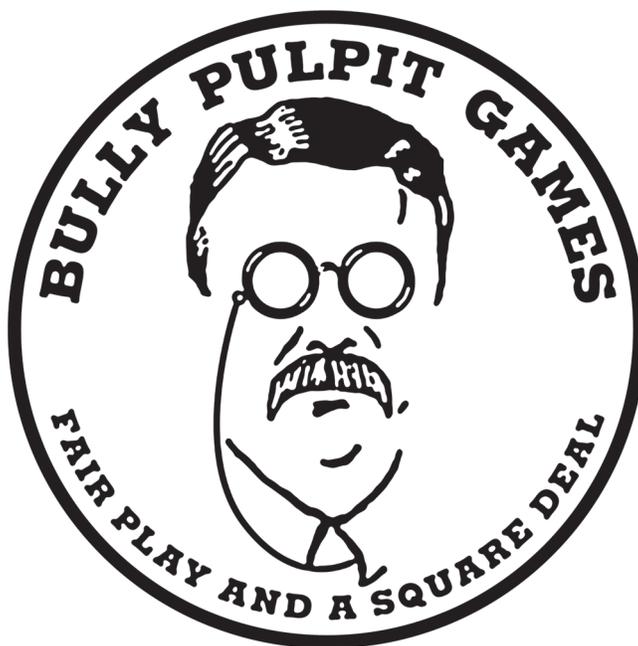


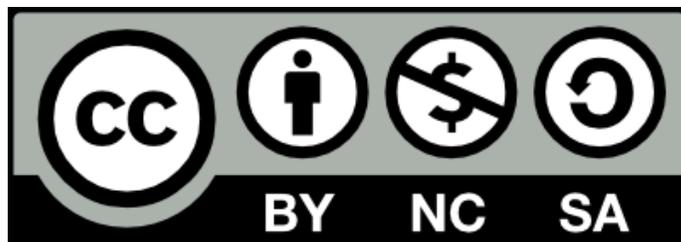
# The Hell Tithe

I hope you enjoy *The Hell Tithe*. I certainly enjoyed bringing it to you and if you have comments—particularly if you play it—I would like to talk to you. I can be reached at [jason@bullypulpitgames.com](mailto:jason@bullypulpitgames.com) or @jmstar on Twitter.

None of this was done in a vacuum—there’s a whole community of talented, generous, creative people out there making and sharing their work. I borrowed from a few and stole from many, who in turn eagerly did the same.



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# THE HELL TITHE

## Fact Box

- Written by Jason Morningstar, [jason@bullypulpitgames.com](mailto:jason@bullypulpitgames.com)
- ©2016 Jason Morningstar, Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license
- 2-6 players and one GM
- 2-4 hours
- Systemless but I strongly recommend *Archipelago III*, *Itras By*, or both in combination. (<http://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/147623/Archipelago> | <http://itrasby.com/>)

This is a light, one-session game full of secrets, surprises, danger and romance. Because it embraces secrecy, **don't read any further unless you intend to run the game.**

# Introduction

Every seven years the Devil—Satan, Prince of Lies—collects the Hell Tithe from the elves. Because they are not good enough to be admitted to heaven and not bad enough to serve the Devil, elves live in a grey area governed by the Devil’s forbearance. His price for their continued ability to exist at all is the Hell Tithe—the sacrifice of an Elf every seven years. It is a painful burden but that’s the way it is. The light elves and the dark elves—the Court of Gold and the Court of Jet—take turns offering up a sacrifice.

This year it is the Court of Gold’s turn, and they have planned ahead. Some years ago they swapped babies with a mortal family, and the changeling—who has no idea they are an Elf—is to be collected and taken to the Devil. Currently they work at a seafood restaurant, surrounded—again, without having any idea—by a weird collection of supernatural outcasts, most of whom know something is up but not quite sure what.

## Backgrounds and Roles

Distribute Roles randomly. There are seven, so there will always be at least one extra.

