

Helene

The monster

It is one of the first good evenings in the spring, when Helene meets the Man and everything turns bad. Perhaps the very first night where the warmth of the day lingers after sunset. She has started out on her evening walk around the neighbourhood, but it only lasts around the corner and a few hundred meters down one of the pathways between the houses before she is forced to do an emergency landing on a bench, like a crashing whale.

Everything is so heavy. So bothersome. Her swollen feet. Her thick fingers like sausages. The tensions in every part of her body. Her monstrous belly. Oh, she knows how it goes. She has read everything there is to read. She has talked it through with everybody, over and over. Nothing can surprise her. She has it under control; this being pregnant. This child business.

Helene leans heavily forward, as much as the belly will permit her, and looks to either side. The paths are empty. Somewhere a dog barks, but nothing else stirs. The area is empty. Forlorn. She is suddenly not sure if anybody actually uses this bench. She tries to imagine how it will feel to sit here, on this bench, with her child. On maternity leave from the job. She has talked it through with friends, she can trust her friends, but she is not sure about people here. She and Lars are still new in the neighbourhood. Not settled in properly yet. It's a nice place, but people are tightly knit.



Suddenly it hits her, like a black wave of fear. Sweat soaks through the T-shirt under her armpits. Everything is too tight. The belly weighs too much, resting heavily like a leaded balloon against her oversized thighs. It's squashing her. Suffocating her. Pinning her against the bench.

It's the thought that it can't be undone. She is going to be stuck. She is going to sit here every day with the child. Alone. She suddenly knows with certainty that they will slip away from each other, her and their

friends. They will forget her. They don't have kids, not yet. They will stop visiting her. Stop calling. And she will be stuck.

Helene sucks air into her lungs in one big, shaky gulp. She puts both hands on her pregnant belly. Forces herself to focus. Relax. Let go of the thought. It's okay. It's just her realising that she would like the waiting to be over. It is okay that she wants her body back. She has read about this stage too. She can handle it.

When she looks up, she sees him. A shimmering black figure a bit further down the pathway, with an old-fashioned pram. The sort of pram her father is peeking out from on old black and white photos – black, big, unwieldy.

He is just standing there, his face a whitish smudge in the deepening dusk. It is impossible to discern the features. How did he get so close? And from where? There isn't a sound. Everything is silent around him. No birds, no wind, nothing. It's a black hole, a vacuum. The silence radiates out from him and makes everything stand out. Her heavy breathing. The pulse in her thighs. Her thoughts. Oh god, her thoughts. He has heard them. He knows what she was thinking just before.

She struggles to get to her feet, not sure whether she wants to get away or get closer to him to make him understand that it's a lie, that she loves all of it, both the swollen belly

and the baby, the preparations, the sweet waiting, everything. She starts waddling, hair getting in her eyes, but it's too late. He's gone. There is nothing across the playground.

The haunting

It's Helene's fault that they are haunted. It's her fault the baby is in danger. Because she let herself be afraid of what might happen, once she felt the first tender swollenness. Because, for the briefest of moments, she imagined that the baby hadn't taken hold in there. The monster waits every night out there on the pavement, because it heard her thoughts. It wants the baby, because she did not, for that one moment. If she had thought better thoughts, everything would have looked different. The baby would be safe.

The story of Helene

Helene is the one that acts. She needs to be in control. She has to do something. Figure it out. She can't just sit there with her hands in her lap. She has always believed in being strong. Not giving up. Attacking the problems head on. She is tiger mom, she tells herself. Claws up, teeth bared. A long time ago she was somebody else, but it is so long ago that she even forgot about it herself.

On the barricades

When you are cornered by something that cannot be stopped by walls or locked doors, you start looking for alternatives. You grasp at straws. For Helene, this would be a series of carefully thought-out rituals to keep the dark man away from the baby. Some work, some don't. Helene needs to figure out which ones. She needs to expand them. Refine them.

Whatever is haunting them seems to be working through holes. Through the irregularities, the oversights.

The more stressed out Helene will be, the more important the routines, the rituals, will be. Do not deviate. Do not stop. No matter what people say or think. No matter the cost. This emergency is greater than anything else. It concerns the baby. It concerns everything.

You must pick one or more rituals (see list for inspiration) and consider how to expand or adjust them to your desired game style.

To drive the story forward

Helene and Lars agree very little about how to handle the situation. They do not even agree on what is most important, or what should be done.

A simple way to illustrate this state and create conflict is to seek opposites and extremities. If Lars' player wants to argue, try to avoid it. If he is calm, be scared. If he seeks order, create chaos. If he wants assurance, attack.

