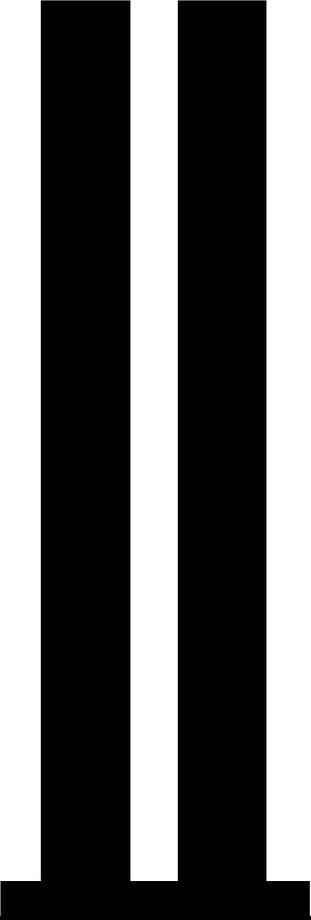


# T H E P L A N T



# THE PLANT

Made by Jason Morningstar.

Inspirations: Jackson Tegu's game *The Smoke Dream*. Kevin Allen, Junior's games *Sweet Agatha* and *Merryweather*. Tony Dowler's game *How To Host A Dungeon*. Keri Smith's not-a-book *This Is Not A Book*.

Thanks: Dan Puckett, Tony Dowler, Stephan Bretall, Tom Gurganus, Simon Carryer and Nathan Paoletta.

Winner of the "Best Out Of The Box" award in the 2009 Two Games One Name Challenge.

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## What You Need

Yourself, twenty-one index cards, a pencil and this booklet. You might want a little token to represent you but it isn't required.

## What is Going On

**Your daughter is in the plant. You are going to find her.**

# Preparing the Plant Cards I

**Set one card aside to tally things on.** Write a column for Anger and a column for Fear on it.

**Take three cards and write “Down” on them.**



These represent descending to a new portion of the plant - by ladder, hoistway, stair, or perhaps by climbing machinery and crawling through a tangled collection of pipes between floors. Climbing between spaces in the plant offers a moment of introspection and peace - nothing is going to happen while you are descending. When you reach the climax of the game, you will have gone deeper three times - to the lowest depths of the plant, the last place your daughter could be.

## Preparing the Plant Cards 2

Take some cards and number them, writing their number in the center of the card. You can have up to ten cards or as few as four - more cards means a longer game. You can write any number between one and ten on a card, but don't duplicate. Seven cards is a good amount. You could, for example, number your cards 1,2,4,6,7,9,and 10.

Then label each edge of each card A, B, C, and D. Each of the numbered cards should have one different letter on each of its four edges.



The order these are written in does not matter - A can be next to D on one card and across from it on another. It's best to scramble these a little.

# Preparing the Detail Cards

**Author a total of ten things, one each onto the remaining cards from the following list.** Keep it simple, *like the examples below:*

- [Condition] [hand tool]. *Broken vice grips.*
- [Condition] [subject] book. *Well-loved history book.*
- [Condition] photograph of your daughter. *Torn photo.*
- Smell of [subject]. *Smell of baking cookies.*
- Sound of [subject]. *Sound of a brass band.*
- Taste of [subject]. *Taste of gasoline.*
- [Emotion] [animal]. *Happy dog.*
- Your daughter's [object]. *Her hockey trophy.*
- Memory of your daughter at [event]. *Prom.*
- Pool of [liquid]. *Pool of spilled apple juice.*
- [Condition] [item of clothing]. *Dirty sweater.*
- [Condition] [toy]. *New Transformer doll.*
- [Condition] letter to your daughter. *Unopened letter.*
- Feeling of [subject] on the skin. *Feel of metal.*
- [Emotion] [type of] person. *Angry homeless person.*
- Your daughter's voice whispering "[word]". *"Sorry"*
- Memory of your daughter when she was [age]. *21.*
- Sudden feeling of [Emotion]. *Feeling of joy.*
- Shadow in the shape of [object]. *Pterodactyl shadow.*
- Glimpse of your daughter in distance. *Just a glimpse.*



brand  
new  
teddy  
bear

[You] can also [make up your own] if you want. Include at least a few that reference your daughter. She's why you are here.

# **Finished!**

When this is finished, you should have:

- A stack of 4-10 plant cards
- Another stack of ten detail cards.

