

THE PURPLE JACKET



NIGHT
TIMES



The Purple Jacket

A hive of despair in small town Connecticut.

Written and Designed by
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see my other work at
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CREDITS

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SPECIAL THANKS

Big thank you to playtesters Aiden, Jol, and Fin.

To everyone on the Necronomicon Discord server for helping to inspire this scenario.

And to you, for reading!



Introduction

This scenario takes place in Spring, in the small town of Putnam, Connecticut sometime in the 1920s. Keepers may wish to use a different setting, and can do so with minor considerations.

At the center of the scenario is a Catholic boarding school in Putnam called Holy Spirit Academy. Here at Holy Spirit, male students (and only male students) who are affluent and of high school age can receive among the best science educations in the state. One of the teachers at this school is Dr. Boyd Barrett, an intelligent and stand-up biologist from Great Britain. Dr. Barrett wants to get his students involved in some hands-on work. However, this work has proven to be too much for the town to handle.

Just over a year ago, Barrett returned from a trip to visit family in Severn Valley, England. While he was here he was exposed to a group of shans, also known as The Insects From Shaggai. The shans are pigeon-sized insects who vaguely resemble hornets. They came to Earth after their home planet was destroyed. Through worshipping their deity, Azathoth, they've gained the ability to phase through solid matter. They use this power to enter the brains of humans and dominate them telepathically. Certain shan use these powers to inflict pain and misery on humans, sensations they find exciting (even nourishing). A year before the beginning of the scenario, a shan made its way into Barrett's head and took control of him.

Barrett went back to Connecticut and returned to his business. One day, however, he had a flash of inspiration. Barrett was no simple biologist - he wanted to be famous. Specifically, he wanted to become known for his pioneering work in the field of genetic engineering. Taking advantage of what he had available - the small but active beekeeping community in Putnam - Barrett devised a plan to create a new type of honeybee. This new bee would be faster, more agreeable, and more productive than ever.

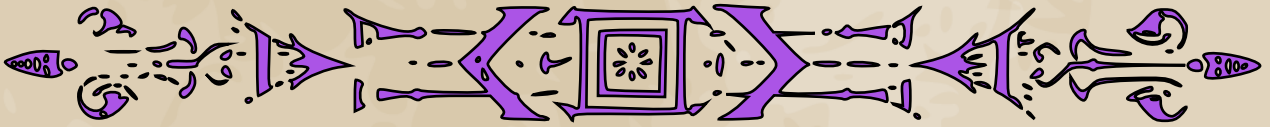
If it weren't for the mind control, Barrett's plan might've been a success.

The shan in Barrett's head took full control of him, forcing him to alter the course of his experiments. In a dream, Barrett mysteriously received knowledge of DNA - an unfamiliar concept to biologists in the Jazz Age. He called his discovery "Jacob's Ladder". When shans started coming through a gate in the woods to donate their genetic material to Barrett, he was more than happy to work the material into his experiments.

He got some of his students to perform tests as well - claiming the shan DNA was from a horsefly. The results were terrifying. "Barrett's Bees" are strong and incredibly mean-spirited. They appear similar to hornets, with a purplish sheen and rapidly beating opaque wings. Getting stung by a Shaggai Wasp (which they will henceforth be referred to as) is far more painful than getting stung by a normal bee. It's not unlike receiving a stiff punch (1D2 DAM, 1D3+1 per round if being stung by a swarm).

Furthermore, those who are stung must make a CON roll to resist the effects of the Wasp's venom. If the roll is failed, the victim loses 1D3 points of Sanity. Only call for one CON roll per investigator per round, no matter how many times they're stung. They also suffer an effect based on the amount of Sanity they've lost to the Wasps so far. This represents the amount of venom in their system. For every 24 hours an investigator goes without being stung, the effective number of Sanity they've lost to the Wasps should go down by one for the purpose of determining the venom effect. *Do not tell them you're doing this, however, and do not allow them to actually regain any lost Sanity.*

The venom effects should not be exactly the same each time someone is stung. If you've already covered an effect, another investigator might experience something similar but slightly different. Keepers are encouraged to come up with their own effects as venomous despair seeps into the brains of their investigators.



Venom Effects

✿ **1 SAN Lost:** The onset of ennui; missing one's parents and childhood; a sudden and unexplainable paranoia.

✿ **2 SAN Lost:** Headaches which never seem to leave; complaining; a constant visage of anger; shame from old embarrassments.

✿ **4 SAN Lost:** The feeling that the group's task is useless; mild suicidal urges; a desperate desire to procrastinate.

✿ **6 SAN Lost:** Frequent random mood swings; constant annoying buzzing sound in ear; flakes and welts on skin.

✿ **8 SAN Lost:** Distant ethereal hallucinations, intense paranoia, hysterical crying fits, random acts of violence.

✿ **10 SAN Lost:** The character is inconsolable. The player loses control of their character until the venom is worked out of their system.

✿ **20 SAN Lost:** If by some miracle the character is still alive, they die now.

Shaggai Wasps

They are, in fact, bees (Wasp is a misnomer). They die when they sting someone and their hives look like normal honey bee hives, though much larger. Their colonies have three different types of bee - a queen, drones, and workers. The investigators should only have to concern themselves with the worker bees, as these are the ones with stingers. At the slightest hint of danger to the hive, workers will swarm and attack in large numbers. Due to the potency of their venom, a swarm of Wasps will quickly devastate its target. Running away is genuinely the most valid option.

If approached, the Shaggai Wasps will attack those who threaten their hive for 3D6 combat rounds. Guns and melee weapons are

ineffective at damaging an angry swarm. Shotguns are only partially effective (half damage). If an investigator uses a shotgun, consider a swarm to have as many HP as it has bees. A swarm has a MOV of 6, meaning it can be outrun.

Sanity loss to see a swarm of Wasps for the first time is 1/1D6 (although this does not count toward determining venom effects).

Shaggai Wasps are larger and more resilient than ordinary honeybees. They have a thick carapace with a vague purplish sheen. Their eyes are quite large and appear green in the light. Additionally, they have twice the number of legs as a honeybee - twelve, instead of six. They can move through walls, but require a few moments to do so. People seeing this may rationalize it as "the bugs squeezing through tiny cracks in the ceiling".

The Wasps are unusually attracted to loud noises. Moving around a large hive of them (such as the one in the attic of the They are, in fact, bees (Wasp is a misnomer). They die when they sting someone. Their hives look like normal honey bee hives, though they are much larger. Their colonies have three different types of bee - a queen, drones, and workers. The investigators will likely only have to concern themselves with the worker bees, as these are the ones with stingers. At the slightest hint of danger to the hive, workers will swarm and attack in large numbers. Due to the potency of their venom, a swarm of Wasps will quickly devastate their target. Running away is often the most valid option.

If approached, the Shaggai Wasps will attack those who threaten their hive for 3D6 combat rounds. Guns and melee weapons are ineffective at damaging an angry swarm. Shotguns are only partially effective (half damage). If an investigator uses a shotgun, consider a given swarm to have as many HP as it has bees. A swarm has a MOV of 6, meaning it can be outrun. The wasps prefer moving at night, but will not hesitate to attack something that is approaching their nest during the day.

