

WICKED CONGREGATION

A Bureau of Paranatural Survey Game

By Daniel H. Kwan

Credits

Written by Daniel Kwan

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WRETCHED
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Safety

Wicked Congregation is a solo game experience about being hunted by a supernatural cult. When playing the following themes are covered during play: **religious violence, body horror, paramilitary activity, death, descriptions of death, injury, hopelessness, physical injury, and psychological trauma.**

If a narrative prompt features a theme that features a theme that you do not want to engage with, consider doing one of the following: move to the next one, draw a new card, or make a pull from the tower and move onto the next day.

Operation Background

Wicked Congregation is a solo game about isolation, survival, and hopelessness. It was inspired by *The Wretched* by Chris Bissette and the *B.P.R.D.: Plague of Frogs* story cycle by Mike Mignola. It's also inspired by the following films: *The Crazies* (1973 & 2010), *Slither* (2006), and *SCP: Overlord* (2020). Video games like *Resident Evil 4* (2005), *Resident Evil 7: Biohazard* (2017), *Far Cry 5* (2018), and *Control* (2019) also served as major inspirations.

You are a field agent of the Bureau of Paranatural Survey (BPS), a clandestine agency formed for a single purpose: to seek, explore, and contain strange phenomena or entities that exhibit, or have the potential to cause, harm to human life and civilization.

Your team set out to a remote mountain town [REDACTED] to investigate the mysterious activities of [REDACTED], the charismatic and powerful leader of a deadly esoteric cult known as the *New Temple of Bliss*. Your intelligence suggested the [REDACTED] was in possession of a [REDACTED]-class paranatural object. The mission was simple - establish containment of the town and identify, engage, and subdue any paranatural phenomena.

Due to the nature of the operation, direct vehicular entry was not an option. When your team arrived, the Town appeared to be abandoned. Then the church bells began to toll, drawing your team towards the chapel. It was there that you encountered the *New Temple of Bliss* and the powerful object their leader wielded. As your team is quickly overrun by followers of the Cult, you manage to narrowly escape with your life and the Object.

Now you are hunted by the Cult. Day and night they stalk the streets of the Town looking for you and what you have taken from them. They will not stop, and you are running out of time.

Operation Set-Up

The following items are required to play this game: a standard deck of playing cards (without Jokers), a single 6-sided die (d6), a tumbling block tower, and 12 tokens (any sort of small objects like coins, beans, etc.) broken down into two types (10 of one and 2 of another).

The tumbling block tower is an optional (though recommended) tool for the game. If you do not have access to one, you can head to bit.ly/Jenga-Alt to learn about substitutes.

This mission was doomed from the moment you stepped foot in the Town. You'll never have enough bullets to get the job done on your own. There is only one way to survive against the Cult - calling for backup. The Aces of Clubs and Diamonds will prolong your life, but it is the Ace of Hearts that is required to survive. By drawing the Ace of Hearts, you are able to potentially call for help - if you can survive long enough to get a signal.

Failure takes many forms and is far more likely to occur. You knew of the risks when you joined the Bureau of Paranatural Survey.

Operation Start

Set up the tumbling block tower as you normally would. Roll a d6 and remove that many blocks from the tower and replace them on the top row. This represents the state of the operation. If the tower falls at any time, the operation fails, you are dead, and the game is over. Your demise might be in the hands of the Cult, the paranatural object you possess, or something else you determine.

Shuffle the deck of cards and place it face down within reach.

Record your first Case Files Supplement. If the Bureau ever finds you, dead or alive, they'll need any intelligence they can to combat the Cult and make additional attempts to secure the Object. This can be completed through an audio recording or in a journal.

For your first Case File Supplement, record the following:

"Day 1, Bureau of Paranatural Survey Advanced Response Division. Field Agent [your fictional name] reporting. The other members of my task force are dead."

All subsequent Case File Supplements you record should begin with, *"Day [X], Bureau of Paranatural Survey Advanced Response Division. Field Agent [your fictional name] reporting..."* in order to align with Bureau documentation protocol. The content of your Case File Supplements is up to you. You're the professional.

