

Skinwalker

by Jerry Blakemore



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Skinwalker: A Pinebox Tale

By Jerry Blakemore

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*This module is dedicated to Mark Ramsey,
for inspiring this adventure.*



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Author's Notes

The journey of the Skinwalker started two and half years ago. Weekend Warriors was in production and there were only three partners in 12 to Midnight. Mark Ramsey, a founder of 12 to Midnight, had



several cool horror ideas for us to consider—one was the Skinwalker. I admit that I had never heard of such a thing before.

From there I researched the legend of the Skinwalker. What I discovered was an evil Shaman with the ability to look like anyone and perform black magic. Making this work in game terms called for some thought.

An American Indian in Pinebox, or even Golan County, would be too obvious a choice for the players to pursue, especially from the angle of metagaming. My first consideration was who else might be logical as a Skinwalker. Then I did some reading on shamanism and saw that Druids would be a good alternative. Thus, we have the origin of the Druids of Texas. In retrospect, an American Indian GM character might have been a good red herring.

This was a hard module to get going. One weekend back in 2003, when all I had were basic stats for Lucius Tiedens and a few pages of notes jotted in a notebook, Ed Wetterman suggested we play Skinwalker. I told him it was not ready, but he insisted. So we played Skinwalker that September Saturday, sitting on the porch swing looking over the yard.

I had two scenes that I carried in my head for a few months. One was the scene with Julie Williams alone in the truck. The other was when she sees her dead father through the window of the Golan County Sheriff's Office. That second scene gave us both chills.

Ed surprised me by calling the FBI, and that is where I created the character of Roberta Williams.

Williams clicked with Green, and if I had not killed her, she might have become a love interest. But Green lives a rough life, and these things are to be expected.

I wanted to make the woods extra spooky, and that is how the idea for the “dawgs,” which later became oak hounds, came about. At that point, I had not even thought of the hunter, though he would be available for playtest number two. I had no stats for the oak hounds either. I had nothing that first playtest but the ability to creep Ed out with the mood. Fortunately, Green climbed a tree.

After this, Green met another pair of characters, Grandma Taylor and Mae Walker. Taylor became the oracle of my story, providing bits and pieces of information—even blessings, odd as they appeared. The rag tree was much smaller in my mind that day, but Ed saw something much larger; so I adapted the scene to his interpretation.

From there we went on to the end, with its violent ‘copter crash. I made everything up on the spur of the moment. Maintaining the mood was the vital issue to me.

There were four playtests altogether. I ran all but one of them. Playtest number two added Bobby Williams’ home, which the heroes ransacked for clues. This session also introduced the element of the Skinwalker’s teasing the heroes with his cruel threats.

The fourth playtest upped the ante in the form of crows. This was the first time I used them to stop the Williams truck. Before, he simply had to answer mother nature’s call.

This has been a long project, and I am happy it is coming to a close. I hope you scare the hell out of your players, but that they all live to fight another day. Most of all, I hope you walk away afraid, fearful that everyone you meet could be the Skinwalker.

JERRY BLAKEMORE

Strategy and Tactics magazine back introduced Jerry to gaming back in 1972. While stationed with the Army in Germany, he heard about these Lieutenants playing some game with elves, dwarves, and black puddings. Soon he was invited to join them and gaming has never been the same since. D&D 3.0 inspired Jerry to write modules for others, but Ed Wetterman and Mark Ramsey talked him into writing modern horror for 12 to Midnight. Today Jerry lives in Sugar Land, Texas with his wife, Branda and two children, Justine and Brandon.

Section 0: GM Preparation

0.1: Introduction

Most citizens of Pinebox are excited that the Green Mark Corporation is moving in. The jobs are welcome and most folks are excited about the prospects. Among the few who are critical of the change, however, is one individual who takes personal umbrage at the news: the Skinwalker. He believes that parts of the forest are sacred and that Green Mark is encroaching upon that sanctity. The only way to restore order to nature is through an offering of blood—Green Mark blood.

0.2: Ranks

This adventure is written for four characters of Novice to Seasoned rank. Because combat is secondary to the unfolding mystery, game masters should find it easy to scale the adventure for any party.

0.3: Play Notes

This adventure is mostly nonlinear, and difficult to run without preparation. The GM should read the entire module several times and become familiar with the Pinebox setting. Once the heroes complete the first two introductory encounters (*1.1: Roadside* and *1.2: Just a Few Questions*) they should be allowed to explore and go wherever they please while you adjust clues accordingly. To help the GM, we have organized the adventure into three sections: *Section 1: Inevitable Events*, *Section 2: It Could Happen*, and *Section 3: Taking It To Tiedens*.

The encounters in *Section 1: Inevitable Events*, should take place regardless of what the characters do. It is possible that the characters may not be present for one or two of these incidents, depending upon how they conduct themselves. Just remember that these events occur with or without the characters and that they may affect future developments.

Section 2: It Could Happen covers several encounters that take place if the characters go to particular locations. Some of these events may not occur, but you should be prepared for them if they do.

Section 3: Taking It to Tiedens presents two possibilities for the ending. *Section 3.1: We Are In Control* explains how the conclusion played out in the original running of the module. The second playtest

had an equally deadly ending, outlined in *Section 3.2: Druid's Grove*. Between these two encounters you should be able to bring the adventure to a suitably climatic ending.

Out of necessity, the presentation of the module focuses on the story from one avenue, but the GM should adjust to his investigating team's actions. Resist the urge to railroad your heroes along a certain path. Keep the action cinematic. You and your players will find the experience rewarding.

Characters can die quickly in this module if they are not careful. Lucius Tiedens is a powerful, vindictive Skinwalker. He has animals trained to monitor certain areas of town, and his shamanistic powers allow him to speak with them and find out what is happening. Tiedens does not hesitate to challenge those who interfere with him. Sometimes he warns folks, but anyone who meets him on his turf can expect a deadly encounter.

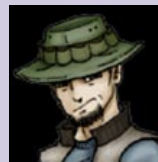
Your 12 to Midnight Guides



Jackson Green

Jackson believes in the paranormal and has extensively investigated hauntings and ghostly activities. He offers advice and background information.

"Wait a sec, guys. I just want to check the recorder I left in Lance's room last night."



Lance Carson

Lance is a skeptic, but open to the possibility of a world beyond the one we see. He offers advice on dealing with players who go "off the map."

"We're facing murder charges, and you guys are worried about pizza?"



Professor Glen Maclanahan

The professor is an expert researcher and investigator. He offers aid regarding the use of skills and mechanics of the game.

"I carry a prism around with me for ten years, and the one time I need it it's in the truck!"

0.4: GM Background

Although Lucius Tiedens grew up in the Big Thicket of East Texas, he was reared learning the Druidic traditions of Ireland. Unfortunately, his love of the woods mirrored his hatred for civilization in general—and the town of Pinebox and its residents in

What is a Skinwalker?



Skinwalkers are Navajo medicine men who, in their lust for power, follow the evil spirit

Coyote. To appease Coyote and receive Skinwalker abilities, they must go through a long period of testing, which concludes with the murder of a relative.

Skinwalkers are hateful and tend to play malicious tricks on everyone they meet. To anger a Skinwalker is unwise, as they are vindictive and use strong death magic.

These evil Shamans get their name from their unique, magical ability to assume the forms of their victims (human and animal alike) by removing and wearing their skins.

particular. Desire for the power to protect the forest prompted him and his twin brother, Andrew, to leave their home in search of new knowledge. In Four Corners, the Tiedens brothers met a Skinwalker—a dark medicine man feared by the early Americans—and saw in that evil magic a tool they could use in their private work against the encroachers.

Only one brother survived the apprenticeship with the evil Shaman, and Lucius undertook the journey from the American West to Ireland alone. There he learned to invoke the Hunt—the

feral embodiment of death and renewal—to track and fight the enemies of nature.

Upon returning to the Big Thicket, he learned of the Green Mark Corporation’s plan to cut timber from the forest he had sacrificed so much to protect. He assembled a meeting of the Council of Texas Druids and called for war against the interlopers. The council pointed out that there were no indications Green Mark would infringe upon the Druid’s Grove. Tiedens argued that the grove might be safe this year, but there was no guarantee that the grove would be protected in the future. The council did not share his concern and refused to consider his demands.

Furious at the council, Tiedens cannot contain his anger. He intends to single-handedly fight Green Mark, since he knows the council does not care about his activities as long as he limits his killing to outsiders. For two months he has gathered information on the corporation’s employees, vendors, and customers.

Now he is ready to start a war of nature versus progress. His first target is Bobby Williams.

0.4a Lucius Tiedens’ Pregame Timeline

This timeline represents the activities of Lucius Tiedens prior to the events described in this module.

Table 0.4: Lucius Tiedens’ Pregame Timeline

Date	Description
-5 years	Lucius and Andrew Tiedens, Texas Druids, go to Four Corners, part of the Navajo Nation where the Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah state lines intersect, to learn about American shamanism.
-3 years	Lucius sacrifices his brother, Andrew, and becomes a Skinwalker.
-2 years	Tiedens goes to Ireland and learns how to invoke the Hunt.
-1 year	Tiedens returns to Pinebox. The Green Mark Corporation announces its move to Pinebox.
-6 months	Tiedens decides to put a stop to Green Mark’s incursions.
-1 month	After stalking Green Mark’s employees and contractors for five months, Tiedens asks fellow Druids to help him with his vendetta. They refuse to help or provide aid.

0.5: Plot Synopsis

Skinwalker is a long adventure that can play out in many ways. To assist you in understanding the “big picture,” the following synopsis describes one possible way the heroes may play through the adventure to its climax. By understanding the different ways the team may choose to play various encounters, you can keep the adventure solid and remain in control of the game. Sidebars, provided throughout the adventure, assist you with a variety of situations and give advice on dealing with wayward teams.

This adventure is very open ended and probably will never play exactly the same way twice, so the GM needs to be familiar with the adventure’s building blocks, and the Pinebox setting, as presented herein.

The heroes take a ride into town on a cold March morning. Where they come from is not important. What matters is that they are on their way to Pinebox, Texas. A lovely community nestled in the Big Thicket of East Texas, Pinebox is a pleasant place to raise a family and start a business. It is also not an uncommon place to die, as death and Pinebox are on intimate terms.

Today, death consummates that relationship along the roadside. Driving down the highway, the heroes slow down as they approach an old Toyota truck.

Skinwalker

Dead crows litter the roadside, while inside the vehicle a little girl pounds on the driver's window, her eyes swollen from crying. The team's vehicle comes to a stop; something is wrong and an adult must come to the rescue. A quick peek in the pickup's bed reveals several empty beer cans and a pair of dead crows. The windshield is cracked, allowing the girl's cries to escape the truck's interior.

She opens the door and the wailing persists, "The crows hit Daddy's truck. He said the birds had gone crazy. Then he went into the woods. He needed to go really, really bad, cause of the birds scared him. Daddy didn't come back. Why don't he come back?"

The heroes do their best to calm the child, Julie Williams, despite their private concern that her father might be incapacitated. They enter the woods, unsure of what they might find. "Gruesome" cannot begin to describe what they discover. Robert "Bobby" Williams, lies brutally murdered, but why did the murderer peel off his skin and smash his jaw?

The sheriff arrives after the team reports the crime, and the investigation is under way. The interrogation is as short as the weather is cold. The sheriff asks the heroes to visit the station later that day. He insists that the team leave the crime scene; nevertheless, they return later to further examine the site.

When the team visits the sheriff's office, Julie is eating an ice-cream cone. When the heroes inquire about her well-being, the desk sergeant informs them that the girl's aunt is coming to take custody of her. While the adults talk, the girl taps her little hand on the window and drops her ice-cream cone. Her blue eyes grow wider and she smiles. She waves her hand frantically and jumps up and down. Much to everyone's surprise she calls out, "Daddy! There's my Daddy. Daddy, I'm here! I can go to Daddy's house now. There's my Daddy!"

No one responds quickly enough to spot the individual she identifies as her father before he enters Johnson's Hardware, across the street. Everyone runs over to the hardware store. When they go behind the counter, they find another skinned corpse with a broken jaw. Stranger yet is the pile of flesh stuffed into the garbage can. Later, the heroes discover that the skin does not belong to the flayed corpse. The sheriff

flees in nausea from the grisly sight in the hardware store. Temporarily left alone, the heroes discover a leather pouch. This belongs to Lucius Tiedens. It is his medicine bag, and he does not think twice about killing to recover it.



In the ensuing investigation, it becomes clear that the sheriff wants to keep the murders quiet. Homicide is bad for business, and the Green Mark Corporation is moving to town—a move that could revive the lumber industry in Pinebox. The heroes consider bypassing the sheriff and alerting the FBI or the Texas Rangers, but eventually decide to cooperate with the local investigation.

While debating their next step, the heroes discover that another murder has occurred outside of town. This time, the victim was a building inspector. A short distance up the road from the murder site is a lumber mill that Green Mark is about to purchase. An inspection of the grounds uncovers an alarming mystery. A large pit holds a great pile of human and animal remains. Stranger yet, every one of them has been decapitated.

The investigators decide to research Julie's father in more detail. The team breaks into the man's house, where they find a GPS device as well as surveys and other information burned onto CD-ROMs.

The team eventually connects the dots. The little girl's father was a surveyor for Green Mark. The hardware store owner had entered into a contract with Green Mark. The building inspector also worked for Green Mark.

Skinwalker

A visit to Green Mark's local headquarters reveals a great deal of activity. Inside, workers are preparing the facilities for operation. Outside, Texas Clean, an environmental activist group, protests the opening of Green Mark's lumber facilities.

The heroes use the information they found at Williams' home to investigate the area of woods that Julie's father had been surveying. While searching deep in the woods, the team comes across yet another gruesome scene. Several Texas Clean members had chained themselves to a tree as part of their protest of Green Mark's plans. Their protest is at an end, as someone or something killed the helpless activists. The heroes return to town to report the finding.

On the following day, the heroes renew their explorations in the forest and are attacked by the Hunt. This is a supernatural hunting party composed of menacing oak hounds and a vaguely humanoid, horned hunter. Although the heroes survive the Hunt, it is a clear warning that their quarry dislikes their investigation. It also becomes apparent that their adversary wants the leather pouch he dropped.

While regrouping after their close escape, the heroes find some members of an old Irish community in the woods. They provide information about Lucius Tiedens, as well as blessings that provide protection from some of his attacks. Lucius Tiedens avoids attacking the Irish, for he is one of them.

Having survived the Hunt and befriended the Irish, the heroes pose a bigger threat to Tiedens than ever. Now Tiedens tries a different strategy and kidnaps someone they care about. State and federal law enforcement finally step in and take over, although they allow the team to wait in the base camp while they locate the sacred grove of the Irish. As the group at the base camp listens on the radio, the Skinwalker annihilates the entire law-enforcement team.

The investigator in charge dispatches an officer by helicopter to get a situation report. This time, the officers allow the heroes to accompany the responding agent to the grove. There is no sign of a battle in the area, and the rescuers see no bodies. While the team releases the abductee, Tiedens kills the law enforcement agent and assumes his form.

The heroes return to the helicopter, unaware that the Skinwalker has taken the law-enforcement officer's form. Tiedens makes himself known and the adversaries hold their final showdown in the helicopter. There are no parachutes, and the pilot is the first to

suffer a wound. The Skinwalker leaves the survivors no choice but to fight him in self-defense.

0.5a Lucius Tiedens Timeline

This timeline represents the activities of Lucius Tiedens if the heroes are passive and do nothing.

Table 0.5: Lucius Tiedens Timeline

Day	Action
Day One	Lucius Tiedens makes his first kill. The Skinwalker has watched Bobby Williams for some time now. He kills Williams, but cannot bring himself to kill Julie, the surveyor's child. He waits for someone to rescue her before he leaves. Next, he goes into town to kill Melba Johnson, owner of Johnson's Hardware. He decides to use Williams' skin to hide his identity and confuse the authorities. He does not plan on Julie Williams seeing him; her excitement calls too much attention to his actions. After quickly killing and skinning Johnson, Tiedens flees the scene, dropping his medicine bag in his haste. Losing the bag diminishes his powers and angers him. He will do anything to get the medicine bag back. Tiedens had one more murder planned for the day, but he looks for his missing medicine bag instead.
Day Two	Early in the morning, Tiedens stops searching for his medicine bag long enough to kill Henry Drake, a building inspector working for the Green Mark Corporation. The sheriff's department discovers Drake's death around noon. Tiedens evaluates the reaction of law enforcement to the first three murders. The Golan County Sheriff places a pair of deputies at Green Mark's headquarters.
Day Three	Texas Clean activists chain themselves to trees near the Druids' sacred grove. This infuriates Tiedens and he murders the activists. Tiedens finds and kills an isolated Golan County Sheriff's Deputy, then enters the Sheriff's Department and recovers his medicine bag. Still wearing the deputy's skin, he drives the police car to Green Mark's facility. He kills three employees, whom he attacks at moments when they are alone.
Day Four	Green Mark insists that the Golan County Sheriff's Department take action. The department, realizing they are outmatched, call in the Texas Rangers. The Texas Rangers arrive and request a Texas DPS SWAT team and Texas National Guard helicopters. Tiedens takes a break from his killing spree.
Day Five	The FBI learns of the murders from Pinebox Police and takes control of the investigation. Tiedens kills a pair of loggers whom he finds in the woods.
Day Six	Law enforcement takes to the woods to search for the two missing loggers. They also hope to find Texas Clean members to question. Tiedens annihilates the search party.
Day Seven	The Texas National Guard arrives on the scene. Tiedens wipes out one squad.
Day Eight	The Texas National Guard drops napalm on the sacred grove. The news refers to it as a training accident. A year later, Tiedens moves his vendetta to Austin. If only a hero had stopped him.

0.6: Setting the Mood

Play soft music in the background. Celtic or Irish music would be ideal. The sound of wolves howling also works well, especially when the Hunt is involved. Burn some incense that smells like pine. Pine-scented air freshener can work too. Playing outside on the patio or while camping can also enhance the experience. If you want to go overboard, have a rack of antlers handy. You can guess when to use them.

0.7: Recommended Plot Hook

We recommend beginning the adventure with the team driving to Pinebox on a cold Saturday morning in March. Where they come from is not important. This time of year they could be returning from the annual rodeo in Houston or from one of the many Louisiana gambling boats. They might have gone down to the Gulf for some salt-water fishing, or taken advantage of one of the many fresh-water fishing holes south of Pinebox. They could be returning from an earlier adventure, or on their way to a new one. They could have even gone to dump the trash so the wife would get off their case. What matters is that they are on the road near Pinebox, Texas, a lovely community nestled in the heart of the Big Thicket.

0.8: Alternate Plot Hooks

Although this adventure is written for heroes who have already adventured together, we recognize that it will be adapted to fit your campaign needs. What should you do if the heroes are not acquainted with one another? Multiple cars can arrive on the scene. Hitchhikers are fun, too—particularly if the finger of blame points in their direction.

Those who are playing law-enforcement types could find themselves called onto the scene. Perhaps other heroes or GM characters found the remains. This requires a few modifications, but it should be easy to place the law-enforcement types in the Golan County Sheriff's Department at the time Julie Williams spots her dad walking down the street.

However you introduce your heroes to the Skinwalker story, remember to keep it spooky.

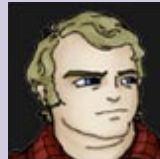
0.9: What's in This One-Horse Town?

In the last census, Pinebox, Texas, was home to 11,977 permanent residents. Records from nearby East Texas University (ETU) indicate an enrollment of an additional 10,051 students. Approximately one third of the student body commutes from the surrounding area.

Heroes can find a dozen chain fast-food joints and an equal number of small locally owned restaurants. The cuisine ranges from steak to Cajun and from BBQ to Tex-Mex fare. The best of these include the Pizza Barn, Mom's Diner, Hamburger City, and Suzie's Catfish Emporium. Three bars along "the strip" cater to students, while two other drinking establishments in Pinebox serve mainly locals. Characters needing supplies can shop at two grocery stores, a small All-Mart, a hardware store, two lumber companies, a gun and hunting-supply store, and four pawnshops.

12 to Midnight is publishing several *Midnight Tales*, which are Savaged conversions of our *Modern Dispatch* line of side-trek-style adventures, set in or around Pinebox. For more information on *Midnight Tales* and the Pinebox setting (including a free, detailed map), visit 12tomidnight.com.

A Note on Skill Checks



Whenever a skill check is called for and there is no modifier listed, the base target number is always 4. In many instances during the adventure, a skill is followed by parentheses containing a modifier to the dice rolls. For example: **Notice (-2)** means make a notice check but apply a -2 penalty to the dice rolls. This modifier is to both the skill die and the wild die.

Occasionally there may be a requirement that the skill check succeed with one or more raises. If you wanted to be really difficult, you could require a success with a raise at -2 to the skill roll.

During your games, you may want to apply a -1, -2, +1, or +2 circumstance bonus. We believe you should reward innovative players and penalize players whose characters are doing something that distracts from the skill check. For instance: A hero goes to the library to **Investigate** Navaho Skinwalkers and uses **Persuasion** to talk the librarian into helping him with his research. The GM could decide to apply a +1 to his **Investigation** check. These bonuses are dependent on the GM's judgement and may be given at his discretion. Alternately, if a hero is being rude to the librarian, but asks her help in **Investigating** something, apply a -1 to the check as she half-heartedly assists him.

Section I: Inevitable Events

Day One

1.1: Roadside

After you have established why the heroes are on the road and how they got there, read or summarize the following:



You've been driving too dang long on this Saturday morning, but you are close to your destination. Hot air blows across your legs, but the cold still manages to tweak your ears. The last sign said Pinebox was eight miles away. The road is a typical Texas highway: two lanes with a wide service lane in the middle. In the Big Thicket, the road has a tendency to curve a bit. In the distance, half a dozen turkey buzzards circle—not an uncommon sight any time of year.

After cresting the hill, the road levels out. A dozen small, black clumps litter the road, and a blue truck sits parked on the shoulder. A closer look reveals the clumps are crows, broken and dead. Another look at the truck reveals that the windshield had been shattered. Something is moving around inside the cab. A little girl has her face pressed against the driver's side window. Tears streak her face and her tiny hand slaps against the glass.

If the heroes stop, you have an adventure on your hands. If they ignore the girl and drive into town, you should kill them on the spot for lacking compassion.

Compassionate heroes (who deserve to live) can park on the shoulder. As they approach the car, the girl sits on the seat and cries. Aside from the smashed windshield, nothing about the truck looks out of place. It appears that a couple of dozen birds must have collided with it while it cruised at highway speed. Anyone with the capability of identifying the vehicle's owner by checking the license plates finds the owner listed as Robert Williams. A quick glance into the truck's bed reveals half a dozen empty beer cans and a pair of pulverized crows. It is easy to deduce that they rammed into something tough, like the windshield. As the team approaches the truck, read or summarize the following:

The dull thud of power door locks is followed by the door swinging wide open. A skinny little girl emerges from the pickup wearing a denim jacket over a pullover, jeans, and a pair of sneakers. She sniffles as she moves to the front of the truck and peeks toward the woods. Long blond tresses run down her back.

"Daddy said, 'Don't get out of the truck or I'm gonna heat your britches,'" the girl says. "The crows hit Daddy's truck. He said the birds had gone crazy. Daddy was scared. Said the birds almost made him go wee-wee in his pants. Daddy said he had to go! He had to go real bad! And boys can go in the woods. Daddy's been gone a long time. Why don't he come back?" She looks at you, sniffing. More tears drip down her cheek.

Broken birds litter the road, while overhead the turkey buzzards circle and more than a dozen crows watch the road from nearby trees and power lines.

The girl is Julie Williams. She is not supposed to talk to strangers, but her father is not supposed to leave her alone for so long, either—especially after a flock of scary crows pelts the truck. She is scared, worried, and, in her anxiety, she does not hesitate to say anything that her kindergarten knowledge provides her. Julie wants to look for her father and, unless another adult remains with her by the truck, she follows anyone who goes toward the woods. If anyone asks Julie her father's name, she answers, "Bobby Williams."

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Heroes who search the truck find the following on a successful *Notice* check:

Table 1.1.1: Truck Notice Check

Success	Result
Basic success	The key in the ignition is on a ring with several other keys, including a pair that looks like house keys. A parking hangtag for the Green Mark Corporation dangles from the rearview mirror. A garage door opener is attached to the driver's-side sunshade.
Success with a raise	A logbook under the driver's seat contains notes and coordinates of the type used to produce survey maps.
Success with two or more raises	Shoved in the glove box is a recently dated letter from an attorney representing Julie's mother, threatening court action unless Mr. Williams immediately settles his overdue child-support payments. There is a box holding Williams' business cards. The address on the cards is a PO box, while the phone number matches his listing in the Pinebox residential phone book. The PO box is located at the Pinebox post office.

1.1a: The Body

Emergency 9-1-1 routes calls to the Golan County Sheriff's Department. If the heroes choose to go into the woods, Julie follows the investigators if allowed. Read or summarize the following if anyone enters the woods. Otherwise, skip to *1.1b: The Sheriff*.

The frozen grass crunches with each step taken toward the tree line. What happened to this child's father? Did he trip over a root and knock himself out? Or did he drink himself stupid and get lost?

A chill breeze stings your face. With it comes a stench of pine, human waste, and blood. Stepping around a tree, you see a gruesome site. It has to be a human body, but this poor fellow has no skin! The scene reminds you of a model of the human muscular structure from your high school biology class—the main difference being that the model did not have its jaw bashed in, and there was no blood covering it.

If you are using 12 to Midnight's *Fear Effects* rules, this is a *minor spook*. Heroes with the *Healing* skill or with *Knowledge (medicine)* automatically pass this check unless they roll a 1 on their skill die.

