As Above, So Below

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Contents

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Introduction

This scenario is similar to a *Call of Cthulhu* adventure, and calls for similar characters. All of the characters have some connection with Patience Meadow, a freshman living in dormitory at Harvard.

The game begins in the Boston-Cambridge area in the present day.

All of you know Patience Meadow, possibly through her parents (Timothy and Anne Meadow), possibly through her guardian, Dr. Cornelius van Nieuhoven.

Patience is 19 and at her first year at Harvard. Dr. van Nieuhoven had urged her to enroll at UMass Boston, where he is a professor emeritus in the Gerontology program, but she insisted that she make her own way at a different school.

Her parents were professors (he taught military history at UMass Boston and she taught mathematics at MIT). Unfortunately, they died some years ago. A decade ago, the Meadows were attending a party when the house caught fire. (Officially it was a gas explosion, triggered when some of the partygoers went downstairs for some surreptitious grass.) Timothy managed to escape but could not save his wife; the shock of her loss drove him quite mad and he was committed to an insane asylum, where he died four years ago.

Doctor van Nieuhoven, who had lost his own wife and child to Van Nieuhoven's Progeria, took the girl in as his ward. (These things still happen.) He has had her schooled by tutors and she has blossomed into a bright, athletic young woman, sheltered from the real world.

Now there have been reports of intruders near the residences and Dr. van Nieuhoven, perhaps overly protective, is concerned for her safety. He has urged her to return to his house and commute to school, but she has refused. Privately, she's told her friends that she's anxious to try out new things, now that she's moved out. She's grateful to Doctor Cor, but she's nineteen.

She wants to try new things—if you know her well enough, she might have confessed to you that she's never been kissed. And her name...well, she's dealt with a certain amount of teasing. (More details about her will evolve as people reveal how they know her or of her.)

If you had to describe her in a phrase, you'd say she's hungry for life.

Patience Jane Meadow

Things you may know about Patience:

She hates her name. At school, she goes by PJ. She lives in a dormitory and shares quarters with a roommate (as yet unnamed – possibly a PC). (She would be at Radcliffe, but they've merged with Harvard; besides, her father went to Harvard.)

She doesn't talk much about her parents.

Patience is somewhat shy about meeting new people. At first meeting, she can be quiet, although she can be bubbly and sometimes boisterous with people she knows. She sometimes acts older than she is, since she has spent most of her life with older people. Since she feels she has led a sheltered life, she tends not to talk too much around people her age.

She has been excellently tutored and is knowledgeable about many topics. She is also quite wrong about some of them.

She strongly respects her elders.

She is not officially a vegetarian, but Dr. van Nieuhoven is, and she has lived primarily as a vegetarian for eight years.

She does regard Doctor Cor as stuffy; she has essentially been raised by her grandfather.

She swims competitively and is keen to try other sports and activities.

Dr. Cornelius van Nienhoven

Born in Groenigen in the Netherlands in 1936, Doctor van Nieuhoven came to the US in the 1960s. He was already a doctor, and brought his wife and daughter here while he studied gerontology at UMass Boston. He became a professor at UMB and has stayed on.

His wife and daughter became ill in the 1980s; he described the syndrome, which resembled progeria; it has since become known as van Nieuhoven's progeria. The cause is not yet known; there have been no other cases.

Friends who knew him then say their deaths nearly destroyed him. It was only the friendship of Tim and Anne Meadow that brought him out of the bleak depression that followed.

Taking Patience on as his ward seems to have protected him against a similar depression when Tim and Anne died.

He has been talking about establishing his own research clinic for about ten years, and in the last three years has been actively raising funds, visiting with successful businessmen and corporations so they will sponsor the clinic. It takes up a great deal of his time.

He has very strong, charismatic personality. You can see how he'd steamroller over someone like Patience without realizing he's doing it.

You can create characters using templates, or you can use standard *CORPS* rules (100 AP, 50 SP). A set of templates is included.

Some House Rules

I've added one or two more options for character creation, besides the templates already given.

