
AETHER

Written by Paul Struth

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Short Gamebook Fiction**

*In a few days, maybe even hours, Morton Prentice is going to kill you.
You have no idea who Morton Prentice is, or why he wants
you dead – you know only that you will die.*

Blood in the water

Death casts a long shadow. For weeks you have had the feeling that something is not quite right, felt currents in the aether that you do not fully understand. There are sleepless nights and bad dreams, dreams in which the name Morton Prentice features prominently; by day, sensations of *déjà vu*, as if everything that can happen has happened already. A life in the past tense, as though you have been written out of the story.

Trying to predict the future risks tempting fate, but you have to know the truth. It takes you two jabs of the needle to break the skin on your thumb. You squeeze the cut to quicken the bleeding and let the drops fall into the washbasin below, where they start to dissolve in the warm water. You trace the slow swirling currents, mirror images of the invisible aether around you, maps of fate itself. The patterns serve only to confirm your worst fears; you are going to die and soon. Somehow the certainty gives you new strength. And the aether has given you something else, the echo of a name: Morton Prentice. You know it is hopeless – fortune is fate and fate is inevitable – but still the hope remains. Can you use your knowledge of the aether to cheat destiny itself?

The aethereal arts

Aristotle knew. Earth, air, fire and water - the four elements he believed governed the material world – are complemented by a fifth, aether. Aether cannot be seen or touched and yet it is present everywhere, in the links between things. It is the unexplainable that explains everything else. Call it luck, call it fate, call it what you will, there are those who can feel it, read it and sometimes, in small but significant ways, influence its course. Those people are the sensitives, of whom you are one.

In his book *Fluidum Mirabile* the eminent Dr Robert Flood recognised
five Artes, as five Elements, five Senses and as many Fingers upon the Hand that feels.
 Every sensitive has some ability in each.

PREMONITION

Aether has been compared to the weather; complex and changeable, it has patterns if you only know how to read them. Understanding these patterns allows you to predict the future. All sensitives have a sixth sense where destiny is concerned but looking at the big picture – a specialist skill known as aethermancy – is akin to long range weather forecasting, and just as easy to get wrong.

DIRECTION

The name implies an element of control but no one can really control the aether, not even a sensitive. Just as you may attempt to channel water in the desired direction but can never make it run uphill, so your influence on the workings of fate is always limited. Direction works best on a small scale; sensitives sometimes refer to the delicate business of trying to alter destiny as ‘nudging’. Major changes are more difficult and involve an element of risk, as the consequences are often unforeseen – and can be disastrous if you get it wrong.

FINDING

The ancient Indian miraculist Serendip was so adept at this art, over which whole books have been written, that it is also known as serendipity. It is often used to find things – and sometimes people – which cannot be found by normal means. In marked contrast to Direction, which involves a conscious effort to manipulate destiny, you abandon any attempt to look for the missing object/person and let yourself be guided by the aether, even if this appears to be taking you in the opposite direction. If you have the required skill you will find, quite by chance, precisely what you were looking for in the first place.

READING

Reading is how most sensitives become aware of their gift. The aether flows through us and we, in turn, leave impressions in the aether (some say that this is the origin of ghosts). Fingerprints are the closest analogy, as the impressions commonly adhere to the surfaces of everyday objects. For example, a door handle may retain traces of all the people who have opened that door. If you touch the handle, you will receive an impression – like a vivid memory – not only of the faces of those opening the door but also of their thoughts and emotions. The sensation can be overwhelming and often leads to nausea. As a result, you usually wear gloves at all times, particularly when touching another person; if you did not, you would experience the other's thoughts and feelings as if they were your own. This art effectively allows you to read hearts and minds; the ethics of Reading strangers without their permission have long been a subject of debate within the community.

BLESSING

This art is the least understood of the five. Some refer to it as 'the healing art' but it will not cure disease or mend broken bones. Rather it is an attempt to correct an imbalance in the aether. Due to a traumatic event or serious illness it can happen that a person or place becomes isolated from the natural course of destiny and, like a backwater, the aether around them becomes stagnant. The person experiences a run of bad luck, or a place acquires an atmosphere, that is noticeable even to those without the art. Blessing is an attempt to right the wrong, to re-establish a connection. But it is not without cost to the sensitive, who experiences a temporary reduction in his/her own power.

SKILL and POWER

Although every sensitive has some ability in each of the five arts, success is by no means automatic. Using the aethereal arts requires a combination of SKILL and POWER.

SKILL

You start with a skill of 1 in each of the arts. This represents your innate ability, the level of skill you were born with.

Now roll one (six sided) die and add four to the number rolled. The total represents the amount of experience you have already gained. You can distribute these experience points between the five arts however you wish, reflecting your choices in life.

Example:

If you roll 1, you have a total of 5 experience points to distribute. You may:

- *add all 5 points to Premonition, raising your skill to 6, or*
- *add 1 point to each of the arts, raising them all to 2, or*
- *any other combination (for example, 2 to Direction and 1 each to Finding, Reading and Blessing), as long as the total is not exceeded.*

The total of ability and experience is your SKILL in the art. Enter your skills on the Character Sheet below.

POWER

Even the most skilled sensitive will not be as effective when tired, sick or injured. If this happens to you, you will be told to deduct points from your POWER.

You start at full strength with a POWER of 5.

Using the arts

Each time you want to use one of the aethereal arts, you will be asked to roll two or more dice, the number depending on the difficulty of the task.

First add your SKILL in the relevant art to your current POWER.

Now roll the dice. If the number rolled is equal to or less than the total, you have succeeded. If it is greater, you have failed – and may have to face the consequences of your failure. You will soon discover that using some of the arts can be risky.

Example:

You wish to FIND something. Your skill in FINDING is 3 and your current POWER is 5. Add them together: $3 + 5 = 8$. If you roll 8 or less, you will be successful. However, a roll of 9, 10, 11 or 12 will result in failure.

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CHARACTER SHEET

The aethereal arts	+	Experience (1d6+4 total)	=	Skill
PREMONITION	1	+	=	
DIRECTION	1	+	=	
FINDING	1	+	=	
READING	1	+	=	
BLESSING	1	+	=	
POWER		5		

Using the aethereal arts

If the number rolled is *equal to or less* than your POWER and SKILL in the art, you have succeeded. If it is *greater*, you have failed.

ART USED	SKILL	+	POWER	=
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Notes and Equipment

Talisman

Practice makes perfect

If you succeed in using an art during this adventure, you have the chance to increase your skill with a PRACTICE ROLL.

Roll one die. If the number rolled is greater than your skill in the art, you may increase that art (only) by 1 point.

You can only increase your SKILL by practice – your POWER always remains the same, unless you are tired, sick or injured.

Example:

Your current skill in FINDING is 3. You try to find something and are successful; you may now make a Practice Roll. Roll one die. You roll 4, 5 or 6 (a number greater than your current skill) and, as a result, may now increase your skill in FINDING to 4. Your POWER remains unchanged.

You may already have realised that, the higher your skill, the harder it will be to increase your skill further. This rule reflects the fact that the learning curve gets steeper and practising the simpler arts may not teach you anything at all.

Notes and Equipment

Talisman

You start the adventure with a metal pendant, a brass disc the size of a coin, which helps you to influence the aether. Each time you use one of the aethereal arts, you have the option to re-roll one die (you may choose which). However, you must accept the new result, even if it is worse than your first roll. You cannot use the talisman for Practice Rolls.

Clues and codes

Aether contains a mystery that needs to be solved. As you progress through the adventure, make notes on the Character Sheet of any useful information that you uncover. Some clues will also be recorded as letters or numbers (see below) but don't rely entirely on these to succeed.

Codes

If you arrive at certain points in the adventure, you will be told to write a letter or number on your Character Sheet. Sometimes this code will refer to a piece of information, or a person you have met, at other times it will simply be a record of something that has happened to you.

It is not necessary to collect all the codes to complete the adventure. Which codes you find will depend on the choices you make.

YOUR ADVENTURE BEGINS ON THE NEXT PAGE

1

In a few days, maybe even hours, Morton Prentice is going to kill you. You have no idea who Morton Prentice is, or why he wants you dead – you know only that you will die.

Outside it is raining hard, a foul night to match your mood. The apartment is cold; the gas fire is on full blast but seems powerless to warm the little room. You take another sip from the bottle, half empty now, and consider your options.

All your life you have been told that it is difficult and dangerous to mess with fate. The consequences are often unforeseen and can be disastrous if you get it wrong. But if you are going to die anyway, what have you got to lose? Why not use what influence you have over the aether in an attempt to cheat destiny?

In your calmer moments you refuse to believe the accuracy of your own predictions. You are not, after all, an aethermancer, one skilled in separating the strands of fate and weaving them into a coherent picture. Maybe you have just got it wrong. Maybe you should go to see a real expert tomorrow.

And then there is Morton Prentice himself. Who is he? Perhaps you should spend your last hours tracking him down and finding out why he wants to kill you.

If you want to attempt the difficult task of altering fate, turn to 10.

If you would rather ask an aethermancer for a second opinion, turn to 42.

Or you may choose to start looking for Morton Prentice (turn to 63).

2

You take a seat in the chair and allow Mr Candlish to fasten the straps around your arms. When he is satisfied that you cannot move, he steps behind the chair and switches on the apparatus. The machine gives off a low hum and you feel a tingling in your arms, as if an electric current were passing through your body. The sensation is pleasant at first but soon gives way to a feeling of weakness. You can feel the POWER draining from you and start to panic.

'Enough!' you croak.

Mr Candlish comes closer, as if he were straining to hear you, but makes no move to turn off his machine. He watches you with a wolfish grin and you realise with horror that he plans to steal all your POWER. Desperately you struggle to free yourself from the chair but you are already too weak and the leather straps easily defeat your feeble efforts. You drift into a sleep from which you will not awaken.

