

Evil to the C.O.R.E.

Survival Horror for Spycraft 2.0

By DT Butchino



Survival Horror

Survival horror involves more intrigue and action than its parent genre. Characters are commonly more heroic and not as easily shaken by the terrifying things they may see or fight. They are better equipped and more prepared to act and others tend to look to them for help.

Survival horror also differs from horror in that it is not as much about fear as it is about thinking quickly and dealing with the shock of the situation. Characters are often thrust into the action without warning or explanation, leaving them to slowly uncover the truth. Dread is a constant enemy, staved off through teamwork, learning about the enemy and beating the odds. Many genre conventions used in apocalyptic campaigns fit well here, most notably the cruel and unforgiving nature of a world at its end.

As might be expected, survival is a predominant theme. Staying alive is the root of most adventures, with the characters regularly fleeing swarming hordes and running into seemingly overwhelming situations. Despite this, hope should always linger — ways to escape or win the day should always be available, even if they are not immediately obvious. Blasting through the beasties is fun and cathartic but shaking it up with scenes where violence clearly cannot win the day will keep the game fresh and interesting. This is, of course, one of the greatest challenges of adventure building for a survival horror campaign, as it demands intimate knowledge of the team and their strengths and the creativity to build challenges that they can overcome, even if they do not know it yet.

Just as important is finding ways to keep the players engaged. Especially in a game where the team is consistently on the defensive, where the odds are stacked so highly in the enemy's favour, it is critical to ensure that the characters have something to strive for, and even better if they have something worth living for. Subplots are great for this: a Romance or

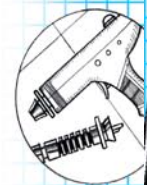
Personal Mission, for example, can drive a character through hell and back. So can a way to stop the madness, which leads to the other predominant theme of the subgenre: discovery.

It is common in survival horror for the characters to gradually gain insight about their new environment and enemies and over time this insight can lead to new tactics and objectives, driving encounters and perhaps even the campaign. New weapons can be developed (or found), alliances can be forged, territory can be won back and day by day the horror can be overcome. Ultimately, that is one of the most critical components in the subgenre — the chance, however slim, of victory.

Campaign Qualities

The following campaign qualities may apply in survival horror games, The GC may alter this list if he desires a less traditional version of the game.

- *Bleak*: Characters must often fend for themselves and learn quickly that one wrong move could be their last.
- *Hybrid*: Some or all the characters might belong to organizations, especially if the backdrop assumes some degree of (perhaps secret) knowledge of apocalyptic events. Even so, it is likely that the team will run into freelancers and civilians, both using the Freelance rules.
- *Paranoid*: Never knowing who or what may jump out at them, characters tend to be a bit jumpy.
- *Tense*: It is easy to crack under the pressure of seemingly unbearable odds and unfathomable creatures behind every door.
- *Thriller*: The path to victory is often less than obvious and always fraught with danger.
- *Violent*: Enemy weaknesses are often violent (the classic brain trauma for zombies, for example).



Common Classes

The following class options are especially appropriate for a survival horror game.

- *Intruder*: Locked doors and inaccessible rooms can get people killed. Fortunately, the Intruder has just the right skills and abilities for these situations.
- *Pointman*: A natural leader and jack-of-all-trades, the Pointman can become the cool head prevailing in moments of panic and terror.
- *Scientist*: All too frequently, the chaos driving the plot is the result of abused science. A Scientist can be the key to identifying what happened – and maybe how to reverse it.
- *Sleuth*: Finding clues is difficult at a blind run. Enter the Sleuth, whose investigative skills can help decipher the often puzzling circumstances facing the team.
- *Soldier*: Keeping a cool head and picking up on important details are all well and good but when the team's at the receiving end of a bloody onslaught, the Soldier's steady hands and scads of ammo can be the proverbial ace in the hole.

Common Objectives

Beyond staying alive, a survival horror game should have a direction. The characters might be trying to contain an outbreak, find a way to reverse it, trying to save innocents or working toward dozens of other goals. On a smaller scale, here are some of the most common objectives they might face.

