The Scarecrow



Michael LaBossiere

THE SCARECROW

CREDITS

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CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Getting the Investigators Involved	3
Keeper's Background	3
Investigation	3
The Contented Cow	4
Action and Events	5
Conclusion	6
NPCs	7
Serial Killers	8
About the author	14

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes investigators need a break from the horror and madness of the Mythos to partake in the horror and madness of the mundane world. This adventure holds out the promise of rest and relaxation, only to rip it away. Otherwise, obviously enough, there would be no adventure.

The adventure is set in the current day and takes place in the imaginary town of Deerfarm in the imaginary state of New Hampshire. With some modifications, it can be set in a different time or place.

The original, 6E version of the adventure is available for<u>free</u>, <u>along with 47 other adventures</u>.

GETTING THE INVESTIGATORS INVOLVED

The Keeper has multiple options to lure the investigators into the adventure. First, the investigators could win or receive as a gift a weekend at the Contented Cow. They will certainly not suspect anything. Second, the players might have happened to ask if their investigators can go someplace "quiet" to recover a few Sanity Points. The Contented Cow is well known as a quiet, restful place and would be ideal for the investigators. Third, if an investigator is already undergoing treatment for Sanity loss, the person treating the investigator can suggest the Contented Cow as an excellent place. In any case, the Keeper should find a plausible way to get the investigators to the Contented Cow.

KEEPER'S BACKGROUND

The Contented Cow, a "rustic" inn, is usually a place of beds and breakfasts. But, unknown to the staff, two of their registered guests (Tamara and Jason Windflower) were murdered in California by Nadine Bryce and John Haplin. Haplin is a serial killer who has evaded the law for nearly a decade and Bryce is his latest girlfriend.

Haplin learned the victims planned on going to the Contented Cow. In an amazing coincidence, Haplin's career as a serial killer began at that very spot, ten years ago. While a college student, he worked part time for Becky and Roger Speight on their farm. While the couple were kind and generous, Haplin took an irrational dislike to them and decided to scare them in what was originally planned as a Halloween prank. A fan of Batman villains and familiar with the local fable of the strangling scarecrow (see below), he dressed up as a scarecrow, even making gloves covered with straw. After dressing up, he went to the farmhouse and terrified them. While he had not planned to go beyond frightening them, their terror awakened something cruel and evil in him and he murdered them. Since then, Haplin has been obsessed with inflicting terror and pain.

Thinking it would be a "real blast" Bryce and Haplin have decided to assume the identities of their latest victims and go to the Contented Cow. Haplin wants to "do it big" by committing a series of killings that will become "bigger than life, an urban myth sort of thing." Haplin's plan is to kill several people as strangely as possible and top it off by blowing up the other houses.

INVESTIGATION

While the investigators should think they are going for a pleasant rest, the players will suspect that something is afoot. As such, they will most likely investigate. The following information can be found by the investigators.

The Contented Cow

If the investigators check on the Contented Cow, they will find that it is owned by an aging rock star who recovered from drug addiction at the original farmhouse in the 1980s. He purchased the land eight years ago and had the old farmhouse replaced by a newer, larger building. The star is currently in England and the investigators will not be able to reach him. Even if they could, he would have nothing useful to say to them. If the investigators save the Contented Cow, he might become a useful contact.

According to all sources, the Contented Cow is a respectable place. It is expensive but offers an excellent vacation for the money. The place has a reputation as a recovery spot for artists and professionals who have had problems with drugs or emotional breakdowns, but there are no incidents to stain its reputation. The Contented Cow is exactly as it appears to be: a vacation spot for people who really, really need to get away from it all.

The Murders

If the investigators talk to the citizens of Deerfarm and specifically ask about any terrible or odd events, they will find that the original farmhouse was the scene of two gruesome murders ten years ago. The owners, Becky and Roger Speight, were found strangled to death. The police report notes that no prints were found at the scene, but there was straw in the bed where the bodies were found, and the forensic examination revealed bits of straw embedded in the victims' necks.

