

THE PRIED EYE

A Trophy Dark Incursion
by Jordan Boschman



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Introduction

WARNING: This incursion involves significant body horror elements and may not be suitable for players sensitive to such content.

Once, this backwoods town only whispered about the sordid histories of its rare newcomers and the abundant setbacks of its long-time residents. But a brilliant flash in the sky a few nights back has brought new topics to the hushed tones of worried recluses and nosy neighbors: odd shapes along the treeline, mysterious lights deeper within, and notes pleasant to the ear dancing on the wind. You've heard more enticing rumors, though, those of priceless gems unlike any others, ripe for the taking, and your thoughts can't escape the tinge of colors you've never witnessed before, strange but welcoming, emanating unseen from the woods that were once your childhood playground...

The Pried Eye is an incursion, or a one-session adventure, for the role-playing game Trophy Dark, set in the forest outside of a rural 20th-century American town. Thanks to the license with which that game was released, all the rules you need to play are included in this book. You only need a Game Master (GM), at least one player (preferably two-to-four), two colors of dice, some pencils, and a character sheet printed off for each player (found at the end of this book). The game should take about three-to-four hours.

It is recommended that the GM read this entire book to learn the rules and become familiar with the setting of the incursion and its progression. For the best experience, the players should not read anything from the incursion itself to avoid spoiling the details for them, but they can read the "How to Play" chapter if they wish to become more familiar with the rules and not rely on the GM to teach them.

How to Play

Following the unraveling of people seeking to fulfill their greed and being enticed toward their own probable demise, *Trophy Dark* is a story-first horror game focused on character arcs, threatening environments, and metaphorical themes. As the characters proceed deeper into the area where the treasures they seek are believed to reside, driven by their desire for material wealth that is not theirs to take, the theme of the incursion is regularly reinforced alongside the onset of their personal descent in an increasingly claustrophobic landscape.

Running an Incursion

Each incursion has a theme, a description, a list of moments, a list of conditions, and a series of rings that mark the progress of the characters as they get closer to their goal. Some incursions, such as this one, include custom character creation options as well to tailor the options available to more fit the setting.

To create a character, choose one option each for the Name, Occupation, Background, and Drive sections on the character sheet. You also choose anywhere from zero to three Rituals, but you must increase your starting Ruin by one for each Ritual you take.

The GM will gradually lead the party of player characters into the incursion's environment and toward the treasures they seek, always mindful of the theme and how to highlight or emphasize it. Starting with Ring 1, the players will have to confront or avoid the threats and handle the temptations in each ring they proceed through on their path to the fifth and final ring.

Dice rolls come into play when player characters attempt risky actions, help each other or take on additional risks in such actions, perform Rituals, or test whether they fall further into the grips of the surrounding environment or escape it. Use the rules listed below for handling these situations. Remember, and ensure the players know from the start, that the party members are not expected to survive, or if they do, they are most likely going to be left radically changed.

This is a game of collaborative storytelling, and as a character-driven game focused on exploring the emerging narrative, players should have significant leeway to provide new details for their characters from their memories, backstories, flashbacks, etc., when it fits the current story beat or theme. The GM is also encouraged to ask questions of the players for them to answer in character to further flesh them out and find their appropriate responses to the strange and horrific things they may witness during the incursion. The info that this reveals is great fodder for future twists and details from the GM that hit the characters in very personal ways.

If the GM ever needs an evocative moment to elicit the incursion's theme or a general sense of unease, they can pick from the list of moments included in the incursion or create one along similar lines for one or more characters to observe or experience. Similarly, when a character's Ruin increases, the GM is encouraged to choose a condition to inflict upon them from the list provided or to create one fitting the incursion's theme. Whether this condition is permanent or not is up to you, but it should remind the player of the consequences that could await their characters for continuing to trespass in this domain.

Risk Roll

When your character attempts a risky task, say what you hope will happen and ask the GM and the other players what could possibly go wrong. Then gather 6-sided dice.

Take one light-colored die if the task is something your character would be able to do because of one of their Skills.

Take another light die for accepting a Devil's Bargain from another player or the GM. Devil's Bargains are described in the following section.

Add a dark-colored die if you are willing to risk your character's mind or body in order to succeed. You must include this die whenever your character performs a Ritual.

