

By AbyssThatSmilesBack

After Sebastian P. Husher, a famous historical fiction author, had been out of contact with his publishing firm Daniel Noyer was sent to check in on him. Husher had recently come into possession of a strange music box from a friend of his who was curious about the history of the box. Unfortunately, the Song recorded in the box brings the attention of a powerful being and now his entire mansion has become host to strange happenings that threaten to drag all who enter the mansion into the shadows, into the domain of the Presence.

Will your stay here follow Daniel Noyer's path, or will you have your own story to tell?

Your trip here will be limited to your bodymod, and will be granted 0CP, however for each Episode you complete you will be granted a special reward that you will keep even if you fail the gauntlet and lose all other benefits. You will need to survive all of the episodes you have chosen and not be trapped in the Elsewhere by the end of the gauntlet in order to avoid failing. However even if you fail here you may continue your chain.

Whatever happens, you can only visit this place once, good luck

v1.0

Role

Choose your role, this encompasses how you will interact with the events here. You may choose your age and gender freely, along with a profession available on Earth that is reasonable for your age.

For Roles other than the Cursed you get +100 CP for each additional Episode you complete and you get an additional +100 CP if you choose to be in every episode.

Cursed - +1000 CP

Through some circumstances, you heard the Song of the music box and became marked by the Presence. You will need to survive every Episode as that is the only way you can break the curse. You start trapped in the Elsewhere, though within moments of arriving someone finds and manages to extract you from the small cell you've found yourself in.

Ally - +300 CP

Good news, you haven't necessarily heard the Song yourself; the bad news though? Someone who has is about to ask you for help, and you are going to give it. By default, you only need to help them for one Episode, though they will be grateful for however much aid you give.

Bystander - +200 CP

You won't need to know what's going on in the big picture, after all you are only going to need to survive a single night in one of the Episodes, and after that, provided you didn't hear the music box, you can leave the purview of the Presence forever. If you end up stumbling into multiple Episodes you must simply survive a single night per Episode before you can escape.

Puppet - +500 CP

For those that hear the Song there is an option other than the Cursed, provided that they still have the music box in their possession.

Ordinarily your will is no longer entirely your own, with the Presence controlling you to spread the Song with the music box in strange trances and tormenting you when it's not taking control. Most who have suffered this eventually take their own lives rather than ultimately being taken by the Presence.

The Presence recognizes that you aren't ordinary however, and so you will be treated a little differently. Instead you choose one Episode, the Presence will task you with playing the music box in the area to grant him dominion there, and condemning all the bystanders to the Presence. Once that is done you must draw a Cursed and their Allies to the location (if you can't find any you are free to use the music box to create your own) and have them all be consumed by the Presence. If you succeed in each Episode you have taken, the Presence will let you go, pleased with the sacrifice you made It.

Threats

Depending on the episode chosen will dictate which of these adversaries you will face. The Elsewhere will be present at each Episode, but other than that you must choose at least two other Threats to be active in any Episode, but you may add additional Threats for +100 CP each and may make any that appear in the Episode far more aggressive and active for an additional +200 CP per threat.

You select which Threats appear on a per Episode basis, so it is possible that a threat you encounter in one won't show up in the next.

If you picked the Puppet Role, these threats are double edged, as they need to be what ultimately takes your victims, and although they have a deal with you, they won't avoid attacking you if you get in their way.

The Elsewhere



The Elsewhere is the domain of The Presence that has been drawn close to the real world by some combination of the Song and its master's will. Although this dimension won't pose much danger on its own, it is what allows the Presence to maneuver the other threats throughout the various locations.

Primarily, the danger this poses directly is that it can mimic the world as you know it, nearly perfectly replicating a room, hiding behind the door that would enter the real room, and trapping you in it like a mouse in a cage if you don't notice in time. Though it being used in this way is rare.

Becoming permanently trapped in the Elsewhere counts as failing the Gauntlet.

The Presence

The Presence likes to hide behind doors and drag those that open them into its domain. The only way to know if the presence is behind a door is by listening carefully with your ear pressed to it for scratching noises. Occasionally, it will try to force a door open and you will have to force the door closed or you will be dragged through the opening.



