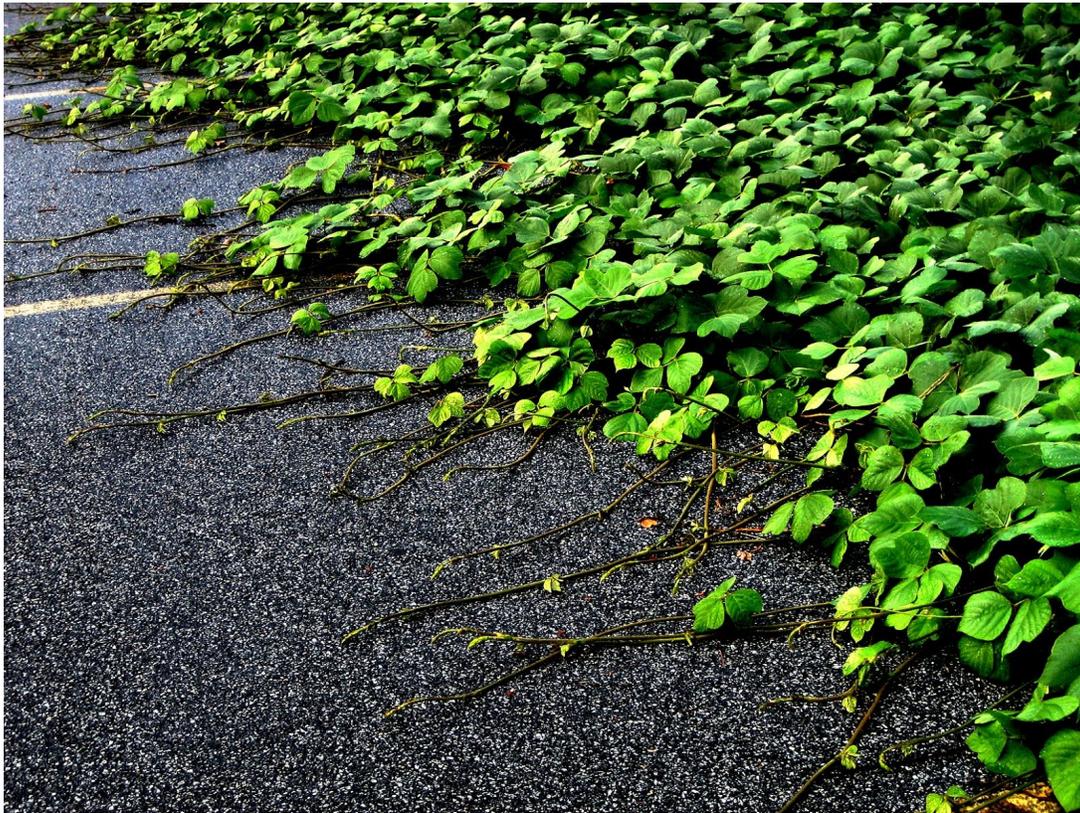


# **SAMPLE**

## The Creeping Kudzu: a monster



Designed by Ruth Tillman

Compatible with GUMSHOE SRD and Archmage Engine (13th Age).  
Includes notes for playing in other systems.

## SAMPLE CONTENT

"When we woke up the house was covered in kudzu. Wilma grabbed the big knife and hacked a way out by the kitchen door. As we dashed through, we saw the slashed vines writhe and extend, sealing the house tight behind us. Kudzu rippled down the road, like water flowing down the mountain."

"I don't know what's wrong with folks in Wright's Creek, but this spring they all left their fields fallow and the kudzu just swallowed it up. I offered to buy Jim some glyphosate and he looked at me like I'd said I could shoot his dog. I stopped going down there soon after that. It's unsettling."

"You've just got to try this new health smoothie, LaTisha! The secret ingredient is an Asian plant called kudzu and it makes you feel RADIANT. If I get my smoothie and my sunshine, I feel like I could take on the world! I should figure out how I can grow some in our community garden."

Green and growing, the Creeping Kudzu seeks warm, sunny places where it will flourish. Hang on, I'm being informed that's just regular kudzu. Right, then. Creeping Kudzu does the same but at an accelerated pace and with a hideous purpose. It swallows a forest in a night. Its roots tear up concrete and shatter rebar, yet somehow it knows when treading gently is in its best interest. The Kudzu that bursts through a city sewer leaves intact a 15-story office building, climbing up its northern faces to basks in the sun.

The Creeping Kudzu's tendrils slink into the minds of humans and pacify them to serve the plant's interests. It pulls them into a hive mind, a colony which serves its bidding. What are those interests? That depends on what's behind this sudden sentience.

## What Caused the Creeping Kudzu?

The horrible truth behind the Creeping Kudzu depends on the game you're running and the effect you intend to create with it. If not part of an investigative plot, e.g. as one antagonist in a dungeon, it requires no more explanation than a sentient pile of slime. Perhaps it leads you to some greater force (alien, human/oid, icon mythos/weird) which brought it into being. It may be its own monstrosity—bent on swallowing up the world.