Roll the dice. **If your highest die is a:**

- ◇ **1–3:** Your character fails, and things get worse. The GM describes how. The GM may also allow your character to succeed, but things will get worse in some other way.
- ◇ **4–5:** Your character succeeds, but there's some kind of complication. The GM describes the complication, then you describe how your character succeeds.
- ◇ **6:** Your character succeeds. Describe how.

If your highest die is a dark die (or if a dark and light die tied for highest), and the dark die is higher than your current Ruin, add 1 to your Ruin. When you do, work with the GM to describe how the forest warps your mind and body.

If you are unhappy with your roll and any dark die in the roll isn't the highest die, you may add a dark die to your dice pool and re-roll them all. You may keep adding a dark die and re-rolling until you're satisfied with your result or until a dark die is the highest die in your roll.

If you are trying to defeat or kill something monstrous, you will fail and likely die. If, instead, you are trying to escape, hide from, or fight past such a monstrosity, make a Risk Roll as normal. In that type of situation, however, you may want to consider using your Risk Roll to perform a Ritual against them.

Devil's Bargains

The GM or any other player can offer you a bonus light die if you accept a Devil's Bargain. Common Devil's Bargains include:

Your character causes collateral damage or unintended harm.

- ◇ Your character gets lost or separated from their companions.
- ◇ Your character sacrifices an important item.
- ◇ Your character betrays a companion.
- ◇ Your character attracts unwanted attention.

The Devil's Bargain occurs regardless of the outcome of the roll. You make the deal, pay the price, and get the bonus die. Whether to accept a Devil's Bargain or not is always a free choice. If you don't like one, just reject it (or suggest how to alter it so you might consider taking it). You can always just risk your character's mind or body and take a dark die instead.

Anyone may veto or suggest alterations to a proposed Devil's Bargain, especially if it would also impact their character.

Help Roll

If a player's Risk Roll dice pool includes one dark die, you may offer help to improve their odds of success (either before or after they roll). If they accept your offer, say how you expose yourself to danger and roll one light die. They may include your light die's result when considering their overall success. But if your light die's result matches any of the dark dice in their roll, your own Ruin increases by 1.

You may only suffer a maximum of 1 Ruin when helping on a roll. This is particularly relevant when a player re-rolls a Risk Roll. The helping player doesn't re-roll their light die. However, you still increase your Ruin by 1 if any re-rolled dice show the same number as your light die (provided you haven't increased Ruin by 1 already).

More than one player may offer to help, in which case each player rolls their own light die. The helped player can incorporate all of the light dice into their own Risk Roll.

Ruin Roll

Your Ruin shows how much physical and mental harm your character has suffered. It starts at 1.

When your character witnesses or undergoes something disturbing, make a Ruin Roll by rolling one dark die. If you've made a Risk Roll which includes a dark die, and that die is equal to or higher than your highest light die in that roll, your dark die is automatically considered a Ruin Roll.

If you rolled higher than your current Ruin, increase your Ruin by 1 and work with the GM to describe how the forest warps your mind and body.

Reduction Roll

When your Ruin reaches 5, you may now reduce it by acting in the interests of the forest: destroying treasure, preventing the use of Rituals, or sabotaging the other characters' exit from the forest. You should do these acts in a way that does not draw attention to yourself. The more it looks like an accident or simple bad luck, the better.

Each time you act in the forest's interest, roll one light die.

If you rolled less than your current Ruin, your betrayal goes unnoticed and you decrease your Ruin by 1. If you rolled higher than or equal to your Ruin, you may still choose to reduce your Ruin by 1, but someone will notice your attempted betrayal.

You may continue reducing your Ruin in this way when your Ruin drops below 5, until you have 1 Ruin.

Losing Your Character

When your Ruin reaches 6, your character is lost. This is an important moment: Everyone focuses on your character's last flashes of lucidity before they run away or turn against their companions.

The GM may allow you to take on a co-GM role, helping describe the terrors of the world—especially any terrors that directly connect to your now-lost character.

The Pried Eye

Theme: Communion

Description

The papers and everyone in town said it was a meteorite, but the Johnsons out in the fields said it had a flat, crescent-like shape and shimmered across the sky. Millie's boy over the river said the same, and that he heard it sing. The farmhand over at Calhoun's up and disappeared the night after, but not before giddily showing off some rainbow-colored jewels to the cook at Molly's. If he stayed upright long enough to get past the county line, he's probably already riding the rails to an appraiser.