If Julie follows them, the little girl screams and faints at the sight of the corpse. She remains unconscious for fifteen minutes. Julie acts semicatatonic for as long as she remains at the murder site. She does not speak, and her only reaction is to kick and scream if she thinks someone might take her back to the trees.

Any hero who became ill or ran from the murder site must make a *Guts* check to return. A successful *Healing* or *Knowledge (medicine)* check reveals the following about the body:

Table 1.1.2: Body Examination

Success	Result
Basic success	The skin has been completely stripped from the corpse.
Success with one raise	A blunt instrument smashed the jaw and the corpse is missing a few teeth.
Success with two or more raises	Only a laser could produce more precise incisions.

A successful *Notice* check in this area reveals a rabbit resting in the underbrush. Any move toward the rabbit causes it to run away. This is the Skinwalker. When describing the rabbit, it is not a bad idea to remind the heroes about the crows watching from above, and throw in a couple of sparrows for good measure. If someone shoots the rabbit, remember that, even in this form, the Skinwalker has all his normal abilities.

A *Notice* check with at least one raise reveals the carcass of a skinned rabbit. The meat is intact, though some of the creature's teeth have been pulled.

The next logical move is to call the authorities (as noted at the beginning of this section), though when he arrives the sheriff does not turn out to be particularly helpful. If the team calls the sheriff, they may examine the area before he arrives. When you feel the time is right, proceed to *1.1b: The Sheriff*.

Instead of calling the police, the team may try to find Julie's relatives on their own, but this proves difficult. Her parents are divorced and her mother lives in Houston. Julie eventually confides that she has an Aunt Allie in Pinebox, and there is an Allison Wil-

What is Fear Effects?



Fear Effects is 12 to Midnight's own set of add-on horror rules. These rules do not

require the use of a sanity score. Instead, they rely on a special roll called a Horror check. You will see references to three different kinds of Horror checks mentioned in this adventure: *minor spooks*, *medium shocks*, and *great frights*.

If you aren't using *Fear Effects*, be sure to check it out. It makes any mediocre game great, and any great game (such as those by 12 to Midnight) even better. However, if you still are not convinced to run this adventure using the *Fear Effects* rules, then just ignore comments in the adventure about *minor spooks*, *medium shocks*, or *great frights*.

liams in the Pinebox phonebook. Unfortunately, this morning “Aunt Allie” has gone to work, and the child has no idea who employs the woman.

1.1b: The Sheriff

It takes the sheriff ten minutes to arrive after someone reports the accident. He drives a police sedan with a green and white paint job and the Golan County Sheriff's Department crest on both doors. It has a cage to separate the occupants of the front seat from those in the back.

“What’s going on here, boy?”

The weather has made Sheriff Anderson cold and uncomfortable. He demands an explanation from the first team member he reaches. Read or roleplay the following when this occurs:

“What’s going on here, boy?” Before the thought can register he says, “Speak up now. Busy day. I got to take care of the county business. What’s all them dead birds doing?”

When he hears there has been a murder, he moves straight for the woods. Investigators in the woods face the wrath of Sheriff Anderson, who demands they quit corrupting his crime scene. When he sees the corpse, he becomes ill and retreats to his car, where he sits down in the passenger seat and calls for backup and for Doctor Dodge Billups.

The sheriff orders the team to remain on the roadside until he decides to release them. He remains in his vehicle until one of his deputies arrives. Only someone trying to leave the scene or enter the woods causes him to leave his car. He berates anyone who forces him out of the vehicle. If the team does drive off, he dispatches deputies to pursue them and take them to the Golan County Sheriff's Office, where they remain in custody until the sheriff returns from the crime scene with Julie.

In five minutes, the first deputy arrives; in 10 minutes, two more deputies arrive together. Doctor Billups arrives 30 minutes later, as does an ambulance. The deputies work the crime scene as they arrive, looking for clues and filling out reports. Sheriff Anderson comes out of the car and chats with the men a bit. One of the deputies takes custody of Julie after

Doctor Billups examines her to make certain she is not injured.

Sheriff Anderson interviews the team now. The best way to handle these interviews is to take each player aside for questioning. This is a great opportunity for roleplaying, and the answers can be quite entertaining for the GM. It can also put team members at odds with each other, as they wonder what their teammates might have told the sheriff. Typical questions and remarks are

“Where are you going, boy?”

“Where you been?”

“You got a record? ‘Cause I’m gonna look. Save us both some time, son. Confess.”

“You kill him? Tell me the truth.”

“What did the little girl say?”

“You ever see that many dead crows in one place? Never seen such a thing before in my life.”

Finally, end each interview with,

“I have a few follow up questions I need to ask. I’ll let you go now, but I want you to come by the station this afternoon. Take my card. Don’t forget me now, ya’ hear?”

Change questions accordingly, and add to them as the situation dictates. Make the players sweat and, if you can, get the party at each other’s throats. Anderson is a lazy, manipulative man, and he intends to keep this incident quiet. The faster he can find a murderer, the better, and the team members are his prime suspects. He ignores the crows, saying that stupid animals do dumb things, just like whales or dolphins that beach themselves. He does not even record their presence in his report.

Unless someone confesses to the crime, he tells the heroes to leave after the questioning. They are now free to do as they please. If they want to look at the crime scene, they must wait until the sheriff’s investigation is complete, which happens around three o’clock. Sheriff Anderson leaves earlier, returning to his office at one o’clock. When the heroes visit the sheriff’s office, go to *1.2: Just a Few Questions*. If they persist in bothering the investigating deputies, then use the information provided in the Crime Scene Investigations sidebar found in section 1.6.

GM Checklist: Did you ...

- Allow the team to search the truck and question Julie?
- Remember to allow *Notice* checks to discover that Bobby Williams worked for the Green Mark Corporation?
- Allow the heroes to discover the skinned body?
- Give the team a chance to *Notice* the animals in the area: sparrows, crows, and a rabbit?
- Introduce Sheriff Anderson and have him question the heroes?
- Let the characters notice the arrival of Dr. Billups?
- Remember to have Sheriff Anderson tell the team to visit his office to make official statements?

1.2: Just a Few Questions

Read the following to the players when they park outside the Golan County Sheriff's Office:

The sheriff's office is a relatively new structure, compared to others along the street. The front has glass double doors flanked by large windows that provide a view into the lobby. There are not a lot of cars parked on this block. Across the street, a young man and two young women, possibly college students, stroll along the sidewalk. The women, a brunette and a redhead, are holding pamphlets, which the man takes and places behind the windshield wipers of each car they pass. The trio walks to the corner, where the young man says something to the girls, who cross the street while he splits off and moves on up the block.

The young man is Chad Rathers, whom the heroes might meet in *1.4: Texas Clean*. As he moves down the street, Chad passes Lucius Tiedens—though he does not realize it nor have any reason to recognize him. Chad should be out of sight when the Skinwalker commits murder at Johnson's Hardware Store, thus making him a possible suspect. When the team chooses to pass through the glass double doors, read or summarize the following:

After the icy chill outside, the air in the room strikes you like a hot breath. A counter runs the length of the room, parallel to the street. A large

black woman, wearing a Golan County Sheriff's Department uniform, sits on the business side of the desk, her hair combed back and tied together with a thick rubber band. She has close-set eyes and an intense, no-nonsense expression on her face. The nameplate says Sergeant Latoya Jones, and the three chevrons on her uniform confirm that she is the sergeant in charge here.

A variety of law-enforcement posters are pinned to the pea-green wall.

Behind her are five file cabinets and a door with an Authorized Personnel sign attached to it. A variety of law-enforcement posters are pinned to the pea-green wall. A dozen chairs line the walls on your side of the counter. Sitting in one of them, looking out the window, is little Julie Williams. She stares vacantly out the window and into nothingness, even as she licks at a chocolate ice-cream cone.

Sergeant Jones ignores the heroes until they address her. She speaks as little as possible and answers in short, clipped sentences. Some examples of answers are:

"The little girl? Her aunt is coming to get her."

"I'm 9-1-1, not 4-1-1."

"Sit down. When the sheriff wants you, he'll get you."

If the team questions Julie, she may give them a brief glance, but her stare returns to the window. If Julie likes one of the heroes, she informs him that her aunt is coming, but mostly she sits quietly looking out onto the street.

After making the team wait for several minutes, the sheriff comes into the lobby. Seeking to flaunt his power in front of the desk sergeant, Anderson chooses to question them here rather than take them into his office. The sheriff asks if anyone has anything to add to his earlier statement. He may ask the heroes to elaborate on a point from their interview at the crime scene. He especially brings up things that might set team members against each other. The sheriff has completed a quick background check, and if any of

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the heroes have been arrested in Texas or been convicted of a felony, he knows about it and uses this information in his questioning. He watches their reactions, as he believes one or more of the heroes is responsible for the murder. After a few minutes of roleplaying, or when the conversation gets really heated, proceed to 1.2a: *That's My Daddy*.

1.2a: That's My Daddy

Interrupt the sheriff's interrogation by reading or summarizing the following:

A persistent tapping noise coming from the front of the room interrupts your exchange with the sheriff. Julie pats her little hand on the window. A chocolate ice-cream puddle forms next to her feet, the cone hanging loosely in her fingers. Her blue eyes are glowing with joy and a smile lights up her face. She stops tapping at the window and waves her hand while jumping up and down.

She calls out, "Daddy! There's my daddy." She looks at you happily, then looks back outside and shouts, "Daddy I'm here! I can go home now. There's my daddy."

Julie has seen Lucius Tiedens in the guise of his latest victim, Bobby Williams. Unless someone is standing beside the girl at the time Tiedens walks by, no one can respond quickly enough to spot this individual she calls her father. Otherwise, on a successful *Notice* check they see the door of Johnson's Hardware closing across the street. When asked to point at her father, Julie directs everyone to the hardware store. The sheriff immediately runs over to the hardware store to see if Williams is inside. The team has no difficulty following the lawman if they choose to do so. Julie tags along too, unless someone stops her.

1.2b: Second Skin

While the team approaches the store, read or summarize the following:

This red brick building dates back to the 1920s. A white sign spanning the building's frontage reads "Johnson's Hardware & Staple Goods" in large, blood-red letters. A bell jingles loudly as you open the metal-framed door. The aisles are full of various items that help build and maintain people's homes and buildings. Customers stroll the aisles holding brown paper bags filled with nails, or admiring the assorted power tools.

The sheriff scrutinizes each individual he passes. Eventually, he reaches the long counter at the rear of the store. He calls out, "Melba?" Without hesitating, he pushes through a waist-high swinging gate and passes through a door marked "Employees Only".

Within a heartbeat, he dashes back out thru the swinging door, knocking a bag of bolts from the hands of an elderly gentleman. The bell jingles as the sheriff flees the building. It would be comical except for his ashen face and bulging eyes. The sound of the swinging gate brushing the adjacent counter marks a slowing pace before it stops.

If the heroes go into the back room, read or summarize the following:

The back room is a large area that comprises a break room, office, and holding area for special orders. A small room off to the side holds a toilet and sink. There is a closed metal door across the room under a lighted "EXIT" sign.

The scene here is reminiscent of what you saw this morning; the victim, stripped of skin and with her face bashed in, lies in a pool of her own blood. Unlike Bobby Williams, however, the woman's throat is sliced open.

If you are using 12 to Midnight's *Fear Effects* rules, and the heroes did not see the corpse by the roadside earlier, this is a *minor spook*. Heroes with the *Healing* or *Knowledge (medicine)* skills automatically pass this check unless they roll a one on their skill die.



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The team has three minutes to investigate before a deputy clears the scene. Heroes searching the back room should make a *Notice* check.

Table 1.2: Hardware Store Search

Success	Result
Basic success	The heroes find a pile of pale human skin and a complete set of men's clothing inside a garbage can. The skin belonged to a brunet. Later the heroes may discover that the blood type found on this skin does not match that of the dead body. Doctor Billups could provide this information after he finishes his examination, around 10:00 that evening.
Success with one or more raises	A bulletin board on one of the walls displays several photographs and clippings. One newspaper clipping has not yet faded to yellow like its mates. The headline reads, "Johnson's Hardware Earns Green Mark Contract." The article includes a photo of a middle-aged man in a suit shaking hands with a woman clothed in a red, flannel shirt and blue coveralls. She wears her red hair in a bun. The dateline on the newspaper clipping is two weeks old. The caption reads, "Melba Johnson welcomes Green Mark Corporation President, Karl Knudsen, to Pinebox."

Any hero who looks out the back door finds that it opens onto an alley. A leather pouch lies on the ground next to the steps. This is Lucius Tiedens' medicine bag, although nothing in the bag overtly identifies its owner. A peculiar wheel, with a dog and some Southwestern and Celtic images, decorates the reddish leather. A hero who makes a successful *Knowledge (theology)* or *Knowledge (occult)* check recognizes that the drawings are a combination of Druidic and Navajo devices. The Druidic wheel is an image of the Celtic sun calendar, while the coyote symbolizes evil in Navajo lore. The bag contains dozens of smashed teeth and pieces of human and animal skin. While the characters can peek into the bag and see its contents, anything they attempt to place inside falls through the bottom.

The arrival of the deputy, along with several Pinebox Police Department officers, cuts the heroes' brief investigation short. Sheriff Anderson informs the team, through one of his officers, that he has no further questions. As they leave the store, the characters notice a crowd of onlookers milling around across the street.

When the heroes get back to their vehicle, they find a flyer under the windshield wiper. Give the characters a copy of **Handout 1: Texas Clean Flyer**. If the characters do not have a car, then Mae Walker, the young, redheaded woman they saw placing flyers on cars earlier, hands a copy to at least one member of the party. She does this partly to promote Texas

Clean, but more for her own curiosity. She wants to remember the faces of those who saw the crime scene.

GM Checklist: Did you ...

- Describe the young Texas Clean members handing out flyers?
- Have the heroes meet Sheriff Anderson?
- Portray Julie Williams seeing her father?
- Allow the team the opportunity to find the discarded skin?
- Give the characters a chance to see the newspaper clipping on the bulletin board, which mentions Johnson's Hardware's contract with the Green Mark Corporation?
- Remember to let the heroes have a chance to find Lucius Tiedens' medicine bag?
- Give the players **Handout 1: Texas Clean Flyer**?



The Medicine Bag

Lucius Tiedens wants his medicine bag. He can locate it just by concentrating on it, and if the characters have the bag, he attempts to steal it from them. He prefers to do this quietly, but murder is always an option. Using animal forms, Tiedens tracks anyone who possesses the pouch. If the sheriff takes the pouch as evidence, then Tiedens kills a deputy to infiltrate the sheriff's office and recover it. This would occur the day after Melba Johnson's murder.

Recovering the medicine bag delays Tiedens' timeline. Just keep in mind that he does not advance his schedule until the bag is once more in his possession.

1.3: We're Done Here

The team found the girl on the side of the road and called the sheriff. They went to town and gave the sheriff a report. They now know of two murders. They may have even given the deputy that funny little pouch they found. Outstanding citizens in this group! You, Mr. or Ms. GM, ask the team what their next move is, and they respond, "Let the Sheriff's Department handle it."

That attitude could torpedo an adventure real quick. Well, in this case, you need to scare the heroes into action. Fear is a tried and true GM technique, but how to achieve that in *Skinwalker*? Read on.

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Mae Walker is a member of the community of Irish Druids that lives in the Big Thicket. She has been passing out Texas Clean flyers all over downtown Pinebox. Perhaps she actually gave some to the heroes. Walker saw the medicine bag as it is being handled by the characters or law enforcement and recognized the Druidic wheel. This implicates the Druids; but worse, it indicates that an individual possessing rare power is using it viciously. Walker thinks she knows who the murderer is, and she worries that the discovery of his identity could result in encroachments upon the Irish community.

This observant young woman has a cousin who works in the homicide unit for the City of Pinebox Police Department. Part of the information taken in witness interviews is address information. Even for transients, interviewers list a hotel or campsite. Walker informed her cousin that these people would need a strong blessing to protect them from a possible curse. The cousin gave her their addresses.

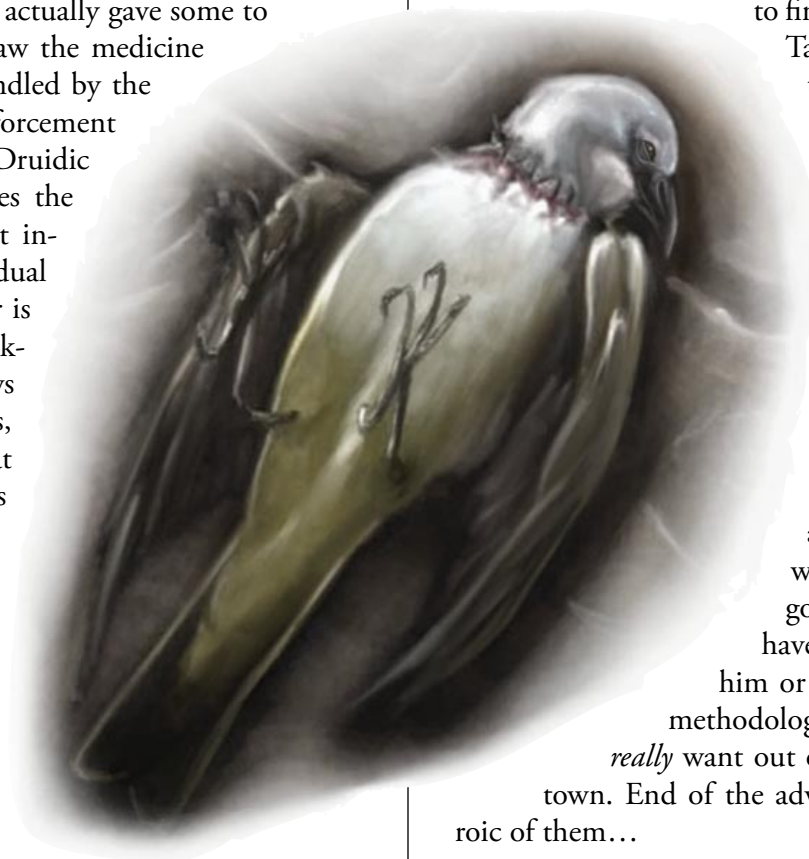
Walker visits her grandmother, Grandma Taylor, and tells her what she saw at the hardware store. She insists that the heroes need a blessing. Grandma Taylor agrees. Walker provides the addresses to Grandma Taylor, who performs the blessing ritual under the light of the moon. The potentially shocking symbol of the blessing appears at the heroes' doors the next morning. Read or summarize the following when the heroes discover the blessing:

It's time to go out and see what the world has in store for you today. As you step out your door, you notice something lying in the doorway. What could it be? A bird? Not just a bird, it's a dead bird ... with its head chopped off and replaced backwards upon the body.

The heroes probably do not appreciate the blessing at this point. It should confuse and worry them.

Most important, it should scare them into wanting to find the killer. Grandma Taylor does not care if the team understands what she has done. It is unlikely they can understand this blessing without some research. Refer to 2.9: *Mixed Blessings* for more information.

If the team refuses to investigate after this event, pick a likely GM character with whom they have a good relationship and have the Skinwalker kill him or her using his normal methodology. Of course if they *really* want out of it, they could leave town. End of the adventure. Not very heroic of them...



Day Two

1.4: Texas Clean

Texas, being such a large state, has many organizations that complement those found at the national and international level. Texas Clean is the Texas version of Green Peace. This organization is new and hopes to create notoriety by blocking the Green Mark Corporation's relocation to Pinebox. Although blue-collar society and the industries that support Green Mark's operations do not receive these activists gladly, Texas Clean may find support at East Texas University (ETU) and grow their membership base there among the students and faculty. For the GM, this group provides a good red herring to throw the heroes off the trail, at least for a while.

Heroes who received or noticed Texas Clean's flyers can go watch, and even take part in, the group's rally, if they choose. If characters go to the rally, read or summarize the following:

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Several cars and vans are parked along the roadside. One of the vans belongs to a Houston news station. A large chain-link fence interlaced with white slats partitions the Green Mark facility from the road. The drive leading to the gate has a crowd of people milling around it. Beyond the crowd, a deputy stands outside his vehicle.

Chad Rathers, the founder and main source of funds for Texas Clean, leads the rally. The characters spotted him yesterday, along with Melonie Richards (See 1.4a: *A Friendly Face*, below.) and Mae Walker, handing out flyers. Rathers likes being the center of attention, a trait that really stands out when the Houston television crew shows up. He gets close to the camera lens and leads his group in an anti-lumber-business chant. Rathers allows no one else to get close to the camera or talk to the reporter, and he holds a lasting grudge against any hero who manages to do so. The television crews spend 10 minutes filming the protest, then leave.

Mae Walker hangs back among the protesters. She does not want to be conspicuous. The characters may remember her if they saw her before or after the murder at Johnson's Hardware Store. She is shy and talks quietly, but anyone chatting about Ireland, Druids, or Celtic heritage can lure her into conversation. Walker is also interested in anyone wearing Celtic devices.

1.4a: A Friendly Face

Melonie Richards, Chad Rathers' girlfriend, greets the group. She is a brunette with dark brown eyes and long, straight hair that touches her shoulder blades. She wears blue jeans, and a red flannel collar peeks out of her buttoned-up denim jacket. A green map of Texas adorns the back of the jacket, with vertical, white, block letters that spell the word *CLEAN*. A circular patch with the silhouette of an oil derrick, inside the standard red circle with a diagonal slash, embellishes the jacket's left shoulder.

She is the talented artist who designed the Texas Clean logo and rally flyer. Richards recognizes that

Rathers can rub folks the wrong way, so she goes out of her way to greet the heroes first. However, she does make a point of proudly pointing out the group's leader to the heroes. She tries to get the team involved with the environmental group, but if they do not want to participate, she advises them to watch from across the street as sometimes things get rowdy.

In her enthusiasm, Richards mentions that the group is planning to chain themselves to a tree in the path of Green Mark harvesting equipment the next day. This is supposed to be a secret, but Richards thinks secrets should be told. She finds the plan very exciting and cannot wait to take part. Rathers is keeping the location to himself until the last minute, to keep corporate spies from finding out and blocking them. He and the other members of Texas Clean

are suspicious of heroes who attempt to join them in the forest the following day.

Rathers encourages the team to participate in future protests, but insists that today is not a good time. The group does their best to avoid being followed to the protest site.

Rathers grows jealous of any man who chats too long with his girlfriend. If this happens, read or summarize the following:

Melonie Richards has been chatting with you cordially and answering all your questions when Chad Rathers comes over. He grabs her short, brunette ponytail and gives it a tug. The girl grimaces and cries out, "Chad!"

Wrapping his arm round her waist and pulling her close to him, he looks at you and says, "I'm here to protest. What about you?"

This interaction could create some tension. If the party backs off and joins or observes the protest, then that is the end of it. If a hero decides that Melonie Richards is too good for Rathers, then the hero may attempt to lure her away. If the hero uses *Intimidation* or *Taunt* on Rathers, and fails, Rathers throws a punch at the interloper. This angers Richards, who

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administers to the hero if Rathers hits him. If the punch goes wide, she slaps her boyfriend and tells him they are done. Then she asks the hero attacked by Rathers for a ride into town. With a successful *Persuasion* check, the hero wins the girl and avoids the fight. Richards begins with a Neutral attitude. The hero wins her heart (at least her friendship) if he can get her attitude to change to Helpful. A hero loses Richards' interest if he fights Rathers or flashes a weapon.

Any display of weapons risks being *Noticed* by the deputy, in which case he responds without delay. If the deputy catches team members pulling out a weapon during the protest, he charges them with

armed assault. Their bail is set to \$22,000, and any weapons are confiscated until the trial can be held.

1.4b: Stand Up and Be Heard

Texas Clean is antagonistic toward the Green Mark Corporation and anyone associated with it. The protesters here are hard-core environmentalists who are not afraid of confrontation for the sake of their cause. If the heroes enter the Green Mark facility, the protesters throw three rotten eggs at their vehicle when they exit. They try to toss the eggs through open windows; otherwise they focus on the windshield, hoping to disrupt the driver's view. If the team elects to press charges, the Texas Clean members who threw eggs are incarcerated. Rathers, Richards, and Walker do not throw eggs.

Texas Clean members have no connection to the Skinwalker, Lucius Tiedens, and have no information useful to the investigation. Have fun with this group and try to make them seem filled with hate. They are a red herring, so use them as such.

The protesters do not intend to get violent today. The protest persists until two o'clock in the afternoon, when the protesters leave to rest up before the next day's protest, mentioned by Melonie Richards (see *2.8b: Killing Tree*). Richards does not die with the other protesters if she leaves Rathers and joins the heroes instead.

GM Checklist: Did you ...

- Introduce Melonie Richards?
- Have Richards reveal Texas Clean's plan to chain themselves to a tree to stop Green Mark's deforestation?
- Introduce the possibility of Chad Rathers and a member of the team arguing over Melonie Richards?

1.5: The Green Mark Corporation

The Green Mark Corporation facility is busy, as workers endeavor to convert the property's leased buildings into a first-class lumber storage and distribution facility. The team may drive or walk up to Green Mark's gate at any time during the adventure. When they do, read or summarize the following:

The gatehouse sits between two drives, one for incoming traffic, and the other for exiting vehicles.



Texas Weapons Laws

Texas allows individuals with a concealed handgun license to carry a handgun on their person. The license does not allow the holder to carry weapons into government buildings or schools.

Weapons may be carried into the woods unconcealed, provided the weapon holder has a hunting permit. Such weapons need to be suitable for hunting, though.

The following weapons and devices are prohibited in Texas:

- Explosive weapons
- Machine guns
- Short-barreled firearms (rifles with a length of less than 16 inches)
- Firearm silencers
- Switchblade knives
- Brass knuckles
- Armor-piercing ammunition
- Chemical-dispensing devices
- Zip guns ("home-made" guns)

Possession of any of these will land the hero in the slammer, charged with possession or transportation of prohibited weapon(s). The only exceptions are active military personnel and law enforcement officers acting in an official capacity.

