

BLACK MASS

A GAME ABOUT
SEEKING AND FINDING
IN *THE WOODS of SALEM*



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INTRODUCTION

SECT I. **B**lack Mass is the game of fleeing your community into the dark, finding what you're looking for, and coming back. Catherine and Lydia flee their township during the witch crisis in the 1690s. They confront their demons in the woods, trekking to their own black masses. Players share responsibility of Catherine and Lydia as fractions of their personalities called *personas*. Each player has two personas, one for Catherine and one for Lydia.

These personas each encompass one facet of Catherine and Lydia. Personas revolve around histories dealing with relationships, emotional experiences, discovery, and growth. Each persona is different, and sketches out a distinctive piece of each character.

Black Mass is a game about discovery: through play we learn about Catherine and Lydia, informed by the in-play personas. No two games are alike, and no two Catherines and Lydias are the same. There are ten personas for both Catherine and Lydia, resulting in many possible combinations. Each persona has background information, questions to answer at the beginning of play, unique abilities, and prerequisites for starting the black mass.

We play to find out who Catherine and Lydia are, what they find in the woods, and what they do after their black mass. Each game of *Black Mass* is unique, while the framework stays the same.

Throughout the game, players draw tarot cards to overcome obstacles and to add to the *spread*, two rows of cards in the center of the playspace. The spread represents the lives of the two characters, each card symbolizing a moment in their past, present, or future. Sometimes cards will be placed between the two rows, symbolizing a connected moment.

Black Mass is played in one sitting over the course of two to three hours. There are three parts to every game: the prologue (30 minutes to an hour), the woods (an hour or more), and the black mass (30 minutes). *Black Mass* is for three to eight players, and a *proctor*, who facilitates the game.

Black Mass revisits popular witch narratives of power reclamation against isolating communities. This game recognizes that a heady mixture of sexism, spiritual abuse, and racism contributed to the torture and deaths of hundreds of “witches” throughout the world. This game was written on the traditional territory of the Mashpee Wampanoag, Aquinnah Wampanoag, Nipmuc, and Massachusetts peoples.

HOW TO PLAY

To play *Black Mass*, you need:

- † A standard 78-card tarot deck
- † Persona sheets
- † Rules reference
- † Catherine and Lydia cards (if not, two tokens or notecards)
- † Space for two long rows of tarot cards
- † An X-Card (<http://tinyurl.com/sc-card-rpg>)

The persona sheets, rules reference, and Catherine and Lydia cards can be found at <https://willjobst.itcb.io/black-mass>.

If you don't have a tarot deck, or don't feel comfortable using a tarot deck, use a deck of playing cards. For an ordinary deck of playing cards, count the jacks, queens, kings, and aces as major arcana.

Digital tarot apps work for this game as well, with the following adjustments: when adding cards to the spread, record the card value and any relevant notes on a notecard (or similar), so there's a physical representation of the card. When adding cards to player's piles (cairns) make sure the number of face-down cards is tracked between turns.

THE PROCTOR

One player takes on the role of the proctor, facilitating the game, providing challenges for the personas, and taking action when players draw major arcana. They guide Catherine and Lydia through the prologue, confront them in the woods, and set them free during the black mass.

If you're planning to run this game, give yourself time to read through the zine.

THE BLACK MASS SUITE

You can find a suite of six looping songs for your game of *Black Mass* at black-mass.bandcamp.com. If you're recording this game or streaming for an audience, you may use this music (and mention the composer, Jack Jobst).

OUTLINE OF THE GAME

Black Mass is a collaborative storytelling game with three phases: the prologue, the woods, and the black mass. The proctor begins play by describing the scope of the game, explaining the X-Card, and discussing the mode of play with the players. After that, the proctor walks through each persona sheet with the players, introducing the personas with capsule descriptions (on page 8). The players choose their Catherine and Lydia personas, and then answer question relating to their personas. When players answer these questions, they take a card from the deck and lay it on the table, creating two rows of cards, one for Lydia and one for Catherine.

Once all the questions are answered and the spread is created, take a short break. In that time, the proctor creates a sheet of potential scenes and events in the woods, drawing from the personas, the mode of play, and the answers the players provided.

When the break is over, the next portion of the game begins with Catherine and Lydia deep in the woods. Here, the proctor will put the characters in dangerous or interesting situations, and the players will react and engage, trading control of Catherine and Lydia. At some point, Lydia and Catherine will be ready for their black mass, the final part of the game. Then players release Catherine and Lydia and use tarot cards to dictate their future, contextualize the present, and rewrite the past.

THE PROLOGUE

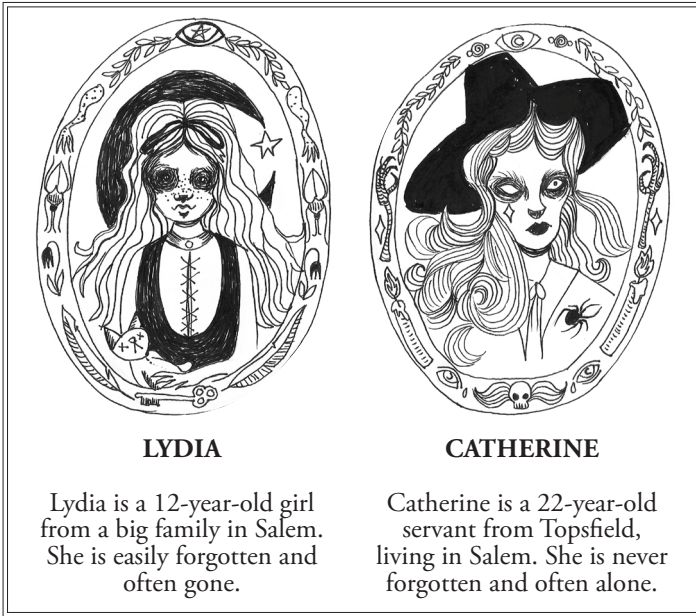
SECT II. **B**lack Mass is about two people leaving a community that doesn't want them, to the wood that calls them. Those travelers, Lydia and Catherine, confront their fears to seek their own black mass, a moment of transformation, to put the tools of change into their own hands. Here's an outline of what happens in the prologue:

- † Introduce the characters and the scope of the game.
- † Choose the mode of play: October, December, or February.
- † Choose personas. Every player gets a Catherine persona and a Lydia persona.
- † Answer half of the persona questions one by one, laying a card on the spread for each answer.
- † Answer a question relating the characters together, as a group.
- † Answer the remaining persona questions.
- † Answer a final question relating the characters together, as a group.
- † Take a short break while the proctor does their work.

CHARACTERS AND SCOPE

When playing *Black Mass*, players will take turns inhabiting different elements of Catherine and Lydia's histories, personalities, and tendencies. These are called personas. Each player has two personas, one for Lydia and one for Catherine. Throughout the game, we will discover who they are, why they left, and what they find in the woods. Once we know that, we'll find out what they do after their black mass.

Each player gets two persona sheets, one for Lydia and one for Catherine. These sheets fit together creating a space in the center for tarot cards.



LYDIA

Lydia is a 12-year-old girl from a big family in Salem. She is easily forgotten and often gone.

CATHERINE

Catherine is a 22-year-old servant from Topsfield, living in Salem. She is never forgotten and often alone.

MODE OF PLAY

The players and the proctor choose the mode of play: October, December, or February. October for bubbling cauldrons, broomsticks, and high-witchiness; December for eerie exploration and historical fidelity; and February for hard horror and blood-stained snow. This will determine the starting spread prompts and what Catherine and Lydia find in the woods.

THE PERSONAS

Once the mode of play is decided, it's time to pick personas. Lay each persona out so the character blurbs are visible, and describe each persona in a few words.

The personas are deeper and more nuanced than these

descriptions, but this'll give players an idea of what they are. After you read these, give the players a few minutes to look through the sheets.

Once each player has a Lydia persona and a Catherine persona, it's time to answer some questions and add cards to the spread. Make sure there is room for two long rows of cards. If you have Catherine and Lydia cards, place them end to end at one side of the play space. If not, two tokens or notecards that represent Catherine and Lydia is perfect. Cards are placed on a rough timeline starting at these two cards. Cards will be placed between these two rows to signify a shared moment.

Here's a quick one sentence description for each persona:

CATHERINE

†

CATALOGING CATHERINE

is about taking stock of everything and their secrets, knowing the hidden pages of one's life.

†

DULCIMER CATHERINE

is about hypnotic music and the strangers attracted to it.

†

MUDBAKED CATHERINE

is about hiding in the dirt and grit.

†

FIREWOOD CATHERINE

is about the soothing violence of cutting lumber, splitting wood.

†

MORNING STAR CATHERINE

is about a strange lantern, reading shadow, and shining a light.

†

CONFESSOR CATHERINE

is about truths, lies, and absolution.

†

NUMBERED CATHERINE

is about the death of her brother and the thing that did it.

†

RUMOROUS CATHERINE

is about letters, trust, and broken promises.

†

SPIDERSILK CATHERINE

is about companionship and webbed basements.

†

SEAFOAM CATHERINE

is about nostalgia and a strange voyage from her past.

‡
LYDIA O' THE RIBBON

is about bedside stories.

‡
LYDIA O' THE MAP

is about knowledge and a walker in the woods.

‡
LYDIA O' THE MELODY

is about Lydia's keening whistle, at once soothing and frightening.

‡
LYDIA O' THE TOAD

is about Lydia's soundless, odd pet.

‡
LYDIA O' THE TREETOPS

is about a strange trapper in the woods and how Lydia found them.

‡
LYDIA O' THE FUNERAL

is about a strange gift and something hidden within.

‡
LYDIA O' THE VELVET

is about knowing nature and embracing its secrets through a moose-velvet cloak.

‡
LYDIA O' THE POWDER

is about elimination and a matchlock musket.

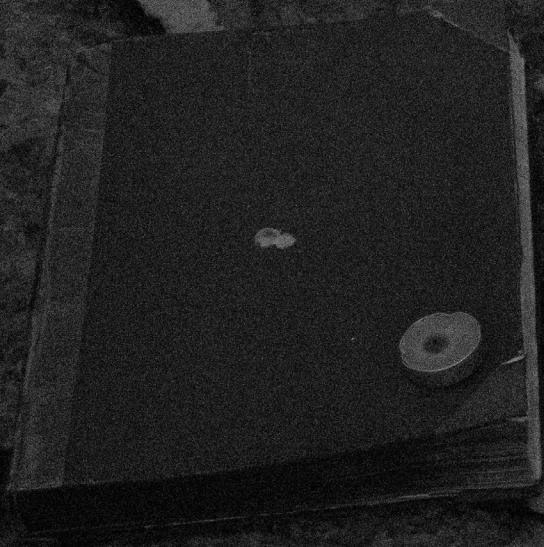
‡
LYDIA O' THE TABLE

is about rot and protection.