Ingenuity

Saavy investigators are likely to think up ways to combat the Wasps. Instead of trying to stop them, *lean in* to these ideas. The goal of the scenario should not be to “eradicate the Wasps” - that’s what the police are for. The goal of the investigators should be to locate Dr. Barrett and stop him before he’s able to spread more of these godawful abominations; that’s his goal, after all.

Some ideas for clearing out (or simply surviving) the Wasps will prove to be more effective than others. Following is a list of the most likely ideas.

Beekeeping Suits

A good beekeeping suit which covers an investigator from head to toe will reduce the amount of damage they take from being stung by a Wasp to zero. It also keeps them from having to make a **CON** roll, as no venom enters the suit. However, getting attacked by a swarm is a different story. The Wasps’ stings are so powerful that not all of them will stick in the suit; some will pierce it. If a suited investigator is attacked by a swarm, they take 1D2+1 points of damage. They must still make a **CON** roll to resist the venom, but may do so with a bonus die. Most of the other humans in town will have suits. Clever investigators will seek them out before the end of the scenario. The nearest place they are likely to find these is Providence, Rhode Island. The drive to Providence takes about an hour in each direction. The train takes 40 minutes. Round-trip tickets cost \$2.33. The suits themselves each cost about \$40.

Fire

Fire is extremely effective. However, the town of Putnam is in no way willing to use fire on any of their mostly historic buildings. If the investigators are caught committing arson, charges will be pressed against them. It may be appropriate to first issue a warning via a police officer to unwary investigators. After this, they will be treated by the full extent of the law.

Smoke

If none of the players have this knowledge organically, they may make a **Biology** or **Natural World** roll to have their characters know it. Bees don’t like smoke. It makes them pass out. If enough smoke is concentrated in their hive, they will fall in large numbers. This tactic is especially effective during the day, when they are sleepy anyway. Once on the ground they can easily be stomped. However, approaching a hive without incurring a swarm is nearly impossible.

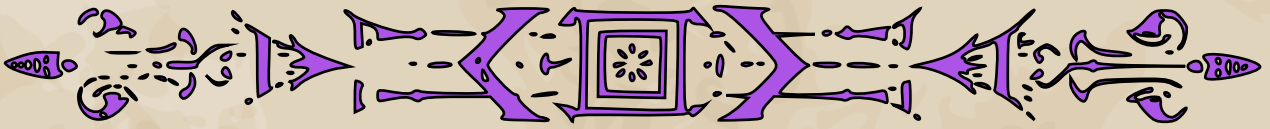
Pesticide

Before the 1940s pesticides as we know them today didn’t exist. During the Jazz Age chemicals such as sodium chlorate and sulphuric acid were used in their place. Investigators can visit the Chem Lab in Holy Spirit to synthesize either of these compounds. This takes a **Science (Chemistry)** roll. If the players do not think to do this, “gassing” buildings in the town becomes the status quo for State Police roughly two days into their occupation. Smoke proves ineffective as casualties mount. Officers grumble about “how much easier it would be if we could just burn the place to the ground”.

Putnam, CT

Putnam is small and otherwise unassuming. Only one road in the town is paved - Church Street. It leads into town from the main road which goes between Connecticut and Rhode Island. Other roads in town are paved with dirt. Church Street has a general store, a church (of course), a sheriff’s office, and little else aside from people’s homes. Holy Spirit Academy is near this main street, and is one of the first things one sees when driving into town.

A railroad runs through the center of Putnam. The station is recently renovated and quite nice for such a small town.



Starting Out

While the Connecticut State Police work tirelessly to rid the town of Wasps, the players are instead hired to figure out how the whole mess happened to begin with. The exact method of introduction is up to the Keeper. Suggestions are provided below.

✿ If the investigators belong to an academic institution, they may be contacted by a friend of one of their Professors. The friend teaches at Holy Spirit, and wishes to protect the reputation of the school by sorting out the bizarre problem.

✿ The investigators could be hired to solve the disappearance of Harvey Crick, a student at Holy Spirit. Harvey's parents (Victor and Donna Crick) are quite wealthy, and near hysteria over the loss of their son. They asked the police to search for him but were met with incredulity. "If Harvey is still in there, he must be rescued", they say. If not, at least whoever caused this can be brought to justice before they get away. Victor and Donna are from Providence, but their location can easily be changed to suit the Keeper's wishes.

✿ Perhaps a journalist investigator is sent from neighboring Providence to write a story about the "Putnam Infestation". Both the Providence Journal and the Rhode Island Pendulum are highly interested. If the investigator in question lacks a reason to want to visit such a dangerous area, you could begin the scenario by poking them a bit. Tell them that the stories written by their competitor are starting to outstrip them. These stories are more dramatic, more in-depth, and far more popular than whatever the investigator is writing. They are at risk of losing their job unless they land a big story - "and your boss has just the thing". The investigator is assured they won't be in any real danger - "the place is crawling with cops".

✿ Finally, the investigators could work for a private security agency as a part-time job. The agency - Pendleton Security in Providence - is contracted by an appropriate party to protect the other investigators.

Delta Green

The Keeper may wish to run *The Purple Jacket* as a Delta Green scenario, or in any sort of modern Call of Cthulhu setting. Indeed, it is well suited for this. If incorporating the scenario into a Delta Green campaign, simply remove any and all references to "Jacob's Ladder". The dream-concept is identical to the modern concept of DNA, therefore Barrett teaching it to his students is in no way scandalous.

The federal government has grown concerned with the "Putnam Infestation", as they are calling it. They have orchestrated several divisions of the Connecticut State Police to join together and eradicate the town. However, they are concerned that the problem will reoccur unless the source is found.



Holy Spirit Academy

The investigators are instructed to start here when they're ready. It's believed to be the source of the outbreak. Holy Spirit is a three story wooden building of colonial construction, which is meticulously kept and renovated. Since power has been cut from the school (and the rest of the town), the halls are empty and dark. Even the police dare not venture here. A faint humming can be heard as investigators wander the halls.

A large main lobby has an inlaid staircase at the back. Pairs of hallways lead out from both sides of the lobby. The second floor is open, with a two hallway-sized walkways going around either side of the room. Large stained glass windows depicting the Virgin Mary and Holy Ghost let a bit of light into the lobby, but the hallways and rooms are dark.

There is a massive nest of Wasps in the attic of the Academy. Wasps will continuously spread from it and build smaller nests in other parts of the town until it is removed by the State Police three days into their occupation. Moving

through the school during the day is easy enough - until a loud noise is made. Smashing a door will attract 2D10 wasps. Firing a gun will attract 3D10. If they fail their **SAN** rolls, the investigators are likely to do some silly things that make even more noise - creating a snowball effect. The only solution is to come back later, after things have calmed down a bit.

Places of Interest

✦ The Chemistry Lab

Located on the first floor, on the east side of the building, below the Biology Lab.