- *Capture*: It is not uncommon to see corrupt agencies and companies behind a monstrous outbreak. When a project goes awry, these groups might send in a specialized team to capture specimens for further study. Alternately, characters unexpectedly caught in an outbreak might take this objective on themselves, seeking answers to their predicament.
- *Destroy*: The groups behind the outbreak may decide it is time to pull the plug, assigning the characters as a “cleansing squad” to wipe out any evidence of their involvement. Characters caught in the violence are unlikely to see this as an option unless they are heavily armed, have lots of help or think the enemy is much weaker than it looks (and likely is).
- *Discover*: Finding the source of the outbreak is valuable to anyone, especially those looking to exploit, manipulate or spark future epidemics. This objective is rarely sponsored by a group that helped to make the enemy (unless they were somehow duped or surprised by current events).

To characters in the thick of it all, though, discovery is a driving goal.

- *Rescue*: Innocents are invariably at stake. Whether the backdrop is a closed environment (like a lab) or an open one (like a city), someone always needs help. Civilian agencies like police, fire-fighters, FEMA and the Red Cross may be spearheading this objective but they are destined to quickly lose control (if they ever gain it in the first place).

Recommended Inspirations

Alien (M), *All Flesh Must Be Eaten* (RPG), *Alone in the Dark* (CG, M), *Clock Tower series* (CG), *Dead Rising* (CG), *Dead Space* (CG), *Dino Crisis series* (CG), *Evil Dead series* (CB, CG, M), *Fatal Frame series* (CG), *F.E.A.R.* (CG), *The Grudge 1 & 2* (M), *Last Night on Earth* (BG), *Parasite Eve* (CG), *Pitch Black* (M), *Resident Evil series* (B,CG, M), *The Ring 1 & 2* (M), *Shaun of the Dead* (M), *Shutter* (M), *Silent Hill series* (CG, M), *The Thing* (CG, M), *The Walking Dead* (CB), *Zombies!!!* (BG)

C.O.R.E. Concepts

Goals: 4 (Enlightened Evolution, Greed, Megalomania, Visionaries)

A forefather of evolutionary study, C.O.R.E. Concepts works consistently with other organizations to evolve mankind. The company has positioned itself to reap any potential rewards, leaving allies to suffer any shameful fallout.

History: 4 (Allies, Persecuted, Prophecy, Rise from the Ashes)

C.O.R.E. Concepts' testing methods have been labelled 'monstrous,' twice pushing the company to the brink of bankruptcy. However, thanks to recent upswings in research and some talented spin from friendly government agencies, it is now restructured and stronger than ever.

Image: 6 (Secretive Goals, Secretive Methods, Prominent Leaders, Secretive Members, Mysterious Sites)

Publicly, C.O.R.E. Concepts is engineering new medicine breakthroughs, including next-gen artificial organs. In reality, it works with government contractors to develop new bio-weapons and advanced soldiers. During business hours, C.O.R.E. Concepts has staff dedicated to its cover identity, unaware that others work on secret projects nearby.

Sites: 9 (Advanced Lab, Airstrip, Armory, Cloning Lab, Hospital, Hot Lab, Motor Pool, Records Office, Satellite Network)

C.O.R.E. Concepts keeps labs on both coasts in the United States and has additional labs in Africa, South America, and India. Its headquarters is located in Colorado, with a central projects lab in the Rockies.

Tools: 5 (E — IV, G — III, R — II, S — IV, T — V, V — III, W — III)

To ensure that its projects remain secret C.O.R.E. Concepts equips its security forces with state-of-the-art gear and the best training money can buy. Sadly, it will not be enough...

The Romero-13 Virus

Created by Dr. Gilbert Jensen (former Head of C.O.R.E. R&D), Romero-13 was originally devised as a cure for necrotic limb paralysis. In theory, it would repair and rejuvenate dead cells. Unfortunately, after twelve previous test viruses failed, leaving Dr. Jensen in danger of losing his funding, he desperately cobbled together a new batch and pushed it through to live testing at one of C.O.R.E.'s research facilities.

Initial testing went well but the experiment slowly fell apart as subjects began exhibiting physical mutations and explosive rage. Containment quickly became an issue and within a week all communication was lost with the facility.

Table 1: The Romero-13 Virus (Complexity 70/+9)

Phase	Onset Time	Fort Save DC	Damage/Effect
Primary	2d12 hours	16	1d6 Con
Secondary	2d4 rounds	18	1d8 Con *

* This attribute damage is permanent and, upon death, the infected may return as one of the creatures in this article (GC's choice). The virus mutates rapidly and the GC is encouraged to use the NPC system to create new mutations and introduce them regularly.