**Keep them separate, thoroughly mix each stack, then put them both face down in front of you.**

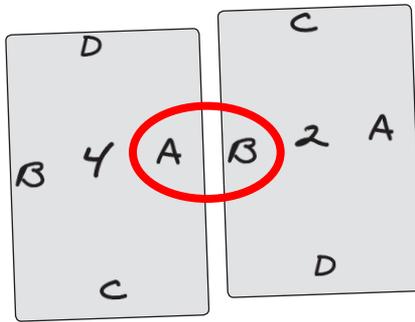
Now you are prepared to play, although you don't know exactly how yet. Read on! The next five pages explain how cards work. After that, you just draw them and follow the instructions.

# How Plant Cards Work I

The edges that connect between the card *you just came from* and the card *you are entering* have letters on them. For example, the edge of the card you are leaving might be A, and the adjoining edge on the card you are entering might be B. The numbered section will always ask you about this, with a question like this:

**Do you have either B or C? Go to 12.**

**Otherwise, go to 21.**



In this case, you'd go read section 12, because you do have a B. on one of the two connecting edges.

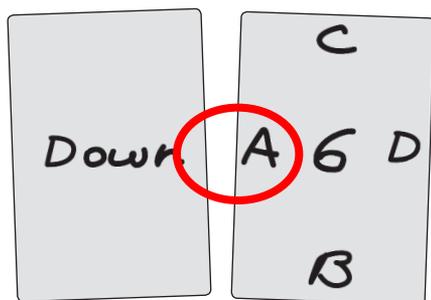
You can connect any two edges together at right angles as you move through the plant. Down cards take up space just like the rest of the plant cards.

## How Plant Cards Work 2

Some rooms will have only a single letter where the two edges connect. This makes what would ordinarily be the rarer choice far more likely than the other.

For the first room, your point of entry corresponds to the side of first card facing you. If a B is facing you, B is what you have.

Similarly, if you are leaving a Down card, you'll only have a single letter at the connection rather than two:



It is also possible to get same letter match-ups, like "A-A", which have the same effect as a singleton. Just look at the connection between where you were and where you are going and use the letter or letters to determine which path to take.

# How Detail Cards Work

Fairly often you will be prompted to draw detail cards, in conjunction with a question about why the detail is important. The results may surprise you. **Make sure you build on each new piece of information you generate.** You are growing the story based on your responses, and they should inform what is to come.

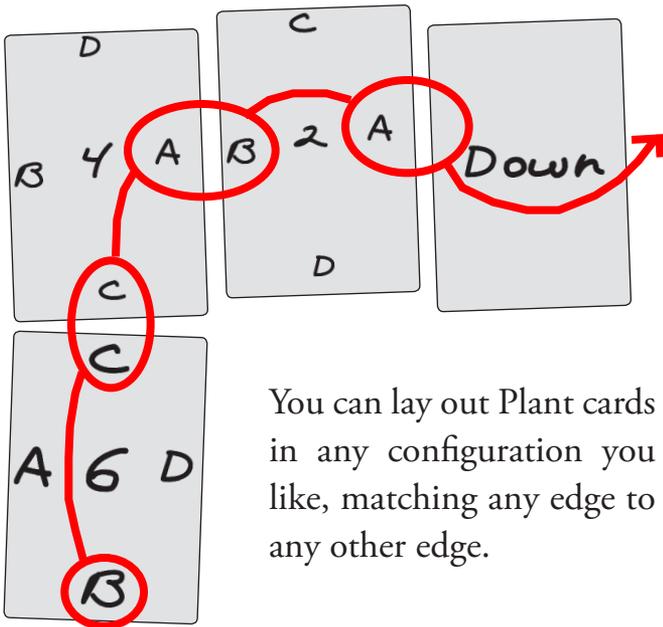
**You really need to buy into the questions and answers.**

If you breeze through without investing in answering questions as they are presented, this game will be a shallow and unsatisfying exercise. As a rule of thumb, give each answer as much time and energy as you would if a GM asked it to you in a more conventional game.

The very best approach is to keep a journal, writing down what occurs in each room as you explore, what questions you answer, what questions you raise.

# Exploring the Plant

Keep moving and following the instructions. If you like, draw out a map of the plant on your cards as you go.



You can lay out Plant cards in any configuration you like, matching any edge to any other edge.

In the game above, I started by drawing card #6. B is facing me, so that's the only letter I had. Next I drew card #4, and mated it to card #6, giving me C/C. Onward, to card #2, where I had A/B, and then down to some new level.