You must drive the story forward. You must move Helene towards the inevitable decision. You do know where this story is heading, don't you?

Lars

The monster

Lars meets the Man when he takes the baby for a stroll in the warm spring air. He can never remember if it was late in the afternoon. Maybe half an hour into the early dusk. He doesn't know why it matters, but he needs to remember when. Needs to remember the details.

He has just turned the baby stroller out on the pavement and was considering the long route around the neighbourhood, just to stretch his legs. It's not really a spring night. He's getting it all wrong. Its early summer, slightly warm, slightly fresh, thick with the first smells of bloom. It's wonderful to be out of the house, wonderful to be free. He's loving everything. The smell of newly mowed lawns. The blackbirds singing their energetic spring songs in the hedges. Every few steps he looks down in the rolling lift in front of him and sees the little sleeping face, the small curled fingers sticking out from the top of the blanket. He is high on being a dad. High on having a baby. His baby.

Maybe that is why he isn't paying attention. When he looks up, there is a figure further down the road. A dark shape pushing a slightly oversize pram towards him. A man. Another dad with a pram, out enjoying the evening.

Lars starts smiling. He is already imagining the upcoming meeting. When the other is close enough, Lars is going to say "Good evening" in that tone every new dad recognizes. Or maybe just give a nod, that nod that both of them will understand. They will exchange



knowing glances. Perhaps a smile. They will be fathers passing each other. Lars likes that thought.

But the smile dies again on his face. The figure is closing in at a terrible speed, and there is something wrong with the way it moves, with the whole thing. The carriage is shaking rather violently from side to side, as if the dark figure is moving far quicker than possible, as if he is moving besides time, outside of time. There is the sound of hard rubber against pavement, wheels shrieking, springs complaining. The sound of hard steps, like fists against the ground. And the face closing in, just a white, shimmering gob in the dusk. Floating.

Wrong.

Lars starts to turn his pram. He suddenly wants nothing else than getting away. He doesn't want this to happen, but it happens. The horrible figure is upon him in second. It starts pushing past Lars with the odd carriage. Everything slows down. Lars can feel his heart struggling like a bird in a hand. He can't move. Can't look away. He has to look down into the lift, into the shadows. Look for the child that must be there.

Something takes a hold of him. He can feel it quite clearly, like a small bite or a tiny hook somewhere deep inside of him. There is a connection. Something sees him, sees his baby. His heart is jumping, clicking, struggling. He is going to die.

Then it is over. Time is released, everything explodes into action. The figure rushes past, wheels screeching, suspensions breaking, and then it is gone, leaving quiet in its place. The birds wait for a few heartbeats, before they strike up an uneasy chorus. Lars lets go of the handlebars. He crouches down and throws up into the hedge lining the pavement. It's when he is wiping his mouth that he realises the baby has been crying the whole time.

The Haunting

Lars finds it rather difficult to accept that it was his pride, his stupid daddy pride and his need to brag about his firstborn that opened the door for the monster. It is his fault that the monster waits out there every night. It is his fault they are going to lose the baby. He should never have looked down into that carriage. He should never have taken the baby outside that evening. He should never have let the monster near it.

The story of Lars

Lars is the constant one. He is able to settle for far less than he is willing to express, and he is far softer than he will allow himself to be. He thinks of himself as a good father. As a good partner for Helene. As a person who has something to fight for. He is a man constantly defined by his relation to others – to Helene, to the baby. He is also a good liar. Deep inside the caretaker, something else sleeps; something nobody has yet seen.

To turn your back against the darkness

When you are cornered by something that cannot be stopped by walls or locked doors, you start looking for alternatives. You grasp at straws. For Helene, this would be a series of carefully thought-out rituals to keep the dark man away from the baby.

Lars is having a hard time with those rituals. He helps out, but primarily because it seems to give Helene some peace. Deep down he feels it is another thing entirely that can save them. The story of their love. The story of the baby. The small stories of the moments; the first hours, just being together. The smells, the sounds. The little fingers and toes. The first smile. To sing to the baby and rock it. They need to remember. They need to tell it to each other.

He tells himself that is how they will drive away the Man. This is how they will win. Not behind barricades, in sheer desperation.

Somewhere, deep down, he might already have given up.

To drive the story forward

Helene and Lars agree very little about how to handle the situation. They do not even agree on what is most important, or what should be done.

A simple way to illustrate this state and create conflict is to seek opposites and extremities. If Helene's player wants to argue, try to avoid it. If she is calm, be scared. If she seeks order, create chaos. If she wants assurance, attack.