Your adventure ends here.

3

Alicia Burgess lives at 18 Cumberland Street.

If you want to visit Alicia after leaving St Michael's Road, you can do so by turning to 18 (make a note of the number as you will not be given the option to do this in the text). Now turn to 76.

4

The compass leads you towards the kitchen. A young man carrying a crucifix is just leaving the room and the needle swings round to follow him.

'Morton Prentice?'

'Er, hello.' He has red hair and a thin face dusted with freckles. He seems nervous; as you are talking to him, his eyes dart around as though he were looking for someone. Can he sense the atmosphere in the house too?

'What is it that you're afraid of, Morton?'

When he refuses to answer, you decide to investigate for yourself (turn to 82).

5

He seems genuinely surprised by your accusation, surprised and a little upset.

'But I don't even know who you are!'

'I'm sensitive, Morton; it's going to happen. There has to be a reason.'

Or perhaps not. Perhaps the reason still lies in the future. Perhaps turning up on his doorstep like this will even precipitate fate.

He says nothing for a moment. When he does, his voice shakes.

'I'll pray for you, OK? Pray that it doesn't happen.'

With that, he closes the door in your face.

If you want to come back later and search the house when nobody is at home, turn to 68. If you think you may have made a mistake and want to consult an aethermancer, turn to 42. Otherwise, turn to 31.

6

Make a PRACTICE ROLL (roll one die) to see if your skill in the art of PREMONITION has increased.

The quiet appearance of the house belies the turbulence in the aether surrounding it; it boils and seethes like a storm at sea. There is a queasy feeling in the pit of your stomach and it is all you can do not to be physically sick. Your sixth sense tells you that this is the place where you will die.

If you want to ring the doorbell, turn to 79.

If you would rather leave the street at once, turn to 31.

7

Struggling to keep pace, you follow the man as he leaves Calvary and turns left onto Park Street. As he approaches Uriel College he begins to slow; three Chinese girls are waiting for him outside the library entrance. He stops and they begin to chat in their own language. For a few minutes you pretend to take an interest in the window of a nearby shop but it quickly becomes clear that this man was not the source of your premonition, and when the little group moves off you do not bother to follow. You must try something else to find Morton Prentice (*turn to 75*).

8

Make a PRACTICE ROLL (roll one die) to see if your skill in the art of DIRECTION has increased.

There is an obstruction at one of the entrances, which causes all the doors to reopen briefly, allowing you to board the tram. It moves away almost immediately, already gathering speed, carrying you away from the city centre.

Morton is sitting in the front half of the carriage, his red head tipped back against the seat rest. You watch to see where he will get off but for a long time he does not move at all. You could believe he

had fallen asleep.

He leaves the tram in Angel, the heart of the student quarter. The busy high street seems to consist almost entirely of cafe-bars, restaurants and banks. Morton does not appear to have noticed that he is being followed. He turns aside into a quieter, tree-lined avenue where the pavements are slick with wet leaves.

The old houses in St Michael's Road are set well back from the road, as if to hide their decay, once grand residences now turned over to the needs of student letting agencies. Morton starts to fumble for his keys in the low 50s, finally stopping at number 57. He climbs the steps to the porch and lets himself inside. Now you know where he lives.

Write the number 57 on your Character Sheet. If you want to return here, you can always do so by turning to this reference. Now turn to 57.

9

Make a PRACTICE ROLL (roll one die) to see if your skill in the art of PREMONITION has increased.

You feel the pointer move beneath your fingers, sliding across the board of its own volition to the bottom left corner. It hovers with the arrow pointing to the letter P, and then the unseen force jerks your hand to the left, to O. The boy in the rabbit suit leans forward, calling out the letters for those too far away to see the board clearly.

The music from the party is loud in your ears. The pointer slashes viciously across the board, as if impatient to impart its message. POISON.

'Make mine a vodka,' someone slurs and there is general laughter.

Write the letter P on your Character Sheet.

The board's warning has deepened your unease. You get up and leave the room.

Will you look for Morton Prentice amongst the partygoers (turn to 64) or investigate the source of the terrible atmosphere in the house (turn to 82)?

10

After you have gone to bed, exhausted by the effort of trying to bend fate to your will, a fire breaks out in the empty apartment below. Probably an electrical fault. The batteries in the smoke detector must be dead; by the time you wake, the fire has already taken hold and choking black smoke fills the stairwell.

Roll three dice. If the total is equal to or less than your POWER and skill in DIRECTION, turn to 80. If the total is greater, turn to 50.

11

As a former student, you are privileged to have access to the library of Uriel College. The Miraculist Room contains a collection of rare and antiquarian books about the aether. Over the years you have spent many hours studying the original edition of the *Fluidum Mirabile* and the mysterious illustrations in *The Five Gates of the Aethereal Kingdom*.

The librarian is a thin woman with pitch black hair cut boyishly short. Madame Lachaise smiles when she hears that you are now researching Isobel Dewar.

'The aether moves in mysterious ways, no? I have here a manuscript which I think will interest you

very much.' The book in question is lying flat on a wheeled trolley behind her. 'I thought to return it to the store but I had a premonition another would come; see, now you are here!'

'Someone else has asked after Isobel Dewar?'

'A young lady. She has just left, so your timing it is *parfait*.'

While Mme. Lachaise carries the manuscript across to one of the reading desks, you sneak another look at the visitor's book. The last entry was made by one Alicia Burgess.

Before she leaves it in your keeping, Mme. Lachaise smiles again and warns you to take care when handling the book, phrasing the gentle command as if it were a question: 'The gloves will be kept on?'

The handwritten pages are bound in a yellowed, waxy leather cover. *A True and Perfect Relation of the Proceedings against the Scarlet Woman, Isobel Dewar, her Notable Crimes and Deserved Death* is a contemporary account of Isobel's trial and execution in the year 1616.

You turn the pages slowly and carefully, pausing when some sentence catches your eye. Here is a statement of her belief in the aether:

that it gives rise to Man and receives him at his Death. Mr Justice Fane asking the Question, she further related that the same Aether has no Beginning nor knows any End but is aethernal, just as the Soul itself is undying.

The whole book is a tragic record of intolerance but it is not until you reach the last page that something really shocks you:

Bound in the Skin of the same Isobel Dewar.

You close the book and look closely at the cover. Is it really human skin? The thought occurs to you that if you were to place your bare hand on the cover you would be able to reach back across the centuries and commune with the dead woman. You look round quickly. The reading room is empty, the librarian nowhere to be seen.

If you want to slip off your gloves and READ the cover, turn to 55.

If not, you must return the book to the care of Mme. Lachaise and leave the library (turn to 92).

12

You tell the girl that you have had a premonition that Morton Prentice is going to kill you and that you need to find him before he does. She bites her lip, evidently unsure whether to help you.

'Oh God!' she exclaims at last, 'why am I protecting him? He lives in Angel, at 57 St Michael's Road.'

'Thanks.'

'When you see him, will you give him a message from me? Tell him to stop calling Alicia; I've already said all there is to say.'

As if to emphasise the point, she closes the front door behind her.

Write the letter A on your Character Sheet. When you are ready to go to Morton's house, turn to 57 (write this number on your Character Sheet, as you will not always be given the option in the text).

If you want to go there now, turn to 57. If you have already been to the house, or have other plans, turn to 31.

13

A silent scream in the back of your mind. The thing that was once Isobel Dewar wavers as it recalls its forgotten humanity. But compassion is now a dim memory, centuries old; the bitter resentment is stronger and drives the shadowy figure forward. You have won only a moment's respite and must act quickly to save yourself.

This memory has been called up out of the aether; it has fed a long time on the thoughts of the living and has gained a kind of existence of its own. But, if you have the skill and power, you can smooth over the ripples and lay the tormented spirit of Isobel Dewar to rest.

Roll two dice. If the number rolled is equal to or less than your POWER and skill in BLESSING, turn to 86. If the total is greater, turn to 29.

14

He seems disappointed. Do you have anything else you want to ask him?

If you have the letter H on your Character Sheet, you may ask him about this (turn to 95). If you would rather ask him outright why he is planning to kill you, turn to 5. Otherwise, you may either leave St Michael's Road (turn to 31) or wait around and search the house when nobody is at home (turn to 68).

15

There is a Bible on the bedside table. As you open the book, a business card falls out of one of the pages.

BELL, BOOK & CANDLISH
19 Jacob's Ladder
Lost Things Newly Found

Write the letter B on your Character Sheet.

The store is well known to you; something between a junk shop and a detective agency, Bell, Book and Candlish specialise in tracking down rare and mysterious antiques and, sometimes, people. What did Morton Prentice want with them?

If you want to visit Bell, Book and Candlish after leaving St Michael's Road, you can do so by turning to 19 (make a note of the number as you will not be given the option to do this in the text). Now turn to 76.

16

Morton Prentice does not kill you that night. But he is going to. Your doom weighs heavily on you now, this dreadful sense of expectation, waiting for fate to catch up with you. You have always been aware of the warnings against trying to predict your own death but only now do you fully understand them. You are trapped in a half-life, not yet dead but no longer able to live.

Every sound sets you on edge, every shadow glimpsed from the corner of your eye makes you turn. Morton Prentice is the bogeyman who haunts the shadows. You are not sleeping well and tiredness is beginning to take its own toll.

There is someone at the door now. You can see him, his outline blurred by the frosted glass. Is it him? The doorbell rings again, insistent. Oh God, if he would only go away....

17

You recognise the symptoms of witchwort poisoning. Luckily the warning you had means you did not drink much of the punch. Cries welling up from the house below suggest others have not been so fortunate. You grab hold of Morton Prentice and shake him.