Most believe that an insane person killed the Speights, since they were well liked and nothing of value was taken from the farmhouse.

The Strangling Scarecrow

There is a local story about the "strangling scarecrow" that most of the townsfolk know. This story claims that the region was plagued by a witch who had escaped the trials in Salem. This witch, the story goes, had the power to summon a demon to bring life to an old scarecrow. This scarecrow was sent to strangle those that threatened her. The story ends with the old witch and her scarecrow being burned on the very spot were the Contented Cow now stands. This story was made up as a Halloween tale in 1907 and gradually became accepted as a local myth, its true origin forgotten. This tale should serve well as a red herring.

O'Donald's Massacre Story

Once the investigators get to the Contented Cow, they will probably start inquiring into anything unusual about the place. Conveniently, the old handyman, Carl O'Donald, loves to make up stories. He will see the investigators as the sort of people who would appreciate a tall tale. Because of this, he will tell them that the place has a rather dark history. According to an old legend, a small group of Indians were massacred on this spot by another tribe. The dying Indians are supposed to have cursed the ground so that none would be able to live here. Shortly afterwards, or so the story goes, the tribe that perpetrated the massacre vanished one day, leaving only a deserted village.

O'Donald knows the scarecrow story and will attest to its veracity. He will add that he thinks the old witch learned her secrets from the Indians who were massacred. If the investigators seem interested in the scarecrow story, O'Donald will embellish the massacre tale by saying that when white colonists found the empty village, they reported finding a tattered scarecrow with bloody "hands." If the investigators try to verify the story, they will find nothing. If confronted about this, O'Donald will say, correctly, that not all old stories have ended up in the history books. If the investigators really push him and seem upset, he will either reveal the truth (if they are likeable) or double down on his fabrication (if he does not like them).

The locals and staff know of O'Donald's story telling ways and most will back up his stories, just to have a bit of fun with people from away.

Betsy Carter

The owner of the one private house (House #4) on the island is a middle-aged woman, Betsy Carter. She found the Speights when she went to visit them for morning coffee. She knows they were strangled and will describe how there were bits of straw and hay on the floor. She will also say the Speight's scarecrow was missing. She doesn't know anything more about what happened but will speculate for as long as the investigators are willing to listen. Most of her speculation will be sensible (an insane person, an addict looking for drugs, etc.), but if asked, she will say that sometimes she thinks that what happened might have been unnatural.

THE CONTENTED COW

The PCs will be staying at the Contented Cow, a replica of an old-style farmhouse (except for the fact that it has dozens of bedrooms). It is a rather nice place with various tame farm animals about to add to the ambience. There is even a scarecrow out in the decorative fields.

The land is surrounded on two sides by a river and a canal was been dug making the area into an island. Access to the island is via a bridge. The bridge has a modest gate that is usually kept locked at night. There are four other houses on the land. Two are currently occupied (by Betsy Carter and Carl O'Donald), the other two are owned by corporations and are used in corporate retreats.

Guests

Second Floor Guests (by room)

1. Carol Burt

2. Steve Brannon, political provocateur and alcoholic.

3. "Jason Windflower" and "Tamara Windflower."

4. James Cocil: businessman, opioid addict.

5. Wendy Smith and Eugene Jones: couple trying to save their marriage.

6. Reverend Paul Miller: fighting his inner demons.

7. Jennie Lee: Hedge fund manager and Iraq vet struggling with PTSD

8. Tracy Dulce: Lawyer with a guilty conscience.

Third Floor Guests (by room)

1. Becky Smith and Ralph White: siblings recovering from the death of their mother.

2. Empty

3. Florence & John Garcia: A couple dealing with the opioid overdose of their son.

4. Empty

6. Tisha Howell and Linda Huan: A couple with relationship problems.

7. Empty

8. William Watson and Henry Wick: A couple burnt out from overworking on their startup company (Watson & Wick's Wicked Apps).

