

protodimension magazine



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submissions@protodimension.com



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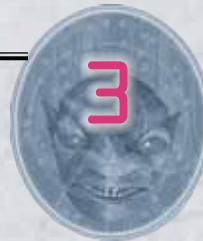
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Dinner Table Humor

By The Braincase Factory



IMAGE BY DAVE SCHUEY, 2010. USED WITH PERMISSION



FROM THE SHADOWS

By Tad Kelson

Horror, conspiracy, strange locations, the inexplicable and frankly disturbing, these are the genres explored in Protodimension Magazine. From aliens conducting experiments on farmers and cows, to hordes of flesh eating anything, to tentacles intent on fleshly domination, and all manner of unspeakable and unknowable monstrosities, these are the bread and butter of things that provoke a squirming response, a visceral gut level reaction. This is what Horror and Similar genres all work toward and the field of role playing games are no different.

Yet the real horror of today is not in chainsaws, or bombs, or mutant apocalypses, but lies instead in the sameness of modern life. Each day, in the pursuit of what ever we call our goals, the days are pretty similar. Get up, go to work, distract ourselves, sleep, rinse and repeat. Which is the beauty of our hobby, our passion, it can be different. From the system to the setting to the intent of the players and the person coordinating the game, it can break the monotony of the mundane life, and allow us to experience somewhere or something else. We can create a new reality.

We here at Protodimensions Magazine would prefer to break up the sameness of your day, the sameness of your existence, the sameness of other gaming products (at times) and provide something a bit different, something not the same as other gaming oriented magazines and electronic products.

So fresh Blood and Brains to fuel the fire, is the core of what makes a good magazine or company great. Fresh Blood and Brains, poured into the engines, powering the machinery down the chosen highway, sinews and muscles pulling and straining, tearing and rebuilding on a continuous basis. These are the cornerstones to any endeavor, with creativity and generosity being the gifts from the living to the electronic entity, known in this case, as Protodimension Magazine.

So take a few moments and investigate the different articles, adventures, fiction and artwork all donated to you, our reader, through the medium of PDM.

Sheers all!

Tad Kelson

Sarah's Friends

An Adventure
By Phil Bignall
For Call of Cthulhu®



This adventure is intended for relatively inexperienced investigators who have been on two or three cases at most. It is set in modern day Blackheath and Greenwich in south-east London although it could be relocated to any era with a bit of work. Investigators should be given handout #1 at the start of the investigation before they are briefed. Invent a couple of totally irrelevant news stories to accompany it or better still, invent news stories pertaining to previous adventures. The news story has a loose bearing on the case but should not be given too much importance.

THE STORY SO FAR...

Michael Huntingdon is an upper class gentleman who after having served in the diplomatic service for many years, retired at the age of 53 to open a small antiquarian book shop in Greenwich, London. He has a pretty wife, Sarah, who is fifteen years his junior and, although partially put out at no longer being part of the diplomatic social circle, is reasonably content to settle down to the quiet life.

However, whilst on a safari holiday in Kenya, Sarah contracts a tropical disease, the symptoms of which manifest themselves after their return to England. Despite

the best medical treatment money can buy, Sarah's condition worsens and she eventually dies.

Huntingdon is beside himself with grief and never rightly recovers. After becoming a recluse and spending time in the bottom of a whisky bottle, he eventually decides to throw himself into his books and study in order to compensate for his loss. This is to prove his undoing. He reads a few too many books on the subject of the nature of life and death and discovers the possibility of the existence of an ancient Egyptian method of bringing the dead back to life.

Huntingdon hatches a plan to bring his wife back to life. He learns of a Frenchman, Arnaud de Jodille, who has a copy of the text in question. He initiates a correspondence with the man and persuades de Jodille to allow him to visit and read the book. He travels to France and gains access to de Jodille's library. Unfortunately the method in question proves inapplicable but de Jodille's private library is extensive and contains many ancient occult books. He is subtly persuaded to read these by de Jodille who has a hidden agenda. After reading many writings about necromancy, Huntingdon, already of questionable sanity, thinks he has the answer and returns to London.



(Sarah's Friends from 5)

He raises Sarah's body from the dead using the 'Black Binding' spell, performing a few heinous acts in the process. Unfortunately, all 'Sarah' is now is a slowly decomposing zombie, which exacts a further toll on his sanity. He tries to make the best of things and carry on as they did before but is painfully aware that normal people would be horrified by the sight of his 'wife'. Shortly after this, the totally insane Huntingdon drinks some of the

revival potion. This kills him but binds his spirit to his body. Failing to realise that he is dead, Huntingdon continues as if nothing has happened. He then decides she needs some friends of her own and raises more zombies to be her friends.

Raising corpses as zombies disturbs the spirits who the corpses belong to. They return to haunt their nearest blood relatives, manifesting themselves at the age at which they were most happy. One of the persons

being haunted is Stephen Thompson, landlord of the Kings' Arms pub in Greenwich. His mother and father both return to haunt him; his father as the bumbling trainee barman he once was who used to spoil the beer on a number of occasions; his mother as an eight year old who liked to 'borrow' things from people. This results in a number of things going missing from people who live in the pub. Suspecting that



(Sarah's Friends from 6)

someone is thieving, Stephen Thompson contacts the investigators.

HIRING THE INVESTIGATORS

The investigators will be telephoned by Stephen Thompson, landlord of the Kings' Arms pub after seeing an advert for their services in the Yellow Pages or local paper. It is assumed that the investigators are organised as a 'Special Investigations Agency' or some such. He wants them to investigate things mysteriously going missing at his pub. The objects going missing are such things as wristwatches, palm pilots, jewellery etc. Thompson will initially be sceptical of the idea of a haunting, after all most people don't believe in ghosts. All the same, things going missing is bad for business. He hasn't contacted the police because he has one or two dubious sidelines going on and is of the opinion that the police couldn't catch a cold anyway.

Investigators will be paid £30.00/day plus expenses and can stay in a room at the pub for the duration of the investigation.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

As the investigation progresses, a number of events will occur. These will result in more information being made available to the investigators as the story unfolds.

27TH JANUARY

Stephen Thompson, landlord of the Kings Arms pub in Greenwich will approach investigators to try to hire them for what he believes is one of his paying guests thieving from himself and other people staying at the pub.

28TH JANUARY

A nearly fresh barrel of ale goes off overnight. Thompson is both surprised and annoyed about this as he prides himself on keeping the ale in the best possible condition. He will say that his father, on the other hand preferred to drink the ale rather than look after it and in his younger days, couldn't look after beer to save his life.

29TH JANUARY

The police, led by Inspector Barry Wilson investigate grave robbing in Blackheath cemetery. If investigators go to the cemetery on this date, they may face questioning by the police. Subsequent visits will find the desecrated graves cordoned off with luminous tape although no police will be on site.

30TH JANUARY

A policeman will arrive at the Kings' Arms to inform Thompson that his par-

ent's grave has been dug up and the bodies stolen. The morning papers will also report this (handout #2).

THE KINGS' ARMS

The Kings Arms is a large public house, built in 1892. It is decorated in a mock traditional style with horse brasses on the walls and old Victorian photographs framed and mounted in various places. It has two main bar areas and takes paying guests of which there are currently three. There are in total five people living at the Kings Arms; Stephen Thompson and his wife Jackie; a computer operator called George Hodge; Frank Carter who is a clerk; and Lawrence Smith a labourer. There are also two part-time bar staff there during the evenings. They are Caroline Taylor and Gary Savage, both of whom are students.

During the night, things go missing from peoples rooms. These are small objects, of a size that can be fitted into someone's pocket. Everyone who lives in the pub has had something removed from their room.

Should the investigators choose to spend nights at the inn one or two unnerving things may happen to them such as:



(Sarah's Friends from 7)

- 1 A slight breeze in the room where they are sleeping.
- 2 Cold spots in the house.
- 3 Very faint laughter (as if from a small child).
- 4 Light footsteps up and down the house.
- 5 One of their possessions goes missing, something small - a pen, wristwatch, mobile phone etc.
- 6 They find the curtains drawn and open when they wake up in the morning
- 7 One morning, the landlord will find a new barrel of beer has spoiled.

Initially, Thompson will dismiss talk of haunting as it only started 3 weeks ago and there weren't any ghosts before that. A THOROUGH search of the premises will reveal a music box in the beer cellar behind a barrel. The music box has had the workings removed so it is, in effect just a box. Inside the box are all the stolen items. If the box is shown to the landlord, he will go pale and say the box belonged to his mother. He will tell a story of how, when his mother was a little girl, she would 'borrow' stuff to play with and keep it in her music box. When she got bored with an item, she

(Sarah's Friends on 9)

NPCS

STEPHEN THOMPSON (PUB LANDLORD)

Stephen Thompson is a well-built man in his late thirties. He has a shaven head and looks intimidating but is generally friendly and affable. He has a wife Jackie and runs the King's Arms pub in Greenwich and has done so ever since his parents died. He has hired the investigators to discover why things are going missing from the pub. He personally believes that one of the lodgers is stealing things from everyone else and only pretending to be a victim of theft. However he has checked all of the lodgers' rooms whilst they were out and could find none of the stolen items.

PUB TENANTS

The lodgers at the pub know very little and all of them have had items go missing. One or two of them may have experienced strange events, such as finding their curtains drawn in the morning, having the bulb in the lamp repeatedly go or the temperature suddenly dropping for no reason.

George Hodge (Computer Operator)

Frank Carter (Filing Clerk)

Lawrence Smith (Labourer)

BARTENDERS

These are two undergraduate students. They know very little about what is going on in the pub. They may have heard funny noises up stairs once or twice when the pub has had a late license.

Caroline Taylor (Student)

Gary Savage (Student)

PAUL FINCH (JOURNALIST)

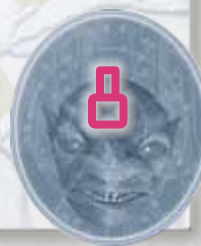
Paul Finch is a scruffy looking journalist, in his mid-thirties who looks like he needs a good shave. Unfortunately he has so far failed to make it onto the staff of one of the national papers and is thus drifting along in an uninspiring job on a regional newspaper *The South London Gazette*. Finch likes a drink or two and can be persuaded to divulge information over a liquid lunch.

FREDERICK CHAPPELL

Fred Chappell is in his late forties and is an upper middle class snob. He has a very high opinion of himself and sits on the board of directors of a local electronics firm. The grave of his sister was first disturbed, and then the body was stolen. He believes the local authorities are incompetent and are not doing enough about it.

BARRY WILSON (POLICE INSPECTOR)

Barry Wilson is a no-nonsense police inspector in his early forties. He has a certain amount of marital trouble due to the long hours he has to put in and consequently every day is a bad day. His attitude to the investigators is disparaging to say the least, especially if they show up at the cemetery while he is investigating the grave robberies. The last thing he wants is a bunch of assorted Sherlocks and wannabee Columbos making his life more difficult. As a result he will be generally obstructive and prove a hindrance to any investigation. He'd rather solve the case himself and get the credit for it than have someone else do it.



(Sarah's Friends from 8)

would return it. She used to get smacked when she pinched something and eventually grew out of it. He hasn't seen the box since he was six years old...

Once the box has been discovered, the haunting behaviour will change. Beer taps will be left on during the night. Glasses will break and lights will go on and off. The effect should be similar to an eight year old throwing a tantrum.

Note: the haunting should be an ideal opportunity to give the investigators the run around and put them on edge without doing anything really nasty to them.

All this should lead players to believe that the Kings Arms is now being haunted by the unquiet ghosts of George and Mary Thompson, Stephens' parents who died three years ago. The reason they are now proving troublesome is because their bodies have been dug up and reanimated by Michael Huntingdon.

THE GRAVE ROBBERIES

There have actually been two sets of grave robberies. The first was over a year ago when Michael Huntingdon first resurrected his wife. The second set was over the last two or three weeks as Huntingdon started raising more zombies to serve as 'friends'.

The South London Gazette has been reporting these grave robbing activities and the story has been covered by their reporter Paul Finch. Finch is an old style journalist who likes a drink and can be persuaded (by means of a liquid lunch & successful Persuade roll) to give the name and address of Frederick Chappell, another person who has had deceased relatives dug up.

LIBRARY RESEARCH

Greenwich library keeps back issues of the local papers. Should the players visit the library and search for any previous reports of grave robbing they will receive handouts #3 & #4 if they make a successful Library Use test.

FREDERICK CHAPPELL

Frederick Chappell is an upper middle class snob. He is indignant about having his sister Alice dug up and the inaction on the part of the authorities (in his opinion). He will offer to co-operate fully with investigators if he can be persuaded that the investigators sincerely want to catch the culprit (a Fast Talk test will get their foot in the door followed by a Persuade test to get him to cooperate).

Chappell however has very little information to impart other than the grave had been disturbed the previous week. In both

cases some attempt had been made to disguise the damage. However, when the body was taken, someone had obviously tried to fill in the grave but had made a very bad job of it.

If asked of the weird happenings about the house, he will say that for some reason it always feels cold in the house.

He will also show investigators to Alice Chappell's grave.

BLACKHEATH CEMETERY

Blackheath Cemetery is a large and rambling cemetery which has been in use for over a hundred and fifty years. Graves vary from the neat, clean and well cared for to age old slabs of stone in forgotten corners, encrusted with moss and lichen. The place has been disturbed in recent weeks. Michael Huntingdon has been resurrecting zombies from the bodies of those buried there. He has also managed to arouse the ire of a small group of ghouls. His revival serum includes the blood of a ghoul, which he obtained by casting a Contact Ghoul spell in the cemetery, then killing the creature that turned up with an axe.

Unfortunately the other members of the ghoul pack found the body and ate it (waste not, want not) leaving the skeleton



(Sarah's Friends from 9)

in a bush. They are now wandering about trying to find who killed their friend.

Should investigators search the whole cemetery, a Spot Hidden roll will yield a rather unusual skeleton in a bush. Anyone passing a successful Biology or Medicine roll will realise the skeleton is not human (a ghoul). This realisation will result in a sanity loss of 0/d3.

A further successful Spot Hidden will locate a leather wallet in long grass beside one of the graves, some distance away from the disturbed graves. It contains two £20 notes, some small change and a wallet sized photograph of Sarah Huntingdon.

If investigators visit the cemetery at night, there is a 15% chance of the ghouls turning up for each hour they spend there. The ghouls however are quite cowardly and will run if outnumbered.

FURTHER INVESTIGATION

If the photograph is shown to some of the regulars of the Kings' Arms, investigators will be told that it is Sarah Huntingdon.

If they ask about her, they will be told that she used to run a book shop two streets away until she died three years ago.

They haven't seen much of her husband and it is thought that he had a breakdown after she died. The shop has been closed for some time.

Alternatively, if investigators look up Huntingdon Books in the Yellow Pages, they will find the address and telephone number. Attempting to telephone the shop will result in failure because the phone has been disconnected. Looking up the address in the A-Z will yield the location of the shop. Alternatively, a successful Computer Use roll will enable them to find the shop through an on-line street finder. Unfortunately they will not be able to find Huntingdon's home address or telephone number in the telephone directory as he is not listed (Ex-directory).

If the players go wandering about Greenwich and at least know Huntingdon's name, they will stumble across "Huntingdon Books. Prop. M.Huntingdon" on a successful luck roll (highest Luck in the group). It will look closed up and abandoned.

HUNTINGDON BOOKS

Michael Huntingdon's book shop is an old two-storey Edwardian terraced building. It is abandoned with the window display covered in dust and left untidy

and derelict. Huntingdon obviously hasn't been there in a long while and players will have to break in to gain access. A successful Locksmith test will enable investigators to gain entry inside a minute. Each repeat attempt will take another minute. Alternatively they may try to force the door. The door has Str 12. The longer they spend trying to gain entry, the more likely it is that someone will notice them trying to break in.

(See Huntingdon Books Map)

By now, investigators should have worked out that Michael Huntingdon is probably behind what is happening and should now know his address. It should be a relatively simple matter to find the house in the A-Z. Again, a successful Computer Use roll will yield the location through the on-line street finder.

22 GLOVER ROAD

22 Glover Road is a three-storey Victorian House in a very affluent area. The front garden looks as though it was once in pristine condition but it is now somewhat overgrown with weeds and the hedges need trimming. Whether the investigators arrive during the day or night, the curtains will always be drawn.

(Sarah's Friends on 12)





ALL IN FAVOR OF CRUMPETS AND TEA, SAY "I."

(Sarah's Friends from 10)

The house does have an electronic alarm system but fortunately for investigators, this is turned off. If they knock at the door or ring the bell, they will receive no answer, despite the fact that Huntingdon does not go out and is therefore in residence. They will thus need to gain entry by other means. A successful Locksmith roll will enable them to do this within a minute. Again, repeat attempts will take a further minute for each one. The door has Str 10 if investigators try to force it.

Unlike Huntingdon Books, 22 Glover Street still has all utilities connected—Michael Huntingdon is actually here to collect his mail. Hence the electric and gas appliances and telephone all work.

THE ZOMBIE DINNER PARTY

Huntingdon, dead and barking mad, still clings to the idea that he and his 'wife' can lead a normal life. He thus has been attempting for a day or two to conduct a dinner party with their new 'friends'. This task is not helped by the fact that all of the zombies (Sarah, George, Mary and Alice) apart from him are completely brain dead and incapable of doing anything unless he tells them to. In addition his wife is rotting quite badly.

The whole scene is a ghastly parody of a genteel dinner party and should be played as such. All of the zombies apart from Huntingdon are in a state of decay as they have been dead some time. Huntingdon's 'wife' is in a particularly bad state. Huntingdon though, is treating the situation as a full scale upper class soiree with all formal rules of etiquette. However the other zombies have to be instructed to do each and every action e.g.

1. Huntingdon will tell 'Sarah' to drink some soup, which she will and it all comes out of a hole in her intestines along with a few maggots.
2. Huntingdon will remonstrate with 'George' about using the wrong cutlery.
3. Huntingdon may tell Alice that it is rude to drop her eyeball in the side salad in polite company. He will then ask her to replace it back in its socket and apologise.

Neither Huntingdon nor the other zombies will attack investigators unless Huntingdon feels either insulted or threatened. It is (1/2d4) sanity loss to witness the zombie dinner party.

(Sarah's Friends on 13)

MICHAEL HUNTINGDON (ZOMBIE)

Michael Huntingdon is or rather was an ex-diplomat who left in order to open an antiquarian bookshop in Greenwich with his wife, Sarah. Unfortunately, Sarah contracted a fever during a safari holiday in Kenya and died. Huntingdon, unable to contain his grief, searches for a way to revive her and ends up falling in with Arnaud de Jodille, a French sorcerer. The learning of forbidden arts takes its toll on Huntingdon's sanity but he successfully revives his wife, albeit only as a zombie. With only the vestiges of sanity still remaining, he attempts to live a normal life with his 'wife'.

After a year of living with a zombie as man and wife, Huntingdon went completely insane. In a fit of gibbering he drank the resurrection fluid which killed him, but the side effects of a living being imbibing this caused his soul to remain within his body. Thus Huntingdon became a zombie although he didn't realise he had died. Huntingdon, thinking his wife is just "different" raids Blackheath cemetery for more bodies to turn into 'friends'.

If Huntingdon can be persuaded that he is actually dead, his soul will depart and he and the rest of the zombies will collapse.

Str:	13	Con:	7	Siz:	11	Int:	6	Pow:	10
Dex:	8	App:	7	Edu:	19	San:	50		

Hit Points: 10

Sanity Points: 0

Magic Points: 10

Spells: *Black Binding*, *Call Ghoul*

Skills: *Cthulhu Mythos* (15%), *Own Language* (94%), *Occult* (33%), *Mandarin* (78%), *French* (52%), *Greek* (11%), *Latin* (15%), *History* (65%), *Persuade* (85%), *Bargain* (83%), *Fast Talk* (76%)

Weapons: *Fist* 50%, *Grapple* 25%

Armour: Treat as if human. If he receives a 'mortal' wound he will realise he is dead and collapse.



(Sarah's Friends from 12)

DEFEATING HUNTINGDON

Huntingdon can be defeated in a number of ways. If he is dealt enough wounds to kill a normal human being, he will realise he is actually dead and his spirit will leave his body. He will collapse, closely followed by the other zombies. Setting fire to the house is a good method of doing this, as is turning on all of the gas appliances and waiting for the lit candles in the basement to ignite it.

Alternatively peaceful means can also be used. Pointing out the fact that Huntingdon has no pulse, is not breathing or showing him his reflection may all convince him that he is dead if a Persuade*1/2 roll is successful. Thus he and his zombies will collapse without a fight. Should this roll be failed however, Huntingdon may take offence and he and his zombies will attack.

CONCLUSION

Once the zombies are laid to rest, no more weird events will occur at the King's Arms. Stephen Thompson will pay the investigators their fee and throw in a few drinks into the bargain.

