

The Scarecrow

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Introduction

There is a line. A line between the World of Man, and the World of Shadow. We are the ones who stand on that line, between two worlds. We are the ones who stop the Dark from intruding on the Light. We are the guardians you will never know about. We are the Scarecrow.

The Scarecrow is a group of mortals who have banded together to stop the supernatural from taking advantage of the world of man. They act as the first, last, and only line between the unspeakable things in the night, and the world we know and love. They may never be thanked for their acts, but they are not in it for thanks, or fame, or money. Those are not the things which matter.

Scarecrows are not born killers, or agents of a government conspiracy. They are not some holy order with a religious passion to drive them forward. They are just men and women whose lives have been changed by the things in the World of Darkness. Normal people -- housewives, teachers, students, bankers, street thugs -- who have seen their world torn apart by something they cannot understand.

So they come together, in secret, to discuss their experiences, to share their observations. They watch for trends in the darkness, they discuss information that seems suspicious. They launch investigations and gather information, and use the conclusions to determine the best course of action.

In the end, they all have one goal. To make sure what happened to them, never happens to anyone else.

Philosophy

“Mankind should be allowed to exist without the fear of monsters. Ignorance is bliss.”

This is the basic creed of the Scarecrow, and it is the center of the group’s belief. Most of the Scarecrow’s laws connect to the basic idea that mankind, as a whole and as individuals, should not have to fear those things in the darkness.

The Scarecrow’s goal is not only to stop things from preying on humans, but also to cover up their existence. It’s one thing to stop the supernatural from harming people. It’s quite another to make all the witnesses stay silent.

The Scarecrow was founded on the ideals of community and mutual support. Its members understand that one person is unlikely to stand successfully alone against the World of

Darkness. While they accept that not all Scarecrows will like each other, or even get along, members are expected to support each other and to refrain from antagonizing each other.

Code of the Scarecrow

Scarecrows are required to swear the Code of the Scarecrow upon joining.

I will not expose the World of Shadow to the World of Man. Mankind has a right to its ignorance.

I will kill only monsters, and only as a last resort.

I will do everything in my power to prevent an innocent from being harmed.

I will report everything I encounter during my investigations, for knowledge is our only weapon against the darkness.

I will aid my fellows, as long as they are acting in the interest of the Scarecrow.

I will endure no Scarecrow as a member of any organization controlled by a supernatural creature, nor will I endure a member to be under the influence of any monster.

Structure & Organization

Because of the local structure of the Scarecrow, the group has only a loose hierarchy, and many differences exist from Safe House to Safe House.

Posts

All the members of one geographical area are called a Post. A Post refers to both the area, and the members as a collective. Every post has a Safe House, which is a common location and resource that all members have access to, and where visiting Scarecrow know they can find their fellow members.

Each Post has its own rules, and elects or appoints a **Board** to monitor and direct the actions of the Safe House as a whole. The Board has only as much authority over individual members as the Post has decided to invest it with. Some Posts run under the absolute command of a senior member and his appointed advisers, others work through consensus decision making of all the members. The majority fall somewhere in between, using agreed upon methods of electing a Board, but in the end, each Post decides for itself what will work best for its members. The only exception is that each Post must establish a Head to represent it.

The Head

Like the Board, the Head has only as much authority as her Post grants her, or that she is able to establish through good leadership, intelligent action, and simple charisma. The Heads of all Posts are responsible for discussing with each other the needs of the organization as a whole, and a Head must represent her Post's interests to the Scarecrow. It is the Head's job to make certain the Scarecrows in her Post are working together effectively, and to maintain the over all efficiency of the Post. She is also responsible for making sure that the Post is keeping in contact with other Posts across the region, and that other Scarecrows know how to find the Safe House.

Safe House

Each Post has its own Safe House. It's often owned by an individual member, but its use and care is determined by the needs of the Post. The House serves as a meeting place for the group, as well as a place to store information, equipment, and gear. It also has basic supplies of food, medicine, and other 'emergency' items such as flashlights, blankets, etc. The Post's library, if it has one, may or may not be kept at the Safe House. Some Safe Houses shelter members full time; others are used only on occasion.

The security of each Safe House is a priority for the Scarecrow. After all, what's the purpose of having a Safe House if it isn't safe? Because of this, every few years the Post usually moves to a new Safe House. This can make tracking Safe Houses difficult, but Safe Houses are always marked, if you know what you're looking for. However, in large cities or even good sized towns, a visiting Scarecrow may not have time to check every house in a neighborhood. It's imperative the Head of a Post inform other Posts when the Safe House is moved.

