



THERE IS

SOMETHING

IN THE  
WOODS

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# THERE IS SOMETHING IN THE WOODS

By Erin Snyder and Tim Ralphs

You're stranded. It's a four day journey to the nearest town, and there is **something** in the woods.

## MATERIALS

- 4 to 6 players plus one Director
- A Summary Sheet for each player
- A pack of playing cards or some adapted cards
- A d20 or a handful of other dice

## OVERVIEW

This is a table-top story game of supernatural survival horror. It'll be as scary as you make it, so if you want it to be creepy, take things seriously. It'll probably be over in two to three hours. This isn't the sort of game that requires week in, week out campaign play, or lots of strategising. Rather, it's the sort of game you might take down after a dinner with a group of geeky friends just to see what they come up with, or dust off every Halloween for a special session with your usual gaming group.

In **THERE IS SOMETHING IN THE WOODS**, 4-6 players create characters, and one player is the Director. You'll start by building your group and creating the horrific supernatural situation that you're stuck in. You'll be isolated and beset by difficulties both mundane and supernatural. Your characters need to survive four days—and four nights—to make it out of the woods. During the day, the players will create scenes for their characters and challenges for one another which will cause tensions to rise. You'll be responsible for playing your characters and also describing what you find in the woods. As scenes resolve, you'll decide whether each character has behaved altruistically, selfishly, or if they've undermined other members of their group. Players will accumulate Doom Cards that represent the horrible things that could happen to them. There's also a die showing how fucked the group is as a whole. Self-centred actions may increase a character's chance of survival, but they threaten the whole party by ticking down the Fucked Die. If it hits zero, the whole group dies.

During the night, the Thing in the woods will threaten the group directly. The players will choose and flip over Doom Cards and then create scenes influenced by the result. Some of the cards will have a character escape the Thing unscathed—for now. Others will have the characters injured or beginning to lose their grip on reality. The survival of the group will be threatened as things get more and more severely fucked. Towards the end of the

game, these cards can kill the characters outright, so players will want to be careful about which they flip over.

At the end of four day-night cycles, the game is over. If any of the group has survived, then they get a short epilogue. In theory, it's possible for the whole group to survive, but it's very, very unlikely. Usually, one or two survivors will make it back from the woods alive. Sometimes whole groups disappear.

## THE DIRECTOR

Unlike many other roleplay games, the Director isn't a games master and isn't responsible for creating and playing the world or the forces that threaten the players. Instead, they make sure everyone understands what they're meant to do and that the game keeps flowing according to the rhythm of scenes and the cycle of day and night. The Director should read all the rules and have them to hand during play. It's their job to teach the other players how to play by explaining the game, particularly the implications of the Fucked Die and the different Doom Cards. The Director should be aware of situations where players have stopped following the rules and bring them back on track. During play, the Director is in charge of keeping things moving. Often this starts by making sure all the players have a coherent idea of the fictional world of the wood. There is Something in the Woods expects the players to switch between describing the woods and roleplaying their characters, and sometimes the Director will need to help this switch by asking questions like "What time of day is it?", "Where are your characters in relation to each other?" or "What are you trying to do?"

Sometimes the whole group will get bogged down in general discussion and argument, and the Director will need to prompt people to start scenes and state definite actions their characters are taking. The Director should ask if any of the other characters might challenge or interfere with these actions. The Director should offer players the chance to create dangerous situations where the Thing in the woods threatens the group. Perhaps most importantly of all, the Director should cut scenes when they are done. During the day, they will then host a short discussion about what sort of behaviour the characters in the scene demonstrated. In all of this, The Director doesn't really make decisions. Instead they ask questions, get the other players to clarify things, and suggest possibilities.

Lastly, the Director keeps track of which day or night it is, makes sure that each player has exactly one scene each day, and sometimes helps arrange the order of scenes during the night.

This may sound confusing and like a lot of work, but once you've read these rules and the examples of play it'll make a lot more sense. After you've played a few games of There is Something in the Woods, you'll probably decide you don't need a Director at all.

Ready? Gather your friends together, introduce the game to them, lay out the dice and cards and give everyone a summary sheet. It's time to start..