In addition, the following Sanity awards may be applied if so wished:-

Killing both Ghouls +d6

Defeating Huntingdon +d6

A number of loose ends may have arisen as a result of this adventure. If the ghouls are not killed, they may still be out trying to find who killed their friend. If investigators have found the contact details for Arnaud de Jodille, they may wish to follow up this lead. De Jodille is a French sorcerer seeking to extend his life by means of magic. However many POW sacrifices during his lifetime have weakened him such that he doesn't have the strength to cast the necessary spell and live. He was therefore hoping to trick Huntingdon into casting it for him. However, should someone else come calling, perhaps he will have another chance...



MICHAEL HUNTINGDON'S' NOTES

Michael Huntingdon's' Notes are in hastily scribbled shorthand, and were intended purely for his own reference. Anyone attempting to decipher these notes will need to know shorthand or find someone who does. The notes will take 12 weeks to decipher and understand and will give the reader 5 Mythos Points and cost (d2/d4) Sanity. They contain the spells "Call forth Noisome Creature of Murk" (Contact Ghoul) and "Revive Man from Dead" (Black Binding) as per the CofC rule book. Both of these spells take 2d6 weeks to learn.

The ingredients for the Black Binding spell liquid are as follows:

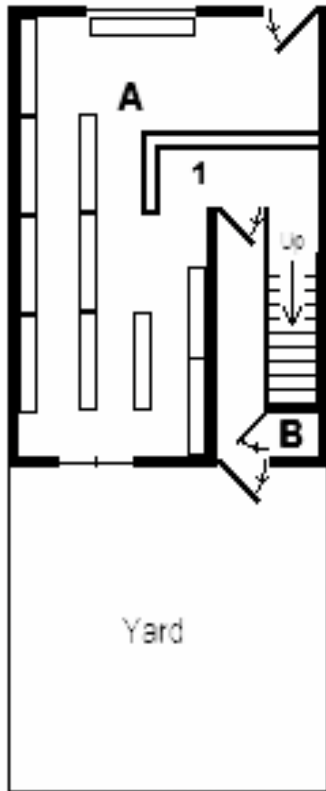
REVIVE MAN FROM DEAD (BLACK BINDING)

- 1 part Blood of Ghoul
- 2 parts Blood of New-born Child
- 1 part Naphtha
- Sprinkling of mandrake root.
- 1 part Belladonna.
- 3 parts alcohol.

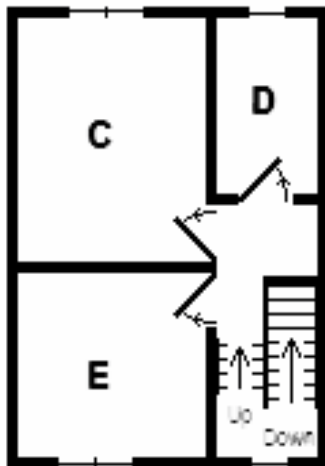
To be brewed for six hours.

Huntingdon Books

Ground Floor



First Floor



HUNTINGDON BOOKS

Room A

This is the shop area and looks largely disused. It is full of bookshelves which are filled with old books on a variety of subjects. Some of the books have been knocked off the shelves and still lie where they have fallen. All of them are covered in a thick layer of dust. There is a shop counter with the hatchway open at (1). On the till is an electronic cash register which is turned off. There is a pile of unopened mail on the doormat in front of the entrance. This if opened this will prove to be an assortment of junk mail and utility bill reminders. The electric lights in the shop do not work because the power has long since been disconnected.

Room B

This is a small store cupboard. It contains some books and various items of stationary.

Room C

This room is a small office. It contains a wooden desk behind which is a plush leather chair, a small table with a fax machine on it, a photo-

copier and two filing cabinets. Beside the desk is a wastepaper basket. There is a PC on the desk. There is no power so none of the office equipment will work. Everything in this room is covered in a thin film of dust.

There are a number of clues to be found in this room.

Checking the wastepaper basket or the desk drawers will reveal a number of items of correspondence which have Huntingdon's home address on it. This is 22 Glover Road.

A successful Spot Hidden roll will reveal a small diary under the desk. It is for the year 2001 and contains a number of intermittent entries (see Michael Huntingdon's Diary 2001 below).

Room D

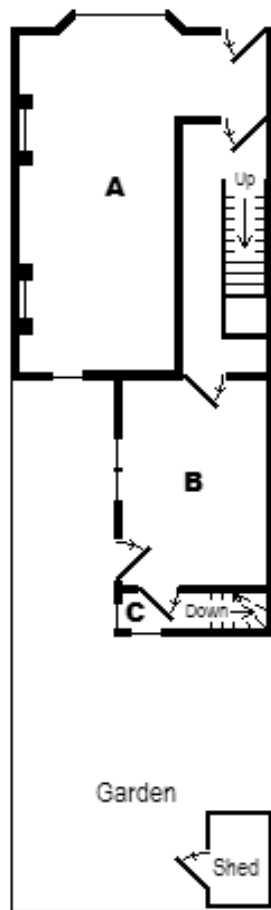
This is a small rest room. It contains a toilet and a wash basin.

Room E

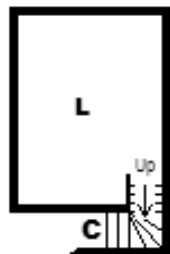
This is a large storeroom and contains some old furniture and a number of stacks of books. All of the contents of this room are covered in dust and cobwebs.

22 Glover Road

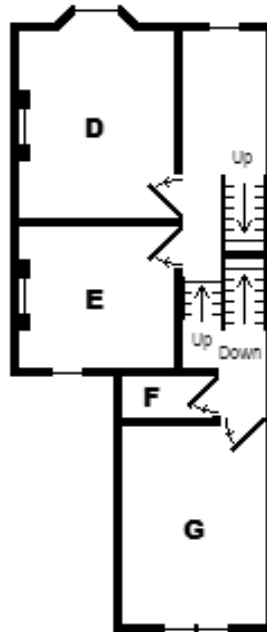
Ground Floor



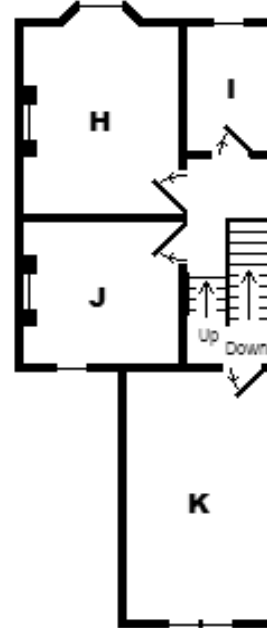
Basement



First Floor



Second Floor



22 GLOVER ROAD

Room A

This room was originally the dining room. It has a number of paintings on the wall and two cabinets containing some small sculptures and ornaments. Apart from this furniture and two gas fires, the room is empty. Investigators will notice that the very expensive Axminster carpet has muddy foot-prints on it.

The reason that the dining table and chairs are missing is that they have been moved to the basement. Huntingdon does not want the neighbours to catch sight of his 'different' wife and her 'different' friends.

Room B

This is the kitchen. It is made up of fitted pine units with a built in sink and gas stove. It also has all modern conveniences including microwave, fridge-freezer, washing machine and tumble dryer. There is a pine kitchen table in the centre of the room and four chairs. The kitchen is also a complete mess. Kitchen utensils are strewn about in a slovenly fashion and there are many unwashed pots and pans, in some of which can be found mould cultures in an advanced state

(Glover Road on 16)

(Glover Road from 15)

of growth. There is also a bad smell in the air which is suspiciously like rotten meat.

ROOM C

This is a stairwell leading down to the basement. The bad smell first detected in the kitchen is much stronger here. If investigators make a successful Listen roll, they will be able to hear a peculiar one sided conversation coming from the basement.

GARDEN

The garden has the look of having once been well cared for and tended but is now somewhat overgrown. There is a tool shed at the back of the garden in which may be found a wide array of garden implements.

ROOM D

This is the lounge. There is a sofa and two armchairs in this room, both of which are very expensive. There is also a wide-screen television and video. Built into the fireplace in one wall is a gas-heater.

ROOM E

This is Huntingdon's study. There is a desk here upon which sits a PC and telephone. The walls are lined with bookshelves which contain a variety of books on many subjects. There is also a gas heater in here. The desk is cluttered with books, all of which seem to be about preserving the dead and the nature of life and death. The books on the desk all concern embalming, immortality, resurrection and even taxidermy. If the investigators switch on the computer and successfully make a Computer

Use*1/4 roll, then they can hack into Michael Huntingdon's private files. This will give them the e-mail and postal address of Arnaud de Jodille.

ROOM F

The toilet.

ROOM G

This room is fitted out as an exercise room. It contains a multi-gym, exercise bike, rowing machine and tread mill. Sarah Huntingdon used to like to keep fit. Unfortunately after Michael raised her as a zombie, he tried to get her back into the old routine with disastrous results. Investigators will find clumps of hair trapped in the multi-gym and complete fingernails here and there. They will also find one of her ears decaying on the floor which will cost (0/d3) Sanity.

ROOM H

This is the master bedroom. There is an expensive king-size bed in here as well as fitted wardrobes and a dressing table. There are two bedside cabinets and a gas heater in here. In one corner, on a small shelf is a portable television. Upon one of the bedside cabinets is a telephone.

ROOM I

The bathroom.

ROOM J

A spare bedroom. This has a single bed and two fitted wardrobes in it.

ROOM K

This room looks like it was equipped as a games room as there is a billiards table in here. However this has been covered over with a board and is now being used as a work surface. Mounted on this is what seems to be a make-shift chemistry lab, complete with test tubes, retorts, and a spirit burner. The residue of a black, vile smelling liquid can be found in one of the beakers.

Investigators will also find some notebooks containing the notes that Huntingdon made whilst researching in de Jodille's library (see below).

ROOM L

This is the basement. It used to be a cellar used mainly for storing wine but now serious, if amateurish efforts have been made to decorate it. There are paintings on the walls and rugs on the floor. A dining table occupies the centre of the room and has six chairs around it. The table is fully laid out for a five course meal, with tablecloth, candles, wine chillers and a bewildering array of cutlery.

Seated on four of the chairs are zombies, looking somewhat the worse for wear. Attempting to play master of ceremonies and get the zombies to eat dinner is Michael Huntingdon. He is actually dead, having died recently. He still however, does not realise it.



The South
London Gazette

**Baby
Snatched
From Pram!**

December 20, 2002

A young mother was in shock yesterday after her baby was snatched from her pram right under her nose. Sharon Tyler aged 26 of Greenwich was doing some shopping in Deptford market when the snatcher struck.

"I only turned my back for five minutes to pay for some fish, but when I turned back he had gone." said the distraught mother.

Police are appealing for witnesses to come forward if they have any information at all.

Handout #1

The South
London Gazette

**Graves Robbed
at Blackheath
Cemetery**

January 30, 2003

It has been discovered that three graves in Blackheath cemetery have been dug up and the bodies removed.

Fred Chappell was going to lay flowers on his sister's grave when he noticed that the grass had been displaced and that the grave had obviously been disturbed.

In horror, he called the police, who exhumed the grave to discover that the coffin had been broken open and the body removed. They also found another two graves which had been similarly desecrated. Police investigating the scene have so far found no clues as to who might have perpetrated such an act. The area around the graves has been cordoned off to prevent further tampering.

This bears a striking resemblance to an event last year when the grave of Sarah Huntingdon was dug up and the body removed.

Handout #2

The South
London Gazette

Letters to the Editor

Sir,

I write to you in order to draw your readers' attention to some outrageous goings on at Blackheath Cemetery. I was placing flowers on my sister's grave and cleaning the headstone when I noted that part of the turf had been cut away and replaced. The ground beneath the turf appeared to have been disturbed. It appears obvious to me that some depraved individuals have been interfering with the grave of my poor deceased sister. I have written to the municipal authorities demanding that they do something about these Satanists or whatever they are and urge members of your readership to do the same.

F. Chappell
Blackheath

January 10, 2003

Handout #3

The South
London Gazette

**Body
Snatched
from Grave**

January 3, 2003

Mourners at Highgate Cemetery discovered this morning that one of the graves had been broken open and the body removed. The grave belonged to Mrs. Sarah Huntingdon who died 18 months ago. Police are investigating the matter.

Handout #4



MICHAEL HUNTINGDON'S DIARY 2001

This is a fragmented diary kept by Huntingdon over the year 2001. On some days he writes extensively, even overflowing onto the entry for the next day. Sometimes he goes for a week or two without writing anything at all. At various points thought the text he writes about how he misses his wife and that all his efforts are poured into bringing her back. Throughout the book, it becomes clear that Huntingdon's sanity is in a continual state of decline. It costs (0/1) Sanity to read the diary.

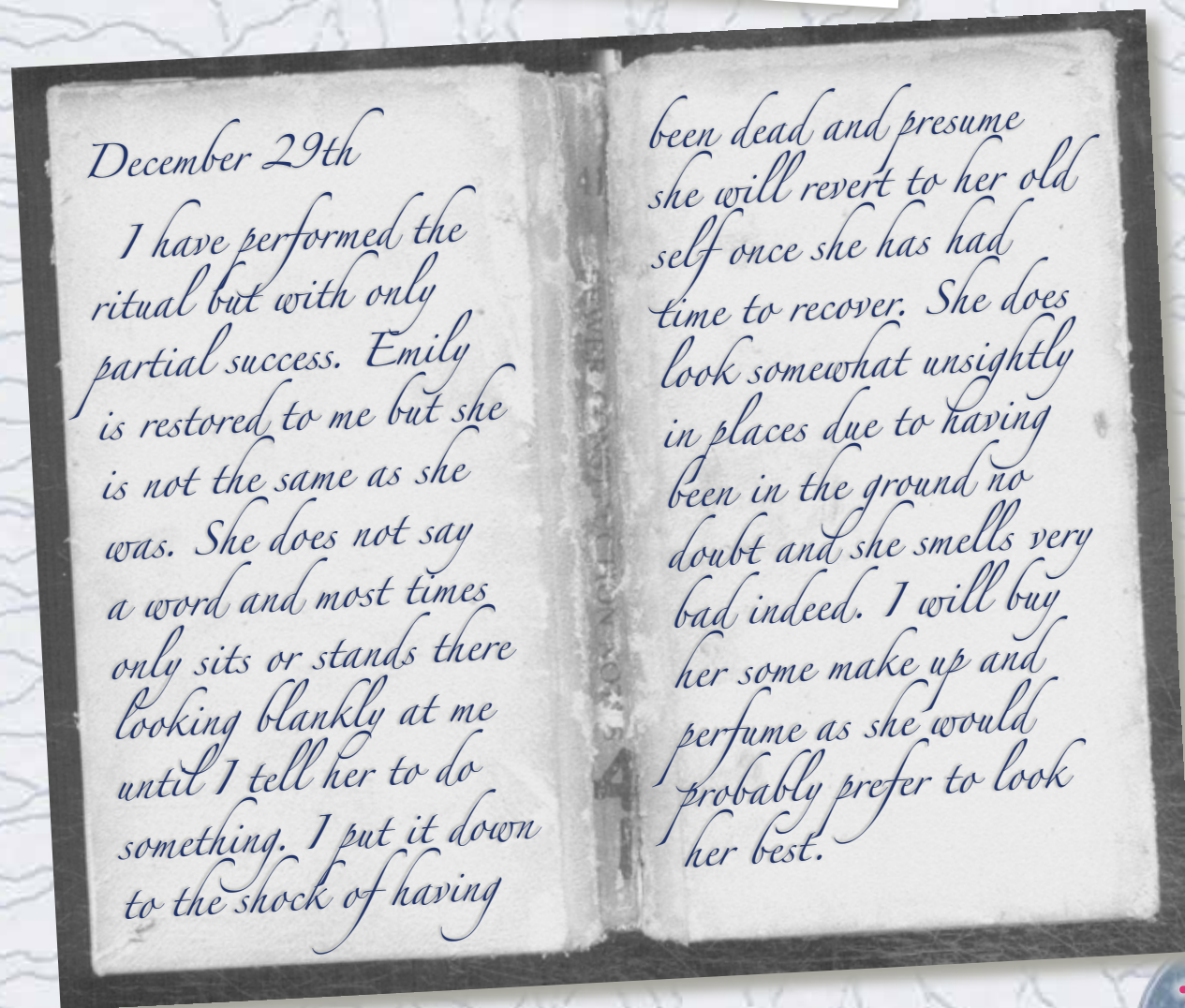
The diary tells of Huntingdon's initial contact with Arnaud de Jodille and how, following de Jodille's refusal to sell him the Mythos tome 'The Book of Blind Hirosthes', he arranges with de Jodille to travel to France and read the book in the Frenchman's library.

The book, after showing much initial promise, proved inadequate because it required that the corpse which was going to be resurrected be in a perfect state of preservation and unfortunately, Sarah had been dead for some while. Huntingdon therefore digs deeper into more sinister tomes contained in the library. The 'Livre d'Ivon' is mentioned as being present there but Huntingdon takes much more interest in 'Les Cultes des Goules', a hideous book of necromancy. He discovers a recipe for a potion and accompanying spells which he believes will bring his wife back to life. There is an obscure reference to him casting the spell "Call forth Noisome Creature of Murk" as some form of rehearsal for what he is about to do.

Convinced that he has found what he needs, Huntingdon leaves de Jodille's mansion, much to the displeasure of de Jodille and returns to England. He then concocts the potion and revives his wife. The last entry is handout #5.

LAST ENTRY IN MICHAEL
HUNTINGDON'S DIARY

Handout #5



FOUR ZOMBIES

Str	Con	Siz	Dex	POW	HPoints
10	11	9	7	1	10
11	12	12	5	1	12
9	10	7	8	1	9
12	10	11	7	1	11

Weapons: *Fist* 50%, - d3, *Grapple* 25%, *Bite* 25%, - d3

Armour: Bullets and other 'impale' weapons do 1 point of damage, all other weapons do half damage.

TWO GHOULS

GHOUL 1

Str: 13 Con: 14 Siz: 12 Int: 10
POW: 10 Dex: 12

DB: d4

Weapons: *Claws* 35%, d6+d4
Bite 30%, d6 + automatic worry.

GHOUL 2

Str: 12 Con: 12 Siz: 12 Int: 9
POW: 14 Dex: 14

DB: 0

Weapons: *Claws* 35%, d6
Bite 30%, d6 + automatic worry.

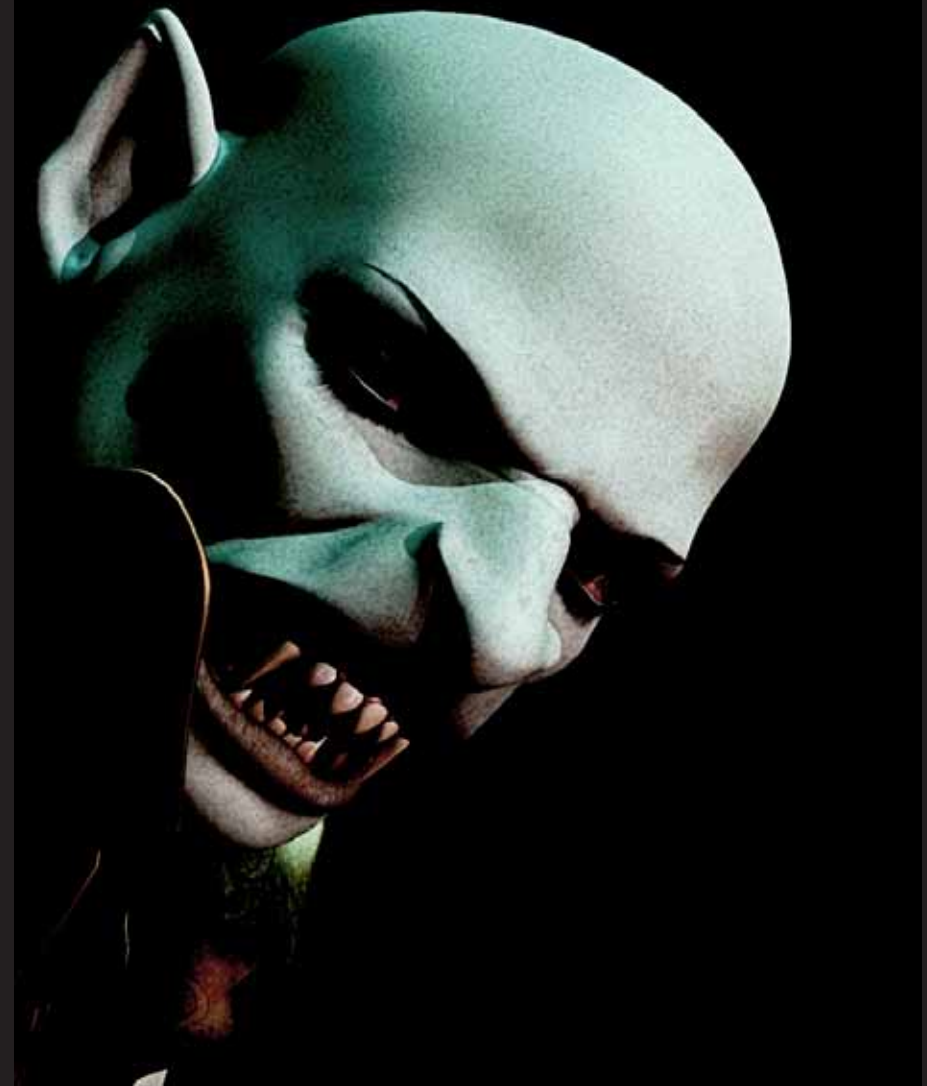
Sanity Loss: (0/d6)

Note:

Once a ghoul bites, it will hang on doing d4 damage per round. It can be dislodged (Str - Ghoul Str) x 5 +50%.