Inherited Wealth (Ω)

This advantage is only available with GM's permission. Income due to Inherited Wealth is an alternative to the regular Wealth rules; normally a character will use one or the other.

The character starts off with a pool of money invested on his or her behalf; this amount is calculated as though it were a skill under the normal rules, but "inherited wealth" skill costs 4 AP or SP per level, and once the character goes through the principal, it's gone.

For example, a character with 10 levels of inherited wealth (40 AP or SP), calculates monthly income as $10\times10\times50$ Cr, or 5,000 per month. This is assumed to be interest on investments that return approximately 10%. This character has an annual income of $12\times5,000$ or 60,000 Cr, which is presumed to come from investments of approximately 600,000 Cr. Should the character need more than 5,000 in a month, he or she can spend principal, at the cost of forever reducing monthly income.

The 50 multiplier may need to be adjusted for games set in time-periods other than the modern day, to reflect different purchasing power.

For easy reference, 13 levels in Inherited Wealth (52 pts) is 1,000,000 invested, and \$100,000 annually. 20 levels in Inherited Wealth (80 pts) is 250,000 annually.

Psychic and Magic Powers

One or two characters may begin with psychic/supernatural abilities. (You'll need the *CORPS* rules to create psychic powers.)

Your ability to detect psychic phenomena depends upon your POW aptitude, and your ability to interpret what you detect depends upon your POW.

A person with a POW aptitude of 0 (POW=1) is oblivious; a person with a POW aptitude of 1 (POW=2-5) will get a chill on entering certain places of power or handling a mystic artifact; a person with a POW aptitude of 2 or better (POW=6+) gets "impressions" and may be able to see auras.

Psychic Power Framework

Psychic powers are extremely unreliable (most people don't believe in them), and only available to characters with a POW of 5 or more. Psychic powers are built with the standard *CORPS* rules and all have the following limitations:

- Requires POW 5+ to use (-1)
- Requires 10 seconds of concentration for each use (-6)
- Works on 3- (-5)
- Requires a Psych Lim of same level as POW used (-3) all psychics and magicians are flakes, obsessed or stuck with odd beliefs that help them. I have to approve the psych lim; religious or obsessive psych lims are the easiest to justify (clerics and mages, really)

Powers require one of the following two limitations:

- All powers require a skill to use; difficulty of the task (maintaining the concentration) depends upon the individual, but will be a least 6 (for -1)
- Powers that affect others require a POW roll versus POW+6 in the opponent

The following only applies to conscious powers:

 Can be negated by presence of non-believers (-3) — in game terms, each non-believer has the Block power at their POW level, and the POW level is additive

The minimum cost of a power is 5 SP.

Certain rituals or foci or times of the year or month may provide power multiples, but they too are subject to the 3- activation.

Psychic powers may activate randomly, at the GM's whim.

Example: Sometimes when Gina reads the tarot cards, she sees the future. That's the Precognition power.

Precognition Non-ranged 2 Self (no one else can interpret the cards for her) 2 Visible (you can see her doing it) Constant (it's not fatiguing) 5 5 Conscious (she decides to do it) 2 Focus (she needs the cards) Basic cost: 18 Requires POW 5+ -1 Requires a Psych Lim (Gina's psych lim is only level 2, -3 so she's limited to POW of 2 in precognition) 10 seconds of concentration for each use -6 Only works on 3--5

Requires visible gestures (laying out the cards)	-1
Requires difficulty 6 skill roll (Tarot interpretation)	-1
Final cost	5 SP

Example: Darren can sometimes talk to the dead That's the Detect power.

Detect Non-ranged 2 2 Self (no one else can hear them) 5 Invisible (he's just standing still, mumbling to himself) Draining (he finds it physically tiring to try) 2 Conscious (he does it on purpose) 5 Focus (something associated with the deceased) 2 +5 Special effect (two-way communication) Basic cost: 23 Requires POW 5+ -1 -3 Requires a Psych Lim (he's got a Psych lim of 6, so he can use all 6 of his POW...he's regarded as a kook) -7 1 minute of concentration for each use -5 Only works on 3-Only works on POW vs POW+6 of the deceased -4 -1 Can't try any person twice unless significant aspects change

Creating Older Characters

Final cost

The *CORPS* aging rules can destroy a character you want to play, so here are some suggestions if your character really needs to be older than 30.