In Texas, it is technically legal to carry a rifle or shotgun without a permit, but doing so brings many questions from law enforcement personnel.

Characters caught illegally carrying firearms can almost certainly expect arrest; although, under benign circumstances, locals known to the peace officer may receive nothing more than a stern warning. A good lawyer might get characters off with deferred adjudication, but a more probable scenario is that characters found guilty will face a sentence of two years probation for a first offense, followed by five to twenty years in prison for subsequent offenses. Heroes should get out on parole after serving two years of their sentence.

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The gatehouse looks big enough to comfortably protect two people from the elements, and still provide room for chairs and a desk. A fat man wearing a security uniform leans against the frame that supports the open sliding glass door. Another security guard stands behind him, scrutinizing the crowd. Plumes of steam escape a vent atop the shack on this chilly day.

Beyond the gate is a large, two-storey office building. Behind it are several metal, prefab structures that look like warehouses and work areas. A dozen cars are parked in the lot. Several cameras rest atop buildings and parking-lot lights.

No matter what day of the week, Green Mark has employees working, gearing up for regular operations. If the heroes call ahead for an appointment, the receptionist puts them in touch with the plant supervisor, Rick Aikens. See *1.5a: Aikens*.

The security guards stop anyone who seeks entry. Green Mark is accustomed to environmental protests, and they have trained the guards to protect their facility and employees. If the heroes stop to chat with the Texas Clean protesters, the guards notice. They are cautious with anyone they consider to be a protester, such as Melonie Richards. Despite this, they respond to polite requests with a call to the plant supervisor.

1.5a: Aikens

The heroes must convince the guards of their legitimacy if they want access to the Green Mark Corporation's facilities and personnel. Roleplaying is preferred, but use *Persuasion* if all else fails. The guards begin with Neutral attitudes and must be moved to Friendly for the heroes to gain entrance. If convinced, the guards call the plant supervisor, who agrees to speak with the heroes. When he greets them, read or summarize the following:

A large man walks toward the gatehouse. He looks like a lumberjack: 6'3" tall and 210 pounds, wearing blue jeans; red-checkered, flannel shirt; and a green, goose-down vest. A green hard hat

covers his baldpate and he chews on an unlit stogie. He extends his hand to the closest character, "Rick Aikens. What can I do for ya?"

Rick Aikens is a busy fellow, but if the heroes convince him that their business is important (such as by dropping hints about a connection between the recent murders and Green Mark), he takes them out of the cold and into the building's lobby. When they enter the lobby, read or summarize the following:

Huge, plate-glass windows flank the door, allowing in ample light. Glass cases hold aged axes and saws. Numerous photographs illustrate the process of harvesting wood and display examples of finished products. In the center of the room is a huge, colorful map of the Big Thicket. Only the receptionist's desk reminds you that this is the lobby of a business rather than a forestry museum.

Aikens knows nothing about the murders of Melba Johnson or Robert Williams, although he remembers that someone named Bobby Williams did some of the survey work for Green Mark around an area called Folly Peak. His primary focus is equipment installation and the organization of the storage areas. Green Mark has given him a demanding timetable for ramping up production, thus he has little time for local gossip. If informed of a skinned murder victim, he mentions that he found a skinned squirrel in the woods north of the warehouses.

The team can look around the lobby, but they need Green Mark ID badges to open any doors that lead to the rest of the building. Restrooms are conveniently located off the lobby. The map of the Big Thicket highlights the areas where Green Mark has purchased lumber rights. One point, highlighted in green, is the O'Brien Sawmill Number Eight. (See *2.7: The Ol' Sawmill*.) Any hero who passes a *Notice* check spots Bobby Williams' signature on the survey map.

GM Checklist: Did you ...

- Require the heroes to speak with the security guards to gain access to the Green Mark facility or Rick Aikens?

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- Have Aikens mention that he discovered a skinned squirrel (if prompted)?
- Have Aikens acknowledge that Bobby Williams worked for Green Mark surveying the Folly Peak area?

1.6: Another One Bites the Dust

A third murder occurs on the second day of the adventure. Lucius Tiedens kills Henry Drake, a building inspector employed by the Green Mark Corporation. Sheriff's deputies arrive at the murder scene around noon, north of town, not far off of US Highway 96.

The team may learn of the murder in one of several ways:



Crime Scene Investigations

The Golan County Sheriff's Office does not appreciate citizens meddling with a crime scene. Continued encroachment upon investigations results in the perpetrator's arrest for obstruction of justice. Any weapons a perpetrator possesses are confiscated. Weapons carried legally are returned after another week of legal wrangling. If the heroes commit a felony, such as assault, the weapons are held as evidence.

Those arrested remain in jail until the next morning, when they meet the judge, who records the charges and sets the bail. Interfering with a crime scene carries a base price of \$2,500, while assaulting a law-enforcement official carries a \$10,000 minimum bail. The bail is \$25,000 for anyone accused of attempting to murder a law-enforcement official. Remember, to raise bail the heroes only need 10% of the total bail price. The rest is in the form of a loan.

Characters who do not plead guilty receive a jury trial. The pretrial meeting would take place in April, which puts the actions and ramifications of the trial beyond the scope of this adventure, although it could provide a good roleplaying opportunity later on. Criminals or defendants are penalized according to the following table.

Table 1.6: Crime Penalties

Crime	Bail	Sentence	Parole
Interfering with a crime scene	\$2,500	6 months probation	
Assaulting a law-enforcement official	\$10,000	6 months in prison	5 years
Attempted murder of a law-enforcement official	\$25,000	2 years in prison	20 years
Murder of a law-enforcement official	N/A	Lethal injection	

Heroes who are out on bail may have a difficult time completing this adventure, as they are not permitted to possess any type of weapon.

- Groups using a police scanner may listen in on the sheriff's department radio transmissions. Heroes who are busy or distracted may need to make a *Notice* check.
- Shortly after the murder's discovery, heroes who are outdoors near a road might *Notice* several sheriff's vehicles speeding north and pursue them to the crime scene. Heroes indoors but near a window facing a road *Notice* the cars at -1 to their check.
- One of the Pinebox locals shows up at a restaurant, convenience store, or some other public place and loudly asks, "What in the hell happened over by the Old Caney Church? There musta been half the sheriff's department done parked over yonder. You'da thought somebody died. 'Course, I guess somebody might have." The heroes can get directions to the crime scene from this man.

Should the team proceed directly to the crime scene, they can do nothing until the sheriff's department completes its investigation. The team does not get to see much while waiting at the crime scene. With a successful *Notice* check, they hear deputies discussing the murder. From this, they learn that the victim has been skinned, just like Bobby Williams and Melba Johnson. They can also learn this information from Doctor Billups, if they are on friendly terms with him. Doctor Billups can also tell the team that Drake had his jaw smashed.

A search of the area, after the police leave, uncovers a bloodied and cracked human tooth with a successful *Notice* check (-2).

If heroes contact Rick Aikens regarding Drake, he provides information if his attitude toward the caller is Friendly or better. Drake had been inspecting O'Brien Sawmill Number Eight. Green Mark plans to retool this mill in the near future and hired Drake to advise them concerning any necessary facility renovations.

GM Checklist: Did you ...

- Allow the heroes to hear about the third murder?
- Give the party the opportunity to overhear the deputies discussing the state of Drake's corpse?
- Have Rick Aikens tell the characters that Drake had been working at the O'Brien Saw Mill Number Eight, if they contact him?

Section 2: It Could Happen

2.1: Investigation

The team has several options for investigating the murders.

- The team can return to the scene of Bobby Williams' death after the sheriff's department is finished. A *Notice* check reveals the skinned carcass of a rabbit in the area. Heroes who made the *Notice* check in *1.1: Roadside* may recall seeing a rabbit watching them when they found Williams' body.
- The team might realize that all the victims had contracts with the Green Mark Corporation. This would naturally lead to a further investigation of the company. Some *Investigation* can be done over the Internet, but more information is available at the local library. See *2.3: Research*. The team can also investigate the facility itself. See *1.5: The Green Mark Corporation*.
- Texas Clean has posters at every major intersection in Pinebox, all over ETU's common areas, and in every business that allows them to post their flyer on the premises. See **Handout 1: Texas Clean Flyer**. The heroes should have received one of these flyers at some point during the first day of the adventure. It informs the reader of a protest the following day at noon. The protest takes place at a facility that Green Mark is preparing to open just outside of town. To research the organization, see *2.3: Research*. To witness the protest, see *1.4: Texas Clean*.
- A successful *Streetwise* check leads to Professor Glen Maclanahan, chair of East Texas University's History Department. He occasionally advises local police on "unusual" murders. His curriculum includes paranormal studies. If the characters seek out the professor, proceed to *2.2: East Texas University*.

For those groups who choose not to investigate, make sure they learn of the murder in *1.6: Another One Bites the Dust*. If that does not motivate them, refer to *1.3: We're Done Here* for advice. Or you could mercilessly tease them for their lack of heroism.

2.2: East Texas University

Professor Glen Maclanahan, the chair of the History Department, is out of town, so the heroes meet his research assistant, Angela Lopez, instead. Lopez is a graduate student in history, and those on friendly terms with her gain her assistance. This translates into a +1 on all *Investigation* checks in which she assists, included on the following table. This also opens up Internet access for the team, should they not have any other means.

Table 2.2: ETU Research

Success	Result
Basic success	Ritualistic slayings are common among serial murderers. Nevertheless, the brutality of these murders is unprecedented in Golan County.
Success with a raise	There are unmistakable shamanistic elements to these murders. In fact, people have reported similar victims in New Mexico and Arizona for all of recorded history, and even in legend.
Success with two or more raises	This looks like the work of a Navajo Skinwalker.

GM Checklist: Did you ...

- Introduce Angela Lopez and allow the heroes to develop a friendship?
- Provide access to the university's computers for research?

Possible Love Interests (Making it Interesting!)



It is possible that single characters could find love in *Skinwalker*. Angela Lopez or Mae Walker could fall for the right man. Heath Labender's stoic and business-like exterior may yield to a woman with the right combination of strength and insight. Even Rick Aikens, busy as he is, could find room in his life for Ms. Right. All of these

characters possess skills and abilities that would be an asset to an adventuring party. These relationships can provide the heroes and the GM with great roleplaying opportunities long after this adventure is over. Any of these characters could also be an excellent victim for Lucius Tiedens to kidnap, if you choose to play that card.

2.3 Research

Skinwalker offers many opportunities for research. Since many modern heroes carry laptops or PDAs with cellular Internet access, they can do some of this research online. However, other information is only available in Pinebox. On the tables below, information that is available on the Internet is marked with an asterisk (*). Heroes can find all other information by visiting Pinebox’s public library. The library’s regular business hours are from nine to six, Monday through Saturday. In addition to local research materials, the library offers a pair of computers with Internet access.

When heroes enter the library for the first time, read or summarize the following:

The Cecil Greystone Memorial Library is a small, white, stucco building, located a few blocks from the town square and directly across the street from a busy grocery store. The cornerstone, dedicating the library to the citizens of Pinebox, dates the building from 1966. Nine other vehicles occupy the parking lot. The front desk serves to separate the children’s books and large meeting room on the left from the fiction, nonfiction, and archives on the right. Free city maps sit in a display holder on the front desk. Four families are selecting books in the children’s section while a librarian reshelves books.

Heroes who choose to *Investigate* the Green Mark Corporation may learn the following:

Table 2.3.1: Green Mark Research

Success	Result
Basic success	The Green Mark Corporation is a multinational forest products company with operations in 12 states and 24 countries.
Success with one raise	The local chamber of commerce initiated an economic-development proposal for Green Mark almost 19 months ago. The corporation announced its decision to operate in Pinebox less than two months ago. Green Mark has leased a complex just outside of town as its local base and is preparing it for extensive operations.
Success with two or more raises	Green Mark has options on harvesting rights in the Nacogdoches area. This is the backup plan, should Pinebox prove to be unsuitable. The Anderson family has purchased a substantial interest in the Green Mark Corporation. These shares are in the name of Ernest Anderson, Sheriff Butch Anderson’s uncle. Ernest Anderson is currently vacationing in Spain.

Heroes who choose to *Investigate* the murders may learn the following:

Table 2.3.2: Murder Research

Success	Result
Basic success	Ritualistic slayings are common among serial murderers.
Success with a raise	Similar killings took place in New Mexico and Arizona two years ago. Police never identified a culprit.
Success with two or more raises	According to Navajo legend, evil shamans, called Skinwalkers, remove their victims’ skin and masquerade as them.

Heroes who choose to *Investigate* Texas Clean learn the following:

Table 2.3.3: Texas Clean Research

Success	Result
Basic success	According to the flyers, Texas Clean is holding a rally to protest Green Mark’s plan to harvest timber in the Big Thicket.
Success with one raise	Texas Clean is a state-level, grassroots, environmental-protection organization a little more than two years old. Photos on their Web site show protesters in front of companies in the petrochemical, mining, and timber industries.
Success with two or more raises	The organization, and especially its leader, Chad Rathers, has received a surprising amount of press in its short existence. Many articles include interviews with Rathers, while the photos depict a less-peaceful side of the organization. Authorities have arrested Texas Clean members on numerous occasions for trespassing, harassment, and vandalism of private property. Rathers is wealthy enough to pay for lawyers to represent any Texas Clean members who end up behind bars.

GM Checklist: Did you ...

- Allow the heroes to *Investigate* the Green Mark Corporation?
- Allow the heroes to *Investigate* the murders?
- Allow the heroes to *Investigate* Texas Clean?

2.4: Enter the Texas Rangers and the FBI

At some point during this investigation, the heroes may decide the situation has escalated beyond their ability or expertise. The Golan County sheriff, Butch Anderson, does not request help from any outside agency. He believes this is a local problem that does not require outside interference. In Texas, the position of county sheriff is political; a loss of jobs can result in a loss of votes. Therefore, the primary reason the sheriff wants to control the investigation of these murders is to avoid discouraging the Green Mark Corporation from setting up operations in Pinebox. It means a lot to the local economy and he is banking on that.

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This means that if the heroes need help from law enforcement, it must come from the next level. If they call the state authorities, the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) deploys a Texas Ranger. The Texas Rangers do not get involved otherwise, unless someone murders the game warden. (See 2.8: *A Hike through the Woods*.) The Ranger is Heath Labender, and he arrives two hours after his agency receives the call. He talks little, listens a lot, and makes decisions based on what people tell him. Even Sheriff Anderson does not dare withhold information from a Texas Ranger. The minute Labender becomes aware of the murders; he calls the FBI in Houston. He remains with the case, but defers to their expertise.

In the event that Ranger Labender does not become involved, the team may wish to contact the FBI directly. Alternatively, the GM may choose to have a Golan County deputy secretly contact the FBI after three murders have occurred. If the heroes make the phone call, they eventually speak to Special Agent Roberta “Robbie” Hawkins. Special Agent Hawkins works under the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC). It takes three hours for her to travel from the Houston office of the FBI to Pinebox.

Regardless of who called her in, Hawkins interviews the team—especially those who annoyed Sheriff Anderson. If the heroes did not call for assistance, this is their introduction to the FBI. Agent Hawkins and Ranger Labender might even consider the characters to be suspects. The goal for a homicide investigation is to find the murderer within three days. The chance of solving the crime beyond that period becomes poor. In other words, it is a great roleplaying opportunity.

After Hawkins reviews the case file, she calls for assistance. This assistance takes the form of three more special agents, who arrive four hours after she places her call. She consults with Ranger Labender after she makes this support call, and he requests a Department of Public Safety SWAT team as well as two transport helicopters from the Texas National Guard. If Ranger Labender is not on the case, Agent Hawkins makes a request for an FBI SWAT team and

two National Guard helicopters. These assets arrive early the next day.

Sheriff Anderson does not like having the Texas Rangers and the FBI working on his turf. Heroes who involve these agencies had better not do anything wrong. An offense as trivial as jaywalking or spitting on the sidewalk could land them in the county jail for an overnighter.

2.4a: The Base Camp

Once Hawkins’ support unit arrives, the FBI sets up base camp at the Old Pine Hotel. They take over a section of the parking lot across the street at the old railroad station, blocking off an area for law-enforcement vehicles and marking off a section to serve as a temporary helipad. Two Bell UH-1 Huey helicopters

arrive two hours later. The law-enforcement team has access to a hotel meeting room, and each officer has a guest room. Read or summarize the following to heroes who visit the meeting room:

It is remarkable how quickly the agents produce large bulletin boards, already covered with satellite maps of Pinebox and Golan County. Nearby tables are buried under topographical maps. Another table, near the door, is stacked with radio and telephone equipment. Two FBI personnel sit here monitoring transmissions, answering phone calls, and collating data. A

pair of long tables, covered with legal pads, notebooks, and dirty dishes, dominates the middle of the room. Various officers from the Golan County Sheriff’s Department, Texas Department of Public Safety, and FBI sit here comparing notes and discussing the case.

Whenever the team wants to meet face-to-face with Special Agent Hawkins, they come here and speak with her. She also provides them with her cell-phone number. Sheriff Anderson becomes like her shadow. He remains miffed that she has encroached upon his case, and he has a habit of trying to downplay the importance of anything the team attempts to provide or any topics they discuss.

So What is the NCAVC?



The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) uses a wide variety of internal organizations to solve crimes. One such organization is the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC), which investigates unusual or repetitive violent crimes. This includes serial murders of the type happening now in Pinebox. Most major offices of the FBI have an NCAVC coordinator on staff. For the purpose of this game, Houston employs such a coordinator.

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If the FBI learns of a kidnapping by Tiedens (2.6b: *Kidnapping*), that ups the ante. Special Agent Hawkins requests the FBI Hostage Rescue Team, an elite SWAT unit, which arrives in 12 hours. This creates a little tension between teams if there is a DPS SWAT unit presently assigned. Use this rivalry to increase roleplaying opportunities.

If the heroes give Special Agent Hawkins the acorns Tiedens sends with the kidnapping demands (2.6b: *Kidnapping*), she hands them over to crime-lab personnel who have set up shop in an adjacent meeting room. After 12 hours of analysis and consultation with ETU botanists, they determine that these acorns originate deep in the Big Thicket. If the team does not contact the FBI, Grandma Taylor could tell them that the acorns come from a special place deep in the woods. She would not mention that the special place is the Druid's Grove.

GM Checklist: Did you ...

- Decide when to get the Rangers or FBI involved?
- Introduce Heath Labender, Texas Ranger, and allow him to interview the heroes as a part of his investigation of the murders?
- Bring in the FBI to investigate, thus introducing Special Agent Robbie Hawkins and allowing her to interview the team at the Old Pine Hotel?
- When appropriate, allow the heroes to learn that Ranger Labender or Agent Hawkins requested SWAT and Texas National Guard support?

2.5: Bobby Williams' Home

The heroes may decide to investigate the home of the first murder victim, Bobby Williams, who won the bid to survey the land on which the Green Mark Corporation had purchased harvesting rights. Williams worked out of his home office. If the team looks in the local telephone book, they find only three listings for Robert Williams. If they call these numbers, they find that two homes have a living Robert Williams who answers the phone. When the characters call the third number, read or summarize this voice-mail message:

You've reached the residence of Bobby Williams. If you're calling for Williams Surveying, please hang up and dial, 555-1624. If this is a personal call,

please leave a message and I'll be happy to return your call.

The house is located in a lower-middle-class neighborhood filled with one-storey patio homes. The house is located in the middle of the block. A driveway leads to an attached, single-car garage. Characters can enter the house through the front door, the garage door, the sliding glass door in the back, or any of the locked windows. Of course, this is breaking and entering, and if the authorities discover the heroes' actions there could be serious consequences.

A: Front porch

This featureless 5' x 5' slab provides a step up to the locked front door of the Williams home.

B: Garage door

This is an electric garage door. If the characters took the garage-door opener from the driver's side sunshade of Bobby Williams' truck, then they can use it to gain easy entry to the house, as Williams never locked the door leading from the garage into the house.

C: Patio

This neglected 10' x 20' expanse of pebbled concrete is partially overgrown with long runners of St. Augustine grass. A lone, plastic lawn chair near the side of the house looks to have once been white, but a healthy covering of mildew has turned it a splotchy gray. A sliding glass door promises entry to the back of the house.

The sliding glass door is locked. Williams lost the key years ago.

D: Living room

Read or summarize the following to investigators who enter the living room from any direction.

A sofa, coffee table, and entertainment center dominate the living room. A pair of paintings portrays hunting dogs out in the woods. An opening in the north wall, opposite the front door, leads into a kitchen and breakfast nook. Near this opening, in the west wall, is a door. Across the living room from this door, a hallway leads to the east.

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E: Kitchen

The counters and sink of this kitchen are full of paper clutter, knick-knacks, and dirty dishes. The range does not appear to have ever been used, though the microwave is in need of cleaning. To the east, across the counter, is the breakfast nook. On the west wall are two doors.

F: Breakfast nook

Newspapers cover the circular breakfast table in this dining area. On top of these newspapers, set before two chairs placed side by side, are two mismatched place settings containing the remains of breakfast for two. A sliding glass door in the north wall looks out on the back yard, while a counter divides this room from the kitchen to the west.

This is where Bobby and Julie Williams had their last breakfast together.

G: Utility room

A single door from the kitchen provides access to this utility room, which contains a washer, a dryer, and a coat rack on which hang three coats: two are styled for a grown man and one for a little girl. A pile of galoshes clutters the floor beneath the coat rack.

If the heroes rummage through the coats in the utility room (Notice check) they find a GPS device. The coordinates for Williams' recent work are stored in the device's memory.

H: Pantry

This sparsely appointed walk-in pantry contains such things as an assortment of breakfast cereals, five economy-size boxes of microwaveable cup noodles, and a few loose packets of hot chocolate.

I: Garage

The garage is so full of storage boxes and other disorganized clutter that there is no room for any sort of vehicle.

Most of the items in the garage are nothing but useless junk. There are, however, two new rolls of

duct tape and a decent set of tools. As mentioned in B: *Garage door*, the door leading into the house is unlocked.

J: Hallway

Leading eastward from the living room, this hallway has four doors, two on the south wall and two on the north wall. The first door on the south wall is closed, all the others stand ajar.

The two doors on the south side open into small bedrooms. The first door on the north side opens into a bathroom. Farther down the hall, also in the north wall, is the door to the master bedroom.

K: Bedroom

This room contains a dozen boxes arranged in haphazard piles.

Nothing in this room is of any value to a party of investigators. The boxes contain such mundane items as old clothes, school annuals, and forgotten kitchen appliances.

L: Closet

The single box in this closet contains clothing and various other effects belonging to Williams' ex-wife.

M: Julie Williams' bedroom

The age and sex of this room's intended occupant could not be more apparent. The walls are pink, and a white coverlet, embroidered with sunflowers and horses, covers a small bed. Several elaborate dolls adorn stands atop the chest of drawers.

This is the bedroom in which Julie Williams sleeps when she stays with her father. There is nothing out of the ordinary here.

N: Closet

These two closets contain clothing and other ordinary effects appropriate to the individual inhabiting the room. The doors to both closets are open.

O: Bathroom

The doorway opens into a windowless bathroom. Installed in the wall at the foot of the large tub is

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a natural-gas space heater. Across from the tub is the sink, which has a large medicine cabinet above it. The mirror on the medicine-cabinet door is broken, with only the left half of the glass remaining.

P: Master bedroom

The master bedroom contains a full-size bed covered with wrinkled clothes. Dirty clothes cover the floor. Several large papers, rolled up like scrolls, lie atop the chest of drawers. A large computer desk, with a desktop computer on top, spans one wall of the room. Stacks of DVD-Rs cover any unused desk space. A large plotter, set on a table, blocks the view of the side yard. The plotter is quite large and can accommodate printouts as wide as 54”.

The DVDs contain surveys that cover a great deal of Golan County. These could be used to seed additional adventures, should the GM wish. The rolled papers are maps that Williams printed on the plotter before it broke down. The topmost map (**Handout 2**) shows the areas he was surveying for Green Mark.

GM Checklist: Did you ...

- Allow the team to find the DVD-Rs with the surveys?
- Allow a chance for the team to discover the GPS device in the utility room?
- Allow the characters a chance to find Williams’ area map (**Handout 2: Area Map**)?

2.6: The Skinwalker Moves

Eventually, the heroes’ nosing around is detected by Lucius Tiedens. It is up to the GM to decide whether the Skinwalker attacks his opponents directly or challenges and teases them first.

2.6a: Skinwalker Attacks

People who ask too many questions regarding his murders can get Tiedens’ attention, since being a shape changer allows him to travel about town quite freely. He communicates with birds that he has trained, and he may eavesdrop on any conversation while in the form of a bird. Trained fowl, ravens mostly, follow people or cars that go to murder sites or other places he has marked. Some marked locations are Bobby Williams’ home, the Green Mark Corporation, and

O’Brien Sawmill Number Eight. He also learns of outside law enforcement agencies setting up shop in Pinebox. What annoys Tiedens the most are heroes who befriend Grandma Taylor (introduced in *2.8d: The Irish*).

Once provoked, Lucius Tiedens acts without hesitation. If he sees the party splitting up, he seeks out easy kills. If individuals leave the group, take them aside with dice to pursue their tasks. Tiedens attacks whoever looks the weakest. Appearance is usually all he has to consider when picking his target (unless he has had the chance to see the heroes in action). It is possible that Tiedens might bite off more than he can chew.

If he murders a party member, that player now becomes the Skinwalker, disguised as the dead character. This provides excellent roleplaying opportunities and keeps the player involved, though the death needs to be kept secret from the other players. Tiedens only knows what he might have overheard from team conversations or witnesses. He wants more kills, so tell any Skinwalker player to have fun and play smart. Taking someone aside should make the rest of the group nervous. The fact that the Skinwalker can look like anyone should build distrust and paranoia. Capitalize on that aspect. Take people aside every chance you have and do not forget the dice. While it may slow the game down, it creates a lot of tension. The alternative is passing notes—lots of notes.