THEY ARE NEITHER MAN NOR WOMAN
THEY ARE NEITHER BRUTE NOR HUMAN
THEY ARE GHOULS

- EDGAR ALLAN POE



Chirp, Chirp

Fiction
By Tim Bisailon

Nexus Pete. 6:23pm

Just finished dinner with the Mrs...Both of us sitting on the front deck having a coffee.

Nexus Pete. 6:34

@Stingray454 What weird light? I thought that was just plain heat lightning.

Nexus Pete: 6:35

@Stingray454 There's nothing on the news at all. I still think it's just lightning.

Nexus Pete. 6:41 pm.

@BluebeardsGhost Just saw the flashes now. Could be some kids partying at the quarry flashing lights into the sky.

Nexus Pete. 7:02pm

Heard shouting in the distance and what sounded like gun shots. @BluebeardsGhost says he's going to investigate.

Nexus Pete. 7:07

The Mrs said she smelt something like sulphur in the air. Could be some form of terrorist activity?

Nexus Pete. 7:23 pm.

Dang. There's someone banging at the door and growling. Called 911. Police are on their way. I'm too old to deal with this stuff.

Nexus Pete. 7:31 pm.

Scratching sound still at the door. I'm sitting here with a loaded shotgun. The Mrs says the TV went blank.

Nexus Pete. 7:44 pm.

Fired two shots. Think I hit someone but still there is scratching along the walls.

Nexus Pete. 8:03 pm.

Siren's approaching. God this mess will be dealt with.

Nexus Pete. 8:06 pm.

Police are firing bullets, there seems to be something amiss.

Nexus Pete.8:13 pm.

Glanced outside after hearing one of the officer's scream then a sickening crunch.

(Chirp from 20)

Nexus Pete 8:14

Saw something move like lightning across the yard. Being chased by two officers firing madly. The wife is upset. I told her to tune into the news to see what is going on.

Nexus Pete. 8:23 pm.

WTH is going on?

Nexus Pete 8:41

Still no answer. Can't use the cellphone since it seems to be interference. Thank goodness land line is still working.

Nexus Pete. 9:02pm

Peter Nolan says that the end of the world is happening. That something strange was uncovered at the rock quarry. It seems like it was a huge pit or something.

Nexus Pete, 9:03pm

Peter drove like a bat out of hell from the quarry and says there is some bat-like humaniod critters scampering about. I think this is some Halloween prank gone mad.

Nexus Pete. 9:05pm

I hope I'm right.



scritch...
scritch...
scritch...

Incident 429

SHUTTLE DISASTER

An incident, subsequently labeled Incident 429 that occurred during shuttle mission STS II-920 had catastrophic results. NASA reported that on March 6, during a routine NASA shuttle mission, a meteorite traveling at near relativistic speeds impacted the main engine fuel tanks, resulting in an explosion and the destruction of the shuttle Indomitable with all hands.

A joint NASA and National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigation was launched to determine liability. The official ruling was that the meteor could not have been tracked and the impact was inevitable based on orbital mechanics. No responsible party was identified and Washington Assurance Inc. had to pay for a replacement shuttle as well as the life insurance policies on the crew. A memorial service was planned in Washington DC for the crewmembers which included the pop singer, Torus, but was cancelled due to lack of interest, in spite of Torus. This was the sixth shuttle destruction since the program started and elected governmental officials promptly began politicizing the incident to serve their own interests.

ANOMALIES

The Daily Mouth soon after reported that aliens destroyed the shuttle, and that a corp/government conspiracy covered the whole thing up. In the lead article of April 25, sources quoted in the article identified as amateur radio operators, reported receiving transmissions on the shuttle emergency band for 45 minutes *after* the explosion. The explosion was massive enough to be seen in daylight and the time of destruction was well known. Sources claimed that the transmissions were from the shuttle commander who appeared distraught about an invasion from space. The commander's last words were, "My batteries appear to be giving out." This led to lots of speculation in the Mouth article.

Another source cited in that article, reportedly from a radar relay operator at Salt Lake City Tracking Center, states that there was no meteor of a size large enough to cause that explosion. This is directly in conflict with official statements. In a side story, the Mouth reported the death in a freak accident of a radar technician in Utah. The technician's car moving at high speed was crushed with the technician in it when a sinkhole opened up on the freeway. The walls of the sinkhole closed on the vehicle after the car was trapped within it. Crews

Space Beasties, Sort Of...
By Norm Fenlason
For Dark Conspiracy®

(Incident from 22)

have reported working for 6 days to clear rubble enough to get to the car. The radar technician's was the only car involved in the freak accident.

LITTLE GREEN THINGS

The amateur radio operator, who published the transcript reportedly from the destroyed shuttle commander's last transmissions, was pushed into a media circus. Speaking on the *Tomorrow* late night show, Billy Gadson described in his own words the emotion in Commander Roger Broadmore's last words: "He was all messed up." Gadson went on to talk about the green and purple things Commander Broadmore described. Commander Broadmore stated that he was convinced that they were an invasion from space, and that the world was in danger. Ironically, replies to Commander Broadmore's transmissions from NASA Space Center in Houston were encrypted and only Commander Broadmore's words were included in the transcript. As Billy put it, "I seen that movie *Alien*. I know what can happen in space. What if one of those things lands on Earth? I gotta tell everyone." All the media, spurred on by the impending alien invasion, tried to renew the Roswell story, but got nowhere. The whole thing quickly turned ludicrous and at one point the Daily Mouth's own Page Three



(Incident from 23)

Girl was photographed cavorting with a pair of Little Green Things.

BACKUP COMMANDER

To add fire to the conspiracy, the New York Times reported that Wing Commander Broadmore was a *replacement* shuttle commander. The primary commander, Lieutenant Colonel Abigail Strock, took ill with an intestinal parasite the day before launch. Commander Broadmore was on exchange from the European Space Agency and received the go-ahead to command the mission. Conspiracy proponents implied that he was not briefed on the true nature of the mission and that his transmissions were real and the result of a failed secret policy by NASA. Lt Col Strock would not give comment and was quietly reassigned to less visible duties.

WHAT HAPPENED?

The shuttle was indeed impacted by a meteorite, a micrometeorite that penetrated the hull and lodged in the aluminum-alloy structure of the lower deck – not the main engine fuel tank. The hole in the hull, which apparently had no impact to the shuttle's mission, was quickly repaired, and forgotten by the crew. Micrometeorite penetrations were dangerous, but routinely handled by the trained crew. Fifteen hours

later Commander Broadmore transmitted on an emergency frequency from the shuttle's extra-vehicular maneuvering suit that the shuttle had exploded. His transmission lasted for 45 minutes before Commander Broadmore re-entered the atmosphere and was killed. Broadmore's wild rantings were interspersed with lucid commentary on the nature of what caused the shuttle to be destroyed. He reported that a fungus in the micrometeorite rapidly grew in the nutrient-rich shuttle atmosphere. This fungus was aggressive, quickly attaining a rudimentary collective intelligence, and overcoming the shuttle's crew. Only Commander Broadmore survived to make his transmission. The shuttle was observed on radar and deep-sky cameras to explode in a fiery flash – very few large-sized debris returned to the earth.

LITTLE GREEN THINGS, REPRISE

The fungus, acquiring the nickname Incident 429, is a collection of extra-terrestrial microbes that upon sufficient advancement reaches rudimentary intelligence. The origin of these microbes is unknown and cannot be traced to any of the known extra-terrestrial species. The fungus thrives in oxygen and uses materials that bind hydrogen as food. It literally eats

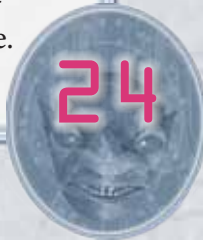
anything with simple or complex hydrogen bonds: plastics, polymers, fats, complex fuels, people...all are prime candidates as a food supply. To support its rapid growth, the fungus assimilates several elements for cell structure and strength, including carbon, silicon, some metals (as the organism needs them), and including sulfur. The fungus' use of sulfur is the most distressing since it is the cause of the smell of rotten eggs and rotting flesh.

FUNGUS GROWTH

The fungus grows rapidly and can be categorized in Stages.

STAGE ONE — FUNGAL INFESTATION

In oxygenated environments and with a source of other nutrients, a single microbe will grow into a *Fungal Infestation*. Although fungal infestations continue throughout the life of the fungus, it takes two hours before the next stage begins. While exceedingly rapid, the infestation spreads like normal terrestrial fungi, such as mildew. During the first two hours, if allowed to grow unchecked, the fungus will attain a concentration sufficient to stimulate the beginnings of sentience. The rate of growth is 1/8 cubic meter per hour. The infestation spreads by creeping where developing new microbes on the fringe advance.



(Incident from 24)

STAGE ONE — FUNGAL INFESTATION

Strength:	0	Education:	0	Move:	*
Constitution:	0	Charisma:	0	Skill/Dam:	1/6d6**
Agility:	0	Empathy:	0	Hits:	***
Intelligence:	1	Initiative:	0	# Appear:	Variable

* Stage One Infestations “creep” at a rate of 1 meter per hour.

** No attack but contact with unprotected flesh causes 1d6 damage per second (6d6 per combat phase). Contact with suits takes 2d6 damage per phase to the suit, including gloves.

*** Stage One Fungal Infestations have 100 hit points per cubic meter

Towards the end of the first two hours, the infestation develops oval buds approximately 2 cm in diameter and 4 cm long. Except for their size, these buds resemble rotten cherries, and some will appear to pulse slightly. The free end of these buds eventually ruptures into grotesque flowers, red in color, with purple veins on the petals. The bloom of these flowers signals the beginning of the foul odor associated with the fungal infestation and only gets worse as more buds flower. The buds with flower attached continue to expand reaching a diameter of 10-20 cm until they burst, spraying spores and signaling the start of Stage Two.

STAGE TWO — SPORES

Rupturing flower pods send particles the size of grains of sand flying through the air.

cloud. Should they be ingested in mouth and lungs, the fungus rapidly grows in their victim’s innards. There are few cures that will not also kill the patient. Forced breathing of eucalyptus vapors is the best one, but who carries that on the shuttle? Internal damage due to internal fungal infestation is 2d6 damage per turn. If the expansion of the fungus in the air tracts does not suffocate the victim, the victim will die when the infestation exits its host in Stage Three. Stage Two continues its function as new buds rupture,

As these particles lodge on surfaces, they begin new Stage One infestations. This stage is not that critical on Earth, where gravity draws these grains to the ground, but in space, without gravity, they stay airborne and move about like a foul

but Stage 3 begins approximately one hour later.

STAGE THREE — MOBILE FUNGUS

Once a Fungal Infestation reaches a volume of about 2 cubic meters, the infestation begins to develop a rudimentary nervous system. This causes the 2 cubic meter mass to become denser to about 5 kg, drawing the volume down. The nervous system allows the infestation to move about under its own direction. Globes of greenish, purplish goop begin to move about the floor and walls. The infestation’s nervous system is very efficient and the infestation can reconfigure itself by forming pseudopods as needed for the task at hand. The general description is one of amorphous creatures moving about seeking additional food supply to sustain its now overpower-

STAGE THREE — MOBILE FUNGUS

Strength:	3	Education:	0	Move:	10/20
Constitution:	7	Charisma:	0	Skill/Dam:	1/6d6*
Agility:	8	Empathy:	0	Hits:	20/30
Intelligence:	2	Initiative:	2	# Appear:	7-12

* No attack but contact with unprotected flesh causes 1d6 damage per second (6d6 per combat phase). Contact with suits takes 2d6 damage per phase to the suit, including gloves.



(Incident from 25)

STAGE FOUR — CARNIVORE FUNGUS

Strength:	6	Education:	0	Move:	10/20
Constitution:	7	Charisma:	0	Skill/Dam:	4/claw*
Agility:	8	Empathy:	0	Hits:	30/60
Intelligence:	5	Initiative:	4	# Appear:	1-3

* Carnivore Fungus gets 1-4 attacks depending on design. The combat skill based on the d20 system is 4 + STR = 10. Damage due to claws is: 1d6+ ½ STR.

ing needs for energy. Amorphous blobs continue to form for the duration of the major infestation, but the amorphous blobs will tend to specialize into Stage Four after about two more hours.

STAGE FOUR — FUNGAL CARNIVORES

Once a Mobile Fungus' mass reaches about 25 kg, the amorphous creature will start to specialize its form. The nervous system continues to become more complex through Stage Three and fixes on a carnivore mode. The Fungal Carnivore has an animal intelligence equivalent to that of a leopard. This gives the Fungal Carnivore a level of cunning and stealth that human victims will most likely fail to comprehend. The Fungal Carnivore will develop specialized pseudopods bearing hooks, claws, spikes, etc. used in killing their prey.

non-biological source of nutrients, strip that wealth and return it to the colony. For example, large masses of organics, most complex rocket fuels, or the silicon-based circuit cards of an avionics bay. Fungal Carnivores will abound for the next 6 hours. From the PC perspective, the Fungal Carnivores attack in an intelligent manner and are vicious fighters.

STAGE FIVE — FUNGAL TOOL-USERS

The rapidity of intellectual development in the fungal constructs is

Slain (or still living) prey is dragged to a centralized location where the most massive infestations reside. The motives of the Fungal Carnivore are to keep the fungus colony fed. The fungal carnivores may when confronted with a wealth of

astounding. Within a matter of hours, the Fungal Carnivores or Stage Four evolve into tool-using creatures. These creatures learn very quickly and will first use metal parts and bits lying around as tools, weapons, levers, and such. In later intellectual developments the Fungal Tool-Users will use any tools and weapons lying around. The primary motive of the Fungal Tool-Users is to secure the area for the colony. To this end, they will sally forth in coordinated attacks against any human enclaves. The Fungal Tool-Users will develop a non-verbal communication component that varies with the infestation. This primitive communication method is used to coordinate attacks and defense. A central area will be designated, around which the Fungal Tool-Users will establish the bounds to the colony. They will establish a centralized

STAGE FIVE — FUNGAL TOOL-USERS

Strength:	6	Education:	0	Move:	10/20
Constitution:	7	Charisma:	0	Skill/Dam:	*/weapon**
Agility:	8	Empathy:	0	Hits:	40/70
Intelligence:	5	Initiative:	4	# Appear:	1-3

* Combat Skills (d20 adds STR):

** Damage is by weapon used, usually a club or spear, but if the crew leaves guns lying about, you never know.



(Incident from 26)

STAGE SIX — CENTRAL BRAIN

Strength:	0	Education:	0	Move:	*
Constitution:	0	Charisma:	0	Skill/Dam:	1/6d6**
Agility:	0	Empathy:	0	Hits:	***
Intelligence:	10	Initiative:	0	# Appear:	Variable

* Stage Six Infestations do not normally move, but may at the “creep” rate of 1 meter per hour.

** No attack but contact with unprotected flesh causes 1d6 damage per second (6d6 per combat phase). Contact with suits takes 2d6 damage per phase to the suit, including gloves. If the Central Brain has had contact with humans, it may “tailor” its spore communication system to produce hallucinogens or toxic substances.

*** Stage Six Fungal Infestations have 200 hit points per cubic meter due to the denser nature of the nervous system and protective shells.

infestation, which is typically the largest. The centralized infestation forms the basis for the next Stage, the Central Brain.

STAGE SIX — CENTRAL BRAIN

Fourteen hours after the initial infestation, the Central Brain Stage begins, forming at the densest cluster of fungal infestation into a super-nervous system. This super nervous system forms not only in the Central Brain, but at this stage, it develops in the mobile forms as well. In fact all Stages are incorporated into the super-nervous system with the Central Brain providing the main sensor processing and memory storage functions. At this stage, the Central Brain develops specialized

Stages of the fungus. The specialized communication pods, called transceiver pods, have a slightly different color than the dark reddish rotten cherry color. They appear as a blood-red crimson color.

Concurrent with the growth of the transceiver pods in the Central Brain, specialized pods develop on all other Stages. The Mobile Fungus stage takes on the role of relay. Their pods receive information and retransmit it, many times after moving towards the intended receiver. The walls themselves, covered in Fungal Infestations, each with transceiver pods will ensure that the Central Brain’s communications are carried to remote areas where the mobile,

spore pods that rupture on command sending specialized spores containing pheromones. Special receptors in the disgusting pod-flowers receive pheromone-transmitted information. The ebb and flow of spores in the atmosphere acts as the communication channel between the Central Brain and

intelligent fungi operate. This communication is near instantaneous and very effective.

Should the Central Brain have extended contact with humans – as in combat and assimilation – it will be able to analyze the human physiology. The Central Brain will use this knowledge to fabricate spore and pheromones that effect humans. The Central Brain will emit hallucinogens and caustic spores that when inhaled cause varied effects. It is up to the referee how to handle this line of attack. Note that this requires several days of contact and that most infestations are resolved one way or the other within 24 hours.

THE BESTIARY

The montage of creatures resulting from an infestation of Incident 429 is varied. The following should be used as a guideline for the GMs own concept of how the infestation evolves.

STRENGTHS

The strength of Incident 429 is in it ability to infest. The fungus goes anywhere via spores and physical contamination. Strict decontamination procedures have proven effective against fungal infestations. The



(Incident from 27)

mobile stages are crafty, elusive, and later, cunning and ruthless as well.

WEAKNESSES

The fungus is based strongly on oxygen and hydrogen components and is very flammable. This is of course of marginal utility in a space environment and is one reason no Incident 429 has so far survived re-entry. When attacked by flamethrowers use normal flamethrower damage and apply it to the infestation's volume as a number of hit points. For example, Stage One Infestations have 100 hit points per cubic meter. If the flamethrower is able to hit the entire volume in one attack, the infestation's 100 hit points is reduced by burn damage. Note that once past Stage Two, the atmosphere is poisonous to humans and unprotected breathing will cause them to become infested with the fungus. Flamethrowers will burn off airborne spores on contact. If the propagating flame is sufficient, an enclosed volume can be cleared of spores (and in space, oxygen as well).



ESSENTIAL WEBSITE:

YOG-SOTHOTH.COM



Also known as YSDC or occasionally 'Olde Yoggie', this website has been around in various forms since 1998. Created by Paul Maclean (aka Paul Of Cthulhu), YSDC has gone from being "just" a fan site for the Call of Cthulhu game in all its forms, to probably the foremost repository for all things Lovecraftian.

A major part of the YSDC community is the infamous and long-running (in every sense!) Yog Radio podcast series. Every show has interesting chat, gaming and literature news and reviews, audio stories, special guest interviews and Cthuloid musical stylings to boot.

There are downloads galore, the news is always up-to-date, and the forums are among the best-behaved and most intelligent I have even taken part in. There is a chat facility too.

Whatever style of horror gaming interests you, there's bound to be something there that you will find useful.

Pop along to <http://www.yog-sothoth.com/> and have a look-see, if you aren't already a visitor!



Dream Job

Fiction Plus
By Dave Schuey

My dream job had become a nightmare.

It began innocently enough on the twenty-first of February. I had been contacted by the Human Resources department of Wrentech, in response to my posting on a number of internet headhunter sites. They really seemed interested in me and I was looking forward to meeting their representative when she was in town the next week. Little did I know that was where the trouble would begin.



“Harvard Business, top of your class. Crew. I see you’re unmarried, any story behind that, or just haven’t met the right... girl?” She was really stunning. Blonde, blue eyes, a killer body and she seemed super smart. Maybe even scary smart. I was actually a little intimidated, but my dad always said the best thing was to push through.

“Yes, Amanda, girl would be the operative word. I wouldn’t say I haven’t met the right girl, it’ll just take time to tell.” I threw her the cheesiest damn look and I thought I might have blown it but she just smiled and sort of shook her head.

“Hmm...that’s good to know. I have to say, I’m very impressed. I don’t think I’d

be going too far to say that you are one of the best candidates I’ve met with all year. I think I’ll definitely be recommending you to Mr. Wren.” She was gathering up her papers when her phone rang.