✦ The Biology Lab

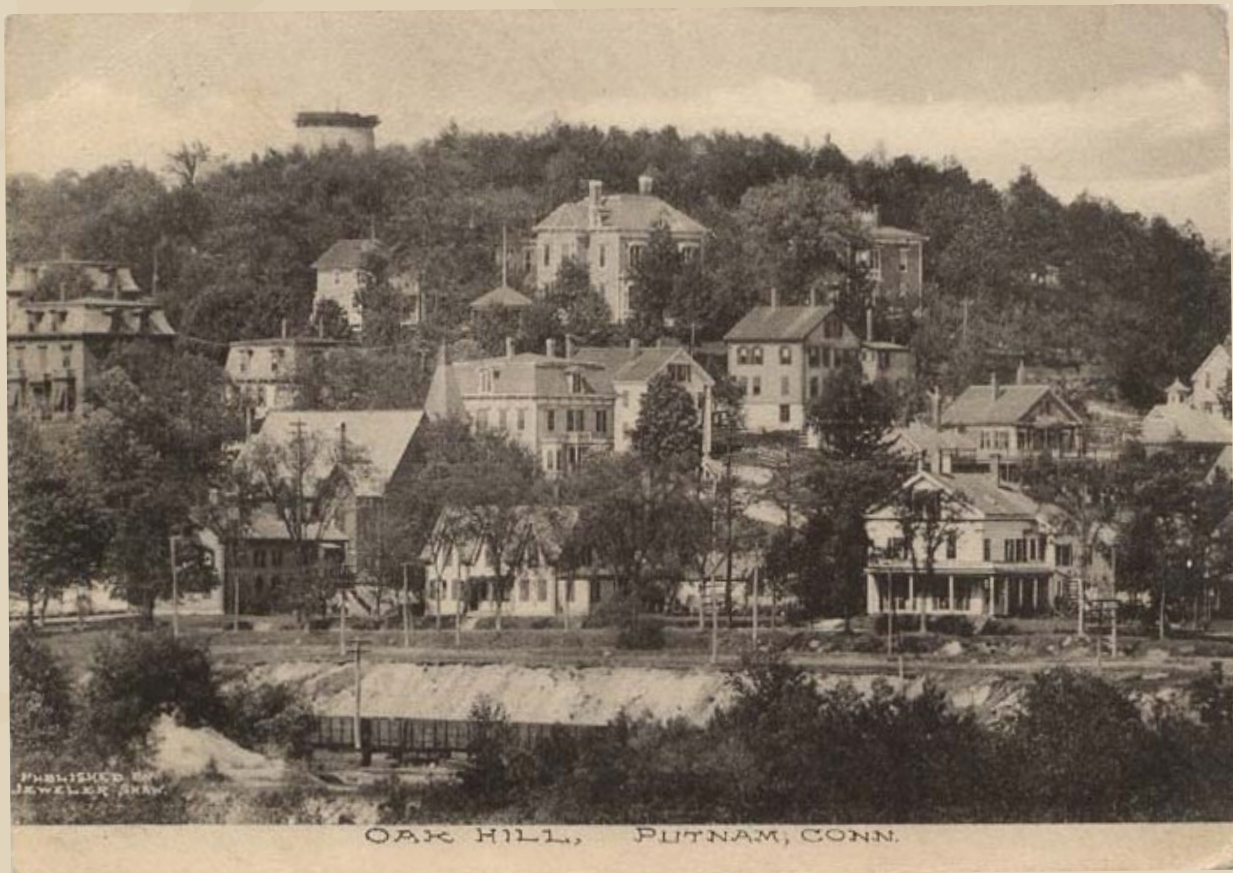
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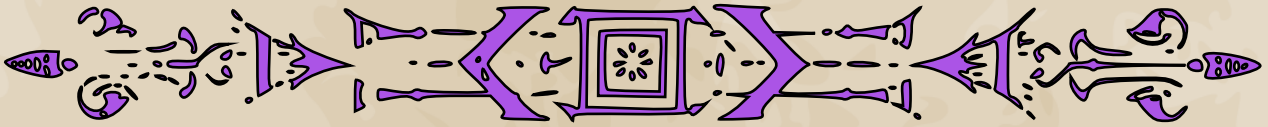
✦ The Principal's Office

On the second floor, the west side of the building, tucked into a dimly lit back corner.

The Chemistry Lab

The lab is neatly kept. A large set of windows looking into the backyard of the school keeps it somewhat lit. Describe as much or as





little as you'd like. It's a well-funded high school chemistry lab, with everything one would expect to find in such a place. The only thing that's odd is the large hole in the ceiling. With **Spot Hidden**, investigators should also be able to see this from the backyard.

It looks to be about three meters across. **Spot Hidden** reveals slight burn marks around the edges of the hole. If an investigator has **Chemistry**, a successful roll can indicate that the hole was made with an extremely corrosive acid, probably over the course of several hours.

A few minutes after coming here for the first time, have the investigators each make a **Listen** roll. Those who succeed hear a muffled yelling coming from beyond the window. A man in a beekeeper's suit is sprinting across the yard, being chased by a swarm of at least fifty Wasps. As he yells, more Wasps are drawn to him. Investigators may attempt to intervene. The window does not open; breaking through it causes a group of 1D10 wasps to descend on the Lab.

Other methods of access take too long; by the time the man is reached he is laying on the ground, dead. Investigators watching him die should lose 1/1D4 **SAN**, as it's a particularly gruesome sight.

If the body is examined (perhaps later, when the swarm has dissipated), it is found to be that of Jimmy Lewis - a police officer from Providence. His face is puffy, and his expression is that of someone who just watched their mother get hit by a train. He is mortified, and was clearly sobbing when he died. If the attack happens at night the swarm is likely to linger and consume much of Mr. Lewis, which makes identifying him slightly harder (and much more horrific).

The Biology Lab

The door to this lab is locked. However, players can access it by **Climbing** up through the floor. Failure will alert the Wasps. The lock can also be picked.

In contrast to the Chemistry Lab, the Bio Lab is a mess. The desks where students would sit seem untouched, but everything else is in disarray. Two large black desks stand at chest-level near the windows, stained with blood and insect

gore. The teacher's desk lays overturned near a chalkboard at the far end of the room.

Underneath the large black dissection desks is a safe with a spinning lock. This safe contains a huge number of frozen Wasp eggs. It's one of two repositories from which Dr. Barrett plans to restore the Wasp population if need be - the other is in his house. On top of the desks is a mess of gore. However, among the gore are several dead Wasps - giving the players an opportunity to learn their basic appearance and physiology without endangering themselves (*see "The Shaggai Wasps", pg. 4*).

The top of the chalkboard has written "BARRETT'S BEES", in huge letters and underlined. A section labeled "cross breeds" has several bullet points under it, including "ant", "hornet", "horsefly", "hummingbird", and "spider". Under each bullet is a small illustration of what appears to be a twisting ladder. Each rung of the ladder is marked with a series of letters. Modern investigators will immediately recognize these drawings as strands of DNA. Investigators in the 1920s should be flummoxed. Allow a **Biology** roll to confirm that these drawings are in no way related to modern science.

The teacher's desk is overturned. Ungraded tests are scattered around. Each test bears the professor's name - Boyd Barrett. **Spot Hidden** finds a particular note.

Dr Barrett -

I couldn't remember the code for the safe so I just left the eggs under your desk. I hope that's ok.

- O'Neal

If they look, the investigators can no longer find the eggs mentioned in the note.

In order to look inside the desk, the investigators must pull it upright. This is easily done by just one person, if a **DEX** roll is made. Failure indicates that the desk was accidentally dropped. The loud noise attracts 2D10 Wasps. A buzzing is heard, and the unsettlingly large bugs start to filter in almost through the ceiling. Allow a **Luck** roll for a single investigator to grab the pertinent stack of papers from the desk before everyone flees the room.

