

INTRODUCTION OR “HOW TO USE THIS MINI-SCENARIO”

This is another super cheap, super mini scenario for use in your Call of Cthulhu gaming circles. Please note that these are intended to be used with the most recent version of the CoC RPG at the time of original publishing, the 7th edition. You will note that I have provided very few stats for use, if any. This is not out of laziness so much as it is intended that you take the time to prepare for your game and gauge the NPCs and assorted nasties to your players. Also there are no character sheets. As a player I have always found that it is best to roll your own. A GM can massage the results or suggest a player do certain things with their character, but rolling stats and assigning personal preferences is part of the whole experience.

The best use for these are the sort of game that occur on short notice when you have nothing prepared, or you just want to introduce someone to the game or perhaps you want a diversion, a “one-off” game to break up a monotonous campaign that is losing steam. Make it yours! Enjoy.

Scenario Specific Note!: This mini scenario is intended for use as an introductory game for new players. You can throw in someone who has a bit of experience as a guide/mentor but it is generally intended for use by the neo folk. The intention is to focus on player creation, investigation, sneaking, spot hidden rolls, and escape! No actual “monsters” per say in this scenario, but Old Man Tompkins is a threat and they do need to escape! I wholly support the use of lighting (candles or dimmed lights) and possibly auditory props in the form of creepy music or sound effects to help the players get into the game!

How to Use This:

- Buy this scenario, its cheap! \$1 US only! That’s, like, what, a coffee, a donut (or doughnut as we say in Canada)! (Done)
- Read it before hand and make whatever prep you need i.e. Roll up your own stats for NPC or use a generator app to do so or if you are like me, just wing it. This is supposed to be fun and improve-ish.
- Give the players the background provided and ad lib whatever you like
- Instruct the players to create characters based on scenario suggestions or your own modification therefor. I won’t judge!
- Dim lights, light candles, whatever you wish to set the mood
- Start game.
- Play music or sound effects as you wish
- Eat snacks
- Smile at an evening well spent with your friends
- Set up your next gaming night right away!

Also before I forget, thank you again to Simon Bray for the use of his art.

Sean Liddle
Summer, 2019

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OLD MAN TOMPKINS

BACKGROUND FOR GM

Year: 1955

Location: Bartleton, Mass (Fictional)

Summary for Players

(Intended to be shared prior to gaming and character creation).

You are all (kids who attend the same high school) or (all members of a local sports team called The Bartleton Badgers) or (a group of kids from the same small close knit neighborhood in a poorer section of Bartleton Massachusetts). It is Independence Day and you are attending the town picnic and fireworks with your families. After they are over, you all have permission to attend a special late night movie feature at the local cinema! Curfew has been expended to midnight and your parents are all planning to head back to the Jones house for an evening barbecue.

SUMMARY/NOTE FOR GM:

The town of Bartleton is quiet. Very quiet. To an outsider, disconcertingly quiet. No crime, everyone is polite, the streets are full of friendly drivers, no loud noises and kids are in bed before curfew. It is 1950s TV land perfection. The police generally drive around all day smiling and waving and stopping to chat with people because there is nothing to do.

The town wasn't always this quiet. For years the town was crime ridden. Local boys fighting, loud dance halls, drunks living in the alleys, a train that passed through dropping off hobos routinely who were always looking for handouts and a bit of crime on the side. The (retired) town librarian, Gareth Tompkins, frustrated at the state of the place in the pre-war years, hunkered down most nights in the library basement complaining until one day he began to sift through a collection of antiquarian tomes that had been bequeathed to the municipality upon the death of mysterious wealthy bachelor Arnold J Flindal*. In it he found a locked, leather bound book that contained history of ancient magics and another, must older, that was a book of spells. He delved into them initially out of humorous interest but soon began to experiment with them.