Mission Short: Hyde and Seek

ShoreComm is a small company with ties to C.O.R.E. Concepts. It's been implicated in a technology smuggling ring and the agents are sent in to investigate. Of course, C.O.R.E. has sent in its own team with shadowy orders...

Location

Wharf area (any large city)

Threat Level: 5

Briefing

"As of 13:08 this afternoon, information was obtained connecting the shipping company ShoreComm with a technology smuggling ring tied to the black market. ShoreComm's Regional Director, Ms. Gildy Fenton, has been observed making regular trips to the wharf and boarding the cargo ship Hestia, which is suspected to be one of the smuggling vessels. She's expected to be aboard this evening. Proceed to the ship, determine whether ShoreComm is up to no good, and if so, bring Ms. Fenton in for questioning."

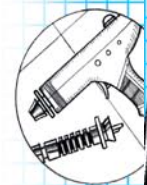
Mission Objectives

- Find evidence that ShoreComm is working the black market
- If evidence is found, take Gildy Fenton into custody
- Survive

Recommended Classes: Intruder, Pointman, Scout, Sleuth, Soldier

Scene One

Read the following aloud as the agents arrive at the scene.



The wharf is quiet, the large cargo vessel “Hestia” parked at the dock. A few workers hoist piles of cargo on board and three large men stand near the gangplank, all dressed in fashionable black suits and sporting stylish sunglasses. Above them on the ship’s deck is another suited man talking into a cell phone.

Sneaking onto the boat may be a bit difficult but not impossible. The easiest way to get on board without causing a ruckus is to hide in the cargo. All that is required is a successful Blend check against the guards’ Notice. With success, the team soon finds itself aboard the vessel (and if they wait long enough, in the cargo hold). Failing this, they can just take the guards out — they are Hired Guns carrying backup pistols (see pages 453 and 253 of the *Spycraft 2.0 Rulebook*).

Scene Two

Once the agents are aboard, read the following aloud.

Quite a few people mill about the huge ship but it is still pretty easy to sneak around. The main deck is treaded steel and stacked high with crates, many emblazoned with the ShoreComm logo. Several doors lead below decks and more men with sunglasses patrol between the stacks.

The agents might try to Blend in to avoid the suited guards or Disguise themselves to look like them. They might even take one or more out as they make their way below decks. Searching for Ms. Fenton takes a bit of time but with a successful Search check (DC 18) they find her in one of the cabins arguing with a man. As they approach, read the following.

Peering into the cabin you see a man in his late 30s with black, thinning hair, a moustache, and a beard, wearing a turtleneck and jeans. His voice is deep and hoarse as he argues with Fenton, an attractive woman with shoulder-length strawberry blonde hair dressed in a blue power-suit. Under different circumstances you might find her voice pleasant but here she’s aggressive, forceful.

Before you get a grasp of the argument the sound of gunfire rattles through the ship. It is coming from outside and you hear a helicopter as well. Screams follow, then the muted thunder of heavy marching on the decks above. It sounds like a small war has broken out up above!

Any agents who rush outside (or those who stayed behind) see the heavies rushing toward three intruders – hulking figures that quickly tear through

the guards on their way toward the below-decks doors. Unknown to the agents, these are C.O.R.E. Concepts’ Hyde troops and their target is Gildy Fenton.

Scene Three

Getting Fenton out before might have seemed sticky but now it probably seems downright impossible. She has no desire to be taken anywhere and initially orders the man with her (the ship’s captain, Fellows) to deal with the intruders. When it becomes obvious that the newcomers are after her (and more importantly, that they are scarcely human and ripping through her guards like mincemeat), she agrees to take her chances with the team. There are three likely ways to escape the Hydes, though the agents may devise more and the GC should be prepared to indulge cunning plans.

Run

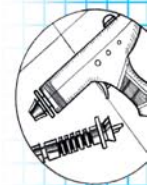
The Hydes are pretty fast for their size and not much gets in their way. Running prompts a chase through the decks (see the *Spycraft 2.0 Rulebook*, page 364). If the agents win they make it to their vehicle or Fenton’s SUV and peel out, only to have one of the Hydes leap-frog the car, landing in their path. With a successful Drive check (DC 20), they outmanoeuvre him and speed away; otherwise the car skids into a wall and the Hyde starts pulling them through windows and batting them aside until they take him down or he is left alone with Fenton.