2.6b: Kidnapping

Lucius Tiedens can locate his medicine bag by concentrating on it. When he determines that the heroes have his medicine bag, Tiedens lures them onto his turf by kidnapping someone they care about. This can be any character with whom the heroes are well acquainted. This choice may be easy for a GM who has a team based in Pinebox. Simply choose a regularly appearing GM character and proceed. For players passing through town, there are a few choices the GM could consider. Angela Lopez, Glen Maclanahan’s teaching assistant from East Texas University, is a possibility. Mae Walker, who knows Tiedens and has infiltrated Texas Clean for Grandma Taylor, is also a viable choice. Julie Williams, the daughter of the late Bobby Williams, is another option, as is Texas Clean’s Melonie Richards or Chad Rathers, if they survived. Rick Aikens could also make a good target, especially if the heroes have developed a friendship

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with him. Again, select an individual the heroes care about. Play off the team's emotions to lure them into the woods.

Tiedens sends a threatening note (**Handout 3: Kidnap Note**) to the team if they have his medicine bag. It gives them a choice of allowing him to kill the heroes or the kidnap victim. They have to make the choice. Half a dozen acorns accompany his demands. Anyone possessing an acorn is marked, allowing Tiedens to locate him without fail.

GM Checklist: Did you ...

- Decide who to kidnap?
- Give the heroes the threatening note (**Handout 3: Kidnap Note**) regarding Tiedens' medicine pouch and the kidnapping?

2.7: The Ol' Sawmill

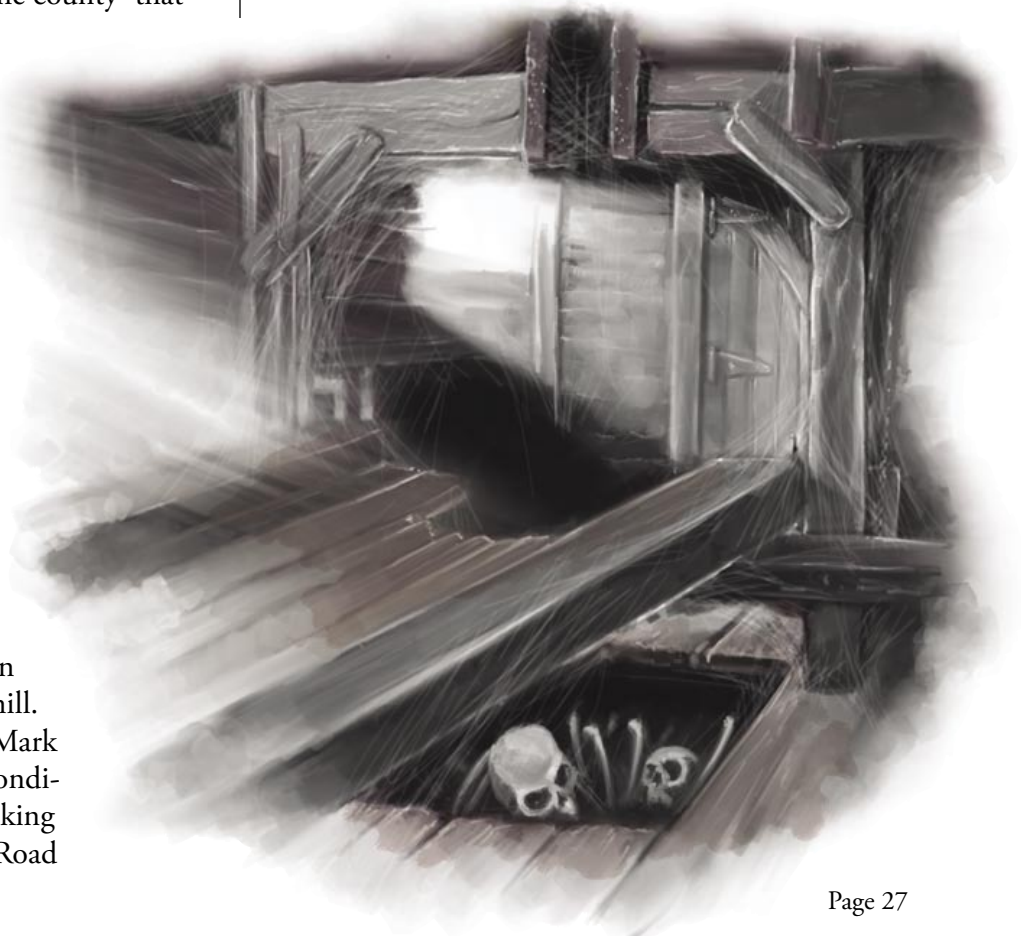
The O'Brien Sawmill Number Eight has been unused for thirty years. The Green Mark Corporation likes this location's proximity to their harvesting rights, and they have every intention of purchasing the facility, pending Henry Drake's recommendation. The Druids have taken a liking to this location as well. It is one of the highest elevations in the county that is clear of trees. They have conducted dozens of sacrifices here, including human sacrifices.

The mill is only accessible to vehicles by an old logging road (unless the heroes are fortunate enough to have access to a helicopter, in which case they could fly straight to the top!). It is a bumpy drive, but the road is passable almost all the way to the mill. Shortly before the road ends, the heroes must make a steep uphill hike the remaining 1,000 yards through a clear-cut area. Before his death, Williams was surveying this slope for a new road. There is very little cover between the road and the tall, silent sawmill. The total travel time from Green Mark headquarters is one hour, as the conditions necessitate careful driving. Hiking the entire distance from Quarry Road

takes roughly three hours. When the heroes arrive, read or summarize the following:

The road winds up a steep slope. The hilltop is clear of older trees, though a few pine saplings have taken root here and there. A large wooden structure dominates the apex of the hill. This building is old, with windows that no longer hold glass and brittle wood that has not felt paint in your lifetime. A crow flies out from a large hole in the building's roof and glides downhill, where it lights upon one of several smaller structures that at one time must have acted as tool sheds and warehouses.

At most, the team members find rusted tools and brittle planks within the outbuildings. Around the sawmill itself, several paths lead down to some of the shacks. These were used for moving freshly cut lumber to storage. On the south side of the sawmill, there is a large, barn-like door. Two large planks have rotted away, allowing easy access for medium-sized or smaller creatures to enter. Should the team enter the mill, read or summarize the following:



Cobwebs stick to your head as you pass through the door. Shadows are abundant, but the holes in the roof and walls allow sufficient light to see. Leaves cover the wooden floorboards, and you notice several large gaps in the floor. On both sides of the mill are the ruins of wooden racks, which must have held logs at one time.

A long table, wide enough to support a log on its path to the saw, dominates the middle of the room. The high end of the table is near the entrance, and it has a noticeable downward slant. The saw blade is gone, but as you approach you see the slit that it used to occupy. As you get closer to the end of the table, you become aware that the table and the floor appear stained.

Coagulated blood has saturated this area. Beyond the table is a drop-off. This pit underneath the blade probably caught sawdust in the past. An unsettling smell assails your nostrils.

Within the pit are the remains of dozens of sacrifices. If you are using 12 to Midnight's *Fear Effects* rules, finding these remains is a *minor spook*. The bones have accumulated over the last 25 years. Animal skeletons belonging to sparrows and squirrels mingle with those of cattle and deer. The remains of five humans are among the bones. These were victims of Lucius Tiedens and his kin. In each case, the skull is detached from the body. Examination of the necks using *Knowledge (biology)* or a similar skill confirms that the victims were decapitated by a heavy blade.

Lucius Tiedens does not suffer trespassers encroaching upon the Druidic sacrificial ring at the sawmill. He killed Henry Drake for this very reason. If a hero comes here alone, or ventures very far from the rest of the group, Tiedens attacks as soon as he can. He has animals, usually crows, trained to watch special places and warn him when they have visitors. Groups are safe for now, but they are marked. The Skinwalker arrives in the space of one hour. He tracks the heroes, attacking as soon as one of them is alone and appears vulnerable.

GM Checklist: Did you ...

- Allow the heroes to investigate the sawmill?
- Give the party the opportunity to discover the pit full of animal and human remains?
- Have the Skinwalker attack any hero who ventures off by himself?

2.8: A Hike through the Woods

Eventually, the team should determine that they need to further explore the woods. Bobby Williams' maps and GPS device are the obvious leads. The woods are a very scary place, and you must create the atmosphere appropriately. The Big Thicket is heavy with underbrush, so running proves difficult off the beaten path. Fortunately, there are plenty of man-made paths and game trails. The heroes find several paths that lead away from the sawmill. It may be possible to follow these trails to the Irish communities, though it is difficult to identify which trail to follow. This may appear to be a good place for the team to use as a base, but Lucius Tiedens is intimately familiar with these grounds and buildings.

Create the mood. Use the wind scraping tree branches against each other. Squirrels suddenly dashing across boughs and armadillos shooting across the path can make the heroes anxious. Have them see threatening shadows, including their own. Use crows—one or a dozen. All it takes is for these birds to sit and watch the team. If you do it right, the heroes begin to wonder about each animal they encounter.

The encounters in this section can take place in any order, as appropriate for your group.

2.8a: Lone Warden

The GM may have the team encounter Jed Seward. Seward works for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department as a game warden. If the team members are carrying longarms, such as rifles or shotguns, he interrogates them regarding the whys and wherefores. If he determines that they are hunting out of season, then they are violating the rules of the Texas Penal Code, Chapter 46. It is legal in Texas to carry rifles or shotguns, but people who discharge them on state-protected land could spend an evening in jail. Hunting season is closed during March for all game, so only people with concealed handguns, and their associated concealed-handgun permits, can avoid scrutiny.

Seward does not fear the heroes, no matter how well armed they are. He arrests anyone who violates Texas hunting laws and calls in the sheriff for assistance if needed. It is not a good idea for the team to attack Seward. He knows the woods like the back of his hand and, if attacked, flees and seeks help from the Texas Department of Public Safety. A Texas Ranger,

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Heath Labender (see 2.4: *Enter the Texas Rangers and the FBI*), leads this investigation. The sheriff's department also supports this effort.

If the team mistakenly believes that the killer they are after is Seward (whom the GM may choose to roleplay in a suspicious manner) and a fight breaks out, then Lucius Tiedens sees this crime, or enough of the crime to serve his purpose. Disguised as a concerned citizen, or even as Seward himself, Tiedens reports the battle to Sheriff Anderson, who initiates a search.

Please note that Tiedens cannot assume Seward's form if the game warden is killed by the team. He, himself, must kill the beings whose form he uses.

2.8b: Killing Tree

On the second day of the investigation, the activists of Texas Clean venture into the woods to make a political statement by chaining themselves to an ancient tree that the Green Mark Corporation intends to harvest. What the activists do not realize is that they have misread the map and have chained themselves a few miles away from Green Mark's harvest site. Lucius Tiedens passes this way frequently. Unfortunately, despite their similar goals, Tiedens feels no kinship with these people. Seeing them in "his" forest sent him into a rage and he slaughtered them. This was not difficult, since the protestors chained themselves to the tree.

The only survivor is Mae Walker. Years ago, before Tiedens went away to Four Corners, the two of them had been romantically involved. This, combined with his respect for the Irish community and fear of the Druids, inspired him to free her. The girl fled to her grandmother's home.

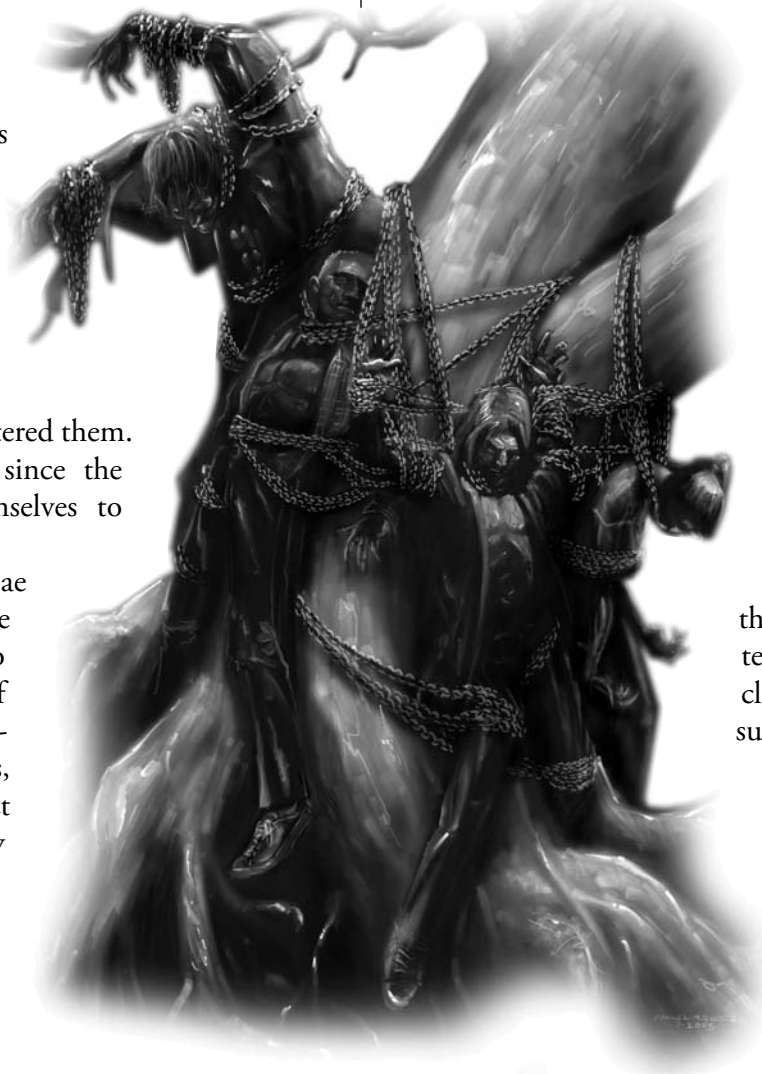
Near a spot marked on Bobby Williams' survey map, the heroes come across the dead protesters. When they reach this point, read or summarize the following:

The forest is strangely silent, and a chill breeze blows across your face. The wind carries an odor you seem to smell more frequently these days: Death. A moment later, your brain pieces together the carnage. Five limp bodies hang chained to an ancient oak tree. [If the heroes attended the Texas Clean rally, continue.] You recognize their faces as those of the Texas Clean protesters.

If Melonie Richards is with the heroes, she weeps and wraps her arms around Chad's dead body. She is going to need some time to compose herself; otherwise she may hinder the team's focus or investigation. If Richards remained with Texas Clean, then her corpse is among those chained to the tree.

Tiedens stabbed each of the Texas Clean members with a knife, but skinned none of them. None carry any valuables and their vehicle is miles from the site of the murder.

It is possible, depending upon whom the characters have met so far, that Mae Walker's absence from among the dead may lead the team to draw false conclusions. They may assume that Tiedens has taken Walker's form, that she conspired to lead the protestors to their deaths, or possibly that he is holding her hostage.



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2.8c: The Hunt

While the heroes are in the woods, Tiedens' crows spot them and report their presence to the Skinwalker. Tiedens may already know of the intruders if the team ventured into the woods after visiting O'Brien Sawmill Number Eight. Any single investigator who wanders away from the group encounters the Skinwalker. Two or more heroes meet the Hunt. Refer to the sidebar to determine what your team faces.

If the mood has been properly set, the team may be a little annoyed at first when the bushes rustle in the distance. They anticipate the arrival of another armadillo, when in fact the Hunt has tracked them down and is preparing to attack. Read or summarize the following:

In the distance, bushes shake as something pushes through. Is it another armadillo scurrying through the woods? A loud howl pierces the thicket ahead. An answering bay resounds from your left, and yet another behind you. Crashing branches mingle with angry barks.



Notes on the Hunt Encounters



When two or more characters invade Tiedens' territory, he calls the Hunt. A Novice-ranked party encounters three oak hounds. For a Seasoned party, the leader of the pack replaces one oak hound. Veteran parties bring the hunter into the fray, though the GM may add any of these to provide a good challenge for his players.

For bands that exceed four heroes, add an oak hound for each hero greater than four. (See *Appendix II: Cast of Creatures* for creature stats.)

Oak hounds blend in well with the natural surroundings. As the oak hounds cannot climb, the heroes can climb a tree if they wish to avoid attack. However, the Hunt remains, waiting below in anticipation of a hero falling within their reach. The Hunt stays with the heroes until Lucius Tiedens utters the command word again or until an hour passes, at which point all summoned creatures return to their dimension. If the heroes shoot or kill an oak hound, all that they find are globs of sap.

2.8d: The Irish

When the team has traveled deep into the Big Thicket, Grandma Taylor and her granddaughter, Mae Walker, approach them. If Walker is leading her grandmother to the Texas Clean murder site on day two, she is distraught and upset when she meets the party. If the heroes are in the woods on another day, then Walker has been tailing them or, if she has become friendly with one of the characters, she may have spoken with them directly about their plans in the woods. In this case, she goes to get Grandma Taylor to meet the team, since Taylor wants to stop Tiedens. Read or summarize the following:

A rustling in the brush comes from ahead of you. You cannot quite see what is coming your way.

Ask the characters what they do. If they shoot, the women have heavy cover (due to the thick woods) and the lighting conditions are Dim. This provides the women with a -5 to ranged attacks against them. An attacking hero can choose to halt a melee attack at any time. The women scream in fright, if possible. If the characters kill either or both

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of the women, Lucius Tiedens, watching from afar, reports their deaths to the sheriff.

If the women are uninjured, and the heroes are not belligerent toward them, describe the pair as follows:

Both women wear long, woolen skirts with heavy, tweed coats. The elderly woman has her silver hair rolled into a bun and covered by a red plaid scarf. Her face is a mask of wrinkles, though her blue eyes sparkle with the joy of life. The younger woman's red hair falls freely down her back. A green scarf covers her head, and freckles adorn an otherwise plain face. You recognize her as a member of Texas Clean. She remains at the older woman's side to offer her support when needed.

The pair belongs to the Irish community who lives dispersed across the woods of Golan County. In the past, the Big Thicket provided a safe haven from those who did not care for the Irish immigrants. Despite the assimilation of Irish immigrants into mainstream American society, the old Golan County Irish prefer to keep to the old ways. Many in this community follow the Druidic worship of nature, and all tolerate its ways.

Grandma Taylor is an elderly Druid. The Hunt recognizes her and does not attack her or anyone who accompanies her. Lucius Tiedens flees Grandma Taylor's presence. He has no desire to confront other Druids of the Big Thicket.

Though protective of her grandmother, Mae Walker is accustomed to Taylor's friendly disposition and lack of fear toward strangers. Walker joined Texas Clean at her grandmother's behest, to spy on the group and learn its intentions. Grandma Taylor has no problem talking with the heroes (if they follow her), even if they inadvertently shot at her, provided they do not treat her or her granddaughter unkindly after realizing their error.

If either of the women are wounded, she appreciates any first aid applied by the team members. After any wounds are treated, she makes her destination the ribbon tree. She invites the heroes to come along, as she desires to test their mettle.

Where Is the Slave?

If the heroes accept her invitation to walk along with her, Grandma Taylor sings a song:

*Oh, where's the slave so lowly,
Condemn'd to chains unholy,
Who, could he burst
His bonds at first,
Would pine beneath them slowly?
What soul, whose wrongs degrade it,
Would wait till time decay'd it,
When thus its wing
At once may spring
To the throne of Him who made it?*

*Farewell, Erin, - farewell, all,
Who live to weep our fall!*

*Lost deep in the piney wood,
Sits a man who could,
Be the last man a carin',
Raised the hope of Erin
When left the Thicket cover'd in
blood.*

*He loved the land that took us,
The Lone Star Flag above us,
But friends have died
No tears were cried,
And his heart turned cold be-
fore us.*

*Farewell, Erin—farewell, all,
Who live to weep our fall!*

*Lucius saw the need for learnin',
Tiedens left for the west a yearnin',
He found a man more lost than he,
And his brother will no more be
Left in his grave a turnin'.
He returned back home to join us,
Learned knowledge that did concern us,
But we want peace more
We care not for his lore,
And his hopes were dashed before us.
Farewell, Erin—farewell, all,
Who live to weep our fall!*

When she finishes this verse she hums the tune quietly to herself. The heroes can question her about anything. Some potential questions and her replies follow.

Four Corners



Four Corners is located in the southwestern United States. This is the only point in the US where four state boundaries touch. The states are Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah.

These have been Navajo lands since before Europeans arrived. The Anasazi also made their homes here, and their ruins remain as a testament to their civilization. Many powerful spirits purportedly reside at Four Corners, where a nexus of ley lines creates an area of legendary power that shamans have tapped for centuries.

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If asked about her background, she relates:

“My family came to Texas in the late 1880s. My grandfather was the first Druid in Texas. He made a home for the Irish in these woods. Here we can respect the land and live as a person should.”

When asked about her song, she says:

“I sing about the man you seek, Lucius Tiedens. I knew his evil would bring city folks out this way.”

If asked to elaborate, she responds with the following:

“Lucius felt Druidism wasn’t enough. He wanted more power to protect our home. Heh! As if it can’t protect itself! Ten years ago, Lucius and his brother, Andrew, headed west to meet other shamans—learn different traditions. Some folks believe that Lucius sacrificed his brother in the Four Corners. He spilled his brother’s blood to become a Skinwalker.

“He is very powerful now. He looks and talks just like anyone he wants. I could be the Skinwalker.” She stops walking and slaps her thigh. Then she doubles, over cackling.

“Could you imagine that? Me ... the Skinwalker. He has to kill whoever he looks like, ya know. Vicious magic. It eats your soul as well as your flesh.”

***“He is very powerful now.
He looks and talks just like
anyone he wants.”***

Taylor can relate other information regarding Lucius Tiedens. No one knows where he lives. He can assume animal form, find sustenance, and rest in the wild quite easily in these animal bodies. Taylor knows Tiedens avoids other Irish. Part of it is the shame of killing his brother and part of it is that he might kill those he chooses to protect. Without new skins to wear, his own flesh weathers to the bone. If he ever killed one of the Irish, the Druids would bring him down. She is the only Druid who wants to stop him now, but alone she is too weak.

If the investigators inquire about the Hunt, Grandma Taylor relates the following:

“Lucius set the Hunt against you. These creatures are vicious hunters, though they can only stalk one prey at a time. So far he has not unleashed the hunter. You would not have escaped if the hunter had led the pack.”

2.8e Ribbon Tree

Grandma Taylor leads the team down winding trails through the Big Thicket for at least thirty minutes. At the end of this trail, read or summarize the following:

The trail appears to widen ahead of you. There is a clearing approximately 25 feet in radius. A bowed yew tree, rising twenty feet tall, stands in the middle of this clearing, covered in ribbons and rags. No particular color or pattern predominates. Some of the scraps look faded and weathered, while others are bright in hue.

Grandma Taylor sings a dirge in an unfamiliar tongue. The reddish-brown tree limbs look as if they are swaying along with the words she sings. Then a branch very deliberately extends itself to the women. Taylor sings on while she and Mae Walker tie ribbons to the tree.

Grandma Taylor does not explain the tree. She is angered if anyone removes a ribbon, and Mae Walker takes any such ribbon and returns it to the branch. The tree also swipes at such an individual, with a d6 *Fighting*, and causes 1d8+2 damage. Furthermore, seeing the tree move on its own is a *Minor Spook* if using 12 to Midnight’s *Fear Effects*. Anyone who respectfully offers to tie a ribbon to the tree sees a branch extend toward him. After the hero ties the ribbon to the branch, the branch retracts and the hero receives a blessing. For the rest of the adventure, this person has +1 to all Trait rolls.

If this encounter occurs on day two of the adventure, then when Grandma Taylor finishes her dirge, she and her granddaughter move to the scene of the mass murder (2.8b: *Killing Tree*). Any other day finds her returning home. She tells the team they must go their own way. Heroes find it impossible to follow them, as Grandma Taylor uses her **obscure** and **speed** spells to leave them. If they manage to follow her, she uses her **Druidic Tree Travel** special ability to elude them.

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GM Checklist: Did you ...

- Describe the thick darkness of the Big Thicket?
- Use some animal encounters to put the team on edge?
- Introduce game warden, Jed Seward?
- Have the team discover the murdered protesters?
- Attack the team with the Hunt?
- Introduce Grandma Taylor and her granddaughter, Mae Walker, if this has not previously occurred?
- Recite the song of the Skinwalker, *Where Is the Slave?*
- Allow the team to interact with the ribbon tree?
- Have the Skinwalker attack any hero who ventures off by himself?

2.9: Mixed Blessings

After the heroes encounter Grandma Taylor, and assuming they part on good terms, she bestows sacrificial blessings upon them the following day. This is particularly true for heroes who tied a shred of cloth to the rag tree. The team may not understand and might even distrust the blessing they receive.

The sacrifices take the form of bloodless and decapitated doves in the team members' doorways. The doves look as if they are sitting with their heads on backwards. Grandma Taylor performs this rite from her home in the woods. She has touched the essence of those who left ribbons, and of any individual she physically touched. Taylor can also send these blessings to known locations, such as the addresses provided by Mae Walker in section 1.3: *We're Done Here*.

The sacrificed birds fly to the doorway of those they bless, but are not otherwise animated. The most any watchful hero might notice is a dove flying toward the door.

The sacrifices take the form of bloodless and decapitated doves...