'The witchwort. How much did you use?'

'Only a small bottle.' He fumbles it from his pocket.

'Only a bottle!'

'He told me it would protect against evil spirits!'

'You bloody fool. A few drops was all it would have taken. You've poisoned everyone here.'

He pales and starts to stammer excuses, but you are not listening. You push past him and storm downstairs. You have cheated fate and saved your own life but feel in no mood to celebrate. This will be a long night and not everyone is going to make it to the morning. *Turn to 100.*

18

18 Cumberland Street is an old house, built for some prosperous merchant who has been dead these two centuries past. The large brass doorknob, dark with age, has been polished to a brilliant shine on its upper side where countless hands have rested.

Roll two dice. If the number rolled is equal to or less than your POWER and skill in PREMONITION, turn to 6. If the total is greater, turn to 79.

19

Bell, Book and Candlish run a store in Jacob's Ladder, though they do little to advertise their presence; theirs is not a business for the casual customer.

Jacob's Ladder is as picturesque as its name; a narrow street of timber-framed houses climbing up the hill, each leaning on the one below, supporting each other in their infirmity. The ancient houses are a comical see-saw of angles, the upper storeys jutting out over the street as if conspiring together to shut out the light. Countless tourists have stopped at the foot of the hill to take photographs; the more energetic have laboured up the flight of stone steps to visit the quaint stores that occupy the ground floor of the houses, searching for a souvenir to take home across the ocean; only the very hardiest climb right to the top of the hill, where they pause to catch their breath and admire the view across the sloping roofs to the city below. Few come to the door of Bell, Book and Candlish and fewer still are aware that the store is still trading, let alone open; there are no lights on inside and the windows are clouded with dirt. If anyone cares to try they find that the front door is locked.

The door is locked now.

If this is the first time you have been here, turn to 48.

If you have been here before, nobody will answer the doorbell, no matter how persistent you are. Eventually, you give up and leave the area (turn to 75).

20

'She has bewitched you as well!'

Morton is now suspicious of you and will not answer any more of your questions. He closes the door in your face and ignores you when you ring the doorbell.

If you want to wait around and search the house when nobody is at home, turn to 68. If you would rather research Isobel Dewar, turn to 11. If you have other plans, turn to 31.

21

You hang around the shopping precinct for the rest of the day, watching as Morton and his colleagues fish for charity. It is late afternoon before he finally hands in his fundraiser's tabard. He walks through the city centre with no other company than you, his self-appointed shadow, trailing some distance behind. But your caution also threatens to be your undoing. A tram is standing at the stop outside The Dutch House, waiting to depart; he steps straight onto it and the doors close behind him. You will have to do something if you wish to keep following him.

Roll two dice. If the number rolled is equal to or less than your POWER and skill in DIRECTION, turn to 8. If the total is greater, the tram pulls away, leaving you stranded (turn to 75).

22

Make a PRACTICE ROLL (roll one die) to see if your skill in the art of READING has increased.

It is easy to impersonate the friend of a friend when you can read minds. You drop names, shared memories. The witch does not recognise you and yet how can you not be what you pretend to be?

'Alicia!'

A raven-haired girl dressed as Elizabeth Bathory, the bloody countess of legend, answers the witch's summons. She hands you a drink and welcomes you to the party.

'We're raising the dead,' she tells you, arching an eyebrow. 'Care to join us for a spot of necromancy?'

Stepping into the hallway, you have the feeling that the dead have already been raised. The house gives you the creeps. The air is heavy with pain and suffering.

If you want to follow the girl upstairs, turn to 37.

If you would rather look for Morton, turn to 64.

Or you may investigate the terrible atmosphere in the house (turn to 82).

23

Cross the TALISMAN off your Character Sheet – you may not use it again.

Mariola moves to the table, where she sets out the tools of her trade: a knife, a bowl of warm water and a silk cloth to bandage the cut she makes on your right arm. She places her own hand over yours and leaves it there while she consults, and consults again, a notebook whose pages are filled with numbers, aethereal tables compiled in her own crabbed handwriting. At the end of the operation, she confirms that you don't have long left to live. 'I am sorry.'

She also confirms your premonition that Morton Prentice will be responsible for your death. How or why, she cannot tell you.

'Is there really nothing in the aether?'

'Nothing? What is nothing? Always there is something. But all is complicated, all is unclear.'

'Tell me what you have seen.'

Mariola begins to clean and clear away her implements, as if to avoid answering. 'There is another,' she admits at last. 'Isobel Dewar. But is unclear.'

'The Isobel Dewar?'

'You know her then. She was a woman of some power, I believe.'

Mariola understates the case. Isobel Dewar is justly famous amongst sensitives. She is also dead - she was hanged during the great persecution of the seventeenth century. There is a new mystery here.

If you want to research Isobel Dewar, turn to 11.

If you would rather look for Morton Prentice, turn to 63.

Or you may choose to investigate other clues you have collected (turn to 31).

24

'Something to hide have we?'

He grabs your wrist and you feel him force his way into your mind, kicking through the memories. His grin broadens.

You are arrested on suspicion of breaking and entering. You will be remanded in custody until your case can be considered at the next sitting of the Magistrates' Court.

Your adventure ends here.

25

Alicia is watching you with a sly smile on her face.

'You're sensitive, aren't you? I mean, I hope you don't mind me asking, I'm not prejudiced or anything. It's just the woman I'm researching was sensitive too.'

She seems genuinely interested and you chat for a little while about the aether. She knows something of the various disciplines but has no skill in the art herself.

'As a historian, especially in an old house like this one, I always think how wonderful it would be if I could feel the presence of all the people who had ever lived here!'

'In some ways it is like developing a photograph with the radio on low in the background. The faces materialise out of the darkness and you can hear the whisper of their voices in your mind.'

'What do the dead say to you?'

'They don't actually talk to you, they're just memories. As I say, it's like listening to the radio; sometimes the show was recorded several centuries ago.'

'Can you READ a living person?'

'Yes; though it is bad manners to do so unless that person is willing.'

'I'm willing.' She holds her hand out to you. 'Tell me what I am thinking!'

Roll two dice. If the number rolled is equal to or less than your POWER and skill in READING, turn to 51. If the total is greater, turn to 73.

26

You step into the circle, kicking over drinks and upsetting the board. A murmur of discontent runs round the room but you ignore it. Grabbing her shoulder with one hand you place the other flat on Alicia's forehead. She is sweating. In the next moment you feel the power leave you - *lose 1 POWER point*.

The girl becomes a deadweight and you have to put your arms around her to keep her upright. Her body convulses and she leans forward to be sick. In the next moment, people are crowding forward to help.

'Is she drunk?'

'I don't think so.' Her skin burns and she does not seem able to focus clearly.

'I think she's been given something.'

Write the letter P on your Character Sheet.

A boy in a skeleton suit pushes forward, claiming to be a medical student. He stoops beside you and carries out his own rapid assessment. He asks for an ambulance to be called.

There is little more that you can do here. The dreadful sense of anguish in the house has grown stronger and is now almost unbearable. You decide to investigate the source (*turn to 82*).

27

You hear the doorbell ring far off in the depths of the house. Shortly after the second peal, the door opens and a young man with reddish hair appears. His thin, pale face is dusted with freckles and for some reason you think to yourself: *Here is someone who avoids the sun.*

'Morton Prentice?'

'Yes.' He looks at you expectantly.

Do you have either of the following letters on your Character Sheet? If so, you may choose to ask him about these.

A? Turn to 77.

H? Turn to 95.

If you have neither of these, you may ask him outright why he is planning to kill you (turn to 5) or come back later to search the house when nobody is at home (turn to 68).

28

'We have just the thing.'

He produces a small box, slightly larger than those which jewellers use to display rings; when he opens it, you see a small compass set in a brass hemisphere. Mr Candlish removes it and holds it in the palm of his hand.

'An aethereal compass?'

He smiles, revealing a line of grey teeth.

'Of a most rare kind. You have only to think of someone and the needle shall point in their direction, as if they were the one true north.'

'How much is it?'

Mr Candlish smiles again; the effect is rather unpleasant. 'The last time you were here, you had about your person a certain talisman.'

'And if I no longer have it?'

He shrugs. 'You have POWER do you not?'

'That is not something I can give you.'

'No, but there are means to take it.' He gestures toward a reclining chair, the kind you might find in a dentist's surgery, the cracked leather the same green as his cardigan. There are straps on the arm rests and a number of wires trail away behind the chair into the gloom. If Mr Candlish cannot read

your mind, he can certainly read your expression.

'Do not concern yourself; we only want a drop of that which you have in such abundance.'

If you agree to sacrifice some of your POWER, turn to 99.

If you would rather give him your talisman, turn to 62.

If you decide the compass is not worth the price, you leave the store (turn to 75).

29

Her touch is pain, a searing, unbearable agony. You feel bony hands take hold of your mind and pry it open as easily as if it were the ring pull of a soft drink can. And then the memories are pouring into you, a rush of emotions that floods your own personality. Feelings of fear, pain and despair brought to new peaks of suffering over four long centuries. You struggle briefly then lose your grip and go under. The black tide envelops you and you know nothing more.

Your adventure ends here.

30

The books are a mixture of academic textbooks (it appears Morton is studying for a business degree) and paperback novels. To judge by his bookcase, he has no interest in the aether. *Turn to 76.*

31

If you have been invited to attend a party, and want to go there now, you may turn to the reference you were given with the invitation.

You may also have collected other numbered clues during your adventure. To investigate these, turn to the reference with the same number.

If you have an aethereal compass and wish to use it to track Morton, turn to 66.

If you do not have any of the above, or you would like to investigate further, turn to 75.

32

Make a PRACTICE ROLL (roll one die) to see if your skill in the art of FINDING has increased.