“This is Amanda. Yes Mr. Wren. Well, I’ve just concluded one interview and I have another scheduled for tomorrow. Yes. No, sir. About six feet, I’d say.” She looked at me as if she had no idea what her boss was talking about, and held her hand above her head. “Alright then, I’ll tell him.”

When she’d pushed the disconnect button on her phone she said, simply, “You’re hired.”

“You must be joking! That quickly? How?”

“Well, Mr. Wren knows what he likes. He is not one to be indecisive. I don’t understand it, but your height seemed to be the final piece of the puzzle for him. I hope I guessed right. You are six feet? She stood up and I joined her.

“Six feet, one inch. Look, Amanda, I’m really excited and totally blown away by how fast this has come together. I hope you won’t find this creepy or anything but I’d like to take you out to dinner tonight. To

(Dream Job from 29)

celebrate, you know, the job.” I was throwing the dice and betting it all.

“Well, normally, John, I’d be constrained by company policy to say no, but as you’ve already been hired, I guess you’re part of the family. I suppose I could make an exception.



The night went better than perhaps any night of my life. The meal was excellent, Amanda was the perfect companion, and I discovered, when I went to pay the check, that my bank account had already been wired a signing bonus of one hundred thousand dollars. It didn’t seem to surprise Amanda, however, who said that Mr. Wren wasted no time and saw to the needs of all his employees.

“He’s very much a “pay it forward” kind of man. Feels strongly that Karmic retribution works both ways.” The cab arrived at her hotel and I started to say goodnight.

“I suppose I’ll see you around the office.” But Amanda had other ideas and virtually dragged me from the cab. It was all I could do to pay the driver.

She couldn’t keep her hands off me in the elevator and I really couldn’t believe this was happening to me. I went with it,

though, because I wasn’t stupid. I’d barely closed the hotel room door before she had her dress around her feet. My imagination proved too limited when I actually saw her standing there, the moon from the open window illuminating her perfect curves.

“Come,” was all she said, and truthfully, all she needed to say.

I don’t know what time we ceased making love, but I know I slept like I’d just run a marathon. My dreams were of Amanda, although a shadowy figure that I seemed to think was Mr. Wren was always in the background watching us.

I awoke to find Amanda already in the shower and I joined her. I was surprised to find, upon closer, daylight inspection, that she had a tattoo. It was something like a stylized sun, with a dozen or so undulating arms radiating down from a central point.

“Oh, that,” she said, “That’s actually how I celebrated joining Wrentech, myself. Kind of a crazy night.” She turned and kissed me once again and I found myself once again aroused. We’d barely finished when she received a call from the front desk.

“My limo is here. I have a flight to catch. You’ll receive a FedEx with your itinerary, ID and instructions either today or tomorrow. I’ll see you in Hong Kong.” She gave me a final kiss before grabbing her satchel and purse and dashing out the door. The bellman loaded her packed luggage and left me standing there in a robe.

I dressed and went home as quickly as I could, still not believing the night I’d just had. Just as Amanda had said, a red and black overnight envelope was resting behind my screen door. I tore it open to find a passport with my name and picture, airline tickets to Hong Kong, directions to the Wrentech Corporate Office building, and a few other documents, including my contract.

I read the contract thoroughly and was only disturbed by the non-competition clause, which said, basically, that I could work for no other company engaged in the same businesses as Wrentech for one year after leaving Wrentech’s employ. However, as my salary was one point one million dollars a year, I hardly imagined myself ever leaving. I signed the contract and placed all the items



AMANDA’S TATTOO



(Dream Job from 30)

in my attaché case, taking just a moment to look at the passport.

It looked real. I couldn't imagine where they got the photo of me, but it looked like my shirt from last night. I knew nothing about forged documents so I couldn't say beyond a shadow of a doubt that it was on the level, but I couldn't fathom why someone would go to the trouble to forge a passport with all my real information on it.

I packed lightly, thinking I'd pick up whatever I needed in Hong Kong. My plane was scheduled to leave in just under three hours. I had some Pop-Tarts and took a cab to the Airport. When I showed my passport to the ticket agent she directed me to a special line. My carry-on was checked, my passport examined again by the TSA agent, and I was on my way to my plane. My worries about the authenticity of the document were unnecessary.



The flight was not as crowded as I had imagined, but was longer. The Hong Kong International airport was simple but dirty. I arrived at the farthest concourse, near the last gate, which meant I would have to walk the length of the place before reaching the exit. Or so I thought.

"Wrentech!" A man in a chauffeur's outfit was saying, while simultaneously waving a hand written sign with my name on it. "Wrentech!"

I approached and pointed to the sign. "That's me."

"Welcome to Hong Kong, sir. May I retrieve your bag?"

I couldn't help but laugh and turn up my hands.

"Sure."

He led the way to the baggage carousel and I learned his name was Po. Mr. Wren had sent his personal driver to pick me up. He wrestled my small bag from among the others and before long we were walking past shops and restaurants and nearing the main entrance.

He offered to get the car and pick me up at the door but I insisted on following him. This seemed to make him nervous but he did not protest. I really expected a limo, but the vintage Mercedes was perhaps better. I climbed in the back and he stowed my bag. Soon we were winding our way through the crowded streets of Hong Kong.

"So how long have you worked for Wrentech?" I said.



(Dream Job from 31)

He seemed surprised that I was speaking to him. "Three years, sir."

I briefly considered telling him he didn't need to call me 'sir', but figured it wouldn't do any good. This servant act was part of his job, which he was doing well, and he might catch heat if he didn't keep it up.

"So where is it?" I asked.

His only response was to point to a tall blue building still some miles away. Even at this distance the place looked massive. I estimated it must be at least 100 stories tall, perhaps more.

"Wow". I said.

Eventually we turned onto Queen's Road and headed southeast. There was less traffic there, but the city still seemed squalid to me. I suppose that was just my western arrogance. We approached the blue building and turned into an underground parking garage, eventually parking in one of five spaces labeled 'Mr. Wren'. The other four contained a Corvette, a Lexus, a BMW and, of course, a Limo.

Po got my bag from the trunk and we walked a short distance to the elevator. I noticed a piece of graffiti on the wall. It read, "They steal our bodies!"

"What's that?" I asked Po.

"Rock group." He said, without looking.

The ride up to the seventy-fifth floor took several minutes, and Po continued to be stoic. We parted company in the reception area as he promised to take my bag to my office. In truth I barely saw him leave as Amanda was waiting for me. She was wearing what I could only describe as a green, curve hugging, cloth tube with a zipper up the front. She embraced me tightly and gave me a kiss, which lasted far longer than I would have expected in the workplace.

"John! It's so good to see you again. How was the flight?"

"Not bad. This is an incredible building."

"It's only the first. The New York and L.A. headquarters will be finished in the next two years, and they'll be even bigger."

"Impressive."

"Come on, I want you to see your office." She led the way down the hall. We passed a large aquarium, which held a few fish, but large numbers of football sized snails. We made first a right turn, then a left. In a few minutes we entered a spacious, windowed office looking out towards the sea.

"Woah." I said. I heard the door close and lock, then turned to see Amanda unzipping the front of her dress.

"Amanda!" I cried. "Not here, surely!"

"It's alright, honey. We have time. Mr. Wren has six appointments ahead of you. No one will come looking."

Standing there in her matching green bra and panties she made a surprisingly convincing case. I had to admit I was aroused. She turned and walked to the cabinet beside my desk and opened it, pouring two drinks. She brought them over and offered me one. "Cheers."

Looking into her eyes I could not help but submit to her wishes. I finished the drink in one gulp and soon we were both naked. The thrill of possible discovery was almost as intoxicating as the alcohol, but something was wrong. In the middle of our lovemaking my vision began to blur. I was sweating, but it seemed more than normal. As I passed out I heard Amanda saying, "Its alright. We'll be together again soon."



I was still naked. My shoulders hurt. My hands were numb. My arms were extended above my head and held there by chains. I was hanging, but just enough so that I was



(Dream Job from 32)

held upright, my feet could still reach the floor. The room was dim, but not dark. As my vision cleared I could make out several things. Around me were a dozen other people similarly suspended. Around the edges of the room were more of the aquariums like the one I had seen in the reception area.

I appeared to be the only one awake. As I looked at the others I at first thought they all had the same tattoo as Amanda. I soon realized with horror that the tattoos were not flat, but raised. In some cases, they were moving. They were creatures. In a panic, I tried to look at the back of my own neck. This was, of course, impossible. Still I tried. I didn't feel anything on my back, but the rational part of my brain told me that meant nothing.

I heard a door open and the light came up slightly. Two men in business suits, followed by Amanda, back in her green dress, entered.

"Oh good, you're awake, John. You have amazing stamina. Mr. Wren is anxious to meet you." She walked toward one of the aquariums.

"What the hell is going on here? You can't do this to me! I'm an American citizen!" I knew my protests were meaningless.

I could see the two men moving among the other prisoners, checking the creatures on their necks. Subconsciously I noted that all the prisoners were in excellent physical condition, and quite attractive. Somehow that disturbed me.

"Please, dear," Amanda said, as she returned from the aquarium, "just relax and soon we'll be together again."

"What? We're together now! Are you insane?" Then I saw what she was holding and realized she wasn't talking to me. She was talking to the squid like creature she was holding. It was the same as those on the necks of the other prisoners. I glanced once more at them. Some of the creatures had dried up and fallen off. Some of the prisoners had awoken, and were being spoken to by the other men. After a few words most of the prisoners were being released. A few remained chained but were awake now and screaming.

Amanda reached me with the squid and said, "Time for your meeting."

She went behind me. Try as I might I could not avoid her placing the cold, slimy creature on the back of my neck. I tried to throw it off but it was firmly attached. Amanda walked back to the door with the two men and most of the naked prisoners.

As she turned down the lights again she said, "I'll be back in a little while Mr. Wren."

I now realized what was going on, although I still could not understand. The rational part of my brain told me I could not afford understanding. I had to accept the evidence. Make a conclusion and proceed from there.

Whatever these creatures were, they were in some way symbiotic. They were joining with the prisoners, and now with me. I could only guess what this might mean, but it seemed I would soon know. The prisoners who had been released seemed numbed, inhuman. I realized that if I had a chance it was to resist the creature and try to fool Amanda when she returned. My advantage in this was something I never would have thought to put on my resume.

In college I was on the rowing team, or crew. Our coach was progressive. He often sought out different training methods. One thing he taught me that had served me well over the years was Eastern style meditation. I reasoned that if I put my mind in a deep state of meditation I might be able to withstand whatever assault was about to overtake me.



(Dream Job from 33)

“Mr. Wren? Are you there?” Amanda asked me calmly. She held a suit in one hand.

“Yes Amanda, I am.”

“Are you in control?”

“Of course. Did you think it would take me any longer?”

“No, sir. You are the strongest of us.”

“Please Amanda, you don’t need to be so formal.”

“Yes darling, I am so happy to hear you say that.”

“Please dear, release me so I can get dressed and get back to business, or perhaps we could tarry a bit..”

“I knew you would be ready for me when you awoke.” She said excitedly. She turned the catch on the manacles first for the left hand, then for the right. Her arms encircled my waist as I worked the kinks out of my arms. “I have been waiting so long for us to be together again. I enjoyed his body, but knowing you were not inside it was disgusting.”

I put my arms around her and squeezed. She squeezed back. I took her head in my hands and bent down to kiss her, but then

my hands grabbed her neck firmly and a look of shock came over her face.

“It was nearly impossible to resist him. From what I gather he will win in the end. However, I can take care of you before I go.” My hands, though still a bit numb, squeezed tighter and tighter. Amanda struggled with my wrists. Her face turned red. “You’ve killed me, honey. You bitch!”

She kicked her leg up and caught me in the groin. Had it not been for the hour of meditation I had just undergone, the pain might have been excruciating. As it was, she did manage to break free of my grasp and press an alarm button on the wall. As much as I wanted to kill her for what she had done, I realized what I had to do. Mr. Wren was knocking at my mental doors even then, and they would not hold for long. I rushed for the open door and into the hall. Amanda was trying to recover her breath.

I turned first to the right and ran full on down the hall. The alarm was even louder out here. I saw a group of men running from the far end. I broke left down another hall and was pleased to find the stairwell. Ducking into this I began to charge down. I found dozens of men ascending the stairs, though. So I headed up. I found that I was on the ninety-ninth floor. My bare feet

pounded the rough metal stairs as I raced up to one hundred.

At the door I listened before I eased it open. The whirring of the alarm leapt into the stairwell. There it became a jarring echo. I heard the men below cry out something. Then I heard their rapid footsteps on the stairs. Bang-bang-bang-bang-bang. It was now or never. I burst out into the hallway. I found myself in another reception area. A Chinese woman sat behind a desk. She looked up blankly at me, then began to cry out an alarm. I didn’t try to reason with her, I just vaulted past and into the office beyond.

This was perhaps the most opulent office I had ever seen. It occupied at least half the top floor of the building. It contained a bar, a hot tub, a sauna, free weights and a bed. The view was incredible. I ran to the window and pressed up against the cool glass. I hoped to see some escape route. The city far below buzzed along as if nothing were wrong. I grew angry at that knowledge. Then I heard Mr. Wren speak in my head.

“It is fitting that my final conquest of you shall occur in my own office. When I am done with you I shall have a soak and then have sex with Amanda.”



(Dream Job from 34)

I knew he was not bluffing. I could feel my mental defenses weakening. I might only have moments. My course was clear. I had to expose what was happening to people in this building. I thought of the two buildings to be completed in New York and L.A. I had to put a stop to this.

I grabbed some of the free weights. I started bashing them against the glass. I hit once, twice, three times, and the window shattered. It showered me with a thousand shards. I was beyond feeling pain. The wind at this height was strong. I stepped toward the gaping hole. At that moment a large group of men and women, lead by Amanda, burst through the office door.

“Noooo.” I heard her screaming as I threw myself out into the air. Just as I did so my mental barriers collapsed and I felt Mr. Wren’s anger, his terror, his rage, at what I had done. By the time I hit the ground it wasn’t me that hit.



SEA KINGS

Strength:	1	Education:	5	Move:	2/4/8
Constitution:	3	Charisma:	7	Skill/Dam:	2/1D6
Agility:	6	Empathy:	12	Hits:	4
Intelligence:	8	Initiative:	1	# Appear:	2-20

Special: Sea Kings have a form of possession that is more accurately Domination. Once they have entered the host’s body they make a Domination (AVG) check. If Successful a Power Level check is made. Basic success indicates the Domination process will be complete in one hour. Each additional Power Level divides this hour by two, i.e. 30 minutes at Stage two, fifteen minutes at Stage three, etc. Sea Kings also have Willpower Drain, which they typically use while being absorbed into the host to make the Domination go quicker.

Note: The above physical statistics apply only to the squid form. A hosted Sea King will have the physical statistics of its host.

Physical Description: Sea Kings come from a proto-dimension that is all water. They are a squid-like species that inhabits the shells of large snails, much like hermit crabs do on Earth. They are black and slimy when encountered out of their shells. They have 12 arms

and a feeding proboscis that resembles another arm. They are blind, having no eyes, however their skin is supernaturally sensitive, affording them sonar like perception.

Behavior: Sea Kings are parasites. They attach themselves on a victim’s back, just at the base of the neck. Over a few hours their Empathic essence is melded with the host and their physical body dries up. This process leaves a permanent mark, much like a tattoo. At this point the Sea King takes control of the host, with full access to its memories and skills. Their lifestyles and appetites are hard on the host, however, and soon they are forced to convert the host’s liver into a new body, which then forces its way out the anus. This must immediately return to the water and occupy a shell, unless a new host is convenient. Sea Kings are hedonists; seeking pleasures of the flesh they are unable to experience in their true forms.

Words with the Psychedelic Goblin

Interview with Colin Chapman
By Tad Kelson

Protodimension's very own Tad Kelson recently conducted an interview with game designer and creator Colin Chapman, the driving force behind Radioactive Ape Designs. His game *Atomic Highway* was a 2010 Ennies Nominee. A prolific contributor to over 30 game products, Colin Chapman was kind enough to grant some of his time in answering a few questions.

PDM: So Colin, share a few sentences about yourself, how you started in gaming and what drove you to do more than game, to write, contribute and create your own products?

Colin: I started gaming when I had just turned 11, and was enrolled at an all-boys Roman Catholic school. Knowing my interest in fantasy, my Design & Technology teacher said he was running an after-school club I might be interested in. I popped along, and clearly remember stepping into the gloom of the DT room, the only light a floodlit wooden table in the middle of the room covered in strange miniature figures and oddly-shaped dice. An hour later, I was hooked. Funnily enough, I'm now a teacher myself and run an after-school RPG club. Talk about life coming full-circle.

When the RPG bug bit me, it bit me hard. I'd always expressed myself before

by drawing weird monsters, dragons, and superheroes, etc. but now, now I began to write. To express that same creativity in house rules, mini-games, and settings. I'd always been an avid reader, but I began writing in earnest even though I was generally too self-conscious to share any of my work back then.

Fast-forward cartoon style to my first year of university doing a BA (Hons) Publishing Studies; I'd starting sharing a lot of homebrew online under various pseudonyms (chiefly Psychedelic Goblin), and I finally figured I'd bite the bullet and approach a publisher. That publisher was Manticore Productions, run by Bill King of Warhammer 40,000 fame. I said, "Can I write for you?" he said, "Yes.", and BAM I was published. From there things just snowballed, and now here I am, many years later, running my own small press.

PDM: So what was the core inspiration for Atomic Highways?

Colin: It is a conceptual mash-up of Mad Max II-III, Escape From New York, Escape From LA, and the new Death Race flick, spiced with a little mutant fun. So, mostly all the cool post-apocalyptic films I grew up watching and ended up stewing in my brain for years.



(Goblin from 36)

PDM: What is forthcoming for supplements for Atomic Highways?

Colin: Now that Irradiated Freaks has been released, the next supplement is basically a grab bag of materials to take your game in different directions. Think of apocalypses caused by killer robots, alien invasions, zombie plagues, warring angels and demons, and so on, accompanied by futuristic gear, cybernetics, and more adversaries than you can shake a Terminator at.

PDM: So will there be a new game to potentially be an Ennie Nomination for 2011, or are you shooting for the supplements area instead?

Colin: I'm aiming for the former, but I can't really reveal too many details yet. There are two primary possibilities, but as things are still being sorted out, it's not clear yet which one will win out. All I can say is that I'm VERY excited.

PDM: Will the V6 Gaming Engine be used in other products, or opened up for OGL or other Licensing opportunities?

Colin: I've already been approached by a few folks about licensing V6, but can't talk about their projects yet due to licensing reasons. If anyone wants to license the V6 Engine, they should just pop me an e-mail to colin@radioactiveapedesigns.com and I'll happily discuss the details and conditions with them.

PDM: The V6 Game system is simple to use, and offers on first view more than enough options. However the Rearings and Pursuits portion of character creation really grabs my interest. I can see applying that exact same concept to my game ideas and settings so easily, allowing for instant characterizations. Where did you come up with the concept, which looks related to terms such as Templates and Lifepaths, but is just different enough to apply to I feel, all gaming genres.