5 SP

A high HLT will let you automatically make aging rolls until a greater age. (That aging starts at 30 presupposes a health of 5.) I will accept the Physical Advantages "long-lived" or "robust health," which will add 2 to your HLT for the purposes of aging rolls.

You might want to save some of your APs and SPs until after your aging rolls, then spend the points to offset the effects of aging.

Possibly Useful Skills

In addition to the usual combat skills, the following skills may turn out to be useful.

- Chemistry
- Computer hacking
- History/Secret Societies
- Hunting/Stealth
- Investigative research
- Investigative research/Forensics
- Investigative research/Library use
- Language Latin
- Mathematics
- Medicine/Psychiatry
- Philosophy/Arcane Religions
- Philosophy/Arcane Religions/Alchemy

- Psychology/Seduction
- Survival/Arctic

Templates

• A **template** is a character stereotype you can customize.

Templates aren't gender-specific. Most are balanced, so you can add new skills or ASPs by picking new disadvantages. Feel free to change the actual psych lims, too—these are templates, not finished characters.

Other typical *CoC* professions are available, of course, but don't lend themselves so nicely to templates – how old is an Antiquarian, for example?

Cop or Ex-cop

COP			P	
STR	5	1	_	Age 26 (20 AP, 40 SP)
AGL	6	2		Enemy 2 (Organized Crime) (10
AWR	5	1		AP)
WIL	5	1		Enemy 1 (Assorted Criminals) (5
HLT	5	1		AP)
POW	2	1		Enemy 1 (Internal Affairs) (5 AP)
				Contact 1 (Police) (-5 SP)
				Contact 1 (Informant) (-5 SP)
Punch	1 DV	7	4	Projectile Weapons
Kick	$2\mathrm{DV}$	7	6	Pistols
			3	Melee Weapons
			4	Billy Club
			4	Unarmed Combat
			5	Punch
			3	Drive Land Vehicles
			4	Car
			3	Paramedic
			3	Law
			4	Criminal Law
			2	Psychology
			3	Influence
			3	Underworld culture
			2	Other interest (Spanish, Military
				Science, or area knowledge)
				Total SPs spent: 80

Dilettante

	,	1 1 1 1 1		Age 30 (28 AP, 56 SP) Psych 3: Keeping up appearances (6 SP) Contacts 2: Other dilettantes (-5 SP) Wealth (-52 SP) — annual
Punch Kick	1 DV 2/1 D	OV	4 5 4 5 3 4 4 2 5	1 \ /

STR 4 leads to a 1 DV kick

Doctor of Medicine

STR	4	1		Age 35 (38 AP, 76 SP)
AGL	4	1		Psych 2: Hippocratic oath (4
AWR	6	2		AP)
WIL	5	1		Psych 2: Drive for professional
HLT	6	2		excellence (4 AP)
POW	1	0		Non-combatant (5 SP)
Punch Kick	1 DV 1 DV		6 9 10 2	Physical advantage: Dexterous hands (-5 AP) Medicine (+1) (49 SP) Specialty (9 SP) Narrow specialty (1 SP) Drive Land vehicle (3 SP) Total SPs spent: 59

SPs left to spend: 23

Iournalist

,				
STR	5/4	1		Age 27 (22 AP, 44 SP)
AGL	4/5	1		Psych 2: Nosy (4 SP)
AWR	6	2		Psych 1: Doesn't know when to
WIL	6	2		quit (2 SP)
HLT	5	1		Enemy 2: Fanatic group, opposite
POW	1	1		political views (10 AP)
				Enemy 2: City Hall (7 AP, 3 SP)
				Contact 2: Wire service (-10 SP)
Punch	1 DV		1	Projectile weapons familiarity (2
Kick	$2/1\mathrm{D}$	V		SP)
			1	Unarmed combat familiarity (2
ASPs				SP)
			2	Drive land vehicles (4 SP)
			5	Writing (21 SP)
			7	Journalism (4 SP)
			4	Photography (12 SP)
			4	Investigative Research (12 SP)
			6	Streetwise (4 SP)
			5	History (21 SP)
			5	Area knowledge of city (-2) (5 SP)
			5	Hobby (Internet) (-2) (5 SP)
				Total SPs spent: 86

For STR and AGL, the first number is for males, the second for females.