The following morning, a postcard arrives. The picture shows the Neo-Gothic folly on Calvary, a hill on the north side of the city centre. By day you can see the tower from your apartment window, a red needle stitching the sky.

You turn the card over. On the other side is a short, rather cryptic, message from your old university professor, Dr John Hindley, a fellow sensitive.

Hope you are well? You seem everywhere lately, as if the aether were trying to tell me bad news. Give a sign of life. Yours in haste, John.

Using the art of FINDING can be difficult. The postcard clearly means more than is being said, but what is the message? Are you being directed to visit your old professor or is the tower on Calvary more important?

If you want to call on Dr Hindley, turn to 69.

If you would rather go to Calvary, turn to 53.

33

You cannot find Morton; you are not even sure if he is here. The guy you stop to ask is more interested in pushing into one of the bedrooms at the front of the house than answering your question. Someone has produced an Ouija board and a makeshift séance is in progress.

If you want to watch the séance, turn to 74.

If you would rather investigate the terrible atmosphere in the house, turn to 82. Or you may choose to leave the party (turn to 16).

34

'It's rather impressive, isn't it?'

She seems pleased by your interest in the old house and agrees to show you round. She tells you that her name is Alicia and that she is studying History at Uriel College. Write the letter **A** on your *Character Sheet*.

If you have a pair of gloves on your Character Sheet and want to give them to her, turn to 47. Otherwise, turn to 87.

35

Make a PRACTICE ROLL (roll one die) to see if your skill in the art of PREMONITION has increased.

You realise that, once he has you trapped, Mr Candlish intends to drain all your POWER from you. Instead you push him backwards into the chair; before he can recover from the surprise, you hold him down and fasten the straps about his thin arms.

'What are you doing? Release us!'

'You are a fool if you thought I was going to fall for that trick. Now, how to operate this machine?'

'Leave that alone! We will give you what you want!'

If you were offered a compass, you can take it now (turn to 91).

If you wanted information, turn to 71.

36

Roll two dice. If the number rolled is equal to or less than your POWER and skill in DIRECTION, turn to 54. If the total is greater, turn to 98.

37

In a darkened bedroom at the front of the house, a makeshift séance is taking place. An Ouija board has been set out on the carpet, surrounded by a circle of candles and drinks glasses. Alicia steps over them and sits down in front of the board, folding her legs beneath her. She loses her balance as she does so, and, with a little scream, topples against the boy in the rabbit suit sitting next to her. The bloody countess is already drunk, if not on blood then on the potent punch that fuels this party.

You look around the hot faces in the room. There is no malice in any of the revellers present; for them, this is just a piece of harmless fun, a quick flirtation with darkness. On another night you might laugh along with them. After all, using an Ouija board to contact the dead has about the same chance of success as launching a space probe into the furthest reaches of the galaxy with a welcome message from humanity. The only problem is if something answers.

And there is something here in this old house. You can feel it, like a noose tightening about your neck. What will you do?

Watch to see what happens next?

Turn to 74.

Insist that you take a turn at the board?

Turn to 56.

Leave the room and look for Morton?

Turn to 64.

Investigate the terrible atmosphere?

Turn to 82.

38

Make a PRACTICE ROLL (roll one die) to see if your skill in the art of FINDING has increased.

The noise makes you jump and you whirl round, ready for any danger. Nothing happens and, after a heart stopping minute, you notice the roll of paper lying half curled on the floor. A calendar; it must have fallen off the wall. You pin it back into place. October 31 is circled in red pen; beneath the date, Morton has scribbled a reminder to himself.

A.B., 7.30pm

A Halloween party? Is this when he is destined to kill you? The Day of the Dead – how apt.

If you think you know where the party will take place, you may go there after leaving St Michael's Road. Add the house number to the date (31) and turn to the reference with the same number as the total (if the text does not make sense, you have gone to the wrong house).

What will you do now?

If you want to look over the rest of the room, turn to 76.

If you would rather leave the house at once, turn to 96.

39

Morton nods encouragement; he, too, believes Alicia has been behaving strangely. He tells you that they used to be very close. Since she started researching Isobel Dewar, however, her whole behaviour has changed. She has become obsessed with her studies and no longer has any time for him. When Morton tried to talk to her about it, she broke off their relationship. He believes that the ghost of the dead woman has possessed Alicia.

'You have to help me save her!'

If you agree to help Morton, turn to 81.

If you refuse, turn to 20.

40

You place your hand on the wall of the stairwell. The sensation of unease becomes tangible; a shiver runs through you as if there was an electric current passing through the walls of the house. And you can feel something else, too, a presence that resists, even resents, your attempt to bless the house.

'What are you doing?'

Alicia pulls your hand away from the wall. You feel the POWER leave you but the blessing takes no hold and dissipates. *Lose 1 POWER point.*

'There is a presence in this house. Don't you feel it?'

'But she's not evil! That is Isobel! What did you do to her?'

'It was only a blessing.'

'I hope you haven't harmed her!'

The presence in the house was not moved at all – you can feel it, as a pressure at the temples, like the onset of a headache.

Alicia tells you that she is haunted by the ghost of Isobel Dewar, the seventeenth century mystic whose life she is researching.

'I can feel her close to me, watching over me. Like a guardian angel.'

If there are angels, you have never met one. The dead, however, are another matter. You start to feel unwelcome in the house – and not just because Alicia was upset by your intervention. You decide to leave Cumberland Street at once.

If you want to do your own research on Isobel Dewar, turn to 11.

If you have other plans, turn to 31.

41

You realise that the punch was spiked. How much did you drink? And how will your body react to the poison?

Roll one die.

If the number is equal to or less than your current POWER, turn to 17.

If it is greater, you have taken a fatal overdose and your adventure ends here.

42

The sky overhead is grey and sullen, not unlike Ashmead itself. The housing estate always seems to find new ways to depress you and today is no exception. A fierce looking dog fouls the grass verge by the roadside while its owner looks away, blatantly indifferent.

The aethermancer's house is no better or worse than any of its neighbours. The garden gate squeaks (but don't the gates of witches' houses always squeak in fairy tales?) and the lawn has been allowed to run wild, devouring children's toys abandoned long since. But the house itself has been freshly painted, a white made brighter by the drabness of the adjacent property, and the shoes in the porch are set in orderly rows.

The boy Martin opens the door, greeting you in his accented English. Of course, your coming has been foreseen and there is a slice of *karpatka* waiting. Eating is the last thing you feel like doing in the circumstances but Polish hospitality will accept no refusal.

Mariola, Martin's mother, is waiting in the lounge, a middle aged, slightly plump woman with clear blue eyes. She listens silently to your request and then asks how you will pay.

You offer her money but it is not enough; she is a businesswoman and knows her skills can command a higher price. Martin says something to his mother in their own language, which you do not understand.

'Your charm,' the boy explains.

Mariola nods. 'Yes, this; this will do.'

If you agree to give Mariola your talisman, turn to 23.

If you no longer have it, or are not prepared to pay such a high price, you will have to reconsider your options (turn to 75).

43

The young woman crosses the park without hurry or delay and leaves by a gate on the far side. You follow her as she descends the flight of stone steps that lead to the street below and wait with her for a gap in the traffic. The coat is grey wool, perhaps even cashmere, and contributes to a coolly elegant appearance. She herself has long dark hair, held back from her face by a clasp, and is probably in her early twenties. Standing shoulder to shoulder, you feel again the cold shiver you experienced in the park but cannot trace the exact reason for your unease.

You look away for a second and when you look back she is already halfway across the road, as if she had unzipped a gap in the passing cars that closes at once behind her. It is several more minutes before you can follow.

The district on the other side is called Georgetown. The streets here are quieter, choked with parked cars, the houses tall and narrow, arranged in terraces of pale yellow stone. Their doorways open directly onto the pavement. You follow the girl to Cumberland Street, where you are just in time to see her disappear inside one of the houses. *Turn to 18.*

44

When you suggest that he is going to kill you he laughs, mistaking your meaning.

'It won't kill you! All we're asking for is £5 per month. Come on, it's for a good cause.'

If you agree to sign up for the Winter Relief Fund, using this as an opportunity to READ him, turn to 72. If you would rather wait around until the end of his shift and then try to follow him, turn to 21.

45

In the next moment, Alicia slumps sideways. Her body convulses and she vomits on the rabbit boy next to her. People crowd round to help them. But the dreadful sense of anguish does not abate; if anything, it has grown stronger and is now almost unbearable. You decide to investigate (*turn to 82*).

46

In one of the drawers, you find a small notebook. You leaf through the pages quickly; the book contains a series of names and addresses, ordered alphabetically. Is there anyone you want to look up?

Convert the initial letters of the first and last name to a number (A=1, B=2, C=3 etc.), add them together and turn to the reference matching the total (if the reference does not make sense, there is no entry for that person). If there is no one you want to find, you replace the address book in the drawer. Turn to 76.

47

'I found these in the library; I think they might be yours.'

She is grateful for the return of her gloves, which she assumed she had lost for good. Her voice is slightly husky, the accent unmistakeably upper class.

If you want to ask her about Isobel Dewar, turn to 60. Otherwise, turn to 87.

48

After a long pause, Mr Candlish opens the door. It is always Mr Candlish who ushers you inside; perhaps he is the last surviving partner, perhaps the name of the store is a joke and there was only ever Mr Candlish. He navigates a path through the piles of junk to his desk, where a dim lamp shines on the clutter. Mr Candlish is as unkempt as his store, a spider wearing a dark green cardigan that threatens to unravel at the sleeves, as if his long fingers were spinning a web of green wool. He eyes you furtively, as if he were trying to read your mind.

'What will it be?' he asks at last.

If you are looking for Morton Prentice, turn to 28.