9. Dr. Barnes and Billy Barnes

MAP KEYS

Area Map

The area map shows the area around the Contented Cow.

Bridge: The bridge is single lane wooden structure intentionally designed to look rustic. The phone lines, electric lines and cable run under the bridge.

Houses 1-2: These houses are owned by corporations and are generally only used for corporate retreats. During the adventure they will be unoccupied.

House 3: Carl O'Donald lives in this house. It is owned by the owner of the Contented Cow and it is sometimes rented out. Carl has a large supply of tools as well as his M1 rifle.

House 4: Betsy Carter lives alone here in a tastefully decorated farmhouse.

Contented Cow: The Contented Cow.

^{5.} Empty

Woods: An area of pine trees. Pleasant during the day, spooky when a murderer is on the loose.

Contented Cow First Floor

This is the first floor of the Contented Cow; it shows the doors (brown on the map) and windows (light blue on the map). The windows can be opened but do have interior locks.

Entrance: The entrance features a rustic check in desk, which is always manned by a chipper and cheerful staff member.

Office: The office contains a desk, chair and computer. The office is occupied by one of the staff during the day but is usually empty at night.

Bathrooms: Each has a toilet and sink.

Common Room: The common room is tasteful-rustic and features a decorative fireplace and comfortable chairs. There are stairs leading up to the second floor.

Dining Room: The dinning room has tables, a decorative fireplace and stairs leading up to the second floor.

Kitchen: The kitchen is well equipped with appliances and has a convenient supply of knifes.

Stairs: The stairs lead up to the second-floor staff quarters.

Storage: The storage area holds food and other supplies.

Tool Shed: The tool shed is well stocked with tools including the mandatory axe and chainsaw.

Contented Cow Second Floor

The staff quarters and guest rooms are located on this floor. While the doors are wooden, they have modern card entry locks.

Staff Quarters: These modest, but tastefully decorated, quarters are used by the staff members who live on site. The Contented Cow offers room and board as part of staff compensation.

1-8. Rooms: Each room is tastefully rustic and has its own bathroom. Room #4 was occupied by the ill-fated James Cocil.

Fitness Room: Stocked with a range of well-maintained fitness equipment, this room allows guests to sweat away their troubles.

Contented Cow Third Floor

The third floor is all guest rooms. They are the same as those on the second floor.

1-9. Rooms: Each room is tastefully rustic and has its own bathroom. Room #9 is occupied by Dr. Barnes & Billy Barnes.

Contented Cow Basement

Despite the sump pump, the basement is always a bit damp and musty.

Main Basement: This area is used for overflow storage and currently holds some old furniture under plastic sheets. The furniture is up on wooden pallets to keep it from contacting the floor. The basement is well lit with LED bulbs, but Haplin will try to break enough of them to make the basement dark and spooky.

Utilities: This locked room contains the water heaters, furnace, breaker boxes, etc. for the Contented Cow. The back up generator is here; it provides power to the emergency lighting and the office. Haplin will punch a hole in the generator's gas tank (so it will go out unexpectedly and lure someone to the basement to check on it) and, if possible, place a bear trap on the stairs to the basement.

Storage: This area is used for long term storage of supplies, such as canned goods.

ACTION AND EVENTS

The first day will be enjoyable and the investigators will get a chance to relax. They will find that their mobile service does not work in the area, but the Contented Cow does have landlines and internet access. As evening approaches, it will start to rain, and a thunderstorm will start rolling in. This will set the stage for the events to come. The following provides a guide for the Keeper to run the adventure. As always, improvisations and modifications are the order of the day.

A Murder

After the investigators arrive at Contented Cow, there will be a massive thunderstorm at night, complete with crashes of thunder and flashes of lightning. One bolt will strike an old tree in the yard and split it open.