‡
LYDIA O' THE MOON PIECE

is about tracking the heavens, whether or not it's what you can see.

LYDIA

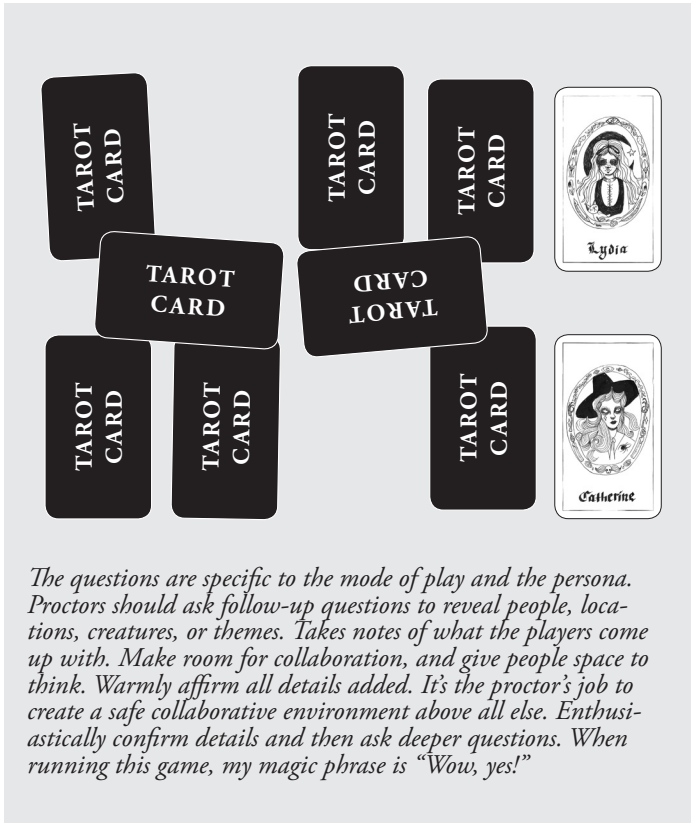




BUILDING THE SPREAD

Now it's time to build the spread. Determine who will go first. That player reads the description aloud for their Catherine persona. When they're done, the proctor asks a question (either an October, December, or February question, depending on the chosen mode). The player draws a tarot card and then answers the question. The player then narrates a moment in the character's past while placing the card on the spread.

The center of the spread represents present day for Catherine and Lydia. To the right of that is the future, and to the left is the past. Make sure there's room for a discard pile. Continue with the next player, alternating Lydia and Catherine personas until every player has answered one question. Stop when each player has answered one question and placed cards onto the spread.



CATHERINE QUESTIONS

CATALOGING CATHERINE

OCT — Catherine found something secret that she kept, a wood carving in an attic. It depicted Catherine and another in the woods. There was writing all around the carved plank—what did it warn? How did Catherine destroy the woodwork?

DEC — Once, Catherine found a series of journals with strange entries. They cataloged the movements and habits of several people, including Catherine, whose page was incomplete. It stopped mid-sentence, trailing off. “She doesn’t suspect a thing,

but we should be careful...” What does Catherine do with this journal? What does she think it’s for?

FEB — Catherine noticed similarities between several recently deceased people. Mentions of a similar nightmare, something coming from the woods for them. Catherine thought it was odd, especially when she saw a sketch of that thing... it looked familiar. What is it holding, and what does this dream-thing do with their prey?

CONFESSOR CATHERINE

OCT — Catherine knows that people think she’s lying, so she adds vibrant details. Red moons, evil hearts—anything to unsettle them. After one especially spectacular confession-story, the minister was shaken, and began reciting the Lord’s Prayer. He stopped on the word “deliver.” He started again, and stopped on the word “deliver.” In Catherine’s story, what startled the minister to his core?

DEC — Catherine listens in and spies on confessions. When they’re barely audible, Catherine fills her head with lurid details and plays them to herself before falling asleep. Salem is a patchwork to Catherine and she can

see the grim stitching that fits everything together. Catherine always involves herself in these stories, sometimes as the villain, the savior, or a bystander. Which one is Catherine most often? Which does she wish to be?

FEB — Catherine saw the death of a family member, William. Yet, he was alive and well. Perhaps a nightmare, perhaps a vision. In the coming days, Catherine saw his death over and over again, as if it was a first draft of something larger. What was the last way Catherine saw William die?

D U L C I M E R C A T H E R I N E

OCT — Sometimes, a quiet figure would stay with the Weymouths. Catherine never caught his name, but whenever she played, he danced. The Weymouths would join, neighbors and strangers too. The home fills and breathes and hidden instruments join Catherine, following her command. What happened on the night she suddenly stopped playing? How did she protect herself?

DEC — Sometimes, a quiet figure would stay with the Weymouths. Catherine never caught his name, but whenever she played, he hummed dark harmonies. They made the house creak and the strings of

the hammered dulcimer warp. Those melodies circled her head through the next day. What about this song reminds Catherine of her childhood? Who did she hear singing this song in town?

FEB — Sometimes, a quiet figure would stay with the Weymouths. Catherine never caught his name, but whenever she played, he spoke with a ragged voice. These quiet speeches were vivid and wild, and as he spoke, Catherine was unable to stop playing. She would lose track of time and place. What did this man want, and what promise will she break for him?

F I R E W O O D C A T H E R I N E

OCT — The arguments got worse and worse until her and one of the Cary brothers were at each other's throats. Catherine went outside, took the axe, and planted in the dirt. She turned her cheek and focused her anger. He fell silent as she split wood all night. What did she command, and how did he fulfill it? How did Catherine break this spell?

DEC — The argument usually stops at the door, but this time a Cary brother followed her to the chopping block. He shouted at her as she placed a log and took the axe. With one display of

strength and wrath, why was this the last time something like this happened? How did he treat her differently after?

FEB — During one fight, a Cary brother took the axe and brandished it at Catherine. She knew he wouldn't strike. She grabbed it out of his hands and showed him the blade. Stunned, he watched Catherine take a mighty swing at a pile of logs and cut clean through. The wood was rotten, and bugs streamed out. What did she do then? How was he afraid of her forever after?

MORNING STAR CATHERINE

OCT — She kept the lantern always, bringing it to her cellar room and watching it make shadows on the walls. One night, the lantern tipped over and poured fire across the room, burning nothing. A figure appeared in the flame. What color were the embers, and what did the figure warn her of?

DEC — The lantern was her most prized possession, she brought it everywhere. A trader from Topsfield once stared stunned at the lantern, it was

MUDBAKED

OCT — It wasn't only Catherine that her father was looking for. When she heard him approach, he stopped and exchanged words with someone hidden, someone who must've seen Catherine descend into the mud. They didn't reveal her location, but they did give her father a grim prediction—what did the stranger reveal about Catherine's future?

DEC — Completely muddied, quietly hurrying back to her childhood home, someone saw Catherine. They offered help and clean clothes, but Catherine only took one. Did she take the help, or the clean clothes? Last night,

NUMBERED

OCT — What was its name? Catherine feels an under-the-skin burning in her body, the exact same spot where her brother was cut. Where is it?

like nothing he's ever seen. How did he try to steal it? Catherine stopped him and kept the lantern secret until tonight. What's different about it?

FEB — The lantern feels odd in Catherine's hands. It grows hotter, not brighter. When she touches the flame, it burns Catherine's hand but doesn't leave a mark. The lantern changes depending on the location or who's around it. Who in the town does the lantern burn hottest, and what makes it burn coldest?

CATHERINE

Catherine saw this person for the first time in years. They offered Catherine the other option. Did she take it?

FEB — Underneath the swamp's surface, Catherine could hear cloudy speech through thick mire. Her father was speaking to someone. Pleading. There was a sharp strike and her father's body slumped on the ground. When she peered out of the mud, that thing was dragging him back towards their house. What kind of tracks did it leave? What does her father forget about that night?

CATHERINE

Tonight, a different sort of feeling sparks under Catherine's skin, what is it?

DEC — What was its name? When he passed away, the whole house was in mourning. When he was buried, many faces from Topsfield came to say goodbye. Catherine's reverend father gave the eulogy, and then family members said a few words. Who among them didn't attend the funeral for Catherine's brother, and how did Catherine cover for them?

RUMOROUS CATHERINE

OCT — Catherine found one of the letters nailed to a post in town. It had been up for a day, at least. Catherine found the letter with a crowd surrounding it. There was something different about the letter, something was added. Was it text or a drawing? What did it communicate?

DEC — Catherine found one of the letters nailed to a post in town. It had been up for a week, at least. Catherine found the letter with someone reading it to themselves, but it didn't sound exactly right. Something has

FEB — When she was tending to her brother, she could see his wounds change. When his eyes clouded over, he described a figure, a place. What shape did the figure take, and what was the place? For every subsequent injury Catherine saw or even attended to, a similar event happened. Tonight, it's happening to Catherine. What does she see?

been added—what secret about Catherine does it reveal? What secret about Catherine's lover was erased?

FEB — Catherine found one of the letters nailed to a post in town. It had been up for no longer than a few hours, there's a chance that no one saw it. What substance is the letter soaked in, and what is dusted on the ground near the letter? Someone watches Catherine examine this letter, she can't see them. What does she do with it?

SEAFOAM CATHERINE

OCT — On the voyage, someone joined. She was unlike anyone Catherine's ever met. The crew called her "bad luck," but Catherine called her a friend. When she was on the ship, there were no storms and only perfect, clear days. When she left, there was a terrible storm that nearly sank the boat. What gift did she leave Catherine? How does Catherine know that the woman was responsible for the storms?

DEC — On the voyage, someone joined partway through. She was unlike anyone Catherine's ever met. The crew called her "bad luck," but Catherine called her a friend. When she was on the ship, she taught Catherine the ropes, unlike the other sailors. It was difficult, but by the end of the voyage, Catherine felt seaworthy. What task did Catherine struggle the most with? Where did she succeed?

