



A New character and Storytelling Adventure System scene for Geist: The Sin Eaters

Written by Travis Stout
Layout by Jessica Mullins

Developed by Eddy Webb

Edited by Genevieve Podleski
Art: Sam Araya, Craig S Grant, Andrew Hepworth

STORYTELLING ADVENTURE SYSTEM

MENTAL	●●○○
PHYSICAL	●●○○○
SOCIAL	●○○○○

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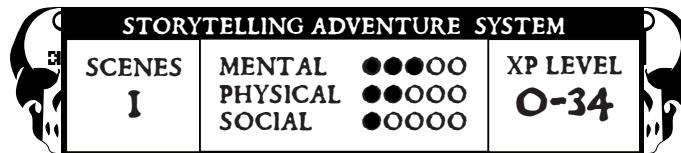
Dem Bones

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Dem Bones

“Dem bones, dem bones gonna walk all over, dem bones, dem bones they gonna walk all over...”

The thing in Regan’s head was still singing that damn song. It hadn’t stopped in three months, ever since the Incident had bound them together. Not to breathe, not to eat, not to sleep—not even to let her do any of those things. You might not think something as simple as a song on continuous repeat could drive someone completely insane; surely that’s the sort of thing you could tune out after a while, like traffic noise or a waterfall right outside your window. You’d be wrong, and Regan would be happy to tell you so.

“Please,” Regan whispered softly, her eyes squeezed shut and her body rocking softly back and forth, like a child in her mother’s lap. “I can’t live like this. Just... just give me an hour. Ten minutes. Five. God, please, anything you want, I’ll do it, just please be quiet!”

“Dem bones, dem bones gonna walk all over, dem bones, dem bones they gonna walk all over...”

Regan’s breath caught in a ragged little hiccup, somewhere halfway between a sob and a hysterical laugh. “Fine,” she said, opening her eyes as her gaze settled on the gun in her lap. “Okay. We’ll do it this way.” Tears tumbling down her cheeks, she drew in a deep breath and brought the gun to her temple.

Some hours later, after her blood and brains had cooled and congealed, Regan sat up with a sudden, rasping hiss of breath. She saw a boy’s face, not much older than her, and she knew that he had been killed for the seventeen dollars in his wallet and the hundred-dollar shoes on his feet before she could tear the caul away. Blinking slowly, as though she’d never seen the world before, Regan smiled and began to sing.

“Dem bones, dem bones gonna walk all over, dem bones, dem bones they gonna walk all over...”

andrew HEPWORTH





Dem Bones

MENTAL ... PHYSICAL .. SOCIAL •

Overview

The Bound, gifted as they are with a second chance at life, do not die easily. A Sin-Eater's attendant geist can hold the most dreadful injuries at bay, and can even manipulate the laws of death so that another dies in the Sin-Eater's place. But what happens when that blessing isn't what the mortal side wants? What happens to poor Regan Anderson, driven mad by her bond to a geist so strange and alien to human thought that it's barely a shade at all? Too many "deaths," and the mortal mind starts to lose control, its humanity shrinking day by day and leaving the geist in control of the body. In the case of Regan's geist, that means a creature utterly foreign to human morality or even self-preservation now has ready access to the physical world, and the means to indulge its whims.

Description

While exploring an old cemetery on the outskirts of town, you come across a girl, knee-deep in a half-excavated grave. Dirt stains her clothes and face, and the shovel in her hand thunks rhythmically into the earth. As she digs, she sings an old spiritual, and you realize that it isn't actually the girl's voice: it's something else speaking through her. Something old and dead and strange. "Dem bones, dem bones gonna walk all over, dem bones, dem bones they gonna walk all over..."

Storyteller Goals

This scene can be run as a straightforward action scene, an "exorcism" scene, or (if the characters let Regan/Dem Bones evade them) a classic haunted house horror scene. Really, though, its true purpose is to throw a light on the characters' own attitudes about life, death and the Sin-Eater's place between them. How will they react when the encounter a Sin-Eater wholly in the thrall of her geist? Will they try to help her? Destroy her? Help her geist? How will the knowledge that such a thing

is even possible color their interactions with their own geists, or the manner in which they deal with other possessing spirits?

There isn't really a right or wrong way to deal with the scene. Dem Bones is a dangerous geist, and it has full control over Regan's body, which it's using to indulge in a bit of dime-store resurrectionism. Stopping it is certainly a noble goal, but at the same time, its host is no mere meat puppet: She's a living, breathing girl, a Sin-Eater, and one the characters will, if they're at all connected to the Twilight Network, likely recognize as being new on the scene. She isn't entirely overwhelmed by her geist – not yet, anyways – so there's still a chance the characters can help her regain control and learn to deal with her passenger.

Character Goals

Figure out why this crazy girl is disturbing the rest of decent dead folk, and put her back in control of her own head.

Actions

Characters can try a variety of tactics to resolve the scene, ranging from outright attack or attempted physical restraint to actual communication with the geist controlling her to a mystical ceremony to "exorcise" the possessing shade (which won't sever the Bond, but might snap Regan back into control long enough to reassert herself).