Though most do not understand the meaning of this grim token, heroes who succeed in a *Knowledge (occult)* check appreciate what the sacrifice represents. For the next 24 hours, heroes who receive the dove on their doorstep are under the effects of a powerful protection ritual. The effect helps protect them from Lucius Tiedens and the Hunt. Each hero receiving the protection gains a +1 to Parry and Toughness for a full 24 hours if facing the Skinwalker or the Hunt. Grandma Taylor performs this sacrifice only once, the day after she meets the team. The only exception is if the GM chose to also implement the blessing Mae Walker requested in section 1.3: *We're Done Here*. If the characters received the blessing earlier, Taylor bestows it again here. If the second blessing overlaps the first, the effects do not stack, although the second blessing still lasts its full 24 hours, effectively restarting the clock from the time Taylor casts the second blessing.

GM Checklist: Did you ...

- Allow the team to discover the sacrificial doves in their doorway?

Section 3: Taking It to Tiedens

3.1: We Are in Control

When the FBI feels they have a lead to follow, they act. The heroes might provide this lead in the form of Bobby Williams' GPS device or other intelligence gathered over the course of their investigation. As GM, you decide when the Bureau has sufficient information, based upon what you feel works best.

If necessary, you can provide the FBI with other sources of leads. Mae Walker might approach FBI agents with information, or, if the characters have not already done so, agents could visit the Williams home and retrieve the GPS device.

Special Agent Hawkins does not allow the heroes, even those with a law-enforcement background, to accompany her team under any circumstances. She explains that she does not need them for this operation. Heroes who remain with the base camp at the Old Pine Hotel can watch as Agent Hawkins, Sheriff Anderson, Ranger Labender, and a SWAT team board the two helicopters and depart. The heroes may wait in the control room if they have been forthcoming with the agents. After about 30 minutes, read the following:

“Base, this is Agent Hawkins. We have touched down at insertion point bravo.”

The man at the comm table speaks into the mike, “Agent Hawkins, roger that. We mark you at insertion point bravo.”

A couple of minutes pass. The room is quiet; in fact, chatter from anyone receives frowns from the professional law-enforcement personnel on location.

“Base, we are approaching point delta. Looks quiet, real peaceful at the...”

A pop resounds through the mike.

“Who’s firing? Hold positions.”

A short burst of M-16 fire precedes a series of individual shots.

“Who are you engaging? Agent Metzger, respond!”

More gunshots.

A male voice sounds off, “There’s something moving. Abrams is down. Something chewed him up! What the hell is...”

A scream competes with the sound of gunshots.

“Metzger. Metzger! Let’s move left and provide SWAT team alpha some support.”

The sound of gunfire increases. You recognize that several weapons are firing and voices shout, but you cannot distinguish what they are saying.

“Oh, God,” Hawkins voice comes through clearly. “Chopper two prepare to pick us up for extraction at point foxtrot.”

More gunshots from the speakers; then the sounds of gunfire slowly diminish. After half a minute, they cease altogether.

“Agent Hawkins, Chopper Two here. Pop smoke and we will begin extraction.”

Five seconds.

Ten seconds.

“Agent Hawkins, this is Chopper Two. Can you read us? Over.”

Five seconds.

Ten seconds.

“Agent Hawkins, come in.”

The man at the table, ashen-faced, keys his mike with shaking hands and says, “Chopper Two, Chopper One. Return to base.”

The Skinwalker, using the Hunt and his own powers, has killed every last member of the law-enforcement team. The Hunt has devoured its victims and taken their belongings into the realm from whence it came. Tiedens can not call the Hunt again today, which increases the heroes' chance of survival if they investigate now.

3.1a: Situation Assessment

The new ranking officer, Malcolm Nabors, dispatches a helicopter, with a pilot and an FBI agent, to prepare a situation report. Because the law-enforcement team is suffering a shortage of personnel, the heroes may accompany them. There is no sign of battle in the area. No bodies are visible from the air. The pilot drops the heroes and the FBI agent off near the previous team's insertion point, but they see nothing until they enter the sacred grove. When that happens, read the following:

An unusual quiet fills the air as you enter a grove of huge oak trees taller than any building in Pinebox. The trees' long, thick boughs intertwine, forming

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a canopy that obstructs the sunlight. Walking between two of the monstrous oaks, you find yourselves in a grove, mostly covered by the foliage, high above. Thick clover provides a blanket of green over the ground.

Lucius Tiedens used the Hunt against the FBI and may not call them again today. If the Skinwalker has kidnapped someone, he has bound the victim in a shallow pit inside this grove. Heroes must make a *Notice* check to see the covered pit. If successful with a raise or greater, the heroes can pinpoint the victim's muffled cries for help. The vines that bind the kidnap victim can be untied or cut apart.

While characters are releasing the abductee, the FBI agent circles the grove's perimeter. If the agent, or any member of the party, is ever alone, the Skinwalker kills him and takes his form. It takes Tiedens six rounds to assume an individual's identity. On the first round he casts a *puppet-statue* spell; on the second, he delivers the coup de grace. He then spends three rounds skinning the corpse and one round donning the skin. For others to see this attack, which occurs on the outskirts of the grove, they must make a *Notice* check at -3, as the Skinwalker has Medium cover from the nearby forest, and the Dim lighting imposes an additional -1 penalty to the observer.

The murder of the lone agent is simple for the Skinwalker, as he has the power to move freely through the trees of this grove, entering and exiting their trunks as he desires using his Druidic Tree Travel special ability. Only a local Druid can move through the trees like this. To better understand this power, the GM should read about Druid's Grove in **Appendix III: Magic Items**.

If Tiedens cannot find an isolated character here, he goes to the helicopter. If the pilot is waiting by himself, the Skinwalker attacks him. He casts a *puppet-statue* spell and then delivers coup de grace as above. Tiedens takes the pilot's skin for his own, removes the body, and sits in the pilot's seat. He has no clue how to fly this vehicle, but plans on taking advantage of characters who return and strap themselves into the aircraft. He expects to wound or kill a couple before fleeing into the woods. The characters may have to walk back. It is late afternoon and the sun sets at 6:00 pm.

If the characters and pilot do not provide Tiedens with an easy target (or if one of the heroes can oper-

ate the helicopter after the pilot's death), then they rescue the kidnap victim and everyone safely returns to helicopter. Tiedens observes the helicopter lift off, and as soon as the chopper is 20 feet in the air he attacks with a flock of crows. See section *3.1b: A Flight to Remember* for the mechanics of this attack. Tiedens wants to knock the helicopter out of the sky.

If the Skinwalker is successful at grounding the chopper, he stalks the characters through the woods. He is content to stalk the team for the early evening. If the party camps in the woods, Tiedens is content to let them rest a bit. He waits for midnight, because at that time he may recharge his spells and the Hunt becomes available again.

Tiedens takes the pilot's skin for his own, removes the body, and sits in the pilot's seat.

Once he has finished his prayers, he calls for the Hunt and brings them in quietly. Next he observes any camp guards. He casts a *fear* spell on the one he considers to have the weakest willpower. The GM could roll randomly as this is subjective for the victim. He sends a pair of oak hounds after the fleeing hero. This should roust the entire team. Next he casts *entangle* on characters in an attempt to hinder those who wield long arms. To confuse the heroes even more, Tiedens uses the crow whistle to summon more crows. The birds focus on attacking characters who avoided being entangled. Then he seeks to attack and kill as many characters as he can, aided by the rest of the Hunt. He fights until he reaches two wounds. At that time he abandons the fight. The Hunt fights until they are destroyed.

3.1b: A Flight to Remember

Although the hostage is free, the Skinwalker might have infiltrated the party. When the heroes return to the helicopter, they may have a few questions for the hostage. They might reasonably even be suspicious of whether this individual is who he or she appears to be. Unfortunately, the trauma of the kidnapping and prolonged outdoor exposure has left the victim weak and delirious.

This section assumes that the helicopter takes off with Tiedens sitting in the observer's seat, where the FBI agent was sitting on the outward flight. You

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should adjust the encounter according to your own situation.

The big showdown starts in the air. The helicopter maintains a low altitude, flying at the nape of the Earth. Tiedens waits until the helicopter is a good distance from the grove and then reveals himself by stabbing the pilot. Any character who happens to look that way makes a *Notice* check to spot the drawn knife. There are no parachutes and the pilot is bleeding to death. How will the story end? GMs should remind the players to use bennies. Tiedens has bennies too.

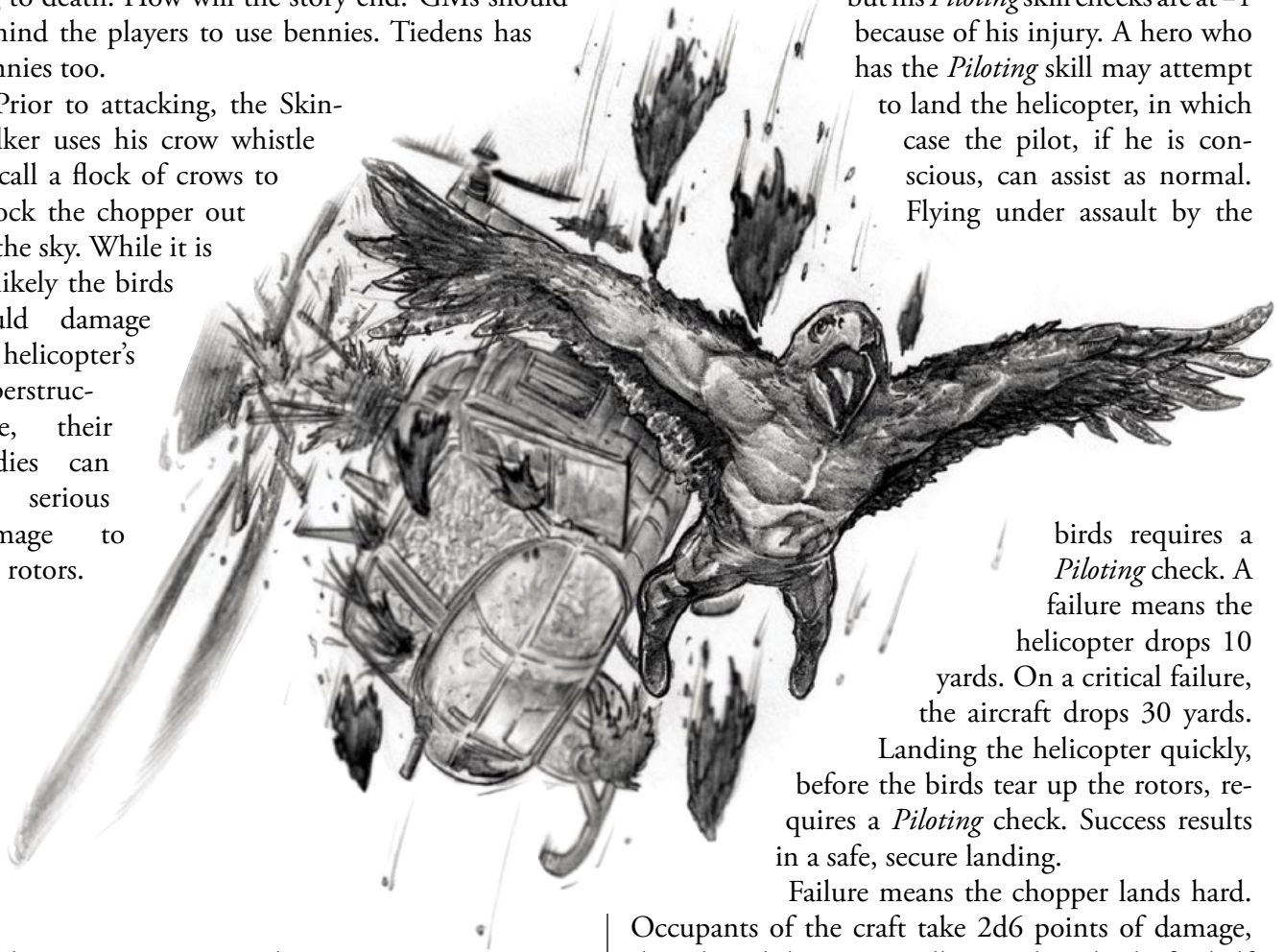
Prior to attacking, the Skinwalker uses his crow whistle to call a flock of crows to knock the chopper out of the sky. While it is unlikely the birds could damage the helicopter's superstructure, their bodies can do serious damage to the rotors.

Play out movement in the passenger area on a 10-foot-wide by 15-foot-long grid. Moving around the helicopter under these circumstances requires an Agility check. Failure means the hero is unable to move at all. On a critical failure the individual moves randomly for 10 feet, using a d8 scatter roll to determine the direction. If the hero strikes a door, there is 10% chance that the impact accidentally opens the door. A character who opens the door does not fall out immediately. Anyone may use a regular attack to catch an off-balance teammate. This is resolved as an unopposed *Fighting* attack versus a base target number of 4 to catch the hero and stop his movement. For those

who lose their balance and fall out of the helicopter, the drop is 20" for 2d6+20 points of damage.

If the team acts quickly, they may kill or subdue Lucius Tiedens. The Skinwalker plans to change into a raven and fly away, and does so at the first opportunity. Characters can prevent his escape by keeping the helicopter's doors closed.

A successful *Healing* check stabilizes the pilot if he was not killed previously. He can land the helicopter, but his *Piloting* skill checks are at -1 because of his injury. A hero who has the *Piloting* skill may attempt to land the helicopter, in which case the pilot, if he is conscious, can assist as normal. Flying under assault by the



birds requires a *Piloting* check. A failure means the helicopter drops 10 yards. On a critical failure, the aircraft drops 30 yards.

Landing the helicopter quickly, before the birds tear up the rotors, requires a *Piloting* check. Success results in a safe, secure landing.

Failure means the chopper lands hard. Occupants of the craft take 2d6 points of damage, though each hero may roll an Agility check for half damage. If the person flying the helicopter rolls a critical failure on his skill die, the chopper crashes and explodes. In such an instance, heroes suffer 3d6 points of damage from falling and 6d6 points of damage from the explosion. Allow the heroes to roll an Agility check for half damage. Team members who are strapped into the helicopter have a +4 added to their Toughness for falling damage.

If the doors are open, heroes can bail out of the helicopter and try to grab a tree limb. Those jumping out of the helicopter take no damage from the crows, as the birds are focused on the rotors. Jumping to a

Skinwalker

tree requires an Agility check. Failure means a fall of 20" for 2d6+20 points of damage. Holding on to a branch requires a Strength check. Failure to hold on means that the branch lashes the character for 1d6 points of damage. The hero has a 50% chance of catching another branch for every 5" fallen. A falling hero who catches a branch takes 1d6 points of damage for every 5" fallen. Anyone who lands in a tree can climb down using the *Climbing* skill.

The team is probably hurt, but Lucius Tiedens has used a lot of his power today. The survivors should have no problem making it back to town. They are currently five miles from the grove. Do they go back and take Lucius Tiedens on? Do they try to find a safe place to recover? Did they get lucky and kill the Skinwalker?

If Tiedens dies, the skin he wears rapidly decomposes. After the passage of a day, the skin used for the disguise is gone. After 48 hours passes, his own skin withers and all of the dermal layers peel off.

GM Checklist: Did you ...

- Describe the law-enforcement team's attack at the grove?
- Allow the heroes to accompany the second helicopter to the grove?
- Allow the team to discover and rescue any abductees?
- Give the team a chance to spot the Skinwalker when he attacks the agent or any team member who ventures off by himself?
- Have the Skinwalker summon the crows to attack the helicopter?
- Have the disguised Skinwalker attempt to kill the pilot and bail out of the helicopter?
- Allow the team to fight the Skinwalker and attempt to save themselves?

3.2: Druid's Grove

The team may use Williams' GPS device and visit areas that he marked in the woods. One such area is the Druid's Grove, an area Williams appreciated for the beauty of the aged oak trees. A character who treats Mae Walker nicely might also receive directions to the grove from her, though she would have to be certain the team would do nothing to hurt the grove itself. They could also get lost in the old Thicket and blunder upon the grove unexpectedly.

Due to the variety of ways the characters could find themselves at the Druid's Grove, the GM should consider the read-aloud text below to be merely a guide. When the characters are ready to enter the grove, read or summarize the following:

The heroes are on Tiedens' home ground now.

A glance at the GPS device confirms that the coordinates are at the crest of this hill. A chill breeze accosts your ears, and a clear blue sky means it may get colder. You reach the hilltop and pause to catch your breath.

An unusual quiet fills the air as you enter a grove of huge oak trees taller than any building in Pinebox. The trees' long, thick boughs intertwine, forming a canopy that obstructs the sunlight. Walking between two of the monstrous oaks, you find yourselves in a grove, mostly covered by the foliage high above. Thick clover provides a blanket of green over the ground.

The heroes are on Tiedens' home ground now. He is extremely deadly here, and he is looking to kill the characters in the grove. He has the power to move freely through the trees of this grove, entering and exiting their trunks as he desires. Only a local Druid can move through the trees like this. To better understand this power, the GM should read about Druid's Grove in **Appendix III: Magic Items**. His ability to trunk travel from tree to tree makes it hard to launch coordinated attacks against him, while enabling him to make surprise attacks against the heroes.

For high-level parties, an attack by Tiedens, using the complete powers of the Hunt, can provide a fight to remember. Tiedens and the hunter can hide while the pack attacks. A favored tactic is for the leader of the pack and several oak hounds to attack, barking and howling, from one direction in order to draw the team's attention. Then the leader of the pack uses its Pack Teleport ability to arrive behind the team, creating flanking opportunities. The hunter attacks isolated characters with buds of entanglement before moving in to melee. Tiedens prefers to cast *puppet-statue* on the strongest-looking opponent and then

Skinwalker

move in for the kill. He uses the crow whistle to frustrate characters with firearms.

When he suffers two wound levels, he retreats inside a tree, where he can remain for two hours. He prefers to come back and fight another day. If the team starts a fire in the grove or looks like they may try to chop down the trees, he becomes enraged and

He is patient. He is cunning. He is vicious. And how he goes after them now is entirely up to you.

fights to the death, channeling all of his energy and power into protecting the grove and killing the individual who tries to harm this sacred place.

GM Checklist: Did you ...

- Allow the team to find the Druid's Grove?
- Provide a challenging battle for the team against the Skinwalker and the Hunt?

3.3: Where Now?

If Lucius Tiedens survived, the bottom line is he hates the heroes. He has the power and ability to get close to anyone. He knows what the heroes hold dear; he can learn where the heroes live. He is patient. He is cunning. He is vicious. And how he goes after them now is entirely up to you.

Do not forget about the Texas Rangers and the FBI. They have the coordinates of the grove, but refuse to go into the woods again. If the team does not

produce the Skinwalker, read the following the next day:

You walk by a stack of newspapers. The headlines catch your attention. "Air Guard Accident in Texas."

If the team wants more, let them buy a newspaper, then give them **Handout 4: Pinebox Newspaper Clipping**. It details how the Texas Air National Guard "accidentally" dropped two napalm bombs on the Big Thicket of East Texas. Later, by visiting the area or talking to someone in the know, they find out that napalm hit the grove. It is possible that the heroes are in the woods when this happens. Be a sport and let them watch. They have probably experienced enough hard times without having 500 pounds of napalm dropped in their laps.

In an ongoing campaign, the heroes learn of the murder, a year later, of the pilot who bombed the grove. **Handout 5: Houston Newspaper Clipping** reports the killing as being ritualistic: the pilot skinned and his jaw bashed in. Of course, if the characters kill the Skinwalker, they prevent this murder.

GM Checklist: Did you ...

- Allow the surviving team members to read the newspaper clipping?
- Decide when the Skinwalker makes his final assault on the team?

Appendix I: Cast of Characters

Rick Aikens

Statistics

Rank: Novice

Attributes: Agility d6; Smarts d6; Spirit d4; Strength d8; Vigor d8

Skills: *Climbing* d6; *Driving* d4; *Fighting* d4; *Knowledge (business)* d6; *Notice* d6; *Repair* d6; *Shooting* d6; *Tracking* d4; *Throwing* d6

Edges: *Brawny*

Derived Statistics: Charisma 0; Pace 6; Parry 4; Toughness 7

Gear: casual outfit; flashlight; hatchet (Str +1); multipurpose tool; walkie-talkie; windbreaker

Profile

It is not hard to figure out why Rick Aikens is in the lumber business. He is tall and broad, like a tree trunk, and he looks just as strong. Typically, he wears blue jeans; a red-checkered, flannel shirt; and a green, goose-down vest. When he goes outdoors, a green hard hat covers his bald head. He usually chews on unlit cigars, rarely lighting them. He has been busy ever since arriving in Pinebox. A short day for him is only working 12 hours. Aikens meets with the local community as required, but he prefers getting lumber operations moving.

Character Speak

"Welcome to Green Mark."

"Murders? What murders?"

"So, what is your point? I have a truckload of details to attend to."

"I appreciate your time. Keep us posted on your progress."



Butch Anderson — Wild Card

Statistics

Rank: Seasoned

Attributes: Agility d8; Smarts d6; Spirit d6; Strength d8; Vigor d8

Skills: *Boating* d4; *Driving* d6; *Fighting* d8; *Guts* d4; *Intimidation* d6; *Investigation* d4; *Knowledge (law)* d6; *Notice* d6; *Shooting* d10+1; *Streetwise* d6-2

Hindrances: *Obese; Mean; Overconfident*

Edges: *Marksman; Quick Draw; Trademark Weapon (.45 SIG Sauer); Two-Fisted*

Derived Statistics: Charisma -2; Pace 5; Parry 6; Toughness 9 (2)

Gear: Kevlar vest (+2 torso, negates 4 AP, wt 8); SIG Sauer .45 (2d6+1, 7 shots [boxed ammo 100 rounds]); baton (Str +1); binoculars; cell phone; compass; first aid kit; boxed ammo (100 rounds); handcuffs; uniform; walkie-talkie

Profile

Sheriff Butch Anderson is a big man. He wears a campaign hat, like that of Smokey the Bear, over his shaved pate, and cowboy boots made out of rattlesnake hide. Sheriff Anderson is an arrogant fellow who judges quickly and rarely changes his mind on any issue. He is a poor judge of character, though he considers himself quite the opposite. Number one on his priority list is making sure that Pinebox looks like a safe location for the Green Mark Corporation to move its operations. Research into Sheriff Anderson's stock portfolio reveals that he has invested substantially in Green Mark's stock. That motivates him to keep these grisly murders as quiet as possible.

Character Speak

"I don't have all day—and if I did, I wouldn't have it for you."

"Confess. Make it easy on everybody."

"You're paper work just waiting to happen."

"I smelled trash the minute you got close. In this town, we put the trash out, boy."

Skinwalker

Dr. Dodge Billups

Statistics

Rank: Novice

Attributes: Agility d6; Smarts d10; Spirit d6; Strength d4; Vigor d4

Skills: *Boating* d6; *Driving* d4; *Guts* d4; *Healing* d10; *Investigation* d8; *Knowledge (medicine)* d10; *Notice* d6

Edges: *Rich*

Derived Statistics: Charisma 0; Pace 6; Parry 2; Toughness 4

Gear: business suit; casual outfits; cell phone; lab coat; medical kit; forensics kit

Profile

Doctor Dodge Billups has lived in Golan County his entire life. He left the county for medical school, but came back after completing his residency. Doctor Billups has a private medical practice, but also provides medical examinations for the county. As a local, he finds the grisly murders especially disturbing. He wants to help Sheriff Anderson solve the case as soon as possible. Dr. Billups talks with characters about the murder if he thinks they can offer fresh insights.

Character Speak

“What agency do you work for?”

“Oh. My son rented Silence of the Lambs once. I never though that sort of thing would happen here.”

“Just call me later. I’ve got too much to do right now.”

“I told you what?”