The Darkness

The Presence will occasionally manifest as rapidly growing shadows. Once they encompass a room they will drag anyone they find into the darkness leaving no trace of them behind. In order to survive you will need to find a place to hide, and whatever you do don't look at the darkness, or it will take you as if you had not been hiding at all.

The Silence

The Silence is a withered corpse wearing a blindfold that will randomly appear in empty rooms hunting anything that makes even the slightest sound. While it is nearby you must be completely silent as even the sound of your breath is enough to draw its attention



The Abyss



The Abyss is a mass of limbs trying to crawl out of a shadowy portal on the ground. When it catches you it will try to use you to climb out of its torment, but it is for naught and instead is dragging you into its mass. In order to escape you must crawl your way out of it, shaking them off of you if they manage to grab onto a limb.



The Pursuer

This is the Abyss' angry cousin, it will chase you through corridors and will completely drag you into itself immediately if it catches you. The only way to survive is getting out of its path and hiding from it.

The Requiem

A strange curse to be sure, these shadows are only visible in a mirror and you must shine a light on them in the mirror in order to banish them. If any of them get close enough to grab you, you have already lost.





The Revenants

These take the form of those recently taken by the presence, usually trying to lure people close before suddenly attacking with unnatural strength. Those who had been taken with firearms in their possession are more dangerous as they will use the firearm to kill you at a distance with supernatural accuracy.

Drawbacks

You may take any amount of Drawbacks

Butterfingers - +100/+300

Prepare to keep dropping important items, for an additional +200 CP you will frequently drop items down grates; they'll still be accessible, but you'll probably need to backtrack or do something special to get it.

Earworm - +100/+600

You are going to have a song stuck in your head for the duration of the Gauntlet and will find yourself occasionally humming it.

For an additional +500 CP the song stuck in your head is the Song from the music box. Beware, as this will put you into a similar case as the Cursed if you wouldn't otherwise suffer the same as them, and in either case, as the Song itself will gather the attention of the Presence, be prepared to deal with a much more active threat as every time you get lost in thought and hum to the tune you bring the Elsewhere closer to where you are, curse those around you, and bring the Presence's focus to where you are

Anglerfish Lure - +200

There will be important looking items in tempting locations, though grabbing them will cause you to be attacked by the Presence having fallen for the trap, however unlike the normal characters in this world you will be able to resist as if the Abyss were the one trying to pull you in.

Questionably Helpful Notes - +200

Most people would just write down the information they need to in a note, not the people here apparently. Expect people to write important information in unnecessarily obtuse ways sometimes needing a second piece of paper to calculate what is needed.

Which key dost thou need? Answer these Riddles Three!

Practical Jokers - +400

Your Allies have gone a little crazy it seems. For the duration of this gauntlet they will perform practical jokes at your expense, regardless of the seriousness of the situation. You won't know for sure if they are all just hiding from you or if they all have been taken.

A Second Music Box - +400

You know how there's just one artifact that you need to seal? Now there is a second, be ready for its presence to be revealed at the worst possible time.

Double the Fun - +600

The Presence usually only sends one threat at a time against you. With this drawback you will occasionally have two threats at once, though you are guaranteed to not have two that would combine to create an impossible to survive scenario. You aren't able to pick this drawback if any set of two of available threats in an Episode could only create impossible scenarios.

The Presence's Ire - +600

The Presence will not be playing with you, instead it will only be interested in killing you the entire time you are here. Welcome to hard mode.

General

All Roles have access to the following, regardless of the Episodes chosen

Perks

Professional Knowledge - Free to all

Whatever your chosen profession is, you have the requisite knowledge to be able to competently do your job. How applicable it is here is a separate matter though.

Easter Egg Branding - 100

In future jumps, you will occasionally come across items that share a name with someone or something you recognize from a previous jump. These items will function slightly better than other similar products at their intended purpose.