## Anger and Fear

As you go through the plant, you'll become more and more angry, and more and more afraid. **Keep track of how many points of each you've accrued**, because it will be a factor in the outcome of the game. You've got a separate card for this, although you can probably keep track in your head if you prefer.

# The Last Card

**Before you draw the last card, tabulate your Anger and Fear.** The higher of the two will influence the climax of the game. Take a moment to think about the likely outcome, then turn over the final card and follow the special instructions.

In the last room, you'll have a decision made by the edge letter pair, just like in each previous room. However, each room has instructions to follow if it happens to be the last room - follow these.

...your Anger total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 8.  
Otherwise, go to 22.**

...your Fear total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 13.  
Otherwise, go to 17.**

# Entering the Plant

**Turn over the top card in the plant deck.**

If it says “Down” on it, you are immediately going lower into the bowels of the plant. **How do you get down there? Draw another card.**

If it has a number on it, you’ve reached some area within the plant. **In the rule book, read the numbered section corresponding to the number on the card.** You’ve started the game and you are building a map.

# STOP

Look, I know you've read a *Choose Your Own Adventure* book or played a *Lone Wolf* game or whatever. Don't read the following sections in order. Start at the number on your first room and **follow the instructions.**



## **I.**

This is the furnace room. The massive annealing furnace squats on an iron trestle, with long-frozen hydraulic lifts poised like fat legs on either side. The walls are studded with support machinery - a huge oil pump, a 200 kilowatt inductor with its guts ripped out, and a rusting stand for cooling water three stories tall. Someone has dragged a shopping cart and a rotten canvas tarp in here.

**Do you have either A or B? Go to 15.**

**Otherwise, go to 24.**

Unless this is the final plant card...  
...and your Anger total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 31.**

**Otherwise, go to 22.**

...and your Fear total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 13.**

**Otherwise, go to 17.**



## 2.

This is the scrap room. Dirty bins that once held copper scraps are overturned and broken. A scrap baler press large enough to crush an automobile sits idle, the press-plates torn off, the breakdown mill that feeds it uprooted and in pieces. The mill's battered octagonal red hopper is spectacularly covered in graffiti. Shattered beer bottles and ancient condoms litter the floor.

**Do you have either A or C? Go to 12.**

**Otherwise, go to 23.**

Unless this is the final plant card...  
...and your Anger total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 31.**  
**Otherwise, go to 22.**

...and your Fear total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 13.**  
**Otherwise, go to 17.**



### 3.

This is the coil room. A bank of cylindrical extrusion presses stand like sentinels in the dust. The paraphernalia used to coil copper wire - control stands, take-up coilers, and long trolleys - have been torn apart, the more club-like pieces used to beat the electrical billet heater until it collapsed, taking large chunks of the ceiling with it.

**Do you have either B or C? Go to 27.**

**Otherwise, go to 20.**

Unless this is the **final** plant card...  
...and your Anger total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 31.**  
**Otherwise, go to 22.**

...and your Fear total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 13.**  
**Otherwise, go to 17.**



## 4.

This is the work line. The room was once dominated by four immense machines spaced along a pair of work lines - all that remains are ghostly imprints on the floor around rusting bolt-holes where they stood for years. At one end of the room is the bent remains of an X-ray thickness gauge enclosure, now filled with unidentifiable refuse. A stained and desiccated mattress is shoved in one corner.

**Do you have either B or D? Go to 14.**

**Otherwise, go to 18.**

Unless this is the **final** plant card...  
...and your Anger total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 31.**

**Otherwise, go to 22.**

...and your Fear total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 13.**

**Otherwise, go to 17.**



## 5.

This is the crawlspace, a claustrophobic access corridor filled with animal droppings and asbestos. Amid the ductwork are gaping, ragged holes where fans, bag houses, dust collectors and changeover dampers were once affixed, now presenting a deadly hazard to the unwary.

**Do you have either A or D? Go to 25.**

**Otherwise, go to 11.**

Unless this is the **final** plant card...  
...and your Anger total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 31.**  
**Otherwise, go to 22.**

...and your Fear total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 13.**  
**Otherwise, go to 17.**



## 6.

This is the control room. Banks of electrical equipment here have been forced open and gutted, their contents sold for scrap. At one end is an overturned metal desk, its contents now covering the floor in moldy paper pulp. A mummified rat peeks out of a waxed paper cup. You remember it in better times...