Helicopter Pilot

Statistics

Rank: Novice

Attributes: Agility d8; Smarts d8; Spirit d4; Strength d4; Vigor d6

Skills: *Area Knowledge* d4; *Driving* d6+2; *Guts* d4; *Healing* d4; *Investigation* d4; *Knowledge (comput-*

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ers) d4; *Knowledge (electronics)* d4; *Notice* d6; *Piloting* d8+2; *Shooting* d4

Edges: *Ace*

Derived Statistics: Charisma 0; Pace 6; Parry 2; Toughness 6 (1)

Gear: Beretta 93R (box magazine [×2], 2d6+1, holster [hip], 9mm ammunition [50]); fatigues; light-duty vest (+1/+2 torso only, negates 2 AP, wt 6)

FBI Agent

Statistics

Rank: Novice

Attributes: Agility d6; Smarts d6; Spirit d6; Strength d6; Vigor d6

Skills: *Driving* d6; *Fighting* d6; *Guts* d4; *Healing* d4; *Intimidation* d6; *Investigation* d4; *Knowledge (law)* d6; *Notice* d6; *Persuasion* d6; *Shooting* d6

Edges: *Command*

Derived Statistics: Charisma 0; Pace 6; Parry 5; Toughness 7 (2)

Gear: Beretta 93R (box magazine [×3], 2d6+1, 9mm ammunition [100]); binoculars; business outfit; cell phone; compass; concealed-carry holster; duct tape; evidence kit; first aid kit; flashlight (standard); handcuffs (steel); handcuffs (zip-tie, ×25); mechanical tool kit; multipurpose tool; notebook computer; penlight; walkie-talkie; Kevlar vest (+2/+4 torso only, negate 4 AP, wt 8)

FBI Hostage Rescue Team Member

Statistics

Rank: Novice

Attributes: Agility d6; Smarts d6; Spirit d8; Strength d4; Vigor d6

Skills: *Driving* d6; *Fighting* d4; *Guts* d4; *Healing* d4; *Investigation* d4; *Knowledge (law)* d6; *Knowledge (psychiatry)* d6; *Notice* d6; *Persuasion* d8; *Shooting* d6

Skinwalker

Edges: *Command*

Derived Statistics: Charisma 0; Pace 6; Parry 4; Toughness 7 (2)

Gear: Beretta 93R (box magazine [×3], 2d6+1, 9mm ammunition [100]); binoculars; business outfit; cell phone; compass; concealed-carry holster; duct tape; evidence kit; first aid kit; flashlight; penlight; handcuffs (steel); handcuffs (zip-tie, ×25); mechanical tool kit; multipurpose tool; notebook computer; walkie-talkie; Kevlar vest (+2/+4 torso only, negate 4 AP, wt 8)

Golan County Sheriff's Deputy

Statistics

Rank: Novice

Attributes: Agility d6; Smarts d6; Spirit d6; Strength d6; Vigor d6

Skills: *Boating* d4; *Driving* d6; *Fighting* d6; *Guts* d4; *Healing* d4; *Intimidation* d6; *Knowledge (law)* d6; *Notice* d4; *Persuasion* d4; *Shooting* d6; *Streetwise* d4; *Taunt* d4

Edges: *Connections*

Derived Statistics: Charisma 0; Pace 6; Parry 5; Toughness 5

Gear: Glock 20 (box magazine [×3], 2d6+1, 10mm ammunition [100]); binoculars (standard); compass; first aid kit; flashlight (standard); handcuffs (steel); handcuffs (zip-tie, ×25); hip holster; mechanical tool kit; multipurpose tool; uniform; walkie-talkie

Green Mark Employee

Statistics

Rank: Novice

Attributes: Agility d6; Smarts d6; Spirit d6; Strength d6; Vigor d6

Skills: *Area Knowledge* d6; *Boating* d4; *Climbing* d6; *Driving* d4; *Fighting* d4; *Healing* d4; *Investigation*

d4; *Knowledge (timber industry)* d6; *Notice* d4; *Swimming* d4; *Survival* d4; *Tracking* d4

Edges: *Brawny*

Derived Statistics: Charisma 0; Pace 6; Parry 4; Toughness 6

Gear: casual outfit; coat; flashlight; hatchet (Str +1); multipurpose tool

Green Mark Security Guard

Statistics

Rank: Novice

Attributes: Agility d8; Smarts d6; Spirit d4; Strength d6; Vigor d6

Skills: *Area Knowledge* d6; *Driving* d6; *Fighting* d4; *Healing* d4; *Intimidation* d4; *Investigation* d4; *Knowledge (law)* d4; *Notice* d6+2; *Stealth* d4; *Streetwise* d4

Edges: *Alertness*

Derived Statistics: Charisma 0; Pace 6; Parry 4; Toughness 5

Gear: Glock 17 (box magazine [×3], 2d6+1, 9mm ammunition [100]); coat; uniform; walkie-talkie



Roberta "Robbie" Hawkins Wild Card

Statistics

Rank: Veteran

Attributes: Agility d8; Smarts d8; Spirit d8; Strength d6; Vigor d6

Skills: *Driving* d6; *Fighting* d6; *Guts* d4; *Healing* d4; *Intimidation* d6; *Investigation* d6; *Knowledge (crime scene investigations)* d4; *Knowledge (law)* d6; *Notice* d6+2; *Persuasion* d6+2; *Shooting* d8

Hindrances: *Code of Honor*

Edges: *Alertness*; *Attractive*; *Command*; *Marksman*; *Natural Leader*

Skinwalker

Derived Statistics: Charisma 2; Pace 6; Parry 5; Toughness 5

Gear: Beretta 93R (box magazine [×3]; 2d6+1); 9mm ammunition [100]; binoculars (standard); business outfit; camera (digital); cell phone; compass; concealed-carry holster; duct tape; evidence kit; first aid kit; flashlight; handcuffs (steel); handcuffs (zip-tie, ×25); walkie-talkie

Profile

Special Agent Roberta “Robbie” Hawkins is the NCAVC coordinator for the Houston FBI office. She is relatively new to the job, having only worked six months in this position. Hawkins has served the FBI for a little over eight years. This is her third serial-murder case, and she intends to make it her third success. She is strikingly beautiful, though she wears her hair up and dresses conservatively because she believes people will not take her seriously otherwise. She tends to wear blue business suits with slacks. Hawkins is willing to work long hours, sometimes going for days without sleep, in order to bring a killer to justice.

Character Speak

“Where do you fit in this puzzle?”

“Is there anything else you remember.”

“I’m very busy. People are dying and it’s my watch. What can you tell me that will stop this killer?”

“Are you flirting? Here’s a quarter. Call some bimbo. I don’t have the time or the inclination.”



Heath Labender—Wild Card

Statistics

Rank: Seasoned

Attributes: Agility d8; Smarts d6; Spirit d8; Strength d6; Vigor d6

Skills: *Boating* d4; *Driving* d6; *Fighting* d8; *Guts* d4; *Healing* d4; *Intimidation* d6; *Investigation* d4; *Knowledge (law)* d6; *Notice* d6+2; *Shooting* d8; *Streetwise* d4; **Languages** Spanish

Hindrances: *Code of Honor*; *Loyal*; *Vow—Serve Texas Law Enforcement*

Edges: *Alertness*; *Block*; *Brawny*; *Hard to Kill*; *Quick Draw*

Derived Statistics: Charisma 0; Pace 6; Parry 7; Toughness 6

Gear: Glock 17 (box magazine [×3], 2d6+1, 9mm ammunition [100]); HK PSG1 (box magazine [×3], 7.62mm ammunition [40]); Mossberg (12 gauge buckshot ammunition [30], 1–3d6); range-finding binoculars; casual outfit; cell phone; duct tape; evidence kit; first aid kit; flashlight; GPS receiver; handcuffs (steel); handcuffs (zip-tie, ×25); multipurpose tool; overcoat; rope (50 yd); walkie-talkie

Profile

Heath Labender comes from a long line of law-enforcement officers, although he is the first Texas Ranger in his family. Labender joined the Texas Department of Public Safety eighteen years ago and rose to become a Texas Ranger after six years. He is a thoughtful person who believes he can learn more by listening than by talking. His normal investigative style includes asking the same question several times throughout a conversation, framing it differently each time. Labender knows a calm, inquisitive gaze can milk more information than overt intimidation.

Character Speak

“Tell me all about what you’ve seen. I’m all ears.”

“Repeat that. Just want to make sure I understood you.”

“Y’all are free to go. Just don’t go too far.”

“One riot. One Ranger.”

Angela Lopez

Statistics

Rank: Novice

Attributes: Agility d6; Smarts d8; Spirit d8; Strength d4; Vigor d4

Skills: *Boating* d4; *Driving* d4; *Gambling* d6; *Investigation* d6; *Knowledge (history)* d6; *Persuasion* d8+2; *Streetwise* d4+2; *Swimming* d4; **Languages** Spanish

Skinwalker

Hindrances: *Curious*

Edges: *Charismatic*

Derived Statistics: Charisma 2; Pace 6; Parry 2; Toughness 4

Gear: casual outfit; cell phone; first aid kit; wind-breaker

Profile

Angela Lopez, Professor Glen Maclanahan's student assistant, is a pretty Tejano (Texan of Mexican descent) working on her master's degree in history. Lopez feels a little put out at times, as she teaches Dr. Maclanahan's American History to 1876 class more than she should have to. It also annoys her that Jackson Green, another graduate student, seems to get the plum research assignments. Lopez admits, though, that many of Green's assignments are quite strange—chasing ghosts and aliens for example, which she considers a waste of time.

Lopez is a romantic. The hero who seeks her heart must be able to dance and make her laugh. He must also be willing to listen, and listen quite a bit; this young woman is not one to mince words.

Character Speak

"Like, uh, I'm late for class."

"Professor Maclanahan ain't here again. You got to deal with me."

"I was supposed to grade tests, not give lectures. Good thing I know my stuff."

"You think I'm pretty. You ain't totally dumb. But you still ain't getting my password, man."

"Wow, murders. So whatcha want from me, dude?"

Chad Rathers

Statistics

Rank: Novice

Attributes: Agility d6; Smarts d6; Spirit d8; Strength d4; Vigor d6

Skills: *Boating* d6; *Driving* d6; *Intimidation* d8; *Knowledge (environmental pollution)* d6; *Notice* d6; *Persuasion* d8+2; *Riding* d4

Hindrances: *Overconfident; Stubborn; Vow—Keep Texas Clean*

Edges: *Filthy Rich; Noble (Blue Blood); Rich*

Derived Statistics: Charisma 2; Pace 6; Parry 2; Toughness 5

Gear: backpack; bolt cutter; casual outfit; cell phone; coat; compass; disguise kit; duct tape; first aid kit; forgery kit; handcuffs (steel, ×4); knife; multipurpose tool; road atlas; tent (four-person dome); trail rations (×48)

Profile

To say that Chad Rathers has an abrasive personality is like saying fish live in water. Rathers seeks the lime-light and lets no one get between him and a camera. He is 25 years old and one of the richest Texans in the state. His family made its fortune in oil. That wealth allows him to pursue his activism, which he does even though success would kill his golden goose. He believes he is doing the right thing and that the way he is seeking change is best. Rathers has no qualms about hurting others to meet his goals. Once Texas Clean achieves its ideals in the state, he intends to move on to the national scene.

Character Speak

"I'm going to save these woods."

"Let's show Green Mark that Texans care about nature."

"This is the first battle in a war that's long overdue."

"Today we take Pinebox. Tomorrow, Austin will be ours."

"Are you hitting on my girl?"

Melonie Richards

Statistics

Rank: Novice

Attributes: Agility d6; Smarts d6; Spirit d6; Strength d4; Vigor d8

Skills: *Boating* d4; *Climbing* d4; *Driving* d4; *Investigation* d6; *Notice* d6; *Persuasion* d6+2; *Riding*

Skinwalker

d4; *Shooting* d4; *Streetwise* d4+2; *Swimming* d6; *Taunt* d4

Edges: *Attractive*

Derived Statistics: Charisma 2; Pace 6; Parry 2; Toughness 6

Gear: backpack; casual outfit; coat; notebook computer; scanner; printer; sleeping bag

Profile

Melonie Richards was learning to be a graphic artist when she met Chad Rathers. She became enamored with Chad's drive, and she supports his environmental goals. Richards designed the Texas Clean logo and works on all of the organization's promotional material. To date, Richards has ignored Rathers' overbearing protectiveness of her. In fact, she enjoys the attention. However, she does not appreciate it when Rathers treats her roughly. Once, she even feared he might hit her, but that event has long passed.

Character Speak

"Chad really knows how to work the press."

"Hey, we're going to chain ourselves to some trees tomorrow. We've got lots of chain, if you want to join us."

"I look forward to a day when we don't have to do this anymore. When my kids can play and not worry about the planet, ya know?"



Jed Seward—Wild Card

Statistics

Rank: Veteran

Attributes: Agility d8; Smarts d6; Spirit d6; Strength d6; Vigor d8

Skills: *Area Knowledge* d6; *Boating* d4; *Climbing* d4; *Driving* d6; *Fighting* d8; *Guts* d4; *Healing* d4; *Intimidation* d6; *Knowledge (law)* d4; *Notice* d6+2; *Repair* d4; *Shooting* d8; *Tracking* d6; *Swimming* d4

Hindrances: *Code of Honor*; *Loyal*; *Vow—protect Texas' wildlife*

Edges: *Alertness*; *Block*; *Brawny*; *Fleet Footed*; *First Strike*

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Derived Statistics: Charisma 0; Pace 8; Parry 7; Toughness 7

Gear: Glock 17 (box magazine [x2], 2d6+1, 9mm ammunition [100]); binoculars; compass; flashlight; penlight; parka; uniform

Profile

Jed Seward has worked as a game warden in East Texas for over 20 years. He takes his job seriously, as he wants to protect wildlife as much as he wants to protect humans from each other. He knows these woods very well, recognizes all the landmarks, and has a good sense of direction.

Seward's father was a bootlegger. He learned the woods from the Old Man, and he remembers those long walks in the forest. Seward tends to ignore bootleggers because of this, though he does not ignore the methamphetamine labs he finds. He reports any of these setups to the local authorities.

Character Speak

"You haven't been shooting those guns have you? Mind if I take a look?"

"If you need directions, I can get you to most places you need to go."

"I'm not sure if I like your attitude."

"Be good. Remember, it's not hunting season. This ain't no range either. I can give you directions to a shootin' range if ya like."

SWAT Team Leader

Statistics

Rank: Veteran

Attributes: Agility d8; Smarts d6; Spirit d6; Strength d6; Vigor d8

Skills: *Boating* d6; *Climbing* d4; *Driving* d4; *Fighting* d8; *Guts* d6; *Intimidation* d6; *Knowledge (law)* d6; *Knowledge (tactics)* d6; *Notice* d6; *Persuasion* d6; *Shooting* d8

Edges: *Command*; *Dodge*; *Inspire*; *Steady Hands*

Derived Statistics: Charisma 0; Pace 6; Parry 6; Toughness 8 (2)

Skinwalker

Gear: Beretta 93R (box magazine [×3], 2d6+1, 9mm ammunition [50]); M16A2 (box magazine [×5], 5.56mm ammunition [200]); binoculars; first aid kit; flashlight; handcuffs (steel); handcuffs (zip-tie, 25); multipurpose tool; uniform; walkie-talkie; Kevlar vest (+2/+4 torso only, negate 4 AP, wt 8)

SWAT Team Member

Statistics

Rank: Seasoned

Attributes: Agility d8; Smarts d6; Spirit d6; Strength d6; Vigor d6

Skills: *Boating* d6; *Climbing* d4; *Driving* d4; *Fighting* d8; *Guts* d4; *Intimidation* d6; *Knowledge (law)* d6; *Notice* d6; *Persuasion* d6; *Shooting* d8

Edges: *Steady Hands*

Derived Statistics: Charisma 0; Pace 6; Parry 6; Toughness 7 (2)

Gear: Beretta 93R (box magazine [×3], 2d6+1, 9mm ammunition [50]); M16A2 (box magazine [×5], 5.56mm ammunition [200]); binoculars; first aid kit; flashlight; handcuffs (steel); handcuffs (zip-tie, 25); multipurpose tool; uniform; walkie-talkie; Kevlar vest (+2/+4 torso only, negate 4 AP, wt 8)

SWAT Team Sniper

Statistics

Rank: Veteran

Attributes: Agility d10; Smarts d6; Spirit d6; Strength d6; Vigor d6

Skills: *Boating* d6; *Climbing* d4; *Driving* d4; *Fighting* d8; *Guts* d6; *Intimidation* d6; *Knowledge (law)* d6; *Notice* d6; *Persuasion* d6; *Shooting* d10+1

Edges: *Marksman*; *Steady Hands*; *Trademark Weapon*—HK PSG1 sniper rifle

Derived Statistics: Charisma 0; Pace 6; Parry 6; Toughness 7 (2)

Gear: HK PSG1 (box magazine [×5], 2d8, 7.62mm ammunition [60], scope); range-finding binoculars; compass; flashlight; ghillie suit; handcuffs (steel); multipurpose tool; penlight; rope (50 yd); uniform; walkie-talkie; Kevlar vest (+2/+4 torso only, negate 4 AP, wt 8)



Grandma Taylor—Wild Card

Character Statistics

Rank: Heroic

Attributes: Agility d6; Smarts d10; Spirit d8; Strength d4-1; Vigor d4

Skills: *Area Knowledge* d8; *Guts* d6; *Healing* d8; *Knowledge (Druidic rituals)* d10; *Notice* d8; *Spellcasting (arcane)* d10; *Survival* d8; *Tracking* d4

Hindrances: *Elderly*; *Enemy*—Skinwalker (minor due to backgrounds); *Vow*—To Druidic Order

Edges: *Arcane Background (magic)*; *Command*; *Enchant*; *Improved Rapid Recharge*; *Rapid Recharge*

Powers: (Spells)—*deflection*; *entangle*; *greater healing*; *healing*; *invisibility*; *obscure*; *puppet*; *shape change*; *speed*

Power Points: 20

Derived Statistics: Charisma 0; Pace 5; Parry 2; Toughness 4

Gear: casual outfit; coat; knife

Special Abilities

Druidic Tree Travel

Druids may expend 1 power point to move into and out of two trees, within ten yards of each other, at will (requires no *Spellcasting* roll). If the Druid is within 100 yards of her sacred grove or other holy site, she may move this way without spending any power points. Each tree entered or exited requires one round of movement. Example: Grandma Taylor moves 5" and enters an oak tree on the first round, she exits a nearby tree (within 10 yards) on the next round of action and may move up to 5" more, or she may enter another tree within those 5" of movement.

Nature's Path

The Druid may move through any sort of undergrowth (such as natural thorns, briars, overgrown areas, and similar terrain) at her normal movement rate without taking damage or suffering any other impairment. However, thorns, briars, and overgrown areas that have been magically manipulated to impede movement still affect her. A Druid using the Nature's Path ability leaves no trail in natural surroundings and cannot be tracked normally.

Profile

Grandma Taylor has lived in the Big Thicket all of her life. She comes from a long line of Druids who can trace their lineage back to the time of the Roman Empire. Grandma Taylor is not the greatest Druid in Texas, but she does have a love for this land and she respects those who exist outside of the Irish community.

She delivered the Tiedens brothers and acted as a surrogate aunt for them from time to time. She hoped they would grow up appreciating the forest, but both men yearned for power. When they left for New Mexico, she figured they would never return—she was half right. Lucius Tiedens returned without his brother and with a knowledge that was quite disturbing. He had learned the power of the Skinwalker.

While Taylor does not care for the Green Mark Corporation, she does not like murder, either. Murderers and violent criminals in the Irish community find themselves sacrificed according to ancient traditions. Taylor has appealed to other Druids to stop Tiedens, but they do not care about his activities as long as he limits his killing to outsiders. Taylor is looking outside the community for people to help. She prefers people who can help without bringing scrutiny upon the community.

Character Speak

"Do you seek the Skinwalker?"

"You are lucky the Hunter has not been sent after you. He has more patience and seeks to please his master by killing his enemies."

"The forest has been a friend to the Irish since we first came to Texas."

"If you're aiming to hurt these woods, you best be going. Now, laddie."



Lucius Tiedens—Wild Card

Statistics

Rank: Heroic

Attributes: Agility d8; Smarts d6; Spirit d6; Strength d8; Vigor d8

Skills: *Area Knowledge* d6; *Climbing* d4; *Driving* d4; *Fighting* d10; *Guts* d4; *Healing* d4; *Intimidation* d6; *Knowledge (Druidic rituals)* d6; *Knowledge (Skinwalker rituals)* d6; *Notice* d6; *Spellcasting (arcane)* d6; *Stealth* d6; *Survival* d6; *Tracking* d6; *Throwing* d6

Hindrances: *Bloodthirsty*; *Enemy—Grandma Taylor (minor due to background)*; *Vengeful*

Edges: *Arcane Background (arcane)*; *Brawny*; *Mighty Blow*

Powers: (Spells)—*boost/lower trait*; *deflection*; *obscure*; *puppet-statue*; *speed*

Power Points: 20

Derived Statistics: Charisma -4; Pace 6; Parry 7; Toughness 7

Gear: crow whistle; medicine bag; necklace of the Hunt; skinning knife

Special Abilities

Druidic Tree Travel

Druids may expend 1 power point to move into and out of two trees within ten yards of each other at will (requires no *Spellcasting* roll). If the Druid is within 100 yards of his sacred grove or other holy site, he may move this way without spending any power points. Each tree entered or exited requires one round of movement. Example: Lucius Tiedens moves 5" and enters an oak tree on the first round, he exits a nearby tree (within 10 yards) on the next round of action and may move up to 6" more, or he may enter another tree within those 6" of movement.

Improved Shape Change

The Skinwalker may turn himself into any animal with a Size from -2 to +2, and back again, once per day. The form chosen must be that of an animal with which the Skinwalker is familiar. This ability func-

Skinwalker

tions like the *shape change* spell except as noted here. The effect lasts for one hour plus another hour per raise on the *Spellcasting* check, or until he chooses to return to his original form. Changing form requires a full round of action, and he may not move or take any action other than casting the spell.

A Skinwalker loses his ability to speak with humans when in animal form because he is limited to the sounds that a normal, untrained animal can make, but he can communicate normally with other animals of the same general grouping as his new form. (The normal sound a wild parrot makes is a squawk, so changing to this form does not permit speech).

Power point costs are 3 points for an animal with a Size of -2, 4 for an animal with a size of 0, and 4+1 for every size increase above 0.

Nature's Path

The Druid may move through any sort of undergrowth (such as natural thorns, briars, overgrown areas, and similar terrain) at his normal movement rate without taking damage or suffering any other impairment. However, thorns, briars, and overgrown areas that have been magically manipulated to impede movement still affect him. A Druid using the Nature's Path ability leaves no trail in natural surroundings and cannot be tracked normally.

Skinning

The Skinwalker may skin a creature he has killed and that has not been dead longer than 30 minutes. The Skinwalker must have a skinning knife to attempt to skin a carcass. To skin the remains, the Skinwalker must make a successful Agility check. The Skinwalker must also smash the victim's jaw to get a few teeth. This is part of the skinning and is included in the Agility check and the time required to complete this task. It takes a Skinwalker one round to skin a Size -2 creature. One round should be added for each additional size category of the creature to be skinned (i.e., two rounds for a Size 0 creature, three rounds for a Size +2 creature, etc.).

The Skinwalker may store skins indefinitely within his medicine bag. Otherwise the skins become useless after 30 full days have passed.

The Skinwalker may use the skin and teeth to assume the appearance of the skinned creature for up to 24 hours. After 24 hours passes, the skin becomes weathered (see below) and the teeth rot. When wearing an animal skin, the Skinwalker assumes the size,

shape, and all of the abilities of the creature, including flight, swimming, climbing, and burrowing. The Skinwalker has the ability to communicate with other animals of the sort whose skin he is wearing. In a human guise, he will look exactly like the human whose skin he wears, gaining a +2 modifier to *Persuasion* when appropriate. The Skinwalker does not gain the victim's memory, though he does speak with the same voice.

In all forms, the Skinwalker uses his own Smarts and Spirit attribute scores. Physical attributes are those of an average specimen of the creature type assumed—either human or animal—with the exception that Charisma is reduced by two for an average creature, as the Skinwalker's evil is naturally repellant to others (i.e., in the skin of another human, the Skinwalker has a Charisma of -2). Once the Skinwalker sheds a skin, he can no longer use it. A Skinwalker may only use the skin of a creature he himself skins. Skins decompose and become useless within 30 days unless they are kept in a medicine bag.

Weathered

Skinwalkers are cursed by the very power that makes them difficult to recognize. When 24 hours goes by in any skin, including his birth skin, he must make a Vigor check. Failure indicates his skin is taking on a weathered texture. It peels and falls away, exposing ugly scabs and lesions. The Skinwalker suffers 1d6 points of damage and a -1 to all Vigor-related trait tests. A check is made every subsequent 24-hour period until the Skinwalker dons a new skin. A Skinwalker suffering from the weathered condition may not heal until he takes a new form. Once he puts on a new skin, the weathered condition is removed and wounds heal normally.

New Spell

Puppet statue

Rank: Veteran

Power Points: 3

Range: Smarts

Duration: 2 (1/round)

Trappings: Glowing eyes, target stiffens like a statue.

This spell is similar to the puppet spell, but instead the victim freezes like a statue and may take no action until the spell wears off or is broken. Puppet- statue

Skinwalker

is an opposed roll of the character's arcane skill versus the targets Spirit. The caster must score a success and beat the target's roll to cause the victim to become stiff as a statue. The Skinwalker often casts this spell, then kills the victim using a Finishing Move attack. Such an attack allows the victim one last opposed Spirit check to break the spell.

Profile

Lucius and Andrew Tiedens were twins born in the Big Thicket of East Texas. Even from their youth, the brothers had an instinctive feeling for nature, which the Druids recognized and helped nurture. The twins viewed the town of Pinebox, with its brick homes and commercial buildings sprouting along the woods, as a cancer. The pair enjoyed playing tricks on town boys and generally abusing their Druidic power.

The twins felt impatience uncharacteristic among the Druids. They always wanted to know more—to do things that only the Druids of the old country could do. They did not know how to move through the waters of Lake Greystone to Ireland, as some of the older Druids did. Without this ability, and lacking the patience to learn, the Tiedens twins chose to go west when they turned 16.

At Four Corners, they sought out Navaho Shamans; what they found was a Navajo Skinwalker. The final step to realizing greater power under his tutelage was the performance of a ritual blood offering to the evil manifestation of the trickster god, Coyote. Lucius's wish for power exceeded his brotherly love, and Anthony become a sacrifice to his lust. Filled with guilt, knowledge, and power, Lucius Tiedens left New Mexico.

From the American West, he undertook a journey to Ireland. There he learned to invoke the Hunt—the feral embodiment of death and renewal—to track and fight the enemies of nature.

He returned to the Big Thicket in time to learn of the Green Mark Corporation's arrival. Green Mark purchased their land out from under Lucius when Anthony died without leaving a will. (See *Golan County Irish Community in Appendix IV: Organizations.*) This fueled Tiedens's anger. Since returning, he has watched Green Mark's actions carefully and has now decided that it is time to strike. He believes the Coyote granted him these newfound powers in time to strike down those who would destroy his family home.

Character Speak

"It's time to stop. You want to live, right?"

"Progress is a leaf on a tree. Not a cyst on the Earth like your Pinebox."

"Crazy, am I? I think not. It's war, and I am the warrior."

"You will not know peace. I'll come for you, and you'll greet me with a hug and a gasp."