If you have the letter B on your Character Sheet and would rather ask him about that, turn to 84.

49

As darkness falls on 31 October, you set off for Alicia Burgess' house. The night is calm and clear, frosted with stars, but a storm is raging in the aether. As soon as you step outside, collar turned up against the cold, you feel the prickling in the air. It is like standing on a cliff edge, the spray misting your face, while far below the tides of fate surge and roar. It is tempting to think of all this as some sort of fanfare in honour of your own destiny but you know that these wild storms are particularly common in May and October, at the aethereal equinoxes.

18 Cumberland Street is ablaze with light. The heavy front door stands open like a coffin lid and the dead are spilling into the street, young people smeared with fake blood and corpse paint. As you move to pass them, a witch smoking a cigarette stops you.

'Hey! Excuse me! This is a private party.'

You will have to try to bluff your way in.

Roll two dice. If the number rolled is equal to or less than your POWER and skill in READING, turn to 22. If the total is greater, turn to 78.

50

The fire crews rescue you from the burning building. Everyone tells you that you are lucky to be alive but somehow you are not surprised. You are not destined to be killed by a house fire.

Your TALISMAN has been consumed by the flames. Cross this off your Character Sheet – you may not use it again. You yourself are suffering from the effects of smoke inhalation - *lose 1 POWER point*. Unfortunately, you cannot wait until you are back to full strength; you do not have long to find Morton Prentice before he kills you. *Start your search by turning to 63.*

51

Make a PRACTICE ROLL (roll one die) to see if your skill in the art of READING has increased.

There is a very obvious thought waiting on the surface of her mind, something to do with a favourite book. You sidestep the thought and continue onwards, picking your way through her memories.

Her head is full of her studies; she has recently started a postgraduate degree at Uriel College, researching the life of the seventeenth century mystic Isobel Dewar. Her thesis will present the long dead woman as a kind of proto-feminist, a pioneer at a time when the freedom of ordinary women was incredibly restricted. You experience her excitement for the topic as if it were your own but cannot shake off a feeling of unease. You have the sensation that Isobel Dewar is looking back at you

out of the memory. You turn away to look at other thoughts.

Alicia hasn't had a steady boyfriend since she broke up with Morton Prentice. The end of the relationship is associated with feelings of irritation rather than sadness; she now thinks of Morton as immature, someone who did not really appreciate how important her degree was to her. She knows nothing of any plans to kill you; in fact, she had not heard your name before you met.

'Well? I'm waiting.'

You resurface and examine the memory of the book. The one she loved as a child, white rabbits and grinning cats.

'Curioser and curioser, Alicia.'

'Amazing!'

She tells you that the girls in the house are throwing a Halloween party and invites you to come along.

'We're having it here. Fancy dress, so wear something appropriately horrific.'

When you are ready to attend the Halloween party, turn to 93 (write this number on your Character Sheet, as you will not be given the option in the text).

The oppressive air of the house is starting to weigh heavily on you. You stick it out for another quarter of an hour, then make your excuses and leave.

Turn to 31.

52

Your mind is confused; you cannot think straight.

'Who are you? What have you done?'

'My name's Morton.'

You reach for the young man but he is not where you thought he would be and topple forward. Are you drunk? But you did not drink that much. Unless that punch was spiked. Poisoned! You have been poisoned!

The old rhyme runs round your brain: *Hot as a hare, blind as a bat...*

Symptoms of witchwort poisoning. 'Witchwort,' you hear your old professor say, 'was formerly used to expel evil spirits.' Or is it you talking?

'It was only a small bottle,' the voice says, anxious now.

'A bottle! A few drops was all you needed!'

Cries can be heard welling up from the house below. Damn the punch! Damn Morton Prentice for a fool! He has poisoned you and everyone here. How did the rhyme end? ...*dry as a bone, dead as a rat.*

Despite your best efforts, destiny has been fulfilled.

53

You travel across town to Calvary, not sure exactly what to expect. You take a seat on one of the park benches near the folly and wait. Behind you, the tower of red stone rises to a steeped point, like a medieval moon rocket ready for launch.

It is late afternoon before anything out of the ordinary happens. As you are taking a photograph for a tourist couple, you feel your spine tingle and the hairs on the back of your neck stand up on end. A sensation like someone walking over your grave. That someone has just walked behind you. You whirl round, camera and picture forgotten, but several people are passing and you cannot be certain who has set your nerves on edge. Who will you follow?

*A Chinese man, swinging an umbrella
as he walks quickly towards the park exit?* Turn to 7.

*A young woman wearing a long grey coat,
heading in the opposite direction?* Turn to 43.

*A bearded old man struggling up the steps
that lead towards the folly?* Turn to 85.

54

Make a PRACTICE ROLL (roll one die) to see if your skill in the art of DIRECTION has increased.

The following day finds you in Greyfriars, the shopping precinct in the city centre. A group of fundraisers are at work, smiley piranhas snapping at the heels of passing shoppers. One of them, a young man with reddish hair, thin face dusted with freckles, darts towards you. He plants himself in your path and, when you do not stop, keeps pace alongside you.

'Do you know how many elderly people will die this winter?'

'Too many, I fear.' But they will still live longer than you.

'We're collecting for the Winter Relief Fund.' He flashes his ID badge in your face and it is this that makes you stop. The young man is Morton Prentice!

He mistakes your interest and thrusts a clipboard towards you, urging you to sign up for monthly donations. Perhaps this is also an opportunity to READ him? It is not really ethical but you are curious to know why he wants you dead.

If you want to READ Morton, turn to 72.

If you would rather try talking to him, turn to 44.

Or you may choose to wait around until the end of his shift and then try to follow him (turn to 21).

55

PAIN! Sharp, agonising pain in your arms and chest, as if you were being pierced by needles. You try to take your hand away from the book, only to find that you cannot; it is as if you were chained to the table. The more you struggle to free yourself, the more the iron manacles bite into the flesh of your wrist. You are being forced to endure the final torture of Isobel Dewar!

The light in the library seems to dim all around you. Although you can still see the tables of the reading room, and the shelves of books behind them, they now appear ghostly and insubstantial, fading into the dark stone walls that imprison you. The stench of unwashed skin, of sweat and urine, assails your nostrils. In the darkness of the torture chamber, the infernal glow of the furnace seems all the brighter. The point of the cruel iron instrument flames deep red.

With a tremendous effort of will you tear your hand from the book; the force required causes you to stagger backwards and, if it were not for the desk behind, you might have fallen. Mme. Lachaise returns to the reading room at that moment and sees your consternation.

'Are you hurt?' she asks mildly.

You look down at your wrists, expecting to see the cuts that must be there, but they are unmarked. You have not suffered any physical damage but you feel mentally and emotionally drained by your ordeal. *Lose 1 POWER point.*

Asking Mme. Lachaise not to let anyone else read the book, a request that leaves her bewildered, you leave the library. *Turn to 75.*

56

The Ouija board looks more like a child's toy than a medium for contacting the dead. It is simply a flat piece of wood printed with letters and numbers; at the top corners, the answers YES and NO. You place your hand on the pointer and wait for someone to respond.

Roll two dice. If the number rolled is equal to or less than your POWER and skill in PREMONITION, turn to 9. If the total is greater, you pick up no messages from the spirit world and must give up your place at the board (turn to 74).

57

57 St Michael's Road must have been built at the turn of the last century, as a villa in the new suburbs. It is a large, redbrick house with bay windows and an enclosed porch. The upper storey is painted black and white, imitating the timber-framed houses of earlier days. A turret projects from one corner; the roof is a crazy jumble of angles sprouting chimneys like mushrooms. The whole is set back from the road at the end of a gravel drive.

If you want to walk up to the porch and ring the doorbell, turn to 27.

If you would rather search the house when there is no one at home, turn to 68.

If you have already done both, turn to 31.

58

The posters suggest Morton listens to classic rock music; a shrouded figure climbing a stairway on the back of the door holds up a lantern but its light casts only shadows. The pinboard has captured little of interest: a university course timetable, several photographs and a flyer for the Winter Relief Fund. Hanging next to the board is a calendar. October 31 has been circled in red pen; beneath the date, Morton has scribbled a reminder to himself.

A.B., 7.30pm

A Halloween party?

If you want to go to the party after leaving St Michael's Road, add the house number to the date (31) and turn to the reference with the same number as the total (if the text does not make sense, you have gone to the wrong house).

The CRUCIFIX is carved from a dark wood but is otherwise unremarkable. If you want to take it with you, note it on your Character Sheet. *Turn to 76.*

59

It takes skill to sift a million and one memories, skill and a clear head. Perhaps you are just too preoccupied by the disaster hanging over you. The rush of sensations makes you giddy; you put a hand out to steady yourself but your stomach heaves and you are sick against the wall of the churchyard. *Lose 1 POWER point.*

Morton hovers a few metres away, uncertain what to do. He looks around, wishing someone would stop to help him, and then jumps as your body is convulsed by another bout of retching.

'You OK?'

'I'm going to die Morton.'

'Are you sick?'

'You're going to kill me.'

He looks really worried now. Others are stopping to point and whisper. A police officer bends over you.

'What have you taken?'

'Nothing.'

'He just threw up,' Morton adds miserably, as if he expects to be blamed for everything.

Anger rises within you, anger and embarrassment. 'I'm sensitive.'

You wipe your mouth with the back of your hand. You can see that you have been labelled as a crazy. Insisting that you are fine, you walk away to escape the attention. *Turn to 75.*

60

She is flattered by your interest and proves more than happy to talk about her studies as she shows you round the house. You already know the outlines of Isobel Dewar's story but Alicia's enthusiasm really brings her to life.

'Women, even noblewomen, were second-class citizens in the seventeenth century. Men resented Isobel's power; she could look into their hearts and see the weakness there.'