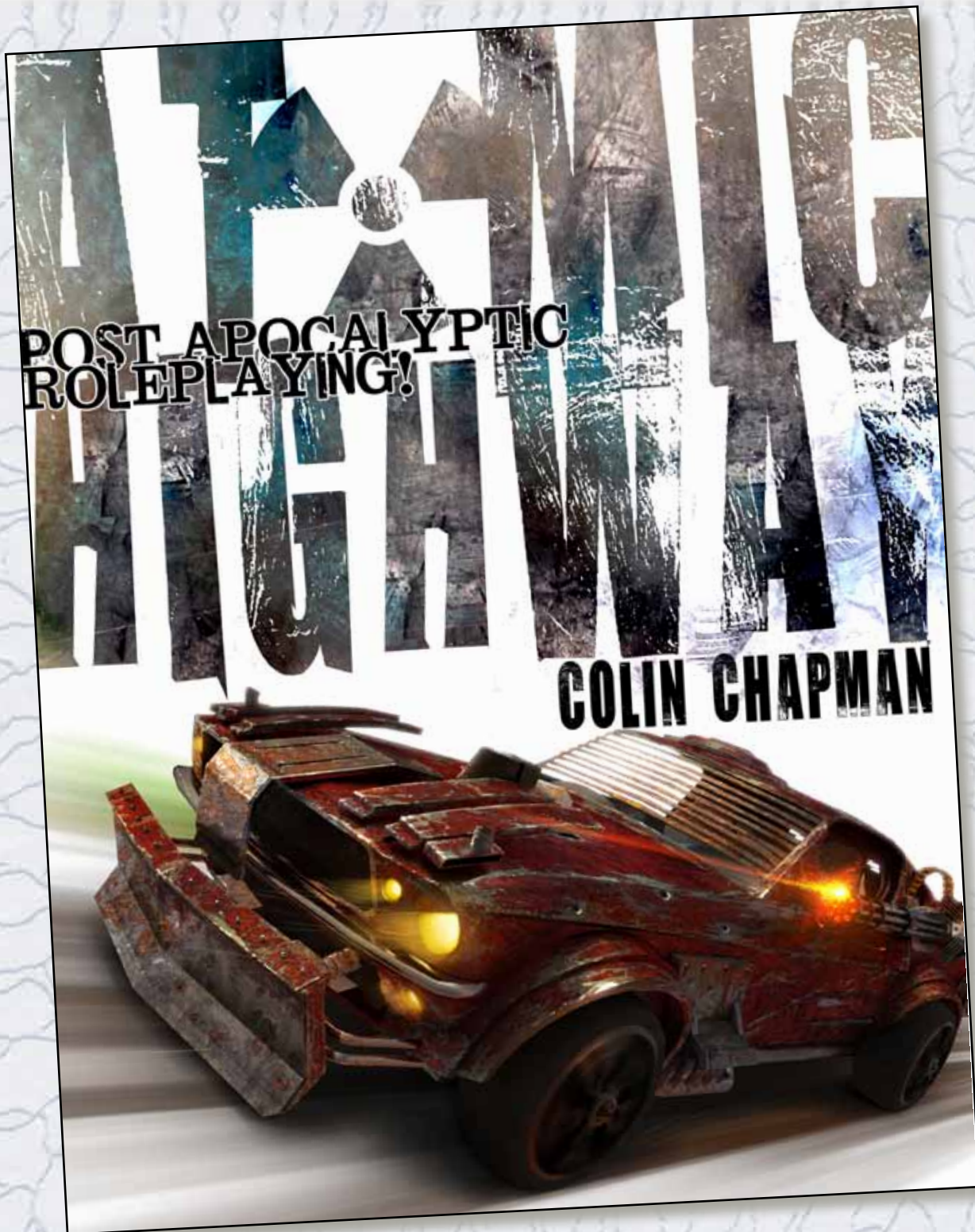
Colin: Talk about hitting the nail on the head! I've always enjoyed Lifepath and Template systems, the former for the feel of creating a character's background through the character creation process, and the latter because they're just so fast and easy to use. In designing AH, what I wanted to do was produce character creation that used elements of both, so having templates for different major parts of a character's life, seemed the ideal solution.

PDM: I really like the layout of Atomic Highways, along with the evocative art. Where did you find the artists, besides the cover artist that I already knew about, and how was working with them?

Colin: I've found that it's a matter of looking at art-specific communities like DeviantArt and knowing how to look and how to narrow down the field. Time, patience, and the ability to search effectively really pay dividends.

The artists I've worked with so far have all been brilliant to work with; whether that's luck or simply the way I run things, I don't know. Maybe a bit of both.

PDM: When I opened up the pdf of irradiated Freaks, the first thing that hit me was, wow old school Gamma World feel updated to current gaming standards. Was



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(Goblin from 37)

that a deliberate attempt, or did it just come out that way?

Colin: Yeah, it was very deliberate. The cover is an homage, and some of the interior illustrations are even nods to the illustrations in the *After The Bomb* setting books for the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles RPG*. Anyone very familiar with those books will chuckle at some of the references.

PDM: Looking over the credits list I have a few things I would like to ask about some of your past work. What was your main contribution to Privateer Press' *Lock and Load*? (Which I personally consider one of the best gaming products I have seen in my 30 plus years of gaming, in look, feel and in sheer utility and concepts to pirate from)

Colin: I created the new clerical domains and assigned them, produced a chunk of the weapons and items of gear, revised the basic D&D classes so they fit the Iron kingdoms (such as changing the Ranger class so it was a non-spellcasting military scout), and a couple of other minor things too. I'm also the nutjob responsible for the introduction of the Gun Mage concept, including the Arcane



(Goblin from 38)

Tempests (an organisation from my home campaign), though I didn't create the class itself. You can also blame me for a bunch of critters in the *Monsternomicon* such as Gristle and Flay and the Gremlins.

PDM: As I look over the list of games, there are at least 15 different systems represented. Besides V6 (your own house system) which ones do you currently like to play in? (Existing systems or orphans)

Colin: My tastes have changed over the years, and become increasingly focused on systems that play relatively simply and quickly; for me, excitement in play is maintained by pace and fiddly or time-consuming systems destroy that for me. I still adore the *Omni System* (as used in *Talislanta*, but only up to the 4th edition "Big Blue Book"), think the system in *Doctor Who: Adventures in Time and Space* is an excellent example of elegant fun, consider the system of *Cartoon Action Hour: Season 2* to be an overlooked masterpiece, enjoy *Cinematic Unisystem*, and can get some real mileage out of *Barbarians of Lemuria*. There are other systems I enjoy, but those are the ones that really make me nod my head in appreciation.

PDM: Besides your own work, what product or products do you think could be called the Cream of the Crop? In terms

of looks, or system, or usability, what ever criteria you find most appealing, what past or present product really sticks out in your mind?

Colin: Apart from the games mentioned in the previous answer, I also have a huge amount of love for *Eclipse Phase*, *Qin: The Warring States*, and *Mazes & Minotaurs* (awesome free gaming goodness!).

PDM: Last question, your gaming contributions cover a wide range of genres. If you had to pick one or two perhaps, what genre is your favorite to:

PDM: Play In?

Colin: Argh! So hard to pick! Erm, non-Space Opera Sci-fi and good old Fantasy.

PDM: Run a Game in?

Colin: Superheroes and Fantasy. I do reserve the right to change my mind in an instant, however.

PDM: Design or create for?

Colin: Action-Based Genre Mashups! So, Sci-Fi Supers, Fantasy Supers, and genres of that ilk.

PDM: Colin Chapman of *Radioactive Ape Designs*, gamer, author, creator.

Again, many thanks for taking the time to respond.

Colin: You're welcome. Thanks for reading my inane ramblings and making my head explode with those last choices!

Some of the games Colin has been associated with include the following: *a/state*, *All Flesh Must Be Eaten*, *Talislanta*, *Hollow Earth Expedition*, *ICONS*, *Castles & Crusades*, *Wild Talents*, *Cartoon Action Hour*, and *Iron Kingdoms*.



NOTE: The cover art to *Atomic Highways* was done by George Cotronis, who donated the cover art to Issue 5 of *Protodimension Magazine* as well as other products.

DEATH IN THE CLOISTERS



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Film at 11

Fiction
By Jeff Moeller

Marcia Hope preferred to think of herself as a starlet waiting to (finally) be discovered, instead of a local television reporter. She looked into the fountain's reflecting basin and checked her hair and makeup. She was perfect, as always. Marcia opened her blouse another button and leaned out over the water. She struck a pouty, provocative pose and in her most sultry, raspy snarl, delivered her line for a promotional bumper:

"The Virgin Mary in the fountain? Or just another pretty face? This is Marcia Hope, WBAX Detroit...Film at 11."

Over her shoulder, Javon rolled his eyes, but did not dare to say anything. People who ended up on Marcia's bad side tended to end up unemployed. He just kept rolling film, capturing Marcia's reflection in the water on his handheld camera. A vaguely anthropomorphic stain in the bronze bottom of the fountain's basin could be seen underneath Marcia's grinning, translucent image.

Javon's eye roll did not go unnoticed, but Marcia decided to give him a temporary pass on his insolence. Things had not been going exactly the way she wanted at WBAX lately, and she needed to deal with one wannabe troublemaker at a time. She was the

queen bee, the top dog, and most people at the station damn well knew that.

The smart ones certainly knew. Those that forgot sometimes needed to be reminded about how much dirt she had on the senior executives, none of whom had been able to demonstrate any semblance of impulse control when she had seduced them. The recordings of those misadventures were stashed in multiple secure places, and as long as senior management at the station did not change, she could do just about anything that she liked.

That new girl, Cici, was proving to be a little slow on the uptake about how things really were at WBAX though. She had officially reached the top of Marcia's list of people needing an object lesson in how the pecking order at the station was arranged. Cici's brother had been pretty, and an amusing dalliance, but it certainly was not her fault about what had happened to him. He had begged her for a date, and she had finally given him a shot. They went dancing, and she had had a couple of shots. She had not really had **that** much to drink, and if she had, then he should have been the man and called her a limo. The police found him behind the wheel, not her, by the time that they got there, and that is all that mattered. It was too bad about that little

(Film at 11 from 41)

kid, but what happened, happened and that was all in the past. He had been deported to Egypt or Iraq or wherever it was that he had been from, and now he was out of sight, out of mind.

Somehow, though, Cici, his snot-nosed brat of a sister, had gotten herself a producer's job at WBAX and was sending her on these demeaning make-work assignments. She had made every threat she could think of to those under her thumb, but management hired Cici anyway. It had to be something about equal opportunity and affirmative action, she assumed; Detroit was full of Middle Eastern immigrants.

First, there had been the live feed from the mayor's daughter's tenth birthday, where she had been made to wear a silly hat and blow a kazoo. Then there was the live, early morning coverage of the worst hailstorm in a decade. Marcia was young and she liked to party, and early morning assignments really sucked. She had made it quite clear that she was not available until after noon, and her lapdogs were testing their leashes.

And now, there was this, reporting on a blobby stain at the bottom of an old courtyard fountain in a gentrified neighborhood that some dumb old lady thought looked like the Virgin Mary. At first she'd refused,

but then that little snot Cici had ordered—**ordered!**—her to go. Her status at the station was in a downward spiral. This was just out and out beneath her. She'd rather be dead.

And no one—**no one**—told Marcia Hope what to do. That was the surest way to get her to do just the opposite. It was all about the pecking order, everyone knew that.

"That's that, at least", she said as she stomped off from the scene to a nearby martini lounge. She opened her blouse yet another button and smiled at the yuppie who bought her the first of several drinks.

Marcia was disturbed from her reverie, a few hours and six martinis later, by the unmistakable sounds of snickering throughout the bar. Someone must be making an ass of himself, she thought. She glanced at her watch—it was only 8 P.M. Everyone in the bar was fixated on the television, and the bartender was setting up the DVR to play back whatever had just been shown. She heard her station's news theme and looked up to see her promotional bumper about Mary in the courtyard fountain.

The laughter was even louder this time, and it was not hard to understand why. Marcia's reflection in the water looked

just awful. Her hair was mussed, her nose looked shiny, and her eye shadow had started to run. Why the hell hadn't she noticed? And why hadn't that no good camera jockey said anything to her?

She could not run to the restroom fast enough, the laughter echoing in her ears. How the hell had such a thing happened? She looked in the mirror over the sink and could not understand what she saw. Apart from looking slightly bleary-eyed from unwinding at the bar, she looked just fine. There was no rat's nest in her hair, no running mascara, nothing amiss.

Somebody, she thought angrily, must have monkeyed with the footage before putting it on the air. It was probably that little snot-nose Cici. Well, now she'd really have to teach her a lesson. Marcia stomped out of the bathroom, threw some money on the table (without bothering to check on whether it was enough to cover her tab), and hastily walked the three blocks back to her station's studio building.

The security guard looked the other way when she came into the lobby. The evening staff made themselves look busy. One intern whispered something to another, and Marcia shot her a threatening look.



(Film at 11 from 42)

Marcia flung open the door to film editing room with a crash. The evening film editor was busy at his work station.

“You son of a bitch”, Marcia screamed. “What the hell did that stuck-up little foreign girl tell you to do to my footage?”

The film editor, a little nebbish whose name Marcia did not need to know and to whom she would ordinarily not have ever bothered to speak, looked up, startled. “I don’t know what you’re talking about, Ms. Hope,” he stammered. “The only thing that has aired is your bumper about the fountain, and I haven’t gotten to the story itself yet. Here, see for yourself”. He spun the work station’s monitor around so that she could have a clear view.

Marcia watched the entire two minutes of footage, where she interviewed the shriveled up old dinosaur who owned the old house where the fountain was. If you could call talking to someone like that and listening to them blather on and on about how old the house was, and how she used to be someone back in the years before World War II, and how she had bought the fountain in several pieces over the years and had it put together, an “interview.”

The main interview had been shot all in one take, right before the bumper had

been filmed. Marcia looked fine throughout the interview. Her hair was perfect, her makeup was perfect; she looked good, even by her standards. Her reflection in the water, though, during the bumper, was another matter. Whereas at the bar, she had just looked comically unkempt, now the footage made her appear downright ill. Her cheeks were sunken and the dark circles under her eyes could not be missed. She looked completely wasted.

“Oh, man, I can see why you might want to reshoot that”, muttered the editor. “Well, we won’t use the bumper, just the story. Chill out.”

Marcia shoved him aside, her thoughts racing. Someone was messing with her. God only knew what they were going to do to the image before it aired. Even if she managed to kill the bumper from airing again, it would end up on YouTube, and she’d be a bigger laughing stock than she already was. The only way to put a stop to this was to find out who was doing this, and in order to do that, she had to figure out how they were doing it. Whoever they were, they were pretty clever. She burned a copy of the whole interview, including the bumper, onto a DVD and stomped out without a word.

She needed help. She ran through the list of people that she had serious dirt on, but came up empty. That meant that she would have to pay one of her own dirty tricks associates, as much as she couldn’t stand the sight (let alone the smell) of him. She pulled out her PDA and reluctantly dialed his number. A deep, nasal man’s voice answered, obviously on a microphone.

“What do you want this time?”

Marcia took a deep breath, swam through the martini-induced mental fog, and turned on the charm.

“Hi, Stinger. It’s me, Marcia Hope. Remember me? I have a little favor to ask...”

“Stinger” was his Internet handle, and he insisted that everyone use it. It sounded more dangerous than Arvid. Arvid was a pimply-faced, nineteen year old nerd with more than a touch of Asperger’s Syndrome. But he had proven discrete and competent with her occasional needs for electronic skullduggery, although it always cost her dearly. It had once cost her in a way that she did not care to dwell upon, especially since he had been 15 at the time. At least it had been over quickly.



(Film at 11 from 43)

“You never returned any of my calls. But you said I was good....”

Marcia forced down her bile and cranked up the charm another notch.

“I’m really sorry about that, but I’ve been so busy at work. Listen, sweetie, I have a little puzzle that I really need some help with. Could I come over? Right now?”

There was a long pause, as Stinger seemed to be wrestling with his pride. Pride lost.

“I have an apartment now. 1152 Hillcrest, #3.”

Marcia’s heart sank. There was no way that she was going to get his help just for cash if he had his own place. At least it would not take long. She pulled a miniature bottle of whiskey out of her handbag and built up her reserve of numb courage.

Stinger’s apartment was a small studio at the edge of downtown, not far from the fountain. It stank. The kitchen was full of dirty dishes and pizza boxes. The sheets on the futon had not been changed for many months. Every inch of the walls was lined with bookcases, on which were a comprehensive collection of science fiction and horror books, horror movies, video games, and electronic gear.

As predicted, the initial pleasantries that she had dreaded took a whole two minutes. She swallowed her bile again, blocked it from her memory and turned to the topic at hand. How was it possible for film footage to be hijacked in that fashion? She could understand how someone could splice some footage, or alter a segment of footage, but how was it possible that the same footage would keep changing?

Stinger stroked his jaw as though he actually had facial hair, which made him look all the more silly. He popped the DVD into his “system”, which appeared to be several different beaten-up computers daisy-chained together, while Marcia tried to hide her rapid consumption of another two airplane-sized whiskies.

“Wow, that’s pretty good,” Stinger muttered. “Not at all subtle, but good tech work. My guess would be that someone wrote a program, like a slideshow, that triggers a patch when the video reaches a certain point. Either that, or they created several different versions of the same clip and are coordinating an elaborate prank. But this version is obviously a joke, no one would take it seriously, unless it was Halloween or something.”

“What do you mean, ‘not at all subtle,’” Marcia asked?

“Here, come see for yourself.”

Marcia watched the bumper again. Once again, it had changed. This time, the reflection in the water was a grotesque parody. In addition to everything else that had been askew before, now her skin was battered, weathered and covered in blemishes. A large, tuberosus wart or abscess had appeared on the side of her reflection’s nose. Instinctively she fished out her compact kit and checked herself in its mirror. She looked a bit drunk, but otherwise normal.

But that was not the only thing that had changed. The vaguely anthropomorphic stain that was the so-called “story” did not look quite so vague any longer. Strangely, it actually did look like a person’s face now. It looked liked an angry, snarling, sneering young woman’s face, to tell the truth: dark, haughty and imperious.

“Whatever they did, kid, it’s still going on. It gets worse every time you show it. Now I look like a refugee from an acne cream commercial on top of everything else. And the Virgin Mary stain doesn’t look quite so virginal any more. It looks like she wants to jump out of the fountain and kick my ass.”

“That’s not possible, Marcia”, said Stinger. “This DVD is just a copy of a video



(Film at 11 from 44)

file. It would just be a copy of whatever file you made it from. It should be the same image as whatever you last saw; there's no program at work."

Marcia heard what the nerd was saying, but it did not add up. She had seen what she had seen in the fountain, and at the studio, and it was not what she was now seeing on the screen.

"This isn't funny, you little twerp", she screamed. Stinger's head flailed about loosely as she shook him by the collar for added emphasis. "What, are you in on it?"

"Let go, let go! Let me look at it again," he mumbled.

Stinger blew up a still and stared at it for over a minute. "That's not right", he muttered, and opened up a new window to watch the longer interview. About halfway through the interview, as the camera took in a broad overview of the courtyard with the fountain, he blanched and shut the computer off completely. When it would not shut down fast enough, he pulled the plug and ran for a pile of clothes in the corner. From underneath them, he pulled out a digital book reader and cursed at the amount of time that it took to boot the thing up.

Clearly, "Stinger" had lost his mind. Marcia thought about offering him one of her airliner miniatures, but thought better of it and drank it herself.

Over the course of the next twenty minutes, Stinger stammered and fumbled his way through a series of documents that he had stored on what he called his "dedicated archive." His ramblings did not make a great deal of sense. He went on and on about a whole circle of acquaintances with equally outlandish names like "Faustus" and "DiscipleofPeaslee", who seemed to spend their Saturday nights scouring libraries for urban legends, rather than going on dates. He seemed to try to be explaining some kind of chain of research that they had conducted on some kind of weird occult topic, but Marcia's attention kept wandering in and out.

The kid seemed to be talking about some kind of circle of imaginary characters that supposedly existed in other dimensions. Some of them were dead but not quite completely dead, kind of like vampires she guessed. Others were just magically locked up, kind of like a vampire that had not been invited into your house. They were behind every nook and crevice, and always trying to get out and run loose, like a grounded teenager on the weekend. They

had agents and cults who ran errands for them, and eggheads and nerds throughout history had tried to understand or control them. Crazy artists tried to wrap their brains around them. This always, she gathered, ended badly.

It seemed that Stinger was most concerned about some story about some ancient Egyptian queen from the Sixth Dynasty (whenever the hell that was). Apparently, this lady was an actual historic figure, but was also supposedly a worshipper of one of these extra-dimensional bogeymen, one who was a big deal back in hieroglyphic days. There were apparently many stories floating around nerd circles about this ancient Egyptian chick: she bathed in her enemies' blood; ate diplomats who looked at her funny; invited a bunch of bigwigs to dinner and then drowned them because they had been mean to her brother and pissed her off; had finally been bricked up alive; and even had a magic mirror that let her see how things really were. She sometimes left her enemies alone with her magic mirror at midnight and it would eat them, or something. Some drugged-out poet named Geoffrey had written a poem about her, in some super-rare poetry collection that had apparently been the last straw in getting him committed to a nuthouse in the 1920s.



(Film at 11 from 45)

At the end, in hushed tones (as though someone might actually be listening to him!) he showed her a picture that looked like it had been scanned from some old book on archaeology. The picture was of a man dressed like a white explorer in a Tarzan movie, posing next to what looked like a big, bronze mirror of sorts, in a heavy frame. The frame was decorated with a variety of fantastic creatures from old stories: dragons and little devils and what looked like an assortment of creatures from Grade B horror movies, including several things that looked like Jafar from the end of Disney's Aladdin movie. The caption of the picture read "1933: Brown-Farley and the Mirror of Nitocris."

Finally, his rant wound down to an end. He wanted to know if she had pissed anyone off lately, and seemed worried for her safety. She should smash that fountain before the curse of Nitocris claimed her soul. Marcia studied him for a few seconds. Then she buttoned up her shirt and staggered to feet.

He had actually tried to tell her what to do?!

"God, you are so stupid," she said as she staggered out the door. "Get a life, find a girl who likes b.o. and day old pizza, and grow the hell up." Marcia realized, as she

headed out the door, that she was going to have to find another nerd the next time she needed a computer system hacked or a hidden camera set up. This one, as good as he was, had evidently gone completely around the bend.