After that night, the neighbors started talking about shapes coming in and out of the woods in the darkness. Outlines like familiar animals but loose, changing. Reggie Mae shot at one that looked like a wolf, or maybe a cougar, that was getting close to his cattle near the brush edge. Swears he hit it, but it never even flinched, just glanced at him and calmly walked back into the trees. The cows even seemed to want to follow it, but couldn't get past the fence.

All you saw for sure when the meteorite fell was a color you've dreamed of since, ever-shifting and indefinite. Even as your thoughts keep filling up with your countless local troubles in this backwoods town, you can't empty your head of that color, or the gem-like facets and angles that now endlessly turn over in your mind. You never really knew much hope here, but if it has a color and a sparkling brilliance, now you know what they look like.

You know these woods better than most. If a seasonal farmhand can find valuables like that, you can do better, a lot better. So you call your trusted few, pack your gear, and wait on the porch, bouncing your knee till daybreak. Only once you're at the treeline do you hesitate for a moment, gripped by the passing remembrance of the games you played here as a child. Frozen in the thought that these may not be your woods anymore, it's the warmth of nostalgia and the people by your side that take your first step for you.

Inspiration

The idea for this incursion comes from a combination of psilocybin-infused, new age universalism and eyewitness accounts of alleged alien activity, all through the lens of the body and its material greed being the lowly outgrowths of one's despicable ego. The basic idea is that whatever being has appeared (or crashed) in the forest is largely just a manifestation of an enlightened, ego-less, and body-less consciousness, yearning to expand its community of undifferentiated souls. The comfort and pleasantly warm feelings the party experiences are intended to evoke the body highs that tend to accompany revelations of unities of consciousness among living things, yet the visceral body horror elements do not shy away from the pain and terror that the concept of ego loss, especially that of a forced, violent variety, can entail.

Conditions

- ◇ You feel the need to share food and rations generously and insistently until they are gone.
- ◇ You begin vomiting and feel feverish. But each purge brings a euphoric haze afterward.
- ◇ A feeling of no longer being confined to your body washes over you, a sense of spilling or leaking out into the air.
- ◇ People and animals appear eyeless to you, with empty black voids in their sockets and with nebulous figures of light floating above them, attached by thin glowing strings.
- ◇ Clusters of red and purple dots begin appearing beneath your skin.
- ◇ You develop severe sunburn and skin ulcers.
- ◇ You begin to disassociate and watch yourself from outside of your body as you move and act.
- ◇ Clumps of hair and a patch of skin fall off of you.
- ◇ Visible tumors grow on your hands and on the left side of your chest.
- ◇ You, alone, witness a large, roiling column floating in the clouds, and within it lies another vivid, colorful sky stretching down toward the horizon.

Moments

- ◇ A piercing pain in the center of the brow leads to the discovery of a slit in the middle of a character's forehead that refuses to open.
- ◇ A being appears as a different animal to each observer and begins following the party.
- ◇ Trails of ants converge in a neatly formed spiral, grouping into a central, writhing clump.
- ◇ Awakening from sleep, party members find that their clothing has been swapped.
- ◇ Pieces of the party's gear are found embedded in trees, the wood already grown around them.
- ◇ Removing thin soil reveals a grid of iridescent metal spreading beneath in every direction, intertwined with the roots of trees and bushes.
- ◇ A human figure with an animal head disappears along the distant treeline.
- ◇ Leaves begin to resemble unblinking eyes.
- ◇ Under boot, stone shatters to gravel, gravel crumbles to dirt, and dirt is crushed into a bloody mud.
- ◇ Unfamiliar laughter comes from the trees. It's as intoxicating as that of a loved one.
- ◇ A humanoid figure with its arms spread wide, that looks like Reggie Mae from the back, walks straight into a solid rock face, disappearing.
- ◇ A luminous cloud passes overhead with numerous white hot orbs of light floating in and around it.
- ◇ A peaceful, orderly line of different wild animals, predator and prey alike, march silently into the woods.
- ◇ From deeper in the forest, animals stumble out fused to each other, bodies intertwined in unnerving geometries, yet they appear calm and unfazed, managing their new forms with natural grace.
- ◇ A whisper on the breeze, in the party's own voices, says "This place was never yours. You were always its child."

Ring 1

TERRORS: A pack of assorted wild animals stands still, staring up into a tree, where a dog recognizable from the Calhoun farm is found whimpering, somehow standing in the upper branches. The animals will not attack anything, flee, or react in any way except by staring at the party if they interfere, no matter what. Ask the party why they react to these creatures the way that they do. Which of the beasts does each character connect with most and why? If the party brings the dog down from the tree, it will slowly proceed deeper into the woods in a straight line, followed by the other animals, never stopping.