As a result of two years of solitary, hermit like research, Mr Tompkins retired, after hauling all the magic themed books to his home. He began work on "cleaning up" the town but stealing objects from locals and using the spells to "calm" their minds. Over time, most of the town, the central portion, was under his influence, which spread beyond those targeted by the spells.

The characters, all teenagers, have never been under the influence as they all live on the outskirts of town and are bussed to school. They do however feel the calm that overcomes them when they are at school each day. They are attending a central town Fourth of July fireworks show and have permission to attend a special late night movie at the local cinema. On the way to the show they notice Mr. Tompkins driving out of town. He is known to leave once a month to visit his sister who is in an asylum (this is unknown to players or the citizens). They run into another kid from school who relays that the old man keeps any kids toys he find in his yard like baseballs but also he has been seen, by kids only, sneaking around on occasion stealing things from peoples yards and porches. The kid says that someone should break in and "liberate" all those stolen good. The other teenager, Tim Roddy, has a bit of a gleam in his eye. The members of the party, with a few successful spot hidden rolls, notice that as the night wears on, the people of the town seem to get a little rowdy. This is due to the lack of influence from Mr. Tompkins as he is away tending to his sister. This will continue till he returns the next morning.

The Tompkins home is unlit and all doors and windows are locked. They will have to break the glass of a basement or other window to enter. The house is old yet immaculate, filled with books and personal belongings. The bedroom is simple and contains a bed, dresser, wardrobe and a chair for reading. The bathroom and kitchen and dining room are nondescript. The basement however is where the interesting findings will occur. The party will find wall to wall stacks of books interspersed with multitudes of children's toys, clothing, bicycle bells, and hats. All things that Mr. Tompkins was able to steal to help create his web of control. Each object is pierced with a silver safety pin. The magic tomes are in a locked foot locker trunk beside an oak desk under a blanket. Successful spot hidden rolls will be required to find the trunk. Two HARD success rolls will be required to find a brick in the wall that is loose where his backup key is hidden. Alternatively, if they search, a regular success on a spot hidden will allow them to find tools. A series of successful brawn related skill rolls and dexterity rolls will allow them to open the lock. If they continue to search after they find the books, a successful spot hidden will identify a hidden door. Inside is a room with a small hand crafted coffin in it. It contains the skeleton of a child. The coffin is inscribed with numerous symbols that mean nothing to the party, however if they do escape with the books and someone knowledgeable reads and interprets them and performs research, they will determine the following:

- The skeleton is that of a child that went missing fifteen years ago, the year Tompkins retired
- The child was used in a ceremony to give Tompkins power over children and others through fear and grief
- The items stolen allowed him to expand his "zone of influence" through connection of loss to the owners and their family

Sanity check of course will apply.

When they touch the books, they will hear a scream (an illusionary alarm) come from a dark corner. Whoever touches the books will be required to roll sanity. A success will result in no SAN loss however they will feel a need to escape with the books and run away.

Once they enter, Mr. Tompkins will be alerted that something is wrong through wards and glyphs he has placed at every entrance. He will turn around in his car and they will have thirty to forty –five minutes until he arrives back at the town. When he does they will feel an overwhelming sense of unwelcome in the home if they are still present. If they have left, they will feel a compressing fear and a desire to curl up in a ball and hide. Successful rolls will allow them to overcome the magic used to attempt to control their actions as will assistance from others who are not burdened by control.

When they flee, which they will feel more and more compelled to do as time goes forward, they will find it is raining outside. Drops will hit the surface of the book(s) and it will instantly cause the books to hiss and sizzle as if it were acid hitting flesh. Near immediately after they will see Mr. Tompkins drive past. He will see them and slam on the brakes, sliding in the rain and wedging his car between two trees. He will rush out and yell at them to "bring back my books!" and the chase will begin.