Still, there had been something creepy about the picture. It had rather looked like the bottom part of the fountain, with all the little devils and dragons and such, except that the fountain was a fountain. But hadn't that old lady said something about gathering the pieces and having it assembled?

Marcia pulled out her PDA and checked her schedule. It was Thursday, so she was supposed to be with Paul, Jr., the station owner's idiot son/Vice-President of Corporate Affairs tonight. Paul, Sr. was tomorrow night. She kept getting the days confused. That would require some additional liquid courage before she headed over there.

By the time that she found a bar that she liked the looks of and had gotten herself situated, it was almost time for the 11 o'clock news broadcast. Afraid of what it might look like, Marcia took her drink and her PDA into the restroom and set up shop in a stall. She plugged in her headset and watched the webcast. Human-interest pieces generally aired in the middle of the

broadcast, after the crime stories and before the weather.

Her piece on the face in the fountain did not air at all. Marcia was not sure whether to be angry or relieved at first. She was glad that the bumper had not aired, at least not in its sabotaged form, but there was nothing wrong with the interview piece. Did they actually think that they were going to be pulling her off the air entirely? Who in the hell did this Cici girl think she was? There were going to be some very sorry people at WBAX, starting with Thursday Night Paul, Jr. Next would be Friday Night Paul, Sr. Perhaps she needed to have a luncheon with their wives again. That usually got their attention, as they were forced to fret about what she might have accidentally let slip. Maybe she should invite Paul, Jr.'s children along this time, as well.

Marcia took a few more minutes to flip through the replay, just to make sure she had not missed anything or nodded off. Satisfied that she had seen all that there was to see, she checked herself in the mirror (beautiful, as always), and headed off on foot toward Paul, Jr.'s condo. The clock tower at the cathedral chimed 11:45 P.M. It was dark and had started to rain, and the streets were pretty deserted. Now she probably did legitimately look like hell.



(Film at 11 from 46)

Her path took her within a block of the old woman's courtyard and that damned fountain. Doing malicious things for the sake of her own advancement and self-aggrandizement was not how she generally conducted herself, she thought, but this was simply too good of an opportunity to pass up. Besides, she was drunk, so that made everything o.k., since she would not really mean anything that she might do. She picked up a nearby cinder block, hoisted it with both hands, and awkwardly stumbled under its weight in the direction of the courtyard.

There was no light in the courtyard, which was just fine with her. Marcia stumbled to the edge of the fountain as the clock struck again. Sliding on the wet grass, she hoisted the cinder block with both hands over her head and looked down into the murk, just as a motion sensitive light triggered and illuminated the water.



A herd of reporters and cameramen gathered at the entrance to the courtyard the next morning. The rain had finally let up in the middle of the night, and the street sweepers had found the body. A few of the news outlets had managed to get some excellent footage of the scene, before the

police and coroner's office showed up to restrain the circus.

The body of a provocatively dressed young woman was folded at the waist, hanging over the lip of the fountain's basin, her head and arms submerged and her feet sticking up into the air. There was a cinder-block in her hands, to which she was still clinging. Scuff marks in the grass and mud suggested that she had lost her footing at the edge of the fountain. Her purse was full of small liquor bottles, several of which had fallen out onto the ground.

After the deceased was identified as WBAX reporter Marcia Hope, most of the crowd quickly dispersed. This was one scoop that WBAX could have; there was no reason for them to call attention to another media outlet with anything other than a brief, throwaway mention.

When Javon had heard that there was an apparent fatality at the fountain that he and Marcia Hope had filmed the day before, he grabbed his camera and hurried down to the scene, expecting her to meet him there. When he saw the body hanging out of the fountain, wearing the same clothes that Marcia had left in yesterday, he called the office and advised that someone else would need to cover for Marcia, since it was Marcia who was the news.

Javon was not then completely surprised when Marcia's new boss, Cici, showed up to cover the story. What he was surprised at was Cici's appearance. She had always dressed casually but professionally, even modestly, in her short time at the office. He supposed that this was part and parcel of coming from a predominantly Muslim country. But today, she showed up dressed to the nines, in a short linen shift, with plenty of her charms on display. Her hair was down, her makeup was flawless, and she looked determined. In fact, Cici looked like a much less drunk, slightly sterner, Middle Eastern version of Marcia.

Some primal part of his brain told him not to let his gaze linger.

"Guess she finally had enough to drink," Cici quipped.

Javon rolled film while Cici politely interviewed the spokesmen for the police and the coroner. Marcia had obviously drowned. There was no immediate sign of foul play, but the investigation was continuing. They would have to wait on the results of the toxicology report to determine if drugs or alcohol had been a factor, but the police spokesman had a hard time keeping his face straight as he delivered his usual, rehearsed line in that regard. When the camera was off, the coroner's assis-



(Film at 11 from 47)

tant mimicked someone unable to walk a straight line.

Javon did not like Marcia any more than anyone else, but the mockery seemed to be a bit too much to him. He packed up his camera and started to leave.

“Wait, Javon”, Cici said. “I still have to do a promotional bumper. Come on in.”

“Um, Cici,” Javon protested. “We can’t go in there. It’s a crime scene.”

Cici smiled. “Oh, don’t worry about that, Javon. My aunt lives here. We just can’t touch anything.”

Cici had a few words with the policeman at the courtyard’s entrance and showed him her i.d. After some discussion, the old lady who lived at the house came out and vouched for Cici. They were escorted in,

and Cici had Javon set up his camera angle at almost exactly the same spot as he had for the previous day’s bumper.

Cici leaned over the fountain from which Marcia’s remains had so recently been removed. The cinder block was still in the basin, although it had not done any real damage. She looked into the reflecting pool and checked her hair and makeup. She was perfect, as always. She opened the top of her shift by another button and leaned out over the water. She struck a pouty, provocative pose and in her most sultry, raspy snarl delivered her line for a promotional bumper:

“One of our own dies in a tragic accident, here, at the scene of her last story. This is Associate Producer Cristin Queen, WBAX...Film at 11.”

Javon could not help but notice that a new stain was forming on the bottom of the fountain’s basin, where the cinder block had made a dent. Another not-so-Virgin Mary, he supposed. Cici mugged for the camera, striking a variety of poses over the water.

But when Cici mimicked the stern sneer of the first, rapidly evolving stain, Javon could also not help but notice how well her reflection superimposed itself. Javon was suddenly afraid that he had seen too much.



Stinger’s phone rang. It was his queen. She was pleased at how he had baited the pretender, by presuming to order her to stay away. Her soul was now one step closer to being whole again, and his reward would be rich indeed.



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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Roleplaying advocacy website celebrates fifteen years of operation

November 15, 2010, Felton Delaware

The Escapist, a roleplaying advocacy website based in Felton, Delaware, celebrates fifteen years of operation in December of 2010. For fifteen years, the site has worked to improve the public image of the roleplaying hobby, and outline the social and cognitive benefits it can provide.

“Tabletop roleplaying games like *Dungeons & Dragons*® (*D&D*) and others are the modern equivalent of the ancient tradition of storytelling” said William J. Walton, author of *The Escapist*. “Likewise, live action roleplaying games are an entertaining form of improvisational theatre. Both forms of roleplaying encourage creativity, problem solving, spatial reasoning, teamwork, and social interaction. Not only that, but roleplaying games can help develop math and language skills and foster interest in history, science, art, world cultures, and more.

The roleplaying hobby has not always received positive coverage in the media. During the early 1980s, two isolated events led many to connect D&D with suicide. The same happened in the 1990s when a handful of events, including the Columbine school shooting, were believed to be connected to the *Vampire: The Masquerade*® roleplaying game.

“The Escapist began as an online resource to combat the myths and misconceptions about the hobby,” said Walton. “Many negative and false claims were made that didn’t stand up to scrutiny—claims that the game could lead players to suicide, crime, insanity, demonic possession, and devil worship.”

Over time, more people became aware of the roleplaying hobby and what really happens during a game, and the myths began to



fade, Walton said. More help came from celebrities who professed their interest in roleplaying games, including Stephen Colbert, Vin Diesel, James Franco, Matthew Lillard, Wil Wheaton, and the members of *Weezer* and *My Chemical Romance*, to name a few. As the negative press began to decline, the site expanded to cover other facets of roleplaying advocacy—bringing new players to the hobby, encouraging gamers and game companies to get involved in philanthropy, and promoting roleplaying with kids, and in library programs and schools.

In early 2010, the site announced a new project, “**Read an RPG Book in Public Week**,” a thrice-yearly event that encourages roleplaying enthusiasts to take their rulebooks with them when they leave the house and “get caught” reading them in public. The goal of the event is to make the hobby more visible, inspire questions and conversation, and possibly even attract new players or bring back lapsed ones.

Over the years, Walton and the site have been featured in numerous news stories and interviews, two documentaries on roleplaying, and in two books - Steve Racer’s “God Loves the Freaks” and Ethan Gilsdorf’s “Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks.”

For the fifteenth anniversary, Walton plans to feature a retrospective of the site’s many changes over the years.

For more information, visit www.theescapist.com, and contact WJ Walton at rpgadvocate@gmail.com

Heroes of Faith

Faithful Settings
By Randy Alan Donahue
For Dark Conspiracy®

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(nicadaemus@hsnp.com)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I write to you now in perhaps what will be my last communication. As I type now, I can sense the presence of the Dark approaching. Only my faith in God allows me to have the courage to sit here and communicate with you. Many terrible things have happened of late, and I regret to tell you I am the last of our cell. Yes, the Heroes of Faith are composed of only me now, Brother Noah. I fear treachery, yet I am not sure from which side it has come, nor can I tell you why our Lord and Savior has let such a thing happen. He is the Almighty, and I trust in his plan. I fear I digress though, and I have much to tell you. I shall continue, and I pray that I have time to send this to you before They arrive.

“Shapes that rip and tear. Shadows that live in corners. Windows in space and time that lead to realms of madness and decay. A dark lurking horror that feeds off the echoing anguish of a billion souls.”

Such is one person's words about the horror that we face each day. The growing darkness that threatens the very existence of humanity. But I come before you to tell you we are not alone. The very power of the Heavens, the strength of God Almighty, the righteousness of Jesus Christ our Lord stands with us. I am sure as you read this, you scoff and shake your head. You think it is just another sermon from the preacher in New England. I assure you it is not. Some rely on their innate willpower to resist the power of the Dark Ones, but I have always relied on my faith. One and the same you might say, but they are not. I will tell you my belief now, my faith, the things God himself has shown me. I hope you will see the truth of this. It is my earnest prayer.

Have you read the book of Revelations lately my friend? Look around at our world today. Look at the after effects of the Greater Depression; look at the how the "outlaw" lands grow daily. Look at the evil that walks our streets and haunts our fields and forests. Read the sixth chapter of Revelations. How many seals do you think the Lamb has broken as of today? You laugh at me, call me superstitious?

My friend, our world is a world of atheists and skeptics. The forces of the Dark want it this way! Their greatest victory was stripping our world of any faith whatsoever. Most of us would rather hold our hand out for some pittance from a megacorp than to hold our hands up in prayer and supplication to God! Which will reward you with greater things? I have communed with God, and He has given me the strength to fight the evil that possesses this world. He has gifted me with my powers.

Now you shake your head. I tell you truthfully, the powers of empathy that mankind has grown to exercise over the past few years are a gift from God himself. You see, even today he pours His judgement out upon this world He created, but in His mercy, He has given us a defense against the forces of Darkness: Empathy.

Unfortunately, Empathy is not good or evil in and of itself. It is a gift from our Lord, but some who do not recognize its divine nature have turned it to their own selfish gain. Isn't this the way it has been with all the gifts God has given us? Didn't man stand back and let its very Savior, Jesus Christ, be nailed to the cross and die? Ah yes, I forget, you don't believe. You explain Empathy with your science. You explain it with your evolution. Well, how do you explain demons in downtown Philadelphia? I bet that challenges your scientific theorems doesn't it? I have stared such hellspawn in the face personally, and no science can account for their

existence. Their father is Satan, and it is his will that is done upon the face of this earth now. The Seals have been broken. The Four Horsemen gallop across the world as I type this very message to you. How can you be so blind?

The ET's? Why yes, I guess you would bring that up. How do I account for them in my faith? I don't have an answer for everything my dear friend. Do you? I don't believe they are God's creation. I think they are an abomination! I have not myself travelled to a distant world to see from whence they came. I only have rumors to go on. Have you seen any evidence? I cannot say I have. Perhaps they are Biblical in origin. Perhaps they are somehow related to the Nephilim spoken of in Genesis 6:4. Perhaps they are something altogether different. I do know this, they are NOT our allies. They are innately atheistic, cunning and inhuman. They are the very ones that opened the gate to Hell and let it vomit forth its contents upon earth.

All God's will though. All God's will. They are His servants too. They are agents for His righteous wrath. But listen, you have seen the Dark Minions, you have seen the ETs, but have you seen the others? Yes, the Heavenly Minions, the Servants of the Light? The one I met called himself an "angelic." He saved me in Philadelphia that day as my lifeblood poured upon the ground in a cold, dark alley. He came in a pillar of light and drew forth a sword of flame and killed the thing that had only seconds before leaned over me, its fetid breath gagging me. I have heard other similar stories as well.

The problem is, they only manifest where Faith is great. So few have faith! So many like you are filled with doubts and skepticism. Read Hebrews Chapter II. It is from there our cell gleaned its name, The Heroes of Faith. It is from there that each of us took our pseudonym. We were not heroes of the caliber described

there, but we invested our Faith in God and He has guarded us.

Now though, we have been betrayed, like Christ was by Judas. Ah, if I only knew who this Judas was, I would hang him myself. So much death and blood. Perhaps we have served our purpose now, and God is gathering us back up to Him to spare us from darker things to come. But the way my fellows died...so horribly...if what is to come is worse than that, then I will be glad to give up my life.

I hear something outside my door now. Something breathing. I can smell it. It smells like a backed up sewer...dead bodies...rotting fruit...urine...all rolled into one potent stench. It is the smell of death.

Please don't let this letter fall on deaf ears. Heed my words. Seek God. He will guide you against the Dark Ones. He will deliver you from their clutches. There are so few churches left. If you cannot find one, start your own. Find a Bible. Brush the dust from its cover. Read the book of Revelations, and you will see. The end is here, and unless we have God on our side, we are condemned not only to Hell on earth, but Hell for all eternity!

Your Brother,

Noah

(Continued on page 53)

HEROES OF FAITH

[Empathic Cell]

SEE THE DARK CONSPIRACY
EMPATHIC SOURCEBOOK FOR
EMPATHIC CELL DESCRIPTION
DEFINITIONS -- ED.

Goals: Hunters, Trainers

Methods: Shadows

Empathic Philosophy: Mixed

Organization: Democratic

Assets: Average Resources

Size: Five Members

Level of Activity: High

Relations with ETs: The group perceives all ETs as agents of evil and not to be trusted

Relations with Other Cells: Good. The group tries to "minister" to other cells concerning their philosophy on the world, empathy, and the Dark Ones; unfortunately, many groups see them as "religious fanatics"

Headquarters: New Boswash

Description:

This group is Christian in its beliefs and subscribes to a philosophy founded in that concerning the current state of affairs in the world (see above). Each member takes his name from a Biblical hero (many from Hebrews Chapter 11, the "faith" chapter). The founding member is a minister known as "Noah." The group has worked extensively in the New England area rooting out forces of the Dark Ones and eradicating them. They have also worked to train empaths how to use their powers against the Dark. Their primary base of operations is an old abandoned church in the Philadelphia area.

The group has suffered several setbacks lately, and rumors have it that most (or maybe all) of them are dead. It isn't certain if the group will rise from the ashes or not. Rumors have it that they were infiltrated by a Dark Minion. The last contact with them was a letter from Noah, indicating he was in great danger.



FAITH SKILL

FAITH (INT)

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)

In game mechanics, Faith is a skill that combines elements of Luck and Willpower. It is in essence a belief in God Himself and faith/belief in His sovereign power over all things in the universe. Faith is a difficult thing to find in the world of Dark Conspiracy, but it does exist, just as its God does.

Faith can be used in the same fashion as luck in circumstances that involve “furthering the faith.” This could be an act of persuasion that involves convincing someone to aid, for example, the church by making a donation of money or goods. It could also be used in a battle that directly involves dark minions. Faith also can replace Willpower in resisting empathy or fear when dark minions are directly involved.

Direct involvement is when the person is himself a dark minion, or on a specific mission of a dark minion. If you were in a bar and ticked off somebody with empathic abilities, you could not use Faith to resist, even if he happened to be an Igor.

Increases in Faith should not be arbitrary. They should require study, performing acts of faith and generosity, and committing oneself to a church and the wellbeing of mankind. Merely fighting the forces of evil are not enough to increase Faith. Those with high Faith scores are not necessarily pacifists, but they try to avoid killing innocents. They also do not

have sympathy for dark minions, but rather for their servants, such as the hapless Igor whose mind is bent by the empathic powers of the dark.

It is highly suggested that the Referee keep a separate experience system in place much like that for initiative. He should reward Faith experience only for appropriate acts of faith. Remember, this should be things other than the standard “I killed a bunch of bad guys” and include playing out prayer and devotional time, along to other Christian principles.

(Faith at a level of 2 should be added to the list of background skills. Faith should also be added to secondary skills as well. For the Clergy career, Faith should be added to the list of subsequent skills, and at a skill level of 1 for first term at the Referee’s discretion.)

ANGELICS

These beings are the “Light” equivalent of Daemons. No “typical” angelic exists. They are rarely seen, as they only manifest to those who have great faith, or in areas deemed “holy.” They can have practically any rating in attributes (refer to Daemons on pg 216-217 1st Edition Dark Conspiracy or pg 38-39 of the 2nd Edition Dark Conspiracy Referee’s Guide) as their counterparts. When Angelics meet Daemons face to face, the battles can be quite dramatic. Angelics should be used sparingly, if at all. They are best seen in a vision, and should not be used as a way to bail characters out of tough situations they have gotten themselves into. They should be more of a dramatic plot element than a buddy to help beat up the bad guys.



INDUSTRIAL STILL LIFE IN WINTER



Chilling Fiction
By Jason C. Hosler

The snow susurrated down around Pamela as she walked past the old factory, sifting down as it had been all day. Her pace slowed as she came to the gate and got a clear view of the brick building and the assorted piles of detritus outside of it. She had always had a particular fascination with the older buildings of the city, their forgotten and mysterious histories, and their distinct look and feel that made them stand out against the mostly uniform steel and concrete blocks of the modern factories.

The snow frosted the hood of her jacket and her eyebrows as she stood, face slightly upturned in the dark. The scant streetlights and single security light on the building created an odd shifting of shadow patterns as the snow continued to fall across them. The old building was dark, except for the security light, and seemed silent and imposing in its stolid brick solidity. Pam's mind drifted, much like the snow that fell around her, wondering what kind of business had been done here and if the building was still in use. As her focus slowly traveled over the snowy lot she could almost hear the shutter click of her camera as various perspectives and views came into the center of her sight line. "It's kind of pretty," she thought with a small smile.

A sudden crash of metal broke over her from within the enclosed yard of the factory, and she gasped as she looked in that direction. Her gloved hand had unconsciously gripped the chain link gate while she daydreamed, and when she jerked at the noise, the gate opened partially. Overcome with curiosity at what could have caused such a loud crash in the still and quiet evening, she pushed the gate open far enough to slip through the gap. Looking around, expecting a security guard or other authority figure to come barreling through the snow to reprimand her for her trespass, she walked through the thick powdery snow that covered the yard. As she walked, she looked closer at the bales of crushed cardboard and sheets of plywood paneling that had been carefully stacked outside the building. As she focused on the building itself, she could see that all of the windows were covered on the inside with some white fabric, and that if there were any entrances to the building on this side, they were completely obscured by the piles of plywood and cardboard.

She rounded the far corner of the building and was surprised to see a teetering tower of metal sheeting and cardboard bales easily reaching three stories tall. A thin arm of metal and wood extended from the top of the tower into a gaping hole in



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(Industrial Still Life from 54)

the side of the building on the third floor. It was obvious that this hole was at one time a window, but there wasn't even a hint of glass remaining in the opening and numerous broken bricks were scattered around the edge of the wall where they had fallen from the crumbling mortar.

“The noise,” she thought, “Must have been caused by a sheet of metal falling off of the tower due to the weight of the snow or a strong gust of wind”. There certainly were numerous bent or broken and snow-covered sheets of plywood and aluminum around the base of the tower.