Hold your Breath - 200

You are able to hold your breath for extended periods of time, as an added benefit you are able to better control your heart rate and gain a small boost to your stealth while holding your breath.

This Smells Important - 400

Ever wonder how someone can grab three keys from a pile of forty and immediately know they aren't the ones they need, or how after using a key twice immediately knowing they will never use it again? Well now you know, items you need have a peculiar scent to them, it's hard to distinguish the exact source when it is in a group but easy to detect when all the pieces are separated from a group or if the group still has the scent lingering. This scent disappears when it is no longer necessary for you to continue progressing.

Items

Professional Accouterments - Free to all

A basic set of clothes and tools so that you can look the part of your chosen profession. Nothing given here is out of the ordinary, but any tools will be adequate. For example, an electrician will have their tools, a police officer will have their standard issue handgun, etc.

Lightsource - Free/100

You have some source of light; a cell phone, a lighter, a torch, a lantern, or whatever else. For an additional 100 CP whatever it uses, electricity/fuel/etc, will not run out while it is being used for a single situation, meaning if you use it as a light source to see in a cave, it is guaranteed to not run out while you are in the cave, but may need refueling once you get out of it.

Deadbolt - 200

A strange reusable sticker that looks like the part of a deadbolt that goes on the inside of a door. When stuck to an otherwise ordinary closed door and the knob of the lock is turned, the door becomes unable to be opened from the otherside, regardless of what is trying to force its way through provided the door itself is sturdy enough to survive the onslaught. Once one is used you will get another the next day.

Forceful Entry Kit - 400

Here you go, a set of equipment that a single person could use to force open any normal door. This includes a sturdy crowbar, a fire axe, a plasma torch, handheld ram, Jaws of Life, bolt cutters, and a set of lockpicks - if you'd prefer to go that way.

Companions

Ally - 100/400

You may import a companion, and they gain the Ally role with all of the points they would gain from that for themselves, based on the number of episodes they intend to participate in. However, they succeed under the same circumstances as you do, so if you are a puppet they must also help you trap your victims. They receive half the additional CP you gained from drawbacks.

Feel free to use this to instead recruit one of the people from here. Provided that you succeed in the Episode your allies who also participated are considered to have succeeded, though if they died they won't gain the perks or items from future Episodes they intended to be in or show up in them.

For 400 CP you can bring a Dozen of your companions, as above.

Episodes

You are free to take the Episodes you choose in any order, though knowledge, and the extra rewards are gained after the completion of its related Episode. If you so choose, you can follow the course of the game more closely by taking the Episodes in order and following the default descriptions.

You will have some time between Episodes to rest, prepare, and travel between locations, but don't expect restful sleep if you have heard the Song. Don't take too long either else risk the trail running cold. If you picked the Bystander Role, you don't need to worry about finding the next location, it will find you.

You gain access to the Perks and Items only for the Episodes you take. In addition, for your first, third and fifth Episode you take one 100 CP perk free, and a Discount for a perk that costs 200 CP, and one more discount for a perk that costs 400 CP and the same set of freebies and discounts for Items. These discounts can be spent in any way that is desired, but cannot be used on an already discounted Perk or Item.



The Puppet's Trap

At some point you will track the strange occurrences to this house. Either wittingly or unwittingly the owner has unleashed the Presence in their home, consuming those that lived in it.

In Daniel's Story this was the Husher Mansion, a small home where Husher's entire family was taken by the Presence.

Perks

Calming Rituals - 100

Things that you find pleasant, be they another's presence, a scented candle, chewing a pencil, or anything else, have their calming effects boosted. In the face of true horror, these items, people, or actions will still provide you some meaningful level of comfort, even if only a slight amount of comfort.

Kind Deeds in Turn - 200

Occasionally, there are creatures that prey on those that try to act with kindness towards them. Like a weeping woman that chases you down to remove your face if you ask them what's wrong, or a lost child that will tear out your jugular when you get too close.

What this perk gives you is the ability to know whether whatever it is that appears to be in need or offering you with an item is actually going to try and kill you or not.