The party will hear a burst of gunfire nearby: five shots and, as they approach, one more. Millie's husband Birch sits leaning against a stump, empty revolver in hand, bleeding heavily from a bullet wound to his head. He only repeats, "I saw them. I saw them. I saw them." When pressed, he will switch to repeating "They saw me. They saw me. They saw me." He does not live long. Ask the party how they met Birch and how they feel about watching him die.

TEMPTATIONS: In Birch's other hand, he clutches a torn piece of iridescent, metallic fabric unlike any the party has ever seen before. It glimmers with colors that remind them of their dreams. Ask them how much they think it could be worth or who would want it.

Ring 2

TERRORS: Bright red pollen floats in on the breeze like light snow. Where it hits the skin, it smears like blood but soon evaporates off into pinkish steam. Following the smell of burnt meat, the party finds a clearing with a cow's corpse, far further into the treeline than it ought to be able to reach. All of the flesh on its head and neck are missing, bloodlessly, with charring on the surrounding skin, and the animal's remains are surrounded by a uniform series of tiny holes punched into the soil. Ask the party what they think could have done this, what the woods may want from them, or what they regret about their lives. A moment later, they notice that small woodland creatures are attracted to the cow's body. They don't feed on it but instead climb inside the openings left by the missing flesh, burrowing as deeply as they can before comfortably falling asleep.

After witnessing this, the party immediately wakes up at camp the next morning, joined by two pairs of identical twins unknown to them. Hours of time are lost, and they are much deeper in the woods than they remember being. The four strangers are friendly and boisterous, like old friends, happily recollecting the good times they apparently had with the party over the past few hours and presenting themselves as standard local townies. However, none of them recognize that they are twins or acknowledge that any of them resemble anybody, instead claiming to have met the other strangers when they moved to town a few years ago, and they quickly become very insistent about the party heading deeper into the forest. Raving about the treasures, joys, and wonders to be found, they'll even start gently pushing any reluctant party members further into the woods. They'll defend themselves if attacked, but are really more interested in moving the party along. If the party stops paying attention to them for a few beats, they disappear.

TEMPTATIONS: A large, random collection of jewelry from various sources hangs from tree branches, presenting itself, but the pieces are bent, broken, and disfigured, reshaped into floral and fractal-like shapes and patterns. No rainbow-colored jewels are among them, but a few of these treasures are from around town: hidden stashes, unmentioned inheritances, and coveted rewards. Others seem to be from origins distant in place and time. Each party member should describe one piece that they recognize and explain what it may be worth to its owner. When they are finished, ask them why playing games at the edge of this forest was so important to them as children.

Ring 3

TERRORS: There seems to be something, or someone, in the corners of the party's perception, always just outside their notice. When party members look at each other, they begin to resemble each other. Facial features appear shared between them and overlap with one another, phasing in and out. If they look at their own reflections, they see themselves as a different party member. If looking for their gear, they find it in the possession of other party members. Piles of clothes and personal items, equal to the number of party members, are found on the forest floor, as though their owners stripped naked and just disappeared.

TEMPTATIONS: A pleasantly warm, buzzing feeling has grown throughout the party members' bodies, flowing in waves from the center of their torsos outward. It's accompanied by a low humming sound and the appearance of strong visual patterns that shift and pulse as they are stared at. Light is brighter; shadows are darker. And the party's minds are filled with images of the glittering, kaleidoscopic, rainbow-colored jewels. The feeling is intoxicating, and gets stronger as they push further into the woods. Ask the party what went wrong that caused them to embrace their drives in the first place and what it might take to actually let that go.

Ring 4

TERRORS: The ground from here on in is buckled, pushed up in concentric waves emanating from a point deeper in the woods that must be the impact site. But it is not broken, cratered, or crumpled; it forms smooth, rounded ridges, almost like naturally formed hills and valleys. Atop the crest of the first buckle lays a number of empty, bloodless human skins, equal to the number of party members and cut only down the center, piled on the ground as if they were shed like any other clothing.

