

A dark, atmospheric illustration in a painterly style. The scene is set at night, with a large, pale yellow moon in a dark blue sky. Numerous black bats are flying across the sky. In the foreground, a horse-drawn carriage is moving away from the viewer on a cobblestone street. A person is seated in the carriage, and a horse is pulling it. To the right, a street lamp with a glowing yellow light stands on a sidewalk. The overall mood is mysterious and ominous.

A SOLITAIRE GAME OF GOTHIC HORROR

Plague of Dracula

RULES OF PLAY

GAME DESIGN BY MIKE NAGEL

TABLE OF CONTENTS



1.0 Game Components	3
1.1 Game Board	3
1.2 Game Markers	4
1.3 Play Mat	5
1.4 Inventory Mat	5
1.5 Event Deck	5
1.6 Optional Die	6
2.0 Game Setup	8
3.0 Sequence of Play	9
3.1 Time Check	9
3.2 Arrival Advance	9
3.3 Renfield Status	9
3.4 Event Draw	9
3.5 Harker Arrival	10
3.6 Plague Spread	10
3.7 Action Segment	10
3.8 Marker Adjustment	10
3.9 End of Turn	10
4.0 Renfield	10
5.0 Plague Spread	11
6.0 Hunter Actions	12
6.1 Standard Actions	12
6.2 Bonus Actions	13
7.0 Combat	14
7.1 Combat Triggers	14
7.2 Combat Resolution	14
8.0 Rumors and Miasma	16
8.1 Strange Rumors	16
8.2 Searching	17
8.3 Rumor Resolution	17
8.4 Miasma	17
9.0 Events	17
10.0 Victory or Loss	17
10.1 Dracula Automatic Victory	17
10.2 Hunters Automatic Victory	17
10.3 Final Confrontation	17
11.0 Play Options	18
11.1 Alternate Play Modes	18
11.2 Shorter Games	18
11.3 Difficulty Level	19
12.0 Designer's Notes	19

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I would like to acknowledge the following for their assistance in making the publication of this game possible. The game is much better for their effort.

Inspirations

Bram Stoker – Of course, I must first acknowledge the inspiration of *Plague of Dracula*, the author of the classic novel himself. If you have not read Stoker's book yet, what are you waiting for? No movie to date has done it justice. It's in the public domain, so no excuses.

Dracula Films – Despite pretty much all of them falling short of the novel, there are several films that should be seen. All three *Nosferatu* films (F.W. Murnau's from 1922, Werner Herzog's from 1979, and Robert Eggers' from 2024). None of the other ones are worth the effort, although your mileage may vary. Tod Browning's *Dracula* from 1931 (the classic starring Bela Lugosi). Terence Fisher's *The Horror of Dracula* from 1958 (and pretty much all of the following Hammer films starring Christopher Lee as the Count if you're a glutton for punishment).

Other Games – Several games have been published over the years, all of which are multiplayer titles. I've played several, but the best are *Undead* (Steve Jackson Games) and *Fury of Dracula* (most recently by Fantasy Flight Games).

Living Rules

Although I endeavor to make sure the rules are as clear as possible, tweaks may be needed after enough players get their hands on the game. Electronic updates to the rules will be issued in a timely manner. Rules marked with a star (★) symbol have been updated since the last printing.

Disclaimer

Plague of Dracula is inspired by Bram Stoker's public domain novel *Dracula*. It is not affiliated with or endorsed by the Stoker Estate or any other rights holder.

Although that would be cool.

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Plague of Dracula

Plague of Dracula is a solitaire game that aims to recreate the experience of the vampire hunters described in Bram Stoker's classic tale of terror. The player (or players if the game is played cooperatively) take the role of the hunters, while the game system handles the spread of Dracula's plague across Victorian London. Rules marked with a star (★) symbol have been updated since the last updating of the rules.

Can you as Mina Murray (later, Harker), Professor Van Helsing, and their trusted cadre of hunters fend off the *Plague of Dracula*?

1.0 GAME COMPONENTS

Prior to play, review and understand the purpose of each of the game's components. The following components are included with the game:

-  Game Board (34x22")
-  Play Mat
-  Inventory Mat
-  Event Deck (60 Cards)
-  Optional Multiplayer Tracking Cards (7)
-  Counter Sheets (2, 136 pieces)
-  Draw-string Bag

1.1 Game Board

The game board depicts the Greater London area, broken down into twenty-five individual locations. Each location is numbered in a zigzag fashion to make finding them a little easier.

1.1.1 **Special Locations** — There are two special locations to the east of London: Carfax Abbey (the property purchased by Dracula with the help of Jonathan Harker) and the Purfleet Asylum (the mental health facility run by Doctor Seward). Both of these special locations have a small holding box where Dracula's lunatic assistant Renfield may be located. Carfax Abbey may never be entered during play. No Plague or Rumor markers may be placed in these locations.


1.1.2 **Connector Lines** — Each location on the map is connected to two or more other locations by connector lines. Most of these lines are black, but several are blue, indicating a crossing of the Thames, and a few are red, indicating that movement is not allowed (they are used to manage the spread of the plague). Two locations that share a Connector Line are considered adjacent.


1.1.3 **Turn Track** — At the bottom of the game board is a 25-space Turn track. Each space on this track indicates a two-day period. One of two Turn markers is used to indicate the current game turn. Once the final (twenty-fifth) turn is completed, victory is determined. There are also several spaces that indicate the likelihood of Jonathan Harker's return to London.


1.1.4 **Action Phase Track** — Above the Turn track is a two-space track to note if the hunters are completing their regular or bonus actions for the turn. Only hunters without bites may perform a bonus action.

1.1.5 **Hunter Status Tracks** — Along the left edge of the game board are seven Hunter Status tracks. Each track is comprised of three spaces. These spaces are used to hold either secular and occult weapons or bite markers that result from combat with the undead. When a hunter receives a third bite, they "turn" and become vampires themselves. A small number is noted beneath each space that indicates how many locations a hunter may move during the Action segment of the game turn, according to the number of bites received.

1.1.5.1 **Special Abilities** — Several hunters have a mnemonic icon at the beginning of their tracks that indicate a special ability:

 **Doctor Bag** — Both Van Helsing and Seward are capable of performing transfusions that may remove a Bite marker from a hunter in their shared location.

 **Carriage** — The wealthy Holmwood has a carriage that allows hunters that share a location with him to move further as a group.

 **Mustang** — The Texan Morris rides a mustang, which allows him to move much further than other hunters during a turn.

1.1.5.2 **Home Locations** — With one exception, each hunter is noted with an icon that indicates his or her home location. For instance, Mina Murray's is Islington, while Holmwood's is Belgravia. Van Helsing has no home area as he is initially placed with a hunter upon his arrival. He shares all home spaces as his own. These home locations also act as "safe spaces" to which hunters flee (if able) following a failed combat.

- 1.1.5.3 **Lucy Westenra** — The fight against Dracula begins with the discovery of Lucy’s first bite. Because of this, the first space on her Status track is a bite that cannot be healed.
- 1.1.6 **Buda-Pesth** — This is a special holding area where Jonathan Harker starts the game. Harker remains in this space until he manages to return to London on his own or is rescued by Mina.
- 1.1.7 **Arrival Track** — Several hunters are not immediately available at the start of the game. These are either placed on this track during setup (Morris and Van Helsing) or at some point during the game (Jonathan Harker and possibly others due to events occurring during game play). During each turn, hunters advance along this track as their travels bring them closer to London.
- 1.1.8 **Dracula Strength Track** — The Dracula strength track is used to indicate Dracula’s strength during the game. A marker is moved up and down the track as he is healed or wounded, respectively, as part of combat and subjected to daylight as his plague is spread. *The number to the right of the slash in each box of the track notes Dracula’s current strength.*
- 1.1.9 **Cleansed Plague** — A space on the map is reserved for Coffin markers that are removed from the game board during play. Discarded markers are not returned to Carfax Abbey.