One Last Ball of Thread - 400

Sometimes having an exit plan isn't viable as the time to make one has passed, worry not! Now when all of your other exit plans have failed and you have been trapped,

circumstances will align to give you one last chance to get out, though that chance could be fleeting or narrow, so be ready to take it the moment it appears.

Items

Walkie-Talkie - 100

Like another survival horror franchise, this Walkie Talkie starts emitting more static when there are monsters nearby. Hopefully they aren't attracted by noise.

Liquid Courage - 200

A silver flask containing a liquid that tastes, smells, and for most purposes is your favored alcohol, however this liquid will not inhibit your faculties, instead it brings what you know must be done into clear focus and calms your nerves to help accomplish the task. You can fill this up with any liquid and after a day the liquid will become this concoction, this process takes less time if you fill it with your favored alcohol instead.

Dollhouse - 400

This is a simple dollhouse with 5 dolls in it, although seemingly innocuous, this dollhouse has a special ability. When you desire to seal a small item away, you can place the dolls in the dollhouse in any configuration and a small compartment will open corresponding to the configuration. Items placed in these compartments that have supernatural abilities are considered mundane while in these compartments, but regain any abilities they had when they are removed.

Reward

A collection of Haikus

Just hear me out before you dismiss this. You get a small book, it is a collection of haikus with hand drawn illustrations, that when opened randomly will give you some kind of cryptic forewarning of a few of the dangers and puzzles you will soon encounter. This book will constantly update but will always be a pocket sized hardcover.



Fool’s Curios

Someone had to have acquired the music box, and you’ve tracked its path down to here looking for answers. This place is either a museum, a store, or some other similar location.

By default this is the Farber and Sons Antique Store, the location where Farber had stored the box before passing it along to Husher

Perks

Strong Grip - 100

Once you grab a hold of a small item, you won’t drop it unless you intend to. No more losing keys down a drain, or having something snatched from your hand. Something may be able to wrest items from your grasp, but they won't be able to grab it in a moment when your grip is less than your best.

In Your Own World - 200

While you are listening to music, things that would attack, or otherwise harm you are less interested in you based on how uninterested you are in them. This may not cause someone to stop following you after they have started, but will definitely reduce the amount of time they would pursue you.

Trigger Discipline - 400

When you have a handgun, and a sudden threat appears, you are extremely quick to react. This won’t go off to merely a perceived threat, like an innocent running around a corner in front of you, but the fastest gun in the west decides to shoot you unprompted? They’re in for a nasty surprise. This might not seem like it does much for you here considering the normal threats you will face, but sometimes the eldritch needs a portal to interact with you like a mirror. When you encounter something like that that a bullet could solve, you’ll be happy to have this.

In addition, if you don’t have a handgun from Professional Accouterments, you get a basic handgun. If you did get one, it is slightly customized for you, making it generally better for you.

Items

Luminol Spray + Black Light - 100

You have a spray bottle of luminol that never runs empty. In addition if you paid 100cp for your Lightsource you can toggle it to give off UV Light, otherwise you get a blacklight.

Coltar’s Wisdom Tooth - 200

A Golden tooth, that when you are in immediate danger will mysteriously drop from your possession, if you also have the Strong Grip perk, it will instead vibrate. Either way, if lost it will return to your possession after a day.

Running Sneakers - 400

Speed and stealth don’t often go together easily, but with this comfy pair of shoes that is less of a worry. While wearing them, they produce no audible noise themselves.

Reward

Cursed Antique Shop Membership Card

When you are at an Antique or Pawn Shop and show them this card they will show you their collection of cursed items. Not all shops intentionally have cursed items, so be prepared to freak out some shop owners when they find their collection for your to peruse.



The Research Trail

A Library, City Hall, university or other place of Record, at some point in your journey you will need to put some research in to track the history of the music box to try. After all understanding where a Puppet or Cursed has gone may help you to find the source of the nightmare.

You can choose to have this be the State University of Arts and Humanities where Husher had done some research into its origins.