The balance of the game will be the students trying to escape with the book (see attached street map). As Mr Tompkins gives chase, and as they get farther from the center of the "zone of influence", he more and more loses his human appearance. Sanity checks will be required as the chase continues until each player has made one. A failure will result in a loss of 1d4 SAN and a sense of fear increasing. An extreme loss will result in the teenager dropping to the ground and curling up in a ball in fear. They will be out for five turns until the control lifts or they make a successful roll against sanity. Mr. Tompkins isn't worried about any children not carrying the books.

If the players are having extreme difficulty, successful idea rolls can be made with the following being ideas they can come up with:

- Split up
- Hide the books in their clothes etc. so Mr. Tompkins does not know who has them
- The rain droplets are damaging the surface. Perhaps running to the harbor and throwing them into the bay waters will destroy them (this is the last idea to be provided and the only one that will result in success)

Essentially this game ends when:

- a) Mr. Tompkins catches the persons carrying the books
- b) They escape the "zone of influence" at which point they encounter a group of parents and ask for assistance. Mr. Tompkins will slink into the shadows and find his way home.

- c) The party decides to run to the harbor. Mr. Tompkins will continue to chase though weakened and loping, cornering them to force them onto the main pier. They will then decide to hand back the book or fight him (not likely) or throw the books into the water.

Results:

- a) Mr. Tompkins upon retrieving the books will regain his posture and youth and fight off any attempts to take the books back. He will walk back home. Sanity checks again will be required when the kids see him return to his more youthful appearance. If they fail they will flee, they may even given no alternative, leap into the water and swim to another shore to escape.
- b) Mr. Tompkins will disappear and if the parents walk toward the home they will within minutes see it ablaze. Tompkins is never seen again and the peaceful town will return to normal.
- c) If they fight him, even in his weakened state, he will be able to successfully fend off three at a time with his inhuman strength. If he toss the books at any point into the waters of the bay, he will leap into the water to find them, again, never to be seen again.

Note: The makeup of the characters should be at the decision of the players to roll and run. They must all be high school juniors or sophomores. A good mix of character types and background make sense however standard careers do not for this game. Skill points must be also reasonable. A fourteen year old may very well be a crack shot with an air rifle or a small caliber rifle like a .22 but they will have no ability to use a firearm in this game. Jocks, bookworms, popular kids and nerds all fit. Another possibility is to have all kids have similar background, like a school team or perhaps a school club.

** Arnold J Flindal will appear in a future game!*

TIMELINE NOTES

(Player/Character specific introductions should occur one on one between GM and player prior to game)

PART 1: Fireworks

Party meets at the park with applicable family members for pre-fireworks picnics and barbecues. Plans made to head to movie I evening when parents go to adult dance/party at town square

PART 2: Boredom Sets In

Party decides during fireworks to wander off and run into Tim Roddy. Plan put into motion to break in to Tompkins house when they see him leaving town. One parent discussing with another nearby says “Off he goes to visit his sister. Shame he never stays for community events...”

PART 3: Investigation

Fireworks end as they arrive at the house. They enter and investigate.

PART 5: The Race to the Bay

Overwhelming fear sets in and the party races off. They see Mr. Tompkins return, crash his car and run. He can keep up with them so they must find a way to escape. He always matches the speed of the slowest party member.