As she stood looking at this unlikely erection, she heard it groan softly in the falling snow shower, and saw a few shadows shift and move within the dark interior of the ramshackle edifice. A shiver trembled its way down her spine, but her fascination with this most unexpected sight drew her closer. She could see that the components of the construct were not held together with rivets or even nails, but seemed bound together by some oddly bulgy white rope. Small knots of the thread looped around and between spars of metal and wood, while larger clumps of it wound through rough holes that had been made in the sheets of wood and metal that made up the outer skin of the tower. Long strands of the rope stretched across gaps in the



(Industrial Still Life from 56)

sheeting, and in several places bound the tower to large metal loops that were mounted in the brick of the old factory. Under closer examination, she began to see that while the tower looked shoddily constructed, it was actually quite sound and solid.

Though the hissing whisper of the snow seemed to smother it somewhat, she heard a distinctly rhythmic clicking or clattering from within the dark interior of the tower. She pulled a gloved hand from her coat pocket, and quickly activated the light function of her phone. The powerful LED erupted into crisp white light, throwing the nearby tower into an odd contrast to the diffuse lighting of the distant streetlamps that she had been examining it by before. Slightly flash blinded by the sudden light, she turned the LED towards the nearest gap in the sheeting around the tower and peered inside. “Who would build something like this?” she thought as she stepped into the door-like gap.

A hissing scream greeted her as her light fell upon the ill-shaped monstrosity that stood at the opposite side of the small room. She seemed frozen in shock as it propelled itself across the space. As it moved, she saw that it had far too many limbs, and that its face had numerous black eyes, glinting with the reflected light of her

LED lamp, and two long black mandibles that dripped with some viscous red liquid. Before she had time to do more than blink in surprise it was in front of her and four thin limbs, covered with hard spiky hairs and terminating in bony points, lashed out and around her, crushing her against the bony carapace that covered the monster’s wide chest. She tried to scream, but all that came out was a high-pitched squeak as the mandibles punctured her shoulder, and the thick red poison began pumping into her. The last thing she noticed before blackness over took her and she fell into unconscious oblivion was the light dusting of snow collecting on the spiky black hairs that grew between the plates of the monster’s black carapace.

“It’s kind of pretty,” she thought as the world faded around her into diffuse whiteness and an almost rhythmic clicking.



My Hell



Poetry
By Peyton Bisailon

My Hell

My life is like an eternal hell,
All I can hear is my bell,
And in my heart I feel is pain,
Knowing my blood never leaves a stain

I know I want to die
Without saying goodbye
As you know I cannot cry
It's my curse, my sty

Now with these rusty chains,
I cannot feel the pain
I wish that I could once again
To be amongst the living

For I am a vampire
And all I want to be is
Human again.

--Peyton Bisailon

THE TRUTH ABOUT MR. TAYLOR



*Cul-de-sac Adventure
By Norm Fenlason
For Little Fears: Nightmare Edition®*



FIRE IN THE SKY

The quiet of the PC's town was shattered by the appearance of a flaming ball that streaked across the early evening sky and crashed in nearby woodlands. A couple of the neighborhood kids saw the fireball, but because of the lateness of the hour, no one's parents let them go and take a look. The parents that saw it immediately labeled it a meteor and said it was lucky it didn't come down on someone's house.

There was a lot of talk in school the next day and a buzz of excitement that Friday about the expeditions that would go looking for it the next day. All the PC's friends were going to look for it, but Jerry, a member of the PC's club hangs back and is very mum. That evening, at the clubhouse he tells his tale, for Jerry had sneaked out that night and saw the meteor's landing site.

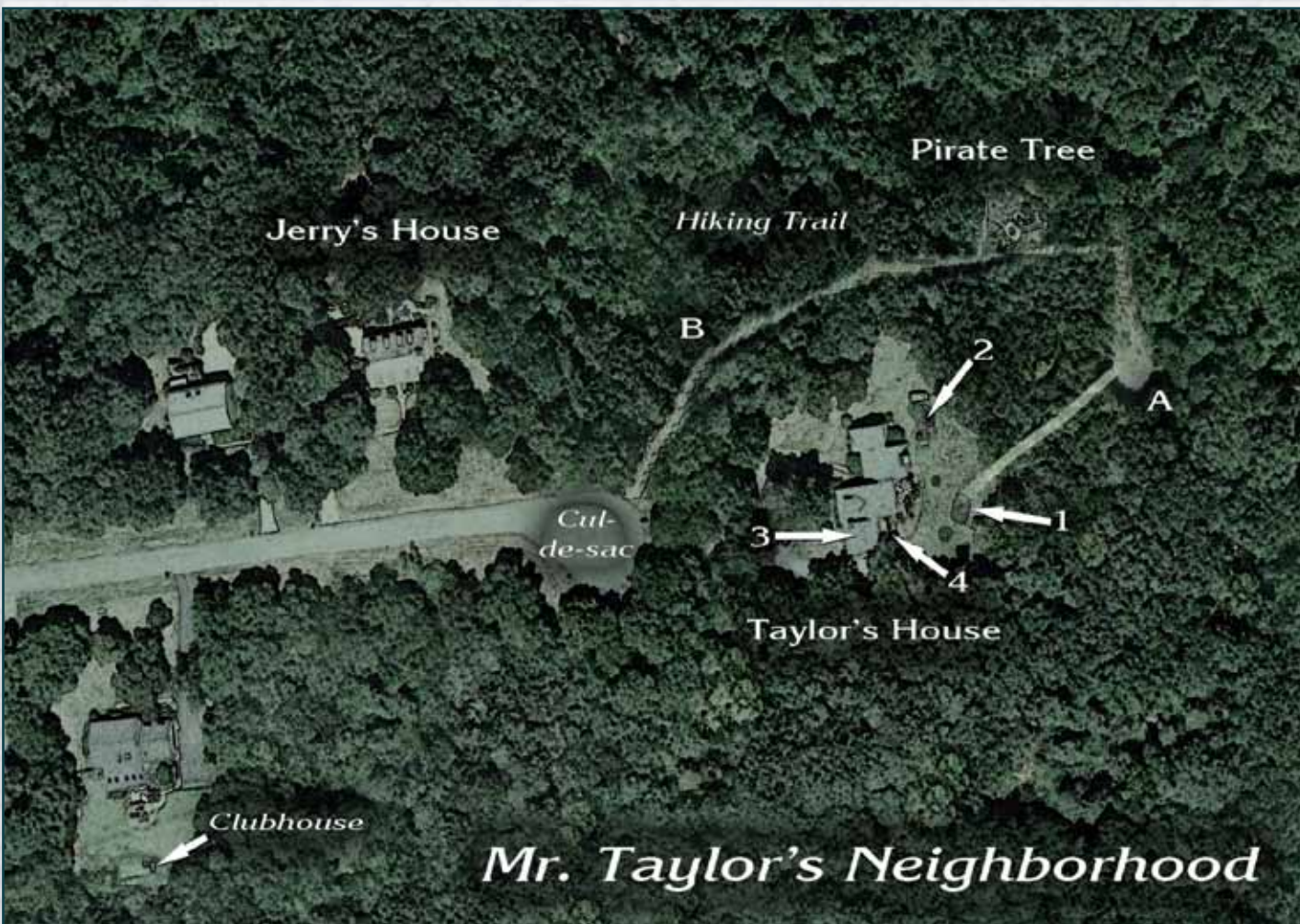
But fate prevents the club from mounting their expedition that Saturday. Everyone's parents decided on that day to spend in family get-togethers. But the club met around noon on Saturday. All of the club members were at the clubhouse, except Jerry. Although excited, the members wanted to wait until Jerry showed up because he was the older kid and he knew something important.

THE CLUBHOUSE

The club is in session and actively discussing local events when the missing member, Jerry, enters the clubhouse. Jerry looks at the elected leader of the group and says this is his last day with the club. Monday Jerry's parents are shipping him to a special school. Jerry is being blamed by Mr. Wilson, the older single man that lives in the house at the end of their block, for the killing of Wilson's and several other's dogs. Jerry double-dog swears that he didn't do it, but has something to tell his friends before he leaves. He wants to meet at the clubhouse Sunday morning and finish the story. The group can dimly hear his mom calling. Jerry teases the kids that it's about Mr. Wilson and the night the meteor flew through the sky. Jerry can't talk anymore because his mother appears outside the clubhouse and calls him home. She has obviously been crying. Jerry then tells his mom to hang on, and gives his slingshot to the leader and asks for someone to hold it for him in case something happens. When pressed, Jerry will not reveal what he means by that.

LATER, AT THE CLUBHOUSE

At the clubhouse at dusk, Jerry shows up and finally gets to unload his story to his friends. Jerry has two tales to tell. The first



Mr. Taylor's Neighborhood

(Truth from 58)

is that he is being blamed for a rash of pet deaths in the neighborhood. Someone or something has been killing and horribly mutilating the neighborhood pets. Mr. Wilson told the police that he saw Jerry kill his dog Kringle two nights ago.

In response to this accusation Jerry told his story of Mr. Wilson and the night the meteor lit up the southern sky—Jerry's second tale. It was rather outlandish and social services were called in. Monday they are taking Jerry to a temporary home for observation and then to a special boarding school. It is not his first time changing schools; Jerry is a veteran of Juvenile Hall. Because Jerry's story about Mr. Wilson is so outlandish and his passionate attacks on Wilson, Jerry's parents fear their son may be deranged. Jerry doesn't tell his friends about exactly what he saw. He considers it real dangerous, and wants to get evidence first. He knows right where to get it too. Darkness brings the meeting to a close, with a hasty call for re-adjournment early next morning.

Mr. Taylor's Cul-de-Sac, which he shares with Jerry's family and a couple of empty lots. The clubhouse is shown at a neighbor's house. A hiking trail to the left of the Taylor House leads to a park, with the Pirate Tree located as shown.

1. Taylor's backyard with the lawn dug up showing loose dirt. In the middle there is a galvanized pipe about four-inches in diameter jutting from a mound of dirt.

2. Woodpile about four feet high. Nearby is a handaxe, a 20-pound splitter axe, a chainsaw, and two five-gallon gas cans - both full.

3. Inside the garage there is a hole in the middle of the floor with dirt and broken concrete surrounding it.

4. Trash cans near the window on the garage. Possible encounter with the *Toothy Raccoon*.

A. Crash site for the flying saucer. It has been filled in and is covered with loose dirt. Nearby trees have been broken and scorched. A path that looks like someone has been digging and covered it up runs from there to Taylor's backyard.

B. Dog carcass. In the underbrush near the Hiking Trail lies a dead dog. This dog was known to the kids, but will stir to life as a *Zombie Dog*.



(Truth from 59)

JERRY'S PLIGHT

Jerry does not show at the clubhouse the next morning. So the club might go looking for him. They need to get to the bottom of this, and besides they are afraid for their friend. A teary-eyed mother meets them at the door of Jerry's House. She sees the kids and starts to sobbing, dejectedly withdrawing back into the house. Mr. McDill appears at the door and in a somber voice tells the kids that Jerry died last night. He fell from the second story of Mr. Wilson's house onto a woodpile and broke his neck. Jerry died before the ambulance arrived.

None of the kids should believe that Jerry would try to break into Wilson's house, especially without his slingshot, that he had given to the leader. There appears to be a mystery going on.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD

On the walk back to the clubhouse, the party has the opportunity to meet various neighborhood constituents.

Leader's Father: the man is out looking for their pet dog, Winston. Winston got out yesterday and did not return. The dog usually returns by the time the sun sets, but there has been no sign of him since taking off yesterday.

Rose: Several dogs and some cats have gone missing since Friday. Seeing the distress this causes any little ones, she gives them a big hug, rejuvenating them. The party loves Rose.

Daphne During: Daphne's brother found a dog in the back woods that was slashed. She says she saw it and it was awful, blood everywhere. The bushes around there looked like there was a fight with something.

Painter's House: Asking around at other houses in the neighborhood leads them to Painter, the huge chocolate lab's house. The group loves that dog who assumes the role of protector to the club. Painter has already defended a couple of the kids in a neighborhood scene. The group heaves a collective sigh of relief to see Painter is ok.

Bert Cranston: Bert the Nerd tells the story of how his father, who is in the US Air Force was called out late the night of the meteor. Bert tells the group that the Air Force does not know where the meteor crashed, it's somewhere in the woods. They haven't found it yet.

Sally McDill: Sally is on her way to the clubhouse. She had to sneak out because Jerry made her promise go to the clubhouse. Sally is quite distraught because she

JERRY'S SLINGSHOT

Jerry's Slingshot has nearly legendary qualities. In tales of Jerry's exploits, he has used the slingshot to dispel vampires, king cobras, and, of course, bullies. Jerry has put a lot of belief into his slingshot. Maybe if he had kept it that night, Taylor would not have got him.

Qualities

It makes whoever holds it feel special.

It never misses the bad guy.

It can only shoot marbles.

Stuff

A Leader's Weapon 000

Boosts the courage of those kids around it (Think/Feel +3)

Smite 000

Bad guys really feel it (Damage +3)



(Truth from 60)

knows how much trouble she will be in should she get caught out without permission—especially now that Jerry is gone. If the party avoids moving around the Neighborhood, Sally will show up at the clubhouse. She has a letter, painstakingly printed in Jerry's scraggly scrawl. Sally says that Jerry gave it to him the night before. Sally starts sniffing, turns, and runs home in tears.

JERRY'S LETTER

Jerry did not come right out and say it, since he was worried his parents would find the letter and it would be used to keep him at the special school. But the letter strongly implicates Wilson in the dog murders. It also implies that the club should keep an eye on Wilson and look after pets from the neighborhood. The letter goes on to say strange lights and noises were coming from Wilson's garage late the night the meteor crashed. Jerry was going to get a peek in the garage last night. Jerry said that there is a spot near the Pirate Ship that looks weird, dirt and stuff moved around, wasn't like that before the crash. There's digging and fresh dirt in Wilson's back yard too. Keep an eye on Wilson and be careful.

WILSON'S HOUSE

Mr. Wilson lives at the end of the street in a simple two-story cracker-box house with gables looking to the front. A driveway on the right side extends to an external garage in the backyard. The garage doors are closed. The front yard is usually well kept with all grass, hedges, and shrubbery trimmed and green. Flower boxes near the front door usually hold a variety of flowers. Mr. Wilson likes to work on his yard and it usually shows. As the party approaches his yard, it is clear that Wilson has not worked on it in a few days, and there is no sign of him on this sunny afternoon. Wilson is usually a fixture of his front yard when the sun is shining.

From the sidewalk the party can see tarps draped on the ground below one of the second story windows. A tall neatly stacked pile of firewood stands next to the tarps. The firewood appears to be fresh cut. All the glass in the window appears to be intact, belying the break-in aspect of Jerry's death.

As the PCs examine the house, the curtains shuffle as if there was someone watching from inside.

THE PIRATE SHIP

Wilson's house backs onto a wooded area that is a state park. Several acres of the woods are in fact part of Wilson's property. This is the same wooded area where the meteor was supposed to have crashed. The community uses a path to the left of Wilson's house as a hiking trail. The kids in the party should be familiar with it as they used to play regularly in the woods. There is an old tree that fell over a few years ago about a quarter mile in that the kids pretend is an old pirate ship. If the party goes to the old Pirate Ship, they will find that the tree has been removed, the dirt disturbed, and a trail of fresh dirt leading back to Wilson's backyard. The area of disturbed dirt where the Pirate Tree used to be is roughly circular with a blackened outer ring where the grass and leaves have been discolored. The grass looks burned, but there is no smell of ash.

THE CRASH SITE

It is starting to get dark, but if the party follows the trail of fresh dirt back to Wilson's House, on the way one of the PCs will spot a shiny object in the brush and leaves. It is Dobie's collar, license, and tag. It is still buckled, and jaggedly cut with dark reddish-brown stains on it. If the party goes into the underbrush, they will





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(Truth from 61)

smell it before they see it in the gloom. In the increasing darkness, the kids can make out Dobie's horribly mutilated carcass partially covered by leaves. As they watch something small, furry, and wiggly darts into the bushes with a scrabbling rustle that splashes blood on the closest character to the carcass. As the party watches in horror, the decaying and horribly mutilated figure of Dobie will rise, bare its teeth that aren't already exposed, and growl ominously at the kids. This is definitely a **Scary Thing** that forces a **Fear Check**.

If the party does not run away in fright, they may notice that the dirt path is in a straight line from where the disturbed ground to Wilson's backyard. From the trees looking into the backyard, in the darkness the party can see that the dirt trail leads to a pipe sticking about three feet out of the ground in the yard near the trees. A small tendril of smoke drifts lazily from the pipe's conical cover. The odor smells like nothing the kids have ever smelled before, but it makes them feel sick to their stomach.

Across the yard at the back of the house is a patio where it looks like Mr. Wilson was cutting and chopping firewood. Here will be a single-headed ax, a chainsaw, a

gas-powered splitter, and several five-gallon cans of gasoline.

Should the kids venture into the yard to get a better look at the pipe, they will hear the loud bang of Wilson's rear screen door closing and a rather angry looking Wilson running at them. As he passes his chopping block, Wilson will grab the ax. Wilson's yelling, angry face, and the ax are pretty scary and the GM can have the party make another **Fear Check** or run away. They should run away anyway.

What happens now is up to the party, but it is mostly dark and some of the club's parents will be getting angry. Wilson will not venture very far from his property.

OPERATION: MIDNIGHT

At this point the party may wish to recon the Wilson garage and yard when he is not about. The garage allows two cars to park within it, but the kids will remember seeing only one at any time – Wilson's old Buick. There is a window on the left side away from the front door. Wilson appears to have hastily lined the inside of the glass with tin foil. The lining was hastily installed leaving a three-inch scrape of clear glass. The inside of the garage is dark during the day, but should the party venture out late at night, an observer can see strange things

glowing with weird colored lights through this gap. See Wilson's Garage below.

If the kids try anything during the day, Wilson will come out and run them off. During the day he seems to know they are approaching the house every time they try. At night the party will have better luck getting close to the garage. Watching through the gap in the tin foil at night will reveal what is going on in the garage.

THE TRUTH ABOUT MR. TAYLOR

Mr. Wilson's car is missing from the garage. In its usual place in the center of the floor is a pile of broken concrete and dirt surrounding a deep hole. Strange colored lights are emanating from the hole. As the observer watches there will be a deep thrumming sound that runs for about a minute, after which Mr. Wilson will emerge from the hole. He is wearing a silver skin tight overall with matching boots, with the ensemble looking like something an astronaut would wear. Strapped around the waist is a holster holding a nasty-looking pistol-like object. When Mr. Wilson starts to take off the suit, his true nature becomes apparent to the kids. Mr. Wilson is not Mr. Wilson, but a scaly green alien! This transition is Wilson's Scary Thing – his ability to transition into his alien self. The observer must make an immediate **Fear Check**.



(Truth from 63)

Wilson is actually an alien doppelganger. The real Wilson has been consumed. The Wilson/alien caught Jerry trying to go into the hole and dragged him up to the second story to drop him from the roof – make it look like an accident. The fall did not quite kill Jerry, so the Wilson/alien had to finish him off before the authorities arrived. The pistol is actual an alien ray gun.

THE BIGS DON'T BELIEVE US, SILLY

Seeing Wilson transition from/into the alien should be a big surprise to the party. The party may be tempted to tell the authorities (parents, teacher, police) about Wilson, but they should remember what happened to Jerry. Should the kids decide to tell their parents, they will be met with disbelieving looks of sadness. Their parents will think that the kids' story is a re-telling of Jerry's wild tale repeated out of uncontained grief for their friend. If the kids persist and threaten to do something about it, the parents will "ground them" by sending them to their room. If the kids tell anyone else, that person will contact the parents with the same net result. Of course, the kids can sneak out again.

WILSON'S GARAGE

The garage is set to the back of the lot with access to the street by a single lane of

asphalt pavement running past the house. At night, a single bulb burns on the wall of the house facing the garage. Concrete pavement covers most of the area around the patio leading to one of two doors into the garage. The other door to the garage faces away from the house. Mr. Wilson's garbage cans are set next to this door. A Toothy Raccoon will give the kids a startle and will fight for the garbage that it takes to be its due. The window with the gap in the tin foil is next to this door.

The door will not be locked. But once opened, the kids will be met by a low growling. A four-legged alien-cyborg zombie-dog will chase the kids out of the garage. If the kids cannot take care of this creature, Painter will streak in from the street and attack the dog. The two dogs will tangle and Painter will chase the zombie dog into the woods.

Inside the Wilson garage where the cars would normally be is a large hole surrounded by a low, dark reddish-brown wall made of chitinous, plastic-looking material. This material is very hard (can't be chipped or scratched by anything in the garage), but warm to the touch and seems to actually sweat leaving the hand moist. Surrounding the wall on the outside is a mound of dirt, concrete chunks, and bits of

timber – all of what used to be in the hole. Wooden stairs with the look of hasty construction (bent, half-driven nails, uneven ends, etc.) lead down into the darkness. A low, barely audible humming and an odor too offensive to describe emanate from the dark pit. Wilson has a great deal of faith in his cyborg-zombie guard and will not appear at this time.