FEB — On the voyage, someone joined. She was unlike anyone Catherine's ever met. The crew called her "bad luck." When she was on the ship, she would ignore Catherine throughout the day and then find her at night to

talk for hours. The conversations were wild and far-reaching, but when Catherine tries to recall details, she can only remember the small things. What details does Catherine remember?

S P I D E R S I L K C A T H E R I N E

OCT — These spiders understand Catherine. When she releases them, they do her bidding. It's not exactly to the letter, but it's the spirit of what Catherine desires. One night, Catherine set the spiders out, and they brought back an offering. What did the spiders bring back, and why wasn't it what Catherine wanted?

aren't. Where did Catherine find them, and how did she get them back?

DEC — Catherine allows the spiders to explore the cellar, the home, the town. One night, the spiders were left and didn't come back. She checked everywhere in the Cary house and she found them somewhere they typically

FEB — These creatures understand Catherine. They don't behave like normal spiders, they move and act alien. When Catherine speaks to them, they spend the night creating silk web versions of Catherine's feelings, her emotions and thoughts and plans. One morning Catherine awoke to a terrible sight. Catherine's image was weaved across the webs. Where is she? What did Catherine do to the silk once she understood?

LYDIA QUESTIONS

L Y D I A O ' T H E F U N E R A L

OCT — The doll moves. When the sun goes down and most everyone is asleep, the cat shakes awake and slinks around Lydia's shared room. What was the animal's name, and where does Lydia keep it safe? The cat doesn't seem to breathe or drink water. It eats, but it doesn't eat food. What keeps this cat full?

DEC — Lydia carries it with her always, except to church. When it's time to go to mass, she can't find the doll, but when she returns, it shows up. Where does she find it when she comes back home? What happens when Lydia can't find it?

FEB — Lydia takes the doll everywhere, but when she raises it above her head, she loses feeling in her hand. Her vision starts to crackle and she feels lightheaded. What happens when Lydia

holds it up for longer, what does she see when she passes out? The traveler distinctly warned Lydia about the cat—what phrase keeps the danger at bay?

LYDIA O' THE MAP

OCT — Lydia's map had a new thick mark on it, somewhere deep in the woods. What shape is the mark? The ink, or whatever it used, behaves strangely. How does the mark change as she moves through the woods?

they go? Who did she see the figure speak to?

FEB — Lydia's map had two marks on it, one deep in the woods, and one in Lydia's home. What shape were the marks?

DEC — Lydia's map had a new thick mark on it, somewhere deep in the woods. What shape is the mark? Lydia followed the figure back to Salem, where did

When Lydia returned home, there was an outline around her house, what was it made of? What happened when Lydia crossed over it?

LYDIA O' THE MELODY

OCT — Her whistle is soothing inside the tavern, but elsewhere it's cold and shrill. How does it change from person to person? When does the whistle hurt and when does it heal?

across the treeline. What was the source? When Lydia raced to find it, was it still there?

DEC — When walking and whistling in the woods, she can hear a faint echo, a counterpoint

FEB — Once Lydia lulled a drunken group asleep at the tavern, she found that she was able to affect them with the sound of her whistle. What nightmare did she inspire with her melody?

LYDIA O' THE MOON PIECE

OCT — Sometime during the night, when Lydia can't sleep, the timepiece malfunctions. It shows a strange night sky, unlike anything she's ever seen before. Lydia must reset it. How does the watch change when it's reset? How does Lydia change as well?

DEC — The timepiece is very valuable, very few others like it exist. Several people have confronted Lydia about it, saying that she's certainly a thief. Once, a traveling minister publically called Lydia out, that there was no was she could possess such a watch. How does Lydia prove otherwise?

FEB — The timepiece is gilded, with intricate metalwork on the back and the sides. It shows a tableau of violence that never

looks the same twice. Lydia often sees herself in the goldwork. Who else is pictured here? What is happening in the metalwork?

LYDIA O' THE POWDER

OCT — Her brother blamed himself, but the gun was tampered with. When they were in the forest, the gun changed somehow, Lydia was sure. As it drew in darkness, what came out when it misfired?

Thomas didn't tell anyone that she came. This is Lydia's worst lie, how does she make up for it?

DEC — Her brother blamed himself, but Lydia knows the rifle was tampered with. Who was the last person to shoot it? Lydia was never blamed, because

FEB — Her brother was shooting at something. It was dark and when the gun went off, Lydia saw whatever it was disappear. The ground where it was looked different, how? What tracks did it make? Her brother remembers the noise, what does it sound like?

LYDIA O' THE RIBBON

OCT — Around a candle, Lydia told her siblings one of her grandmother's stories. She made it her own, describing the life and death of a new character. The listeners were horrified, especially days later when it came true. Who was the character, and how did they die?

FEB — Her grandmother's final story was whispered in pieces to Lydia on her deathbed. It was apocalyptic, prophetic. It was graphic and softly told, over the course of days. What did she warn Lydia of, and how did Lydia know the main character was her?

DEC — Many of her grandmother's stories change, details becoming more vibrant as time went on, except for one. The story about the girl in the woods never changed. Where was she going, and how did Lydia know that the main character was her?

LYDIA O' THE TABLE

OCT — When the spoiled food gives Lydia a fever, she has vivid dreams. She's sailing above the woods, but what's under her? The dreams always end the same way, with Lydia finding someone lost in the woods. Who was it and is Lydia able to save them? What danger are they in?

DEC — Once, rotten food got to one of her siblings and they got very sick. It was something that Lydia prepared, what was it? What did Lydia do to make

sure that never happened again?

FEB — When scavenging the woods for food, Lydia found a grove with perfect, lush fruit. She filled her basket and her pockets with delicious red fruit. When she stopped to take a bite, it was sweet and pure. She took it back home, and everyone partook. When Lydia returned to the grove, it was different. What was living here? How did it die and ruin the grove?

LYDIA O' THE TOAD

OCT — Once home, she kept it secret and tried to feed it anything she could, bread, fruit, insects, slugs. It wouldn't eat, except for one thing. What was it? The creature speaks one word when it eats—what does it say to Lydia?

DEC — A brother found the toad and stole it, teasing Lydia and putting it over a colony of ants in the yard. She stared hard at him with hate and purpose and he stopped, a blank look on his face. How does he treat Lydia differently now?

FEB — Beneath the vernal pool, Lydia opened her eyes and saw plant matter, murky water, and something dead beneath. What was it, and where does Lydia recognize it from?

LYDIA O' THE TREETOPS

OCT — The trapper brought Lydia back to Salem, but didn't enter the village. They stood at the treeline as she walked home. When she looked back, they were gone. What gift did they leave Lydia? What sound comes from deep inside it, trying to escape?

DEC — On their way through the woods, the trapper hushed Lydia as something crossed in front of them. This is what the trapper was hunting. They watched in serene quiet as it

passed before them. What was it, and why did the trapper let it go?

FEB — On their way through the woods, the trapper hushed Lydia as something crossed in front of them. It moved in shadow, leaving deep tracks in the ground. It wasn't a person, nor an animal. What was the trapper hunting, and what did the trapper whisper to Lydia as it passed? What shape were the tracks? Why did the trapper let it go?

LYDIA O' THE VELVET

OCT — Whenever the velvet covered her head, a soft whisper would begin in her ear, comforting. It described somewhere Lydia wants to go very badly. Told in great detail, somewhere unlike anywhere else. What does this place smell like? What lives there? Why is it dangerous?

DEC — The moose has strange markings on its body. Once when Lydia was with the moose, she reached out and felt them. The beast was calm, and the feeling was strange. The lines and marks were familiar, almost like a map. Has Lydia ever been to this place before? Why is she scared?

FEB — One morning, Lydia saw the moose in the treeline, with one of her brothers drawing near it. She called out to warn him, but said a name that was not his. After the boy turned away, the moose suddenly charged. Lydia called another name, and they both stopped. What did she say? What happened the next time Lydia called her brother by this name?

SEASON QUESTIONS

When half of the personas have laid a card onto the spread, the proctor asks a question of the group that ties Lydia and Catherine together. The proctor draws a tarot card and lays it face down on the spread in between the two rows. This represents Lydia and Catherine's connection. Again, this question depends on the mode of play, but it can be answered by anyone, and it should be a collaborative process. Once the group comes to a consensus, continue with the question-asking process for the remaining personas.

FIRST SEASON QUESTION

Ask the question and flip the tarot card over. Ask each player to contribute to the answer, one at a time. Always confirm their answer. Ask for clarification if needed. The players may adjust the position of the card.

Catherine and Lydia knew about each other in passing, perhaps a shared glance at church, a look given to passing people on the street, but this card shows us how they really met:

OCT — It was at the fire that burned down the old home by the woods. All the crops were already dead, smoke pouring out of the windows and chimney. Catherine and Lydia watched, side by side, holding each other's hands out of fear. Neither of them could look away, the fire was red-purple. Before, what did Lydia bring to this family on a weekly basis? How did Catherine specially prepare the Cary house when this family was to visit? Now, how do Catherine and Lydia acknowledge each other's loss, and how did they remember them together? What was their last name?

DEC — It was at the funeral for someone Catherine and Lydia both knew, a child. It was a young son of the Cary house, someone Lydia played with and someone Catherine looked after. What game did Lydia and

the boy play together? What did Catherine hide under his pillow, as a surprise? Now, how do Catherine and Lydia acknowledge each other's loss, and how did they remember him together? What was his name?

FEB — It was on a frozen lake, thawing. They were in a group, sliding on the ice. There was a crack and someone fell through. Catherine and Lydia rushed to the hole in the ice, but the person was gone. They knew if either of them went in the water, they would be gone too. Why couldn't Catherine explain what happened to the person's family? What did Lydia lie about? Now, how do Catherine and Lydia acknowledge each other's loss, and how did they remember them together? What was their name?

Now, go around and answer the remaining persona questions. When all of the personas are finished, the proctor asks a final question to the group, draws a tarot card, and places it face down on the spread. The group answers this question, and then the prologue is complete. Then, we're into the woods.

SECOND SEASON QUESTION

The second question is asked once the rest of the persona questions have been answered. Ask the question, and flip the remaining tarot card, and lay it on the spread. Ask each player to contribute to the answer, one at a time. Always confirm their answer. Ask for more clarification if you need it. The players may adjust the position of the card.