The Notes in the Desk

Among Dr. Barrett's mostly innocuous papers is a useful letter from a student of his named Harvey Crick.

Dr. Barrett,

The things you teach us in class are fiction. My cousin studies biology and when I told him about the things you teach us he said you should be fired. I've already talked to Principal Meyers about it. Maybe Colin will go back to normal once you're gone!

- Harvey

Also amid the papers is a sheaf of notes which detail in a small way the experiments performed by Dr. Barrett. Allow a **Science (Biology)** roll to decipher the notes; the process takes about an hour. A success indicates that the reader comprehends the notes, spotty and manic as they are. It seems Barrett wished to take advantage of the rapid breeding cycle of the honeybee by cross-breeding them with another species of insect which he does not identify. Entire pages of notes seem to be missing. He identifies that the Wasps should have an aversion to sunlight - "just like their cousins". Additionally, a section which seems entirely too brief entitled "phasing" is among the notes. It describes the Wasps' ability to move through solid matter as "a deconstruction, and almost simultaneous reconstruction of living material". One of Barrett's theories is that the Wasps do not actually "teleport" - but rather briefly flit into what he calls "the fourth dimension" as things move *around them*.

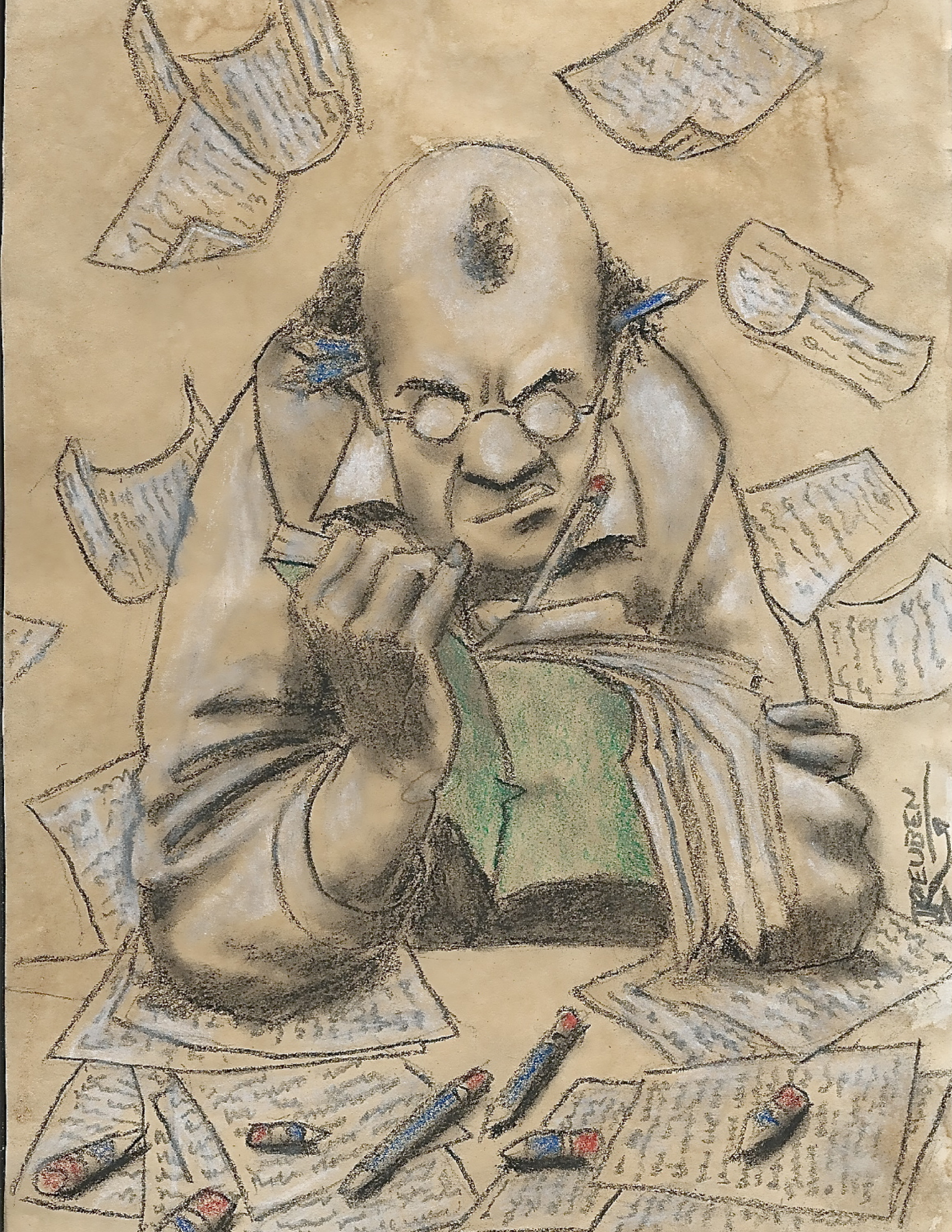
A character reading these notes, with reason to believe that they are true, should make a **Sanity** check (0/1D3). Failing their Biology roll indicates that the character can gain only a cursory understanding of the notes and perhaps a single fact - most likely that the Wasps don't like sunlight.

The Principal's Office

It contains important information, but it's locked. Breaking the door will bring 2D10 Wasps down on the investigators. Principal Meyers will give them a key if they convince him of their good intentions.

The Principal's Office holds records on all of the students and faculty at the school. Looking someone up here takes only a few minutes (no Library Use roll is required; there aren't that many files). Following is the pertinent information for each of the scenario's five characters.

Note: The only reason this scenario has an all-male cast is the sexist nature of private schools in the 1920s. If adapting the scenario to a modern era, the Keeper should at least change the gender of one or two of the non-player cast members. Dewey Meyers could be Donna



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THE PURPLE JACKET

Meyers. Xavier Wells could be Vivian Wells, and etc.

✿ **Principal Dewey Meyers.** Lives at 2 Van Den Noort St. Noted Next of Kin: Constance Meyers (relationship: wife).

✿ **Dr. Boyd Barrett.** Lives at 43 Woodstock Ave. Noted Next of Kin: Several are listed, but none as living nearby. His closest living relative appears to be “Donald Barrett” in Birmingham, England. No phone number is listed.

✿ **Colin O’Neal.** Lives at 55 Providence St. Noted Next of Kin: He lives with his parents (Thomas and Alma) at their family home in Putnam. *Note: Even if investigators have only the first or last name of Colin O’Neal, he can still be looked up. There is only one student with the surname O’Neal at Holy Spirit. There are two with the name Colin, but only one of them was in Barrett’s biology class.*

✿ **Harvey Crick.** Lives at 12 Dufault St., Apt. G. Noted Next of Kin: His parents (Victor and Donna), who live in Providence.

✿ **Xavier Wells.** Lives at 202 South Prospect St. Noted Next of Kin: His only listed next of kin live in Birmingham, England. *Note: Investigators shouldn’t know about Xavier until later in the scenario, but may return to the office to find his address.*

The Town at Large

As they traverse the town, a series of unpleasant events will befall the investigators. Use these events to build an atmosphere of despair and chaos; players should grow to fear moving across town. Keepers are encouraged to add to or subtract from the list as they please.