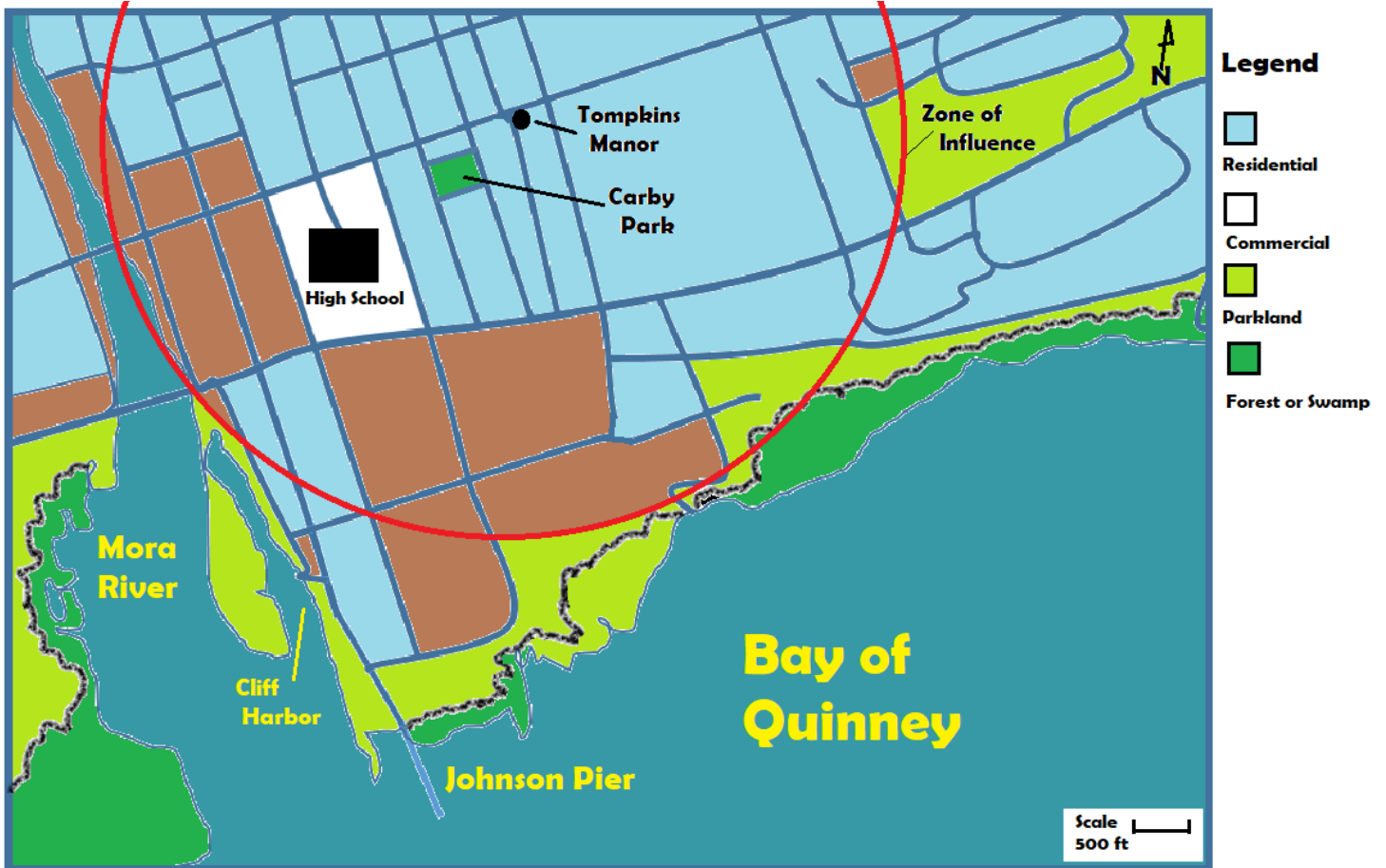
Old Man Thompkins

Gareth Thompkins requires two sets of statistics. It is suggested the GM roll one set being those of a sixty year old fit man with no movement or other skill losses due to age. A second set will be required for when he approaches or leaves the Zone of Influence. This second set is for after he leaves the zone and will reflect a man who is ninety but with the same strength as a sixty year old. In all cases, his movement should be such that he is at all times the same movement as the slowest party member.

Part 6: Epilogue

This is intended to give the players a sense of how to make skill rolls, and how to deal with Sanity loss. It is suggested, assuming all survive, that they are provided a summary of what actually happened. He essentially utilized magics to control the town, to dominate the peoples. He utilized stolen objects to create a web of influence and the death of a child to spark the magic.

Appendix 1: Map (I don't usually provide maps!)



Hope you enjoy the scenarios. More to come.

Please send any questions or comments to:

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