ALIEN COMMAND POST

The stairs lead down in almost complete darkness along a twisted and very narrow path. The walls are also made of the plastic-like chitin. There does not appear to be supports or anything holding the ceiling up. As the party moves further into the tunnel, the gloom lifts to reveal a widened area with a table and chair. On the table are a kerosene lamp, brightly lit, a thermos with a couple of coffee mugs, and what appears to be a map of the US torn from an encyclopedia or atlas. The map is marked in a profusion of bright red dots. Notes in a strange script looking like nothing from this earth fill the map between the dots to provide annotation. Older kids may recognize a marking where the nearby Air Force base is located if they pay attention. There is still no sign of Wilson.



(Truth from 64)

THAT'S A SPACESHIP? WHERE'RE THE FINS?

Across the widened area, dim in the gloom from the lamp, a saucer shaped spacecraft sits on its tripod landing gear. This is the source of both the humming and the smell. A ramp leads to an open portal in the side of the craft. Strange clicking noises appear to be coming from the opening. At the side of the disk-shaped craft, an out-of-place stovepipe runs from an open compartment up to the ceiling. The odors are coming from the leaky seals in this pipe. Stealing a sneak peek into the door, the kids will see the Wilson/alien in alien form sitting on a pedestal and clicking and waving its arms at a screen. The image from the screen is another alien clicking and gesturing back. If the kids make any noise Wilson/alien will notice them in the doorway. Wilson/alien is buried in wires and gadgets, so it will take a few seconds for it to get free.

CONFRONTATION

The Wilson/alien would be too powerful for the kids, except for one thing: Jerry's Slingshot. The slingshot was Jerry's *stuff* and has become even more powerful since being killed by the alien. Jerry gave the slingshot to the leader as a *hand-me-down*. If the Wilson/alien receives any

damage from the slingshot, it is doubled; in addition the Wilson/alien will become disoriented for several rounds, giving the kids time to flee. Wilson/alien will not use his ray gun in the tunnels, but if it chases the kids out of the garage, it will attempt to shoot them one-by-one.

CLIMAX

PREFERRED SOLUTION

The preferred solution is for the kids to pin the Wilson/alien in the tunnels while others pour gasoline into the pipe in Wilson's backyard and ignite it. This will destroy the spaceship and the tunnels leaving a gaping collapsed sinkhole in the yard. Authorities will believe that Wilson was digging a bomb shelter in his backyard when something went wrong and it all collapsed. Of the chitin, they have no explanation.

ALTERNATE SOLUTION

The players can use Jerry's slingshot to kill Mr. Wilson, but they will have to keep attacking, disorienting it, and avoid the ray gun.

NEUTRAL PLAYERS

Jerry McGill: Tragic juvenile delinquent that first identifies what is going on with the meteor.

Sally McGill: Jerry's sister and purveyor of the letter.

Jerry's Mom and Dad: Parents that do not understand the troubles Jerry was going through.

Bert Cranston: Just a neighborhood kid.

Daphne During: The town gossip. Telephone, telegraph, tell-Daphne.

The leader's father: The parent that helps out with some gossip about the military.

FRIENDLY PLAYERS

Rose, the Red-Headed Girl: Rose is 17 and a little strange. Her parents wear tie-dyed shirts and sandals, have really long hair, and smell funny, but Rose is ok. She has been baby-sitting the members of the club for as long as they can remember. Rose provides rejuvenation to the party when they need it. If they are feeling down, they can drop by and spend a few hours. Rose can recover *Wits* and *Darkness* per LF:NE rules with her over-developed *Caring*. Rose will not fight for them or otherwise get involved, but will chuckle saying, "Imagine me duking it out with the alien! Right!"

Painter the Chocolate Lab: Painter should have been their dog, but he belongs to



(Truth from 65)

the young war veteran with the limp – a friendly guy, but he had some not-to-be-discussed secret. Painter was big and strong and very vibrant (some thought he was an MP K-9). Still, he showed a soft touch for the kids. As it was, Painter was only too happy to help the kids out. In a tight scrape while walking home **Older Kid** bullies cornered them and threatened to take their lunch money. Painter appeared mysteriously and routed the bullies. Those Older Kids never bothered anyone in the party again.

ADVERSARIES

MR. WILSON / ALIEN

Wilson is a middle-aged bachelor that teaches high school math. Tending to flab, Wilson in human form is not very intimidating with his balding head, eyeglasses, and soft belly. But the alien form is just downright scary.

TOOTHY RACCOON

This raccoon has been stealing from the Wilson trashcans a long time. Wilson has been trying to corner and trap this raccoon for quite some time. The raccoon has staked a claim to the

MR. TAYLOR

This **Bug-Eyed Alien** is a *Scary Monster*.

Crashing to earth in its flying saucer disguised as a meteor, the Bug-Eyed Alien set about building a secret base to help other aliens to take over the Earth. More than one alien was sent to Earth, but no one really knows where they all landed.

The Bug-eyed Alien grabs humans and eats them. It takes a while to consume the victim, but the alien gets the person's memories when it is finished. The Bug-Eyed Alien leaves a horrible mess that may turn into a Zombie later. After eating a person, the alien can transform into an exact duplicate—a doppelganger!

In its true form, the Bug-Eyed Alien drips a green slime from its mouth, its tentacle suckers, and its exposed brain on top of its head. This slime has Kooties!

It is really scary when it changes to its true form. It wants to finish its secret base with no witnesses.

Abilities

Fight: ØØØØØØ

Grab: ØØØØØØ

Chase: ØØØØØØ

Scare: ØØØØØØ

Virtues

Health: 40

Terror: 10

Qualities

It is one heck of a disgusting alien.

It can make itself look like a person it ate.

It can eat you if it holds on long enough.

It cannot eat in a human form.

Stuff

Brains Hanging Out Ø (Damage -1)

Slobber ØØØ

Kooties! (Think -2)

Goopy and green (Scare +1)

Tentacles ØØØ

Suckers won't let go (Grab +3)

Ray Gun ØØ

Makes you really cold (Damage +1)

Freezes you (Move -2)

Slurp! ØØ

Eats people it grabs (Damage +1)

Soul stealer (Spirit -1)

Bugged-out Eyes Ø

Can see in the dark (Chase +1)

PAINTER THE CHOCOLATE LAB

This **big dog** is my *friend*.

Painter is kind of a neighborhood dog, a very large dog even for Labradors. He runs around and plays with the children, never bites or even growls... unless you are bad. Painter has taken the neighborhood children under his wing, especially protecting the smaller kids.

It is scary to monsters and bad people when he shows his teeth.

Abilities

Fight: ○○○○○○

Grab: ○○○○○○

Chase: ○○○○○○

Scare: ○○○○○○

Virtues

Health: 40

Terror: 7 (to monsters)

Qualities

It is a neighborhood pet.

It keeps bad guys from hurting us.

It cannot be everywhere all the time.

Stuff

Huge Size ○○○○

The younger kids ride him like a horse
(Flight +3)

Stronger Than Strong ○○○○

Bites through broom handles (Damage +3)

Resolute ○○

Doesn't scare easily and bolsters the kids
(Think +2)

(Truth from 66)

trashcans and will attack the children, who it does not consider a physical threat.

ZOMBIE DOBIE

Dobie is a zombie dog raised in horrid afterlife by strange alien technology or perhaps the fears and belief of the characters. The poor dog will fight any living thing, the closest being the kids. The zombie dog is not as agile as a living dog, and with two of its legs missing, it doesn't chase very well.

ALIEN CYBORG ZOMBIE DOG

The alien cyborg zombie dog is an amalgam of one of the poor pets that Wilson killed and some alien technology. The technology keeps the dog in a semi-living state even though the dog has already died. The dog's alien brain does not operate as well as a living dog's.

JERRY'S SLINGSHOT

Jerry's Slingshot was renowned in the neighborhood. It has taken out many a rat, and scared many a bully away. Jerry was very good at shooting it. He used marbles instead of rocks and the results were better than possible with a normal slingshot. Since Jerry's death, the slingshot has taken on new powers – namely that the weapon's effectiveness is doubled against the antagonist that killed Jerry. The slingshot will

work against all aliens since Jerry's premature death.

PLOT TRICKS

TRANSFORMATION TRICK

The alien has the capability to transition into the form of another being of roughly the same size and shape, which it has consumed. The alien has already captured, killed, and consumed the original Mr. Wilson. The alien can do this to any human being left alone with it for 4 hours or more.



ZOMBIE DOBIE

This **Zombie Dog** is a *Regular Monster*.

Dogs hate the Bug-Eyed Alien. Unfortunately, dogs don't know what they are up against. When the Bug-Eyed Alien eats a dog, it leaves a carcass that will turn into a Zombie Dog. Watching the Zombie Dog come to life is really *scary*. But the Bug-Eyed Alien has eaten a fair bit of the Dog and so it cannot move very fast.

It is *scary* when its dead body comes to life. It wants to chew on kids bones.

Abilities

Fight: ØØØØØØ

Grab: ØØØØØØ

Chase: ØØØØØØ

Scare: ØØØØØØ

Virtues

Health: 30

Terror: 7

Qualities

It was once a neighbors pet.

It will keep coming after you.

It cannot track a scent.

Stuff

Skeleton Fangs ØØ

No need to snarl, the lips are missing
(Damage +2)

No Eyes ØØ

Empty eye sockets (Scare +2)

Rotten Flesh Ø

Buzzing flies (Think -2)

Missing parts (Move -1)

TOOTHY RACCOON

This **Toothy Raccoon** is a *Regular Monster*.

It's just a product of nature, but hanging around garbage all night can make anything gouchy. The Toothy Raccoon is really hungry and will not let a few kids keep it from it next meal.

Abilities

Fight: ØØØØØØ

Grab: ØØØØØØ

Chase: ØØØØØØ

Scare: ØØØØØØ

Virtues

Health: 30

Terror: 7

Qualities

It can see in the dark.

It really wants what is in the garbage cans.

It is not very big.

Stuff

Pointy Teeth Ø

A mouth full of needle-sharp teeth
(Damage +1)

Wild Eyes Ø

Might be rabid (Scare +1)

Very quick (Move +1)

ALIEN CYBORG ZOMBIE DOG

This Alien Cyborg Zombie Dog is a Regular Monster.

The Alien Cyborg Zombie Dog was once alive. It was someone's pet dog, a large Golden Retriever to be exact. Now the miserable creature is more machine than dog. Oh yeah. It's dead.

It is scary while moving with its servos whining like that. A combination of rotten dog and robot parts is really scary.

Abilities

Fight: ØØØØØØ

Grab: ØØØØØØ

Chase: ØØØØØØ

Scare: ØØØØØØ

Virtues

Health: 30

Terror: 7

Qualities

It was once a living flesh-and-blood dog.

It knows where you are when you're hiding.

It can only see one person at a time.

Stuff

Metal Mouth ØØ

Whirring servos and clanging jaws
(Damage +2)

Camera Eyes ØØ

Constantly moving in and out (Scare +1)

Part Machine Ø

High pitched whining (Think -2)

Unfamiliar Parts (Move -2)

SPECIAL FORCES HOOKER



Armalite MH-12 MagHook
By Lee Williams
For Dark Conspiracy®

ARMALITE MH-12 MAGHOOK

Developed originally for the US military, the MagHook is a modern take on the grapnel launcher. At first glance, the device resembles something from a science fiction movie, being housed in a non-reflective black plastic outer casing. The exterior of the device is covered in handholds to maximise the safety of the user. The enclosed reel contains 110 metres of cable, which can handle weights of 100 kilos with no problem. The actual hook heads fired by the MH-12 are highly magnetic, although they do have conventional prongs as well which can be extended and retracted at the push of a button. The weapon is powered by a gas cartridge that can fire up to 50 times, and the built in winch is run off a high capacity battery. Both cartridge and battery are located in the stock. The winch has a manual winding handle in case of malfunction.

The MH-12 can also be used as a weapon in emergencies. The prongs of the head are kept closed and if the attack is successful, the user can attempt to entangle the target [**Difficult: Agility**].

Weight: 3.5kg.

Price: \$600. (R/R)

Armalite MH-12 MagHook

Ammo	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	Recoil		Rng
						SS	Brst	
Hook	SS	1	Nil	3	1i	2	N/A	110

(Adapted from the works of Australian techno-thriller author Matthew Riley)

THE BRAINCASE FACTORY PRESENTS

TABLE TWO

SCRIPT: MINXON ART: DIETZ

BLASTED MAP!

I'M SURE WE TOOK A LEFT HERE, BUT NONE OF THESE DAMN STREETS SEEMS TO BE NAMED!

I'M TIRED AND HUNGRY MILES. CAN'T WE JUST FIND SOMEONE TO ASK DIRECTIONS FROM BACK TO THE HOTEL?

DUNWICH AFTER DARK IS NOT A PLACE FOR OUT-OF-TOWNERS...

WELL HOW ABOUT IN HERE THEN? WE'LL HAVE A BITE TO EAT, AND THEN GET THEM TO CALL US A TAXI AFTERWARDS.

I'M NOT SURE MILES; THE PLACE LOOKS KIND OF CREEPY!

OH, COME ON LOIS, THEY WON'T BITE!

AH, GOOD EVENING SIR AND MADAM, MAY I TAKE YOUR COATS?

YES, THANK YOU, ER, GOOD EVENING! A TABLE FOR TWO PLEASE!

PLEASE ACCEPT A BOTTLE OF WINE ON THE HOUSE; IT IS SO RARE THESE DAYS THAT WE HAVE SUCH DISCERNING CUSTOMERS.

I'M SORRY BUT DO YOU PERHAPS HAVE A MENU IN ENGLISH?

AH, ALAS NOT SIR, ALTHOUGH I DO RECOMMEND THE HOUSE SPECIAL FOR TWO TONIGHT.

MILES, PLEASE I WANT TO LEAVE! I DON'T LIKE THIS PLACE!

DON'T BE SILLY LOIS, WE'RE SEATED NOW. STILL I HOPE THE FOOD IS BETTER THAN THE WINE, I LIKE IT MUST BE CORKED OR SOMETHING!

YOUR FOOD SIR, MADAM. BON APPETITE!

HMMM, ER, YES, VERY NICE, THANK YOU!

MILES, THERE'S SOMETHING HERE...

...MOVING!

BLINK

EEEEIGH!

SPLATT!

UGHHH!

CHOMP

AHHH, A FINE VINTAGE!

CLOSED

YESSIREE BOYS, THEY'LL CERTAINLY BE SOME FINE DINNING BY THE WHATELEY'S TONIGHT!



This issue, I would like to present an idea that I had some time ago but have never done anything with since. It came to me after one of the old Dark Conspiracy Sunday chatrooms. So I put it into words and then left it laying around my various hard drives for several years! I present it here as an example of what can happen when one does a bit of random brainstorming. It is perhaps a little raw and unpolished, but it is still a work in progress. Perhaps some of you might like to add to it, or comment, or suggest changes. It is obviously written with Dark Conspiracy in mind, but with simple tweaks could fit it into a Cthulhu setting. By the way, seeing as people will ask the question, I didn't have any particular real-life author in mind. On to the idea.

A mildly famous author of science fiction and horror tales vanishes mysteriously from the study at his home, where he always sits to do his writing. Nobody was seen entering or leaving the building, but when his agent called round to see how the latest manuscript was coming along there were absolutely no signs of the writer.

My idea is that the author has a very low level empathic or psychic ability and has been picking up very vague 'echoes' of beings and events happening elsewhere in the multiverse. Also, to make himself completely comfortable when writing he has organised his study in a way that makes him feel 'almost separate from the world'.

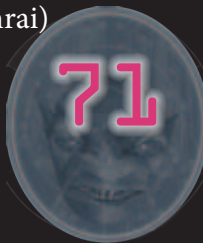
What is actually happening here is that as his psychic powers have grown slowly, he has unwittingly managed to slip into a pocket proto-

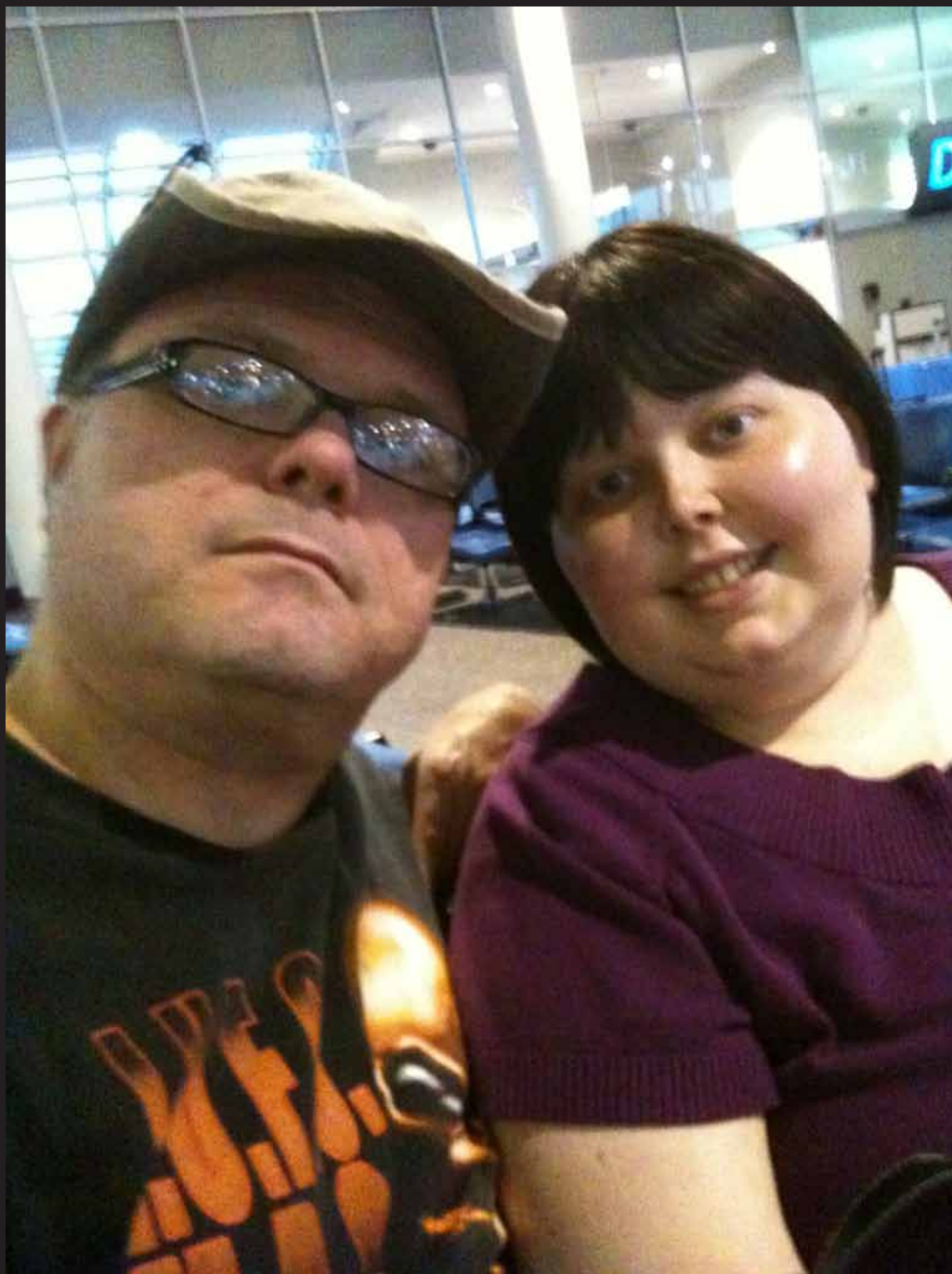
dimension when he writes. The p-dim is only about the same size as his study, and his mental emanations have shaped it into an exact replica of the 'real' room at his house. Recently, the growth of his ability has attracted a Darkling (any of the more empathic and devious ones might work), and they have imprisoned him in the p-dim version of his study. Even he does not know the truth. As far as he knows someone is holding him hostage in his own home .

What is more, the manuscript he is working on is the first book to be written completely inside the 'Study' p-dim, and has itself become infused with some sort of power from its environment. The manuscript could be something that helps detect Darklings in the real world, or it might have a repelling effect on them. It might be useful to a Darkling as a power source, or it could even be a key to enable Dimension Walk without penalty...how dangerous the manuscript actually is, I have not yet worked out. :)

The player-characters would have to work this one out quite quickly, as the Darkling is currently on a mission to harvest empathic brains for use in some variety of DarkTek and it will be returning to pick up the author within a certain time limit. The Darklings may or may not realise that the manuscript itself has some power, so if the party are too late to save the author they might still redeem themselves by obtaining the original manuscript.

--Lee Williams (morthrai)





Dave and Samantha Schuey

Samantha Carol Schuey
June 1, 1988 - November 16, 2010

protodimension magazine

OUR HEARTS ARE WITH YOU.