After Catherine and Lydia experienced mutual loss, their relationship strengthened. This card shows how they became each other's life-line, how they were the only two, how their truths became one. This is also the last thing that happened before they entered the woods.

OCT — Tonight, the moon is red and low in the sky. Tonight, Catherine and Lydia are running. There is gunpowder smell in the air, along with salt and sulfur. Among Catherine and Lydia, one had fitful nightmares and the other did not sleep. Who was who? It's after midnight and they're together at the edge of the woods. From this vantage point, they can see a band of townspeople check a house, is it Catherine's or Lydia's? The group then met in the center of Salem, lighting torches and holding whatever weapons were available. By the time the group entered the woods, Catherine and Lydia were long gone.

DEC — Tonight, the moon is shining through clouds. Tonight, Catherine and Lydia are running. One of them has long

been suspected of witchcraft. The other was accused this morning. Which was which? How did the other sneak them out of Salem? The path was dangerous, what did they lose? Unbeknownst to Catherine and Lydia, someone saw them run into the woods. They followed, how far behind are they?

FEB — Tonight, the sky is starless. Tonight, Catherine and Lydia are running. While Catherine and Lydia met in the graveyard after midnight, two people died. The screams of one were deafening. The other was found days later. Where were they discovered? How did Catherine and Lydia sneak out of town, and where did the minister see them on the way? By the time he enters the woods, they are miles in.

A black and white photograph showing the silhouette of a person from behind, looking out a window. The window has a decorative valance with fringe. The scene is dimly lit, with light coming from the window, creating a strong contrast between the dark interior and the bright exterior.

TAKE A BREAK

The proctor should take a few minutes to sketch out connected elements and themes from these questions and their answers. Some personas offer characters, creatures, and locations. Others provide thematic elements that should run through your game of *Black Mass*. Modes of play give you palettes to choose from and opportunities to add color. Elements from *The Devil's Town* (page 50) should come in to play, depending on the mode.

Aim to have three or four “set pieces” ready. These are places, people, and things in the woods that Catherine and Lydia will come across. The personas create plenty of room for these set pieces. Good ones are unique locations mentioned or alluded to in the spread, creatures from persona’s backstories, and elements shared among characters.

Try to have one location that Catherine and Lydia are trying to get to, something chasing them, and a few locations or scenes to play out in the woods. The questions are designed to get these answers. When in doubt, reach for genre elements inspired by the modes of play.



THE WOODS

SECT III.

After the group decides on a mode (October, December, or February), chooses personas, answers questions, and takes a short break, it's time to enter the woods.

HERE WE'LL COVER:

- † Inhabiting Catherine and Lydia.
- † General actions.
- † Persona actions.
- † Black mass requirements.
- † Starting play.

INHABITING CATHERINE AND LYDIA

To inhabit Lydia or Catherine, a player must first declare that they are taking control. Take the Catherine or Lydia card and draw three cards from the deck and place them face down on the center of your persona sheets. This is the *cairn*. Your persona is now guiding that character. During this time, you may not inhabit the other character. Likewise, no other player may inhabit a currently active character.

GENERAL ACTIONS

There are three actions everyone can take in *Black Mass*: struggle, rogue, and keen. Struggle is using your body, keen is using your wits, rogue is using the night. Each persona offers two unique actions that only they have access to.

To use an action, describe what action you're using, and then flip the top card your cairn face up. If it is any suited card (swords, cups, wands, or pentacles), you succeed and choose one benefit. If your action suit matches the card's suit, you succeed and choose two benefits.

HERE ARE THE ACTION SUITS:

- † Struggle (swords)
- † Keen (cups)
- † Rogue (wands)
- † Certain persona actions (pentacles)

You can spend additional cards for additional benefits, at the rate of one card per benefit. These are not flipped over. All spent cards go in the discard pile.

MAJOR ARCANA

If you flip a major arcana card (like the World, the Moon, the Tower), something's gone wrong. This is when the proctor can make things worse, bringing details from the spread and the season to complicate the journey.

RUNNING OUT OF CARDS

When you're out of cards, you can no longer inhabit Catherine or Lydia.

EXITING CHARACTERS

You can exit characters whenever you want, leaving cards in your cairn. When you exit a character, you may spend a card from your cairn to complete a black mass requirement or to control how your character ends up. If you don't dictate your characters actions as you exit them, the proctor may take an action (as if drawing a major arcana).

Now let's take a more detailed look at the general actions, struggle, keen, and rogue. Each of them have a description and a list of benefits. A downloadable rules reference is available at <https://willjobst.itch.io/black-mass>.

STRUGGLE (SWORDS)

When you are struggling, it's either against something or for yourself. In *Black Mass*, this action is about using your body. Using your body to evade spectral handcuffs, falling trees, charging animals, and whatever the forest holds. Using your body to stay on the broomstick, the branch over the river, or to hang on the matted fur of something tremendous.

When you inhabit Catherine or Lydia, add three cards from the deck to your cairn.

Flipping a suit card from the top of the cairn is a success related to the action, including a benefit. Flipping a matching suit card (swords) is a great success, including two benefits. You may spend additional cards for additional benefits.

ROGUE (WANDS)

When you are a rogue, you are moving with the night. In *Black Mass*, this is about using your eyes and your ears and your touch. Whether you're avoiding a maddened and lost town patrol, the black goat of the woods, or a spectral axe, this is the action for staying hidden.

When you inhabit Catherine or Lydia, add three cards from the deck to your cairn.

Flipping a suit card from the top of the cairn is a success related to the action, including a benefit. Flipping a matching suit card (wands) is a great success, including two benefits. You may spend additional cards for additional benefits.

KEEN (CUPS)

Keen is using intuition or smarts to keep your cool. Whether you're striking a deal with the devil, convincing the Forest Thing you're on its side, or calming down another to-be-witch, this action is about using your head.

When you inhabit Catherine or Lydia, add three cards from the deck to your cairn.

Flipping a suit card from the top of the cairn is a success related to the action, including a benefit. Flipping a matching suit card (cups) is a great success, including two benefits. You may spend additional cards for additional benefits.

BENEFITS

- † Remain unhurt.
- † Gain ground.
- † Reverse positions.

EPILOGUE

Optionally, spend a card to put the character in a situation of your choice or fulfill one of your black mass requirements. You can only complete one black mass requirement each turn. If you don't spend a card, or if you can't, the proctor may take an action (as if drawing a major arcana).

BENEFITS

- † See what they're hiding.
- † Disappear without a sound.
- † Discover something about the situation.

EPILOGUE

Optionally, spend a card to put the character in a situation of your choice or fulfill one of your black mass requirements. You can only complete one black mass requirement each turn. If you don't spend a card, or if you can't, the proctor may take an action (as if drawing a major arcana).

BENEFITS

- † They won't hurt you.
- † You find what they really want.
- † Have them unawares.

EPILOGUE

Optionally, spend a card to put the character in a situation of your choice or fulfill one of your black mass requirements. You can only complete one black mass requirement each turn. If you don't spend a card, or if you can't, the proctor may take an action (as if drawing a major arcana).

PERSONA ACTIONS

Each persona has two unique actions. When inhabiting a character, you can only use their persona actions. So if you were inhabiting Lydia, you can not use your Catherine persona actions. Persona actions are represented by pentacles.

There are several types of persona actions. Some persona actions add to the list of available benefits for struggle, keen, or rogue, such as Lydia o' the Powder's *Flesh and Bone*. The match suit is pentacles, even though it represents a struggle action:

Flesh and Bone: When using struggle, spend cards for the following benefits:

- † They never speak again.
- † They never walk again.
- † They never see again.

Some persona actions like Dulcimer Catherine's *Many Strings* give players a list of benefits to choose from, not affiliated with struggle, keen, or rogue. For these, the match suit is pentacles:

Many Strings: Your deft hands can get into small places. Spend cards for the following benefits:

- † Manipulate something quickly.
- † Manipulate something quietly.
- † Manipulate something to sing for you.

Some persona actions, like Lydia' o the Moon Piece's *Broken Clock* require multiple cards to be spent, regardless of suit.

Broken Clock: Things happen twice when Lydia checks the clock against the moon. Sometimes, they happen again with slight variation. Spend two cards to make an event happen again, twisting a detail to your desire. If it's unreasonable, spend three cards.

Let's take a look at black mass requirements, located at the bottom of each persona sheet.

BLACK MASS REQUIREMENTS

Each persona has several black mass requirements. When every persona completes their black mass requirements, it's time for the black mass. Each black mass requirement is different. Some require the characters to gather something, experience a sensation, to relive a memory, or to plan for the future. To achieve a black mass requirement, take a card from your cairn and place it on the spread, and detail satisfying the requirement.

Black mass requirements are optional, and serve to guide play thematically. Every player will be able to participate in the black mass, regardless of how many black mass requirements they complete. In some games, players complete every black mass requirement, and in others, only a few are completed.

INTO THE WOODS

The woods portion of the game starts the same way every time: Catherine and Lydia begin in the woods, an hour or two outside of Salem. This is the farthest Catherine has ever been, and around as far as Lydia has ever made it.

None of the players start as Lydia and Catherine. The proctor begins play zoomed in on one detail, slowly filling out the surroundings, until Catherine and Lydia are introduced. Begin this scene tailored to the personas while incorporating strong details from the spread throughout. During this narration, any player can jump into Lydia or Catherine.

If they don't, continue narration until something threatens Lydia or Catherine, then remind players how to inhabit characters.

In play, players often left a few cards in their cairns and traded characters frequently. A natural tendency to share spotlight time emerged, but proctors should keep track of players who often take the spotlight. The built-in countdown timer in the form of the cairn provides a physical reminder of spotlight time.

Play continues until each player has completed the requirements for their black mass, or until the deck is empty, or you're out of time. Then, it's time for the black mass.

THE BLACK MASS

SECT IV. **T**he black mass is Lydia and Catherine's capitulation. The black mass is the culmination of Catherine and Lydia's journey. It releases the personas and revisits the timeline.

Take the discard pile, and make equal piles of cards for each player. Each player then takes a pile. Then each player reads aloud their black mass statement, at the very bottom of the persona sheets.

Players take turns laying a card on the spread while narrating moments of Catherine and Lydia's future, rewriting their present, and realizing their past. These black mass cards can be played on already existing events, recontextualizing them or even changing them by force. These cards can be played in the far future. The cards can be cosmic, practical, or apocalyptic. Players do not need to lay every card down. When playing these cards, players should describe what Lydia or Catherine do during the black mass that corresponds to changing their reality. Once the players are satisfied, the game is over.