The Hydes are only interested in Fenton but they defend themselves by heaping violence on any agents who attack them. A couple agents can use this behaviour to distract the Hydes while the others ferry Fenton away. Of course, this becomes much harder if the Hydes win the chase as all three will be present...

Fight

Agents who prefer to face the creatures may be able to find some helpful items by searching the smuggled cargo. With a successful full action team Search check (DC 15), the agents find an item listed on Table 2: Searching the Crates. Firearms and rocket launchers are found near loads of ammunition and an agent may spend 1 half action grabbing up to 3 full loads for any weapon found.

Taking the Hydes on is no simple task. The beasts are ludicrously strong and gladly beat agents to a pulp or throw them against scenery. They are



also nigh-impossible to put down, meaning that even with the best weaponry the agents are likely outgunned in a direct confrontation. Fortunately, the Hydres are Large, letting the agents evade them by slipping into narrow spaces (like between fallen crates and other debris). They are also somewhat slow and prone to irrational rages that the team might be able to use to its advantage.

Table 2: Searching the Crates

Result	Item Found
Page Reference	
15–20	IMI Micro-Uzi light submachine gun
257	
21–25	RSA AKS-74 assault rifle
260	
26–30	Browning Auto-5 semi-automatic shotgun (12 gauge)
266	
31–35	1d6 thermite grenades in a satchel
252	
36–40	Large propane tank (with a firearm hit, it operates like 1 full lb. of thermite)
269	
41+	Bofors AT4 CS HE rocket launcher
271	

Distract

The Hydres' slow intellect means they can also be tricked. A female (or effeminate male) agent might be able to disguise themselves as Fenton to get the Hydres' attention, leading them away from the others or perhaps into a trap.

Finale

Assuming the agents escape with Fenton she is more than happy to cooperate with their superiors. She does not know what the Hydres are but she has a pretty good idea who sent them and why. This might lead to future adventures as the team follows leads she provides to help their

organization bring down her former employers at C.O.R.E. Concepts.

Hydes

“Target... Acquired...”

Description: Hydres are the least human of Romero-13 test subjects. Monstrous in form and function, their bodies are warped engines of destruction, their skin and muscle transformed into thick hide-like armour, their fingers twisted into vicious claws and their mouths become angry, jagged maws.

Motivations: C.O.R.E. reinforces the Hydres' natural aggression with shock therapy and conditions them to direct their rage at the company's enemies. A few, like those seen in this encounter, are still aware enough to accept simple overriding orders (“fetch this woman,” for instance) and they perform these tasks unto their destruction.

Hydes (Special NPCs — 90 XP): Init III; Atk VII; Defense VI; Res VII; v/wp IX; Comp I; Skills: None; Weapons Bite II (dmg 1d8 lethal + Romero-13 virus, error 1–2, threat 18–20), claw IV (dmg 1d10 lethal, error —, threat 19–20); Gear: None; Qualities: *Construct, damage reduction 4, feral, horrific, hulking (Large 2 × 2), inferior attribute (Int 5), superior attribute (Str 18)*

Mission Short: Death's Row

Something is not right in the old mines of Caribou, Colorado. Folks have reportedly gone missing and strange sightings have made the back pages of local papers. Most write it off as part of

the ghost town's mystique but a rare few suspect something more...

Location

C.O.R.E. Concepts Mountain Research Facility, Caribou CO

Threat Level: 3

Briefing

“Strange lights were spotted this evening in the long-abandoned town of Caribou, CO. They were initially believed to be caused by kids playing with fireworks but now two state police officers who responded to the reports have failed to report in. According to local authorities these are not the first disappearances in the area — a pair of hikers on vacation from Maine and a few teenagers known to party in the local mine — but until now there's been no reason to suspect foul play. The Governor has asked for assistance in getting to the bottom of the situation.”