The next morning, Mr. James Cocil, an innocuous businessman from North Dakota struggling with an opioid addiction, will be found murdered in his room. The room (#4) is on the second floor and the window has been smashed in. There will be muddy footprints on the floor leading to and from the window. Cocil appears to have been strangled, with clear marks on his neck. If the marks are examined, small bits of straw will be found stuck in his skin. Bits of straw can also be found in the room. He was killed by Haplin, who dressed up in a scarecrow costume for the deed and reached the window via a wooden ladder (returned to the tool shed).

A dead cow, missing most of its major organs, will be found in the nearby field. Haplin killed the cow and disemboweled it, to add to the terror. If the investigators try to call the police, they will find that the lines are dead, the internet is down and that they are in a mobile phone dead zone. If someone else tries to make the call, they will report that the lines are dead. Anyone going to check out the bridge will find that it has been destroyed (Haplin blew it up, timing the detonation of the dynamite with the thunder). The river will also be found to have swollen to dangerous proportions. Anyone attempting to swim across must make a Hard check of their Swim skill or be swept away, taking 1D6 each round until they succeed on a check or die.

There are no boats on the island, although a raft could be made by using wood from the Contented Cow or a house. It will continue to rain and storm during the day, making it dark and quite noisy.

A Witness

If the investigators become involved in the situation and seem to be in charge, Billy Barnes (Room #9 on the third floor) will hesitantly approach them. He will say "I was scared by the thunder and I looked out the window. I saw the scarecrow..." at this point his mother, Dr. Darlene Barnes, will pull him away, saying that he should not bother them. She will not want him around the investigators and will keep a careful eye on him. The boy did see Haplin dressed as a scarecrow walking across the field to the building. If Haplin learns of this, he will kill Billy and his mother that night if the investigators don't solve the mystery.

Events to Follow

Haplin will pretend to be shocked and horrified by the events, while planning his next murder. He will begin by trying to kill Betsy Carter. If he succeeds, he and Bryce will attempt to murder everyone else. Haplin is fond of horror movies and will endeavor to recreate various classic murders from them. He has loaded up his stolen WV bus with various murder implements, though he is careful to conceal the more obvious ones. Fortunately for his efforts at deception, many of the items are quite common and easily explained (such as the axe he claims he uses to split firewood when he camps).

Haplin and Bryce are both talented in the ways of deceit and will probably be able to kill everyone unless the investigators stop them. If Haplin and Bryce see the investigators as a threat, they will focus on taking them out first.

Methods of Murder

Here are, without the gory details, some suggested methods of murder. As with almost any horror movie, Haplin can kill unimportant NPCs easily, even when the game combat mechanics would make it a challenge (like killing a victim by stabbing them with an arrow through a mattress). When facing investigators, Haplin is subject to the normal combat rules.

Haplin knows the layout of the Contented Cow and will acquire a master key card that will allow him access to all the rooms. He will use this access to plant fake clues as needed to throw the suspicion on others and to commit murders.

Arrow Impale

If Haplin gets the opportunity, he will hide under a bed and try to kill a victim by pushing an arrow up through the mattress and through their throat. If this opportunity does not present itself, he will use his bow and arrows to pincushion a victim.

Axe/Knife Murder

Haplin will endeavor to lure a guest or staff member into the woods or to another one of the houses (telling a plausible tale of looking for supplies or checking up on whoever might be there) to kill them with an axe or knife.

Bear Traps

Haplin has four custom made bear traps hidden in his WV bus. He will conceal them in various places where people are likely to walk, such as the stairs to the basement. Noticing a bear trap is an opposed roll against Haplin's **Stealth** skill roll. Blundering into or avoiding a trap is largely a matter of luck—if the investigators run across one, call for Luck rolls. A bear trap does 2D6 damage. The Keeper can also have NPC victims run into the traps.