Meetings

A Post holds regular meetings at the Safe House. Sometimes, these meetings are casual gatherings, a chance for everyone to simply enjoy being part of a community where they are not an outsider, where they do not have to be afraid of saying the wrong thing. Other times, meetings are strictly business.

Business handled at Post meetings includes everything from swearing in new members to the best use of Safe House Funds. Decisions are made according the rules set by the Post. It is at these meetings that members also propose investigations, discuss on-going investigations and decide a course of action, or close an investigation and debrief the members on the results, which can range from the purely mundane to announcing funeral arrangements. Many members investigate things on their own before bringing something to the attention of the entire Post.

If a Post decides to investigate an incident, it often appoints a particular person to lead the investigation, but again, the method of assembling and carrying out an investigation will

vary from Post to Post.

Factions

The Straw

“My son says the janitor has been acting strange lately. Working late hours, and spending a lot of time in the basement. I’ve also noted, there are no more stray cats around the school.”

More a nickname than a faction, ‘the Straw’ are the Scarecrow’s common members. The typical member has a day job, and often has a family, who may or may not know about his involvement in the Scarecrow. This can make life difficult for a member of the Straw, but even those members who do not accept dangerous or time consuming investigations participate fully in meetings and do their best to keep their ears and eyes open. They often keep notebooks handy to jot down information. You never know when a snippet of conversation or a license plate number will prove to be important.

The name Straw comes from the belief that the common members are the straw that stuffs up the Scarecrow and gives it shape and support, allowing it to fulfill its mission.

The Hood

“I don’t know what it is, but I just shot it in the head and it’s still coming towards us, so you’d better think fast!”

Sometimes, there is no peaceful solution. Sometimes, someone needs to put an end to a threat, permanently. Sometimes, an investigation is just too dangerous to let the Straw go in alone. Sometimes, you call on the Hood.

The Hood is the Scarecrow’s last resort, and the Scarecrow hates to call it out. Not only is any violence bound to attract unwanted attention, but everyone knows that no matter how skilled or how well equipped the Hood is, it will always be the underdog. Humans have no supernatural powers. They have no innate defense. They have no one to help them but their fellow human beings. Every member of the Hood knows this when they join, but they know also that no matter what the situation is, they will always have their fellow Hood at their back.

Of all the factions, the Hood seems to take the most pride in its membership. Members often get a scarecrow tattoo, and they tend to keep in close contact with each other. Some members of the Scarecrow worry about the actions of the Hood, fearing they may take things too far one day, but the Hood polices its own. They have a violent, unpleasant, deadly job, and they don’t allow a Hood’s bad attitude or careless actions to put fellow Scarecrow in danger, Hood or not.

Typical Hood members are those who had violent jobs even before their lives were torn apart. Cops who walked into the wrong crime scene fit the bill. Members of the military who saw their buddies torn apart by ‘something.’ Criminals whose life was changed when their mothers became a zombie. Very often, members have no family waiting for them; they have only their fellow Scarecrow.

The faction gets its name from the burlap hoods once worn by members to disguise themselves. This practice has been discontinued, however, as in the modern age it simply draws unwanted attention.

The Needle

“Sure I can take the kids for a night. We’ll have a sleep over party, they’ll never even know you were gone.”

When the Scarecrow comes apart at the seams, it’s the Needle’s job to keep it together. If not for them, the Scarecrow could not exist. They are the ones who work behind the scenes to keep the organization running.

What the Needle actually does varies from city to city as well as from person to person. In one area, the Needle works to organize meetings, keep members in contact with one another, and manage Safe House funds. Still other members of the Needle are just rich men or women who wish to support the group and know that the Scarecrow needs money. Other members watch homes or pets while the Scarecrow are away on an investigation. The important thing is that everyone helps to the best of their ability, even though they may not actively participate in investigations, or even in the activities of the Post.

Needle members held in especially high regard are doctors and counselors. After all, try telling your average ER nurse where that bite mark came from, or explaining to your average therapist why you’re so afraid of the dark...you’d find yourself locked away.

The one common duty the Needle has in each Post is collecting and administering an insurance fund. If a Scarecrow dies or is seriously injured, money from the fund is used to help take care of his family. Each Post has its own fund, administered locally, but if a family is in need and a Post doesn’t have the resources to care for them, other Posts have been known to help out.