STR 4 leads to a 1 DV kick.

Parapsychologist

	,		U	
STR	4	1		Age 27 (22 AP, 44 SP)
AGL	3	1		Psych 5: Talkative (7 AP, 3 SP)
AWR	6	2		Psych 2: Wants respect (4 AP)
WIL	6	2		Enemy 2: Skeptics (10 AP)
HLT	4	1		
POW	5	1		Physical ad: Sharp memory (-5 AP)
Punch	1 I	OV	2	Projectile Weapons (3 SP)
Kick	1 I	OV	2	Unarmed combat (3 SP)
			2	Drive land vehicles (3 SP)
			3	Cars (1 SP)
			7	Electronics (45 SP)
			4	Computer science (12 SP)
			6	Hacking (4 SP)
			4	Psychology (12 SP)
			6	Parapsychology (4 SP)
			3	Writing (5 SP)
			3	Area knowledge (5 SP)
				Total SPs spent: 97

You're involved in the disreputable science of parapsychology; perhaps you want to bring it respectability, or perhaps you're an intellectual failure eking out a living in a sideshow pseudoscience.

You are currently a contributing editor for **File 13013**, a fringe magazine dealing with the strange and unusual.

Private Investigator

				U
STR	5	1		Age 28 (24 AP, 48 SP)
AGL	5	1		Enemy 1: various former targets (5
AWR	6	2		AP)
WIL	5	1		,
HLT	4	1		Contact 1: local police (-5 SP)
POW	1	0		Contact 1: local mob (-5 SP)
				Local weapon permit, PI license
Punch	1 D	V	3	Projectile weapons (8 SP)
Kick	2 D	V	4	Pistol (1 SP)
			3	Unarmed combat (8 SP)
			5	Law (21 SP)
			2	Drive land vehicles (3 SP)
			4	Hobby (-2) (3)
			5	Investigative research (21 SP)
			7	Streetwise (4 SP)
			6	Records search (1 SP)
			4	Psychology (12 SP)
			5	Intimidation
				Total SPs spent: 83

Retired Professor

ICUIC	uı	101	Co	501
STR	5	1		Age 55 (78 AP, 156 SP)
AGL	5	1		Psych 3: Condescending (6 AP)
AWR	8	2		Psych 4: Intolerant of the willfully
WIL	6	2		ignorant (8 AP)
HLT	5	1		Enemy 2: Mexican police
POW	1	0		Contact 2: Colleague in distant country
				Note 10 leftover APs not counted as ASPs, for paying off age-related problems
Punch	1 DV	7	1	Projectile weapons familiarity (2
Kicks	2 DV	7		SP)
			3	Unarmed combat (8 SP)
			3	Drive land vehicles (8 SP)
			8	Professional skill (60 SP)
			6	Related skill (32 SP)
			6	Investigative research (32 SP)
			4	History (12 SP)
			4	Second culture (12 SP)
			4	Second language (12 SP)
			4	Survival (12 SP)
			4	Hobby (-2) (8 SP)
				Total spent: 198 SP

More House Rules

Some of these are optional rules selected from the rulebook; others are my own invention.

You can get a 3-page version of the *CORPS* rules at http://www.digdat.com/~btrc/pub/nutshell_v15en.pdf

ASPs

An Ass-Saver Point (ASP) is a point the player can spend to change the effects of a die roll. Think of it as luck, and like luck, it can run out...

For each point you spend, you can change a die roll by one. Let's say you need to roll a 7 to hit the monster and you rolled an 8; spend one point, and you hit. Or let's say you need to roll a 1 to hit the monster in the head, but you rolled a 3; spend two ASPs, and that 3 becomes a 1. Or maybe someone shot you and rolled a 10 to determine where you were hit (left leg); you spend 1 ASP and move that gunshot off your body (there is no hit location 11).