1.2 Game Markers

A collection of game markers is provided to keep track of what’s going on during the game as well as provide random effects that ensures each game is a different challenge. The various game markers are described below.

- 1.2.1 **Turn Markers** — These markers are used on the Turn track to note both the current turn as well as the time of day in which that turn’s action takes place. One marker represents a night turn, while the other represents a day turn. Each marker is double sided to indicate the number of consecutive turns that occur under that condition.
- 1.2.2 **Action Marker** — This marker is used on the Action track to note if hunters are performing standard or bonus actions.
- 1.2.3 **Plague/Coffin Markers** — These markers are placed hand-side up to indicate the plague spreading from Carfax Abbey. Plague markers are eventually flipped to their Coffin sides. Coffin markers are noted with a combat bonus used by the undead at that location.
- 1.2.4 **Rumor/Miasma Markers** — These markers are placed as the result of searches or random events. They are initially placed with their Rumor side showing. Unresolved Rumors are flipped to their Miasma side (and then replaced with Plague markers).

GAME MARKER EXAMPLES



1.2.5 **Weapon Markers** — These items are retrieved and used by hunters to fight the legions of the undead. Some of these may only be used once, while others may be used until lost or transferred to other hunters. There are two categories of weapons:

1.2.5.1 **Secular Weapons** — These are run-of-the-mill weapons like Daggers, Kukri Knives, and Revolvers. Their use may drive away a vampire, but will not kill one. All may be used multiple times.

1.2.5.2 **Occult Weapons** — These items hold religious significance and are harmful towards the undead. Some may be used multiple times, while others are used once and then discarded.

☞ **Multiple-use** — Crucifix

☞ **Single-use** — Garlic Wreath, Holy Water, Host, Wooden Stakes

1.2.6 **Bite Markers** — The reverse of each Weapon marker indicates a bite. A weapon held by a hunter that loses a combat flips the weapon to its Bite side. Bites are applied from left to right on the hunter's status track. A hunter that sustains a bite but is not carrying any weapons pulls a Bite marker from the Search Bag (replacing the drawn weapon type from Inventory, if possible, see 6.1.2.1). If a Rumor/Miasma marker is drawn, return it to the bag and place a Garlic Wreath marker on its Bite side on the hunter's status track.

1.2.7 **Standeeds** — The game includes eight standees. Carefully insert these into the laser cut bases so that they can be used upright. These standees represent the seven hunters (blue bases) and Renfield (the black base).

1.2.8 **Vampires** — Each of the hunters (excluding Van Helsing) has a matching vampire marker. When a hunter is turned (received a third bite), remove his or her standee from the map and place the matching vampire markers in the next open space on the Vampire Display on the Play Mat. Dracula also has a Vampire marker that is used on his strength track. Van Helsing kills himself rather than be turned, so simply remove his standee if he receives a third bite.

1.3 Play Mat

The Play Mat provides a convenient place to position the Event deck and Discard pile as well as an event that is active throughout the turn. At the base of the mat is the Vampire Display used to determine which vampires are in play. Printed in the upper right corner of each vampire's space is a circled number indicating the creature's base combat strength (Dracula's is a question mark as his strength is indicated on his strength track). The three blank spaces are re-

served for hunters that are turned during combat. Several game processes and tables are also printed on the mat for convenience.

1.4 Inventory Mat

A mat is provided to organize the various markers used throughout the game. Each space is color coded to segregate secular weapons from occult weapons (which are collectively referred to as the item Inventory) and Rumor/Miasma markers. A space is also provided for markers that are discarded during play.

1.5 Event Deck

The Event Deck provides the engine that both generates random events and resolves challenges like plague spread and combat. Each card has multiple features.

1.5.1 **Time Check** — The upper left corner of each card shows an indication of night or day. This is used when determining the time status at the beginning of (most) turns.

1.5.2 **Event** — The middle of the card displays an event title and its descriptive text.

1.5.3 **Card ID** — At the bottom right corner of each card is the card's identification number. This number serves no purpose other than helping verify that the card deck is complete.

1.5.4 **Random Numbers** — At the bottom of the card are five random number columns noted from 2 to 6. Each of these columns has an equal distribution of values from one to the column number within the whole Event deck. For instance, the 2 column has an even distribution of 1s and 2s (thirty each) while the 6 column has an even distribution of 1s, 2s, 3s, 4s, 5s, and 6s (ten each). Whenever the rules or an event calls for a random selection, use these columns to resolve that selection.

EVENT CARD DIAGRAM



Hunter Home Locations

MINA MURRAY



4

2 1

DISCARDED COFFINS

JONATHAN HARKER



4

2 1

1



PADDINGTON

2



ST. MARKEDONE



ST. PANCRAS

Hunter Move Rates

DOCTOR SEWARD



+

2 1

TRANSFUSION ATTEMPT
1st Bite: 1-5 / 2nd Bite: 1-2

10



PADDINGTON

9



HOLBORN

8



CLERKENWELL

Hunter Status Tracks

LUCY WESTERNA



3

1

11



BELGRAVIA



ST. JAMES

Hunter Special Ability

ARTHUR HOLMWOOD



11

3 2

25



MAYFAIR

12



THE STRAND

QUINCEY MORRIS



24

4 2

24



CHELSEA

22



LAMBETH



GREENWICH

VAN HELSING



2

1

TRANSFUSION ATTEMPT
1st Bite: 1-2 / 2nd Bite: 1-4

23



WANDSWORTH & BATTERSEA

23



WANDSWORTH & BATTERSEA

ACTION



Turn Track

AUGUST, 1890

SEPTEMBER, 1890

11	1	13	2	15	3	17	4	19	5	21	6	23	7	25	8	27	9	29	10	31	11	1	2	12	3	4	13
												JH1	24		26		28		30							JH2	

Plague of Dracula

Game Design by Mike Nagel

Plague Marker Holding Box

Buda-Pesth Holding Area

ARRIVAL TRACK

Renfield Holding Boxes

Arrival Track

Dracula Strength Track

Action Phase Boxes

PHASE

BONUS

TRANSFUSION ATTEMPT
1st Bite: 1-3 / 2nd Bite: 1-2

Use the red values if Dr. Seward is present

Count Dracula

6/2 **5/1** **4/1** **3/1** **2/0** **1/0**

9/3 **8/2** **7/2**

6 **5** **4** **2**

BUDA-PESTH

ARRIVAL TRACK

6 **5** **4** **2**

PHASE

BONUS

3 **6** **8** **10** **12** **14** **16** **18** **20** **22** **24** **26** **28**

5 **7** **9** **11** **13** **15** **17** **19** **21** **23** **25** **27** **29**

by Mike Nagel

NOTE — There are many instances in which a player needs to determine a target at random, such as a hunter to attack or a location for plague spread. This is done by counting the number of options and assigning a value to each option up to that number. For instance, if there are three possible locations for a plague marker placement, the spaces would be numbered: Space 1, Space 2, and Space 3. The selected option is then determined by drawing a random number using the column equal to the number of options. In the case of three spaces, the 3 column would be used and the column's value indicates the option chosen at random, Space 1, 2, or 3. In the rare case that there are more than six options, organize the options as evenly as possible into groups of options, randomly determine which group is used and then which option within that group is selected.

1.5.5 **Mnemonics** — Above the 4, 5, and 6 random number columns are three mnemonics. The coffin indicates the column to use when checking for a vampire attack. The bat indicates the column used to resolve combat. The die indicates the column used when resolving a mechanic that refers to that symbol.



1.5.6 **Deck Reshuffling** — The Event deck should not be reshuffled until a game mechanic requiring the draw of a card and the deck has been expended, or if required to do so according to the text of a random event. When reshuffling, all cards (including those played that may have caused the reshuffling or are currently “active”) are shuffled into a new Event deck.