THE PERSONAS

SECT V. **P**ersonas are how players influence and highlight Catherine and Lydia's stories. Personas are embodiments of experience related to each character. Each persona has a description, two persona actions, a black mass persona, black mass requirements, and one half of a black mass statement.

The description is a paragraph giving context to the persona.

The two persona actions are special abilities that are unique to that persona.

The black mass requirements are a list of optional objectives to be completed throughout the game. To fulfill a black mass requirement, inhabit the character and spend a card from your cairn and add it to the spread, narrating how you complete the requirement. This could be gathering an ingredient, completing a task, or answering a question.

The black mass persona is a suggestion of what the character may do after their black mass.

The black mass statement is created when two Catherine and Lydia sheets are put together. This is read out loud once the black mass begins.

Download and print persona sheets at willjobst.itch.io/black-mass.



CATHERINE PERSONAS

Catherine is a servant from a nearby town, Topsfield. She is the daughter of a reverend, a middle child in a small family. She lives with and works for the Cary house, and is an outsider in the community. Catherine is 22 years old, she writes letters, enjoys being alone with her thoughts, listening to the hammered dulcimer, and watching boats come in.

CATALOGING CATHERINE

When a landowner dies in Topsfield, Catherine is called back to her family's home. She, her father, and a magistrate enter the home and log every single item: clothes, furniture, jewelry. Everything. She's not supposed to take anything, but she does: pages and passages from journals and letters, the secrets that those who are gone will no longer miss.

PERSONA ACTIONS

Catherine Knows: You know a secret, from the stolen letters and the pages from journals. Spend a card to establish a fact about the surrounding area, relating to something you know that others don't. If it's unreasonable, spend two cards.

Something More: Catherine has seen the worth of a life, written on a ledger. When using keen, spend cards for the following benefits:

- † Make them feel small.
- † Make them feel grand.

BLACK MASS STATEMENT

Know and number the world as you see it, its secrets yours...

BLACK MASS PERSONA

After the black mass, spend cards to number everything, to save the secrets you want and to burn all the rest.

REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ Hide the things you've collected.
- ☐ Find a place described in a letter.
- ☐ You pieced together a grim event from a house you were cataloging, what was it and why did you keep it to yourself?

CONFESSOR CATHERINE

Catherine has secrets. Some are hers and some aren't. Some she has trouble remembering. Speaking them aloud is a mental uncovering, clearing off surface memories to search for something deeper. She reviews them, atones alone or to anyone that would listen—ministers, travelers, empty rooms. She's not clearing her conscious, she's finding something hidden.

PERSONA ACTIONS

Say It: Catherine can draw a confession because she knows the right words. Spend cards for the following benefits:

- † A truth about the village.
- † A truth about the woods.
- † A truth about themselves.

Than Thou: Catherine can tell where the darkness lives in hearts, because she knows where hers is. When using keen, spend cards on the following benefits:

- † Make them believe a lie about their faith.
- † Make them believe a lie about their past.
- † Make them believe a lie about themselves.

BLACK MASS STATEMENT

To render clean under my words and not my actions, to patch together with grim stitching...

BLACK MASS PERSONA

After the black mass, spend cards to build a house of words and deeds, worshipping your image or the image of your choice, in true faith.

REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ Find a place of worship and give your last confession.
- ☐ Find something better than the cross for your neck.
- ☐ Who believes all your stories? How do you frighten them?

*D U L C I M E R
C A T H E R I N E*

Catherine isn't completely isolated. She spends several nights a month at the Weymouth house, cleaning, drinking, and playing the hammered dulcimer. The Weymouths kept Catherine later and later to play the stringed instrument, she was constantly breaking curfew. These moments were a break from the gray loneliness.

PERSONA ACTIONS

Something to Drink: Tonight, you've come from that house. When using keen, spend cards for the following benefits:

- † They do what you want and mean it.
- † They hear you and take it to heart.
- † They promise the world.

Many Strings: Your deft hands can get into small places. Spend cards for the following benefits:

- † Manipulate something quickly.
- † Manipulate something quietly.
- † Manipulate something to sing for you.

BLACK MASS STATEMENT

Joyous manipulation, harmony into the black and red night...

BLACK MASS PERSONA

When you've done the black mass, spend cards to bend sound, twist harmony and ear, and detach your personal melody into a chorus of your choosing.

REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ Find your chosen family.
- ☐ Find the house in the woods where the quiet figure lives.
- ☐ Once, Catherine slept at the Weymouth's. Where did she wake up, and why could she never find that place again?

*F I R E W O O D
C A T H E R I N E*

The chopping block was a place of release for Catherine. During shouting matches, Catherine would slam the door, go outside, and split wood. Muscles growing taut and strong with each swing. The sound of the axe cutting through the wind is a soothing violence.

PERSONA ACTIONS

Against a Stump: You have wrath in your hands. Spend cards for the following benefits:

- † You made them afraid.
- † You are calm.
- † Your power is known.

Rotten Wood: When using keen, spend cards for the following benefits:

- † Know its intention.
- † Know its power.
- † Know its weakness.

BLACK MASS STATEMENT

I will cleave reality towards my liking, powerful division by my arm and lever...

BLACK MASS PERSONA

When you've done the black mass, spend cards to divide, use strength, and bend others with your will. Separate the bark and hardwood of community, building the house of Catherine.

REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ Gaze into the swirling death of wood.
- ☐ Tap into your true power.
- ☐ Find what you cannot split.

*M O R N I N G S T A R
C A T H E R I N E*

Catherine loves her lantern's light, peering at the shadows in its glow, giving them stories and moving with their flicker. Out by the treeline one night, there was a noise from the woods. Something was coming at her, fast. She dropped the lantern, cracking the glass. She left it and ran. When she returned the next day, the lantern was still there: different and unbroken. She took it.

PERSONA ACTIONS

Shadow Reader: Look far into the dark, seeing the shadows for what they really are. You can use keen on environments, getting information from shadows. Spend cards for the following benefits:

- † Know where it's going.
- † Know where it's been.
- † Get it to take you there.

Light's Out: When Catherine extinguishes her lantern, she seeps into the dark. It brings the things of the night closer. Extinguish the lantern and draw them closer, then ignite. Spend cards for the following benefits:

- † They are blinded.
- † They are shown in their true form.
- † The way out is illuminated.

BLACK MASS STATEMENT

In gleaming greatness, seeing everything laid bare...

BLACK MASS PERSONA

When you've done the black mass, spend cards to build shadow armies, blind the spoiled, shroud and present horror.

REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ A trinket from the thing in the woods.
- ☐ Spill the lantern across your enemies.
- ☐ Find your own shadow from the lantern. What does it want from you?

*M U D B A K E D
C A T H E R I N E*

Catherine's childhood home was near a swamp that she escaped to whenever she could. Usually it was just her and the bugs, but one summer night she fled and hid there. When her reverend father came looking for her, she covered herself in mud and swamp water and stayed perfectly still. She was scared, but she was hidden. She didn't need to open her eyes to know where her father was, she could hear his drunken stumbling.

PERSONA ACTIONS

Ripples: You can feel things that you can't see, you can speak to them too. Spend cards to:

- † Make it stay.
- † Learn its name.
- † Unleash it.

Sink: Catherine can completely disappear. When using rogue, spend cards on the following benefits:

- † Learn something haunting.
- † See something terrible.
- † It's messy.

BLACK MASS STATEMENT

I will slink into the corners of my mind...

BLACK MASS PERSONA

When you've done the black mass, spend cards to become invisible, to communicate with spectral beings, and to seep into the underside of the world, and unleash it.

REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ Mud of your own.
- ☐ Bring someone beneath the surface.
- ☐ When under the swamp and the mud, what did you see?

*N U M B E R E D
C A T H E R I N E*

One night, her brother returned from a hunt trip in bloody ribbons. As the rest of the family was asleep, Catherine the child helped clean her brother's wounds. He died weeks later due to infection. He could not explain the thing that made these wounds, or describe the sound it made. He knew only its name and the mark it made: 15 cuts.

PERSONA ACTIONS

Something Nearer: Catherine can feel the hidden presence of things, spend cards for the following benefits:

- † They are unaware.
- † It is guarding what you're looking for.
- † It is drunk.

Catherine of Bandages: Heal the wounded of what ails them, spend cards for the following benefits:

- † They regain mobility, for a while.
- † They regain life, for a while.
- † They regain their past selves, for a while.

BLACK MASS STATEMENT

I will count the days and the rains and know what lives beyond...

BLACK MASS PERSONA

When you've done the black mass, spend cards to hurt and heal. Spend cards to raise the dead, and to make it so some have never lived.

REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ A sixteenth notch.
- ☐ What happens to the marks when Catherine is hurt?
- ☐ Catherine followed the tracks back into the woods, what did she find waiting for her?

*R U M O R O U S
C A T H E R I N E*

Catherine's first love is from Topfield. It was secret. She sent letters every few weeks and if they were lucky, saw each other in person a few times a year. They couldn't write, they could only read the letters. This was an odd delight to Catherine, to be able to articulate herself perfectly.

That was until she visited Topsfield and found that her letters, her secrets, shared with nearly everyone.

PERSONA ACTIONS

A Whisper: When using keen, spend cards for the following benefits:

- † Know their true intent.
- † They empathize with you.
- † They make a promise they can't keep.

Knower: Open yourself up to the secrets of others, and spend cards for the following benefits:

- † You understand it entirely.
- † It is painless.
- † It is free.

BLACK MASS STATEMENT

My body without truth, but understood in full...

BLACK MASS PERSONA

When you've done the black mass, spend cards to create and reveal the ruinous secrets of others. Make anything with a penstroke. Ink enemies into the ground.

REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ Write the last letter.
- ☐ Visit the secret meeting place.
- ☐ Where in the woods did they meet, and what does she hate about it?

SEAFOAM CATHERINE

Catherine's uncle is a sea merchant who traveled up and down the coast. One summer, she and her father joined him for a trip touring parishes throughout the colonies. She learned the superstitions and rituals of sailors at sea. On the trip, she was called a "Jonas" by the sailors, one who brings bad luck to the voyage.

PERSONA ACTIONS

Overboard: Place yourself in clear danger, and succumb to it. Spend cards for the following benefits:

- † Lydia is out of harm's way.
- † The danger is contained.
- † The danger recedes.