Chainsaw

Haplin will persuade some of the staff to assist him in trying to fell trees to make a raft or bridge. Once he gets them away from the rest of the group, he will kill them with the chainsaw.

Exercise Murder

If Haplin can catch a guest working out, he will kill them with a piece of exercise equipment—most likely by crushing their throat with a free weight on the weight bench.

Scarecrow Murder

Haplin has a scarecrow costume, complete with straw covered gloves, hidden in his VW bus. He will try to do at least a few more murders by strangling weak victims while wearing the costume.

CONCLUSION

If the investigators are not able to stop Bryce and Haplin, the two will eventually kill everyone who is unable to flee the area. Once everyone is dead, Bryce and Haplin will plant dynamite in all the buildings on the island, except the Contended Cow, and blow them up. After that, Bryce and Haplin will stab each other a few times and then wait for the authorities to show up. They will tell a convincing tale about two murderers and will go on to kill many more people.

If the investigators defeat Bryce and Haplin, they will be considered heroes and should receive 1D4 Sanity Points as a reward. They will be welcome to visit the Contented Cow for free in the future for as long as they do not abuse their privileges. They can also make a useful contact with the survivors as well as the aging rock star, who might provide a lead to or help in other adventures.

After putting the investigators through such an ordeal, the Keeper might decide to let them remain at the Contented Cow, recovering and resting. If so, the Keeper might allow them to recover 1D4 lost Sanity points.

NPCS

Carl O'Donald, age 60, handyman

STR 65	CON 70
011000	001110
APP 55	POW 60
DB: +1D4	Build: 1
Attacks pe	r round: 1
Brawl	
Garand Mi	1
Armor: no	ne.

SIZ 75 EDU 90 **SAN 60** HP 15 Move: 5 MP: 12 Luck: N/A 40% (20/8), damage 1D3+1D4

DEX 75

55% (27/11), damage 2D6+2



Important Skills: Climb 55%, Dodge 32%, Electrical Repair 60%, First Aid 45%, Jump 30%, Mechanical Repair 65%, Operate Heavy Machinery 25%, Stealth 35%, Track 15%, Firearms (Handgun) 45%. Firearms (Rifle/Shotgun) 55%

INT 65

Description: O'Donald is an older man, with graving black

hair. He wears jeans and work shirts when on the job. He served in Iraq as an Army mechanic and returned to New Hampshire after the war. He does not like to talk about the war, preferring stories about fishing. O'Donald saw some rather unpleasant things during his tours and will not be panicked by the murders. If he thinks the investigators are trying to save the day, he will help them.

Carol Burt, age 32, police officer

STR 65	CON 65	SIZ 65	DEX 65	INT 65
APP 65	POW 65	EDU 85	SAN 65	HP 13
DB: +1D4	Build: 1	Move: 8	MP: 13	Luck: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl Glock 9mm damage 1D10 Armor: none.

50% (25/10), damage 1D3+1D4 60% (30/12),

Important Skills: Climb 45%, Drive Auto 45%, Fast Talk 45%, Law 25%, Library Use 46%, Listen 35%, Spanish 35%, Persuade 31%, Psychology 21%, Stealth 25%, Spot Hidden 32%.

Description: Burt is a fit woman who has brown hair and blue eyes. She wears hiking clothes while on vacation. Burt is a

police detective in Miami. After being badly injured while investigating a series of brutal homicides, she decided she needed time away from the city. Burt is an experienced detective



and, if the investigators do not take the lead, she will.

Dr. Darlene Barnes	, age 35, medical doctor
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STR 45	CON 55	SIZ 55	DEX 65	INT 85
APP 65	POW 65	EDU 95	SAN 65	HP 11
DB: +0	Build: 0	Move: 8	MP: 13	Luck: N/A

Attacks per round: 1 Brawl Armor: none.