She tucks a strand of dark hair behind one ear. 'They accused her of impossible things and tortured her until she confessed. She must have suffered terribly.'

'Less enlightened times,' you agree.

Alicia is curious about your own sensitivity. She does not possess the art herself but needs to understand it if she is to fully understand Isobel Dewar; she would like to keep in contact. She tells you that the girls in the house are throwing a Halloween party and invites you to come along.

'We're having it here. Fancy dress, so wear something appropriately horrific.'

When you are ready to attend the Halloween party, turn to 93 (write this number on your Character Sheet, as you will not be given the option in the text).

Alicia seems friendly enough. Her house, on the other hand, gives you the creeps. The rooms have high ceilings that trap cobwebs and shadows; those at the back, overlooking the river, are not so bad but the dark rooms facing the street are another matter. There is a musty smell to the aether, psychic rising damp.

If you want to BLESS the house, turn to 40.

If you have seen enough and would rather leave, turn to 31.

61

Ghosts are nothing but memories but this memory has fed on the thoughts of the living for a long time and has gained a kind of existence of its own. It senses your intention to banish it and will resist with all its power.

Roll three dice. If the total is equal to or less than your POWER and skill in BLESSING, turn to 86. If it is greater, turn to 29.

62

Cross the TALISMAN off your Character Sheet – you may not use it again.

If you were offered a compass, you can take it now (turn to 91).

If you wanted information, turn to 71.

63

The aethereal arts offer a number of ways to track down a person.

FINDING will not locate Morton himself but might help you discover a clue to where he is, while DIRECTION will bring you together as surely as two magnets – but at a time and place that you cannot predict. FINDING carries less risk than DIRECTION but its results are much more uncertain.

If you would rather not rely on your art, you may instead pay a visit to Bell, Book and Candlish. Something between a junk shop and a detective agency, this rather strange store specialises in tracking down rare and mysterious antiques and, sometimes, people. Which method will you use?

Bell, Book & Candlish? Turn to 19.

DIRECTION? Turn to 36.

FINDING? Turn to 94.

If you have already tried all of these, turn to 75.

64

If you have the letter M on your Character Sheet, turn to 90.

If not, but you have an aethereal compass, turn to 4.

If you have neither, turn to 33.

65

Make a PRACTICE ROLL (roll one die) to see if your skill in the art of DIRECTION has increased.

‘Roy!’

You both look back up the street, where a man is leaning out the window of a parked car. A radio crackles inside.

‘We got to get going, Roy. There’s trouble in Ashmead.’

DS Bird cocks his head to one side, as if he were listening. He knows what you have done; he can feel the ripples in the aether. His face distorts.

‘Very clever.’ He takes a step towards you.

‘Roy!’ The driver is half out of the car now. ‘Come on!’

Bird jabs a fat finger in your direction. ‘Don’t let me find you here when I get back.’ Then, reluctantly, he turns and hurries back to the car. You have had a lucky escape. *Leave the area quickly by turning to 31.*

66

For much of the time, the compass points north, in the direction of Uriel College and the student quarter. On the evening of 31 October, however, the needle begins to swing to the west, towards the river. You decide to follow.

The night is calm and clear, frosted with stars, but a storm is raging in the aether. As soon as you step outside, collar turned up against the cold, you feel the prickling in the air. It is like standing on a cliff edge, the spray misting your face, while far below the tides of fate surge and roar. It is tempting to think of all this as some sort of fanfare in honour of your own destiny but you know that such wild storms are particularly common in May and October, at the aethereal equinoxes.

The tram into town is packed with nightmares, costumed revellers on their way to Halloween parties. The compass needle points to a house in Cumberland Street where one such party is in progress. The heavy front door stands open like a coffin lid and the dead are spilling into the street, young people dressed in fake blood and corpse paint. As you move to pass them, a witch smoking a cigarette stops you.

'Hey! Excuse me! This is a private party.'

You will have to try to bluff your way in.

Roll two dice. If the number rolled is equal to or less than your POWER and skill in READING, turn to 22. If the total is greater, turn to 78.

67

'He sent you here, didn't he? This really is the last straw! If he wants to say something to me, tell him to come and say it to my face!'

She slams the front door behind her.

Leave Cumberland Street by turning to 31.

68

You are not a hardened criminal. This won't be your first experience of breaking and entering but the prospect still makes you nervous. You watch the house to make sure that no one is at home. The days are shorter now and, although it is only late afternoon, it is already getting dark. Your job is also made easier by the fact that the house is set well back from the road, hidden from clear view by the trees in the garden. You walk round to the back and force a window.

Inside, there is a confusion of sense impressions; it seems to be a shared house and Morton is only one of six students living here. You follow the memories upstairs, using them as a virtual compass, until you find his bedroom. The room is deep in shadow and you regret not having brought a torch.

At first glance, it seems to be a typical student bedroom. A desk stands in front of the window, looking out over a ramshackle garden. Close at hand is a bookcase. Another book lies on the bedside table. The walls of the room are papered with posters; there is also a crucifix and a pinboard with notes and sheets of paper attached. Where will you look?

By the bed? *Turn to 15.*

Through the bookshelves? *Turn to 30.*

In the desk drawers? *Turn to 46.*

At the walls? *Turn to 58.*

If you want to speed up your search, you may use the art of FINDING to focus on anything important (turn to 89).

A few hours later, you are seated in Dr Hindley's study high in the tower of Uriel College. It is like floating above the city in a book-filled balloon.

'I am so pleased to see you again, so pleased. With all the portents and premonitions flying around, one could be forgiven for assuming that you had died.' Hindley laughs nervously. 'More tea?'

To all outward appearances, the professor is a rather helpless old man, his joints so stiff that he moves as if he were made out of wood. But the world is no longer his true element. A gifted sensitive, John Hindley spends much of his time letting his thoughts drift on the aether, waiting for the currents to pull him towards some new insight.

'A most remarkable case came to my attention the other day, most remarkable. A young man reported a case of possession to the university chaplain, claiming his girlfriend was under the spell of a witch, no less a person than Isobel Dewar herself. The name was known to the chaplain, who referred the boy to me.'

The name is also known to you. Isobel Dewar was a famous sensitive, a victim of the great persecution of the seventeenth century. The label of witch shows that, in some respects, little has changed in four hundred years.

'What on earth did you say?'

'As a man of science, I utterly reject the idea of possession; and it is precisely because men of science err so often on these questions that I am inclined to consider it possible.'

'But ghosts do not exist! In so far as they can be seen at all, they are just memories. You taught me that!'

John Hindley makes a steeple of his fingers. Slanting sunlight strikes the shadowy wall behind, framing your old professor in gold, and lends him the attitude of a saint deep in prayer.

'Yet I wonder. The nature of human consciousness is still imperfectly understood.'

'You think Isobel Dewar found a way to transcend death?'

'Ah, I did not say that! But young Prentice's story raised certain questions...'

'I'm sorry; what was his name?'

'Prentice. Martin Prentice.'

'Morton?'

'Yes, you are quite right, Morton. Do you know him?'

You tell Dr Hindley about your premonition.

'Interesting, interesting. A coincidence, one might say, but if so a very great one.'

Sensitives soon learn that very little that happens to them is entirely due to chance. The aether has a habit of reflecting your thoughts and fears back at you. *Write the letter H on your Character Sheet.*

Before you leave, Dr Hindley tells you that Morton Prentice lives at 57 St Michael's Road. *Write the number 57 on your Character Sheet. If you want to go to the house at any point, you can do so by turning to this reference.*

'Be careful,' Hindley warns. 'Those who go out of their way to avoid fate often find they are rushing to meet it.'

If you want to go to St Michael's Road now, turn to 57.

If you would rather research Isobel Dewar, turn to 11.

70

'OK. Strength in numbers and all that.'

He nods but looks a little scared nonetheless. Together you start to investigate the source of the terrible atmosphere in the house.

Although Morton is not sensitive, his moral support will add 2 points to your POWER when facing Isobel Dewart. Turn to 82.

71

'Morton Prentice came to us because he wanted to be rid of a ghost. The boy thought he was being haunted.'

'Was he?'

'How should we know? We only give people what they ask for.'

It occurs to you that Mr Candlish is very like a djinn, fulfilling wishes in a manner to suit his own dark imagination.

'And what was that?'

'You know the rhyme? *Hot as a hare, blind as a bat, dry as a bone...*'

'...dead as a rat. Witchwort, you gave him witchwort. Some paste or potion no doubt?'

'A small vial, most precious. He had nothing of value to give, so we took his memories. Very juicy they were, sweet reminiscences of tormented childhood. It reminded us of our own youth.'

You can imagine Mr Candlish being sprung from shadow or born under a stone. It is very difficult to picture this sinister old man as a small boy. And he has given you much else to think of; witchwort was formerly revered as a holy plant, which grew where the aether was at its strongest. But it is also a poison, a purgative used to expel evil spirits.

Write the letter W on your Character Sheet and leave the store by turning to 31.

72

You are standing almost opposite Greyfriars itself, the ruined abbey at the heart of the pedestrian area. The old church was bombed during the war and is now nothing more than a roofless shell. Hemmed in by later buildings, the churchyard has shrunk to a small paved area in front of the west door. It is here that Morton takes you aside to complete the paperwork.

The walls of the churchyard are tiled with the few remaining tombstones, worn slabs of dark stone from which the dedications have been all but erased. If you look closely, you can just make out the outlines of skulls and other reminders of human mortality. Morton presses his clipboard up against the wall and indicates where you should sign.

Roll two dice. If the number rolled is equal to or less than your POWER and skill in READING, turn to 83. If the total is greater, turn to 59.