Distribute Backgrounds randomly, with one caveat—the “You are a month behind in your rent and utility bills” Background must be in play. If you have a brand new player, this is a nice role to give that person, since it is both engaging and very straightforward to play.

Ask everyone to carefully read their Role and background and do whatever it tells them to. Some people will say a phrase and everyone will write down a name for their character.

Ask if everyone has all the information they need. If necessary, ask anyone with a phrase on their Background sheet to repeat it.

## Introductions and Questions

Ask each player to zoom in on their character during a busy Friday dinner rush at Jack Ketch Seafood. Who are they? What is their job? What are they doing? How are they doing it?

Ask them to answer the question posed by their Role, if they can.

Ask them an additional question as well:

- For the player who says “Man, am I exhausted!”, ask—Who are you closest to in your family? Do your parents live in town? A sibling? Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend? Do you have a best friend?

A question for each of the others:

- Where do you get your drugs from? Is there a reliable connection on the restaurant staff? Is it the old creeper, Tweet? Is it the Manager?
- What’s the name of the bar all the kitchen and front end staff hang out at after hours, and what is it like? Is it the Sunflower? Is it Hammer’s?
- Why are you friendly with Tweet, the regular customer, general old creeper, and owner of a really excellent beach house where inappropriate parties the Jack Ketch staff are always invited to are thrown?
- What’s the big problem at Jack Ketch Seafood right now? Are you short staffed? Unable to get a certain popular item? Financial trouble? Not enough hours? A feud?
- Who is the (a restaurant Role not taken)? Why don’t you get along with them?

# Stuff For the GM To Do

Various supernatural agents will come to abduct the changeling (the mortal who says “Man, am I exhausted!” at the start of play). The entire game hinges on what the players choose to do about it, what they reveal, and how that all shakes out. Don’t be shy about letting them know what’s going on—the agents will be glad to let them in on the plot, assuming they will be OK with the sacrifice.

## Around the Jack Ketch

- Roles: Drug dealer—Regular customer—Celebrity customer—Annoying customer—Server—Manager—Beat cop—Dumpster hobo—Fishmonger—Health inspector—Friend looking for a free meal—Job applicant—New Age priestess from across the street
- Names: Leonard Washington, Dominika Benes, Pete Ellsberg, Janice Pratt, Edward Matousek, Sally Cho

## Supernatural People and Things

- Macha Redmane, part of the tri-partite deity The Morrigan, coming to collect the Hell Tithe for the Court of Jet. A dazzlingly beautiful femme fatale, perhaps posing as a film star, with powerful magic. Prone to fits of rage but restricted in her mortal world actions.
- Badb, another part of the Morrigan who manifests as a sympathetic crow, perhaps to offer mute warning or advice.
- Wolves, intelligent and ferocious, to chase and guide a panicked mortal from their comfortable realm into the forests of faerie, where they can more easily be captured.
- The weird crew of a rotten old longship that beaches, perhaps near Tweet’s Halloween party.
- Glamours and manipulations. Phone calls pretending to be loved ones to draw the sacrifice to some location. Seduction and obfuscation. Agents of the Gold Court would be likely suspects.
- Dishwater as mirror through which a message can be delivered, or someone can be pulled.
- Mr. Splitfoot, the Devil himself, who will surely come to collect his due if all else fails. He is always ready to make a deal but represents the apex of magical power and always comes out on top in some terrible way. Tweet would like to meet him—he will eventually, anyway.
- Some Elf names: Álfhildur, Ælfweard, Gnúpur, Manfreð, Friðdís, Franklin, Þeódís

## Events and Locations

Set the game in a beach town. I recommend Wilmington, North Carolina—a wonderful mix of failed industrial port, seasonal resort, retirement community and college town. But any beach town will do.