25% (12/5), damage 1D3+0



Important Skills: First Aid 65%, Medicine 80%, Psychology 30%, Science (Biology) 20%

Description: Dr. Barnes is a relatively young doctor but has already been burned out by the opioid epidemic plaguing America. She has come to the Contented Cow to get a respite from dealing with the problems of other people. Because of this, she will initially want to avoid interaction with the investigators. However, she is still a dedicated

physician and will assist the best she can with her medical abilities. She is extremely protective of her son and wants to keep him away from bad influences-at least some of the investigators will probably fall into this category. Her husband was left to die, slowly and horribly, by a hit and run driver while biking, and she still struggles a bit when anyone asks about him.

Billy Barnes, age 11, young boy

STR 35	CON 60	SIZ 35	DEX 65	INT 60
APP 60	POW 60	EDU 95	SAN 65	HP 10
DB: -1	Build: -1	Move: 8	MP: 12	Luck: N/A

Attacks per round: 1 Brawl Armor: none.

25% (12/5), damage 1D3-1

Important Skills: Stealth 20%, Throw 30%

Description: He has brown hair and brown eyes. Aside from not being able to sleep well at night, he is a normal young boy.

Typical Guest

STR 55	CON 55	SIZ 65	DEX 60	INT 60
APP 60	POW 60	EDU 80	SAN 60	HP 12
DB: 0	Build: 0	Move: 7	MP: 12	Luck: N/A

Attacks per round: 1 Brawl Armor: none.

25% (12/5), damage 1D3

Description: The typical guest is a middle aged professional, skilled in their field, but not up to dealing with violence. Most of the guests will be too scared to do anything effectively. The guests can be used in the usual way of bit players in horror movies—as victims, to annoy the investigators and as red herrings. There are 19 guests in all.

Typical Staff Member

STR 65	CON 65	SIZ 65	DEX 60	INT 65
APP 70	POW 55	EDU 70	SAN 60	HP 13
DB: +1D4	Build: 1	Move: 8	MP: 11	Luck: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3+1D4 Armor: none.

Important Skills: Fast Talk, Persuade 35%, Psychology 35% **Description:** The typical staffer is a student who is earning money for school. The staff members are selected to be good looking, good listeners and friendly. The staff members are not well equipped to deal with violence. There are ten staff members in total.

Staff

Andrews, Ashley: Friendly electrical engineering major. Brown, Tom: Witty philosophy grad student. Cortez, Juan: Sensible pharmacy major. Dupree, Glenn: Bombastic finance major. Felder, Daniel: Sarcastic psychology major. Gupta, Gopa: Clever political science grad student. Huen, Janet: Expressive visual arts major. LaBree, John: Fancy food science major. Sutton, Ann: Reflective math major. Tell, Jane: Materialistic business major.

SERIAL KILLERS

"Jason Windflower" (John Haplin), age 38, serial killer

		•	1 1 2	, ,
STR 70	CON 75	SIZ 65	DEX 70	INT 70
APP 65	POW 75	EDU 90	SAN 00	HP 14
DB: +1D4	Build: 1	Move: 9	MP: 12	Luck: N/A
Attacks pe	r round: 1			
Brawl		50% (25/1	0), damage	1D3+1D4
.38 Revolv	er	40% (20/8), damage 1D10		
Knife		50% (25/10) 1D4+2+1D4		
Axe		20% (10/5) 18+2+1D4		
Bow & Arr	ows	20% (10/5) 1D6+1/2DB		
Chainsaw		20% (10/5) 2D8		
Armor: no	ne.			



