

The Devil's Box

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A Horror Rules Script
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Story

A chance meeting with a desperate stranger in the street leaves the characters with a simple, ornate box, and a cryptic warning: "Whatever you do, don't let HIM get it!" Strange events, bizarre accidents and unexplained horrors fill the next days as they desperately attempt to uncover the truth behind the container. Unable to rid themselves of the cryptic vessel and with the growing desire to open it, they are caught in an ever-increasing circle of madness and danger. Finally, answers come, but just in time to prepare them for one final ordeal. To break the bond of the box, they need only endure one further trial, but beware - its owner is coming for what is his...

Goal

Mystery

To save themselves and keep Meleche from recovering the Box, the characters must unravel its secrets, survive the Four Ordeals and make sure that it is once again safely hidden. Kicking his booty would be nice, too.

Setting

A city; any will do, but preferably a large one with lots of people, crime, restaurants, convenience stores, a few churches, maybe a waterfront, and the more clouds and rain the better (Seattle would be a great choice). In a place like this, anything can happen.

Bad Guys

Name: The Box	Grip Check: Startle at first contact; Flip Out if opened
COR: n/a	Move: n/a
Health: Indestructable	Weak Spot: n/a
Fighting Skill: n/a	Damage: n/a

Powers: The Box is evil. It is the property of a wicked demon, Meleche, and stores much of his power. It has been kept from him by the faithful until recently. When it comes into the possession of someone new, Meleche is alerted and starts for the box (a journey of four days). As he draws closer, the owners must endure the Four Ordeals of the Box, which are Strife, Terror, Death and Darkness (see below for details).

Skills: n/a

Vulnerabilities: Once the Four Ordeals have been successfully completed, and only then, the Box loses all powers and can be released - tossed out, given away, kept, etc.

Description: A small red wooden box with strange designs painted on the outside in gold, black and orange. The lid is held tight by a brass clasp that is tarnished and hard to move. The box will fit easily in the palm of a hand, and by its weight seems to have something substantial inside. It is obviously quite old. The Box is an artifact belonging to the demon Meleche. It is steeped in evil, and although none knows for certain what it contains, his disciples believe it holds a portion of his own body. Whatever it is, Meleche wants it back.

Name: Disciples of Meleche Grip Check: Startle

COR: 3

Move: 6

Health: 8

Weak Spot: 4

Fighting Skill: 6

Damage: by fist or weapon (knife, club, pistol)

Powers: none

Skills: Watchfulness (7), Thief (5), Sneak (6)

Vulnerabilities: none

Description: Ordinary people who worship the demon Meleche, they are zealous, single-minded and sadistic. Their only desire is to retrieve the box for their master; they will do anything to get it. Yes, we mean *anything*. The disciples will not mention Meleche by name, but will only refer to him as "the Dark One."

Name: (Philip) Meleche Grip Check: Scare

COR: 4

Move: 8

Health: 125

Weak Spot: 1

Fighting Skill: 8 (punch)

Damage: Moderate

Powers: Flight - at triple move rate

Night sight - normal vision in darkness

Mask of Terror - show his real features (red eyes, teeth, horrid face); Freak Check

Superhuman Strength - Bulk: 6

Regenerate - every round, he regenerates 1 Health (unless Completely Dead)

Sense the Box - during the Four Ordeals, he knows the rough location of the Box (within 20ft); once the Ordeals have been endured, he loses the ability.

Skills: Watchfulness (8), Sneak (8)

Vulnerabilities: Meleche cannot take the Box by force. It must be given to him. He will, however, stop at nothing to get it, including threats, the promise of violence and the delivery of violence. Meleche is affected by Faith attacks, which, although they do no damage, will keep him at least 10ft away for 10 minutes. Also, the Dark One only regenerates until he is Completely Dead. After that his spirit form returns to the Abyss for several months of R 'n R.

Description: tall, roguishly handsome, dark curly hair, chiselled features, hard eyes, wears black expensively tailored clothes and a floor length topcoat. Nice fingernails.

Cast

1. **Avery Book** - a good and righteous man who has been entrusted with the care of the Box for the past 24 years. Age 43, shy, graying and somewhat unkempt, he was given possession of

Meleche's container and told to lose himself.

2. **Shelly Book** - Avery's sister. 29, somewhat shy herself but had secretly discovered something of what her brother was doing. She will easily identify strangers at the funeral and point them in the direction of her brother's apartment.
3. **Stuart Elverson** - socially challenged next-door neighbor, amazingly annoying and suspicious, who will doggedly investigate any strange sounds, activity, etc. Collects comics and frequents Internet chat rooms, where he is known as "HunkaHunka69". He is large, unwashed, sports stringy hair, smells faintly of corn chips and is almost always wearing a Star Wars T-shirt of some type.
4. **Father Michael Fairbanks** - A 63 yr old local priest, who had infrequent meetings with Avery Book to provide Communion and occasional theological discussions. He doesn't know the real truth, but suspects that Avery was involved in some sort of heavy-duty spiritual warfare. He will help the characters speak with Shelly and pray for them. He might even get involved more directly, if he knows what's at stake. Tall, thin, balding, with glasses and a kindly personality.