- Jack Ketch Seafood
- Blessed Be, a New Age store across the street from Jack Ketch Seafood
- The Sunflower, a nicer restaurant with better tips
- Tweet’s beachfront house, where an epic halloween party will happen
- Character’s homes and apartments
- The beach, a local park, outdoor places of beauty and splendor

## Background Cards (7)

Distribute Backgrounds randomly, with one caveat—the Background with the border (“You are a month behind in your rent and utility bills”) **must be in play**.

Any left over can be used as inspiration for agents of the Elven Courts or minions of Macha or the Devil, should you need any.

**You are a month behind in your rent and utility bills.** This isn't too unusual, and you have been pulling extra shifts to straighten out your financial situation. As a result, you are pretty exhausted. Also you are crushing pretty hard on one of your co-workers, which you know is a bad idea but that's how restaurant work goes. Who else are you going to meet? You should ask them out.

■ After you've read this information, say “**MAN, AM I EXHAUSTED**” out loud. Trust me, just do it!

■ You'll know who you have a crush on because they are about to say “**WORKING AT JACK KETCH IS A DREAM COME TRUE**”.

■ Think up a name and write it on a little index card table tent in front of you.

**There's somebody here you have a sort of crush on.** It isn't a big deal and you probably haven't done anything about it, but you really like them, and admire them, and would love to hang out with them in a more intense way. A date? Just pals? Something more than just admiring them from a distance. Anyway you should probably clean up your rather threadbare, unimpressive act and figure out a way to really make an impression on them.

■ You will know the person you have a crush on because their player is about to say “**MAN, AM I EXHAUSTED**”.

■ Think up a name and write it on a little index card table tent in front of you.

**You are a Myrkálfar, an Elf of neither light or darkness.**

Your parents were light and dark and as such you owe fealty to neither the Court of Gold or the Court of Jet, and are despised by elves of both sides. You were banished to the mortal world and, since elves are a bunch of racist assholes, you're pretty OK with that. Mortal humans are deeply flawed and short-lived, but they are capable of great kindness and moments of genius.

■ After you've read this, say “**THE SMELL OF FRIED FISH GETS MY MOTOR RUNNING**” out loud. Trust me, just do it!

■ Think up a perfectly ordinary mortal cover name and write it on a little index card table tent in front of you.

□ Once during the game you can call upon your Elven powers to simply disappear. You can show up again later, in another location, or maybe you just become invisible.

**You are a Svartálfar, a Black Elf, also known as a Dwarf.** Your people live deep beneath the Earth. You are a little short. You are here, undercover, to keep an eye on a changeling—a Light Elf that was separated from the Court at birth and has no idea of their heritage. This person was thrown out unceremoniously as a baby and you find that more than a little unfair. You like them, as it turns out, and want to keep your fellow Elf out of trouble if you can.

■ You'll know the person you are here to protect because their player is about to say **"MAN, AM I EXHAUSTED"**. Keep your relationship and their backstory a secret for now—but not forever.

■ Think up a perfectly ordinary mortal cover name and write it on a little index card table tent in front of you.

□ Once during the game you can call upon your Elven powers to weave a potent spell that alters the nearby environment in some significant way.

**You are a Ljósálfar, a Light Elf, a representative of the faerie Court of Gold.** You are the good guys—humanity is an annoyance you can happily co-exist with, although you can't resist pulling pranks whenever you can. You are here on your own initiative, undercover, to keep an eye on a changeling—another Ljósálfar that was separated from the Court at birth and has no idea of their heritage. This person was thrown out unceremoniously as a baby and you find that more than a little unfair.

■ You'll know the person you are here to protect because their player is about to say **"MAN, AM I EXHAUSTED"**. Keep your relationship and their backstory a secret for now—but not forever.

■ Think up a perfectly ordinary mortal cover name and write it on a little index card table tent in front of you.

□ Once during the game you can call upon your Elven powers to weave a potent spell that influences or manipulates a human being.

