



0 *Primer*

INTRODUCTION

A primer? For a role playing game? Yes, everything needs defining, games especially. Unlike card, board, and war games, role playing games are a different breed because they depend on the imagination of the players and their relationships with the GM. RPGs depend not only on rules, but also on settings that work together with the dice and the people involved to create an environment ripe for enjoyment.

Most games tell you “how” to play, but they usually don’t tell you “what” to play. Even after you read the rules, create some characters and play an adventure or two, you might not know if you are playing the game as it was meant to be. A lot of games

are big on ideas and setting, but when it comes to the nuts and bolts of creating an adventure, they might forget to show you how. Once you've played enough games you can easily figure this stuff out, but it can be a struggle.

This is where this primer comes in. After reading this, you will know what the game is about. It is not written with great details; to learn more you will need to read the rest of *Colonial Gothic*. *Colonial Gothic* is a role playing game, but more than that it a horror role playing game inspired by a historical time period. In this game you play a Hero; through the course of your adventures you will slowly uncover more about the reality of this world. Along the way, you'll uncover mysteries and foul plots—nothing is as it appears to be.

SETTING

Colonial Gothic is not just about supernatural horror; it is also about a different kind of horror that is mired in mysteries, secrets and plots. Some of these secrets and plots you will determine for yourself, but there are other secrets in the world of *Colonial Gothic*—more than you could possibly imagine—that we will help you uncover. In this book, as we show you how to play the game, we offer you a tiny glimpse into a dark secret that will change how your Hero thinks about the world—forever.

In this, the rulebook for *Colonial Gothic*, the horror relies heavily upon your imagination and ingenuity using the tools we provide for you to play the game. Whether you choose to play a Hero fighting a campaign in the American Revolution who discovers how brutal and bloody war truly is, or whether you decide to play a Hero tracking down an accused Witch just outside of town, that is entirely up to you. As a Hero, you play a mortal fighting against Villains. As you discover more and more about the Villains you face, you'll begin to realize that some enemies are all too human while others are just simply monsters.

Whatever level of horror you decide to play, the world of *Colonial Gothic* functions on the premise that everything you can imagine in the supernatural—from the lowly dandelion plant demon to a sleeping stone giant making her home at the base of the Appalachians—exists. Most other Colonists have either chosen to rationalize the forces of Darkness away, ignore their attacks and simply pick up the pieces as best they can, or have been irreversibly damaged by their experiences to the point where they can no longer function in polite society. Your reputation, your Sanity, and your Faith are all on the line because you are the last line of defense for so many innocents more worried about war with England than with the things that hide in the shadows.

On a much, larger scale, there is something “off” about the world of *Colonial Gothic*, something darker, malicious, and purposeful. No one knows what is causing this world to go awry, not even the Natives who have lived in the New World for many, many

years. The Natives, because they have a relationship with the land most Colonists can only dream about, do understand one thing more clearly than anyone else, though. Whatever evil has infected their lands, it is spreading like a plague. There is more villainy now than there ever have been, and it is up to your Hero to stand against it.

Are you up to the challenge?

FOR THE PLAYERS

It is the eve of the American Revolution; colonial life is on the verge of drastic change. To some degree, many parts of the world shun folklore and Witchcraft in favor of so-called rational thinking. Magic, in many people's minds, is supposedly as dangerous as a child's imagination. However, tucked between soldiers, trackers, and pioneers, there are those who believe they know the Truth. Magic, along with monsters, demons and other creatures, is real.

In *Colonial Gothic* you play a Hero who knows that Magic is real and the horrors that it can create in the form of monsters. These monsters could be anywhere. They could be witches cursing a settlement, vampires that followed European immigrants to the New World, or angry spirits terrorizing a Cherokee tribe. Whether you're fighting in the frontier or you're fending off a supernatural disease like Curse from the Grave you, along with others like you, will wage a hidden war because there is no one else brave enough to face the Devil's minions, fight them and win.

Heroes, be warned: something waits for you in the dark.

And it is hungry.

FOR THE GM

As a GM, you will be creating adventures and campaigns loosely inspired by Colonial American history. The horror adventures you create revolve around the supernatural and the mundane. From monsters to scheming merchants and politicians, there are many campaign possibilities for you to discover in *Colonial Gothic*. To help you craft your game, we've outlined three, different styles of play:

High Action Style is one that downplays the supernatural and the occult. Instead of slaying demons, the Heroes will fight against more common threats like slavers, French Traders, and the British Military, to name a few. Campaigns that would work well for this style would be movies like *Last of the Mohicans*, *Dances with Wolves* or *The Patriot*. If a military campaign does not interest you, you could create a campaign based around discovery or exploration. The Colonies and Her lands are still new to most people—many resources and Native cultures are waiting to be discovered. This style works well for players that like a lot of movement in their game; it also works well for players that want to explore the natural side to this setting.

Occult & Mystery Style is one that introduces players to the occult, but takes a softer approach to the horrors that might await them. The threats your players face are few and far between; you create adventures that are focused around a mystery. The mystery you design might be based on a strange cult intent on winning the War for its own, devilish reasons or a necromancer intent on infiltrating the militia. While the setting details of movies like *Sleepy Hollow* and *From Hell* are not an exact fit to *Colonial Gothic*, these are two movies that are written in a similar vein—strong setting, an aura of dark mystery, and a suspension of disbelief. Whatever mystery you choose, the goal of this style is to utilize players that are more interested in investigating than engaging in constant, heavy combat.

Supernatural Style is the default style of *Colonial Gothic*. Similar to Occult & Mystery, this style has that same touch of magic and mayhem. However, in this style of play, the Hero's threats are more ancient and widespread than they would be in Occult & Mystery. Similarly-themed examples of a larger, supernatural threat that would be considered “epic” would be movies like *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Blade*, *Hellboy*, *The Prophecy*, and *Constantine*. These movies each have a large-enough threat that, if it succeeds, would change the world's fabric of reality. Many Heroes don't know much about how Magic works; they only have a vague understanding of how to fight what monsters it sometimes creates. Some Heroes try to use Magic and the occult to their own advantage; others shy away from it.

Regardless of the style you choose, action in *Colonial Gothic* is larger-than-life. What does this mean to you, as a GM? Heroes and Villains are capable of performing feats that others may find impossible. When you're designing your adventures and running your games, remember to think “big” and allow your players to react “bigger.” We've designed the rules with the swashbuckling Hero and the dastardly Villain in mind; not only will your players have fun being the Hero—you'll have a great time watching them interact with each other in game.

Do you have an idea of the game you'd like to run?

Let's get ready to play!

Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered. Yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap we esteem too lightly.

Thomas Paine, Common Sense, 1776