Mission Objectives

- Discover the source of the disappearances
- Rescue any survivors
- Survive

Recommended Classes: Pointman, Scout, Soldier; potentially Explorer, Intruder, Scientist

Scene One

Arriving in Caribou, the agents find little besides hills, a few ruined buildings, and a long-closed mine. Deputy Lewis meets them at the edge of town and explains that the area is pretty much a ghost town, though it is a favourite of tourists and rowdy kids. As the agents poke around, they can make a team Search check for additional clues (*see*

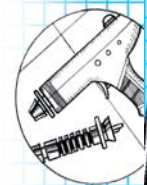


Table 3: Investigating Caribou).

Table 3: Investigating Caribou

DC	Result
15	A few spent handgun bullet casings are found in the dirt.
20	White rubber (potentially from a shoe's sole) is found lodged in the cracks of some rocks at the edge of a steep incline.
25	A human tooth is found at the bottom of a stair in one of the ghost town's buildings. It's whole but cracked.
30	A bent carbineer is found in a dried bush. Dried blood is visible on the rusty steel.

The GC should also make a team Notice check (DC 18). With success, the agents spot a light reflected off a wall deep in the mine (they would not have noticed it at all except that it is flickering). The light comes from behind an interweaving veil of petrified tree roots which the agents quickly discover is the false front of a hidden door. The root veil can swing aside, revealing a modern tunnel, one of the bulbs lighting its length in need of changing. It is clear the tunnel's construction is much more recent than the mine's last use in its original capacity. The tunnel ends in a heavy metal door with no apparent locking mechanism.

A well placed explosive could knock out the door's supports or the agents could feel around the door and with a successful Search check (DC 20), find a hidden control panel. Hotwiring the door requires a successful Security check (DC 20). Either way, read the following aloud as they open the door.

Beyond the door you find a sleek, sterile corridor painted pale blue and bathed in soft fluorescent light. A string of small orange bulbs high on the right wall blink in sequence. You hear a clunk, something sliding (perhaps another door opening) and movement from deeper in the complex.

If the agents approach or wait for the newcomers, read them the following.

Two people come into view, both wearing shredded police uniforms. They look gruesome, the rips gouging past their clothes and deep into their flesh. They lurch toward you, their arms swinging at their sides like a shaken rag doll's limbs. Their milky eyes lack focus and drool seeps from their gray lips but as you come into their lines of sight they tense and slow. They gaze at you and their eyes sharpen, then they leap forward, breaking into a dead run...

These are, of course, the missing state police officers, who were killed by some of C.O.R.E. Concepts' test subjects while investigating the town. They fell victim to the Romero-13 virus and rose as Rabid Dead, zombies whose bodies have not decomposed enough to slow their movement. Fortunately for the agents, there are only two of them, so the combat should be brief. The former officers try to grab and/or bite anyone they can, driven by a biological need to spread the virus.

Searching the officers, the agents find a pair of .38 Special Colt Police Positive service revolvers with 3d10 rounds, 2 nightsticks (which operate like light clubs) and 2 sets of handcuffs with keys.

The strain of the Romero-13 virus that infected the officers is fast-acting, the Primary Onset Time taking minutes instead of hours, so any agents who were bitten in the fight may show signs of turning more quickly than expected, particularly if the agents previously played through Hyde and Seek. The agents may believe that an antidote to the virus could be located deeper in the complex. They would be right.

Scene Two

As the agents move deeper into the complex, read the following aloud.

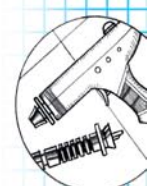
Safety posters and biohazard signs decorate the walls further along the corridors and soon you come to a large metal door with thin windows that have been smashed out. People (or things that used to be people) jerk about inside.

Agents who dare to peek through the windows see a lab and with a successful Notice check (DC 15), perhaps more (see Table 4: The Lab).

Table 4: The Lab

DC	Result
15	The occupants all share the officers' gruesome characteristics but they're further decayed and amble with less purpose. They wear the remnants of white lab coats and identification badges are still visible around one or two of their necks.
20	A large refrigeration unit containing vials of red and green liquid is located at the far wall. Pasted to its reinforced glass doors are the stencilled words "In Case of Emergency Infection — Antidote" and instructions that cannot be read at this distance.
25	Near the refrigeration unit is a large gas tank. If the agents' eyes are to be believed at this distance, it is half full.