1.6 Optional Die

Rather than drawing a card when resolving a die-based mechanic, the optional six-sided die may be rolled, instead. Using the optional die reduces the number of times the Event deck is reshuffled during a game (usually four or five times), but greatly increases chaos in the game.



2.0 GAME SETUP



“But we are face to face with duty; and in such case must we shrink? For me, I say, no; but then I am old, and life, with his sunshine, his fair places, his song of birds, his music and his love, lie far behind. You others are young. Some have seen sorrow; but there are fair days yet in store. What say you?”

— Van Helsing, Chapter XVIII

This rules section describes how to set up *Plague of Dracula* prior to play. Begin by laying out the game board and place the Play Mat and the Inventory Mat to the left, right, or other convenient configuration. The diagram on pages 6 and 7 indicate the initial setup.

2.1 **Hunter Placement** — Other than Jonathan Harker (see below), place each hunter in their respective home locations (per the Home Location icons on the hunter status tracks). To summarize:

☠ **Mina Murray** — Islington (4)

☠ **Doctor Seward** — Purfleet Asylum

☠ **Lucy Westenra** — St. Pancras (3)

☠ **Arthur Holmwood** — Belgravia (11)

2.2 **Arrival Track** — Place Quincey Morris (with a revolver and kukri knife on his status track) and Van Helsing in the 3 and 1 spaces, respectively.

2.3 **Buda-Pesth** — Place Jonathan Harker in the Buda-Pesth holding box (where he is convalescing after his escape from Transylvania).

2.4 **Renfield** — Place Renfield in the holding box at Purfleet Asylum.

2.5 **Turn Markers** — Place the Action marker on the first space of the Action Phase track. Place the Night and Day markers near the first space of the Turn track (the marker initially used is determined when play starts).

2.6 **Dracula Strength** — Place the Dracula marker on the 10 space of his strength track.

2.7 **Plague Markers** — Mix these markers up Coffin-side down and stack them in (or near if the stack is too unwieldy) the Carfax Abbey location holding box.

2.8 **Marker Inventory** — Stack the secular and occult weapons by type into individual stacks. An Inventory mat is provided to keep them organized. This collection of markers is referred to collectively as the marker Inventory.

- 2.9 **Rumors** — Place a stack of Rumor/Miasma markers nearby. *A space is provided on the inventory mat for convenience, but these markers are not part of the Inventory.*
- 2.10 **Search Bag** — Remove four Daggers, one Kukri Knife, one Revolver, and one Rumor/Miasma marker from Inventory and place them into the drawstring bag. This bag is referred to as the Search Bag.
- 2.11 **Event Deck** — Shuffle the Event Deck and place it in its box on the Play Mat.

3.0 SEQUENCE OF PLAY



“We were prepared for some unpleasantness, for as we were opening the door a faint, malodorous air seemed to exhale through the gaps, but none of us ever expected such an odour as we encountered.”

— *Jonathan Harker, Chapter XIX*

Once the game has been set up, play is ready to begin. The game is played out through a series of twenty-five turns (possibly followed by a Final Confrontation between Dracula and the surviving hunters). Each turn is broken down into nine distinct segments. Each segment must be completed in the order described. However, some segments may be bypassed if they cannot be completed (e.g. Plague Spread after all Plague markers have been placed). Once the sequence has been completed, a turn is over. Each segment is described below.

3.1 Time Check

Reveal the top card from the Event deck and check its Time status indicator in the upper left corner. If the result is:

- 3.1.1 **Night** — Replace the Day marker on the Turn track with the Night 1 marker. If the Night 1 marker is already on the track, flip it to its Night 2 side.
- 3.1.2 **Day** — Replace the Night marker on the Turn track with the Day 1 marker. If the Day 1 marker is already on the track, flip it to its Day 2 side.
- 3.1.3 **Extended Period** — If the Turn marker is on its Night 2 or Day 2 side, do not draw a Time check card. Instead, replace the marker with its opposite on its 1 side (Day 2 for Night 1 or Night 2 for Day 1. Additionally:
- 3.1.3.1 **Extended Day** — Move Dracula’s strength marker down one space on his track. If already in the 1 space, remove any one Plague marker. If no Plague markers are available to remove, there is no additional effect.


- 3.1.3.2 **Extended Night** — Move Dracula’s strength marker up one space on his track. If already on the 10 space, Dracula attacks the hunter with the most bites. If tied, he attacks Lucy Westenra before checking randomly for a victim.

3.2 Arrival Advance

Move each hunter on the arrival track up one space. A hunter in the 6 space is placed as follows:

- 3.2.1 **Quincey Morris** — Place Morris in Chelsea (24). Add a Revolver and a Kukri Knife from Inventory to his status track *during setup*.
- 3.2.2 **Van Helsing** — Place Van Helsing with any hunter. Add any three occult weapons from Inventory to his status track upon his placement on the game board. Also, add four Garlic Wreaths and two each of Crucifix, Host, Holy Water, and Wooden Stakes to the Search Bag.
- 3.2.3 **Other Hunters** — Other hunters may be pushed onto the Arrival track through random events (including Morris and Van Helsing following their first arrival). These arrive at their home locations if free of Plague or Coffin markers. Otherwise, they arrive at any home locations or with any hunter if all home locations are marked with Plague or Coffins.

3.3 Renfield Status

Renfield, Dracula’s bug-eating minion, is located in either Purfleet Asylum or Carfax Abbey. Each location notes random results that move him from one location to the other. Draw a card from the Event deck and check the  result. If that value falls within the spread of numbers shown at his current location, move him to the other location. If both Renfield and Dr Seward are at Purfleet Asylum when the status check is made, use the 1-2 option, thus making it harder for Renfield to slip away.

NOTE — As the number spreads show, it is easier for Renfield to escape from Purfleet than it is for the white-coated orderlies to capture him. While at Carfax, Renfield is considered “out” and will affect some key events occurring on the map, despite his standee not actually moving.

3.4 Event Draw

Draw a card from the Event deck and complete the event as described by its text. If the effects of the event last throughout the turn, place the card in the “Active Event” space of the Play Mat. Otherwise, discard the card after completing the event.

NOTE — The text of some of the events may run contrary to the standard rules presented here. In these cases, the event text takes priority.

3.5 Harker Arrival

Beginning on the seventh turn, there is a chance that Jonathan Harker is sufficiently recovered from his escape from Dracula's Carpathian lair to resume his journey back to London.

- 3.5.1 **Harker Arrival Value** — On the seventh turn, this value is set to 1 and remains so until it increases to 2 on the thirteenth turn and then 3 on the sixteenth turn.
- 3.5.2 **Status Check** — Draw a card from the Event deck and note the value in the 🎲 column. If the result is equal to or less than the current Status value, move Harker's standee from Buda-Pesth to the first box on the Arrival track. From that point on, Harker's movement is resolved using Arrival Advance and the Harker Arrival segment is ignored for the remainder of the game.
- 3.5.3 **Harker Health** — After determining that Harker is leaving Buda-Pesth, draw another card from the Event deck and check the 🎲 column. If the value is a 1, Harker has completely recovered from his ordeal and has no bites. If the value is a 6, he has suffered two bites. Any other value results in one bite.
- 3.5.4 **Mina's Travels** — This event allows Mina to rescue Harker automatically. If drawn, the event places both Mina and Harker together on the Arrival track and voids the need to check for Harker's status. Harker's health status must still be determined, per 3.5.3 above.

3.6 Plague Spread

During this segment, Dracula's plague spreads into new locations in London. This segment occurs every turn, until all the Plague markers have been placed. Once all of the markers are placed, this segment is ignored. Review the Plague Spread section of the rules that describes this process.

