

Weird Stories on Tabletopia

Welcome to Weird Stories! This is a collaborative story-editing game for 2-5 players where weird things happen, but probably won't ever be fully explained.

More information about the game, including how to get the rulebook, is here: <https://formalferretgames.com/products/weird-stories/>

Playing on Tabletopia

When you begin the game, you'll see five sets of Control Cards, each next to a differently-colored disc. These discs' colors match up with the players' colors in Tabletopia. Choose the Control Card next to your disc and pick up that card.

Choose a player to be the Framing Player and place the Framing Player card next to their colored disc. After each scene, pass it clockwise to the next player.

Flip over the Setup and Start Cards; they'll be closer to the top of the screen.

Once you're done with Setup and the starting scene, you can flip over the 4 Act I Question Cards. They'll be different for each game you play.

You can play a Control Card out of your hand. If necessary, you can wave it above the Question Cards to get the other players' attention.

If you need to draw from a Prompt deck, you can draw the top 2 cards by right-clicking on the deck, selecting the bottom option "Draw" from the radial menu, and selecting "2". You can return used cards to the bottom of the Prompt Deck by dragging a card over the deck and simultaneously holding down the SHIFT and ALT keys (SHIFT and OPT on a Mac).

You can discard cards into the gray bag. Note that if you need to get a card from the gray bag, you will need to drag each object out one at a time until you get the one you want. Anything put into the bag will be drawn out in a random order.

Settings Packs

Weird Stories comes with 3 Settings Packs, with more available soon. All these starting Settings Packs are available on Tabletopia: Creaking Branches, Dark Ramble Manor, or Happyland. Simply choose the one you want to play with and start playing!

Creaking Branches

A small, eccentric town must deal with an odd, violent incident, and strangers coming a long way to investigate. What is really going on here?

Creaking Branches is a Setting Pack for Weird Stories. You must have the base Weird Stories game to use this Setting Pack.

See the *Weird Stories* rulebook to find out how to use this Settings Pack.

About this setting

Creaking Branches is based on the work of David Lynch, where ordinary small-town life is punctuated by the dreamlike, bizarre, and violent.

Stories in Creaking Branches are usually going to contrast surface-level town events and politics with private moments that are simultaneously supernatural and grim. Characters will often have a second, darker, “shadow” identity that can manifest anywhere from a recurring nightmare to a flesh-and-blood doppelgänger.

An important element of Creaking Branches is that there are out-of-towners here to investigate the new happenings. A lot of the story dynamics will be driven by the friction between the town residents and visitors.

Pay attention to what time period the game is set in. If you're setting this in the 1600s or earlier, the town is likely doing well economically. In the '70s through the '90s, it will be starting to struggle. Anytime after that, it will be a faded shell of itself. This will affect many things, like how the town residents treat each other and the out-of-towners.

Most games of Creaking Branches won't have humor at their core, but the setting will allow you to punctuate tense scenes with moments of surreal humor.

Keep the story cryptic and dreamlike. Resist the temptation to come up with an easy explanation for anything.

Dark Ramble Manor

Dark Ramble Manor is a mansion 90 minutes away from central London by carriage. Its primary residents, Lord and Lady Darkramble, are said to be haunted by a centuries-old curse...

Dark Ramble Manor is a Setting Pack for *Weird Stories*. You must have the base *Weird Stories* game to use this Setting Pack.

See the *Weird Stories* rulebook to find out how to use this Settings Pack.

About this setting

Dark Ramble Manor is a horror setting in Victorian England. The kind of horror is up to you; it could be a simple ghost story, Cthulhu-esque cosmic horror, an Austen-esque love story gone off the rails, or even a very peculiar comedy of manners (pun intended).

Victorian England was a place where class, station, standing, and civility mattered above all else. Hierarchies, and the power dynamics they create, will charge a lot of the encounters here. The more flawed you can make the Darkrambles, and the more dissatisfied you can make their staff, the more spark you can apply to the story.

This should affect the Characters' dealings with The Weird. Instead of everyone united to fight The Weird, it is likely in this setting that some Characters will try to use it to gain or preserve their power. This will create interesting dynamics in your story.

A note on culture and accents

Some characters in Dark Ramble Manor are of Indian or Pakistani descent. If you, as a player, do not already speak with that accent, we suggest that you do not affect an accent when speaking as your character. Just talk the way you normally would.

It's also a good idea to not affect an English accent if you are not English. There is a lot of information and history packed into an accent. Most English people can locate where a person is from, with high accuracy, from their accent. A character who speaks with a Cockney, Brummie, or Scouse accent will be treated very differently than one who speaks with a 'cultured' London accent. Even if you think you can fake an English accent, you likely will not be able to perform the correct one for the story.

So we suggest not performing accents. If your character speaks with an accent, say what the accent is, and then speak as you normally would.

Finally, the spectre of colonialism hangs over the story of Dark Ramble Manor. This can lead to intense, uncomfortable moments as characters exert power over each other.

Be sure to set up Lines and Veils at the game start that suit everyone. It is fine to agree to ignore the impacts of colonialism and play ahistorically if it will make for a safer game.

Happyland

Happyland isn't just the theme park of the future. It's a template for living in our new century. Spend some time with your family and get a glimpse of utopia, because nothing can ever go wrong here!

Happyland is a Setting Pack for Weird Stories. You must have the base Weird Stories game to use this Setting Pack.

See the Weird Stories rulebook to find out how to use this Settings Pack.

About this setting

Happyland is a setting that takes place in an amusement park. Most of the game elements assume a big-budget theme park, but if you want to play this in a state fair or local park with carnival rides, you can do that!

Amusement parks are carefully cultivated to provide a fun experience for all ages... if everything goes right. But amusement parks can also be liminal spaces, and even one small detail going askew can create a deliciously creepy vibe.

There are decades of lore to build from, from true (some large parks leave their lights and rides on all night, after closing) to apocryphal (the frozen head of the company founder being hidden inside a ride). Many of these nuggets can be exploited to heighten the story.

People go to theme parks for many reasons. One of them is escape. What are they escaping from? What do the park employees want to escape from?

One potential story thread in Happyland is idealism versus realism. For example, many theme park attractions before the mid-'80s were of a space exploration theme. But a series of space shuttle disasters eventually pushed the idea of human interstellar travel firmly into the realm of fiction.

Another thing that spurred this idealism was a large, well-to-do middle class. Reaganomics began eating into this middle class in the '80s. And of course, many people never had access to that middle class in the first place.

So if your story takes place from the '50s to the mid-'80s, the Characters will likely believe in the idealism of the attractions. In the late '80s or '90s, you can feed off the dissonance between the unrealistic idealism of the attractions and the cynicism of the guests. In a more modern setting, class and wealth divisions will be visible to everyone.

Visiting families will be more likely to be stretched on budget and making financial compromises. Park attractions will emphasize these divisions, like the ability of wealthy guests to skip lines. Meanwhile, some park employees, living on poverty wages, are sleeping in their cars.

Finally, you may want to emphasize uncanny valley—the phenomenon of a human-like figure being so close to human that it feels creepy. Animatronics with human-like eyes. Statues that seem to stare at you. Happyland is so close to being a model of humanity... but it's not quite there.

Overall, Happyland should feel creepy, disorienting, and dissonant. The Characters are being asked to buy into (or sell) a skewed mirror reality. Some will handle it better than others.

This dissonance alone won't make for a heightened story. But The Weird should exaggerate it all. Who will find the fiction comforting, and who will fight it?