The team has some decisions to make. A well-placed explosive will detonate the tank and more than likely take out everything in the shaft (plus collapse any outlying tunnels) but if anyone is infected the agents may need the antidote. Burying the complex may also destroy any proof of what is going on.



Twelve Shambling Dead mill about the room, along with another six Rabid Dead that are currently out of the agents' lines of sight (these are the hikers and kids that recently went missing). The Shamblers immediately attack anyone who enters the lab, drawing the attention of the Rabid Dead 1d4 rounds later. All are driven by the same biological need to spread the virus that plagued the officers.

The refrigeration unit is locked but may be smashed open with a successful Athletics check (DC 18) or any attack that inflicts at least 6 points of damage. Should the agents sweep the lab, a successful Search check (DC 20) yields a laptop bearing the C.O.R.E. Concepts logo. Decrypting its password protection will take longer than the agents have in this scene but their friends in R&D can crack it, revealing a wealth of information about C.O.R.E. Concepts and its latest viral enterprise.

The tank can be ignited with any explosion or attack that inflicts at least 15 points of damage. The resulting detonation inflicts 10d6 explosive fire damage and destroys the refrigeration unit and most of the lab and as expected it also weakens the support structure holding up the ceiling. The lab collapses over the next 5 rounds, during which time the agents must make a Complex Athletics check (3 Challenges, each DC 15) to escape. Failure brings the mine down on top of the hapless agent(s), who suffer 8d6 lethal and stress damage and are *buried* under 1d3 tons of rubble. In both cases – the initial explosion and the burial – an agent may reduce the damage to 1/2 (rounded down) with a successful Reflex save (DC 20).

One last effect of the explosion is that only half the surviving Dead perish in the explosion; the rest emerge from the destruction as the ceiling is

coming down – and they are on fire! They suffer 1d6 fire damage each round but their hits and successful grapples also inflict the same damage. It is just one more thing for the agents to deal with as they flee the mine.

Finale

Agents that make it out of the mine can administer the antidote (if they have it) and regroup. Deputy Lewis meets them outside and after some questions about what happened, offers any assistance that he can. Conveniently, he was in his patrol car while the agents explored the town and missed the fun, which is probably for the best. The agents can beat a hasty retreat and report back to the home office, perhaps with the laptop to help answer the inevitable string of questions to follow.

What comes next? Depends on whether you'd like C.O.R.E. Concepts to make another appearance in your game. Data found on the laptop or in the ruins of the complex may lead to new test sites, offer new information about the company's experiments or perhaps even name some of those responsible.

The Rabid Dead

Description: Those killed by the Caribou strain of the Romero-13 virus first become Rabid Dead, zombies that retain a good deal of their original freedom of movement and show no signs of fatigue. As their muscles and other tissues continue to atrophy, they eventually become Shambling Dead. Rabid Dead are identified by gray skin, purple lips and sunken cheeks and eyes.

Motivations: Both versions of the Caribou zombie are driven by a single all-consuming compulsion: to spread the virus raging through their decaying

systems. As the virus is transmitted by bite, this usually exhibits in an irresistible urge to feed on flesh of the uninfected.

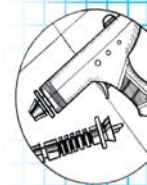
The Rabid Dead (Standard NPCs — 49 XP): Init II; Atk V; Defense II; Res IV; DS VII; Comp I; Skills: None; Weapons Bite I (dmg 1d6 lethal + Romero-13 virus, error 1–2, threat 18–20); Gear: None; Qualities: *All thumbs, clumsy, construct, damage reduction 2, fearsome, unnerving*