## SET-UP

### CHARACTERS

Collaborate to create a group of people, and a reason that they are in the woods (family reunion, office away day, girl scout camping trip, group of friends on holiday, plane crash survivors, stag do, hunting party, archaeology dig, and so on). Everyone in your group should know everyone else, even if you don't know them very well. At the start of the game, you'll already have spent some time together.



Pick a character within your group. (A disaffected girl scout, the groom to be, newly divorced Uncle William.) Write your character's name and how they fit in to the group on your summary sheet.

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*We're going to be an archaeological dig near some weird ruins. Characters are a PhD student (Hector), a late-career Professor of Archaeology on one last dig (Professor Carter), a documentary filmmaker (Vanessa), and the camp manager and cook (James).*

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## CONFLICTS AND KINDNESSES

You've got history; some of the the people you're with have done things that really fucked you over or got on your nerves, and others have been surprisingly nice when you didn't expect it. Now that you're stranded and days away from any help, all of that shit you've been dealing with is going to come right back up to the surface.

Conflicts represent an action that someone on this trip has taken that your character strongly dislikes. What have they actively done that's pissed you off? Kindnesses are favors or generous deeds another character has done for you. Both conflicts and kindnesses should be recent, specific and tangible. These actions may not have meant anything to the other person, but they mean a lot to **you**, right now.

Describe a conflict you have with one character, a kindness with a second character, and a conflict with a third character. Choose in rounds: everyone decides their first conflict, then their kindness, and so on. Write your conflicts and kindnesses on your summary sheet.

Kindnesses cannot be reciprocal. If someone takes a kindness with you, you cannot take a kindness with them! If you have to, you can have a conflict and a kindness with the same person, just as long as nobody reciprocates kindnesses.

You may need to negotiate who takes kindnesses with whom so the whole group can have them. For example, if everyone decides that James the cook was kind to them, then he'd have nobody left that could be kind to him, because of the reciprocal kindness rule. Spread your conflicts and kindnesses around to involve everyone.

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**Hector:** *I think I have a conflict with Professor Carter. She's always hindering my career.*

**Director:** *Can you think of something specific she's done on this dig?*

**Hector:** *Hmm. How about this: I really need this dig for my thesis, but she's got a pet student that she was going to bring along instead. She only brought me in at the last minute, because he broke his leg.*

**Professor Carter:** *Yeah! I bet I'm always telling you how much better Jeremy would be at everything, if he were here.*

**Hector:** *I'm so sick of Jeremy.*

**Vanessa:** *I'm taking a conflict with you, Hector, because I really need interesting footage for this film, and you just keep going on about stone tools.*

**Hector:** *Hey, chipped edges are fascinating. You just don't appreciate them.*

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## WANTS

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The final piece of character creation is to think of something your character wants from this situation—some goal or objective that will influence their behaviour while in the woods. This shouldn't simply be to get out of the woods alive! Instead, think about something that might tempt them not to leave in the most obvious and direct way, or would create an interesting relationship with another character in the party. Simple, obvious wants are usually best.

Wants are usually most relevant on the first day, before the full extent of the Thing's influence has been revealed. Sometimes the characters will abandon their wants very quickly and focus fully on survival. Sometimes, as characters get more unhinged, their wants will become dangerous and powerful obsessions.

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**Vanessa:** *Well I think my want is pretty obvious. I want to get a brilliant documentary out of this. In some ways I think I'm going to be really excited when things start going wrong; it's much more interesting than digging trenches and Hector's endless stone tools. I'm going to be lugging my cameras around, trying to get as much footage as I can.*

**Professor Carter:** *Yeah, my want is also pretty obvious. This trip is my legacy, my last dig. I want to use what we find to go on to become some distinguished emeritus professor. Book deals. Lecture tours. I need the dig to be a big media success.*

**James:** *I think I've developed a bit of a crush on Vanessa, and I'm really liking location work. I want her to realise that she should take me with her on all her trips in the future.*

**Hector:** *I've been collecting a real mass of stone tools and bits of rock, and I'm really protective of them.*

**Director:** *How is that a want? I'm not seeing how that would make you compromise on leaving.*

**Hector:** *Well, I think maybe they're awkward to carry... or perhaps the Thing doesn't want us looting ancient temples.*

**Director:** *Ahh! That's perfect.*

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## OTHER CHARACTERS

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When your group went into the woods, there may have been some other characters with you. By the start of the game everyone else is gone. Perhaps your party stayed behind to clear up the log cabin after everyone else left. Maybe you're the only survivors of the plane crash. If there were others with you then feel free to be vague about what may have happened that's led to them disappearing. Perhaps you'll find out what's become of them later.