**Go to 19.**

Unless this is the **final** plant card...  
...and your Anger total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 31.**  
**Otherwise, go to 22.**

...and your Fear total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 13.**  
**Otherwise, go to 17.**



## 7.

This is the trunk room. Both gas and water pipes of every dimension wend through this space, all of them lifeless and broken. A burst pipe long ago flooded the space, and a greasy black water line is visible at knee height on the walls. A jagged hole in the floor provides a view into the inky blackness of what was once a water well. Incongruous piles of shingles are stacked behind the door.

**Do you have either C or D? Go to 28.**

**Otherwise, go to 16.**

Unless this is the **final** plant card...  
...and your Anger total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 31.**  
**Otherwise, go to 22.**

...and your Fear total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 13.**  
**Otherwise, go to 17.**



## 8.

This is the break room. Faded safety and health posters vie for space with creeping mold and crudely scrawled graffiti on the walls. A bank of shattered windows look out over a grey courtyard far below. Ornamental brickwork serves as a ladder of sorts, making this room easy to get to. It's obviously been a popular shooting gallery - needles and syringes form a toxic constellation across the cracked linoleum floor.

**Go to 27.**

Unless this is the **final** plant card...  
...and your Anger total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 31.  
Otherwise, go to 22.**

...and your Fear total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 13.  
Otherwise, go to 17.**



## 9.

This is the spin-block room. A pair of ominous-looking round cages, once yellow but now consumed with rust, hang from the ceiling, far enough off the floor that vandals could not reach them. The hydraulic machinery to raise and lower the spin-block cages has been removed, leaving only shadowy impressions on the walls, and stranding the cages forever.

**Do you have either A or D? Go to 26.**

**Otherwise, go to 29.**

Unless this is the **final** plant card...  
...and your Anger total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 31.**  
**Otherwise, go to 22.**

...and your Fear total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 13.**  
**Otherwise, go to 17.**



## 10.

This is the rolling mill hall. It stretches out a great distance in both directions; the dormant mill itself dominating one wall. Aluminum raceways and trays that once caught and directed the mill's output have been smashed and bent in an orgy of destruction. Here and there a piece of dirty copper tubing hints at a productive past.

**Do you have either B or C? Go to 30.**

**Otherwise, go to 32.**

Unless this is the **final** plant card...  
...and your Anger total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 31.**

**Otherwise, go to 22.**

...and your Fear total is higher:

**If you have either of the edge letters, go to 13.**

**Otherwise, go to 17.**



## II.

Draw, read and discard a detail card.

**Why does the item on the card make you simmer with barely contained rage?**

**Gain one point of anger.**



## 12.

In your mind the scrap room is stuffed with the leavings of a busy and productive plant - Bits of copper cathode, wire ends, and finishing scrap, piled high in wheeled bins. A scrap baler press large enough to crush an automobile sits idle beside its twin drive motors, fed by a brand new breakdown mill with an octagonal red hopper.

Amid the noise and activity, you stand with your head tilted back, your eyes fixed on feed tray above the hopper.

**What do you see?**

**Gain one point of anger.**

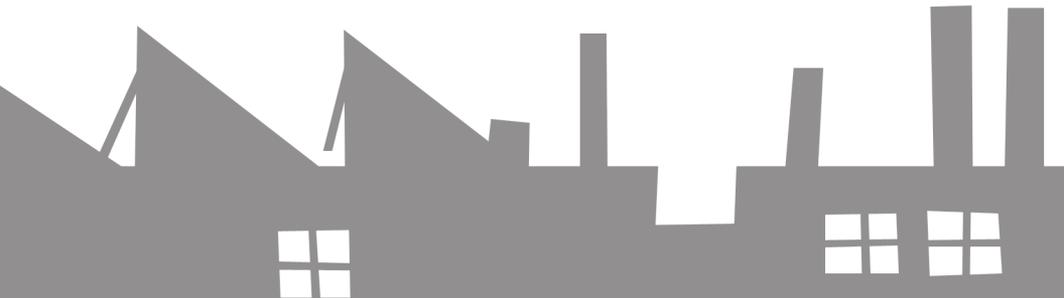


### 13.

In the end she wasn't even hiding.

A different turn, a more sensible choice and you would have walked right to her. She smiles when she sees you, but it is a terrible smile - somehow vacant, as though she learned it from poring over magazine photos rather than ever being happy.

She's changed. Whatever happened to her here has changed her, and something inside you falls and keeps falling.



## 14.

Draw, read and discard a detail card.