Walk-Ons

1. **Margaret Petersmith** - an elderly landlady of one of the characters, who will definitely wonder about any problems at her property. She might become very enchanted with Meleche when he arrives.
2. **Officer Pemberton** - a rookie cop assigned to investigate any reports made by the characters. He is Good, has a Faith - 2, and might even believe the characters (if he gets a little taste of what's happening...)
3. **Ex-Boy/Girlfriend** - a clingy ex-flame is a perfect addition to this adventure. Toss them in when the character least expects it (or wants it). Preferably, they should be attractive, witty, well-meaning, and simply convinced they can "Make things work." And persistent. Very persistent.

Chain of Events

1. *A Strange Gift*

The adventure begins with some, one, or most of the characters out for an evening stroll - coming home from work, taking in a show, or what have you. Suddenly, out of the crowd lunges a wild-eyed, wild-haired stranger in a faded jacket and a few days of chin stubble. The stranger is Avery Book, and before he can be stopped, he thrusts a rag-wrapped bundle into a random character's hands, clutches him close and whispers intensely, "For God's sake keep it closed... and whatever you do, don't let HIM get it!" With that, he disappears into the crowd. Wrapped inside the rags is the Box. (Don't forget to have first-time touchers make their Grip check.) They may ponder it at their leisure, although the middle of the street probably isn't such a great place.

2. *First Impressions (The First Ordeal)*

The Box, of course, is the Box (as noted above). Once the characters have been exposed to it for about an hour, the First Ordeal begins. This is the ordeal of Strife, which is basically the Box's excuse to make everyone hate each other. The group will suffer the following effects, according to their Morality:

Saintly/Good - strong desire to get rid of Box; sense of impending doom

Normal - uneasy, jumpy and strangely curious

Selfish/Sinful - get it for themselves (and maybe even sneak a peek); sense of great worth

The Box, after allowing a short while for these urges to sink in, will begin to push the characters. Each character will be pushed in turn to act on their impulses. Normals, when pushed, will have to pick a side of the fence to come down on - keep it or get rid of it. If they resist, have them check Will to remain in control. Characters can be pushed three times each. The period of Strife ends when the pushing is all done. The end will be abrupt and the group will know something weird is happening. Have everyone make a Scare check and tell them they have goose pimples.

3. *Signs of Things to Come (The Second Ordeal)*

That night, as they sleep, everyone has bad dreams according to their impulses from the Ordeal of Strife. In the morning have everyone make a Startle check because of the powerful nature of the nightmares. On this day they move to the Second Ordeal - Terror. The Box will inflict on each character a heart-pounding close-call or eerie happening. Be creative, flexible, and don't be afraid to hurt someone (a little). Each episode will result in a Scare check (or a Freak or two) and/or the possibility of Light or Moderate damage. Here are some suggestions:

1. The Box moves about by itself
2. Nearly electrocuted in tub by radio falling in
3. Almost (or more than almost) run down by car
4. Classic cat-jumps-out-of-the-closet ploy ("Wait - I don't own a cat...")
5. Creaks, footsteps and voices whispering but no-one is there
6. A Flock of ravens bursts from the cupboard
7. Slugs infest the refrigerator, shower or toilet
8. Phone calls with no one on the other end but eerie noises

Whichever events you choose, be ABSOLUTELY SURE to include these:

Waking dream of a tall, black, menacing figure, swathed in darkness,

9. coming closer and closer, minute by minute (a vision of Meleche).

10. Black-robed prowlers following, stalking and watching, but too slippery to catch (these are the Disciples of Meleche).

The upshot of all this is a lot of noise, which will draw out **Stuart Elverson** for a nosy interlude. Once he has the scent that something is going on, he will not cease his quest to discover it. Heck, even Margaret or the ex-boy/girlfriend might show up. The more the merrier.

4. *Accidents Happen (The Third Ordeal)*

If the characters are convinced something horrid is occurring and try to get rid of the Box, tough - it always finds a way back, sometimes through a kindly stranger returning it and sometimes through purely supernatural means (turns up on the counter after being tossed in the river, pops up in the mailbox or a jacket pocket, etc.). Heck, after the day they've had, who wouldn't want to get rid of it? But the next day proves even worse. That night more

troubled dreams occur (another Startle check), and Day 3 starts the Third Ordeal - Death. Hopefully not all the PC's will get snuffed, but it would certainly be nice if some did. The Third Ordeal is basically like the Second on steroids. Accidents, instead of scary, are now lethal. Pump up the same list or add a few:

1. Elevator breaks and drops 12 floors
2. A fire starts in the bedroom with doors mysteriously locked
3. Poisonous snakes sprout from the laundry hamper
4. Brakes go out on the old winding mountain road
5. Accidentally pushed into the shark pool at the aquarium
6. Chased and attacked by a wild-eyed serial killer whose voices told him "You were THE ONE..."