Now you're on your own out here. Well, except for the Thing in the woods.

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*Our archaeological dig started out with a local guide. Unfortunately, that's his skin pegged out in the middle of camp: Professor Carter swears she recognises his tattoos.*

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## YOU ARE SO SCREWED

As a group, choose a keyword that describes the Thing in the woods: hungry, angry, lonely, infected, obsessed, ritualistic, eerie, feral. Write this word on your sheet, and keep it in mind when describing the Thing in the woods and its actions.

What forebodings has your group encountered? What signs should have tipped you off that this trip was going to be a terrible idea? What warnings have you chosen to ignore?

Why or how is your group totally fucked? Why can't you just call for help? What has happened to your transport? How bad is your shelter? What supplies are you lacking? Remember, it's going to take you at least four days to get out of this situation. Landslides, washed-out roads, avalanches, wildfires, broken-down cars... let's face it, you guys are pretty screwed, and the more problems you create for yourself the more fun you'll have.

Lastly, make sure that some evidence of the Thing's supernatural presence has been revealed. It should be something that you'd struggle to blame on bad luck or poor planning. Remember your keyword, and think of something threatening.

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*We decide our Thing is going to be ritualistic. In our case, the loss of our local guide is the biggest thing that fucks us over. In hindsight, maybe the fact that no one else would guide for us when they heard our destination should've been a warning, plus Professor Carter explains that there was another expedition out here several decades ago that vanished.*

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*When Vanessa tries to use the satellite phone, she finds that it's only getting static and something that might be chanting. There's no transport, no roads, and nobody was paying any attention to the map so we don't really know where we are. We were expecting the guide to return with more supplies; ours are pretty low. We decide that finding the guide's skin in the camp, flayed and pegged out, is probably enough evidence that the Thing is a threat, and it fits our ritualistic keyword.*

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## THE FUCKED DIE

The Fucked Die represents how close you are to being completely, totally, and utterly fucked. If it gets to zero, no one makes it out of the woods. The whole group dies. Some character Behaviours and some Doom Cards tick the die down.

Set the Fucked Die at twice the number of players, plus two.

## THE DECK OF DOOM CARDS

The deck is definitely stacked against you. We recommend writing on your cards, but if you don't want to spoil the deck, use the suits as follows with Jokers and Aces representing Fucked. You'll need specific numbers each, described below.

Card Type	4 players	5 players	6 players	$n$ players
Death (Spades)	4	5	6	$n$
Fucked (Jokers, Aces)	3	4	5	$n-1$
Unscathed (Diamonds)	6	7	8	$n+2$
Injured (Clubs)	4	5	6	$n$
Unhinged (Hearts)	3	4	5	$n-1$

When you set up the game you divide up the cards into two piles and then put one on top of the other.

Make up the first pile with the cards shown below.

- **Four players:** 4 Death, 1 Fucked, 2 Injured, 1 Unhinged
- **Five players:** 5 Death, 1 Fucked, 2 Injured, 2 Unhinged
- **Six players:** 6 Death, 1 Fucked, 3 Injured, 2 Unhinged

The second pile has all the remaining cards.

Shuffle the first pile; shuffle the second pile and place it on top of the other pile. The Director should make sure that players understand how the deck is stacked. Because the Death cards are all at the bottom of the deck, the Thing won't kill you outright to begin with. It's very important to keep track of which card you drew on which day!

Players start with one Doom Card and draw an extra Doom Card each day. Remember, there are four days between you and safety. At the end of the game, if you're still alive, you'll have five Doom Cards in front of you and four will be face up. It's possible that the whole deck of Doom Cards will be exhausted.

## DOOM CARDS IN PLAY

Everyone starts the game with one face-down Doom Card drawn from the top of the deck. ***Don't look at the Doom Cards!*** Never look at the Doom Cards unless the instructions for your Behaviour tell you to.