Possible causes:

Alien:

- A meteorite lands in a field full of kudzu and transfers an alien consciousness to vast plant network.
- An alien lifeform disguises itself as kudzu in order to move undetected through areas infested with the normal plant. This is particularly appropriate for a hivemind.

...

## Tracing the Tendrils

Use and adapt these clues for your kudzu mystery. The investigative skills come from the GUMSHOE SRD. Map them to appropriate skills in your system of choice or use them as narrative flavor.

...

**Hacking** – A script on the server regularly deletes satellite images from this latitude and longitude, replacing them with imagery of an ordinary wildlife preserve.

...

**Notice** – The people in this area seem to share knowledge and behavioral patterns, almost as if they had some kind of secret network or hive mind.

...

**Pathology** – You've heard of strange ways the human body can host plant life-like a woman who grew a tiny tree in her lung. But a whole root system branching through the blood vessels?

...

Whether a sea or a patch, the Creeping Kudzu vine itself uses the following attacks with goals and effects. The kudzu has one attack per player within reasonable proximity. It will attempt to grow toward player who are not in or nearby it. A later section provides stat blocks and attack numbers for the Creeping Kudzu in several gaming systems.

On vulnerability: mechanics and systems differ, but in this zine the term "vulnerable" means that the target is now at a disadvantage relative to their opponent. This may mean that the opponent gets a bonus to attack. This may mean that the target takes a penalty on rolls to resist or escape.

...

## Pawns and Spawns

In a horror game, the kudzu itself may be suffice as antagonist, with its fast growth and possible connections to larger entities. These minor foes may work in both horror and horror/fantasy settings, where tiered monsters provide more opportunities to fight.

**The Possessed** – those who have spent long enough under the psychic pressure of the Creeping Kudzu feel its tendrils in their mind. ...

**Child of the Vine** – a human/oid carrier into whom the kudzu has crept. ...

**Kudzu Spriggan** – born and woven of the vine, this being walks abroad and bears a piece of the Creeping Kudzu's sentience. ...

## Statistics

The following statistics are derived from various systems under their Open Gaming Licensed System Reference Documents. A Creeping Kudzu Patch is the size of a large garden, whereas a Creeping Kudzu Sea is the size of a field (or more).

### GUMSHOE System

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#### Creeping Kudzu

Hit Threshold: 2 (huge)

Alertness modifier: +2 if players or their vehicles touch the ground, +1 otherwise.

Abilities (Patch / Sea)

Athletics: 8 / 14, Health: 56 / 120, Scuffling: 20 / 36

In the GUMSHOE system, the +/- of an attack listed below is a damage modifier. Bonuses to hit come from the ability pools. However, because some attacks don't have damage, the + refers to a bonus to another attack which does not require the Creeping Kudzu to spend from its pool. When the + or - is a damage modifier, it's spelled out to avoid confusion with these bonuses.

...

- Choke: +0 to damage, automatic success on successive rounds if Choking Coil not neutralized (see below for its hit threshold and health), also allows Graft attack

...

### 13th Age / Archmage Engine

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#### The Possessed

## SAMPLE CONTENT

*Numinous psychic tendrils connect these fighters to each other. They share a mind, a health pool, and a determination to spread the kudzu's influence.*

2nd level mook (humanoid/plant)

Initiative: +2

*Rusty blade +7 vs. AC - 4 damage*

*Churning vines:* when an enemy is engaged with 2 Possessed, they must roll a normal save (11+) to avoid becoming entangled and vulnerable to attacks by all Possessed members. Normal save ends, 11+.

AC 18

PD 16      HP 9 (mook)

MD 12

Mook, kill one member of The Possessed for every 9 damage dealt to the mob

...

## D&D 5e

The following entries are D&D 5e-compatible stats for the monsters, as developed from the D&D SRD, OGL 5.1. Use and adapt the attacks from the 13th Age section. Note, these stat blocks only contain the most pertinent information about the foes. GMs may feel free to adapt and add information such as "Senses." These are comparatively experimental numbers vs. the 13th Age stats. The plant types have Damage Immunities: lightning, Damage Resistances: cold. The Creeping Kudzu Patch and Sea are immune to all conditions except poisoned and... on fire.

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### The Possessed

*Medium human, unaligned*

## SAMPLE CONTENT

Armor class: 10

Hit Points: 16 (3d8 + 3)

Speed: 20 ft, shambling

Challenge: 1/4 (50 XP)

STR	DEX	CON
10	11	10
INT	WIS	CHA
8	8	10

...

### Fate / FAE

... The purpose SEEK THE SUNLIGHT sounds benign until it becomes apparent that the Creeping Kudzu wishes to seek every inch of available sunshine and will swarm over houses, fields, roads, and anything surface over which it may, well, creep. ...

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