When approached at all, the skins rise, standing under their own efforts. One can be recognized as the farmhand from Calhoun's place, no longer in possession of his jewels. The skins pursue the party silently but relentlessly, opening themselves from their central cut and attempting to wrap around their targets, wanting to be worn. If they catch someone, the target risks suffocation as the skins are clumsy and imprecise in their attempt to envelope another creature. Their original innards may still be around here, somewhere, twinkling with a light rainbow-tinted sheen...

TEMPTATIONS: The trees here have bark made of the same iridescent metal Birch was clutching, studded with rainbow-colored jewels. The bark is seemingly impenetrable, not yielding to any attempt to carve or remove it. If anyone tries to touch or pry out the jewels, they dissolve into the tree with a flickering diffusion of glorious and radiant colors, their indescribable value taunting anyone hoping to dislodge them. Light of that incredible color the party members can't forget crests over the buckled earth ahead, refracting and glimmering off of the trees from deeper in the woods. Ask the party what they hope to find within that uncanny, beautiful glow.

Ring 5

TERRORS: An echoing call warns the party as they approach the crash site, “They see you. They see you. They see you.” It comes from a once-human mass riddled with bulbous, growing tumors and dripping thick, rainbow-tinged fluid from what was once its right temple, hovering a few feet above the ground as it moves about the perimeter. If it catches anyone with one of its four fleshy appendages that were once limbs, now readapted only for grasping, it carries them with it on its floating patrol, trying to meld their body into itself.

From near the crash site, thick, pulsing light expands from the sunken earth in fractal-like tentacles that are dotted with countless circular, lidless eyes emerging along their lengths. They swing, reach, and wrap around whatever they can grab, pulling it closer, into the crater. If any party members turn to look back or retreat, they see that several more identical twins, triplets, etc., alongside a few more empty walking skins and eerily calm animals, have encircled them, slowly closing in around the party, wanting nothing more than to gently push them closer and closer to the crash site.

TEMPTATIONS: Beyond the tendrils of light lays an immense smooth vessel with a shimmering, prismatic surface, larger around than the party can trek, encrusted with rainbow-colored jewels. It hums and sings to them, reverberating in their bones and buzzing behind their eyes, calling them to a loving embrace, drawing them to its warmth. But even more than the party members want to approach it, they want to bring their fellow travelers to it. Ask them what their drive means to them in the face of this glory, this newfound and sudden sense of belonging. Confront their petty and egotistical natures and ask who takes care of them and who they should be taking care of.

There are dozens of the rainbow-colored jewels scattered about in the dirt immediately around the crash site, but their appeal pales in comparison to that of the grand spectacle of what lies in the crater. A party member would also have to avoid the remains of Birch, the tendrils of light, and the encroaching identical strangers, skins, and animals in order to collect and escape with any of the jewels. Anyone who touches the vessel itself, or the jewels affixed to it, becomes stuck, slowly melting into its bright, shining surface, their matter breaking down at the atomic level until they fuse with it. Anyone touching someone who has begun this process will experience it as well, gradually combining with the person they touched until they disappear into each other and then into the vessel. As they join with the craft, a striking refrain wordlessly repeats in their mind: "All is not lost. All has been found."

Choose your character's name, occupation, background, drive, and rituals

NAME Rusty Levi Robyn Jolly Duff Tommy
 Dugan Kristy Doc Gloria Myra Becky _____

OCCUPATION

- Rancher (*skilled in grit, animals, and environment*)
- Doctor (*skilled in first aid, medicine, and surgery*)
- Preacher (*skilled in spirituality, socializing, and omens*)
- Prepper (*skilled in orientation, survival, and weapons*)
- _____

DRIVE

- Convince the townsfolk you still belong
- Bring back your love
- Show the town that they need you
- Find out how to apologize to them
- Make them forgive you
- Prove to them they're wrong
- _____

BACKGROUND

- Retired Tour Guide (*skilled in wayfinding*)
- Weary Homesteader (*skilled in crafting*)
- Reformed City Slicker (*skilled in perception*)
- Habitual Recidivist (*skilled in brawling*)
- Discredited Yogi (*skilled in rituals*)
- Failed Farmer (*skilled in endurance*)

RITUALS

Select up to three rituals, crossing out an additional ruin for each one you take.

- Read (*know one being's true intention and desire*)
- Merge (*temporarily join two beings*)
- Radiate (*emit bright, burning light*)
- Scry (*choose one fact and know it to be true*)
- Purge (*choose one thing within and drain it*)
- Call (*bring nearby life to your side*)
- _____

RUIN

1	2	3	4	5	6
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