Important Skills: Art (Graphic Design) 60%, Charm 65%, Climb 55%, Fast Talk 55%, Jump 35%, Law 15%, Library Use 35%, Listen 45%, Locksmith 27%, Persuade 50%, Psychology 34%, Stealth 55%, Spot Hidden 45%

Weapons: .38 Revolver 31% Damage 1D10 Range

15 yards Attacks 2 Shots 6 HP 10 Malfunction 00, Knife 45% Damage 1D4+2+1D4 HP 15, Fist 65% 1D3+1D4

Description: Haplin is reasonably good looking and has an honest, kind face. He is quiet but has good social skills. He has light brown hair and brown eyes. Haplin is, by normal human standards, insane. While possessing effective planning skills, he loves to harm others and lives for acts of planned violence. Haplin is not simply a crazed killer, he is a planning, careful, crazed killer. Haplin is currently posing as Jason Windflower, a graphic designer he worked with once. Since Haplin is also a graphic designer, he can play Windflower's role convincingly.

"Tamara Windflower" (Nadine Bryce), age 30, serial killer

miner				
STR 55	CON 55	SIZ 55	DEX 65	INT 60
APP 75	POW45	EDU 90	SAN 30	HP 14
DB: +0	Build: 0	Move: 8	MP: 9	Luck: N/A
Attacks p	er round: 1			
Brawl		25% (12/5), damage 1D3		
.38 Revol	ver	20% (10/4), damage 1D10		

ver 20% (10/4), damage 1D10 30% (15/6) 1D4+2

Important Skills: Anthropology 21%, Charm 55%, Fast Talk 41%, History 35%, Medicine 15%, Persuade 40%, Stealth 30%.