Knots: You know a variety of complicated knots. Tie something, and spend cards for the following benefits:

- † It will not move.
- † It will not make a sound.
- † It will be hurt.

BLACK MASS STATEMENT

Sweep through and bring tidal change across the shores and seas...

BLACK MASS PERSONA

When you've done the black mass, spend cards to turn the air to salt, ropes to water, and songs to storms.

REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ Practice the superstition of the sea.
- ☐ Call upon the sea witch.
- ☐ What bad luck does Catherine bring?

S P I D E R S I L K
C A T H E R I N E

Catherine lives in the cellar of the Cary house, a quiet place for her to be alone. Catherine hates pests, except spiders. They weave great webs across the cellar. Catherine has never been bit, and she's tried. In her room live house spiders, cellar spiders, wolf spiders, even a black widow. She lets them crawl across her hand and keeps them safe in her wide-brimmed hat.

PERSONA ACTIONS

First Bite: Let danger in, and let it test its ability. When you struggle, spend cards for the following benefits:

- † It is stunned, silent.
- † It is snared.
- † It thinks it has won.

Strands of Silk and Hair: Take a spider from your hat and speak its dark mission. Spend cards for the following benefits:

- † The wolf spider tracks your prey.
- † The house spider shows you where to hide.
- † The cellar spider traps your prey.
- † The black widow hurts your prey.

BLACK MASS STATEMENT

Suspended in the web of all things, I am here...

BLACK MASS PERSONA

When you've done the black mass, spend cards to bind, trap, hunt, and destroy—you are many-limbed, many-eyed, and all-sensing.

REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ Peer into a new web.
- ☐ Find the wood's last spider.
- ☐ When did you use the spiders on another for the first time?

LYDIA PERSONAS

Lydia is a middle child in a large family. She's 12 years old. She gets by anonymously, spending time wandering around the woods, gathering things from others. Lydia is an explorer who can't satisfy her interest in the world.

LYDIA O' THE FUNERAL

A traveler from Maine stayed in Lydia's home. This traveler had a sack that they kept secret. Whenever Lydia neared it, the traveler recoiled and the bag squirmed. While the house was asleep, Lydia peeked into the sack and saw the taxidermied bodies of cats, dogs, rabbits, and other animals. Lydia pulled out a cat and kept it. The next morning, the traveler exchanged words with Lydia and left.

PERSONA ACTIONS

Cat Eye: The stuffed cat blinks and shudders when used as a divination tool. Spend cards for the following benefits:

- † Describe how the area is safe.
- † Describe how the area is dangerous.
- † Things within the area are pacified.
- † The area includes Catherine.

Ribbon and Stuffing: You can use keen on the dead or those barely alive. Spend cards for the following benefits:

- † Know how they passed.
- † Know what will happen to their body.
- † Know what will happen to their soul.

BLACK MASS PERSONA

When you've completed the black mass, spend cards to see honest reflections, poll the dead, and to receive the gifts you've earned.

BLACK MASS STATEMENT

...to death, and the living shortly after.

REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ Open the stuffed cat and reveal the gift.
- ☐ Find a suitable present for the traveler.
- ☐ The cat has made sounds, even spoken aloud—what do they keep asking you?

LYDIA O' THE MAP

Lydia goes into the woods to watch the trees change, the rivers freeze, and to see the damage from storms, marking the locations on a crude map. One trek she heard a snap in the woods and saw a figure standing in the distance. It was walking slowly, but unabated. Lydia hid, but dropped the map. It drew closer, wandering aimlessly. They walked on, but not before marking Lydia's map.

PERSONA ACTIONS

Different Here: Spend a card to change a piece of the landscape, it's not exactly how you remember. This could be a burned-out clearing, a new lake, a fallen tree. Spend cards for the following benefits:

- † The path is safe.
- † The path is dangerous.
- † The path is hidden.
- † The path is dirty.

Favorite Hiding Place: When using rogue for hiding, you find the perfect place. Spend cards for the following benefits:

- † Help Catherine hide too.
- † It is clean.
- † You are unheard.

BLACK MASS STATEMENT

...and conform it to my memory, a shape unbelievable.

BLACK MASS PERSONA

When you've done the black mass, spend cards to find the undiscovered land and map it, path the way to the end, see all steps laid out.

REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ Make a rough map of the path Lydia and Catherine make through the woods.
- ☐ Somewhere along your path has changed, what was it before, and what happened?
- ☐ The one in the woods found you when you were unable to hide. What did they ask you to remember?

*LYDIA O' THE
MELODY*

Lydia has a pitch-perfect whistle. She is sometimes invited into the tavern to whistle to the patrons. Between songs, she sees the misery on display. Lydia has learned how to use that whistle to manipulate, to warn, to attract and calm. She has learned the melody that lulls some to sleep, and others to dance.

PERSONA ACTIONS

Overtones: Your song is dynamic. When using keen, spend cards on the following benefits:

- † Put a lie in their ears.
- † Pull a truth from their lips.

Harmonic Movement: You attract the things of the woods closer with your song. Spend cards for the following benefits:

- † Distract them.
- † Lull them to sleep.
- † Inspire them to move, to dance if they can.

BLACK MASS STATEMENT

...in resonance and in harmony with what I decide.

BLACK MASS PERSONA

When you've done the black mass, spend cards to enact your chorus: call upon singing angels, lightning, fire, and torment.

REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ Find the whistler in the woods.
- ☐ Once you lulled a grieving person to calm. How did you take on their sorrow?
- ☐ You've hurt someone with your whistle, it was piercing. What were they doing and why couldn't you stop?

*LYDIA O' THE
MOON PIECE*

Lydia keeps time with a broken heirloom watch, a gift from a distant relative. Although the central time piece is broken, it can track the phases of the moon. The watch follows the sky, showing the moon's position and its size. Lydia stays up most nights watching the moon race across watch, but it doesn't look quite right. Lydia can't tell if it's faster, slower, or tracking something entirely different.

PERSONA ACTIONS

Steady Winding: Take a moment and wind the watch, and consider the moon in the sky. Spend cards for the following benefits:

- ☐ The moon's light shows you the path.
- ☐ The moon's light shows you a weakness.
- ☐ The moon's light shows you a secret.

Broken Clock: Things happen twice when Lydia checks the clock against the moon. Sometimes, they happen again with slight variation. Spend two cards to make an event happen again, twisting a detail to your desire. If it's unreasonable, spend three cards.

BLACK MASS STATEMENT

...through perfect etheric knowledge, splayed across hidden skies and secret heavens.

BLACK MASS PERSONA

When you've completed the black mass, spend cards to crater the moon, confuse time, and steal the night's light.

REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ See the broken watch tell the truth.
- ☐ Warp the moon.
- ☐ The timepiece wasn't a gift, Lydia stole it. How did she get caught, and why was she let go?

*LYDIA O' THE
POWDER*

Lydia learned from her oldest brother how to shoot the family matchlock musket. She has no words for the process, but can perform it perfectly. She was using the gun in the forest with her brother, when a misfire caused him to go deaf. When Lydia leapt from the village, she took the musket.

PERSONA ACTIONS

Bang: Spend three cards to load and fire the rifle. Whatever you shoot is completely obliterated, as long as it's close.

Flesh and Bone: Lydia learned to take careful aim. When using struggle, spend cards for the following benefits:

- † They never speak again.
- † They never walk again.
- † They never see again.

BLACK MASS STATEMENT

...hold them dead by my hand and in my sights.

BLACK MASS PERSONA

When you've done the black mass, spend cards to cast brimstone streaks, aim at the underpinnings, and smite even god's soldiers.

REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ Fill the gun with something of your own and shoot it.
- ☐ Return fire.
- ☐ What did you promise your brother as you left tonight?

*LYDIA O' THE
RIBBON*

Lydia's grandmother lived with the family until she passed away. Lydia and her grandmother shared a secret language of glances, communicating silently around a bustling table or the quiet of church. Lydia treasured the two gifts she received, a long ribbon she uses to tie her hair and her grandmother's stories. "Make them yours," her grandmother said.

PERSONA ACTIONS

Tie and Untie: Lydia's ribbon is for more than tying hair. Spend cards for the following benefits:

- † Brace.
- † Bind.
- † Link.

Sit and Listen: Lydia weaves tales taught by her grandmother, making them her own. When using keen, spend cards for the following benefits:

- † Frighten.
- † Calm.
- † Teach.

BLACK MASS STATEMENT

...to tie and untie now and in every version, until it's right.

BLACK MASS PERSONA

After the black mass, spend cards to make real stories and dreams, bind and unbind.

REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ Find your grandmother's real resting place.
- ☐ Discover a landmark from the stories and see how it's different.
- ☐ Tell your own story at the end of this night.

*LYDIA O' THE
TABLE*

The knife too heavy in her hands, the smell of pickled food, the rotten vegetables. There was a particularly weak yield this season, so they had to stretch what food they had. Lydia even took it upon herself to prepare rotten food, and to eat the moldy parts of bread. Sometimes this would make Lydia quite sick. The family didn't know, but Lydia did it to make sure everyone was full.

PERSONA ACTIONS

Dinner Bell: Spend a card to put yourself in harm's way, protecting Catherine. Spend cards to:

- † Make more harm.
- † Make the harm invisible.
- † Reverse the harm.

Rotten Insides: Every fruit or vegetable you pick is dying, but you can find comfort in this cycle. Use keen on rotten things, to find out what they know.

BLACK MASS STATEMENT

...to reveal the rotten core, to exorcise the pit.

BLACK MASS PERSONA

When you've completed the black mass, spend cards to clear the rot, sickly sweeten, and to endure beyond fortitude.

REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ A perfect unblemished piece of fruit.
- ☐ Prepare a feast.
- ☐ Once you were so sick, you were bedridden for a week. Someone visited you, what did they bring you?

*LYDIA O' THE
TOAD*

On a summer walk, Lydia followed the sound of croaking toads to a stagnant pond, a vernal pool. It was filled with toads and eggs. As Lydia approached, the deafening croaks stopped. The muddy ground beneath her gave out and she fell in. When she emerged, it was night. As she got home, a single toad hopped out of her basket, silently opening and closing its mouth.

PERSONA ACTIONS

Croak: Stun something with the soundless croak of your toad. Spend cards on the following benefits:

- † They back away.
- † They freeze.
- † They fold.