Perks

Prescience - 100

While Maxwell was doing some tidying, he saw a picture of his desiccated body manning his station in a strange slide being displayed in a projector and only removed the cable thinking it would protect him, ultimately he wasn't able to escape his fate. You, however, probably will. When you encounter a sign of an impending threat, you will immediately recognize it as such. This might not tell you the nature of the threat, but the clues will stick out to you.

Mad Hatter - 200

There's a certain level of eccentricities that people will put up with if you are good enough at your job. So this perk helps you do that. The more eccentric you are, the better you are at whatever your job is, this doesn't completely close that gap and it does have diminishing returns, but it does make the threshold of skill for what people will tolerate a lot easier to hit.

Seeing through Tricks - 400

Sometimes there are traps that, while invisible to the naked eye, have a strange way that makes them able to be seen. Like smoke revealing a laser grid, or walls only visible on cameras. Once you partially reveal something unseen in this way, you become able to see it as if it were normally visible.

Items

Something to Hold a Leaver - 100

When you need an item held down or a button pushed that is just out of reach, you always seem to be able to find an item nearby that could easily accomplish the task, like a heavy book, or some tape ...Or a severed hand, if you insist on that…

Secret Glasses - 200

A simple pair of glasses that when worn while inspecting an object no bigger than what you coils easily hold and manipulate in your hands will reveal any hidden compartments or contraptions on it, though won't show you how to interact with them.

Maxwell's Lucky Coin - 400

When you ask this coin to decide between two options it will always land on the side that would grant you the greater profit. For purposes of this coin assume death is negative infinity profit.

Reward

A Special Projector

Why would you leave this behind? When this projector is running and its slides are put in a specific order, the door on the last slide becomes real-ish. It accesses a copy of the room the door was connected to. In addition to this you gain the ability to convert pictures of other doors to slides for use with this projector.



Song’s Origin

At some point you will find the source of the music box, and will need to venture there for further clues.

In the source material this was St. Cecilia’s Abbey, an old monastery that held a concert that unfortunately played the Song, dooming all those who attended.

Perks

Let’s Split Up - 100

When you go into a probably haunted and dangerous location with a group, it’s usually a bad idea to split up, less so now. When you and your group split up to cover more ground each person gets better luck when trying to find clues.

I said No Thank You - 200

When something is attempting to influence your actions, once you deny the temptation, it will have increased difficulty influencing you.

Cursed Composer - 400

You have great skill at creating music, if you possess some supernatural ability or knowledge of a thaumaturgical system, you are able to convert its components into a song that when performed replicates its effect. The more complicated the spell the more complicated the composition but you will be able to convert it given time.

Items

Disposable Gloves - 100

When you need them, you have a pair of disposable gloves that fit comfortably. Once disposed of you will have another set.

Hearing Aid - 200

This is a special hearing aid, it greatly amplifies the noise of those who are sneaking.

Tarot Cards - 400

You gain a set of Tarot cards, though not really useful as it is neither a full or normal set of cards, it has the strange ability to always have a set of five cards that represent the major threats you are facing in your immediate circumstance. When you take one of the cards and place it in opposition to the other four, whatever card is singled out is unable to actualize as a threat.

These cards aren't omnipotent though, each card only prevents a single threat; For example, a single card could prevent the Elsewhere from creating it's mimicked rooms, but not prevent the Elsewhere from moving the other Threats, or it could prevent the Presence from hiding behind doors, but not all manifestations of the danger it poses.

Reward

The Requiem Mirror

By now you are familiar with the game to defeat the Requiem, however it originated as a trick to let you know how close you were to being taken by the Presence. This mirror holds an echo of that ritual, when you play that game with this mirror, threats to you, be they creatures, political machinations, plots, or anything else appear as shadows behind you, the closer they are the more immediate the threat. This doesn't give you knowledge of what the threats are, but it can give you an idea as to how long you have before it must be dealt with.



A Solution

Eventually you will find information that may lead a way to solve the curse permanently. You will uncover the efforts of those who came before you.

In Daniel's story this is where he and whatever allies remain discover the work that came before that would give them a way to resolve the curse by investigating Jeremy Hartwood Mental Hospital.