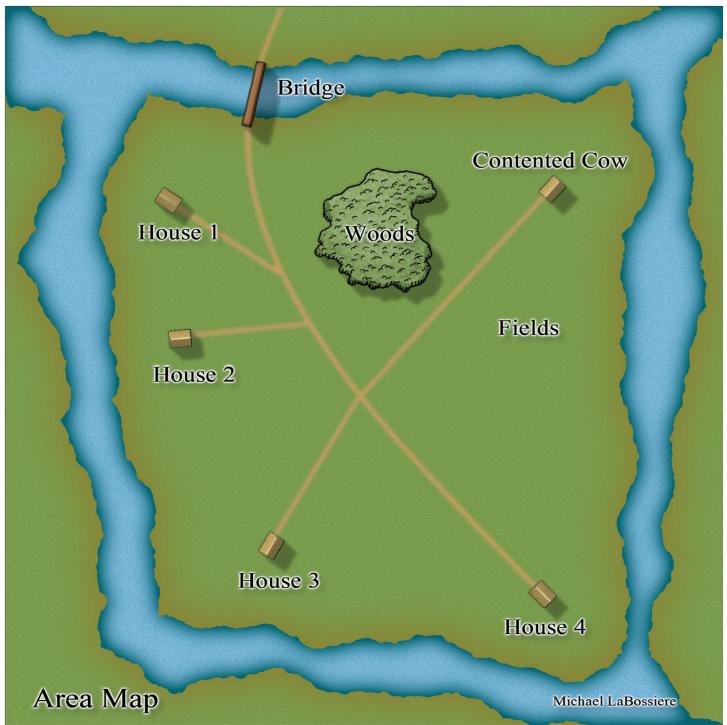


Knife

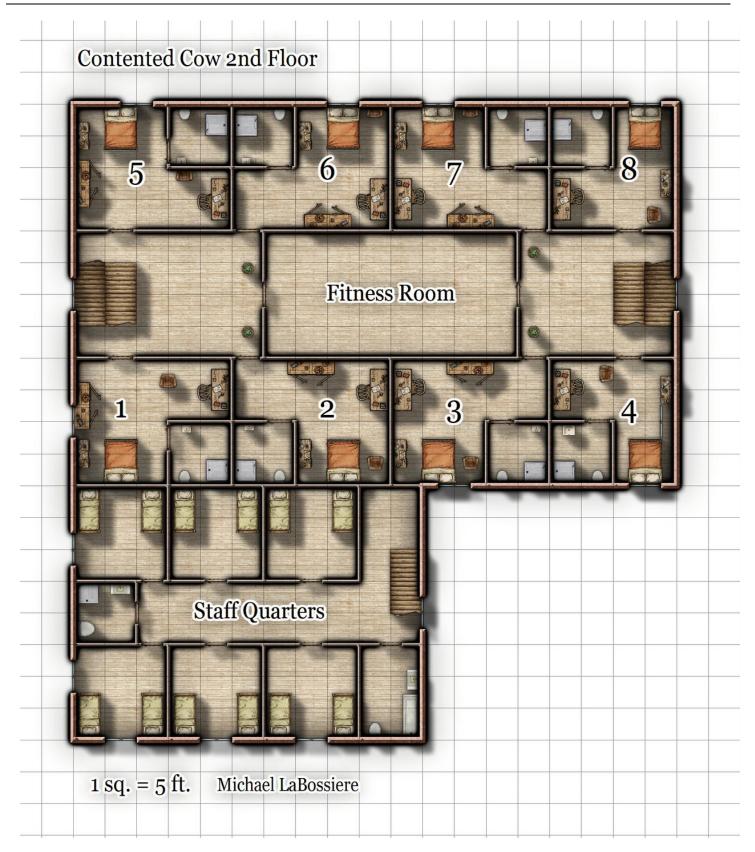
Description: Bryce is an attractive woman who knows how to use her looks and her charm to her advantage. She has black hair and green eyes. She was a graduate student when she met Haplin. While initially uninterested in him, he won her over with a bold move: he gave her a choice between

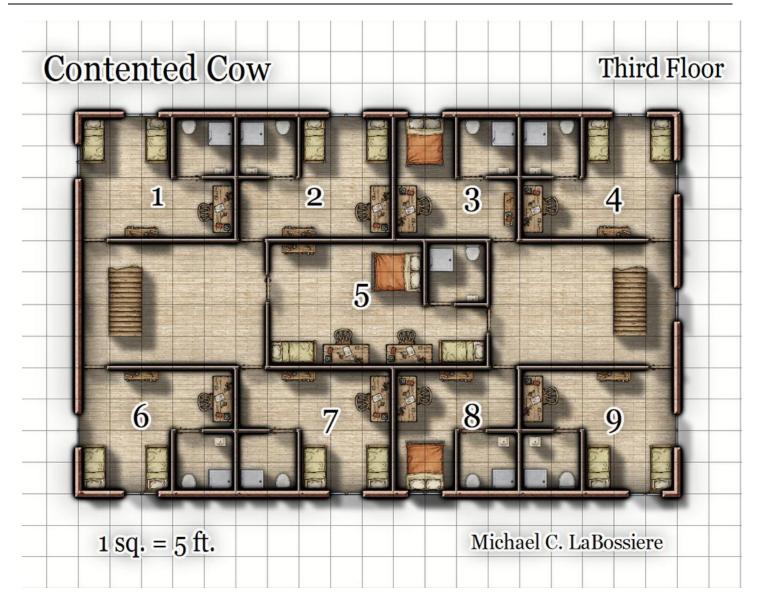
joining him in the moral abyss of murder or being his victim. Like Haplin, she came to realize that she enjoys the suffering of others. She also shares his penchant for planning.

MAPS











ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Michael LaBossiere is a gamer/runner from Maine who went to school in Ohio and ended up a philosophy professor in Florida.

While acquiring his doctorate in philosophy at Ohio State University, he earned his ramen noodle money by writing for Chaosium, GDW, R. Talsorian Games, and TSR. After graduate school, he became a philosophy professor at Florida A&M University. His first philosophy book, *What Don't You Know?*, was published in 2008. He continues to write philosophy and gaming material. He is also a blogger, but these days who isn't?

When not writing, he enjoys running, gaming and the martial arts. Thanks to a quadriceps tendon tear in 2009, he was out of running for a while, but returned to the trails and wrote a book about it, <u>Of Tendon & Trail</u>. He can be contacted at <u>ontologist@aol.com</u>.

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