Each night the Thing will take action against the players. Everyone will be confronted by its influence. The Doom Cards tell us how the characters are affected.

- **Unscathed cards (Diamonds):** You survive the night more or less unscathed, though not without incident.
- **Fucked cards (Jokers, Aces):** The Thing has made the group's situation even worse, either directly or just through its supernatural presence. Maybe the path has twisted or vanished, maybe the temperature has changed rapidly, maybe your supplies are ruined, maybe something catches fire, maybe the Thing has ransacked your camp. Reduce the number on the Fucked Die by 1.
- **Injured cards (Clubs):** The Thing in the woods has severely injured you. If you flip over your second you're not dead yet, but you're so injured you're never going to make it out of the woods alive and will instead suffer a lingering, horrible death.
- **Unhinged cards (Hearts):** The Thing in the woods has done something that unhinges you. If you flip over your second then you're so unhinged you're never going to make it out of the woods alive and will instead suffer a tormented, hideous fate.
- **Death cards (Spades):** The Thing has killed you outright. If you're lucky, your corpse might serve as a terrible warning.

## PLAYING: DAY

Everyone should have either one or two face-down Doom Cards in front of them at all times, depending on whether or not they've had their scene yet.



# SCENES

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Everybody gets one scene each day. It's fine to stand around and bicker over who got you into this mess, but pretty soon somebody's going to want to do something. There's no set order, so start with whoever chooses to take a significant action. They're in charge during their scene, and we call them the acting player. After the scene, the other players will make a decision on how they thought the acting player behaved, and then play passes to the next person who wants to take an action.

Scenes have a structure. The acting player describes an action they want their character to take. Then someone else introduces a challenge, something that threatens or interferes with that action. The first player decides what their character does and also describes the short term results of their actions.

During your scene, you play as your character, describing what you're doing and how you're doing it. It's the job of the rest of the players to figure out if this is an action that they want to challenge. Are you selfishly screwing someone else over? They may take issue with that!

If there is an objection from another character, that person describes how they challenge the action you're taking. You'll describe how you respond. If other characters are present they may well react to this back and forth.

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**Hector:** *I'm going to go examine the guide's skin that's been pegged out in our camp.*

**James:** *What the fuck?*

**Hector:** *No, seriously, I think this has been done with stone tools. Look, you can see the change in depth due to the angle of the blade.*

**Director:** *So Hector's standing around prodding at your guide's flensed skin. Is anyone objecting to this?*

**Vanessa:** *Actually, this is the most exciting thing he's done all trip. I'm totally filming it.*

**Hector:** *I start explaining to the camera how you can tell something about the tool based on the marks it leaves. I think this was done with obsidian, which makes it even more interesting, as there's no history of obsidian tools in this area.*

**James:** *I think this is sick! I'm going to challenge it.*

**Director:** *Okay, tell us how you're going to stop him.*

**James:** *I'm going to get in the way of the shot. I'm going to tell him, Hector, this is awful, this was a human being. We should bury him.*

**Vanessa:** *Hey, get out of the frame! My contract says I have to have five minutes of film of Hector, and this is the only interesting thing he's done in his life!*

**Director:** *Okay, Hector, how do you think this ends?*

**Hector:** *I think James disrupts the shots and Vanessa can't get the footage. But now I'm mad at him. Also I'm wondering if someone in the group has got an obsidian knife they're hiding.*

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Challenges can be more subtle than a direct conflict. A challenge can be anything that interferes with the acting player's intended actions in a way they can't just ignore. Perhaps the challenging player wants to propose a different priority for the group, perhaps they interrupt the acting player's actions with news of a fresh, horrible discovery, or perhaps they present the player with a difficult choice. For example, if your character was unhinged in the night and the acting player has been comforting you but now wants to go and gather some water, maybe your challenge is simply that you can't stand to be left alone and that you start crying or panicking as soon as the acting player lets go of you.