3.7 Action Segment

During this segment, hunters may perform one of several different actions. They may perform the same action. They may also perform no action, if their condition does not allow it. Once each hunter has had the opportunity to perform an action, each healthy hunter (that has no bites) may perform a bonus action. Bonus actions are a limited set of regular actions. Some actions, both standard and bonus, may initiate combat. Review the Actions rules section for information on how actions may be completed.

3.8 Marker Adjustment

After all actions have been completed, complete the following housekeeping steps:

- 3.8.1 **Unresolved Miasma** — Replace any unresolved Miasma markers with Plague markers or Coffin markers if in a location occupied by one or more hunters. A placed Coffin marker immediately triggers combat.

- 3.8.2 **Unresolved Rumors** — Flip unresolved Rumors to their Miasma sides.
- 3.8.3 **Crosses** — Restore any crosses used in combat to an upright position.
- 3.8.4 **Active Event** — If an Active Event was in play, discard the card.

3.9 End of Turn

Move the Turn marker into the next box on the turn track. Per rule 3.1.3 (Extended Period), exchange the Turn marker and adjust Dracula's strength, if necessary.

4.0 RENFIELD



“I shall have to ... call him a zoöphagous (life-eating) maniac; what he desires is to absorb as many lives as he can.”

— Dr John Seward, Chapter VI

The bug-eating Renfield lives to serve the Master. During the game, Renfield bounces between captivity at Purfleet Asylum and servitude at Carfax Abbey. When Renfield is at Carfax, he provides Dracula with several advantages.

- 4.1 **Crossing the Thames** — If Renfield is at Carfax Abbey, Plague markers may spread to locations south of the Thames. Additionally, hunters may be attacked south of the Thames (they otherwise may not be attacked unless a Plague marker has been placed south of the Thames).
- 4.2 **Protection** — When Renfield is at Carfax, he supports Dracula in combat. If Dracula loses in combat, Renfield absorbs the hit and is sent back to Purfleet Asylum (see 7.2.6.2).
- 4.3 **Initiative** — When Renfield is at Carfax Abbey, the undead strike first in combat.



4.4 **Final Confrontation** — If Renfield is at Carfax Abbey when the game ends, he allows Dracula to ignore one hit during the final confrontation in the same manner as a turned hunter. (see 10.3.4).

5.0 PLAGUE SPREAD



“The flapping against the windows, the distant voices which seemed so close to me, the harsh sounds that came from I know not where and commanded me to do I know not what”

— *Lucy Westenra, Chapter XI*

During the sixth step of the sequence of play, plague may spread through the placement of Plague markers. Markers are drawn from one or more stacks created during the setup process and may not be examined when placed.

5.1 **★ Plague Strength** — The number of Plague markers placed is based upon Dracula’s strength at that moment. Draw a card from the Event deck and examine the number under the column equal to Dracula’s strength. The resulting value is the number of markers placed during that turn. *At least one marker is always placed, if available.*

5.2 **Plague Placement** — Plague markers are placed according to the list of priorities noted below. Each priority must be fulfilled before the next priority can be selected. Plague may not be placed into a location marked with Rumor or Miasma.

5.2.1 **Surrounded** — A location that is *surrounded* by adjacent locations marked with Plague or Coffin markers or Carfax Abbey must receive a new Plague marker first, regardless of occupation by a hunter.

5.2.2 **Adjacency** — A plague marker must then be placed in an unoccupied location that is adjacent to a location that is already marked with a Plague or Coffin marker or Carfax Abbey. Plague markers may not be placed adjacent to markers placed during the current phase (no chaining of markers).

5.2.3 **Occupied Locations** — A Plague marker must then be placed on a location *occupied* by a hunter that is adjacent to a location already marked with a Plague or Coffin marker.

5.2.4 **Multiple Options** — It is likely that there are more locations available than there are Plague markers to place. In these instances, use the random number columns to determine the placement of each marker, as described in rule section 1.5.4 (Random Numbers).

5.3 **Combat Trigger** — Any Plague marker placed in an occupied location may immediately trigger combat. Flip the marker to its Coffin side and draw a card from the Event deck. If the value in the 4-column (the coffin mnemonic) is equal to or less than the number of coffins on the Coffin marker (one, two, or three), combat occurs immediately.

5.4 **Thames Limitation** — Plague cannot spread across the Thames without assistance. Plague markers may only spread south of the Thames (over a blue Connector Line) if Renfield is at Carfax Abbey or by Miasma (see 8.4).

PLAGUE SPREAD EXAMPLE

In the diagram, plague is spreading from the marked locations. Based upon Dracula’s strength of three, a card is drawn and it indicates that three Plague markers must be placed.

The first marker must be placed in Mile End Old Town (marked by the letter ‘A’) as it’s surrounded by Plague locations.

The next marker may go into one of six Plague adjacent areas (marked with a ‘B’). Since Renfield is at Carfax Abbey, these may extend south of the Thames. Note that since Mina is in Shoreditch, a marker may not be placed in that location, since there are other open locations. Each area is numbered and a card is drawn, checking the 6 column as there are six options. A value of six is drawn, so a marker is placed in Bermondsey (marked ‘B6’). This leaves five more locations for the third marker.

Another card is drawn and the value in the 5 column checked. The value is a three, so the third marker is placed in The Strand.



- 5.5 **Carfax Abbey** — The red Connector lines between Carfax Abbey and its three adjacent locations are there to show plague spread only. Movement is not allowed across these lines.

6.0 HUNTER ACTIONS



“First he fastened up the windows and latched them securely; next, taking a handful of the flowers, he rubbed them all over the sashes ... to ensure that every whiff of air that might get in would be laden with the garlic smell.”

— *Dr Seward, Chapter X*

During the Action segment, each hunter, regardless of his or her status, may perform one action. Following these actions, hunters that have no bites may perform one bonus action. Use the Action marker to note which type of action is being completed.

6.1 Standard Actions

Standard Actions may be completed by any hunter, regardless of their status (with some exceptions, as noted). Only one action may be taken by a hunter and all actions must be declared and completed in the following order: Cleansing, Searching, Item Management, Movement, Transfusions, Rumor/Miasma Resolution (i.e., all Cleansing attempts must occur before any Searches happen, which occurs before any Item Management, etc.).


- 6.1.1 **Cleansing** — Any hunters that occupy a location containing a Coffin marker may attempt to cleanse the location if at least one hunter holds a Garlic Wreath. All hunters in the location must participate in the Cleansing attempt (it constitutes their action). Declaring a cleansing attempt immediately triggers combat. If a hunter holding a Garlic Wreath survives the combat, discard the Coffin marker and replace it with the Garlic Wreath. The location is now immune to Plague.
- 6.1.2 **Searching** — A hunter may spend his or her action searching for weapons as long as they have at least one unmarked box on his or her status track. This may be done in one of three ways.
- 6.1.2.1 **★Search Bag** — *A hunter may always draw an item from the Search Bag when searching, but may only do so if occupying a location marked with a Coffin marker.* The item drawn from the bag is replaced in the bag with the same item from inventory, if available. If not available, place a Rumor/Miasma marker into the bag, instead. If a Rumor/Miasma marker is drawn, return it to the bag and immediately place a Rumor marker in the location occupied by the searching hunter. *If the Rumor marker cannot be placed or an item not returned to the bag, initiate combat in that location against the searching hunter.*
- 6.1.2.2 **★Secular Weapons** — A hunter occupying an unmarked or cleansed location may search for a secular weapon using the Secular Weapon search table on the Play Mat. Draw a card from the Event deck and check the  column. Look up the result on the table to determine what has been found. Note that the result could require a pull from the Search Bag as described above. If a Rumor/Miasma marker is drawn, place it in the unmarked location or return it to the Search Bag if the location has been cleansed (see 6.1.4). *If the chosen item is not available in inventory, no item is found.*
- 6.1.2.3 **★Occult Weapons** — Once Van Helsing has arrived in London, a hunter occupying an unmarked or cleansed location may search for an occult weapon using the Occult Weapon search table on the Play Mat. Draw a card from the Event deck and check the  column. Look up the result on the table to determine what has been found. *If the chosen item is not available in inventory, no item is found.*
- 6.1.2.4 **Holding Weapons** — A hunter may hold a number of items on their status tracks. A found item is placed on the leftmost space that is not occupied by a bite marker. A hunter without an open space on their status tracks cannot search.
- 6.1.3 **Item Management** — Once hunters start searching for weapons, they may run out of spaces on their status tracks to hold them. They may then spend an action performing one of the following:
- 6.1.3.1 **Return Weapon** — The hunter may return any number of weapons to the Inventory. Any weapons kept are immediately shifted to the left as many boxes as possible.
- 6.1.3.2 **Give Weapon** — The hunter may transfer a single weapon to another hunter in their shared location. Receiving a weapon in this fashion does not constitute an action. Several hunters in the same location may all give weapons to each other simultaneously, thus allowing hunters already holding three weapons to swap them around.
- 6.1.3.2 **Rearrange Weapons** — A hunter may reorganize the weapons on their status track. Noting that bites are placed from left to right on a status track, the leftmost weapons are more vulnerable to elimination in combat.
- 6.1.4 **Movement** — As a standard action, a hunter can move a number of adjacent locations equal to the small number noted under the first space of their status track that does not hold a bite marker. For example, Mina Murray can move up to two locations when she has no bites, or just one space if she has been bitten once. A hunter with two bites cannot move at all.
- 6.1.4.1 **Obstacles** — A hunter must stop upon entering a location containing a Plague or Coffin marker.