✿ A woman is spotted outside a large home, trying to shove her way past two armed police officers. “You don’t understand”, she wails, “Mr. Socks is still in there! He’s scared and hungry! Please...!” The police are steadfast in their refusal to let her enter. If the investigators look into it for her, they sadly find that Mr. Socks the black tuxedo cat perished several days earlier and was mostly eaten by Wasps.

✿ A vagrant stumbles out from a dark alleyway and accosts the investigators. He is covered in welts, and his skin appears to droop from his body. “Hello”, he blurts out, half stammering - half crying. “I’m forty-five years old and I’m homeless.” He grabs a random investigator by the shoulders. “I try and I try but I can do no better, I swear! Please, let me out! Don’t make me jump from one of the roofs, I beg you! Kill me with dignity!” The request is made more desperate knowing the only building taller than two stories in Putnam is the school. If the vagrant goes up here, he will likely die of stings before he’s even able to jump.

✿ As the investigators turn down a particular street, they spot a plume of smoke in the distance. As they are looking at it, a swarm of nearly forty Wasps descends on them. This swarm was just burnt out of their home, and they aren’t particularly happy about it. Investigators may make a **Spot Hidden** to see the swarm before it’s too late. Those who are unlucky feel warm goosebumps, followed by sharp pain. Then suddenly, they are surrounded by the horrendous buzz.

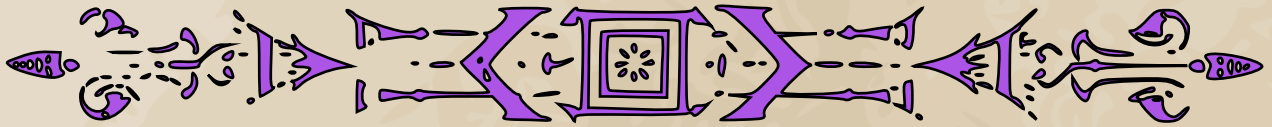
✿ A police officer sits in his squad car, completely surrounded by Wasps. Upon seeing the investigators he lets out muffled pleas, begging for assistance. Shortly after this, the Wasps start to filter into the car and kill the officer. There is little to be done.

✿ As investigators pass by an alleyway, they see a corpse laying, half-eaten by Wasps. The Wasps immediately rear up into a taut swirl and lunge at the investigators.

✿ As they take a forced detour through an abandoned alleyway, one investigator has part of a nest fall right onto their face. The nest is dried up. If **Natural World** is used, an investigator can point out that this is an old piece of an ordinary hornet’s nest.

Lodging

There is a single hotel in Putnam: Hodgkin’s, which is nearly devoid of customers. The police all leave Putnam at night due to the danger of increased Wasp activity. The owner and operator of the hotel is a young woman named



Deirdre Burrowes. An orphan, she stays in Putnam because she has nowhere else to go. Deirdre has plenty of bedrooms and enough food and alcohol to last the investigators until the scenario is over. Her cooking is simple - mostly meat and potatoes - but the food is surprisingly good.

Though she gives no hint of it, she is beyond grateful to have guests. She was beginning to grow terrified at night. At night, Putnam turns into a ghost town. Going outside becomes problematic, as this is when the Wasps prowl around in search of prey. Small animals unlucky enough to wander into the town during the day become meals at night. Even staying indoors poses a problem - Deirdre knows just how good the Wasps are at squeezing through cracks in the walls. As the investigators eat dinner she urges them to "please, for the love of God, keep it down".

Night is harrowing. At one point an investigator should wake up to the sound of a buzzing cacophony against

their window, which quickly dissipates. Unsure whether it was a dream or not, they struggle to fall back to sleep.

Those with venom in their systems become increasingly agitated at night. The silence becomes unbearable, leading to restlessness. Everything seems too hot; a window should be opened (if one actually is, the investigator wakes up being chewed on). In any case, sleep is nearly out of the question. Those afflicted pass out and wake up suddenly, after six hours of rest, in a pool of sweat.

Gerry's General Store

This general store is the only one in Putnam. In recent years, Gerry has expanded to take over the shop which was once next door. He now sells all manner of grocery, supplying nearly everyone in the town.

The man himself stands behind the counter, as the only current acting employee. The only customers he gets these days are police officers, but he is happy to help them due to a sense of duty he feels to his country (Gerry is a veteran of the Great War).

Gerry has also been stung more than a few times, and his symptoms are starting to get the better of him. He constantly stutters, scratches, and his personality switches between frustratingly polite and simply frustrating.

Saint Jacob's Church

Right in the center of the main road in Putnam is St. Jacob's Church. The church mostly caters to the Catholic population in town, including the many students at Holy Spirit Academy, but they accept all denominations of Christians. It's a bright white church of soapbox design. The building is immaculately maintained, with the exception of the grounds, which have fallen into disrepair in the past few weeks.



The church is recently abandoned and locked. A nest of Wasps is residing in the crawlspace above the bell tower.

The Sheriff's Office

Located just a short walk down the street from the church. One officer and one assistant stay here at all times. The officer answers the phone and the assistant goes to the Putnam Station as needed to send telegrams. Requests for aid are consistently laughed off or ignored - the only help the police can give right now they are already giving in an effort to fight the infestation. They may, however, be able to give some basic information (such as offering the school as a starting point, giving the address of the Principal, etc.)

Dewey Meyers

Principal Meyers lives at 2 Van Den Noort St. with his wife, Constance. His home is neat and beautifully kept, although the flower garden surrounding it has begun to wilt in the past week or so from lack of care. Principal Meyers can be met at any respectable hour. Though normally well dressed, he is now disheveled and often just wears a robe. He is currently staying in his home out of fear. However, he won't abandon the town of Putnam due to the mixture of duty and guilt he feels. Meyers feels like he could've done more to stop Dr. Barrett.

When someone first knocks at the door it opens little more than a crack, and then Meyers ushers the investigators in "quickly - before the bugs get in". Flickering candles light the otherwise dark halls of his estate. Meyers is an older man with a dignified grey beard. After an introduction, he will tell the investigators what he knows.

✿ Two weeks ago a student named Harvey Crick came to his office and voiced some concerns about his biology teacher, a man

named Dr. Boyd Barrett.

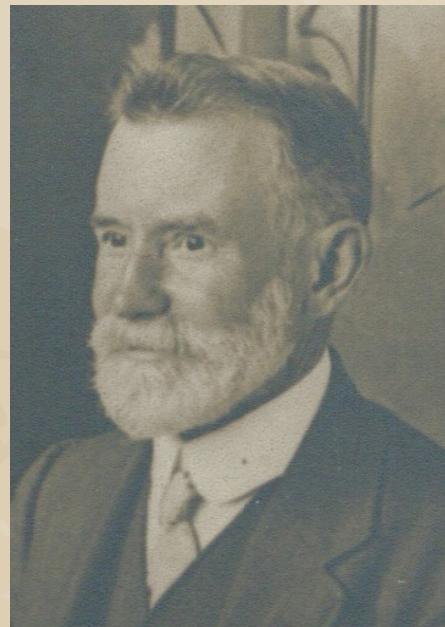
✿ Barrett had been teaching his students about a new concept that had come to him in a dream. He called it Jacob's Ladder.