**Who does the item remind you of, other than your daughter, and why?**

**Gain one point of anger.**



## 15.

It's quite a few years ago. The massive annealing furnace squats on an even more massive iron trestle, with hydraulic lifts poised like fat legs on either side. The walls are studded with support machinery - a huge oil pump, a 200 kilowatt inductor, and a stand for cooling water three stories tall. The room is filled with the sharp metallic tang of liquified copper and the air is astonishingly hot.

**Your foreman just came in and told you that you were going to be a father. How did you take the news?**

**Gain one point of fear.**



## 16.

It's a long time ago. Both gas and water pipes of every dimension wend through this space. A long carbon monoxide gas generator sprouts tubes leading to the distant melting and annealing furnaces. The hot well pump, its connecting pipes ringed in red, connects to the mains and the cooling tower with only a dross sieve interrupting the water's progress. Oily steam bleeds from a safety valve, making the air foul and swampy.

**What is your daughter doing here?**

**Gain one point of anger.**



## 17.

You find her in the last place you look - the furthest corner of the plant, as far from her life as it was possible for her to get.

As far from you.

Jammed in a corner, as if, even in her last moments, she was still trying to find more distance.

She looks so small.

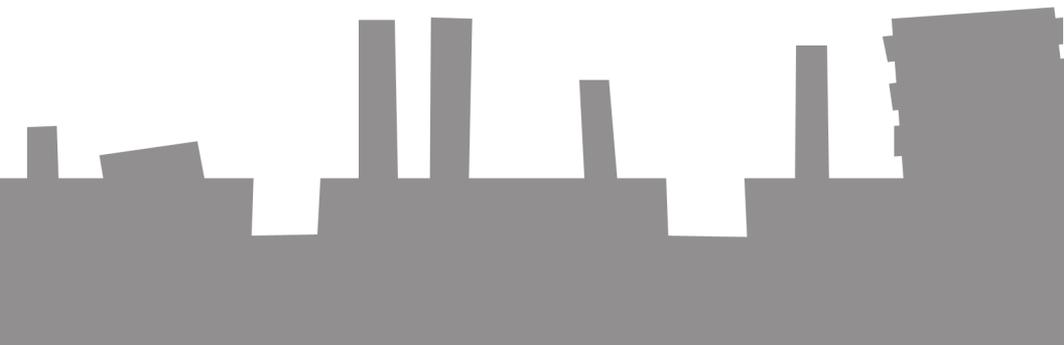


## 18.

It's many years ago. The room is dominated by four immense machines spaced along a pair of work lines - a channel induction melting furnace, a milling machine, a brushing machine, and a brutal guillotine chopping shear. At one end of the room is a plain grey box into which the lines converge - an X-ray thickness gauge.

**Something is about to go wrong - what is it, and why aren't you trying to stop it?**

**Gain one point of fear.**



## 19.

It is many years ago. The plant is spotlessly clean, brilliantly lit, and humming with power and purpose. Here in the control room, solid-looking electrical cabinets line the walls, and banks of instruments monitor the furnace, upcasting, and coiling workspace machinery. At one end is a battered metal desk with a telephone and paperwork on it. In its own way it is weirdly cheerful and realer than real. You remember it like it was yesterday. And then it all falls apart around you.

She's been here, that much is obvious. You can feel her nearby and it makes you relax for a moment. **What happened before - that nonsense in the last room of the plant - couldn't have happened, right?** You have a dramatic disposition and tend to spin out tales for yourself. You imagined the whole thing. You *must* have.

(Keep any points you gained, though).



## 20.

It's a long time ago. The plant is buzzing with energy. Copper wire of all gages snakes everywhere - through a bank of cylindrical extrusion presses, down to control stands and into take-up coilers, and onto trolleys. The coiling line is a blur of activity as workers stamp, cut, bundle, and haul copper wire.

Yeah, the good old days. That was a long time ago.

Remember that thing in the last room? The last thing you experienced? Remember how easily you described and explained what happened? **You were lying to yourself.** Actual events were much, much worse. Ten times worse, horror show freak show worse. Come to grips with that and be honest with yourself at last. Keep it together. Do it for her.

**Gain one point of fear.**



## 21.

You realize you aren't supposed to be here, right?

This is a secret page. You can't get here by following the rules and yet here you are. Is this how you always do things? Is this how life works in your world - sneaking around, cheating, losing the thread, getting distracted from the most important fucking task in the world?

