

(The original) Fear of Falling

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(This is the original “Fear of Falling” scenario I submitted to Mark Morrison for Chaosium’s *Fearful Passages* book. An amended version has appeared in *The Unspeakable Oath* and on the Internet, but this is the first publication of that initial submission – Steve.)

Let’s face it, if there’s an investigator in a parachute then something has gone very wrong. It would have to be an absolute disaster.

It is.

In The Air

Everything is going smoothly. The weather is fine and the flight is on schedule. Then, after an hour, everything goes wrong.

The sound of breaking glass alerts the investigators to trouble. The pilot shrieks as something slits his throat. A ghoulish tittering and giggling mingles with agonised screams. The co-pilot stares in horror as the bloody outlines of a star vampire becomes visible.

The star vampire (1/1D10 SAN loss) finishes with the pilot before starting on the co-pilot. It hauls him free of the seat and drags him out of the cockpit and onto the wing. There it sits, happily picking holes in the wing and drinking the poor

co-pilot’s blood. Controls smashed and broken, the plane starts to enter a dive.

The aircraft is not in an airworthy state and is going to crash. Soon. The investigators will have to jump for it.

It is unlikely that the investigators have had much interest in parachutes until now. Fortunately, several chutes are within easy reach and it is a simple matter (a successful Idea roll) to fit the harness correctly. Then it is all just a question of taking a deep breath and leaping out.

Unfortunately there’s a star vampire out there waiting for them.

Parachuting (05%)

This is the skill for operating a parachute under good conditions – clear skies and a windspeed of 5-10mph. Penalties are up to -20% for jumping in high wind, -20% for a night jump or in fog, and -10% for jumping in a rainstorm.

A failed roll indicates a minor problem, such as drifting off course, dropping any carried gear, getting snagged in trees, or a hard landing (1D6 damage unless a Jump roll is made). A critical failure is more serious – a really hard, ankle-snapping landing for 2D6 damage (1D6 with a successful Jump roll), or blown into danger such as into a lake or electricity pylons. A roll of 100 indicates that the

canopy has not opened. The good news is that the SAN loss is only 0/1D6; the bad news is that the investigator will not live long enough to appreciate it.

The skill also covers care and maintenance of the equipment, including knowledge of how to pack a parachute.

Parachuting theory can be traced back to Leonardo da Vinci, although practical application began in the eighteenth century. The first successful jump was made in 1797. By 1916 parachutes were in widespread military use, and in 1926 the first contest was held.

The Star Vampire



STR 14 CON 15 SIZ 34 INT 10

POW 15 DEX 8 HP 25 MOVE 6/9
flying

Damage Bonus +2D6

Weapons: 1D4 talons 40%, 1D6 + 2D6
damage

Bite 80%, 1D6 STR (blood) drain.

Armour: 4 point hide plus invisibility
(50% reduction to hit). Bullets do half
damage.

San loss: 1/1D10 SAN

Someone, somewhere is really angry. In their line of work, the investigators will inevitably upset somebody. Cultists, gods, monsters, and in this case a sorcerer. Now it is time for revenge and a star vampire has been summoned to dispense justice.

The star vampire, a huge member of its race, has specific instructions, varying according to past circumstances. The keeper must decide, based on the wreckage of previous adventures, exactly how much the sorcerer knows or believes. The star vampire might only be told one or two names, and it may be required to return a sacred artefact.

Not entirely keen on the idea of spending much time in a frail human aeroplane, the star vampire (after indulging itself in the despatch of pilot and co-pilot) wrecks the plane and waits for its target(s) to leave. There will be plenty of time to deal with them then. If the investigators decide not to leave, it picks sadly through the wreckage, mourning the loss of a fine meal.

The Jump

A parachute jump begins in freefall. Terminal velocity, 120 miles per hour or 180 feet per second, is reached within 3-4 seconds. A stable position should be achieved before deploying the canopy as a violently tumbling freefall can complicate canopy opening – a Parachuting failure of 99 or 100.

Once open, the canopy is steered by opening flaps that expel air and provide some manoeuvrability. With both flaps open the parachute can maintain a speed

of about 10 mph, less in headwinds. The parachute is clumsy and awkward to steer, investigators are likely to be blown off course. This is the most likely result of a failed roll, especially in any wind. Those succeeding their Parachuting roll land more-or-less where they aimed for.

Soon enough the star vampire, invisible again, arrives. It falls behind as the investigators plummet earthwards in freefall, but catches up once the canopies have opened. Brave investigators might want to wait until the last possible moment before pulling the ripcord. If they fail an Idea roll then they have left it too late and land with a sickening squelch. If the successful Idea roll is followed by a failed Luck roll, the star vampire arrives before they land. Otherwise they are on the ground and able to prepare for the star vampire's attack.

The star vampire gets it wrong first time, tearing through the canopy to get at its target beneath. The canopy immediately collapses, dropping the terrified investigator out of reach. SAN loss 0/1D6, and the investigator plummets to his death.

Wiser now, the star vampire leaves the canopy alone and goes directly for its victim. Suspended in the harness, the investigator can attempt to defend himself. With nothing to brace against, all gun skills and melee skills suffer a penalty of -20%.

Other investigators can, on a successful Parachuting roll, steer closer to the star vampire and its victim. Shots that miss the star vampire may well hit their unfortunate colleague. Re-roll near misses

(by 10% or less), if successful the investigator has been hit instead.

The star vampire ignores the other investigators, concentrating on its targets. Once they are dead it leaves, returning to the icy depths of space from whence it came. The investigators, however, are not out of the woods yet. They are still suspended in mid-air, and have to land.

The landing is the last part of the jump, and the most dangerous. Ideally, a landing spot should be flat and soft, surrounded by plenty of open space. Possible injuries range from twisted ankles to a broken neck. A badly failed roll results in 1D6 damage, while a critically failed roll is worse at 2D6. A successful Jump roll reduces damage by 1D6.

Landing in a tree is awkward and embarrassing. A wet landing involves treading water and struggling out of the harness: Swim and DEX rolls. Landing in the sea presents many dangers, especially if no means of rescue is immediately obvious. Attempting to land in a built up area is best avoided as it almost guarantees a hard landing, possibly into the side of a building.

With Feet on the Ground

With the star vampire dead or driven off and everyone safely on the ground, all that remains is for the investigators to gather themselves together and figure out how to return to civilization. Which, if injured and stranded in the middle of nowhere, might be an adventure in itself.

The Author

Steve Hatherley is also the creator of **Tales of Terror**, a collection of adventure

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