After character creation, the maximum number of ASPs you can have stored is equal to your highest attribute.

The Graze Rule

A roll that makes an exact success means a marginal success. In combat, the attack does only 1 point of damage.

If you have an automatic success in combat, it counts as a graze, unless your skill is 5+ greater than the difficulty.

To turn an automatic success into a more substantial hit, roll the die for 9-.

The Long Shot Rule

Normally, you have no chance to succeed at a task where the difficulty is 6+ points higher than your skill. You can attempt to go for the long shot.

More House Rules

Roll a 1 then roll again against a difficulty that's 5 lower. For example, Jim-Bob has a skill of 6 and the difficulty is 13. There's no chance to take extra time, so he rolls and gets a 1. With luck on his side, he rolls again, skill 6 versus difficulty (13-5=8), now trying to beat 7-.

The bad guys may also get to use this rule.

Going Crazy

It's stressful to see certain Things Man Was Not Meant To Know. The player characters may go crazy.

Use the *CORPS* fear ratings. That is, use your current WIL as the skill and roll against the "fearfulness" of what they see: difficulty 5 for 1 walking corpse, difficulty 6 for 2 or 3, difficulty 7 for self-animated amputated limbs, difficulty 8 for seeing 4 at once. (The higher difficulty for 4 of them is because you're alone by then...) Increase the difficulty if it's gory.

- Success means you continue as you were
- Failure means all actions take a penalty of the amount failed until the situation changes significantly (someone smacks you to sanity, the monster leaves, etc.).
- Failure *by your current WIL or more* means you freak out: stand paralyzed, flee, or you attack with whatever's handy and no regard to personal safety.

When you have failed as many fear rolls as your POW, your current WIL drops by one. Your ability to resist your own psychological flaws is reduced. If you freak out as part of these failures, you pick up one level of psychological disadvantage: a brief hallucination, a minor phobia about something in the room, a new obsession... It should be somehow related to what has just been happening.

Example fear ratings:

ITEM	FEAR RATING
Ferocious large carnivores	4
Mutilated corpses	4
Self-mobile corpses	5
Ghosts	5
Demons	6
Horrors that are life, but not as we know it	6
Each 2x human size (up to +5)	+1
Each 2x quantity (up to +5)	+1

Example: Indigo West, adventurer, has just split open Nagy's head with a shovel and knows he's dead. She sits down for a moment to pour herself a stiff drink. Behind her, Nagy gets up. She hears the noise and spins and is afraid. Then Nagy pulls the shovel from his own head with a sickening sound and advances.

It's one walking corpse (5), gory (+1), make that *very* gory (another +1). Indigo needs to roll against a difficulty of 7: with her WILL of 5, that's 7 or less.

If she rolls 7 or less, she has her wits about her and she reacts. If she rolls an 8, 9, or 10, the roll fails, and she's at -1, -2, or -3 for all actions for a while.

Too bad Indigo only has a POW of 1: if she fails this roll, her effective WIL is reduced to 4, which will make it harder for her to keep her nerve when she sees the four walking dead outside the tomb.

Charts

ROLL TOTAL	LEVEL
≤8	Fail
9-10	1
11-12	2
13-14	3
15-18	4
19-21	5
21-23	6

TIME	MODIFIER TO DIFFICULTY
"Out of combat"	-2
1/4 of usual time	+2
½ of usual time	+1
Usual time	+0
2-4x	-1
5-9x	-2
10-16x	-3
17-25x	-4
Bad conditions	+1 to +5
Good conditions	-1 to -2

DISTANCE	0	1	2-4	5-9	10-16	17-25	26-36	37-49	50-64
DIFFICULTY	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
FIRER MOVING	+0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8
TARGET MOVING	+0	+1	+1	+2	+2	+3	+3	+4	+4