**You are a Dökkálfar, a Dark Elf, a representative of the Court of Jet, the realm of shadow and darker things.** You are the good guys—you keep the magical world a secret from humanity, which, in turn, keeps both sides safe and happy. To that end you are here, undercover, to keep an eye on a Light Elf changeling who was mysteriously abandoned to the mortal world for reasons you don't understand—but would like to. It is probably a Light Elf trick against your people. You like this person, as it turns out, and want to keep your fellow Elf out of trouble if you can.

■ You'll know the person you are here to protect because their player is about to say **"MAN, AM I EXHAUSTED"**. Keep your relationship and their backstory a secret for now—but not forever.

■ After you've read this, say **"WORKING AT JACK KETCH IS A DREAM COME TRUE"** out loud. Trust me, just do it!

■ Think up a perfectly ordinary mortal cover name and write it on a little index card table tent in front of you.

□ Once during the game you can call upon your Elven powers to weave a potent spell that causes someone to be injured, or cursed, or confused, or otherwise harried by malevolent harm.

**You are a Jötun, a giant, descended from those bad old giants formed in the primordial chaos when the world began.** Your father was Baugi, son of Gilling; Járniðr Iron-Wood was your mother. It's giants all the way down, although each successive generation has grown more measly in height and width—you look practically normal among humans. You were kicked out of Jötunheimr over some political skullduggery. You came to this place by following another outsider—a miserable Myrkálfar, an outcast Elf of neither light or darkness—and figured if a fish restaurant was safe for them, it is safe for you. You like this Elf but have kept your secret to yourself.

■ You will know your outcast Elf-friend because their player is about to say **"THE SMELL OF FRIED FISH GETS MY MOTOR RUNNING"** out loud. Keep your backstory a secret for now—but not forever. (If you don't hear this, your buddy quit about a week ago and you are sad about it.)

■ Think up a perfectly ordinary mortal cover name and write it on a little index card table tent in front of you.

□ Once during the game you can call upon your giant powers to perform some epic feat of strength or endurance that is way, way beyond human possibility.

## Role Cards (7)

Distribute Roles randomly.

Any left over can be used as inspiration for non-player characters, should you need any.

# JACK KETCH Seafood



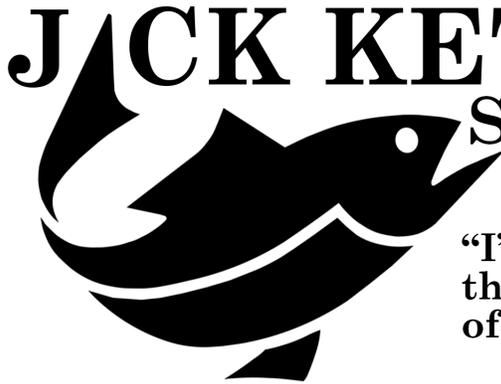
“I’ll have  
the Ketch  
of the day!”

## Asst. Manager

You are the Assistant Manager at Jack Ketch Seafood.

They promised you that if you worked hard enough you’d be Manager by now, but here you are. What the hell? Why aren’t you Manager?

# JACK KETCH Seafood



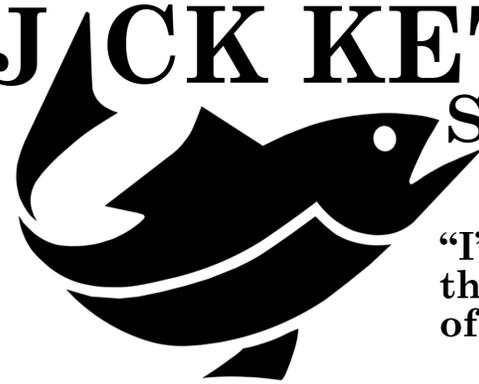
“I’ll have  
the Ketch  
of the day!”

## Line Cook

You are a Line Cook at Jack Ketch Seafood.

Like all cooks you work ferociously hard for stupid long hours and take a lot of drugs. Who is your dealer? It could be someone at the restaurant or an old friend. It could be that old creeper, Tweet.