✿ Barrett had also been recruiting his students for experiments which lay outside the scope of the class. He promised extra credit and recommendations to his alma mater in England.

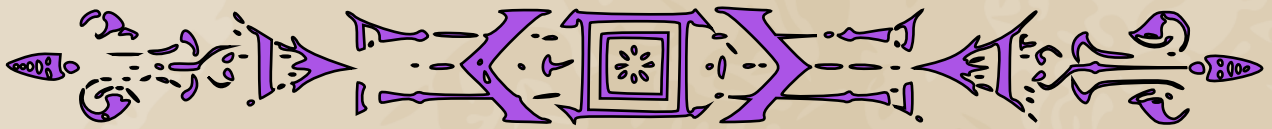
✿ The experiments consisted of fusing together different types of insects and sometimes birds. Crick was unwilling to participate, seeing the experiments as a slight against God. Dr. Barrett looked down on and made students like Crick feel lesser than the students who participated in his experiments.

✿ One night as Meyers was preparing to take action, he stayed late and overheard a commotion in the Biology Lab. Finding the door to be sealed, he demanded entry. Much to his surprise, his skeleton key no longer worked on the lock. As it was getting late, he decided to head home and follow up the next day. Unfortunately, the next day was when the infestation broke out.

Meyers knows Barrett is up to something, but not what. If the investigators succeed on a **Persuade** or **Credit Rating** roll (or gain his trust in some other way), Meyers will give them a copy of the skeleton key which unlocks every door in the school. *Note: it no longer works on the Bio Lab since Barrett had the lock changed.*



Principal Dewey Meyers



Boyd Barrett

His address is 43 Woodstock Ave. The doctor's home is dark and ill-kept. The doors and windows are all locked. However, it's in a quiet part of town where police don't seem to patrol much. Though they should fear breaking the door down, investigators are more or less safe from Wasps here.

Immediately as they enter the house the investigators will find a body lying in a pool of blood at the bottom of the stairs, with a cloth over its face. If searched, the body has a driver's license and can be identified as Colin O'Neal. It seems the killer covered his mouth with the cloth before stabbing him several times in the heart. **Medicine** reveals that the body is, at most, a few days old. There is little else of note on the first floor of the house. It's dreary during the day and pitch-black at night, unless the investigators bring a light. **Spot Hidden** will find, however, a trace of recently burnt papers in Barrett's fireplace.

Climbing over the body and up the narrow wooden stairs takes investigators into a hallway. This leads to Barrett's bedroom and what looks like his study.

- While exploring the school, one of the playtesters got stung multiple times. His character, a Russian criminal, was taken over and enraged by the venom. He decided to toss a molotov into the school as the group ran away, out of fury toward the Wasps. From this point on, the police in Putnam watched and followed them, resulting in a confrontation at Barrett's house. A fire later, the players were forced to continue their investigation as fugitives, adding yet another element of suspense to the game.

The Bedroom

The bed is unmade. Cupboards are drawn open, with clothes flung about the room randomly. Sitting on the bedside table next to a lamp is a framed picture of several people posing and smiling by a low stone fence. They all look similar - perhaps they're family? *In fact, one of the men in the picture is a young Xavier Wells.*

Spot Hidden detects a note peeking out from under one of Barrett's pillows. Investigators directing their search under the pillows find this note immediately. If the

Dr. Barrett -

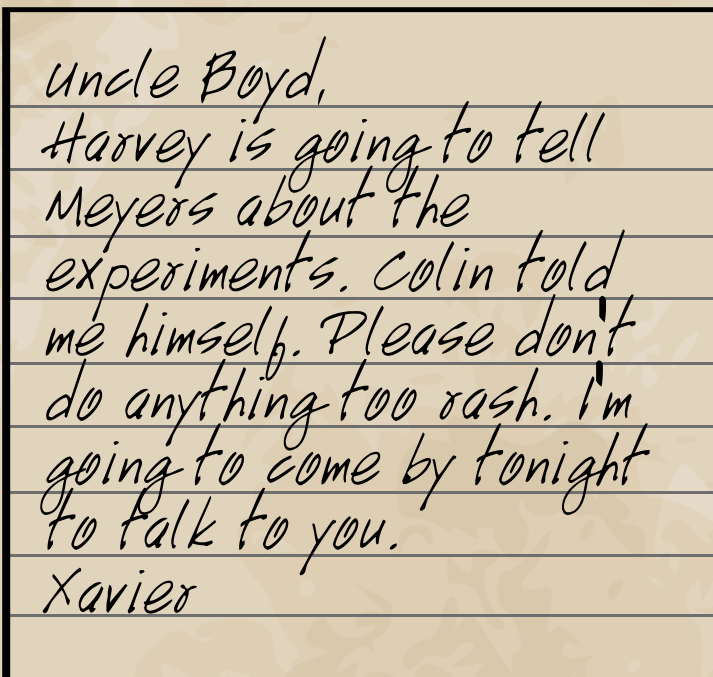
Thanks for nothing. What on Earth! Are we not still your proteges? Will you not keep your promise? Because to me it seems like you've skipped town after this disaster you've made! My father paces around endlessly. My mother simply lays in bed. When she is not crying, she is asking me to take care of the house for her. Father says we are leaving for Newport soon, to stay with family there. And after all the work I put in securing your recommendation. I hope you die. I haven't been able to find Xave either, but I can't imagine he feels any different.

bed is moved around, the note will likely fall to the floor. Comparing the handwriting finds that it matches that of Harvey Crick - this can also be gleaned by the players physically looking at the two handouts.

The Study

Barrett's study contains some information on the Wasps, though much of it has been removed. If investigators did not find or comprehend the notes in the Bio Lab, information they may have missed can be conveyed here (see "The Notes in the Desk", pg. 9). Otherwise, no new information can be learned about the Wasps.

Spot Hidden finds a note which stands out among the others.



Colin O'Neal

As the investigators may have already seen, Colin O'Neal has been murdered. However, his home at 55 Providence St. may still be a point of interest. His parents, Thomas and Alma O'Neal, behave as described in Colin's note (Thomas is restless and often paces to work off energy, while Alma simply lays in bed and mopes or gently sobs).

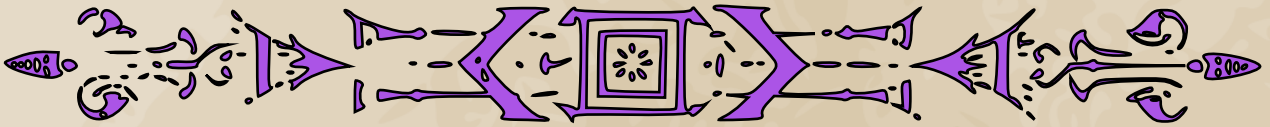
Thomas answers the door quickly, and seems saddened when the investigators show up instead of his son. Still, he invites them inside. The O'Neals have little to offer, saying their son was very secretive when it came to the "extra credit work" described by the investigators. Colin kept his door locked and neither Thomas nor Alma have been inside it in weeks.