Perks

Group Rituals - 100

When you encounter a group that performs certain rituals to protect themselves, you understand the purpose of the ritual and whether it is effective or not.

Last Will - 200

If you are earnestly attempting to solve a problem that others either currently or will eventually share, and you would die before accomplishing creating a solution, at the very least you will be able to create a solution for them, even if you won't necessarily be able to solve it yourself. Those who share your goal will uncover your solution given a small amount of tracking you through whatever trail you created, guaranteeing that the solution you have made will not come to naught.

Demystifying - 400

When you research a supernatural force, its base components and effects will become revealed to you. The more you understand the underlying processes of an effect, the less it affects you.

Items

Stethoscope - 100

You have a simple Stethoscope, works very well to hear things like the tumblers in a safe or someone on the other side of a wall

Dreamcatcher - 200

This is a protective charm, whoever is holding it is less likely to be randomly attacked.

Pioneer’s Journal - 400

This book contains a blank line on the first page, and the other pages seem to be bound together. When a title is added to the blank line describing what the author of the journal was exploring or researching , the remaining pages become unstuck. The journal is full of the day to day research or exploration of the author on the subject written on the first line. The author is quite competent on the subject in question and at the very least will grant another perspective on the current subject.

Reward

Three Drawings

When you start a jump you will find three drawings with an unknown origin and their quality will vary wildly. They are labeled and are described as follows:

What has Happened - Which shows an image that represents an event whose ramifications will affect you

What Must Happen - Which shows a scene where a task required for a goal that is important to you is accomplished

What Could Be - Which displays something that you could either avoid or attain

Whatever the drawings are, they serve one more purpose, you can burn all 3 to make an single otherwise difficult goal easier to accomplish.



Denouement

Unlike the previous Episodes this one is only available if you completed every other Episode, making it so that this one must be chosen last.

Here it is, the end of your journey, whatever solution you were able to find culminates here. If you had chosen the Cursed Role, whatever the plan is will involve going into the Elsewhere, success will require you escaping as well. Good Luck.

Daniel found a plan to leave the music box within the domain of the Presence making it and the Song it contains unreachable forevermore.

Reward

Badge of Perseverance - Limited to Cursed

While this may appear to be an AA chip, this one is a bit special. While holding this, the more desperate the situation, the more danger you are in, the more of your allies incapacitated, the better you are, becoming faster, stronger, and more skilled.

Stalwart Ally - Limited to Ally

You had no reason to go on this journey, and those you have helped won't forget this. In future jumps when you routinely aid another they won't forget what you have done, and given an opportunity they will do what they can to repay you. In truly desperate moments expect allies to be crawling out of the woodwork to aid you.

S.S.D.D. - Limited to Bystander

You must have the worst luck in the world to have dealt with five different nightmares you had no context for, and maybe that broke something in you or made you stronger. Now when you encounter something truly frightening or mind shattering it will elicit no more of a reaction from you than if you've found a fairly interesting rock.

In addition, you've perfected a glare that conveys that now is not the time to mess with you. When you are facing a minion and you give them this glare they will recognize that they are not worth your time and frequently get out of your way. Otherwise when dealing with the boss of said minions, they will get the sense that, not only are they wasting your time, you have dealt with bigger fish than them.

The Music Box - Limited to Puppet

The Presence is quite pleased with you, when you arrive in your next jump you will find that it has left you with a copy of the music box complete with the Song. Playing the song has all

the effects as it does here, though the Presence will act more as a strict ally to you in return for the favor of having granted it access to a new world.

End

Once you have completed the Episodes you are required to, you may choose one of the following.

Stay

If you want the break, you can remain in this world for the remainder of the ten years, with the guarantee that you won’t encounter the Presence or its ilk again while you are here.

Go Home

If you are tired of these adventures feel free to return home

Move On

Pick your next jump and continue onward

Notes

Earworm + In Your Own World

In Your Own World provides protection if you can focus on the song, and scales with it. If the Earworm is something you can focus on, this is helpful, though if you got the +600CP version the Song is more likely to be a strong detriment here.