

chapter one

to
be
young
again

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Little Fears is not about the child as hapless victim, but the child as his own salvation. In a world of rational, mature thought, no one has time for the fanciful stories of the young. No one wants to hear that the Bogeyman really did steal the little neighbor girl in the middle of the night. Or that something really is under the bed just waiting for the lights to go out. Authorities look to the family when a child shows up to school with scrapes and bruises. The family looks to the child's peers when their son or daughter comes home late from school, clothes tattered and torn. In *Little Fears* you will play the part of children who must face an irrational horror that threatens their very existence. Without anyone else to turn to, the children must devise ways to save themselves from the horrors of a place called Closetland. They must learn to survive in a hostile world where they are so very alone.

Imagine a world where you are hunted. Where things are going on that don't have an "acceptable" explanation. Imagine if no one believed you. If everything you said was chalked up as make-believe. You were told there were no ghosts, no werewolves, no monsters in your closet despite the fact there's one hiding there right now. You'd learn to become dependent on yourself, wouldn't you? Perhaps you would confide in a few close friends who had witnessed the same, or similar, things you had. Maybe you'd start to wonder how you could stop it. How you could help the girl down the street who was kidnapped weeks ago even though no one's aware of the fact. Knowing that the thing parading as her actually has a much darker face, you wonder if you could find her. Could you save her? If so, how would you do it?

ACTING LIKE A CHILD

The biggest obstacle as a player will be assuming and maintaining the mindset and demeanor of a child. Most of us don't remember what it was like when we were six years old. Sure, we have memories of birthday parties and visiting our grandparents and maybe you remember your first day at school or the holidays past but do you remember how you thought? How you felt? How you reacted to things?

Unlike a barbarian from the frozen wastes or a 26th century mecha pilot, you actually were a child and you might worry about trying to act young enough and trying to capture being an 8-year old just right. Throw all that aside. Approach

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playing a child like any other role. Instead of donning a space suit, you put on a school uniform five days a week. Instead of seeking out the Dragon Lord, you run from the school bully. Instead of devoting your life to finding a mystical weapon, you're happy if you find that ultra-rare action figure. Instead of fighting in a war, you play war, squeezing the trigger of a mock gun and making "kapow" noises instead of launching 30-missile volleys at enemy spacecraft.

Before you attempt to fill the shoes of a child facing their nightmares made flesh, just fill the shoes of a regular child.

Luckily, there are a great many resources readily available to you. Numerous movies center around child protagonists. Some of them fit nicely into the Little Fears vein. From campy (where a group of school kids have to prevent Dracula from summoning all the monsters of lore to destroy the world) to serious (a 9-year old boy who sees the ghosts of the dead must fight through his fear to save his sanity). You can go even younger and watch a film about a 6-year old girl who is being hunted by a cult of fanatics led by the Devil himself. At the top of the age spectrum, we have that poor 12-year old girl who became possessed by the devil and had to be saved through the sacrifices made by men of God. Movies like these can help you figure out aspects of your character. You can use them to pick up mannerisms or figures of speech for your character. Watch how they interact with adults and other kids to remind you of how you and your buddies used to be.

But your research need not be limited to the horror genre. Your goal as a player, at this point, is to realize the basic concept of your character, so any movie, book, television show, or comic book that has children in a leading role will help you tremendously. Watch a couple episodes of children's programming. There are plenty of educational shows that can show you what kids are being taught in school (so you can better determine what sort of knowledge a child might pick up). This not only can facilitate the assumption of a child-like mindset but also give you a better guide when it comes to separating player knowledge with character knowledge. For example, if the GM questions whether your 11-year old would know that much about forensics, you can cite the show you saw it on and be able to defend your case. The important thing is to look beyond that which is peddled to children not yet of school age. The characters in Little Fears, more than likely, are going to have basic comprehension of the alphabet (the majority will be quite literate), science, math, geography, and so on. Obviously, the younger the character, the less savvy they'll be on average but, unless your child is developmentally challenged, this basic level of education greatly increases the role-playability of the character.

Now once you've achieved the mindset of your character, the trick is to maintain it. Joking and carrying-on are common and healthy parts of the role-

playing hobby. They can help lighten the mood and often these digressions fit the personality of the character (Class Clown isn't a Quality for nothing) but when you're dealing with two delicate elements (playing a child and the horror genre), you really have to try to keep everything moderately serious and in-character to get the most out of the game. Not only does it help the GM keep the game focused but it helps your fellow players maintain their characters' personalities.

CHILDHOOD Q&A

Once you have an idea of your character's personality, it's time to give your character a more concrete form. This will happen over a few different steps. The first thing we're going to tackle is a questionnaire that you're going to fill out as your character would. The bulk of the questionnaire is located on the back of your character sheet (there are a few that we'll cover first that are on the front). It's set up to read like a story and can be used for just that. So get out your questionnaire (make a copy of the one in the back, print out from your PDF copy of this rulebook, or grab one at www.littlefears.com) and sharpen your number 2 pencil.

TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

These questions correlate to the sentences on the top of the front part of the character sheet.

What's your name?

One of the most important things to decide is your child's name. This is his real name, what his mother calls him. We'll cover any potential nicknames next.

What do your friends call you?

Just because your child's parents named them one thing, doesn't mean they'll be addressed as that. Whether it's an abbreviation of their full name (Jerry instead of Gerald, Sam instead of Samantha, etc.), their middle name, or a pet name like Stinky, Lefty, or Chubs, a lot of children have nicknames. Not all of them are very flattering.

How old are you?

Children in Little Fears range from 6 to 12. This is more important than you might think. As you'll see below, there are advantages and disadvantages to whatever age you choose.

Are you a boy or girl?

Simple enough: is your character male or female? There is no mechanical difference between playing a boy and a girl but you will be playing characters becoming aware of gender, societal and familial expectations, as well as burgeoning adolescence and the changes that come with that.