You must drive the story forward. You must move Lars towards the inevitable decision. You do know where this story is heading, don't you?

About Maja

You are going to play Maja, one of Helene's and Lars' oldest and best friends. She has moved in together with her boyfriend Steen, to help Lars and Helene deal with the haunting of their child. Everybody is very happy that she is there.

Nobody knows that Maja isn't a person, or that she is not one of Helene and Lars' oldest friends. She is not blond. She is not pretty. She is not young. And she is not Steen's girlfriend. But that was the easiest arrangement. And even if there are many things Maja is not, she is very good at creeping closer. Fitting in. Latching on and passing as one of the flock.

What is certain is that Maja intends to stay, at least for now, and that she intends to help out. Helene and Lars might not thank her for the help when everything is over, but she is not worried.

Your part in this

You are both a player and a co-game master. A big part of your task is to support the game master in creating and maintaining ambience and moods. You also have an important part in stressing Helene's and Lars' players, and to support their main stories: the Black Man's haunting versus loving the baby.



This is a story that lives or dies with the mood. The intention is therefore that you and Steen's player will act as amplifiers for whatever mood, effects, sounds and feelings the game master is trying to build up; also, that you participate in any whisperings, songs, sound-offs, yelling, sound effects and so on. Consider arranging for the game master to feed you information to use in the game if needed, for example by repeating his or her phrases or words in key scenes.

Both you and Steen's player possess the off-game ability to move the two other characters around the house, when or if they fall asleep. That means they might wake up in scary, horrible, weird or spooky situations set up by you or Steen's player.

Both of you are also able to tell stories about Lars' and Helene's life, as if this actually happened for them. The power is off-game, but the stories are in-game and must be accepted by the other characters as truth.

All players can pick up one of the Whispering Ones when desired. Your game master will tell you more about this technique.

You are especially responsible for

Assisting Lars' player in telling the story of the life that should have been: the love for their sweet baby, the love between Lars and Helene, the perfect family, the perfect house, the hopes they have or had. You can help his player by being active when Lars is trying to



talk about the baby, and making space for his stories. You and Lars' player must work on making the young couple and their firstborn stand out clear and strong. This does not mean Maja as a character has to care about the baby. There are many ways to highlight the story.

Steen's player will be responsible for assisting Helene's player with her mission; the routines and the rituals. Steen's player should also push for scenes that build up the story of the figure with the Black Pram; what it wants, why it wants the baby, what will happen to it. Steen's and Helene's players are especially tasked with feeding the story of the black figure and the pram with energy and horror.

Before the game starts you need to

- Have a talk with the game master to agree on co-op style
- Establish a relationship with the other characters. You need to flesh out the friendships and couple dynamics. You have known each other like forever. How can this be expressed?

About Steen

You are going to play Steen, one of Helene's and Lars' oldest and best friends. He has moved in together with his girlfriend Maja, to help Lars and Helene deal with the haunting of their child. Everybody is very happy that he is there.

Nobody knows that Steen isn't a person, or that he isn't one of Helene's and Lars' oldest friends. He does not have short hair, and he is not rock n' roll. He does not have high or slim cheekbones and a characteristic face. He is not young, and he is not Maja's boyfriend. But that was the easiest arrangement. And even if there are many things Steen is not, he is very good at creeping closer. Fitting in. Latching on and passing as one of the flock.

What is certain is that Steen intends to stay, at least for now, and that he intends to help out. Helene and Lars might not thank him for the help when everything is over, but he is not worried.

Your part in this

You are both a player and a co-game master. A big part of your task is to support the game master in creating and maintaining ambience and moods. You also have an important part



in stressing Helene's and Lars' players, and to support their main stories: the Black Man's haunting versus loving the baby.

This is a story that lives or dies with the mood. The intention is therefore that you and Maja's player will act as amplifiers for whatever mood, effects, sounds and feelings the game master is trying to build up; also, that you participate in any whisperings, songs, sound-offs, yelling, sound effects and so on. Consider arranging for the game master to feed you information to use in the game if needed, for example by repeating his or her phrases or words in key scenes.