73

Maybe she is too eager for the experiment and tries to force feed you her thoughts, maybe it is the stale air in the house. Whatever the cause, the rush of emotions makes your head spin; suddenly you feel as if you are about to faint. You let go of Alicia's hand and concentrate on not being sick.

'What's the matter?'

It is a while before you can reply. 'Nothing. I'm fine.'

'I was really worried for a moment.'

'Just felt a bit dizzy, that's all. It happens.'

Alicia puts the kettle on. While you are drinking the tea, Kat, one of the girls she shares the house with, comes home. The oppressive nature of the house is beginning to weigh heavily on you, like the onset of a headache. You make your excuses and leave, glad to get away from Cumberland Street. *Turn to 31.*

74

The raven-haired countess places the pointer on the board and calls on whatever spirits are listening to answer her. She pushes the pointer forward tentatively but the only voices to be heard are those of her friends, offering drunken encouragement. 'Come on Alicia!'

After a few minutes, you notice a change come over the girl. Her face is flushed; her eyes have a distant look about them. She sways slightly. She looks as if she is about to faint, or go into a trance. Is this an act? Or is it genuine?

If you want to intervene, roll two dice. If the number rolled is equal to or less than your POWER and skill in BLESSING, turn to 26. If the total is greater, lose 1 POWER point and turn to 45.

If you would rather watch and do nothing, turn to 45.

75

On the wall of your apartment is an antique barometer – brass mounting housed in a dark wooden case - which shows the ebb and flow of the aether. The gauge continues to fall, the hand of fate sinking towards Death.

If you think you have already solved the mystery, turn to 31.

If not, you must decide what to do next.

If you want to attempt the difficult task of altering fate itself, turn to 10.

If you would rather consult an aethermancer, turn to 42.

Or you may choose to look for Morton Prentice (turn to 63).

76

You have time to search in two places (using the art of FINDING counts as one search). If you have already searched twice, a noise outside disturbs you and you decide to leave the house at once (*turn to 96*).

Where will you look next?

By the bed? Turn to 15.

Through the bookshelves? Turn to 30.

In the desk drawers? Turn to 46.

At the walls? Turn to 58.

If you want to speed up your search, you may use the art of FINDING to focus on anything important (turn to 89).

77

'You know Alicia! How, how was she? Did she seem strange to you?'

'Strange?'

'I don't know; odd behaviour that you wouldn't expect.'

If you decide to tell him you agree there was something strange about Alicia, turn to 39. Otherwise, turn to 14.

78

'Nice costume,' someone sneers. All the other partygoers are wearing fancy dress; in the midst of all these horrors, it is you that appears to be the freak.

A big werewolf steps towards you. 'Sorry,' he says, 'I'm going to have to ask you to leave.'

You are not welcome here. *Turn to 16.*

79

The door is opened by an attractive young woman with long dark hair. She wears a short-sleeved dress and a slightly worried expression on her face.

'Can I help you?'

If you tell her you are looking for Morton Prentice, turn to 97.

If you would rather pretend to be an architectural historian interested in the house, turn to 34.

80

Your destiny was to be killed by Morton Prentice but now you are going to die in a house fire. You did it, you really did it; you altered fate itself. As you slip into unconsciousness, overcome by the smoke, the knowledge gives you some small satisfaction. Your adventure ends here.

81

Morton tells you that Alicia and her friends are throwing a Halloween party at their house in the Georgetown district of the city.

'We'll use the party as an opportunity to get inside the house and exorcise the evil spirit.'

He arranges to meet you at 18 Cumberland Street on the night of 31 October. *Write the letter M on your Character Sheet.*

'Come prepared; the Devil will not give up without a fight!'

When you are ready to go to the Halloween party, turn to 49 (make a note of the number as you will not be given the option to do this in the text).

What will you do now?

If you want to wait around and search the house when nobody is at home, turn to 68. If you would rather call on Alicia Burgess, turn to 18. If you have other plans, turn to 31.

82

The source of the trouble seems to be coming from somewhere at the top of the house. You climb the stairs, conscious of the increasing turbulence in the aether. A sick feeling wells into the pit of your

stomach and threatens to overflow. Above you, the stairs end at a landing, with a skylight in the roof above. When you flick the light switch, the bare bulb emits a feeble yellow glow and then fails, as if snuffed out by the miasma surrounding it. Not a great omen but at least the floors below provide enough light to allow you to find your way.

At one side of the landing is the outline of a door. These old houses were built with low attics, where the servants would have slept. Probably the door leads on to this space, whatever purpose it serves now. You try the handle but, predictably, the door is locked. Unlikely that anyone in the house has a key, even if they were inclined to lend it to you. You rattle the handle futilely, as if that would magically shake the lock open, then stand and stare at the door, your mind as blank as the white painted surface.

You are going to die. You know that now. Everything that you have attempted has been in vain; you cannot cheat destiny. You punch the unyielding door in frustration, taking the skin off your knuckles, and the pain clears your mind of the creeping sense of despair.

You whirl round and there, in the cold square formed below the skylight, is a figure, the hazy form of a woman, like a stain hanging in the air. Her face is lost in shadow but you know that she is dead, long dead. Her plain skirts reach to the floor, her hair is hidden by a white cloth cap. You can feel the pain in this ghost, a memory of terrible suffering corrupted to fear and resentment of the living. She reaches out blindly, as if to snatch your breath from you.

Names can give some protection against the dead. If you think you know her name, convert the initials to a number (A=1, B=2, C=3 etc.), add them together and turn to the reference matching the total (if the reference does not make sense, you were mistaken). Otherwise, turn to 61.

83

Make a PRACTICE ROLL (roll one die) to see if your skill in the art of READING has increased.

As you take the pen in your hand, the faces of all those who have signed up that morning crowd into your mind. You dismiss them and concentrate on the dominant impressions, those left by Morton himself.

Morton Prentice is a generally happy young man with a wide circle of friends. He is also a committed Christian. He attends church regularly and tries to live his life honestly and with compassion; raising money for the Winter Relief Fund is just one expression of this. He is not sensitive but retains a strong sense of the spiritual.

Morton is studying business at Uriel College but has no real passion for the subject. His real love is a dark-haired student called Alicia Burgess, though these feelings are not returned – you feel his pain as keenly as if it were your own heartbreak. There is a shadow behind the girl, the stain of some other, darker emotion – anger, perhaps, or fear.

Most of his recent memories revolve around church and university life. In your mind's eye you can see the house in the suburbs that Morton shares with other students, and the terrace in Cumberland Street where Alicia Burgess lives.

Morton has a busy, busy mind and yet there are whole areas of it that are blank. There are almost no memories of his childhood, for instance. If reading a mind is like opening the door into a room, then this corner is empty. You can see the imprints of the memories, like marks upon the carpet where furniture has been, but the thoughts and feelings are gone, as if Morton has repressed them.

Most importantly, there is no hint that Morton plans to kill you. His only thought for you is a fervent wish that you would sign the direct debit form in front of you. You scratch your name quickly upon the paper, the biro giving up the ghost almost before you have finished.

You hand him back the pen and clipboard and the images fade. The noise of pigeons sounds loud in your ears; you are back in the churchyard of Greyfriars, though in truth you had never really left.

'Thanks for giving,' Morton says and tears off a duplicate copy for you to keep. You cram the paper into your pocket and walk away.

Make a note on your Character Sheet of the addresses for Morton (57 St Michael's Road) and Alicia Burgess (18 Cumberland Street) - if you want to visit either house, you can do so by turning to the reference with the same number as the house (you will not always be given the option to do this in the text).

If you want to visit Alicia Burgess now, turn to 18. If you would rather search Morton's house while there is no one at home, turn to 68. If you think you may have made a mistake and want to consult an aethermancer, turn to 42.

84

Mr Candlish smiles, revealing a line of grey teeth. 'Yes, the boy was here.'

'What did he want?'

'That we are not at liberty to divulge.'

'You mean the information comes at a price?'

'Anything of value has a price.'

'Name yours.'

Mr Candlish smiles again; the effect is rather unpleasant. 'The last time you were here, you had about your person a certain talisman.'

'And if I no longer have it?'

He shrugs. 'You have POWER do you not?'

'That is not something I can give you.'

'No, but there are means to take it.' He gestures toward a reclining chair, the kind you might find in a dentist's surgery, the leather the same green as his cardigan. There are straps on the arm rests and a number of wires trail away behind the chair. If Mr Candlish cannot read your mind, he can certainly read your expression.

'Do not concern yourself; we only want a drop of that which you have in such abundance.'

If you agree to sacrifice some of your POWER, turn to 99.

If you would rather give him your talisman, turn to 62.

If you decide the information is not worth the price, you leave the store (turn to 75).

85

Exhausted by his exertions, the old man has paused halfway up, clinging to the hand rail.

'Go on!' he barks. 'No sense in waiting for me.'

Up close you can see that his hair is greasy, that the sleeves of his jacket are coming apart at the seams.

You continue to the top of the steps and walk around the base of the tower. After a long pause – has he doubled back? - the old man joins you to admire the view. He leans heavily against the parapet, wheezing heavily after the exertion of the climb. When you risk a glance across, you can see that his hands are marked with ancient tattoos, faded now, having the appearance of blue veins. But you can

detect no trace of the tension that gave rise to your earlier premonition.

'Are you Morton Prentice?'

'Eh?'

'I said, do you know Morton Prentice?'

'Who's that?'

You wish the old man a pleasant afternoon and walk away. The young woman in the grey coat and the Chinese man have long since disappeared; you must try something else to find Morton Prentice (*turn to 75*).

86

The tension in the air lifts and you are able to breathe again. The ghost has disappeared but the struggle has taken its toll on you – *lose 1 POWER point*. You are sweating despite the chill on the landing and your throat feels dry.