If the investigators look in the room (a social skill check is needed for Thomas to let them in), they find that it's a mess. Plates and cups caked with the beginnings of mold sit, almost lining the walls. The smell of insect gore is persistent and may remind investigators of the Biology Lab. The room itself is sparsely decorated with little more than a few slightly drooping posters of Babe Ruth. On the desk are a series of conical flasks, each stained with what looks like purple blood. Underneath the desk is an ice box, but it's been cleared out.

While Alma is too depressed to give much useful information, Thomas might be good to interview. He seems nervous, but his answers are cogent. Here's what he knows:

- ✦ Colin has become very aloof over the course of the last two months. He is constantly agitated and shuts himself in his room for long periods of time.

- ✦ Sometimes Thomas hears glass breaking in his room, or smells strange things from under the door. Colin's temper made Thomas unwilling to intervene.



✿ A few nights ago a friend of Colin's named Harvey Crick visited just after school got out, while Colin was with Dr. Barrett. He voiced his concerns about Colin, wondering if everything seemed okay at home.

✿ This morning Colin was gone. He didn't leave a note. Thomas wants to search for his son, but fears going outside. When he asked the police, they told him they were too busy to search for "stragglers".

✿ If at any point Thomas is told about the death of his son, he freezes. At first he seems in disbelief, but his resolve quickly breaks. For about ten seconds he just stares off into space. Then he mutters "I'll tell Alma." When Alma hears the news she starts to cry.

The attic of the O'Neal house has a medium-sized Wasp nest. Loud noises (such as Alma crying) will bring in 2D10 Wasps. Thomas becomes much harder to deal with when he is stung, only recovering a full day later. Alma is at risk of passing into extended unconsciousness.

Harvey Crick

Harvey Crick lives at 12 Dufault St. He has a room at Roth's Boarding House. During the day, reception is manned by an old busybody named Mrs. Georgia Roth. She will happily waste the time of investigators by asking them everything she can think to ask. With a successful social skill check, she'll give them access to his room, although she will want to accompany them. In the evenings, a younger woman works reception. She will allow the investigators in with little more than a passing glance and a "yeah, go on ahead".

Harvey's door is unlocked. Inside is his corpse, laying on top of his bed. Upon seeing it, if Mrs. Roth is present, she buckles over and faints.

The head of the corpse is covered with a pillow, which appears to have been

stabbed through multiple times. A pool of dried blood sits under his body. The blood has dried to a sickly brown, and soaked clean through the sheets and into the mattress. If needed, **Medicine** can confirm that the body is several days old.

The rest of the room is decorated sparsely. A thick wooden cross hangs over a desk. A small bookshelf sits at the far corner of the room, filled with mostly Catholic texts. **Spot Hidden** finds an interesting letter in the desk, tucked away among sheafs of completed homework and correspondence from Harvey's parents.

It's come to my attention that you spoke to Principal Myers about what uncle Boyd EXPLICITLY TOLD YOU NOT TO SPEAK ABOUT. If I were you I would skip town. I'm not joking, Harv. You didn't see how mad he was.

- Xavier



Xavier Wells

Note: Finding Xavier is a crucial step in finding Dr. Barrett. Though the scenario has multiple avenues of investigation, the players could still fail to find Xavier (and, ultimately, Dr. Barrett). If this happens, Principal Meyers can come to their rescue. He has Xavier's address, and says he remembers the boy was another student who worked closely with Barrett.

The nephew of Dr. Barrett lives at 202 South Prospect St. Due to Xavier's loyalty, Barrett has let him live for now. Xavier is, however, terrified (and more than a little paranoid after being stung a few times). His door is locked. Though there is no response when knocking, there are signs of life in the house. **Listen** uncovers a vague shuffling of feet on hardwood. **Spot Hidden** notices a pair of candles being snuffed.

The door can easily be forced with STR (or **Lockpicking** can be used for a stealthier approach). Inside, Xavier is hiding in a dark corner of his kitchen. He has a gun drawn - **Spot Hidden** notices him before he notices them.

He may order the investigators to leave in a hushed tone, catching them by surprise. He will not shoot them, mostly since he doesn't want to attract Wasps. Xavier should be swiftly convinced that the investigators can be his allies. Unlike Barrett, Xavier's mind is free from control. At this point he just wants someone to kill his uncle before his uncle kills him. **Psychology** indicates that he is lucid, honest, and genuinely concerned for his life. Here is what he knows:

✿ Xavier was given an "almost free ride" at Holy Spirit, since his mother is Dr. Barrett's sister. This gave Barrett the leverage he needed to get Xavier in on his experiments. If Xavier said no, Barrett threatened to concoct something to

have him removed from the academy.

✿ Over the course of the last two months, the doctor has been developing a disease which he said was incurable. The only remedy for this disease was sleeping indoors from morning until evening, in a place where no light would land on his skin.

✿ One day, Xavier went to Barrett's house to tell him about the situation with Harvey Crick. He tried to wake his uncle, but found that the bed was empty.

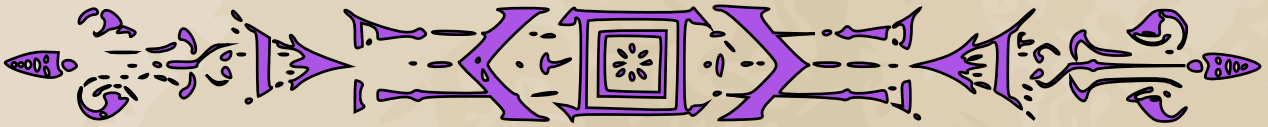
✿ Barrett visited the other night and told Xavier of a place in the hills outside Putnam, where he would be staying from now on. It's a series of caves in the woods northeast of Putnam. During the day he hides here. At night he occasionally returns to Putnam to observe the Wasps or do whatever else he needs to do.

✿ Xavier tells the investigators exactly where to find the caves, but refuses to join them. Before seeing the investigators out, he will curtly ask them not to tell Barrett about this discussion.

Note: if the investigators foolishly kill Xavier before he's able to give them this information, they may be able to find it instead in a note among his belongings.



Xavier Wells



Confronting Barrett

Barrett is staying in a series of caves northeast of Putnam. He has found the relatively sizeable caverns perfect for his current situation.

Speaking of his situation, Barrett is currently in the final stages of combining his own DNA with that of a shan. These hybrid creatures emerge from a pulsing orifice deep in the catacombs almost fully formed, tucked inside an orange-tinted gel capsule. They hatch about six hours later, naked, fully capable of walking and talking. Barrett does not have time (nor does he care) to get clothes for the clones, so they are naked. Only the original Barrett is dressed in a tattered lab coat.

The brains of the clones are identical to the current brain of Dr. Barrett - each one houses a single shan. At the beginning of the scenario, Dr. Barrett has created a number of clones equal to the number of investigators. Every 24 hours, he creates a new clone of himself to bolster his numbers. Only by killing every single clone can the investigators stop Barrett's terrible plan. If they fail to do this, even one of Barrett's clones will move to a random town in the U.S. and spread Wasps.

The caves are mostly normal in terms of biology for North America, but rather large. They are filled with Wasps, making it difficult to fight Barrett here. The doctor doesn't worry about being stung, as his pets seem to ignore him. A series of loud noises made in the vicinity around the cave will draw the mindless Wasps outside. Adroit investigators may think to run some kind of generator, which will draw the Wasps continuously and allow them to explore the caves safely.