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**Vanessa :** *Well, I think that's enough time spent filming the group taking apart the camp. I'm going to pack up and try and work out what stuff is too heavy to carry and best left here.*

**Professor Carter:** *I have an idea! I'm going to sidle over to Vanessa, and tell her that I think we should do one last trip into the ruins, just her and me. We can catch everyone else up afterwards. Is that a challenge?*

**Director:** *Vanessa, do you think it interferes with your plan to sort through your stuff, pack up and go?*

**Vanessa:** *Totally! I... I think I'd be swayed, actually, and leave the others to get a last few shots of the ruins.*

**Director:** *Can you describe the ruins for us, and what you both find there?*

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## **NOTHING'S EASY.**

Sometimes someone will come up with an action that nobody objects to. (Perhaps everyone agrees the action is taken for the good of the group.) In this case, the world is going to get in the way of the proposed course of action. The acting player sits back and one of the other players must think of a way that the proposed action could be blocked or hindered by the some aspect of the woods or the Thing's influence. World challenges have to affect more than one character—if you're proposing one, the challenge should have the potential to implicate you as well as the person who started the scene.

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**James:** *I have an idea about our water shortage. I'm going to set our tarps up in a tree as a water trap. They'll collect dew and any light rain overnight.*

**Director:** *Okay, so James is trying to collect water. Anyone challenging?*

**Vanessa:** *No, I think it's a good idea.*

**Hector:** *Nope.*

**Professor Carter:** *I think it should be a world challenge. Oh, I know—halfway up a tree, trying to hang on while tying a tarp in place, James comes across a wasps' nest.*

**Hector:** *Killer wasps.*

**Vanessa:** *And James is allergic to wasps.*

**Director:** *Okay! Professor Carter, it's your challenge. This challenge should involve you in some way as well as James.*

**Professor Carter:** *I think—what if it was my job to pack all the medical supplies and do the risk assessments and allergy sheets when we planned this expedition? And it was such a big form to get an epi-pen through customs that I secretly ignored James' insistence that we bring some. Is that enough?*

**James:** *I'm happy with it!*

**Director:** *Okay, James. You're hanging from a tree by one arm and the dangling tarp brushes against what you thought was a bit of dead wood. A small, angry cloud of insects is going to come swarming out. What do you do about it?*

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After the challenge, we come back to the acting player, the person who started the scene off. Did the challenge stop you doing what you wanted, or change how you went about your action? Did you manage to overcome the obstacles, and at what cost to you or other members of the group? Your action may have changed the dynamic of the group, and this may play out in the actions of other characters. Ultimately the acting player gets to narrate the end of the scene and any immediate consequences.

## BEHAVIOURS

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At the end of each person's scene, the group decides if the acting player showed altruism, selfishness, or undermined another character. The players who weren't involved in that scene have first say in what sort of Behaviour the acting player demonstrated. They may want to ask questions about that character's motivations in order to make a decision. That's fine. The acting player draws the cards associated with that Behaviour, as explained below.

- **Altruism:** Draw a Doom Card face down. If you can't decide how someone behaved then consider that they were probably altruistic. If they did something direct to oppose the Thing then that might be altruistic as well. Note that, even if what they did was stupid, it's the motivation that counts.
- **Selfishness:** Reduce the Fucked Die by 1. Look at the top Doom Card and either take it, or take the next card from the deck without looking and put the one you looked at back on the deck, face down. Selfish actions might include keeping secrets, or anything that hurts the group as a whole but doesn't have a specific victim.
- **Undermining:** Reduce the Fucked Die by 1. Look at a face-down Doom Card in front of the person you've undermined, and either take it and give them one from the top of the deck, or take the top card from the deck without looking at it. Undermining always has a specific target: another person you're trying to bring down. You can only take cards from the person you've undermined and you can't undermine yourself.

**Note:** the maximum number of Doom Cards you can look at in any turn is 1.

Each day, after everyone has had a scene, night comes.

## PLAYING: NIGHT

Night is when the Thing in the woods makes its move. What will it do, and will you survive?

During the night, everyone chooses and reveals one of their face-down Doom Cards by turning it over. Players all turn over their cards at once.

If you've been Injured or Unhinged during the night, narrate briefly what the Thing in the woods has done to injure or unhinge you. Make it good and creepy! If you drew a Fucked card, tell everyone how the Thing in the woods has made the group's bad situation worse. If you're unscathed, you've survived a near miss—what happened, and how did you manage to avoid it?