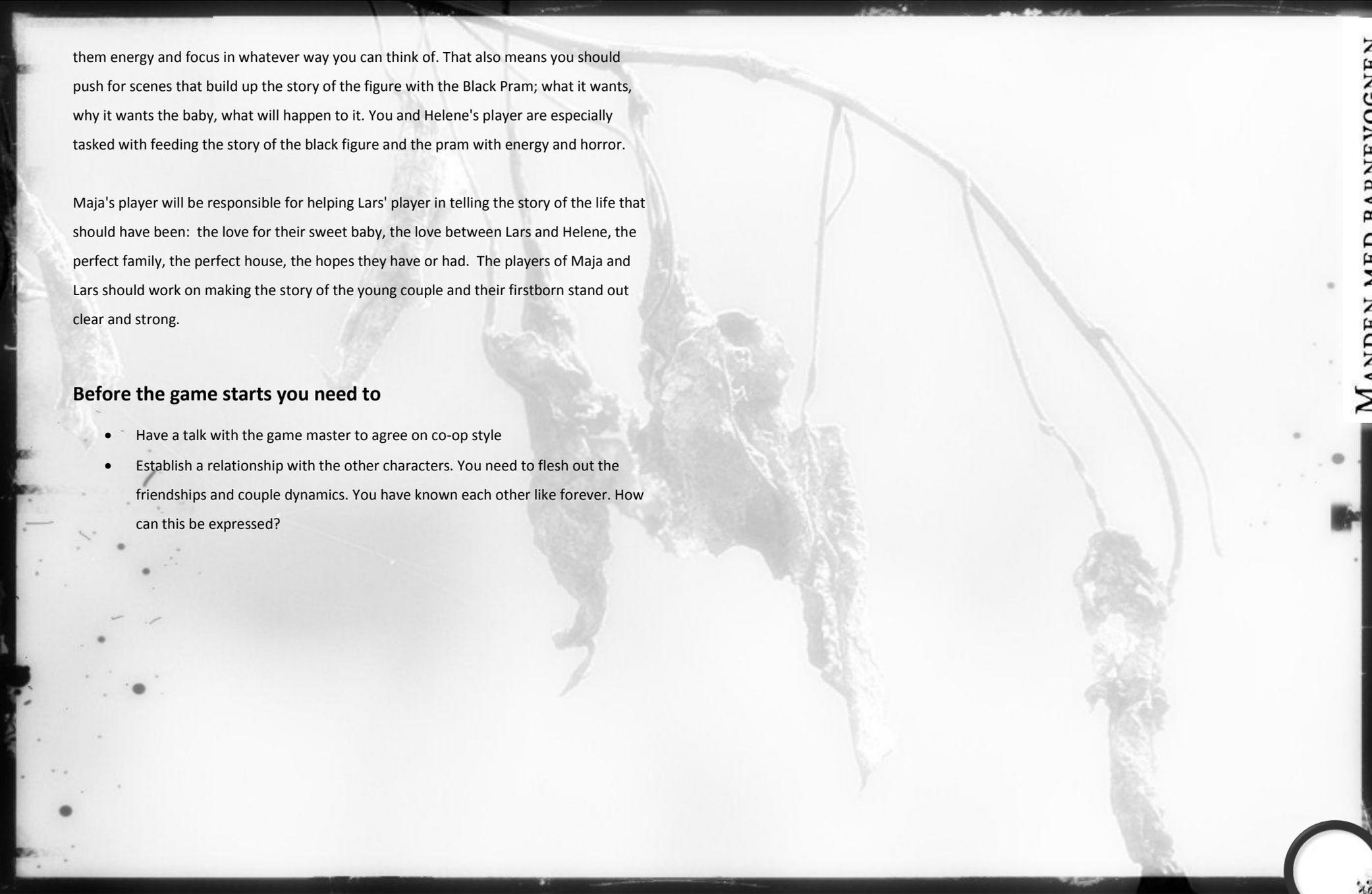
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Both of you are also able to tell stories about Lars' and Helene's life, as if this actually happened for them. The power is off-game, but the stories are in-game and must be accepted by the other characters as truth.

All players can pick up one of the Whispering Ones when desired. Your game master will tell you more about this technique.

You are especially responsible for

Assisting Helene's player with her mission; the routines and the rituals. Your character does not have to agree with the rituals or how they are carried out – it's all about giving



them energy and focus in whatever way you can think of. That also means you should push for scenes that build up the story of the figure with the Black Pram; what it wants, why it wants the baby, what will happen to it. You and Helene's player are especially tasked with feeding the story of the black figure and the pram with energy and horror.

Maja's player will be responsible for helping Lars' player in telling the story of the life that should have been: the love for their sweet baby, the love between Lars and Helene, the perfect family, the perfect house, the hopes they have or had. The players of Maja and Lars should work on making the story of the young couple and their firstborn stand out clear and strong.

Before the game starts you need to

- Have a talk with the game master to agree on co-op style
- Establish a relationship with the other characters. You need to flesh out the friendships and couple dynamics. You have known each other like forever. How can this be expressed?