Status and Titles

The only official Titles that exist within the Scarecrow are Head and Board Member. These titles confer no specific authority or benefits except those granted by the local rules of the Post, though being a Head does come with specific responsibilities.

There is no rank in the Scarecrow. No member is considered better than any other, it is merely a matter of dedication and experience. Some members are more well known for

their exploits than others, and this represented by Status.

Storytellers are reminded they are empowered to deny a player's experience point expenditure if the player does not provide sufficient justification or meet the criteria set by the low approval Storyteller for status increases.

Post Status (Local)

Post Status is Low Approval for levels 1 to 3, and Mid-approval for levels 4 and 5.

Members in a local Post gain respect over time, through their efforts and contributions to the Post, and by proving themselves to be intelligent, capable members. This can be a double-edged sword among a group of monster hunters. On one hand, their words hold more weight during meeting and they can often get things pushed through that others cannot. On the other hand, they find themselves called on to share more of the burdens of leadership and to lead or assist with the most dangerous investigations.

There are many, many ways to gain Status, but quick ways to lose it are drawing attention of law enforcement, or putting the secrecy of the Scarecrow at risk. The Scarecrow respect survivors, not maniacs.

Scarecrow Status (National)

It is possible for a Scarecrow's actions to attract attention beyond the local level. These are usually Head Scarecrows, who interact with each other on a regular basis, though sometimes the reputation of an individual Post member gains fame beyond local boundaries.

Some Scarecrows dream of having a legendary reputation among their fellows, but such a reputation has draw backs. Those whose names are thrown about among wider circles find themselves plagued by requests for help and advice. It's hard to keep a regular day job when you get calls every couple of hours from across the country asking if you know how to kill a chupacabra. In addition, no matter how much a member may trust other Posts, they know all too well that sometimes, members go rouge. Sometimes, monsters can drag secrets and information from even the most stalwart mind. To have your name on a list, even a mental list, could mean death.

Players of the Scarecrow can purchase "Status: Scarecrow" to represent their character's growing reputation.

Scarecrow Status is Low Approval for levels 1 and 2, Mid Approval for 3, High Approval for 4, and Top Approval for 5.

Joining the Scarecrow

Membership in the Scarecrow is Low Approval.

Membership in the Scarecrow is only offered to those whose life has been changed or damaged by the World of Darkness. This not a rule written down by any Post, but Scarecrows know that it is their common experiences which bind them together. There is just too much at risk to open up membership to those who haven't already learned about the supernatural the hard way.

Potential members, unfortunately, are far too easy to find. While undergoing an investigation, victims are easy to spot. If one of these victims doesn't rationalize away what they saw, or doesn't slip into denial, they are watched further. If they seem to show some trustworthiness and good sense, then a member will approach them, and tell them they are not alone.

The potential member is then asked to meet with other Scarecrows at a neutral location. If that interview goes well, then the issue is brought up to the Post. If the Post approves, the person is contacted again and offered membership, and one member of the Post volunteers to act as the recruit's sponsor. During the period of sponsorship, the recruit meets with his sponsor and other members of the Post, but is not permitted to know the location of the Safe House or access Post resources. The sponsor teaches the recruit the Code of the Scarecrow and rules of the Post, and helps the recruit decide how he can best help the Scarecrow.

When the sponsor is satisfied the recruit is ready, he blindfolds the recruit and brings him to the Safe House. There the recruit is asked to swear to the Code of the Scarecrow, while he is still blindfolded. If he swears the Code, the members take off the blindfold and welcome their new colleague. He is given his Scarecrow symbol, usually a pendent presented by his sponsor. In rare instances where a recruit does not swear to the Code, the blindfold is not removed, and he is driven far away from the Safe House and dropped, then watched closely. The Scarecrow are ever vigilant for spies and infiltrators.

Practices & Rites

Aside from initiation and the swearing of the Code, there are no rituals the Scarecrow follow, though some individual Posts have developed them over time.

The Scarecrow's symbol is very important to them. Sometimes, it is the only way to determine who is a friend or foe. A member must display his Scarecrow symbol when officially requesting help as a Scarecrow. As show of solidarity members will clasp hands over a symbol and repeat the vow, "We Watch the Shadows, we Stand the Line." Hoods frequently do this at the start of a mission.