Texas Clean Member

Statistics

Rank: Novice

Attributes: Agility d4; Smarts d8; Spirit d8; Strength d4; Vigor d6

Skills: *Boating* d4; *Climbing* d4; *Driving* d6; *Intimidation* d6; *Investigation* d4; *Knowledge (environmental pollution)* d6; *Notice* d4; *Streetwise* d6+2; *Taunt* d6

Edges: *Charismatic*

Derived Statistics: Charisma 2; Pace 6; Parry 2; Toughness 5

Gear: casual outfit; parka

Texas Department of Public Safety Trooper

Statistics

Rank: Novice

Attributes: Agility d6; Smarts d6; Spirit d6; Strength d6; Vigor d6

Skills: *Area Knowledge* d4; *Driving* d6; *Fighting* d6; *Guts* d4; *Healing* d4; *Intimidation* d6; *Knowledge (law)* d4; *Notice* d6; *Shooting* d6; *Streetwise* d4

Edges: *Brawny*

Derived Statistics: Charisma 0; Pace 6; Parry 5; Toughness 8 (2)

Gear: Glock 20 (box magazine [×3] 2d6+1, 10mm ammunition [100]); Mossberg (12 gauge buckshot, 1–3d6, ammunition [30]); backpack; bin-

Skinwalker

oculars; cell phone; compass; duct tape; evidence kit; first aid kit; handcuffs; mechanical tool kit; uniform; walkie-talkie; Kevlar vest (+2/+4 torso only, negate 4 AP, wt 8)

Mae Walker

Statistics

Rank: Novice

Attributes: Agility d6; Smarts d8; Spirit d6; Strength d4; Vigor d6

Skills: *Area Knowledge* d4; *Boating* d4; *Climbing* d4; *Driving* d4; *Fighting* d4; *Guts* d4; *Healing* d6; *Knowledge (Druidic rituals)* d8; *Notice* d8; *Stealth* d6

Hindrances: *Code of Honor*; *Loyal*; *Vow—Serve the Druid Council*

Edges: *Arcane Background (magic)*; *Attractive*; *Very Attractive*

Powers: (Spells)—*deflection*; *healing*; *obscure*

Power Points: 10

Derived Statistics: Charisma 4; Pace 6; Parry 4; Toughness 5

Gear: casual outfit; coat; knife

Profile

Mae Walker is one of Grandma Taylor's many grandchildren, and she is slowly learning Druidism under the tutelage of her grandmother. She lives with her elder and performs many of the more physical chores that Taylor, at her advanced age, finds difficult. Walker frequently visits Pinebox, where she attends school, runs errands, or picks up news for her grandmother.

Despite her exposure to town life, she has no desire to leave the forest community, with its ramshackle huts that burn coal in the winter and suffer through the summer with no air conditioning. Walker is quite shy and may not answer questions from town folk unless they are persistent. She would just as soon cross the street as have to speak to a casual acquaintance from Pinebox. She does not think of herself as pretty, but she has a lovely complexion and beautiful red hair.

12 to Midnight

Walker may fall for a hero who charms her, or she may just befriend him for the knowledge he possesses. A character who expresses knowledge of, or interest in, Irish lore may have a shortcut to winning her heart. The team could benefit from having Mae Walker as a resource. Just be warned: Walker does not tolerate an abuse of nature nor threats to her grandmother.

Character Speak

"My grandma isn't affeared of folks or beasts."

"I'm in no position to be answerin' your questions."

"My grandma is very powerful, but very weak too."

"I wish you'd leave. Grandma Taylor needs her rest."

Julie Williams

Statistics

Rank: Novice

Attributes: Agility d6; Smarts d6; Spirit d6; Strength d4; Vigor d4

Skills: *Area Knowledge* d4; *Climbing* d4; *Investigation* d4; *Notice* d6; *Persuasion* d4; *Swimming* d6; *Throwing* d6

Hindrances: *Young*

Edges: *Luck* (Total of 2 extra NPC bennies, as she is young and has luck).

Derived Statistics: Charisma 0; Pace 6; Parry 2; Toughness 4

Gear: casual outfit; jacket

Profile

Julie Williams is the five-year-old daughter of Bobby Williams, Lucius Tiedens' first victim. She is trying to cope with her parents' divorce and hates that her mommy and daddy never share time together. The ex-couple spend just enough time together, in fact, to hand off their daughter. She longs for a day when her family can go to the movies together and laugh.

Skinwalker

Julie is a cute little girl who wears her blond hair in long tresses. She has big brown eyes that can convey a great deal of sadness.

Character Speak

“One time, I counted to ten while my Daddy burped.”

“Where’s my Daddy? Why’d he leave me alone?”

“Mommy don’t love Daddy anymore. He’s a jerk.”

“Daddy sez Mommy is a bih...Uh, I’m not s’posed to say that word.”

Appendix II: Cast of Creatures

Oak Hound

Statistics

Attributes: Agility d8; Smarts d6 (A); Spirit d6; Strength d8; Vigor d10

Skills: *Fighting* d8; *Notice* d6+2; *Stealth* d8+2; *Tracking* d6+2

Derived Statistics: Pace 10; Parry 6; Toughness 9 (2)

Special Abilities

Armor +2

An oak hound enjoys a +2 bonus to its Toughness due to its bark-like hide.

Bite

The bite of an oak hound inflicts Str +2 damage.

Fearless

An oak hound is immune to Fear and *Intimidation*.

Fleet Footed

An oak hound rolls a d10 instead of a d6 when running.

Forest Coloring

In woods or heavy brush, an oak hound possesses a natural concealment due to its unique coloration and bark-like skin. This provides a +2 to all *Stealth* checks. Opponents suffer a -1 attack penalty when fighting an oak hound in the woods.

Go For the Throat

An oak hound instinctively goes for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, the creature hits the target's most weakly armored area.

Hardy

An oak hound does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.

Low-Light Vision

An oak hound ignores penalties for Dim or Dark lighting.

Natural Tracker

Using its enhanced sense of smell, the oak hound can detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes,

and track anyone who ventures into its domain. Oak hounds gain a +2 to all *Notice* and *Tracking* checks.

Weakness (Fire)

The oak hound takes an extra +4 damage from any fire-based attack.

Description

This creature is the size of a Great Dane, and the hue of its leaf-like coat constantly fluctuates with different shades of brown and green. This quality makes an oak hound very difficult to see in wooded areas.



Leader of the Pack

Wild Card

Statistics

Attributes: Agility d10; Smarts d6; Spirit d8; Strength d10; Vigor d10

Skills: *Fighting* d10; *Notice* d6+2; *Stealth* d8+2; *Tracking* d6+2

Derived Statistics: Pace 10; Parry 7; Toughness 11 (4)

Special Abilities

Armor +4

The leader of the pack enjoys a +4 bonus to its Toughness due to its bark-like hide.

Bite

The leader of the pack's bite inflicts Str +2 damage.

Fearless

The leader of the pack is immune to Fear and *Intimidation*.

Fleet Footed

The leader of the pack rolls a d10 instead of a d6 when running.

Forest Coloring

In woods or heavy brush, the leader of the pack possesses a natural concealment due to its unique coloration and bark-like skin. This provides a +2 to all *Stealth* checks. Opponents suffer a -1 attack penalty when fighting the leader of the pack in the woods.

Skinwalker

Go For the Throat

The leader of the pack instinctively goes for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, the creature hits the target's most weakly armored area.

Hardy

The leader of the pack does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.

Low-Light Vision

The leader of the pack ignores penalties for Dim or Dark lighting.

Natural Tracker

Using its enhanced sense of smell, the leader of the pack can detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track anyone who ventures into its domain. The leader of the pack gains a +2 to all *Notice* and *Tracking* checks.

Pack Teleport

The leader of the pack can teleport itself and up to three oak hounds, without error, up to a distance of 10" or 15" at will with a raise on a Spirit check. All oak hounds to be teleported must be within 3" of the leader on its round of action. The leader may perform this teleportation once every other round. If the leader rolls a 1 on its Spirit die, the teleportation does not work and the leader is left Shaken.

Weakness (Fire)

The leader of the pack takes an extra +4 damage from any fire-based attack.

Description

This creature is the size of a Great Dane, and the hue of its leaf-like coat constantly fluctuates with shades of brown and green. This quality makes the leader of the pack very difficult to see in wooded areas.

The Hunter

Statistics

Attributes: Agility d8; Smarts d8; Spirit d8; Strength d6; Vigor d8

Skills: *Climbing* d8+2; *Fighting* d8; *Notice* d8+2; *Stealth* d8+2; *Tracking* d8+2; *Throwing* d8

Derived Statistics: Pace 8; Parry 6; Toughness 8 (2)

Possessions buds of entanglement, staff of the hunt

12 to Midnight

Special Abilities

Armor +2

The hunter enjoys a +2 bonus to its Toughness due to its bark-like hide.

Fearless

The hunter is immune to Fear and *Intimidation*.

Fleet Footed

The hunter rolls a d10 instead of a d6 when running.

Forest Coloring

In woods or heavy brush, the hunter possesses a natural concealment due to its unique coloration and bark-like skin. This provides a +2 to all *Stealth* checks. Opponents suffer a -1 attack penalty when fighting the hunter in the woods.

Forest Movement

The hunter's root-like toes and fingers grant it a +2 on all *Climbing* checks. Succeeding at a *Climbing* check allows it to move at the same pace from branch to branch in the trees as it does on the ground.

Hardy

The hunter does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.

Gore

The hunter's antlers inflict Str +2 damage.

Low-Light Vision

The hunter ignores penalties for Dim or Dark lighting.

Weakness (Fire)

The hunter takes an extra +4 damage from any fire-based attack.

Description

This creature stands on two legs, like a man, but the similarities stop there. Deer antlers protrude from its feral head, its flesh looks akin to bark, and red vines coil from its head and body instead of hair. Coal-black eyes stare out of its head. It does not appear to have eyelids or nostrils. The hunter moves easily through the woods, either on the ground or pouncing from branch to branch. Root-like toes and fingers make climbing and swinging through the trees effortless.

Appendix III: Magic

Buds of Entanglement

The hunter uses buds of entanglement to ensnare its prey. These buds behave in all ways like magically enhanced darts. The buds have a 3/6/12 range and do Str +1 damage. After a bud hits, vines sprout forth to entangle the victim. A bud merely has to strike to ensnare its victim, it does not have to cause damage. The target of a bud may make an Agility check to wriggle out before the vines ensnare him. If entangled, the target suffers a -2 penalty to Pace and all skills linked to Agility and Strength. If the bud strikes its target with a raise, the target must make an Agility check at -2. Failure means the target cannot move or use any Agility- or Strength-related skills.

Each following round, an entangled target may make an Agility or Strength check to break free of the vines. Victims make this check at a -1 if simply entangled, and at a -2 if entangled with a raise. Other heroes may help an entangled character break free with a Strength check at -2. If the aiding hero fails with a 1 on the Strength die, he is also entangled.

The effect lasts until all targets break free of the vines.

Crow Whistle

The crow whistle is made from crow beaks and bound together with crow gut and pure silver. Most of these devices are three to five inches in length. The sound the whistle emits is inaudible to the human ear.

When blown for a full round, this instrument calls a flock of crows, which arrives on the next round and swarms in a thick mass within sight of the whistler for the next five minutes. The flock affects one area the size of a medium burst template area and blocks line of sight through it. Each round, the flock must move a minimum of 6" and no further than 12".

Casting spells within the flock is impossible. Regardless of Toughness, creatures inside the flock sustain 1d6+2 points of damage at the end of each round due to bites and scratches inflicted by the crows. Invisibility is no protection. All creatures caught within the swarm must pass a *Guts* check or be driven from the flock in a random direction at their fastest possible speed and flee until they are at least 12" away from the crows. Optionally, you could

use 12 to Midnight's *Fear Effects* rules; in which case, being caught inside the flock is a *medium shock*.

Heavy smoke drives off crows within its bounds. A fire also drives the birds away, and they do not move adjacent to any fire. The crows return as soon as the fire is extinguished, if the whistle's 10 round duration has not expired. A single torch is ineffective against this horde of birds. Lightning, cold, and ice are likewise ineffective, while a strong wind (21+ mph) that covers the entire flock area disperses the crows and ends the spell.

The crow whistle may be used four times a day. An hour must pass after blowing the whistle before summoning another flock.

Druid's Grove

Thirteen ancient oak trees form the perimeter of the grove. The Druids have made this site hallowed ground and do not like outsiders walking upon it.

The following permanent powers are in effect:

- 1) A *protection from fire ritual* protects the area. It acts as armor, giving all trees and bushes here a Toughness of 20 (16).
- 2) No dead body interred in the Druid's Grove can be turned into an undead creature.
- 3) Druids may use Druidic Tree Travel (see *Lucius Tiedens* or *Grandma Taylor*, in *Appendix I: Cast of Characters*) at will between trees in the grove at no power-point cost. A Druid may remain inside of a trunk for 120 minutes before being ejected.

Medicine Bag

Druids use these bags to hold spell and ritual components. Items stored in a medicine bag never spoil. No item or element can enter the bag unless the Druid makes the effort to place the item inside. If someone other than the medicine bag's owner attempts to place an item inside, the bag rejects the item and it falls straight through the bottom.

A Druid must make his own bag; he may not use a bag that belongs to someone else. These pouches are of a size that can hold half a cubic foot.

Necklace of the Hunt

The parts of this necklace are carved from the heart of an oak tree that is at least 500 years old. Silver tendrils bind the individual carvings together. The carvings depict several doglike creatures and a man with antlers like a deer. One dog figure is in the sitting position, while its companions are shown running. The user must wear the necklace and speak aloud a command word to summon each creature. Only one creature may be summoned each round. The creatures that can be summoned are the hunter, the leader of the pack, and six oak hounds. Each creature may only be summoned once a day.

Upon being summoned, creatures appear within 2” of the necklace’s user. The Hunt will guard an area or item if so instructed, or it can track if provided with a scent. Otherwise, the wearer of the necklace just points in a direction or at a specific location and the Hunt chases down the first prey it encounters in the designated path or area. The Hunt remains until the necklace wearer utters the command word again or until an hour passes, at which point all summoned creatures return to their dimension. If a member of the Hunt is killed or wounded, it may not be summoned again for a week. After the week passes, it may be summoned as before.

Staff of the Hunt

The hunter has a staff that helps it coordinate a pack of oak hounds and the leader of the pack. While holding the staff, the hunter can communicate telepathically with all pack members. Three times a day the hunter can use the staff to cast a *heal* spell on a member of the pack or himself.

Buds of entanglement grow upon the staff of the hunt. Two buds sprout each morning, though the staff may never sustain more than six buds at a time.

Appendix IV: Organizations

Federal Bureau of Investigation

The FBI comes in to help investigate the Pinebox murders.

Agenda: The FBI seeks to enforce federal laws.

Entity: Federal law-enforcement agency

Symbol: FBI crest

Overview: The FBI is the principal investigative arm of the United States Department of Justice. It has the authority and responsibility to investigate specific crimes assigned to it. The FBI also is authorized to provide other law enforcement agencies with cooperative services, such as fingerprint identification, laboratory examinations, and police training.

Structure: The FBI is a federal law-enforcement agency with offices all over the United States.

Base of Operations: The FBI has a Houston office that carries out the agency's mission in South Texas and parts of East Texas. They establish a base at the Old Pine Hotel upon arriving in Pinebox.

Golan County Irish Community

The Golan County Irish community lives in and around Pinebox.

Agenda: The Irish seek to maintain the independence that derives from living in relative isolation.

Entity: Local community based in Golan County

Overview: The Irish community's origins go back to the nineteenth century. Hearing of bad luck for many of their countrymen along the East Coast, these Irish immigrants decided to go to Texas. It was not much easier for them there until they found someone willing to sell them land. The immigrants pooled their resources and entrusted their meager savings to the respected Tiedens family, who purchased a tract of land large enough for all the immigrants. Although the seller considered it the equivalent of swampland—a piece of the Big Thicket so dense and difficult to navigate that nobody else wanted it—it suited the Irish's needs perfectly. They were close enough to

Pinebox to enjoy the luxuries of America, yet far enough away to avoid some of the prejudice.

Today, some of their descendants live in shacks with no running water or electricity, while others live in modern homes. Regardless of their living conditions, they still cherish their heritage and look out for each other. Most people in Pinebox give the Irish little thought. They just know that some "strange folks" live in the woods. They may not realize that their neighbor is related to these "strange folks." The Irish look very American and have Texas accents, but hold pagan Irish values.

The Golan County Irish do not care for local laws, much less federal ones. Technically, the Tiedens family holds the title to the Irish community's land. The Druids keep order in the small, insular community and provide their flock with spiritual guidance.

The death of Andrew Tiedens, who owned one-half of the Irish community's land, has thrown their future into doubt. With neither a will nor a lengthy legal claim by his brother, Lucius (who was not only ignorant of the law, but away in Ireland), the land became the property of the state of Texas. The Green Mark Corporation quickly seized the opportunity and purchased the land for timber harvesting. Green Mark is thus far unaware of the existence of the Irish community.

Structure: The Irish of Golan County have no formal structure. They come together, under the leadership of the Texas Druids, for worship of nature and to commune with spirits.

Base of Operations: They have no formal base, but there are places in the Big Thicket that they hold sacred.

Golan County Sheriff's Department

The Golan County Sheriff's Department is the first law-enforcement agency at the initial crime scene.

Agenda: The Golan County Sheriff's Department maintains the peace in Golan County. They also oversee the county jail, which is located in Pinebox.

Skinwalker

Entity: Golan County law-enforcement agency

Symbol: GCSD crest.

Overview: The GCSD maintains law and order in the unincorporated regions of Golan County. It provides first response to all crimes reported in these areas and investigates said crimes. Suspects are sought, apprehended, and subsequently interned within the Golan County Jailhouse. The GCSD allows the Pinebox Police Department to house prisoners within the jail as needed. There is no small rivalry between the two agencies, despite differing jurisdictions. When the GCSD requires resources, they seek assistance from the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Structure: The GCSD is a local law-enforcement agency with its headquarters in Pinebox, Texas.

Base of Operations: The GCSD has a Pinebox office that dispatches deputies within the county. They also supervise the county jailhouse in Pinebox.

Green Mark Corporation

The Green Mark Corporation harvests lumber and produces forest products.

Agenda: Green Mark, which is moving its operations to The Lone Star State from Oregon, seeks to establish a profitable business in East Texas.



Entity: Corporation

Symbol: Lightning bolt superimposed over a tree.

Overview: Green Mark, an established corporation on the West Coast, wants to expand its business, but feels that buying more lumber rights in Oregon is too costly. The desire for more wood has led them to Texas. This move would expand their economic base and provide management with opportunities for promotion. Many in Golan County are eager for the economic boost that a new Green Mark facility would bring to the area.

Structure: Green Mark is a large corporation with its headquarters in Ogden, Oregon. It plans to move

its offices to Pinebox, Texas, which would require a staff of 250 people.

Base of Operations: Green Mark is establishing an office complex just outside of Pinebox, with several mobile offices for coordinating lumber operations. The company is in the process of deciding whether to renovate an old sawmill or build a new one.

Texas Clean

Texas Clean is an environmental group similar to Greenpeace but more aggressive and willing to use deadly force.

Agenda: Texas Clean seeks to keep Texas's environmental and ecological treasures in pristine shape and stop further encroachment by business and government.

Entity: Environmental activist group

Symbol: Dark green map of Texas with the word *Clean* centered in white letters

Overview: Texas clean grew out of a feeling that organizations like Greenpeace do not do enough to achieve environmental goals. The organization is growing by slowly identifying individuals who share a zeal and love for the environment and do not mind cracking a few skulls in order to protect the planet's resources.

Structure: Texas Clean currently consists of 20 fanatically militant environmental activists led by the group's founder and financier, Chad Rathers.

Base of Operations: The members of Texas Clean live and operate solely within Texas, migrating around the state like gypsies. They use an Austin post office box for mail, and cell phones for most other communications.

Texas Druids

The Texas Druids are the leaders of the Irish community found in Golan County.

Agenda: The Druids provide a vital link to Irish heritage and the spirit world.

Skinwalker

Entity: Official religion of the Golan County Irish community in the Big Thicket.

Overview: The Texas Druids, the priests to the Irish of Golan County, provide a vital link to the spiritual world and ensure the Irish continue to respect nature. They commonly conduct worship in the Piney Woods at different sites, according to the reason for celebration. Some Irish attend Catholic mass, but they also seek blessings from the Druids. Some of the older Druids are able to move through the waters of Lake Greystone directly to Ireland.

Structure: The Texas Druids are a religious group that meets for worship in the Big Thicket of East Texas.

Base of Operations: The Texas Druids have a sacred grove located in the Big Thicket. There are several other sacred locations throughout the forest.

Appendix V: Arms and Equipment

The following is a list of the arms and equipment found in *Skinwalker*.

Arms

Melee Weapon	Damage	Weight	Cost	Min Str	Notes
Baton	Str +1	1	10	–	Carried by most law-enforcement officers.
Hatchet	Str +1	2	40	–	
Knife	Str +1	1	10	–	

Ranged Weapon	Range	Dam.	RoF	Cost	Wt	Shots	Min Str	Notes
Beretta 93R 9mm pistol	12/24/48	2d6	1	250	3	20	–	AP 1; semi-auto; double tap releases 3 round burst (+2 to hit, +2 damage)
Glock 17 9mm pistol	12/24/48	2d6	1	200	3	17	–	AP 1; semi-auto
Glock 20 10mm pistol	12/24/48	2d6+1	1	200	3	10	–	AP 1; semi-auto
HK PSG 1 7.62mm sniper rifle	24/48/96	2d8	1	750	15	5	D6	AP 2; semi-auto
Mossberg 12 gauge shotgun	12/24/48	1–3d6	1	450	10	12	–	Damage depends on range (see rulebook)
SIG Sauer P220 .45 pistol	12/24/48	2d6+1	1	250	4	7	–	AP 1; semi-auto

Equipment

Most equipment relates to being trappings used to assist the person with it, though some do provide bonuses to skill checks. The following is a very basic guide to the equipment used in *Skinwalker*.

Disguise kit: This kit contains everything needed to create a disguise, including, but not limited to, make-up, brushes, wigs, and dyes. **Cost:** 200; **Weight:** 5

Evidence kit: Commonly used by law-enforcement personnel, this kit consists of various tools used to collect evidence from crime scenes. It includes items like labels, containers, surgical gloves, tweezers, and supplies for testing or finding such things as narcotics, chemical residues, fingerprints, and organic fluids. **Cost:** 250; **Weight:** 3

First-aid kit: A basic medical kit available at most supply stores and pharmacies, a first-aid kit adds a

+1 to all *Heal* checks. A first-aid kit can only be used once. **Cost:** 2; **Weight:** 1

Forensics kit: Crime scene investigators or forensic medical professionals use this kit to investigate violent deaths and to carefully handle spilled bodily fluids without risking contamination. **Cost:** 400; **Weight:** 4

Forgery kit: This kit provides everything necessary to carry out a con using forged IDs, business cards, autographs, or legal documents. It includes various inks, stamps, specialty papers, and so forth. **Cost:** 300; **Weight:** 3

GPS (Global Positioning System) receiver: This is a handheld device used to determine the operator's exact location on the Earth. **Cost:** 250; **Weight:** 1

Skinwalker

Handcuffs (steel): These are the classic handcuffs used by law-enforcement officers. **Toughness:** 12; **Cost:** 15; **Weight:** 1

Handcuffs (zip-ties): These hard, plastic zip-ties are used to tie hands or feet together. **Toughness:** 8; **Cost:** 2; **Weight:** Negligible

Kevlar vest: This vest is worn as body armor. **Armor:** +2/+4, **Cost:** 250; **Weight:** 8

Light-duty vest: This vest is worn as body armor. **Armor:** +1/+2, **Cost:** 150; **Weight:** 6

Mechanical tool kit: This kit includes all the basic mechanical tools needed to build and repair engines. **Cost:** 500; **Weight:** 25

Multipurpose tool: This is a small tool, meant to fit into a pocket, which includes a knife blade, corkscrew, screwdriver, leather punch, toothpick, magnifying glass, scissors, and a dizzying array of other small, useful items. If a gizmo can be fitted into the housing, it has it. **Cost:** 5; **Weight:** 1

Range-finding binoculars: These work like basic binoculars, but can also be used to determine the exact range of any object in the center of the reticle. **Cost:** 150; **Weight:** 2

Skinning knife: This knife is very sharp and made for taking the skins off of animals. **Damage:** Str +1; **Cost:** 25; **Weight:** 1

Walkie-talkie: These communications devices have a range of 2 miles. **Cost:** 40; **Weight:** 1

Appendix VI: Player Handouts

Handout 3: Kidnap Note

YOU HAVE SOMETHING THAT BELONGS TO ME. I DEMAND YOU RETURN IT. GO TO THE WOODS SOUTHEAST OF TOWN. DOES NOT MATTER WHERE. I AM WATCHING YOU. ALWAYS. NO ONE CAN HELP YOU. AND NO ONE CAN HELP THIS WOMAN I HAVE, EXCEPT YOU. DROP WHAT BELONGS TO ME IN THE WOODS. I'LL RETURN THE WOMAN. YOU KNOW I WILL KILL HER. DON'T INSULT ME.

Handout 4: Newspaper Clipping, Pinebox, TX

Big Thicket Training Accident

PINEBOX, TX — The Texas Air National Guard reports that an aircraft suffered a malfunction while flying a training exercise over East Texas. The purpose of the exercise was to prepare National Guard pilots for Homeland Security missions. The Air Guard F-16, based out of Houston, dropped its load of two 2,000-pound JDAM (Joint Direct Attack Munitions) guided air-to-surface bombs over an isolated area of the Big Thicket in Golan County. Early assessments of the bombing report no injuries.

Officials have indicated that the pilot, whose name had not been released as of press time, has been grounded pending a joint Texas Air National Guard and United States Air Force investigation.

Handout 5: Newspaper Clipping, Houston, TX

Houston Pilot Murdered

HOUSTON — A Houston man was found murdered in his home yesterday in what appears to be a ritualistic slaying. The body of Samuel Jenkins, a member of the 147th Fighter Wing of the Texas Air National Guard, was found in the back yard of his Houston Heights home. He had been grounded late last year after the F-16 aircraft he piloted accidentally released two bombs over an isolated area of East Texas. No one was reported killed in the accident, though a part of East Texas's densely forested Big Thicket area was severely damaged.