'Are you OK?'

A voice as if from far below. Your vision is blurry and it takes a while to focus on the young man with the red hair and the crucifix.

'Did you drink the punch?' he asks, a note of urgency in his voice.

If you have the letter W on your Character Sheet, turn to 17.

If not, but you have the letter P on your Character Sheet, turn to 41.

Otherwise, turn to 52.

87

Alicia seems friendly enough. Her house, on the other hand, gives you the creeps. The rooms have high ceilings that trap cobwebs and shadows; those at the back, overlooking the river, are not so bad but the dark rooms facing the street are another matter. There is a musty smell to the aether, psychic rising damp. As you glance up the stairs you think you see a woman standing on the attic landing but when you look again all you can see is a brown stain on the wall. A feeling of despair overcomes you.

If you want to BLESS the house, turn to 40.

If you would rather do nothing, turn to 25.

88

All Hallow's Eve is a clear night frosted with stars but in the aether a storm is raging. When you go outside, collar turned up against the cold, you can feel the prickling in the air. It is like standing on a cliff edge, the spray misting your face, while far below the tides of fate surge and roar. It is tempting to think of all this as some sort of fanfare in honour of your own destiny but you know that these wild storms are particularly common in May and October, at the aethereal equinoxes.

You ride the ghost train to Angel, a tram packed with vampires, witches and zombies. You are tempted to wish fate to hell and go for a drink with these blood soaked revellers but you know that you cannot.

St Michael's Road is quiet, the house itself in darkness. Nothing stirs as you crunch up the gravel drive. You walk round to the back and stand in the garden, looking up at the blank windows.

'MORTON PRENTICE!'

Your words, shouted into the night, receive no response. There is no one at home. But if not here, not now, then where? *Turn to 16.*

89

Roll two dice. If the number rolled is equal to or less than your POWER and skill in FINDING, turn to 38. If the total is greater, turn to 76.

90

Morton finds you first; you are standing in the doorway of the lounge, trying to pick him out from the faces in the room, when you feel a hand on your arm.

'Shit! You scared the life out of me. Who are you supposed to be, anyway, Van Helsing?'

'Someone of that art.' He brandishes a crucifix at you.

'That's not going to do any good.' You look him up and down warily, wondering if he has a stake to drive into your heart.

'Is she here?' he asks, his face serious. 'The witch, I mean.'

'Something is. Can't you feel the turmoil in the aether?'

'I, I don't have the skill,' he mumbles.

You press your fingers against your temples but the headache will not leave you. The atmosphere of the house is heavy with pain and suffering. But you can tell that the young man standing beside you is not the cause. The anguish comes from somewhere overhead.

'I'll come with you,' Morton says.

You hesitate, still mindful of the prediction that he is going to kill you.

If you agree to let Morton accompany you, turn to 70.

If you insist on going alone, turn to 82.

91

Note the AETHEREAL COMPASS on your Character Sheet.

Leaving the store, you hold the compass in the palm of your hand and try to imagine Morton Prentice. You have little more than the name to go on, but a name can be powerful in itself. You form the syllables in your mind; the heavy sound of the first, the escaping air of the last. After a long pause, the needle swings round to the north-west.

You board the Zoo tram, heading out of town. For several stops, the tram line runs in the same direction as the needle, as if the compass were marking out your journey. By the time you reach Angel, however, the needle has swung round to the north-east; the tram is now carrying you away from where you want to be and you leave it in the heart of the student quarter. Letting the compass guide your steps, you turn aside from the busy high street into a quieter, tree-lined avenue where the pavements are slick with wet leaves.

The old houses in St Michael's Road are set well back from the road, as if to hide their decay, once grand residences now turned over to the needs of student letting agencies. As you walk along the road, the needle begins to swing back on itself, until it is pointing directly at one of the houses on your left.

Turn to 57.

92

As you are preparing to leave, you notice a pair of black gloves lying on the floor beneath the table. The gloves are for small hands, perhaps those of a woman. If you want to take them with you, add the GLOVES to your Character Sheet. *Leave the library by turning to 31.*

93

All Hallow's Eve is a clear night frosted with stars but in the aether a storm is raging. When you step outside, collar turned up against the cold, you can feel the prickling in the air. It is like standing on a cliff edge, the spray misting your face, while far below the tides of fate surge and roar. It is tempting to think of all this as some sort of fanfare in honour of your own destiny but you know that these wild storms are particularly common in May and October, at the aethereal equinoxes.

Alicia welcomes you to the party, dressed as a vampire.

'Elizabeth Bathory,' she corrects you. 'Another misunderstood woman.'

She hands you a plastic cup containing a strongly alcoholic punch, a home-made cocktail of fruit juice and spirits.

'Come upstairs. We're raising the dead.'

Stepping into the hallway, you have the feeling that the dead have already been raised. The house gives you the creeps. The air is heavy with pain and suffering.

'I think that would be a very bad idea.'

Alicia arches an eyebrow. 'Why? You're not scared are you?'

She starts to climb the stairs, daring you to follow her with a backward glance.

If you decide to follow Alicia, turn to 37.

If you would rather look to see if Morton is at the party, turn to 64.

Or you may investigate the terrible atmosphere in the house (turn to 82).

94

Roll two dice. If the number rolled is equal to or less than your POWER and skill in FINDING, turn to 32. If the total is greater, your attempt was unsuccessful and you must try something else (turn to 75).

95

'I work with Dr Hindley. You went to him about a case of possession?'

His face brightens. 'That's right! I thought he didn't believe me.'

'Well, to be honest, possession is not really...'

'Oh, possession is real enough. It's mentioned several times in The Bible.'

A pause. 'Perhaps you could tell me a bit more about this particular case?'

Morton explains that he used to go out with a History student, a girl called Alicia Burgess. Since she started researching a 'witch' named Isobel Dewar, however, her whole behaviour has changed. She has become obsessed with her studies and no longer has any time for him. When he tried to talk to her about it, she broke off their relationship. Morton believes that the ghost of the dead woman has possessed Alicia. 'You have to help me save her!'

If you agree to help Morton, turn to 81.

If you refuse, turn to 20.

96

Returning to the street, you start to walk quickly away from the house. A burly man, his bulk inflated by the heavy jacket he wears, is standing in the middle of the pavement, rummaging through his pockets. As you draw near, he holds up a cigarette, as if in greeting, and asks if you have a lighter. You tell him you don't but he appears to want to continue the conversation.

'Do you always wear gloves?'

It's a strange question. 'I'm sensitive,' you say at last.

He raises an eyebrow. 'Is that so? That what you're doing here then, soaking up the atmosphere?'

When you don't reply, he fishes in his jacket for a wallet, which he opens so you can see the badge inside. Detective Sergeant Roy Bird. A plain clothes policeman.

'There have been a lot of burglaries in this area recently,' DS Bird continues pleasantly. 'Would you mind taking those gloves off for me?'

He looks straight at you and suddenly you understand that he, too, is sensitive. The realisation fills you with fear. If he touches your hand, he will read your mind and discover what you have been doing.

You mind races but you can't think of a reason for not removing your gloves. Instinctively, you reach out to the aether, trying to escape this awkward fate.

Roll two dice. If the number rolled is equal to or less than your POWER and skill in DIRECTION, turn to 65. If the total is greater, turn to 24.

97

'I'm sorry, Mort doesn't live here.' Her voice is slightly husky, the accent unmistakeably upper class.

'I need to find him.'

She tucks a strand of dark hair behind one ear and regards you coolly. 'Why? Are you a friend of his?'

If you pretend to be Morton's friend, turn to 67.

If you would rather tell her the truth, turn to 12.

98

The following morning you walk down to the Crowley Road to catch the tram into town. Preoccupied as you are by the disaster hanging over you, you hardly pay any attention to your surroundings, walking as if in a daze. The first you notice of the oncoming vehicle is the squeal of brakes. The driver cannot stop in time and you are thrown through the air by the force of the collision.

Your injuries are treated in the Royal Infirmary, where you learn, courtesy of the police investigation, that the man behind the wheel was none other than Morton Prentice. An accident, the official enquiry will record.

You are discharged from hospital with your right arm set in plaster, an unpleasant reminder of your mortality. It will heal but in the meantime the pain and discomfort reduces your ability to concentrate and manipulate the aether successfully. *Lose 1 POWER point and turn to 75.*

99

Roll two dice. If the number rolled is equal to or less than your POWER and skill in PREMONITION, turn to 35. If the total is greater, turn to 2.

100

HALLOWEEN HORROR***Student victim of poisoning***

A Uriel College student has died, and several others taken ill, after the drinks at their Halloween party were laced with a deadly poison. Alicia Burgess, 21, was admitted to Brightstowe Royal Infirmary but died early this morning. A spokesperson for the College paid tribute to Ms Burgess as 'a gifted student who will be sadly missed'. A man is helping police with their enquiries.

BRIGHTSTOWE EVENING POST, 1 November

400 YEAR OLD BOOK LAID TO REST

After a short service at Mount Pleasant Cemetery, a book made of human skin was cremated and the ashes scattered in the cemetery grounds. The seventeenth century manuscript, a contemporary record of the trial of noted sensitive Isobel Dewar, had been bound in leather made from her skin after she was hanged in 1616. Until recently it had been in the collection of Uriel College. Dr John Hindley said the College recognised the historic value of the book but felt it was no longer appropriate to store human remains in this way. He added:

'Isobel Dewar was just one of many victims of a cruel and unjust persecution. With this simple service we hope to close an unfortunate chapter in history and finally give Isobel the respect and peace she deserves.'

Anthropodermic bibliopegy – or the practice of binding books in human skin – was by no means uncommon in former times, though usually restricted to the skin of convicted criminals.

AETHERNITY, December

THE END