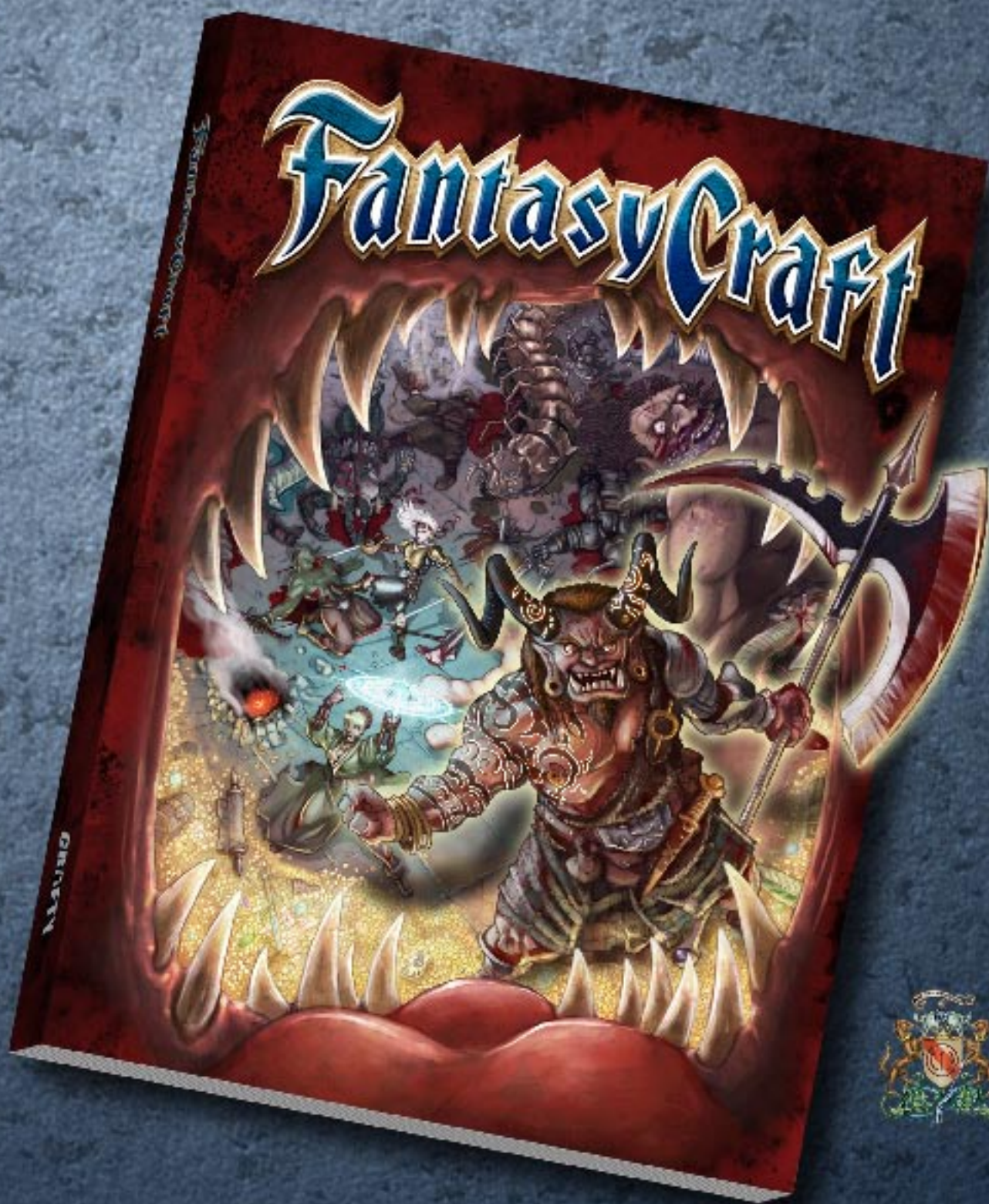
The Shambling Dead

Description: As Rabid Dead decompose they lose full control of their motor functions, becoming dry, lurching husks of their former selves. Their range of movement is small, letting agile agents slip past them with ease but they can still be extremely dangerous in large numbers.

Motivations: Both versions of the Caribou zombie are driven by a single all-consuming compulsion: to spread the virus raging through their decaying systems. As the virus is transmitted by bite, this usually exhibits in an irresistible urge to feed on flesh of the uninfected.

The Shambling Dead (Standard NPCs — 42 XP): Init II; Atk V; Defense II; Res IV; DS VII; Comp I; Skills: None; Weapons Bite I (dmg 1d6 lethal + Romero-13 virus, error 1–2, threat 18–20); Gear: None; Qualities: *All thumbs, clumsy, construct, damage reduction 2, fearsome, sluggish (20 ft. Speed)*





**YOUR DUNGEON
YOUR DRAGON
YOUR WAY!**

FantasyCraft

Legendary Fantasy Action
from the makers of Spycraft 2.0

UNLEASHED 2009



CRAFTY

**MASTER
CRAFT**

WWW.CRAFTY-GAMES.COM