6.1.4.2 **Plague Conversion** — A hunter that enters a location containing a Plague marker immediately flips the marker to its Coffin side and checks for combat by drawing a card from the Event deck and checking the coffin column. If the result is equal to or less than the number of coffins noted on the marker, combat occurs immediately.

6.1.4.3 **Mustang Movement** — Quincey Morris rides a mustang that allows him greater mobility, hence his increased Movement rate.

6.1.4.4 **Carriage Movement** — Arthur Holmwood travels in style in a fancy carriage. This allows him to transport up to three additional hunters with him. The hunters must all begin in the same location. Additionally, hunters that cannot move due to suffering two bites may still be transported with Holmwood. This constitutes a move action for all hunters involved.


NOTE — Moving a hunter alone into a Plague location can result in an unpleasant surprise. Moving multiple hunters with Holmwood can help mitigate this situation.

6.1.5 **Transfusions** — If Doctor Seward or Van Helsing share a location with a bitten hunter or the hunter is located at Purfleet Asylum, an attempt to heal the bite may be made. Next to each clinician's name is a chart indicating the success of a  draw from the Event deck, based upon the bite being healed. If the drawn value falls within the range indicated, remove the bite marker from the hunter's status track. Receiving a transfusion also costs an action.

6.1.5.1 **Transfusion Order** — A second bite must always be healed before the first bite. Any weapons held by the hunter are shifted to the left as each bite is healed.

6.1.5.2 **Multiple Transfusions** — If both clinicians share a location with a hunter that has two bites, both may attempt transfusions. Two successful attempts removes both bites. If the first attempt fails, the second may attempt to heal the same bite again.

6.1.5.3 **Self Transfusions** — As long as a clinician shares a location with a hunter with no bites, that clinician may attempt to transfuse themselves.

6.1.6 **Rumors and Miasma** — A hunter that occupies a location containing a Rumor/Miasma marker may attempt to resolve it by drawing a card from the Event deck and checking the  column. Reference the result on the Rumor Resolution chart on the Play Mat.

6.1.6.1 **Search** — Draw a marker from the Search Bag as if a search were being performed.

6.1.6.2 **Rumor False** — Nothing occurs. Discard the marker.

6.1.6.3 **Attack!** — An attack occurs. Resolve the combat normally.

6.1.6.4 **Coffin** — Place a Coffin marker in the location. This placement does not trigger combat.

6.2 Bonus Actions

Bonus Actions may only be undertaken by hunters with no bites (also, with some exceptions). These actions are italicized on the Play Mat listing.

6.2.1 **Cleansing** — A bonus cleansing follows the same rules as a standard cleansing.


6.2.2 **Searching** — A bonus search follows the same rules as a standard search.

6.2.3 **Movement** — Bonus movement follows the same rules as standard movement, but hunters may only move to an adjacent location.


6.2.4 **Rumors and Miasma** — A bonus resolution of a Rumor or Miasma follows the rules for a standard resolution of this type.

ACTION SEGMENT EXAMPLE

During this Action segment, only Mina, Dr Seward, Holmwood, and Morris are available to take actions (Lucy may have turned and the other hunters not yet arrived in London). Mina, who has received a first (and only) bite, and Dr Seward share the same location. Although this situation is hypothetical, note that the order in which hunters take actions may be important.

1. Morris has a space available on his Status track and so attempts a Search. Since Van Helsing has not arrived yet, he may only search for Secular items. He is in an open location (no markers of any kind) and so may check the Secular Weapon table. Morris draws a card and checks the  column, and receives a 4 result (requiring a draw from the Search bag). Morris pulls a Rumor marker and places it in his location. The Rumor marker is replaced in the Search bag by another marker from Inventory.

2. Holmwood takes his carriage and moves three spaces to a location with a Plague marker. The marker is immediately flipped to reveal a two-coffins. A card is drawn and the value in the coffin column is checked. A 2 is drawn, resulting immediately in combat. How this battle is resolved is up to the Combat process.

3. Dr Seward attempts to perform a Transfusion on Mina. His chance of removing the bite is a one through five (per his Transfusion table). Seward draws a card and checks the  column and gets a 2. Mina discards the Bite marker. Each hunter has performed their action for the turn.

7.0 COMBAT

“Arthur took the stake and the hammer, and when once his mind was set on action his hands never trembled nor even quivered. Van Helsing opened his missal and began to read, and Quincey and I followed as well as we could. Arthur placed the point over the heart, and as I looked I could see its dint in the white flesh. Then he struck with all his might.”

— *Dr John Seward, Chapter XVI*

There are various points throughout the game in which hunters come face to face with Dracula and his undead minions. Ensuing combat results in either wounds to the hunters in the form of bites or the destruction or driving off of the undead threat. These rules describe how combat occurs and is resolved.


7.1 Combat Triggers

Combat occurs when one or more hunters come into contact with a threat. These instances are referred to as combat triggers and include the following:

- 7.1.1 **Event Cards** — Some events immediately trigger combat against a randomly determined hunter or within a randomly determined location. Examples include the “They Must Feed” and “A Dark Mist” events.
- 7.1.2 **Rumors** — The random resolution of a Rumor or Miasma may result in an attack on hunters in the Rumor’s location. Additionally, drawing a Rumor/Miasma marker that cannot be placed results in immediate combat against the Hunter performing the search.
- 7.1.3 **Plague Conversion** — When a hunter enters a Plague space and flips the marker to its Coffin side, combat may occur. See 6.1.4.2.
- 7.1.4 **Cleansing** — When a hunter attempts to cleanse a location, combat occurs immediately. Once a location has been cleansed, combat may never occur there (any events that would otherwise trigger combat in that location are ignored). Any hunters that may be randomly selected for an attack are ignored if occupying a cleansed location.

7.2 Combat Resolution

When combat is triggered in a location, it is resolved immediately. All hunters in the location are involved in the combat and combat cancels any untaken actions by those hunters. Combat continues in successive rounds until either the undead attacker or the hunters are driven off. The following steps must be taken to resolve a round of combat.