**What does that say about you?**

**What does that say about your chances of finding your daughter alive and unhurt?**

Get out of here. Go find the plot; go find your little girl.



## 22.

You were driven toward her by love and fury, you fought  
your own demons and hers, you found her.

Still amid the rubble, asbestos like snow, she's hurt.

She was foolish, she's crying, you pick her up and take her  
from the plant and with each step you forget a little more,  
and in the end there are no memories, just your daughter  
back with you and safe.

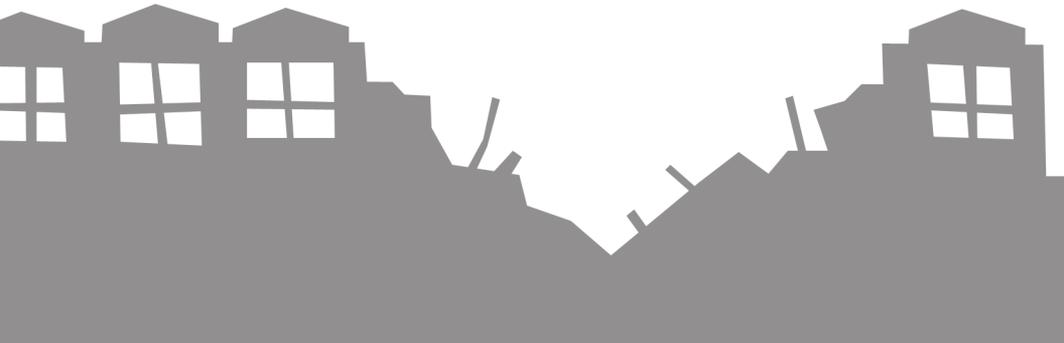


## **23.**

Draw, read and discard a detail card.

**Why is the item on the card terrifying to you?**

**Gain TWO points of fear.**



## **24.**

Draw, read and discard a detail card.

**Why does the item on the card fill you with stubborn determination?**

**Gain one point of anger.**



## 25.

It is the past. You spend a good amount of time above the factory floor, in cramped crawlspaces filled with metallic dust. Amid the ductwork are high temperature dust collectors and changeover dampers, enormous slowly-spinning fans, and bag houses with rotary valves. The roar of the plant floor is muffled down here. It is almost peaceful.

You look down and see your partner, the love of your life.

**Who is your partner talking to, and about what?**

**Gain one point of fear.**



## 26.

Draw, read and discard a detail card.

**Why does the item on the card make you break down and cry?**

**Gain one point of fear.**



## 27.

You used to spend a lot of time here. You used to eat lunch here every day. The courtyard used to have a tree in it, growing in an enormous planter. People would gather there to smoke, and you'd watch them.

You ate alone after people found out about what happened.

### **What happened?**

And you were always watching. Scanning the yellow, exhausted faces huddled around that miserable tree. Every day, you'd look, knowing eventually you'd catch a glimpse again.

### **Who were you looking for?**

**Gain a point of anger AND a point of fear.**



## 28.

Draw, read and discard a detail card.

**Why does the item on the card make you whoop with delight, eager to press on and take care of business?**

**Gain a point of anger.**



## 29.

It is the past. You are in the spin-block room and the blocks are winding copper tubing, a strangely hypnotic process. The mile-long tubes enter through access channels in the walls and are gently bent into huge spools. The whole process is nearly silent, and requires little supervision. You come here when you need to cool down, when you need to think, when you need to contain your rage.

**What happened to make you so furious, and how long has it been going on?**

**Gain a point of anger.**



## 30.

It's long ago, in the rolling mill hall. The mill itself is clattering and clanking with frenetic activity. Long, uninterrupted tubes of gleaming copper emerge from the mill and gracefully roll onto aluminum raceways, guided by workers wearing cotton gloves. The strong copper tang in the air reminds you, disturbingly, of blood.

**When were you around enough blood to form a strong memory of its odor?**

**Gain a point of fear.**



### 31.

Oh, yes, there she is. After all your crawling and struggling, After all your nightmares and rages, you'd imagined her alone and helpless but she's neither. Your paternal rescue suddenly takes on a ridiculous air, a patina of age and foolishness.

She doesn't need you.

She doesn't even *want* you.



## **32.**

Draw, read and discard a detail card.

**Why does the item on the card make you physically ill?**

**Gain a point of whichever is currently higher, anger or fear. If they are tied, raise the one most recently raised.**



# THANKS!

I hope you enjoyed The Plant. 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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