Operation is a go.

The Days

This game is divided into days, each one represented by two phases: Operation Tasks and the Case File Supplement. Repeat this structure until you are saved, or the Operation fails.

Phase One: Operation Tasks

- Roll your d6 and draw that number of cards, placing them face down in front of you.
- Turn over the first card and consult the Operations Manual. Follow the instructions associated with the card. Repeat this process for the rest of the cards drawn during this day.
- When your Operation Tasks are complete, discard the cards you've drawn unless you have been instructed otherwise in the Operations Manual.

Phase Two: Case File Supplement

- Take a moment to consider the events that transpired during the Operation Tasks phase. Reflect on how you're feeling and what you've learned about the Bureau, Object, Town, or Cult. Then, record your Case File Supplement for the day.

Operations Manual

Consult the operations manual every time you draw and reveal a card during the Operation Tasks phase. Some cards will instruct you to engage in quiet contemplation, reflect on the horrors you face, pull from the block tower, or signal for your salvation.

Hearts - The Bureau

Hearts represent the Bureau of Paranatural Survey - your professional connections, personal relationships, and emotional truths associated with the dangerous work you do. When you draw a Heart card, you must reflect on the emotional and psychological toll working for the Bureau has taken on you.

Diamonds - The Object

Diamonds represent the paranatural object you've taken from the Cult. It has the power to alter. To corrupt. Your mission is to secure it for the Bureau, but it has an agenda of its own. When you draw a Diamond card, you are faced with the reality of the powerful paranatural object you must contain. It will have physical and psychological effects on you.

Clubs - The Town

Clubs represent the Town that you cannot escape. When you draw a Club card, you might learn something new about your surroundings, witness the horrific activities of the Cult, and if you're lucky, discover a resource that aids in your survival efforts.

Spades - The Cult

Spades represent the Wicked Congregation that hunts you. You have taken something from their leader, and they will stop at nothing to retrieve it. From the toll of violence to the stress of survival, the followers of the *New Temple of Bliss* will have a profound effect on you if you are trapped in the Town. When you draw a Spade card, you will face the members of the wicked congregation.

Hearts - The Bureau

Ace	<p>Since you arrived in the town, you've been cut off from the outside world. Today, you manage to find an amateur radio setup. While you are able to restore power to the station, you aren't able to establish a signal.</p> <p>Instead of discarding this card, set it aside. At the end of each day, after you complete your audio log, roll a d6. On a result of 6, add token to this card. This represents you boosting the signal. If you successfully add ten tokens, you are able to get a strong enough signal to call for Bureau extraction. Make one final pull of the tower.</p> <p>If the tower stands, you are rescued by the Bureau. A containment team arrives to rescue you and the game ends. Record one last audio log as you watch Bureau forces neutralize the cult and secure the object. If the tower falls, the voice on the other end is not as it seems. You are killed by the wicked congregation, and the game is over.</p>
Two	<p>Prior to this operation, you were able to mend a severed relationship you had with a member of your team. What happened between the two of you? Now that they're gone, what regrets do you have?</p>
Three	<p>You hold onto a token reminding you of why you joined the Bureau. What is it?</p>

Four	Someone on your team allowed their ego to get the best of them leading up to the Operation. How did this potentially compromise the team?
Five	A member of your team sacrificed themselves to not only save you, but allow you to escape with the Object. How does that make you feel?
Six	It's everywhere in the Town - a horrific symbol. What does it look like? Is this something you've seen before on a previous case? If you do, draw another card from the deck.
Seven	You remember someone at the Bureau warning you about joining the Advanced Response Division. What was their warning and why did you ignore it?
Eight	Given that this was a deep direction action operation, you have a small supply of MREs (Meal, Ready-to-Eat) in your pack to sustain you. Not the most ideal last meal. What food do you wish you could be eating right now?
Nine	What did you do when everyone began to die? Did you try to save them? Did you run?
Ten	You've made a lot of sacrifices for your family in the name of the Bureau. What kind of message do you leave for them? What do you say?
Jack	In a fleeting moment, you may have recognized a member of the congregation as someone from your past life. Who do you

	think it was? What could've brought them to this Town?
Queen	If you make it out of this alive, will you stay with the Bureau or hand in your resignation? Is this worth it anymore?
King	<p>The Cult have taken what remains of your team and has arranged them in a macabre display at the center of town. How do you react to this? If you decide to look closer, describe what you see and draw another card.</p> <p>Do not discard this card. Instead, set it aside within view. If this is the fourth King drawn from the deck, the Cult has finally found you. What is your fate? Do you join your fellow agents in death or the cult? The game is over.</p>