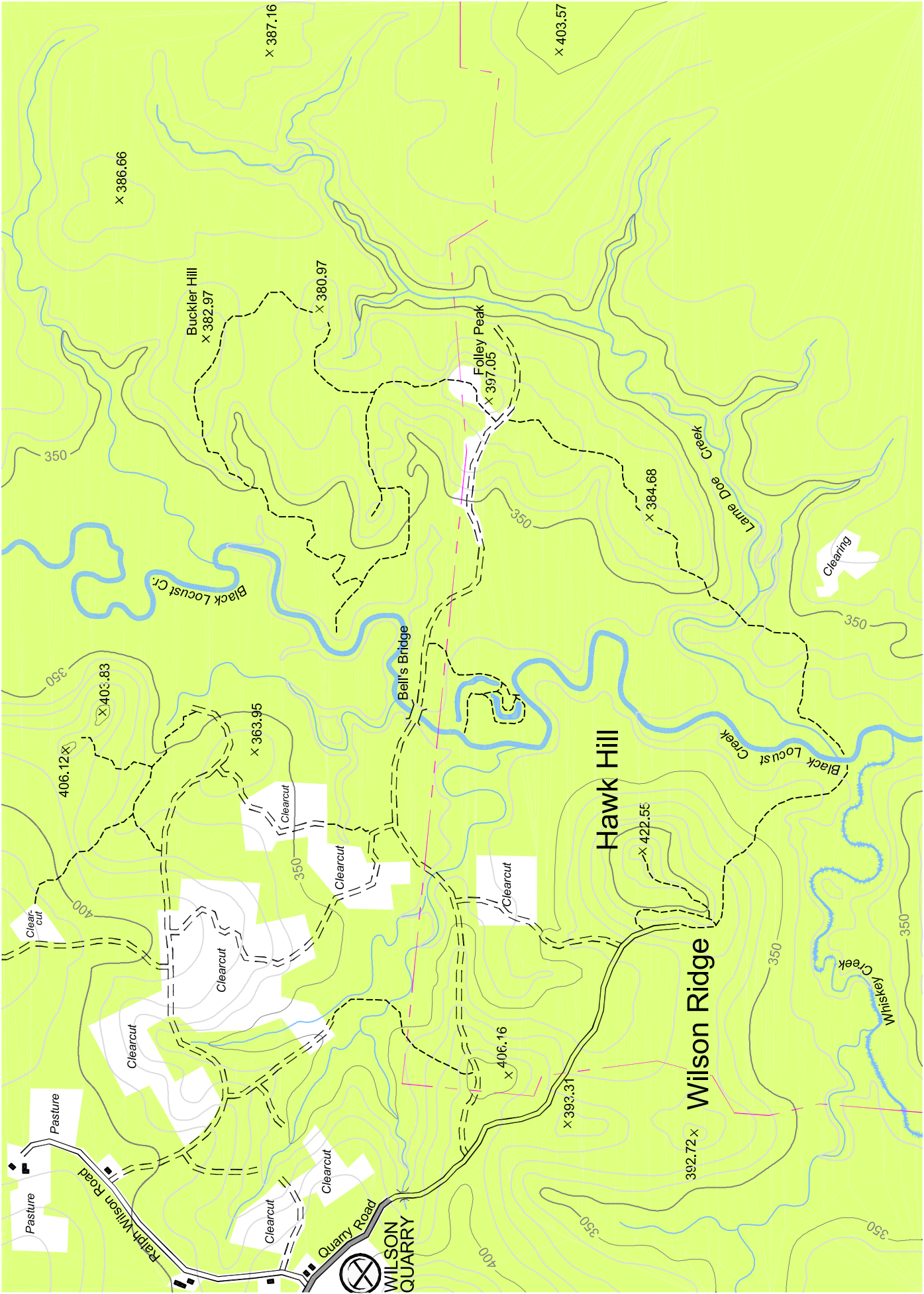
Early reports suggest that the victim may have been tortured and skinned by his killer, though neighbors did not report any disturbances. The FBI has joined forces with Houston Police in the hope of quickly apprehending those responsible. Anyone with information pertaining to this case is encouraged to contact the Houston office of the FBI.

Keep Texas *Green* **Keep Texas *Clean***

*Join **Texas Clean** in a historic event.
Help us tell **Green Mark** that Texas doesn't
want them. Save the Thicket for the future!*

***Time:** Sunday, 10 am 'till they get the point.
Location: Green Mark evil lair, Pinebox*





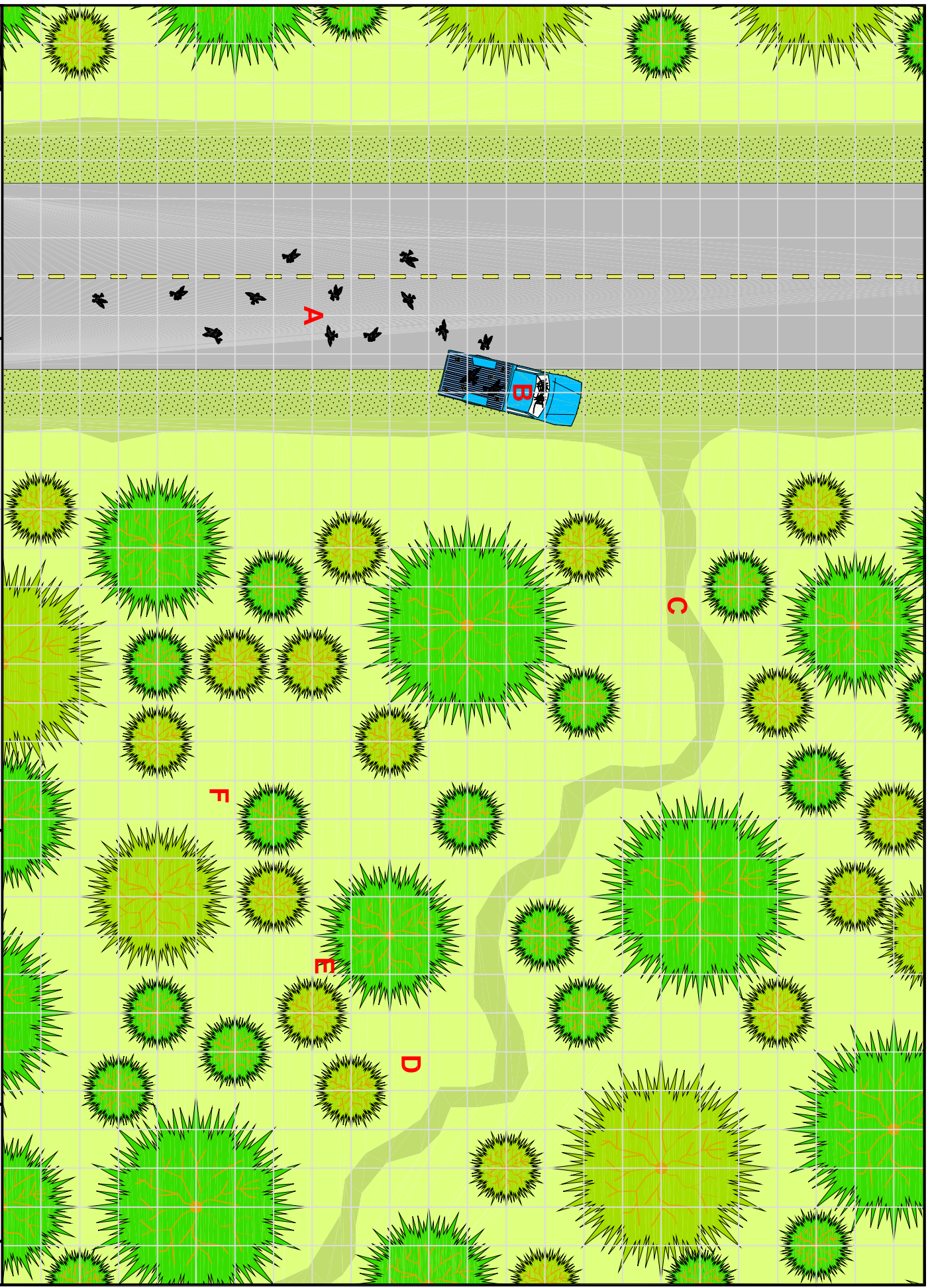


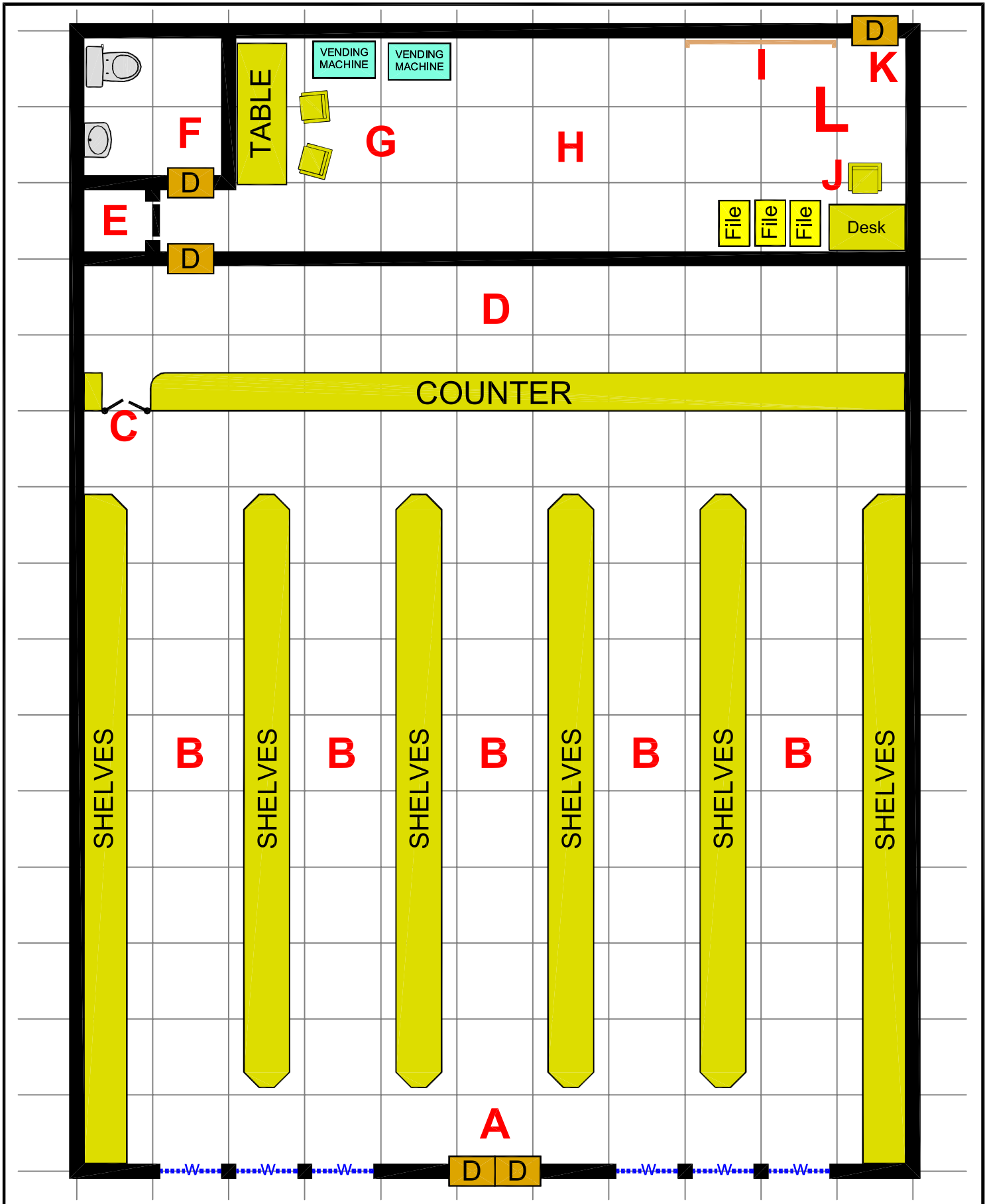
12 TO MIDNIGHT
www.12tomidnight.com

MAP 1: THE ROADSIDE

MAP KEY
 A = Dead Crows
 B = Parked Truck
 C = Animal Trail
 D = Location of Body
 E = Location of Live Rabbit (Skinwalker)
 F = Dead Rabbit

SCALE:
 1 Square = 5 feet





12 TO MIDNIGHT
www.12tomidnight.com

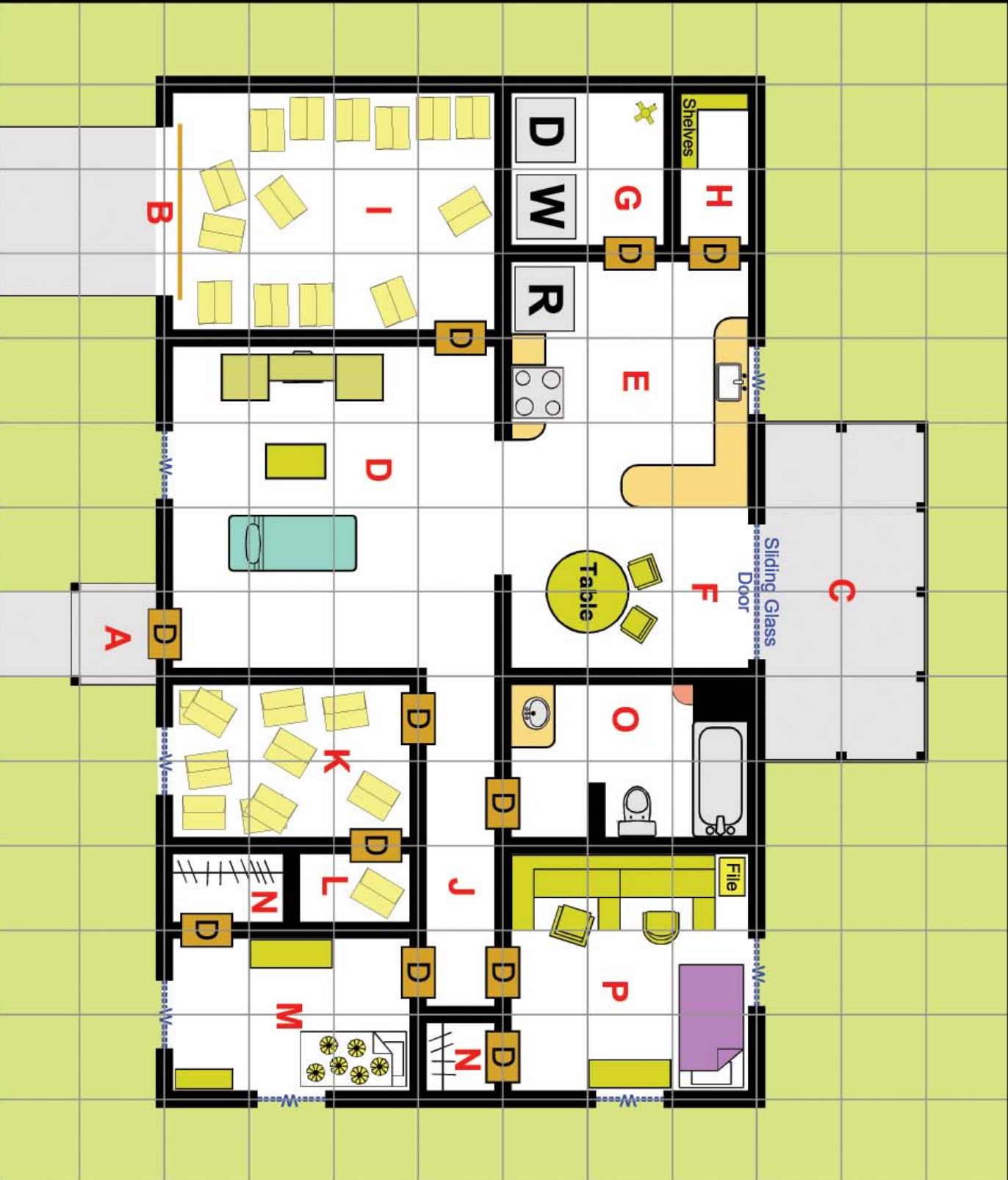
MAP 2: JOHNSON'S HARDWARE AND STAPLE GOODS

KEY	
A = Main Entrance	G = Break Room
B = Aisles	H = Holding Area
C = Swinging Gate	I = Bulletin Board
D = Cashier/Clerk Area	J = Office Area
E = Water Heater Alcove	K = Exit to Alley
F = Bathroom	L = Body Location





MAP 3: BOBBY WILLIAMS HOME



MAP KEY

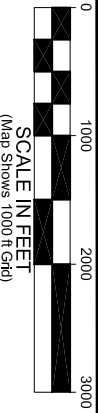
- A = Front Porch
- B = Garage Door
- C = Patio
- D = Living Room
- E = Kitchen
- F = Breakfast Nook
- G = Utility Room
- H = Pantry
- I = Garage
- J = Hallway
- K = Bedroom
- L = Closet
- M = Julie Williams's Bedroom
- N = Closet
- O = Bathroom
- P = Master Bedroom

GM's NOTES:

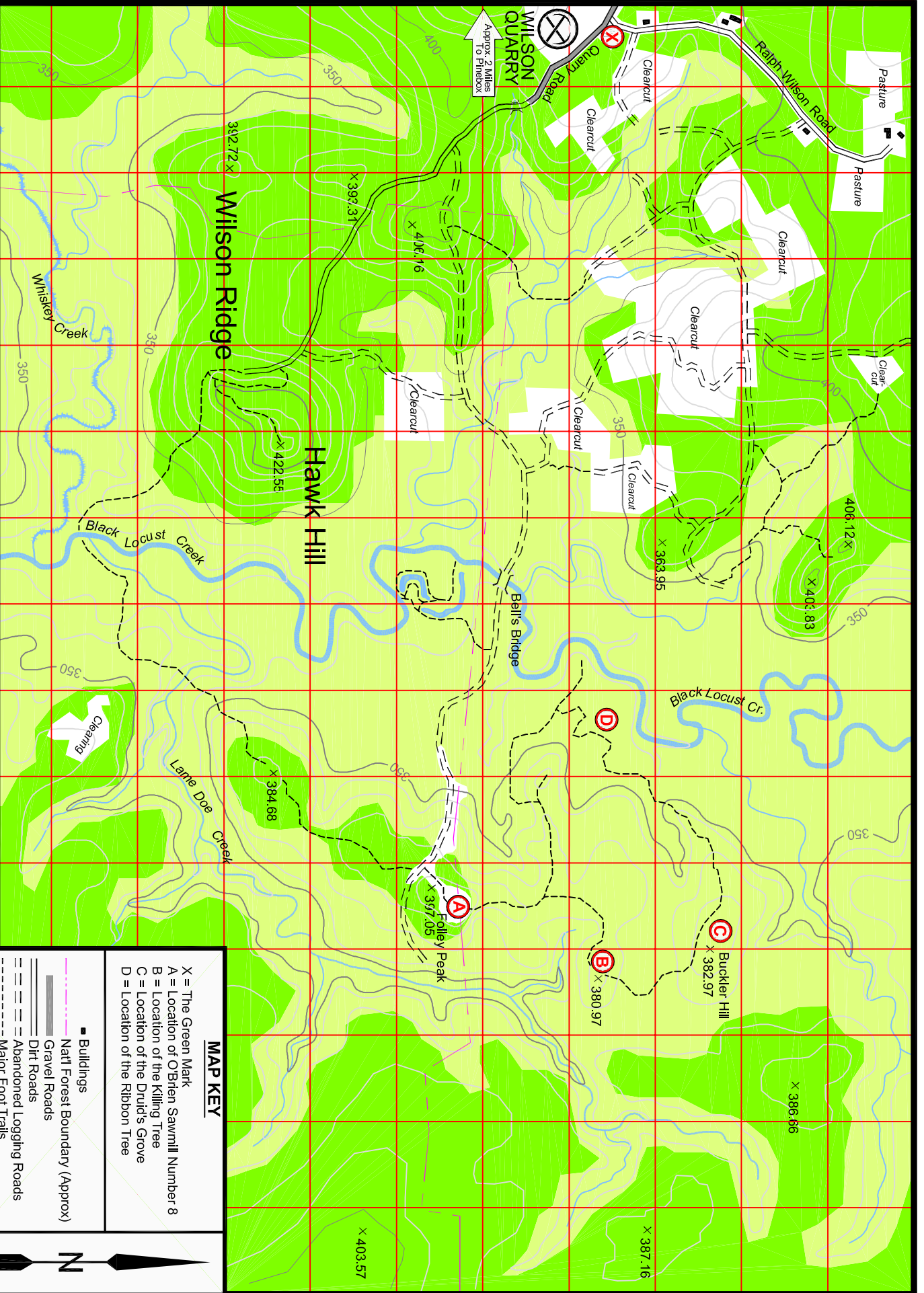
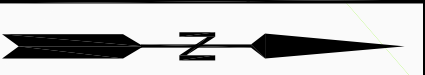
SCALE
1 Square = 5 feet

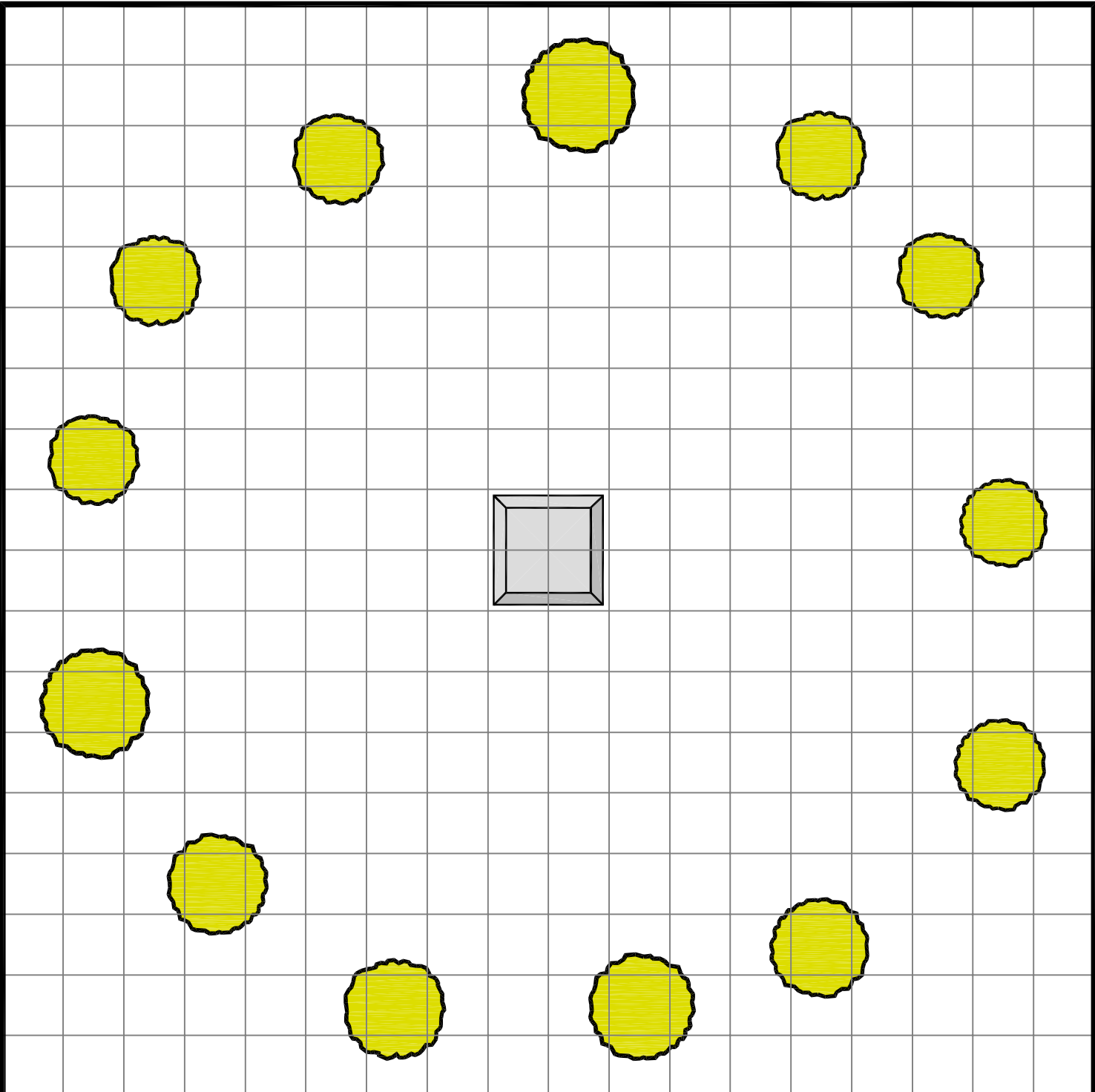
MAP 4: AREA MAP

Wooded Areas
 Predominantly Hardwood
 Predominantly Softwood (Pines)



- MAP KEY**
- X = The Green Mark
 - A = Location of O'Brien Sawmill Number 8
 - B = Location of the Killing Tree
 - C = Location of the Druid's Grove
 - D = Location of the Ribbon Tree
- Buildings
 - Nat'l Forest Boundary (Approx)
 - ▬ Gravel Roads
 - ▬ Dirt Roads
 - ▬ Abandoned Logging Roads
 - - - Major Foot Trails
 - X Spot Elevation
 (Contour Interval = 10 feet)





GM's NOTES: _____

SYMBOL KEY



TRUNK OF OAK TREE
NOTE: This indicates the thickness of the trunk at ground level. Roots, limbs, and foliage are not indicated.



LOCATION OF PIT



SCALE
1 Square = 5 feet

MAP 5: THE DRUID'S GROVE

More adventure awaits!

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