Now's your chance to really make 'em squirm. Require at least two skill checks to avoid Severe damage (two separate chances) or one to prevent Catastrophic Damage, your choice. Grip Checks, too, preferably at the Freak level. Also, more **Stuart Elverson**.

5. *Visitors*

That same night, now that everyone is properly shaken and disturbed, the characters receive a visit from the Disciples of Meleche. Have one for each member of the group, plus an extra for every Criminal and Law Enforcement character type. Only a few will show up at the door dressed in normal (but dark) garb, but they will be full of veiled threats and the hint of bad intentions. They will ask to sit and talk with the characters, display a great deal of familiarity with the Box, and make a great many cryptic comments about how they should "give it up if they know what's good for them" and about how the "Dark One is ill-pleased" and will be even grumpier when he arrives. If they succeed in getting the Box, it will of course return to the characters, and this will force the Disciples to attack later on that night. If they fail to get it, it will of course remain with the characters, and this will force the Disciples to attack later on that night. When they return they will be fully dressed in robes and hoods and will not take no for an answer. They will fight until 1/2 are out of commission or until they get the Box.

6. *Avery Book (*Point of No Return)*

If they survive the night, the group will be treated to a shockingsurprise - the morning news carries a report of a grisly murder. The characters will easily recognize the face of **Avery Book**, the man who gave them the Box. Details are sketchy, but they get his name and the location of the funeral, which is later that afternoon. At the funeral, **Father Fairbanks** might be persuaded to introduce them to Avery's sister. He will approach the characters, having recognized them as outsiders, if they don't seek him out first. If handled properly, **Shelly Book** will tell them what little she knows - including where Avery lived and taking them there. Avery's small rundown apartment is packed with papers, clippings, Scripture passages and notes from various religious works. The characters can piece together most of the details regarding the Box, how Avery came into possession of it, its origins, and the nature of the Four Ordeals. Also, they will learn that Avery had long ago passed the trials, but that the Disciples had been on the verge of finding him. There are signs that he left in a hurry and it is obvious that he felt the only way to keep the Box from its master was to get rid of it. The papers mention Meleche by name as the owner of the Box, as well as making reference to him as "the Dark One," and hint at the Fourth Ordeal.

The party has a few hours to worry about this, and ponder the obscure references to “the coming of the Dark One.”

7. *The Dark One (The Fourth Ordeal)*

What’s coming tonight, precisely at 6 o’clock, is “Philip” Meleche, the Dark One, rightful owner of the Box and all-around bad bad man. The Fourth Ordeal, Darkness, is him, and it’s a doozy. Meleche will attempt to get the Box at all costs, although he is unable to actually *take* it. The Box, as part of its weakness, must be given to him freely, although Avery’s paper said nothing about this and Meleche isn’t about to offer this helpful bit of info. Meleche cannot take the Box by force. It must be given to him. He will, however, stop at nothing to get it, including threats, the promise of violence and the delivery of violence. The Dark One can and will use coercion, bribery, murder, lies and whatever else his (or your) filthy, wicked little mind can devise. One of his favorite tricks is threatening to kill one character unless another gives up the Box. An even dearer ploy is following through. Ultimately, the characters must elude, outrun or outgun him until midnight, when the Fourth Ordeal ends and Meleche loses his connection with his prized possession. At this point, the characters are free from him and the Box (as long as they can get away) and may do with it as they wish (throw it in the river, keep it, give it away as a gag gift, wear it as a hat).

Mood

1. **Tension of the Box** - most of the mood for the story stems from the Box itself, and the Four Ordeals. The important aspect is tension - try to build suspense and prevent the characters from just popping it open right off the bat (although certainly award Stupid Thing Points to anyone who does it in secret, whether they go bonkers or not). Build up the hostility and discord among the party members. A little scrap would certainly be interesting.
2. **The City** - the story takes place in the city, so play up this angle; dark, dirty, stinky alleys, misty streets, seedy folks, a light drizzling rain. Seattle would be a great place to stage it.
3. **The Dark One and His Disciples** - obviously, this is a great angle. Dreams and visions of dark, faceless, evil Meleche striding down the street, gliding around on bat wings or peering back from the mirror are great mood setters. Also, the everpresent Disciples can hang around quite a bit, elusive but definitely up to no good.