A Basket with Everything: Lydia has a basket with miscellaneous supplies. Spend a card to retrieve something. If it's unreasonable, spend two cards.

BLACK MASS STATEMENT

...to intone the vibrant croak of it all, to know darkness.

BLACK MASS PERSONA

When you've completed the black mass, spend cards to demand faith, sink the world into a pool of your design, and to make it all silent.

REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ Find the rotten water and make it clean.
- ☐ Deliver the toad's eggs to be hatched.
- ☐ What else was underneath that vernal pool?

*LYDIA O' THE
TREETOPS*

Lydia spends all her free time in the woods. It's a comfort to her, especially the treetops. Once she skipped mass to climb trees. She fell and concussed herself. A trapper returning from a fur hunt found her. She can remember the trapper's name, and what they looked like, but not where they came from, or where they were going.

PERSONA ACTIONS

Scramble Up: When you climb a tree, spend cards for the following benefits:

- † See something hiding out of sight.
- † Establish truth about a location.

Lay of the Land: Lydia knows where she's going, even if she may be lost. Spend cards to create a landmark in the woods:

- † For one card, something small.
- † For two, something big.
- † For three, something strange.

BLACK MASS STATEMENT

...to see out over everything, and to know the expanse.

BLACK MASS PERSONA

When you've done the black mass, spend cards to command the trees and the wind, to rend stone, to beautify through reclamation.

REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ Climb the oldest tree.
- ☐ Find what the trapper was hunting.
- ☐ When you tried to find the trapper in the woods, what happened?

*LYDIA O' THE
VELVET*

Lydia has a powerful, calling whistle. She can attract animals and make them comfortable. Once, a hulking moose stepped toward her. This wasn't the last time Lydia saw this creature. Lydia found the molted antlers of the moose, the velvet, draped across branches. She pulled it across her shoulders and wore it home. She was warm, unaffected by the worsening snow.

PERSONA ACTIONS

Among the Woods: Lydia can use keen on animals and non-human things, communicating through touch and sound. When using keen, spend cards on the following benefits:

- † Befriend.
- † Scare off.

Finest Velvet: Lydia can cloak herself in the velvet to listen to the whisper of the moose. Spend cards for the following benefits:

- † Learn of a hiding place.
- † Learn of a bounty.
- † Learn of a danger.

BLACK MASS STATEMENT
...in sheer sound, massing the walkers of the woods.

BLACK MASS PERSONA
When you've done the black mass, spend cards to transform others into hellions and beasts, pierce the limit of sound, to calm even the sea.

REQUIREMENTS

- A gift for the moose.
- What did you do when you saw hunters bring the moose, dead, into Salem?
- The moose stood in the treeline earlier this night, not moving. It seemed to be beckoning you. What does it want?



THE PROCTOR

SECT VI. **T**he proctor of *Black Mass* facilitates the game, provides challenges for the personas, and takes actions when players draw major arcana. You'll guide Catherine and Lydia through the prologue, confront them in the woods, and set them free during the black mass.

Before play, there are several things to prepare. First, print out and cut the character sheets, and make stacks of Catherine personas and Lydia personas. These can be downloaded at <https://willjobst.itch.io/black-mass>. Make sure there are no duplicates. Once everyone is ready to start the game, begin with this description:

We'll be telling the story about two people in the woods. It's the 1690s, the beginning of the Salem witch crisis, and Catherine and Lydia are deep in the woods. This story has several constants: they are alone, they are going to get where they're going, and they are dead set on getting there. We'll share these characters between us, finding out why they left, what they find, and what they do once they've completed the black mass. We'll play as identities informed by their past, called personas. Each persona is unique, and you will get one for Catherine and one for Lydia.

Black Mass has three modes of play: October, December, and February. An October game of *Black Mass* has bubbling cauldrons, flying broomsticks, and wart noses. It's rated PG-13. A December game of *Black Mass* focuses on eerie exploration and introspective journeys. It's rated PG. A February game of *Black Mass* has cloven hooves and bloody snow. It's rated R. Each mode of play comes with questions asked at the beginning of play, during the prologue, and unique elements from the Devil's Town.

Feel free to mix and match elements from different seasons. The only requirement is that the whole group agrees on tone.

MAKING YOUR OWN

What about November or January? These modes only reflect three genres of witch narratives. There's a gradient here. If you're interested in elements across modes, compare and contrast modes for your desired effect. If you don't see the flavor of game you're looking for, tweak until you're satisfied. The only requirements are: Catherine and Lydia are alone, they are going to get where they are going, and they are dead set on getting there. The game is about why they left, what they find, and what they do when they return.

MAJOR ARCANA ACTIONS

Whenever the players reveal a major arcana card, it's the proctor's turn. These cards don't belong to any suit, and they represent worsening situations in *Black Mass*. The cards are oracles. Combined with the situation that they're drawn in and the action they're used with, there are a lot of elements to pull into play. When a major arcana is drawn, the worst possible thing happens. If you're not sure what that might be, here's an optional list to use when players draw major arcana:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>† <i>The Fool</i>: When this card is drawn, it is the woods against the travelers. Here their journey is measured up against them, seemingly impossible.</p> <p>† <i>The Magician</i>: When this card is drawn, it is a binding of the travelers. They are brought together in a singular purpose, challenged cosmically or earthly.</p> <p>† <i>The High Priestess</i>: When this card is drawn, it is the breaking on an invisible law. They're accused, falsely or not.</p> <p>† <i>The Empress</i>: When this card is drawn, the forest moves and grows. They are sighted and subsumed by twig and torn.</p> <p>† <i>The Emperor</i>: When this card is drawn, a perverse order tries to take hold. They are held to unreal standards by a crumbling ruler.</p> <p>† <i>The Hierophant</i>: When this card is drawn, a heretical sect sends an inquisitor, to suss out and destroy. They are seen and something is removed.</p> | <p>† <i>The Lovers</i>: When this card is drawn, they are tempted with exactly what they want, at a cost far too great.</p> <p>† <i>The Chariot</i>: When this card is drawn, someone uses the travelers for their own goals, grim and vainglorious.</p> <p>† <i>Justice</i>: When this card is drawn, a price is exacted from the travelers. The means far outweigh the costs.</p> <p>† <i>The Hermit</i>: When this card is drawn, they are isolated, alone and lost. They are in thick fog, physical and mental.</p> <p>† <i>Wheel of Fortune</i>: When this card is drawn, their destiny shows itself, in vanishing detail. It is loud and uncaring.</p> <p>† <i>Strength</i>: When this card is drawn, the wild things in the woods give a gross display of strength. Bared teeth and snarling.</p> |
|--|--|

- † *The Hanged Man*: When this card is drawn, they're forced to sacrifice something. A physical toll or a loss of identity or self.
- † *Death*: When this card is drawn, unyielding change spreads, first in the environment and then on our travelers.
- † *Temperance*: When this card is drawn, their goal is further than ever, half-drowned. Is it natural or divine?
- † *The Devil*: When this card is drawn, it's literally the devil.
- † *The Tower*: When this card is drawn, freak weather alters the environment, casting them somewhere they do not want to be.
- † *The Star*: When this card is drawn, elements of the travelers' identity are mirrored and warped. Reliving past experiences in the reflection of the woods.
- † *The Moon*: When this card is drawn, something from Salem is made wild and sent into the woods, seeking the travelers. It'll find them.
- † *The Sun*: When this card is drawn, false images and impostors fool the travelers, bending them toward opposite goals.
- † *Judgement*: When this card is drawn, those who have died rise again in dark celebration. They plead for the travelers to join them.
- † *The World*: When this card is drawn, the forest begins to consume itself and the things within. It's brief and vicious.

THE DEVIL'S TOWN

HELL IS A PLACE YOU CAN WALK TO.

In 1638, there was an earthquake in Massachusetts. There was another, greater earthquake in 1755, the largest in the colony's history. Tremors plagued Massachusetts in the meanwhile, sounding like cannon blasts or gunfire. Lumberers in the woods smelt "dead air" and sulfur, and some areas of forest were so full of toxic fumes they caused confusion, fainting, and short-term memory loss. In *Black Mass*, this is evidence of a dark city rising, the cyst of Mass Bay Colony. The Devil's Town grew out of fissures and hate, just out of sight. It emerged as the Massachusetts was settled, and receded during the industrial revolution.

There is dark everywhere. Following colonizers like a fell orbit, there's an external *place*. It chases them, because they brought it. Never mapped, never remembered, but always felt. The darkness of the hearts, direct contact from the Devil's Town.

The Devil's Town is a manifestation city. It is always just over the hill, just further in the cave, deeper still. It rises wherever hate fills men's hearts, it is always there. It refracts everything, warped and its own. It might be the actual devil, or something else. Here, we'll look at how the Devil's Town affects your game of *Black Mass*.

In October games of *Black Mass*, the Devil's Town is real and physical. All the horrors of the forest are dispatched from the Devil's Town, a gothic city risen to torture Salem. A game of *Black Mass* could end with Catherine and Lydia finally reaching the Devil's Town, and being welcomed in.

In December games of *Black Mass*, the Devil's Town isn't a place, it's a part of the Salem mindset—a tool by the residents to exclude, harm, and shut out those around them. The Devil's Town is built out of whispers, sermons, and death. A game of *Black Mass* could be full of obstacles, moments, and themes all informed by the oppressive social structures, questions, and demands from Salem, with Catherine and Lydia exorcizing or co-opting the Devil's Town for their own growth.

In February games of *Black Mass*, the Devil's Town could be a place. Or it could be just the visible portion of a massive structure, controlling everything. It has roads and gates into everyone's head. It inspires and dictates those that wish to harm Catherine and Lydia. It is the who-and-what of February games of *Black Mass*.

After the introductory spread is created, it's up to the proctor to take a moment and take stock of the residents in the Devil's Town. What elements did the players raise, what personas are in play, and what aspects of their backgrounds have been established? If you want to incorporate the Devil's Town in your game of *Black Mass*, read this section before playing.



BAD SIGNS

Morning Star Catherine, Numbered Catherine, Lydia o' the Funeral, and Lydia o' the Toad all have instruments of location. These can be used to receive signs from the Devil's Town.