Investigators will need a light source to explore the caves. This makes it easy for Barrett's clones to see them, as they have

darkvision. Someone will also have to make a **Navigate** roll to keep the group from getting lost in the caves. If the roll is failed, the investigators will not be able to find an easy way to escape before a group of Barretts ambushes them. Only an Extreme **Spot Hidden** roll can notice the attack before it's too late - a naked Barrett is bearing down on an investigator from behind and trying to stab them.

The clones attack in groups of two or three. Barrett hopes that the chaos will draw in Wasps, or that he'll be able to pick off an investigator, and that their morale will break as a result. As he attacks, he may scream at the investigators in an intense, alien language. Even the strongest light reveals nothing in his eyes but darkness.

At the heart of the caves is a small lab setup where there is a strange pulsating orifice laid into the rocky wall. The orifice is fleshy and pink, although chunks of it are covered in a slightly hairy insect carapace. The orifice contains several eggs, each of which contains a Barrett. Fire destroys the orifice easily.

Also nearby are Barrett's notes, along with his lab equipment. The ramshackle lab is organized chaotically, and hasn't been cleaned since it was set up. His notes are also here, which can be compiled and burned to prevent anyone from using them in the future. They can also be studied and used to create more Wasps, if an investigator wishes.

Finally, a cavern leading away from the laboratory appears to have a vague purplish glow coming from it. If investigated, there is a Gate at the end of this hallway. The Gate leads to the interior of the cone-shaped temple in Severn Valley mentioned in Ramsey Campbell's *The Insects* from *Shaggai*. shans will not come through the Gate at this time - only if Barrett tells them it's safe will any of them actually visit. If the investigators

go through the Gate, they are unlikely to be able to comprehend the interior of the temple for more than a few seconds before their mind is forcibly taken over by a shan. Resisting with POW is futile; shans barrage the visitor continuously until they are possessed. If an investigator is nearly possessed but passes their POW roll, the Keeper can give them one last chance to step back through the Gate as more than a dozen shans rush toward them.

The investigators may try to block off the cavern containing the Gate. This can easily be accomplished with **Demolition**.

Conclusion

Those investigating the disappearance of Harvey Crick are rewarded for their findings, though his parents are heartbroken. The local police are loathe to believe some story about “clones in a cavern”. However, investigators contracted by the federal government might find whoever sent them is oddly receptive to whatever is written in the final report.

If all of the Barretts were killed, investigators each gain 1D10 SAN. If this happens, over the following year the remaining Wasps die. They are unable to spread far enough south to survive the winter.

As was said earlier, if Barrett survives he and his Wasps will infect the rest of the country, serving as a possible setup for an ongoing campaign. If the Keeper wishes for this to happen, he may hide the true Barrett in another place entirely - allowing him to spread beyond Putnam even after the investigators think they’ve defeated him. Keepers who choose to go this route are advised that Dr. Barrett, while he can make for a terrifying villain, can quickly become repetitive. His alien brain has only one goal - to spread Wasps. If all the investigators do is search for reports of Wasps and kill clones,

they’ll definitely get bored. Dr. Barrett would perhaps make for a better minor villain in a campaign. The investigators believe they’ve defeated him and go back to what it was they were doing before. Then, a few months later, reports of terrifying wasps begin to pop up again. Due to their strange sheen, the public is terming them “Purple Jackets”.

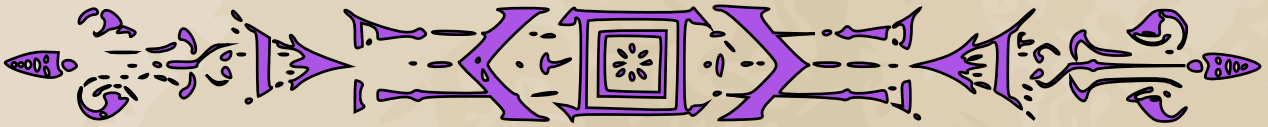
Appendix

THE SHAGGAI WASPS Biological Anomalies

If approached, the Shaggai Wasps will attack those who threaten their hive for 3D6 combat rounds. Guns and melee weapons are ineffective at damaging an angry swarm. Shotguns are only partially effective (half damage). If an investigator uses a shotgun, consider a given swarm to have as many HP as it has bees. A swarm has a MOV of 6, meaning it can be outrun. Sanity loss to see a swarm of Shaggai Wasps for the first time is 1/1D4 (although this does not count toward determining venom effects). The wasps prefer moving at night, but will not hesitate to attack anything that comes near their hive during the day.

Shaggai Wasps are larger and more resilient than ordinary yellow jackets. They have a thick carapace with a vague purplish sheen. Their eyes are quite large and appear green in the light. Additionally, they have twice the number of legs as a yellow jacket - twelve, instead of six. They can move through walls, but require a few moments to do so. People seeing this may rationalize it as “the bugs squeezing through tiny cracks in the ceiling”.

The Wasps are unusually attracted to loud noises. Moving around a large hive of them (such as the one in the attic of the school) can be done, as long as it’s done quietly. They still use sight, but are not as ef



fective with it. Moving within thirty feet of a nest at night is enough to set it off. During the day, the Wasps will not realize a threat has approached them until it's within ten feet of their nest. However, loud noises will always attract them. Make a judgement call. The louder it is, the more likely it is that a huge swarm will hear it.

DR. BOYD BARRETT

Brainwashed British Biologist

STR 35; **CON** 50; **SIZ** 45; **DEX** 60; **APP** 40; **EDU** 85; **INT** 70; **POW** 30; **MOV** 8; **HP** 9; **Magic Points** 6

Attacks: Knife (50%), damage 1D4+1

Skills: Library Use (70%), Listen (40%), Occult (10%), Science (Biology) (85%), Science (Chemistry) (50%), Spot Hidden (50%)

SAN Loss: 1/1D3 to see a clone of Barrett, naked and screaming, for the first time.

Though he's only 35, Dr. Barrett appears much older. His eyes are sunken and his skin wrinkled. Due to his reclusiveness, he has begun to grow a scraggly beard. His clones have the same statistics as him, but are naked. The original Barrett is dressed in a tattered white coat and grey tie, with work slacks.

INSECTS FROM SHAGGAI

Mental Parasites

STR 10; **CON** 10; **SIZ** 5; **DEX** 80; **INT** 80; **POW** 85; **MOV** 4 / 20 (if flying); **HP** 1; **Magic Points** 17; **Build** -2

Attacks: An insect from Shaggai relies on either its nervewhip or on its ability to possess the target (meld) and has no innate Fighting skill otherwise.

Nerve Whip: The nerve whip is a small technical device that projects a chattering line of pallid light. When the light strikes a target, make an opposed POW roll. If the shan wins, the target is overcome by agony and can do nothing but writhe on the ground until the weapon is turned off. If the attack fails, the target is still in pain and all rolls are made with one penalty die for a number of hours equal to 24 minus one-half of the victim's CON. The attack may be renewed each round and the penalties are cumulative.

Meld: This represents the shan's chance to fly into a human's head and stay there.

Nerve Whip 50% (25/10), damage special; Meld 60% (30/12), no damage, however the insect gains progressive control after it enters the brain of target; Dodge 77% (38/15)

SAN Loss: 0/1D6 to see a shan.