Narration should proceed collaboratively, affirming the other players' descriptions and adding to them. Feel free to discuss how the cards might fit together.

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*Hector reveals a Fucked card. James is Injured, and Vanessa is Unhinged. Professor Carter escapes unscathed.*

**Hector:** Okay, so we'd set a watch—what happened?

**Vanessa:** I think something turned up at the tents... It was wearing the guide's skin.

**James:** Did you have the rifle?

**Vanessa:** Yes.

**James:** I think you shot at it and hit me.

**Professor Carter:** No, that was probably me! I've got my pistol.

**Vanessa:** Yeah, I shot the Thing and you fired wildly and hit James while you were both crawling out of your tents. The Thing hardly reacted. It kept coming closer but vanished just as it touched me. Now I'm really distraught. It got so close I could smell it and I keep expecting it to reappear.

**Hector:** I think cleaning the bullet wound and fixing James up has wasted the last of our water.

**Director:** Is there a way of making that a bit more about the Thing? Or more supernatural?

**Hector:** Hmm. How about this? I'm helping James. As I start to tip some water out of the container I notice there are things wriggling in the bag—a swarm of writhing black creatures that weren't there before. I just freak out and throw the whole lot away.

**James:** Shit. We're still a long way from the river.

**Hector:** Better move fast.

---

If you reveal a Death card, narrate the gruesome circumstances through which the Thing in the woods brought you to your death. You may choose that the party do not find your body straight away, which can leave things open for further horror later on.

## PLAYING: FINER POINTS

### MORE ON SCENES

As you move through each day, you may want to build on the set-up and on what's been revealed so far. For instance, on Day One, you may want to explore. Describe the woods and the situation you've wound



up in. Build on your conflicts and kindnesses, and see how your wants play out against the supernatural threat that is looming on the horizon.

On Day Two, you can look at revelations from the first night: who is injured, who has become unhinged, and what help do they need? What supplies are in crisis, and what actions might the group take to remedy that? How lost is the group?

By Day Three, the Thing in the woods may be extending its influence into the daytime as the situation escalates. Perhaps your group is beginning to get a sense of the Thing's motives, or they're making—and acting on—wild theories about what the Thing wants (to leave all the stone tools behind, for example). If you haven't shifted location, moving to a different part of the woods (a river, a swamp, or stumbling across traces of the Thing's home turf) may prompt good scenes.

By Day Four, some of your party may have died outright, and others may have become too injured or unhinged to make it out of the woods. What dynamic does that create within the group? A great way to heighten the tension during Day Four is to introduce a glimmer of hope on the horizon—traces of a search party or helicopter, a crashed car that might still work, a sign pointing out that the nearest town is just a few miles off, or some other signal that the group may yet make it out alive. If you can survive one more night, you'll be free of these woods! What will your characters do, now that rescue seems just around the corner?

You can find an additional short list of scene prompts on the Summary Sheet.

Keep in mind, especially if you are Injured or Unhinged, that you're only one Doom Card away from a ghastly end. That might influence how you want your character to behave during your scene!

## HOW INJURED IS INJURED?

As a rule, feel free to have your own or other people's characters suffer slight injuries as a part of the resolution of a scene. Minor cuts and lacerations, small burns, sprained ankles, shock and all the effects of exposure, sleep deprivation and starvation—this is all fairly run of the mill and you shouldn't hold back from heaping it on yourself and others. Injury cards are another matter. Make them serious, requiring medical attention, a hindrance to you and possibly the progress of the whole group. The same applies to being Unhinged. Every encounter with the Thing is likely to leave someone psychologically scarred. Being Unhinged should be significant.

Every night it's likely that someone will become a victim of the Thing. If another character has become Unhinged or Injured then this makes great inspiration for a daytime scene in which you try to help them. The injury or delusion can then form a part of the challenge.