- † Morning Star Catherine's lantern is a mysterious gift. It bathes subjects in light and shows their true intent in shadows. In October games, this shows caricature morality shadows, perhaps someone's sins behind them. In December games, something more nuanced, shadows that identify a feeling that Catherine or Lydia have. It confirms the feeling environmentally. A shadow split across many trees could indicate instability, across rivers indicating change or barriers. The lantern can be used to highlight feelings and elements of Catherine and Lydia too, for more internal reflective games of *Black Mass*. It's difficult enough traveling by lantern light, especially so when one is reading shadows. February games have shadows that shine back, crawling out of the darkness, becoming physical.
- † Numbered Catherine's notches burn and react to elements established in the prologue. In October games, this is an infernal radar. Give liberal pings of cloven hoofprints, stalkers out of sight, and locations important to the personas. Catherine's notches could be an easy signal that something here is wrong, but it isn't perfect. In December games, it's strong detection for things that aren't clearly seen. Are those reflections of themselves, townspeople in the forest, or memories of a simpler time? In February games, it's uncontrollable. Catherine's signs are sketchy, she can't even trust her own body. Maybe she can sense the true moral north, but the twisted confusion of the forest complicates things, with hell's agents on her heels.
- † Lydia o' the Funeral wields a stuffed cat given by a stranger. The proctor should follow elements and pieces offered by players in the prologue to best show how the toy signals safety or danger. This is the most straightforward divination tool in *Black Mass*, but it provides a wide range of uses. In October games, the toy could be a familiar, limp in Lydia's hands, the companion of a previous witch or the current form of something much worse. In December games, the toy provides a lens for Lydia to interact with the world, to get near the uncanny and the horrifying and to make sense of it herself. In February games, it's an external organ, something vital to Lydia's journey. An animal sensation and cold unfeeling.
- † Lydia o' the Toad highlights an alien relationship between her and the woods. The creature is found in a fever dream, and has indecipherable needs. This isn't so much a locator, more divination. In October games, it could bring the devil out of most anyone, and it does. In December games, it shows things that weren't there before: secret entrances to caves, sinkholes, homes. February games are filled with false positives, Catherine and Lydia aren't sure of true intentions until the lurkers let them be known—but the toad may be trembling a few minutes before.

MEN OUT THERE

Dulcimer Catherine, Mudbaked Catherine, Lydia o' the Map, and Lydia o' the Treetops all incorporate strangers, men out there. Are they agents of the Devil's Town, or do they aspire to live there?

- † Dulcimer Catherine incorporates her experience at the Weymouth house, and the few older figures there. In October games of *Black Mass*, that other who complements Catherine is certainly infernal. He guides their path through the woods—his home as a prominent landmark. In a December game of *Black Mass*, these are all peers, treating Catherine like an adult—for all that that's worth. The Weymouths enable her unlike anyone else in the town. The form of the “other” in the room provides uneasy comfort through her journey in the woods. In February games, he's a darkness that stalks and chases down Catherine and Lydia.
- † Lydia o' the Map is chased by an agent of the Devil's Town. It has an alien purpose, the most clear indication is where it marks on Lydia's map. In October games, this agent could be the Devil's own, pulling strings from the background. It could be an intermediary, or someone trying to help that is unable. In December games, the location on the map might be an abandoned structure, a cave system, a particular place marked by a wanderer in the woods. In February games, the marked map is a trap, or it's a haven, or it's nothing.
- † Mudbaked Catherine has one of the few seeker figures, her reverend father. The specifics are left to the player to decide, but this figure can come during play to provide existential pressure on Catherine and Lydia. In an October game, the reverend father seeks to save Catherine from the woods, or to save *his* version of Catherine. In a December game, he may be trying to reclaim Catherine, to limit her autonomy, and to bring her back. In a February game, he is a witch-fearing bible-thumper, perhaps with a torch and musket, seeking to purge the forest of sin. He could be an agent of hell, trying to rebuild his family in the Devil's Town.
- † Lydia o' the Treetops' trapper is not necessarily a villainous character, they're just excluding themselves from the town. Lydia's fragmented memory provides several options for this person. In an October game, they're hunting Lydia, waiting for the perfect heel-turn. They're obvious, scheming, and devilish. In a December game, the trapper is someone specifically exiled from the community. In Catherine and Lydia's trek through the woods, they find out why: an accident with no explanation, violence, heresy? The trapper serves as a pariah. In a February game of *Black Mass*, the person fled into woods for the worst reason, and likely wants Lydia for the same.

ODD ALLIES

Spidersilk Catherine, Lydia o' the Moon Piece, and Lydia o' the Velvet's companions live between Salem, the Devil's Town, and the sky above it. Their allegiances are assumed by the travelers, but ultimately unknown.

- † Spidersilk Catherine has an uneasy relationship with the spiders in her hat and in the cellar. They highlight the dangerous and malicious parts of Catherine. Are they extensions of herself in the Devil's Town, or are they sent from there to help Catherine's journey? In October games, the spiders are big, real, and malicious. They speak to Catherine, chattering opinions and receiving commands. In December games, the spiders are extensions of Catherine's will. On this journey, things eventually go her way, and the spiders are an enacting of her want. In February games, Catherine is barely in control. The spiders serve an alien unknowable purpose that aligns with Catherine's, but they scare her every time they're used.
- † Lydia o' the Velvet's moose is a hulking presence when this persona is in play. No matter the mode of play, its tracks and markings are found throughout the woods. In October games, the moose communicates danger to Lydia, providing a semi-reliable source of knowledge of the goings-on in the woods. In December games, the moose is a real threat to Catherine and Lydia. It's huge, it's strong, and it's in distress tonight. In February games, the moose is somewhere in the middle, a hulking liar, helping and hurting the duo in equal measure.
- † Lydia o' the Moon Piece's clockwork acts as a beacon. When it tracks the phases of the moon, it malfunctions, tracking something else entirely. Is it the sky of the Devil's Town? In October games, the moon is a maniacal presence, communicating back and forth with the travelers. In December games, the moon and the watch are in sync, tracing a secret heaven, illuminating paths. In February games, the moon is a tool. Do the travelers control it, does the Devil's Town control it, or still another?

REFLECTIONS

The Devil's Town is a bad mirror for the travelers, reflecting truths about the characters in the bark and snow of the woods. The ones we see backscattered are Firewood Catherine, Rumorous Catherine, Seafoam Catherine, Lydia o' the Melody, Lydia o' the Powder, and Lydia o' the Table.

- † Firewood Catherine is visceral, a gross display of power. Her strength is clear decisive action. Reflected through the Devil's Town, it's a feint. In October games, Firewood Catherine is met head-on with flawed aggressive creatures, inspired by her own shortcomings. In December games of *Black Mass*, she is just as strong, but her tools fail her. The weaknesses are exposed, the axes are cracked, and the wood is rotten. In February games, her swiftness and violence is used against her, beings of retribution prize her perceived coldness, but is Catherine truly like that?
- † Rumorous Catherine's experience is reflected through the dark work of the Devil's Town. The letters are made real by the time thoughts spent fermenting. In October games, these letters are made physical into grotesque versions of the Catherine she portrayed in the letters, the partner they were written to, and the humiliation of their exposure. In December games, the letters return as warped memories in the woods, manifest thoughts and would-rathers. In February games, the worst of both worlds. Voices mocking from treetops, letters appearing nailed to structures, all with naked lies.
- † Seafoam Catherine is filled with the superstitions of the sailors she met during her voyage, reflected through the Devil's Town. In October games, they're big physical reminders of the voyage: the sea-witches themselves, thunderstorms, and squalls. In December games: vertigo and near-hypothermia. The trek to the black mass is a reflection of the trip down and up the coast. In February games, tell-tale signs of a sea-witch appear in the woods: briney air, sailor's countermeasures, and swirling wind and storms.
- † Lydia o' the Melody pulls those who can hear in, and twists their ear. Via the Devil's Town, the melody is at once consonant and harsh, providing the veneer of beautiful while exposing ugliness. In October games, patrons' nightmares are made real in the woods, confronting Lydia. In December games, the drunks themselves wander and freeze in the woods along with the travelers. In February games, the melody pulls from Lydia's own psyche, a synesthetic horror of lived experiences and worst possible situations.
- † Lydia o' the Powder is about firsthand witnessing violent accidents, and taking the power into her own hands. The Devil's Town demands it. An open question here is the target of Lydia's injured brother. In October games, the powder is the devil's own, claiming those placed in its way. In December games, the weapon is unwieldy, cold, and loud. One shot obliterates targets, but it signals her exact location. In February games, Lydia is the weapon, the musket is an instrument. It is a funeral bell and it's everybody's funeral.

† Lydia o' the Table is self-sacrifice. It's taking harm on oneself for the protection of others. Reflected through the Devil's Town, the mold is inside all of us, the real friends we've made along the way. In October games, the rot is visible everywhere, with fungal structures representing homes and loved ones confronting Lydia.

In December games: attacks of fits, hunger, and the opposite, perfect fruit. February games of *Black Mass* may have Lydia herself rotting, with the ground around her desiccating.

JUST STORIES

Cataloging Catherine, Confessor Catherine, and Lydia o' the Ribbon involve oral histories, stories, and fables. What does devilish energy do to these tales? How are the stories warped and sent back to the travelers?

† Cataloging Catherine sees lives in the ledger, the sum of a lifetime's parts. The dead aren't taking their things with them, so Catherine collects momentos like letters. The Devil's Town fills in the blanks of Catherine's imagination, the connective tissue of sin. In October games, the secrets play out live in the forest, in vivid detail. In December games, places and events are replayed in Catherine's mind and in her vision. She knows more than she's letting on. In February games, it's revenge and twisted bloody webs.

† Lydia o' the Ribbon holds the stories of her grandmother. The tales are hers now, to do with what she wants. How does this folklore involve the Devil's Town? How does it change when they're in Lydia's hands? In October games, the stories manifest vividly, with clear morals and lessons. In December games, the stories are shown in environmental detail, place and feeling. In February games, the stories are covering something up, perhaps a larger, darker message.

† Confessor Catherine's secrets are her own. That doesn't mean she doesn't share them. The Devil's Town isn't concerned with what's true. The confessions do not clear the soul, that's impossible. In October games, warped priests ask for impossible penances, their sins and lies made real and physical. In December games, Catherine's sense of self and her morals are tested. In February games, her soul is laid bare to all.

With these tools, proctors can build a deeper context of these modes of play, the personas, and the characters themselves.





THE DEVIL'S BOOK

SECT VII. **T**his game was made possible by the following Kickstarter backers, whose names are hereby signed into the Devil's Book:

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