The "Exorcism" of Regan Anderson

Dice Pool: Resolve + Composure vs. Regan's Resolve + Composure (dice pool 5)

Action: Extended and contested (each roll represents 5 minutes of ceremonial exorcism)

Hindrances: Exorcist's Synergy is 5 or lower (-3), exorcist has no knowledge of who Regan is (even learning her name is enough to negate this; -2), Regan is not restrained during the ceremony (-2), any character in the group has encountered Dem Bones before and come into conflict with it (-1 per character)

Help: Exorcist's Synergy is 8 or higher (+3), exorcist is able to convince his own geist to help with the ceremony (+2), exorcist has some physical token or memento of significance to Regan (favorite earrings, a photo of her mother, etc., +2), exorcist's Event was a suicide attempt (+2), characters are able to stop Dem Bones singing (e.g. gagging Regan, using Manifestations or other powers to silence her, etc.; +1)



Dem Bones



Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: If the exorcist rolls a dramatic failure, the attempt to drive Dem Bones into submission not only fails, it backlashes spectacularly. Regan's personality is rendered entirely dormant for 24 hours. During this time, Dem Bones has complete control, and any further attempts to exorcise it during that period fail. If Regan rolls a dramatic failure on her contesting roll, Dem Bones is immediately driven into a dormant state for 24 hours. In addition, Regan regains a single point of Synergy, allowing her to begin reclaiming control of herself.

Failure: If the exorcist rolls fewer successes than Regan, he loses a point of Willpower. If he loses his last point of Willpower, the exorcism is over and he cannot try again until he regains at least one point. If Regan rolls fewer successes than the exorcist, she loses a point of Plasm. If she loses her last point of Plasm, Dem Bones' control over her is broken for the remainder of the scene.

Success: Either the exorcist makes progress toward wearing Dem Bones down, or Dem Bones maintains its hold on the girl and wears down its opponent.

Exceptional Success: If the exorcist beats Regan's roll by five or more successes, his next roll is uncontested. As long as he rolls a single success, he forces Regan to lose a point of Plasm. If Regan succeeds at resisting the exorcist's roll by a margin of five or more successes, the exorcist loses two points of Willpower instead of one.

Consequences

If the characters capture Dem Bones and give Regan control of herself again, they might be able to help her learn to deal with her geist and find a place in Sin-Eater society. Dem Bones is not an easy geist to be Bound to by any means – its personality has degraded to the point that it is nearly impossible to communicate with the spirit, and even with control of her body restored, Regan might not be able to stand its constant presence. This scene could be spun off into a multi-story arc in which the krewe tries to uncover Dem Bones' past and restore some degree of its sanity, helping Regan Anderson become the Sin-Eater she should be. If, on the other hand, they are unable to restrain the geist, it will continue to indulge its alien whims as long as it can control Regan's body – at first, it does little beyond digging up graves and animating the bones within them, but as time wears on it might decide to start making bodies to raise up. Even if it doesn't, eventually the mortal authorities will get involved in the "grave-robbing spree," which could draw all kinds of unwanted attention.

Regan Anderson/ Dem Bones

Quotes: "Dem bones, dem bones gonna walk all over, dem bones, dem bones they gonna walk all over..."

"No! I'm sorry, please, I can't fight him, just go!"

"Now, hear the word of the Lord."

Virtue: Hope. Regan doesn't understand what's happened to her or why, but if she's shown that she has a chance to deal with it, she'll fight to make it happen.

Vice: Sloth. Regan isn't very good at creating her own opportunities or taking hold of her life. She prefers to wait and hope that someone else will ride in and save her.

Background: Regan Anderson was an ordinary suburban kid in an ordinary suburban high school. She wasn't one of the popular kids, but she wasn't a total social outcast either, and she never fell into one of the convenient little cliques most people box teenagers into. Sure, sometimes she had weird dreams in which her dog Scrapple (who had been hit by a car when Regan was 10) talked to her and gave her advice, but everybody has weird dreams sometimes, right?

The Halloween party in her junior year changed everything. Or, more accurately, the drive home from the party changed everything. Regan was a smart enough kid to know not to drive home drunk, and she'd dutifully stopped drinking a couple of hours before leaving so she'd have time to sober up. Unfortunately, sobriety doesn't help much when a blood clot breaks loose and, in a freak chance, travels to your brain and causes an aneurism. The car flew off the road and wrapped itself around a telephone pole, and as Regan lay there, crushed, bleeding and nearly dead, she met Dem Bones. He looked like a gruesome Halloween decoration come to life: a dry, brittle



Dem Bones

skeleton covered with tiny scraps of flesh like rotting leather, a tall stovepipe hat on his head and a cane in his hand. Delirious, Regan called out to the figure for help, and like Ezekiel in the valley of dry bones, Dem Bones sang her back together. In return, Dem Bones hitched a ride in her Psyche.