When a member dies, it is tradition for other Scarecrows not to attend the funeral, unless they knew the individual outside the Scarecrow. Instead, members visit the grave the night after the funeral. There, they will say a separate prayer, blessing, or even just a moment of silence, and sprinkle straw on the grave. If the person died while in service to the Scarecrow, her picture is placed on the wall of the Safe House.

Membership in the Scarecrow is often for life, but not always. Some members go non-active, but they are usually still considered Scarecrow. Members who go rogue, that is, who actively work against the Scarecrow, are few and far between, but it does happen. These individuals are tracked down and their symbol reclaimed; whether additional consequences follow depends on who catches them. On occasion a member has been recruited into another secret society, in which case they are asked to give up their symbol and are regarded with distrust. The Scarecrow works hard to provide solidarity and community and is distrustful of those who would leave it.

If a member, for whatever reason, needs to investigate or travel in another Post's domain, he should contact The Head of that Post. This applies only to official Scarecrow business, though if traveling on leisure members often stop by the Safe House for a courtesy call.

Secrecy is an important part of being in the Scarecrow, and a specialized vocabulary has evolved so members can communicate in public.

Crows: Monsters, organizations of monsters, or enemies of the Scarecrow, supernatural or human. *Is this a crow's nest? Have you seen any crows? We killed a crow here a few years ago....*

Farmer: Allie or Contact of a Scarecrow. *A farmer gave me a lift back to my place after a crow damaged my car.*

Friendly: A Scarecrow. *Is that guy friendly?*

I'm Stuffed: I'm a Scarecrow (often said while tapping a symbol).

Benefits of Membership

The Scarecrows seen have their lives torn apart by the World of Shadow. Everything they once knew has been proven false, and everything they have loved has been left in bloody tatters. But they have pulled themselves up from that, and they continue on. One of the ways they do this is through supporting each other. When a Scarecrow needs something, his fellows are there to help him out.

Scarecrows often go out of their way to make new friends, and to keep in the know of what's happening around the. Be it keeping in contact with the school janitor, attending all the neighborhood watch meetings, or just keeping a friendly relationship with that homeless guy.

Members of the Scarecrow may purchase the following Merits at half price:

Contacts and Resources

In addition, Scarecrows gain one free specialization in any Skill.

Library

All Posts have a library, recorded knowledge the members have collected over the years. Mostly this will consist of old reports, but there are sometimes books of interest, or old magazine articles. If the library is kept in a Safe House, a member often acts as librarian. Sometimes, however, The Head asks that the library be left with him and he looks after it. Other times, the library is split up among a number of members, each responsible for their own 'section,' with new reports collected by the Head. The local ST is empowered to decide what information, if any, a Scarecrow may gain from the library.

Stereotypes

Because the Scarecrows are so diverse, it's next to impossible to get any consensus on how they feel about any outside groups. The quotes below represent some general impressions, however, that a member is likely to have of the other secret societies in the Round Table.

The Circle of Hermes

"My wife was killed by some guy in a circle. You know anything about that?" -*Richard Stone, Hood*

"All talk and no action. What good is learning if you don't *do* anything?" -*Jenny Hall, Straw*

"One of our members found this book in the possession of a... well, we aren't quite sure what it was. Could you take a look at it?" -*Kim Lynfield, Head of Hanford Post*

The Priory of Scions

"So, everything in the Da Vinci Code is true?" -*Marv Miller, Hood*

"What do you do here again?" -*Ryan Miles, Needle*

"Why do you want to know where I was born?" -*John Chaumont, Straw*

Project Garnet

"I don't care if it came from Mars or Mexico, its going down." -*Richard Stone, Hood*

"One of our men found this near where a meteor fell a few months ago. Careful not to touch it with your bare skin." -*Harry Freeman, Board Member*

"Aliens, hmm? Well, that's very interesting, but if you'll excuse me, I have real work to

do.” -*Mr. Joey Falcone, Needle*

The Round Table

“The details on the investigation are sketchy, but five good people died to get it here, so I’d appreciate it if you’d listen without interrupting!” -*Dr. John Paul, Head, Selma Post*

“Why on earth should I tell you anything?” -*Hector Chavez, Straw*

“You can debate all you want. I’m going to stop that thing from killing again.” -*Rebecca Paul, Hood*

History

No one knows exactly how long the Scarecrows have existed. Among themselves they speculate, and some try to research the history, but because each Safe House has records only for its particular Post, it’s hard to tell. In truth, there have always been Scarecrows, though they never called themselves such. For as long as there have been monsters, there have been men and women who stood against the darkness, even if it meant being cast out. Sometimes, they became heroes. Most times, they became corpses.