Name	DAMAGE	DV	INIT	LENGTH	Size	Mass	ΑV
Knives and Blades							
Bowie Knife	lethal (c/p)	+1/+1	+0	28	2	0.4	16
Hatchet	lethal (c)	+2	-1	30	4	0.7	10
Lumber axe (2-handed)	lethal (c)	+3	-3	90	8	2.1	8
Meat Cleaver	lethal (c)	+1	-1	30	4	1.3	18
Hunting Knife	lethal (c/p)	+1/+1	+0	25	2	0.2	12
Pen Knife (cheap)	lethal (c/p)	+0/+0	+0	10	1	0.1	4
Pen Knife (expensive)	lethal (c/p)	+0/+0	+0	10	1	0.1	12
Machete	lethal (c)	+1	-1	55	4	0.4	5
CLUBS							
Billy Club/Truncheon	comb. (b)	+1	-1	55	6	0.3	2
Medium club	comb. (b)	+2	-2	70	9	1.4	5
Big club (2-handed)	comb. (b)	+4	-2	120	11	5.5	22
Tools							
Claw Hammer	lethal (b/p)	+1	-1	25	5	1.5	30
Hoe (2-handed)	lethal (c)	+1	-1	130	19	1.4	6
Pen/leather awl	lethal (p)	+0	+2	17	1	0.0	0
Pitchfork (2-handed)	lethal (p)	+0	-3	180	14	1.4	4
Scythe (2-handed)	lethal (c)	+5	-3	240	33	2.4	6
Sickle	lethal (c)	+2	-2	50	7	1.2	12
Chainsaw (2-handed)	lethal (c)	3/sec	-5	90	15	6	10
I MPROVISED							
Stick, Pointed Metal	lethal (b/p)	+1/+0	-2	70	5	1.8	6
Stick, Pointed Wooden	lethal (b/p)	+0	-2	70	5	0.9	2

TARGET SIZE	DIFFICULTY
Big boat	-3
Boat	-2
Motorcycle	-1
Person	+0
Torso	+1
Head	+2
Hand or neck	+3
Thumb or eye	+4

Roll	LOCATION
1	Head/neck
2	Right arm
3-4	Chest
5	Left arm
6	Abdomen
7	Upper right leg
8	Upper left leg
9	Lower right leg
10	Lower left leg

Combat Checklist

- 1. Decide the first skill you want to use.
- 2. Apply any modifiers for injuries or situation to get initiative.
- 3. Act.
- 4. Wait 2 Initiative points before acting again.
- 5. Go back to step 3; repeat until Initiative 0.

Getting Hurt Checklist

- 1. Learn where you're hurt
- 2. Subtract armor, if any, from damage.
- 3. If you're hit in the arm or leg, add 1 to damage; if you're hit in the head, subtract 1.
- 4. Record the impairment.
- 5. If the attack is lethal, figure out if you're dying: roll 1d10 *over* Damage armor (+1 for head, -1 for limb)
- Figure out if you're knocked out. Your will vs. a difficulty of 2x that ifyou're-dying number

NAME	CALIBER	DV	Іпіт	RMod	SIZE	Mass	EXTRA CLIP MASS	RATE OF FIRE	CLIP	ΑV	A UTO KILL
D : 1 070	10	10	1.0		10	411		2		0	
Remington 870	12 ga	10	+0	2	13	4.1 kg	-	2	7i	8	8/5/3
(with 00 buckshot)	12 ga	4(+0)	+0	1	13	4.1 kg	-	2	7i	8	3/0/0
AR 7	.22LR	6	+0	2	13	2.5 kg	.2 kg	4	50c	5	3/0/0
.30-06 Springfield	7.62x63	19	+0	5	13	4.2 kg	.2 kg	1	1i	7	10/10/10
Ruger Mini-14	5.56	16	+0	4	13	3.3 kg	.4 kg	4	30c	6	10/10/10
PISTOLS											
Government .45	.45 ACP	4	+1	1	3	1.4 kg	.3	4	7c	7	3/0/0
Colt Python	.357 Mag	7	+1	2	3	1.1	-	3	6i	6	
Glock 19	9 mm	6	+1	2	3	.9 KG	.3 KG	4	17c	5	