- 7.2.1 **The Undead Attacker** — Unless specified by an Event card, draw randomly to determine which undead creature is attacking. Draw an Event card and refer to the column equal to the number of foes on the Vampire Display. The resulting number refers to the attacking creature. The base strength of the attacking creature depends upon its nature:
 - 7.2.1.1 **Creatures of the Night** — The base strength is an unmodified one. This value is never increased. Their base strength on the Player Aid Card is colored black to note this exception.
 - 7.2.1.2 **The Infected** — These are the lesser victims of vampire attacks. Their base strength is one.
 - 7.2.1.3 **Vampires** — These are the hunters that have suffered three bites and have turned. Their base strength is two.
 - 7.2.1.4 **Dracula** — Dracula’s base strength is derived by the position of the marker on his strength track. If Dracula’s strength is at zero (the last two spaces on his strength track), he is replaced in combat by the Infected. If the Infected succeeds in biting a hunter, immediately draw an Event card and check the  column. Increase Dracula’s strength by the result.
 - 7.2.1.5 **Undead Strength Modifiers** — Increase the attacker’s strength by the bonus noted on a Coffin marker in the combat location or the location triggered by an unplaced Rumor. Strength may also be modified by an active event.
- 7.2.2 **Attacked Hunter** — If the attack was triggered by a search, the searching hunter is attacked first. Otherwise, the hunter with the most bites is always attacked first. In the case of ties, Lucy Westenra is attacked if in the location. Otherwise, the player selects the hunter (he or she is not chosen randomly). If the first hunter flees or is turned after a round of combat, a second hunter is selected as if the attack was not triggered by a search.
- 7.2.3 **Hunter Strength** — A hunter’s base strength is one. A hunter with two bites may not take part in combat, but may be the target. Increase this value as follows:
 - 7.2.3.1 **Secular Weapons** — Add the highest strength bonus provided by all Secular weapons held by all the hunters in the location (one weapon).
 - 7.2.3.2 **Occult Weapons** — Add one to the hunter’s strength if a hunter in the location holds Holy Water. This marker is discarded after its use. If a weapon is removed from a space to the left of other weapons held, the other weapons are immediately shifted to the left to close gaps on the hunter’s status track.
- 7.2.4 **Attack Cancellation** — If a hunter in the location holds a Cross, it may be used to cancel the undead’s



current attack (the hunter still attacks). Tip the Cross marker on its side to indicate its use.

7.2.5 Scattering the Host — If a hunter in the location holds the Host, it may be discarded to cancel all attacks in the location. Hunters have one opportunity to damage Dracula or kill a vampire before all flee. Discard the Host marker after its use.

7.2.6 Combat Resolution — Combat is resolved by drawing a card from the Event deck and checking the value in the 5 (♠) column. If the result is equal to or less than the side's modified strength, a hit is applied. Combat is not simultaneous. The hunters draw a card first, unless Renfield is at Carfax Abbey (in which case the undead draw a result first).

***NOTE** — It is possible that either side's strength is increased to a five or more, which would ordinarily result in an automatic hit. In these cases, a hit fails if the color of a 5 result is black.*

7.2.6.1 ★Hunter Hits — A hunter that is hit suffers a bite. Place a bite marker in the leftmost non-bite space on his or her status track. If a weapon occupies that space, flip the marker to its bite side (the weapon is lost). The bitten hunter then flees to his or her home location if able (not marked with a Plague or Coffin marker) or any other home location if unable (or a location occupied by another hunter if all home locations contain Plague or Coffin markers). Any other hunters in the combat location may follow the fleeing hunter. If this is the hunter's *third* bite, remove the hunter's standee and place the matching vampire marker in the next available slot on the

Vampire Display *and any remaining hunters may flee to any home location or location occupied by another hunter.* **Exception:** *If a hunter is bitten in a home location without Plague or Coffin markers, the hunter remains in place rather than fleeing, but is out of the combat.*

7.2.6.2 Undead Hits — A hit upon an undead attacker drives it away. If Dracula was attacking, move his strength marker one space down his strength track, unless Renfield is at Carfax Abbey. In this case, the hit is ignored and Renfield is moved to Purfleet Asylum. In this fashion, Dracula may stick around for another round of combat, despite being hit by a hunter.

7.2.7 Ending Combat — If after any round of combat at least one hunter and the undead still occupy the combat location, fight additional rounds of combat as described above. If only the undead remain standing, they fade away to harass the hunters at a later date or location. If only the hunters are left standing:

7.2.7.1 Evil Flees — Neither Creatures of the Night nor the Infected can be destroyed, per se. There are a lot more of them haunting London. Dracula cannot be killed until the Final Confrontation. He has fled into the darkness.

7.2.7.2 Wooden Stakes — If the hunters have defeated a turned vampire, it may be destroyed by discarding a Wooden Stakes marker held by a surviving hunter. The vampire marker is removed from the Vampire Display.

COMBAT EXAMPLE

Morris, Harker, and Van Helsing have attempted to cleanse a coffin-marked location. Morris is armed with a Revolver (+3), a Kukri Knife (+2), and a Garlic Wreath. Harker is armed with a Dagger (+1) and a vial of Holy Water. Van Helsing is armed with a Crucifix and Wooden Stakes. The coffin marker provides a +2 strength bonus. Renfield is in Carfax Abbey.

1. There are five undead options on the Vampire Display (having turned Lucy and Holmwood). A card is drawn and the 5 column checked. A draw of a 4 determines that Lucy is the attacking vampire. Her base strength is a two, which is increased to a four because of the coffin bonus.

2. Harker throws his Holy Water at Lucy, providing a +1 bonus to the hunter's strength. The Holy Water marker is discarded.

3. Since Morris holds the Garlic Wreath, his action initiated the combat. His strength is a base of one, plus three for the best weapon available (the Revolver), plus another one for Harker's Holy Water for a total of five.

4. The combat starts by Van Helsing tipping his crucifix, which cancels Lucy's first attack (who would strike first, since Renfield is at large). Morris draws a card and checks his strength against the Bat (5) column. The result is a black 5, which is a miss.

5. The next round begins. This time, Morris's strength is a four, since the Holy Water has been used. Lucy strikes first and draws a five. A miss! Morris now draws a six. A miss! This round of misses is followed by several more rounds where neither side can successfully get a hit in.

6. Another round starts and Lucy draws a two. A hit! The left-most weapon on Morris's track is flipped over to its Bite side. Morris must retreat and moves back to his home location of Chelsea. Harker and Van Helsing have the option of following Morris to safety, but they are determined to stay and defeat Lucy. Harker takes over the combat duties, but his strength is now just one plus his Dagger for a total of two.

7. Another round starts and Lucy draws a six. A miss! Harker now draws a one. A hit! This ends the combat. Since Van Helsing is carrying Wooden Stakes, Lucy is eliminated and removed from the Vampire Display (assuming Holmwood occupies the 5 spot on the track, his marker is moved down to the 4 spot).

8. Since Morris was defeated in combat and was forced to retreat, he took the Garlic Wreath with him. This means that the location cannot be cleansed following the successful combat. The other hunters are going to have to search for another Garlic Wreath before they can tackle that location again.

8.0 RUMORS AND MIASMA



“There was an earthy smell, as of some dry miasma, which came through the fouler air. But as to the odour itself, how shall I describe it? [B]ut it seemed as though corruption had become itself corrupt.”