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**Director:** *Okay, enough whimpering. What are you trying to do today?*

**Professor Carter:** *How badly has James been injured? I'm going to try and help him.*

**James:** *Well, I guess the bullet is still lodged inside me and moving is really painful. I don't know if I'm happy with you trying to treat me though—it's kind of your fault.*

**Director:** *Are you challenging her by refusing her kind offer of help?*

**James:** *Hmm. Our keyword is "ritualistic, isn't it? So how about the Professor has got out her knife and is trying to clean out the wound and get to the bullet, but she keeps having weird images of blood rites*



*and sacrifices in her mind. That's a world challenge, right? It interferes with her action and it puts us both at risk?*

**Director:** *That's perfect. Well Professor, you have James lying down, vulnerable to your knife. Want to tell us what happens next?*

---

If you've got two Unhinged cards or two Injured cards, you're not making it out of the woods alive—but you still take turns with scenes, drawing cards and interacting with other players. This is a lingering, miserable demise, so ham it up and make it felt. It can really suck to get two of these cards by the start of Day 3, so think about that when you choose how to behave.

## **THINGS TO DO IN THE WOODS WHEN YOU'RE DEAD**

If you flip a Death card during the night then the Thing has killed you. Players with dead characters no longer get a scene during the day and don't draw more Doom cards. However, you get first say when coming up with world challenges. When you make these challenges, be sure that you expose both the acting player and at least one other character to the Thing's influence.

## **THE PARTY SEPARATES OR TURNS ON EACH OTHER**

It's entirely possible that the group may split up into smaller factions. That's fine, although you probably want to avoid leaving someone wholly on their own as it can make challenges tricky. If the party does separate, try to keep in mind ways that different factions might join up again, either during the night or the next day. If you're on your own, think about things you might find that the rest of the group would really like to know about.

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*It's Day Four. Vanessa is dead, though her body hasn't been found. James has been injured again, and is now very close to death. After a tense, angry argument, Professor Carter persuades Hector to leave him behind so they can move faster. It's now James' scene.*

**James:** *I'm dying right? But I don't necessarily realise that. I hear the sound of running water nearby, and I manage to crawl to a river where I find a sign of hope. It's a boat. I'm going to be heaving myself up, checking out the hull, trying to clamber in.*

**Vanessa:** *Is it up to me, as the dead player, to come up with a challenge?*

**Director:** *Not necessarily, though jump straight in if you've got one.*

**Hector:** *If not, I've got one. The rest of us have found the river, and we're arguing about making a raft. We haven't got far; maybe James can hear us arguing when the wind carries it. He can tell the boat is damaged, and might leak too much to get very far. We could help him fix it, but then he'll have to spend energy shouting.*

**James:** *Fuck all of you. You abandoned me and I'm feeling selfish.*

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Sometimes, as the days wear on, the party can really feel like it's about to explode and turn on one another. Keep in mind that the worst harm you can do another character as part of a daytime scene is pretty minor (see the notes on injuries above, though Undermining someone can have dire consequences) and that you probably want to leave full-blown fights for near the end of the game.

## EPILOGUE

If any of you are still alive after four nights in the woods, you get to do a quick epilogue. How did you make it out and how does your character live with the trauma of what happened in the woods? If you had two Injured or two Unhinged cards, this is where you get to narrate your tragic demise. If you all died, either from flipping cards or running down the Fucked Die, go to town describing your last, desperate moments.

You might want to discuss what the Thing could have been and ask what happens next.

## THE CREEP

At the end of the game, make sure you give everyone you've played with a copy of **THERE IS SOMETHING IN THE WOODS**. Paper is fine, but an electronic copy is even better. Let the horror spread.

## ADVANCED FUCKERY

That should be all you need to play a decent game of **THERE IS SOMETHING IN THE WOODS**, but if you want to mess with things, or if you've played it once and are looking for a new experience, there are a couple of ways to mix it up. These range from minor to major changes.

If your group thinks that encountering the Thing is more likely to unhinge you than it is to injure you, swap the total number of Unhinged and Injured cards around, and swap the number used in stacking the bottom deck.

Try out (or make up) some new keywords like alien, Lovecraftian, cruel or tragic.

If you're playing with a group where most people already have a good grasp of **THERE IS SOMETHING IN THE WOODS**, then you can play without a Director. Everyone will need to take some responsibility for the Director's role.

Bored of the woods? Change up the setting. Anywhere isolated will do: There is something in the desert. There is something in the cargo hold. There is something on this abandoned spaceship... Locations and group dynamics are flexible. Just make sure you all have reason to know and dislike each other, and accept that you're all pretty fucked.