Diamonds - The Object

Ace	You are able to restore power to a local radio tower. Hopefully this comes in handy. Pull from the tower. Instead of discarding this card, set it aside within view. If you are able to locate the amateur radio setup (Ace of Hearts), rolls of 5 or 6 will be sufficient to boost the signal.
Two	You are unsure if the Cult have a way to track the Object. How do you plan to throw them off your trail?
Three	In a moment of weakness, you allow the will of the Object to take over. What did it

	make you do? What permanent effect does this have on you? Pull from the tower.
Four	The Object is more terrifying than any other you have encountered. Describe the Object. What makes it different?
Five	The Object speaks to you and its voice cannot be ignored. What does it say? What is it called? Pull from the tower.
Six	Describe the power you believe the Object holds. Will you use this power to survive? If you do, draw another card from the deck.
Seven	Since it has entered your possession, you and the Object are becoming one. How has the Object bound itself to you? Pull from the tower.
Eight	Your time with the Object has taught you a dark secret. What is it? Is this what motivates the Cult? Pull from the tower.
Nine	So far, you've been able to resist the desires of the Object. What does it demand? Will you give in? Pull from the tower.
Ten	As you spend more time you spend with the Object, you find yourself unable to recall important details about your life. What have you lost? Record this in the form of a question.
Jack	You begin to form an emotional bond with the Object. How does it captivate you? Will you relinquish it to the Bureau if exfiltration arrives? Pull from the tower.

Queen	If you make it out of the Town alive, what will the Bureau do with the Object?
King	<p>Prior to the mission, a mysterious individual offered you a large sum of money in exchange for the Object. Did you accept their offer and betray your team? If so, how do you now feel about this decision?</p> <p>Do not discard this card. Instead, set it aside within view. If this is the fourth King drawn from the deck, the Cult has finally found you. What is your fate? Do you join your fellow agents in death or the cult? The game is over.</p>

Clubs - The Town

Ace	You find a loaded gun in an abandoned vehicle. It's old, but it'll get the job done. Set this card aside and place two tokens on it. The next time you are instructed to pull from the tower, you may spend a token to avoid doing so.
Two	What kind of influence has the Object had on the plants and animals you see around town? What effect does their appearance have on you?
Three	You are wounded by a trap set by the Cult, but not badly enough to prevent you from pushing forward. What was the trap? What kind of injury have you sustained? Pull from the tower.
Four	Now that you have your hands on the Object, you are able to see a horrific truth

	juxtaposed against the Town's idyllic appearance. What is different?
Five	You see it out of the corner of your eye. Something is following you. Something different than the Cult. What is it? Pull from the tower.
Six	Your meagre supplies are low, so you decide to search for food. Everything that you find is at least partially rotten. Do you eat what you've scrounged? If you do, draw another card from the deck.
Seven	While investigating an abandoned building, you find the remains of what appear to be nonbelievers. Despite your training, you are overcome with sickness at this sight. What do you think was their fate? How does this affect you? Pull from the tower.
Eight	It seems that, in addition to the Cult, the Town is changing around you. You turn around, and what was once behind you has changed. How is this preventing your escape?
Nine	While searching for supplies, you discover a warning written in blood. What does it say? Who wrote it? Pull from the tower.
Ten	Vile effigies have been erected around town. How does their form affect you? How do you keep going?
Jack	Exhaustion is beginning to overcome you. You must rest, but you need to find a safe location. Where will you hide? Pull from the tower.