The current group that calls itself the Scarecrow traces its roots back to the year 1805. The oldest text that has been found is in the Paris Safe House, and relates the origins of the group in that year. The text tells the story of a monster who murdered and ate children at night in a small village outside of Paris. One father tried to get the townspeople to stop the monster after it had killed his daughter, but fear kept them in their homes.

This father, whose name was never recorded, persevered, and convinced the other men who had lost children to go out and kill the monster. The monster became aware of their plan, and went into hiding. One night, it saw a girl walking alone through a field. Too hungry to resist the temptation of easy prey, the monster came out of hiding and gave chase. The girl fell, helpless, and the monster rose above her. As it prepared to strike, the monster was struck by an arrow.

Surprised, it looked up to see a scarecrow holding a bow, then another with a sword, and another with a torch. The men had disguised themselves, and in so doing were able to take the monster by surprise. After killing it, the men formed a pact. They would prevent such monsters from attacking the innocent, from preying on the weak. They knew they could not tell their fellow man about the monsters and they would have to work alone. The scarecrow became their symbol; keeping away monsters became their cause.

It’s unknown how this pact grew to encompass other people or how the group spread its message farther, but the Scarecrow did grow. They spread across Europe, keeping in touch with each other through letters and travel. They established a network of Safe Houses, at first just the private residences of individual members but soon growing into the first formal Posts. The Scarecrow also began making connections among other opponents of the supernatural. By the 20th century, the name was being used among

secret societies around the world, but the history of the Scarecrow is sadly marked with tragedy as well as success.

In the 19th century the Scarecrow faced several setbacks that nearly destroyed the organization. In 1848, revolutions spread across western Europe, throwing cities into turmoil. Many Scarecrows were among the revolutionaries and joined violent dissident groups. Their political activities began to compromise their secrecy, and several Safe Houses were breached.

Fellow Scarecrows stepped in to salvage the contents of the Safe Houses. They gathered up all the reports, files, and stories that had amassed and took them to America. There, the newly arrived Scarecrows hid themselves, and spread their message, creating the first Posts on U.S. soil. Books and records were sent to a large Safe House in Chicago for safekeeping.

As a result of the Safe House breaches in the mid-1800s, traditions of secrecy developed among the Scarecrows. The organization had always kept a low profile, but many of its members had been open about their affiliation with it. As the group spread over wider territories and into new lands where the Scarecrows did not know who they could trust, they had to change their ways. Members were no longer allowed to talk about the group with outsiders. Where once the group had been controlled by a few influential Heads, there were too many Posts for the Heads to keep abreast of everything going on in every Post, especially with the establishment of new Posts in the frontier lands of North America, places not easily reached by mail or messenger.

As the Scarecrows fragmented, Chicago became the last central Post. It was a depository for all Posts to send copies of their records to, even those in Europe, so that if a Safe House was ever breached, its knowledge would still be secure. On October 8, 1871, the city of Chicago went up in flames. Over 18,000 buildings burned to the ground, including the Chicago Safe House, and all the records it contained.

Not long after the Chicago fire, the remaining Posts decided never to allow this kind of disaster to happen again. From that point on, the Scarecrows would not have a centralized depository of information. The loss of a single Safe House would never again jeopardize the entire organization.

The Industrial Revolution brought new advances in communications and transportation, allowing the Scarecrows to travel more easily and spread their message. By the turn of the century, the name Scarecrow was recognized by most of the secret societies in the western world, and the Scarecrow was invited to join the Round Table.

The invitation to caused a stir among the Scarecrow. Many Scarecrows simply did not trust these outsiders who seemed to know so much. After a long, slow debate, the Posts of the Scarecrows voted unanimously to join the Round Table in good faith, and each Post sent a representative to the first meeting of the Round Table in 1947. Yet many individual

members still held a deep distrust of the other organizations, and some of that prejudice lingers to this day.

Since joining the Round Table, some members have sought to coordinate the Scarecrow's efforts on a wider scale, believing the Scarecrow could be stronger if it became more like the other organizations in the Round Table. Many members, however, find they have enough to do protecting the people they care about and protecting their own Post and city. This has been aided by the Internet, which has enabled greater information sharing among Posts. Members are now able to call for and lend aid more easily than in decades past. What hasn't changed is the the Scarecrow's commitment to its goal to allow mankind to exist without the fear of monsters.