If you really want a different breed of Thing, take either all the Injured or all the Unhinged cards and replace them with a new card: "Touched." Whenever your character is Touched, you are changed in some way. Infected, transformed, cursed, or possessed, you become a beacon of the Thing's corruption. Draw two "Touched" cards and all semblance of your past humanity is doomed to drain away. A lot of your classic monsters (zombie hordes, werewolves) have this kind of influence.

# SUPPORTING INDEX CARDS AND HATE

**ICH Games is Erin Snyder and Tim Ralphs.** She's a poet and novelist. He's a storyteller. We're both gamers. Follow us at [erinesnyder.wordpress.com](http://erinesnyder.wordpress.com) or [timralphs.com](http://timralphs.com) or on Twitter [@TimRalphs](https://twitter.com/TimRalphs). If you've enjoyed **THERE IS SOMETHING IN THE WOODS** we'd love to hear from you and we'd love you to tell your friends about it and spread the creeping horror. Download the latest version of the rules from [timralphs.com/there-is-something-in-the-woods](http://timralphs.com/there-is-something-in-the-woods).

If you want to support Erin and Tim's creative endeavors, consider donating something via Paypal to [tim.ralphs@gmail.com](mailto:tim.ralphs@gmail.com), or by using the donate buttons on either of our websites. We'll be very grateful, and your name will go up on our donor page. Plus, as a patron of ICH Games we'll keep you informed of which projects your donations are going to fund and if we ever get cool stuff like designer Fucked Cards to give away we'll make sure you get them first.

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Layout, typeset, cover art, and design magic by Zabet Groznaya.  
[zabetgroznaya.com](http://zabetgroznaya.com)

Many thanks to our playtesters and everyone whose input and encouragement got this game together.  
[timralphs.com/there-is-something-in-the-woods-playtesters-and-readers](http://timralphs.com/there-is-something-in-the-woods-playtesters-and-readers)

This game would not exist without The Forge.  
[indie-rpgs.com](http://indie-rpgs.com)

Erin and Tim were walking home at night, talking about **C J Cherryh's *Rider at the Gate***, when Erin said, "You could make a whole roleplay game off the premise that there is Something in the woods."



Index Cards and Hate™



**zabetgroznaya**

# SUMMARY SHEET

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Keyword for the Thing in the woods: \_\_\_\_\_

Role in the group: \_\_\_\_\_

Conflict: \_\_\_\_\_

Kindness: \_\_\_\_\_

Conflict: \_\_\_\_\_

Want: \_\_\_\_\_

## SCENES AND BEHAVIOURS

The acting player proposes an action. Other players challenge that action, either in character or by posing a world challenge. World challenges should involve more than one person. The acting player resolves the scene. Everyone else decides what kind of Behaviour was exhibited.

- **Altruism:** The acting player draws a Doom Card face down.
- **Selfishness:** The director reduces the Fucked Die by 1. The acting player looks at the top Doom Card and either takes it, or takes the next card from the deck and put the one looked at back on the deck, face down.
- **Undermining:** The director reduces the Fucked Die by 1. The acting player looks at a face-down Doom Card in front of the person he or she has undermined. The acting player either takes it and gives them a face-down Doom Card from the top of the deck, or takes the top card from the deck.

## POTENTIAL SCENE IDEAS

- Respond to you or someone else being injured or unhinged during the night.
- Address a shortage (food, water, shelter, other).
- Conflicts, kindnesses, and wants – how will these evolve as shit gets real?
- Discover evidence of the Thing's supernatural influence.
- Build on past forebodings.
- Move the timeline ahead a bit; what's happening now?
- What else is the woods hiding?
- Pick someone you haven't really interacted with yet. Why might the two of you be together?
- If you're a group, what might separate you? If you're apart, what might unite you?
- Uncover someone else's secret.
- How is the Thing in the woods escalating the situation?
- Change of location – where will you go, and what awaits you?
- Face a new and different facet of the Thing's power.
- Make accusations against the others.
- How might you repel or fight back against the Thing?
- Day Four: signs of hope appear-how will you respond?