# JACK KETCH Seafood



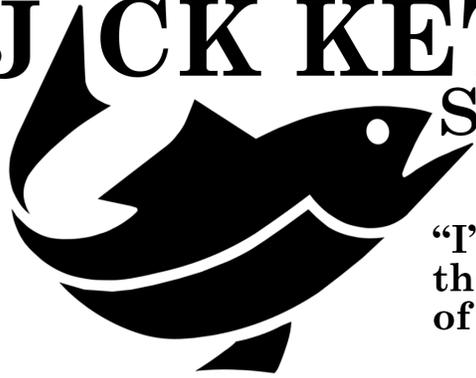
“I’ll have  
the Ketch  
of the day!”

## Dishwasher

You are a Dishwasher at Jack Ketch Seafood.

Being a dishwasher is hard work but it isn’t very demanding. Which is good, because you like being able to turn off your brain every night and dive into a pile of filth. Why is that?.

# JACK KETCH Seafood



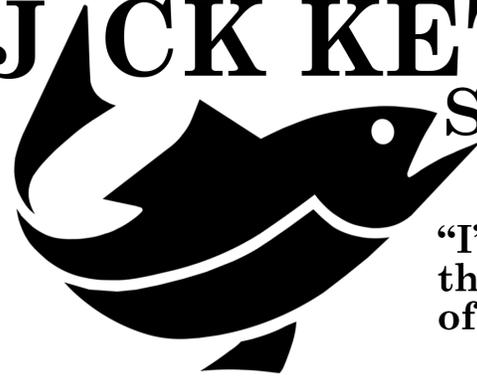
“I’ll have  
the Ketch  
of the day!”

## Host

You are a Host at Jack Ketch Seafood.

Being a host means making a good first impression—being attractive and well put together. So why do you have the job instead of, you know, someone attractive and well put together?

# JACK KETCH Seafood



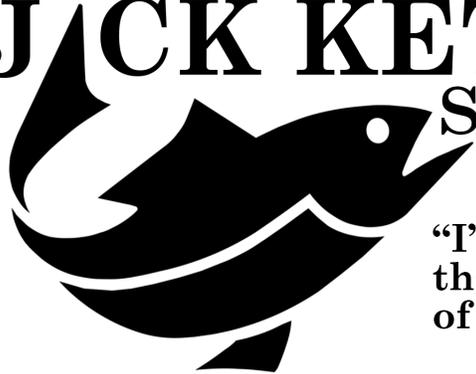
“I’ll have  
the Ketch  
of the day!”

## Busser

You are a Busser at Jack Ketch Seafood.

You clear tables and do scut work for a cut of tips, and you are really glad to have any job at all. Why is that? Who at the restaurant got you this job?

# JACK KETCH Seafood



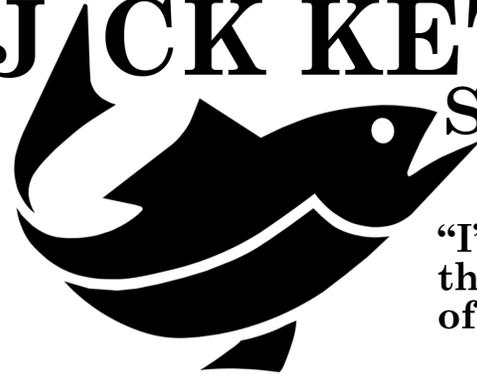
“I’ll have  
the Ketch  
of the day!”

## Server Trainee

You are a Server Trainee at Jack Ketch Seafood.

Waiting tables wasn’t in your life plan but here we are. What did you think you’d be doing by now, and where did it all go wrong, and what feeble effort are you making to turn things around?

# JACK KETCH Seafood



“I’ll have  
the Ketch  
of the day!”

## Server

You are a Server at Jack Ketch Seafood.

You like meeting new people and making strangers happy through the universal currency of fried fish. Your co-workers are weird but nice, and the work is hard but not difficult. So why are you a few days away from quitting?