— Jonathan Harker, Chapter XIX

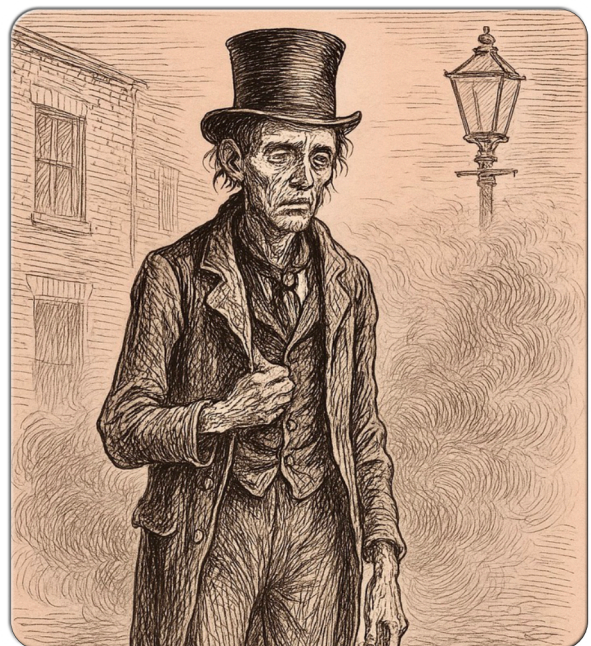
Rumors are whisperings and reports of strange goings on in London. If left unheeded, they may spawn terrors in the heart of the city, making the hunters' efforts to stave off the darkness a lot harder. Rumors are formed in two ways:

8.1 Strange Rumors

These are random event cards that refer to specific locations on the game board. There is one event for each location. When one of these events is revealed, place a Rumor marker in its location. If the location already holds a marker:

8.1.1 **Tainted Location** — If the space is already marked with a Plague or Coffin marker, the event is ignored and an attack against a random hunter happens immediately. Use the number of coffins on the marker in the rumored space (flip a Plague marker if necessary) as the attacker's strength modifier, not the targeted hunter's location.

EXAMPLE — Morris is in the Strand, which is marked with a +1 Coffin. The Islington Strange Rumor event is drawn, but Islington is already marked with a +3 Coffin. Morris is attacked in the Strand by a creature with a +3 bonus, rather than +1.




- 8.1.2 **Cleansed Location** — If the Rumor is to be placed in a cleansed location, the event is ignored and a Garlic Wreath is given to any hunter from inventory.
- 8.1.3 **Purfleet Asylum** — If a Rumor is drawn during a search within Purfleet Asylum, place the marker in any unmarked location adjacent to a Plague or Coffin marker.

8.2 Searching

Rumors can also occur as a result of searching in a location. If the Rumor marker is pulled from the Search Bag, place it in the searching hunter's location. If that location contains a Rumor or Miasma marker already, return the marker to the Search Bag with no further effect. If the location contains a Coffin marker, an attack immediately occurs.

★8.3 Rumor Resolution

As an action, a hunter may resolve a Rumor in his or her location. Doing so removes the marker, which is returned to the Inventory. Draw a card from the Event deck and reference its  value on the Rumor Resolution chart on the Play Mat to see what comes of the investigation. *If the resolution requires a hunter to search for an item and the hunter cannot accommodate the new item, the search is cancelled.*

★8.4 Miasma

During the Marker Adjustment segment, flip any unresolved Rumors to their Miasma sides (the local populace is beginning to feel the effects of evil in their midst). Miasma is resolved in the same fashion as a Rumor. During the Marker Adjustment segment, replace any Miasma markers with Plague markers (or Coffin markers if a hunter is in the space). *Replacing a Miasma marker in this fashion immediately triggers combat if a hunter is present in the location, and may occur south of the Thames regardless of Renfield's location.*

9.0 EVENTS

★An Event may be drawn from the Event deck during the Random Event segment each turn. The effects of some events may be in effect the entire turn. Place these events in the Active Event spot of the Play Mat for easy reference. Some of the text of the events contradict the game rules. In these cases, the Event card text takes precedence. *If an event cannot be completed, it is ignored.* Unless noted otherwise, events only affect hunters in London (including Purfleet Asylum). Some events may require some elaboration.

- 9.1 **Strange Rumors** (01-25) — These cards place Rumors in random locations around London. If left unheeded, they may convert to Plague or Coffin markers that can spread the plague further and faster.
- 9.2 **They Must Feed** (28-39) — These cards generate random attacks against the hunters. These attacks may earn the bonus of any Coffin markers in the attacked hunter's location.

- 9.3 **Mina's Travels** (47) — The love between Mina and Jonathan Harker is a key plot point of the novel *Dracula*. Therefore, if Mina is turned when Jonathan returns to London, Dracula has won. Players should pay special attention to Mina's condition throughout the game.

- 9.4 **The Thames** — When called for through a random event, hunters south of the Thames cannot be selected for combat unless either a Plague or Coffin marker has been placed in a location south of the Thames or if Renfield is at Carfax Abbey.

10.0 VICTORY OR LOSS

“It was like a miracle; but before our very eyes, and almost in the drawing of a breath, the whole body crumbled into dust and passed from our sight.”

— *Mina Harker, Chapter XXVII*

The game ends when either the hunters or Dracula achieve an automatic victory or following the last turn by completing the Final Confrontation.

10.1 Dracula Automatic Victory

Dracula achieves an automatic victory either by filling all locations on the game board with Plague or Coffin markers at the end of a turn, by having four turned hunters (one more than space is available on the Vampire Display) in play, by Mina having been turned when Harker returns to London, or if no hunters can participate in the Final Confrontation due to suffering too many bites.

10.2 Hunters Automatic Victory

The Hunters achieve an automatic victory if all the Coffin markers have been discarded from the game by the end of any turn.

10.3 Final Confrontation

If neither side has won an automatic victory by the end of the twenty-fifth (and final) turn, Dracula returns to Transylvania with the hunters in hot pursuit. A final battle against Dracula begins.

- 10.3.1 **Hunter Status** — To participate in the Final Confrontation, hunters may have no more than one bite.
- 10.3.2 **★Dracula's Health** — For every full five locations that remain marked with Plague or Coffin markers, increase Dracula's strength by one. Dracula's health does not exceed 10.



10.3.3 **Wooden Stakes Required** — To kill Dracula, at least one of the surviving hunters must hold Wooden Stakes. If none are held at the beginning of the Final Confrontation, each hunter may spend any number of rounds searching (one round includes a search by each hunter). Each round spent searching increases Dracula's strength by one. Hunters may spend as many rounds searching as they wish (they may acquire multiple sets of Wooden Stakes), until Dracula's strength reaches 10. They then may spend one more round searching. If they cannot find any Wooden Stakes, the game ends with a victorious Dracula (despite being chased from London, he can regroup and try again).

10.3.4 **★The Last Battle** — The hunters and Dracula battle out continuous rounds of combat. Each loss by Dracula lowers his strength. Each hit on a hunter causes a bite. Three bites eliminates a hunter. Eliminated hunters do not turn. Host does not have an

effect (it has rotted upon arriving at Dracula's lair). *Dracula may ignore one hit for every turned hunter that is still active, as well as Renfield if he is at Carfax Abbey.* All other combat rules apply. If all the hunters are eliminated, Dracula wins. If at least one hunter with Wooden Stakes survives after Dracula's strength reaches zero (the 2 space on his strength track), the hunters win.

11.0 PLAY OPTIONS



Plague of Dracula was designed to play solitaire across three to four hours. Here are a few play options.

11.1 Alternate Play Modes

If more than one person wants to play the game, here are options that allow up to four or five to play together.

11.1.1 **Multiplayer Cooperative** — Multiple players can split up the hunters into separate groups. Each player decides the actions of their own hunters. When taking actions, players alternate activating hunters. If a player's sole hunter is turned (or eliminated in Van Helsing's case), a player with two or more hunters must pass control of one to the hunterless player. Here are suggested hunter groupings:

☞ **2-Player** — Mina, Jonathan, Lucy, Morris / Holmwood, Seward, Van Helsing

☞ **3-Player** — Mina, Jonathan, Lucy / Seward, Morris / Holmwood, Van Helsing

☞ **4-Player** — Mina, Jonathan / Holmwood / Lucy, Morris / Seward, Van Helsing

Use the optional *Multiplayer Tracking Cards* in lieu of the Hunter Status Tracks so that players do not have to reach across the game board.