Queen	As you wander through the abandoned streets, you learn the Town's slogan. What is it and how does it make you feel?
King	<p>Ambush! Exhausted and searching for supplies, you find yourself surrounded by the Cult. How do you escape and what is lost during the process?</p> <p>Do not discard this card. Instead, set it aside within view. If this is the fourth King drawn from the deck, the Cult has finally found you. What is your fate? Do you join your fellow agents in death or the cult? The game is over.</p>

Spades - The Cult

Ace	Driven by curiosity, you decide to investigate the town's chapel to learn more about the Cult. What dark secret do you learn? What are they planning? If you have already drawn the King of Spades, you may shuffle it back into the deck.
Two	You witness the cult performing a dark ritual on one of your comrades, but your sense of duty towards the Bureau holds you back from saving them. What horrors are they subjected to? Pull from the tower.
Three	Describe the way that the Cult has cut you off from escaping the town. Pull from the tower.
Four	The cultists of the <i>New Temple of Bliss</i> are beginning to change. Describe how they are transforming and why they are becoming an

	even greater threat to humanity. Pull from the tower.
Five	You find a recording made prior to the Operation by a resident of the town that gives you a critical piece of information. What is it? Pull from the tower.
Six	When you were hiding from the Cult, you could hear them very clearly. What did they say? Could you understand it? How does it haunt you? Pull from the tower.
Seven	Your intelligence was flawed from the beginning, who made a critical error in preparing for this operation? Pull from the tower.
Eight	You've run out of ammunition. What are you using to defend yourself? Pull from the tower.
Nine	You find the grisly remains of others who opposed the Cult. Who were they? What do you wish you never saw? Pull from the tower.
Ten	You hear them coming. Disturbing sounds echo through the town as they hunt you. What does this sound like? Pull from the tower.
Jack	Cut off from emotions. Pull from the tower.
Queen	You encountered one of the monstrous congregation up close, what do they look like? Pull from the tower.

King	You find materials outlining the cult's beliefs. One of them rings true. What is it? Do not discard this card. Instead, set it aside within view. If this is the fourth King drawn from the deck, the Cult has finally found you. What is your fate? Do you join your fellow agents in death or the cult? The game is over.
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Operation Summary

It's over. Breathe and take a moment to recover from this experience.

Was the operation a success? Were you able to call for back up? Did you escape the Town and secure the Object?

Or did you fail the Bureau and humanity? Did the Cult catch up to you? How did you meet your grisly end? Or did the Object's will consume you?

You hoped that the Bureau would send a rescue party. With each passing day you imagined the sound of helicopters and the roaring engines of armoured vehicles. At the start of this, you truly believed that they would send help.

But it never came.

You have been telling a story during this game, but it began before you drew your first card or set up the tower. The rules to this game are a story told to you by an unreliable narrator feeding you information and instilling you with the desire to persevere against overwhelming odds.

Unfortunately, you were doomed from the start. Investigations of the paranatural are burdened with incredible risk, and field agents like yourself must face the reality that their careers are expected to be short. You are a cog in a machine that seeks to protect humanity.

You may not have survived this Operation, but the log of your final days will live on. What will become of it? Will it be found by the Bureau task force that came too late to save you? Will it help them complete what you could not?

Or will it be lost forever? Will your efforts have been in vain as the Cult destroys any record of your presence? Who will be their next victim?

Now that the Operation is over, what will you do with this experience? How did it make you feel? What will you take from it?

*** Back Cover ***

You are the last surviving member of a Bureau of Paranatural Survey task force that sought to identify, engage, and subdue any paranatural phenomena reported in a remote mountain town harbouring a violent cult. The roads are blocked and communications with the outside world are jammed.

You've managed to escape with a volatile object of paranatural power. The Cult wants it back and they will not stop hunting you.

Nowhere is safe and your time is running out.

Wicked Congregation is a solo journaling RPG inspired by *The Wretched* and uses the *Wretched and Alone SRD*. It is played with a deck of cards, a tumbling block tower, and either a microphone or journal. It is also inspired by survival horror games like *Resident Evil 4*, science fiction games like *Control*, and movies like *The Crazies*.

