twisting passages year after year.

Its ominous gables, spired towers, and sheltered balconies loom over the surrounding forest and shelter a fantastic secret: an infinite array of rooms. Parlors flow into one another, secret doors and narrow stairways connect space in random ways. The last of the Keeton family disappeared years ago--lost in the house according to some.

Characters

The characters wake up in the vast mansion, each alone in a dour room and unaware of the others. The characters have no idea who they are or why they have ended up in the mansion. Their mission is to gain some sense of their own identity, discover their connection to the Keeton family, and escape the house.

Over the course of the game the players will define a handful of traits that flesh out each character's identity, including a *perk* that describes something positive about the character, a *flaw* denoting a less pleasant aspect of her background or personality, and finally the character's *relationship* to the Keeton family, which helps explain why she has been drawn to the bizarre house.

Scenes

During each scene the player serves as a GM for the player to her left, describing the room the PC has entered and what she experiences. A coin toss at the beginning of each scene shapes the tone. If the coin comes up heads, something positive will happen to the character involved. If tails, some unpleasant development will occur—including discovery of the character's flaw.

A scene can include events leading to a revelation about the PC (including learning more about her traits), a problem the character must face, or a surreal encounter. Other players at the table can interject ideas or questions, or even play the roles of NPCs who turn up.

When in doubt, use a coin toss to determine if PC actions succeed.

Teaming Up

The player characters begin the game alone and confused, but as they wander the house they will run into each other. GMs can include extra PCs in a scene after the characters have started remembering traits. The coin toss at the beginning of the scene applies to the group as a whole.

Even though the PCs will find each other as they explore the house, the nature of Keeton Manor makes it possible that they will be separated again when the scene ends by ending up in different rooms after passing through a doorway.

As long as it makes sense in the flow of the story, a player can include her own PC in a scene she is narrating. A player can't define new traits while using her own PC in a scene, however.
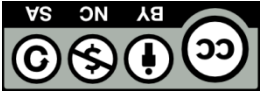
Leaving the House

When the players has successfully unearthed the PCs' connections to the Keeton family and fleshed out the characters' identities, they can begin plotting to escape the house. The nature of the escape can vary dramatically depending on the tone of play so far and the experiences of the characters. A group focused on character development and narrative could wrap things up with a scene that finds the characters walking through the manor's main door into a sunny landscape, for example, while a game that has emphasized terror and conflict might resolve after a battle with a malign entity. No matter what track your group takes, all of the characters must escape the house in the same climactic scene.

Final Thoughts

The style of play can vary from session to session—or even from scene to scene—ranging from magical realism to horror, mystery to science fiction. Some groups might want to set some rough guidelines when they begin play, while others will be more comfortable with odd combinations. As long as the house feels weird and engaging you're doing fine.

Folks who want to add more randomness to the game could use Rory's Story Cubes to introduce new elements to the game.

Shae Davidson presents

The House of Unusual Size