11.1.2 **Head to Head** — One player controls the hunters, while the other player controls Dracula. Using this option, Dracula draws the Plague markers, examines their coffin values and places them during the Plague Spread segment. Dracula selects the hunter attacked in the case of ties (unless an event card notes a specific hunter). Additionally, Dracula chooses which creatures on the Vampire Display attack and draws his own combat results. Each vampire may only attack once per turn (flip their markers over after an attack ... Dracula flips his strength marker). Creatures of the Night and the Infected may attack multiple times per turn, but must do so sequentially.

11.1.3 **Combination** — A game may do a combination on these two options, allowing up to a fifth player.

11.2 Shorter Games

A full game of *Plague of Dracula* takes roughly four hours to complete. Here are a couple of options for a shorter game if time is tight.

11.2.1 **Shorter Game** — The Shorter Game starts on Turn 7, when Harker has the first opportunity to arrive. After setting up the game per standard setup rules, make the following adjustments:

☞ Place Morris in Chelsea

☞ Place Van Helsing with Lucy Westenra

☞ Place Plague markers in Hackney (5), Bethnel Green (6), and Poplar (15).

☞ Place seven more Plague markers adjacent to previously placed Plague markers, including those placed as part of this process. These markers may not be placed in locations containing hunters. Additionally, no gaps can be formed within the Plague markers. They must be one solid mass.

☞ Each hunter may complete one search from the Search Bag (replacing any weapon drawn). If a Rumor marker is drawn, the hunter may select any item from Inventory.

☞ Start Turn 7.

11.2.2 **Mop-Up Game** — This is an even shorter game that starts when most Plague markers are already placed. The game starts on Turn 13. After setting up the game per standard setup rules, make the following adjustments:

☞ Place Lucy's vampire marker on the Vampire Display (Lucy has already been turned).

☞ Place all other hunters in setup locations as desired. Harker still begins in the Buda-Pesth holding area.

☞ Place Plague markers in Hackney (5), Bethnel Green (6), and Poplar (15).

☞ Place twelve more Plague markers adjacent to previously placed Plague markers, including those placed as part of this process. These markers may not be placed in locations containing hunters. Additionally, no gaps can be formed within the Plague markers. They must be one solid mass. This leaves ten locations available for Plague spread.

☞ Each hunter completes two searches from the Search Bag (replacing any weapon drawn). If a Rumor marker is drawn, add a bite to the hunter. Each hunter must complete one search before drawing the second.

☞ Start Turn 13.

11.3 Difficulty Level

Players can make the game a little easier or a little harder if this may enhance their play of the game. Consider these options:

11.3.1 **Easier Game** — For those wishing to make the game a little easier, do not automatically trigger combat during Cleansing. Instead, check for an attack using the coffin column as during Plague Conversion (6.1.1.2).

11.3.2 **Harder Game** — For those wishing to make the game a little harder, automatically trigger combat during Plague Conversion (6.1.1.2). Also, when on a Night 2 Turn marker, add an additional Plague to each spread result.

12.0 DESIGNER'S NOTES



It's not uncommon for me to be asked why I designed this or that game. Was there a specific inspiration? In most cases, I work on a design to resolve issues I may have with other games, either questioning mechanics, missing features that I might feel important to the subject matter, or just liking the

game enough to want to expand its design into new territory. In the case of **Plague of Dracula**, my inspiration was Robert Eggers' film **Nosferatu**. Despite some iffy writing, the film's atmosphere is stunning. The experience of watching that film got me thinking about Stoker's original tale, which is a favorite of mine. All this inspiration got the mental gears turning and the game popped out of my fevered brain nearly fully formed. I had never done a solitaire game before, and this seemed like a perfect opportunity to give it a try. After little tweaking here and there, I'm very happy with the resulting design and find it quite immersive.

One of the features of many solitaire games that I don't enjoy (and a key reason that I don't play a lot of them) is that they are chart heavy, forcing players to fight the system more than the foe. I wanted to make sure that these interactions would be as limited as possible. I believe I achieved this through the use of the event deck, which provides plenty of randomness without bogging down play. Particularly important are the random number columns that I've used in my **Off the Line** design (and stole from Courtney Allen's **Up Front**).

I wanted to ensure that the game evokes Stoker's vision and so focused on several key features of the classic tale. The story is presented in an epistolary fashion via letters and diary entries. This allowed me to determine that the meat of the tale takes place over roughly fifty days (from the time Lucy Westenra is first bitten to the final confrontation with the Count). Clearly, fifty turns would be excessive for a solitaire game (I'd surely be board after a while), so I settled on two-day turns. Given what can be accomplished in this span, the game takes about four hours to complete, which is just right. To vary when the action takes place during each two-day period, I opted to set the time of action randomly from turn to turn, with extended periods having a positive or negative effect on Dracula himself (who could operate during daylight, but was not comfortable doing so).

The map is based upon a listing and diagram of Victorian era districts within the Greater London area from the 1890s. Purists may well point out that the positioning of the locations may not align with the historical map of the city beneath them and that the home locations of some of the hunters (Lucy in particular) are off. Although I've endeavored to adhere to the source material as closely as possible, sometimes something has to give for the sake of game play.

Two characters, I felt, required special treatment in the game. Jonathan Harker has a significant impact at the beginning of the story as he is imprisoned by Dracula following the signing of the lease over Carfax Abbey. He is pretty much out of the tale until rescued by Mina in Buda-Pesth (Budapest to you and me) toward the end of the action, following his escape from Dracula's castle. Still, his presence is felt throughout the tale through Mina, who is arguably the main character of the story. I felt it important to allow Harker an opportunity to arrive earlier during the action and have tied his arrival to Mina's health. If Harker arrives after Mina has been turned, the player immediately loses the game. The other character is Dracula's "assistant" Renfield. Although Renfield poses no direct threat to the hunters, he does enable Dracula's operations throughout London. His impact is managed in the game through his either being

locked away at Purfleet Asylum or running amok at Carfax Abbey. When loose, he provides several tangible benefits, not the least of which are his assisting vampires across the Thames (they otherwise may not cross moving water), as well as providing the undead with critical initiative in combat.

The flow of the game is dictated by the spread of the plague itself. The plague is, of course, the distribution of Dracula's coffins throughout the city and the effect of their owner's presence. As originally designed, the number of markers placed was equal to Dracula's strength. This resulted in the plague spreading way too fast across the board. After some experimentation, I found that making the number of tiles placed randomly made the flow more reasonable and added to the replayability of the game. Adding to this chaos are the rumors that can appear as part of a search or as an event. These rumors provide colorful descriptions of what's happening in and around London as well as creating opportunities for plague to appear and expand from unexpected locations, again adding to variability of play. The challenge for the players is to limit the spread of the plague enough to successfully cleanse enough of it to limit Dracula's strength during the final confrontation.

This confrontation is the last feature of the game to help it hew more closely to the source material. Dracula cannot be destroyed until the final confrontation. If he could be destroyed earlier, the game would not be as interesting and the value of turned vampires would be diminished. I like to think of this in terms of the point of the trip is more the journey than the destination.

One last thing about the game that deserves special mention is the portraiture and marker art. Pretty much all of this was created using ChatGPT by asking the AI to produce images of the characters based upon Stoker's descriptions. The only character's portrait that strays from the original text is Dr Seward, who was not that much older than the other hunters (and was one of Lucy's suitors). Call it a Hammer Films bias, but I always imagined him to be older, and suggested his portrait depict him in that fashion. It's really amazing what AI can churn out! Still, using is not without risk. I asked AI to create pull quotes from the text and most of them were fabricated "hallucinations." Trust, but verify!

As someone who's not a huge fan of solitaire games, I'm very happy with how **Plague of Dracula** has turned out. It provides a very evocative experience that's a great way to spend a dark and stormy night. Just keep an eye out for vampire bats.

Mike Nagel



Relative Range

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