Regan spent the next several weeks in traction in the intensive care unit, drugged into near-incoherence with nothing but her newly-attendant geist's rambling singsong rolling through her mind. Even after her release and return home, the alien shade's constant presence wore her sanity to the breaking point. When her every attempt to communicate with Dem Bones failed, she realized that no one was going to help her and decided that death was preferable after all. Her attempted suicide didn't work as well as she expected, and the massive blow to her Synergy allowed Dem Bones to seize active control of her body.

Description: Regan herself is a petite, brunette 17-year-old girl. Her face is pale, with dark circles under her eyes that speak of lengthy sleep deprivation. Her hair and clothes are unkempt and filthy – Dem Bones doesn't care about appearances, and it has been in control for several days now. Her head lolls and tilts in a vague, dreamy fashion, and she frequently sings snippets of the old spiritual "Dem Bones," as though to herself. Her voice is hoarse and raw, little more than a rasping croak. Occasionally her eyes snap into focus as she gains a moment's lucidity; they seem to plead for help from whomever's gaze they meet.

To those capable of seeing the restless dead (like Sin-Eaters), Regan's attendant geist is readily visible and in full control of her body. Dem Bones resembles traditional depictions of some of the

vodoun loa: a tall, lanky skeleton bereft of flesh save for a few scraps of dry, leathery skin, with a tall, black stovepipe hat and an ivory-handled cane. Two perfectly intact, strikingly beautiful blue eyes rest in its eye sockets, supported by thin, thready scraps of muscle. Dem Bones stands behind Regan, pressed close against her back with his hands on her wrists – he moves her about like a dance partner, a lewd display of gross physical control.

Storytelling Hints: Dem Bones is an old, old geist, one nearly lost to his archetypal nature. Once, he was the ghost of a Mississippi preacher man who died of a stroke at the pulpit but clung to his church and his congregation even after death. Now the church has been bulldozed and most of his old parishioners are dead, and little remains beyond the bizarre archetypal mantle he took upon himself: that of death as an affirmation of faith.

Dem Bones' motivations are inscrutable, but its goals seem straightforward: it's going to every cemetery it can find, digging up bodies and imbuing them with "life." It doesn't raise every corpse it digs up (those it doesn't just get left on the ground or lying half-out of their own open graves), nor does it raise all of them the same way. Some it animates as little more than mindless zombies under its control, while others it offers as "gifts" to the ghosts lurking in the cemetery (not necessarily the ghost of the body's original owner). Once raised, the corpses shuffle off to a clearing in a nearby forest (or a park, if this takes place in a city), where they wait. Inside that clearing is a tent, like the kind they hold revival meetings in, and a lectern on a little hillock holds a battered, stained old bible. Soon enough, Dem Bones will have a full congregation... and what happens then is anybody's guess.



Dem Bones



Name: Regan Anderson/
Dem Bones Virtue: Hope
Concept: Trapped Sin Eater Vice: Sloth



Archetype: None
Threshold: The Stricken

Intelligence	●●●○○	Strength	●○○○○	Presence	●●●○○
Wits	●●●○○	Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●○○○○
Resolve	●●○○○	Stamina	●●○○○	Composure	●●●○○

Skills	Merits	Health		
Academics	●○○○○	Ceremonies	●●●●●	●●●●●●●○○○○○○
Computer	●○○○○	Fleet of Foot	●●○○○	□□□□□□□□□□□□□
Crafts	●●○○○	Status		
Medicine	●○○○○	(High School)	●○○○○	●●●●●○○○○○○○○
Politics	●○○○○		○○○○○	□□□□□□□□□□□□□
Science	●○○○○		○○○○○	
Athletics			○○○○○	
(Track & Field)	●●○○○		○○○○○	
Drive	●○○○○		○○○○○	
Survival			○○○○○	
(Fire-Starting)	●○○○○		○○○○○	
Empathy	●●○○○		○○○○○	
Expression			○○○○○	
(Poetry)	●○○○○		○○○○○	
Persuasion	●●○○○	Manifestations	●●●○○	
Socialize	●●●○○	Marionette	○○○○○	
Subterfuge	●●○○○		○○○○○	
	○○○○○		○○○○○	
	○○○○○		○○○○○	
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NOTES

Regan is currently completely under the control of her geist, Dem Bones.

Ceremonies: Wings of the Moth 5

Synergy 2
Size 5
Speed 11
Defense 3
Initiative Mod 6
Armor _____

SCENE: Dem Bones

MENTAL • • •

PHYSICAL • •

SOCIAL •

HINDRANCES

Exorcist's Synergy is 5 or lower (-3)

No knowledge of who Regan is (-2)

Regan is not restrained during the ceremony (-2)

Any character has fought Dem Bones (-1 per character)

Exorcist's Synergy is 8 or higher (+3)

Exorcist's geist helps with the ceremony (+2)

Exorcist has physical token of significance to Regan (+2)

Characters are able to stop Dem Bones singing (+1)

Throw light on the krewe's attitudes toward dealing with the dead and with their own who have gone astray.

STs Free Regan from Dem Bones and help her become a proper Sin-Eater.

PCs