



STYGIAN FOX



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO
**ALICIA
THORNE?**

SHOULD A MURDERER ESCAPE JUSTICE?

FOX
COUNTRY

13

Sean Smith
& friends

for 7th Edition

CALL of CTHULHU
THE MODERN ERA



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ALICIA THORNE?

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WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ALICIA THORNE?

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Whatever Happened to Alicia Thorne?

INTRODUCTION

This Modern-Day scenario is suitable for 2-6 investigators, but also lends itself well to a single investigator (plus a Keeper), as it is possible to resolve it without any combat. As written, all of the investigators went to high school together, in the small town of Milo, Maine, and that they all graduated 10 years ago. Beyond this contrivance though, and with a little work, it may be re-purposed easily enough to other eras and/or other small towns.

Content Warning: This scenario deals with a non-player character's desire to commit suicide, or at the very least, strongly considering it. Suicide is one of the leading causes of death in young people, and close to 800,000 people die from it each year, leaving long-lasting effects on those loved ones left behind. We at Stygian Fox strongly suggest that a Keeper holds a Session 0 prior to starting this scenario to privately ascertain with each prospective player if this is a topic that they're okay having in a game.

Finally, if you or someone you know may have suicidal ideation, please, talk to someone. There are crisis lines available 24 hours a day, all around the globe, with people who are able to help: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_suicide_crisis_lines

KEEPER'S INFORMATION

A year ago, thirty-year-old Alicia Thorne left Redd's Bar and Grille after a few quiet drinks with casual friends. She never got home. Public opinion then, as it remains now, is that her partner, Ben Facet, kidnapped and murdered her—though he might not have had any particular motive to kill *her*, it is rumored that he dabbles in black magic and occult mysteries. The police have been unable to find anything, nor any proof of Alicia's whereabouts. After a few months' search of the area surrounding Milo, Maine, the investigation was dropped. Beautiful women go missing off roads far too often, and this won't be the last time. Sorry son.

Of course, it wasn't Ben who killed her. He doesn't practice black magic—anything he knows about occult rites come down to a hobbyist's interest and his neighbors are quick to jump to Satanism because he plays role-playing games in his basement with a few friends from out of town.

And in fact, Alicia wasn't killed. She's not dead. A few weeks before her disappearance, Alicia began to undergo the Innsmouth change. Distraught and confused, she left town after her last supper and ended up in a small



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ALICIA THORNE?

cave off the Penobscot River, just above the town of Bucksport. Ben tracked her down, and has been bringing her food, comfort, and love. Initially, she had wanted to be chained to the rocks so that she didn't succumb to these frightening new instincts, but now she's not so sure. She is fed up and she wants things to change. She wants things to end.

FAMILY TIES

Canny Keepers might wonder why her parents don't seem to have been afflicted by the Innsmouth taint themselves. In addition to the fact that underlying genetic conditions often skip a generation, Alicia isn't their biological child—she was adopted. The Thornes, Cheryl and Walter, are good people and have given Alicia a wholesome life and never hidden her adopted status from her.

They are hardy Maine folk: upset but no longer distraught. This isn't their first tragedy and it won't be their last, and they keep on moving with things. If anything, their candor and calmness about the situation provides a particularly strong absence of emotion for the investigators to fill in themselves.

INVOLVING THE INVESTIGATORS

Each of the investigators should have grown up in the town of Milo, ME, or be intimately connected with someone who has. It's not the world's most exciting place and it isn't uncommon for people to grow up and get away. The townsfolk (all three-thousand of them) don't begrudge this and don't hold it against people that come home, however briefly.

These events begin with the investigators being invited back for their high school reunion, an event that takes place every decade, where anyone and everyone is welcomed home.

ALICIA THORNE

Alicia was always considered the prettiest girl in her year, though she didn't fawn at that attention. She happily lived with her foster parents in Milo, worked retail and service jobs in town, and invested her money in decent camera equipment to shoot YouTube make-up tutorials and product reviews in her spare time. She never made it huge but her videos would often hit a few thousand views. A few months before her disappearance, she started wearing heavier make-up—strong foundation and concealer—even when the videos were just eyeliner tutorials. Her viewers

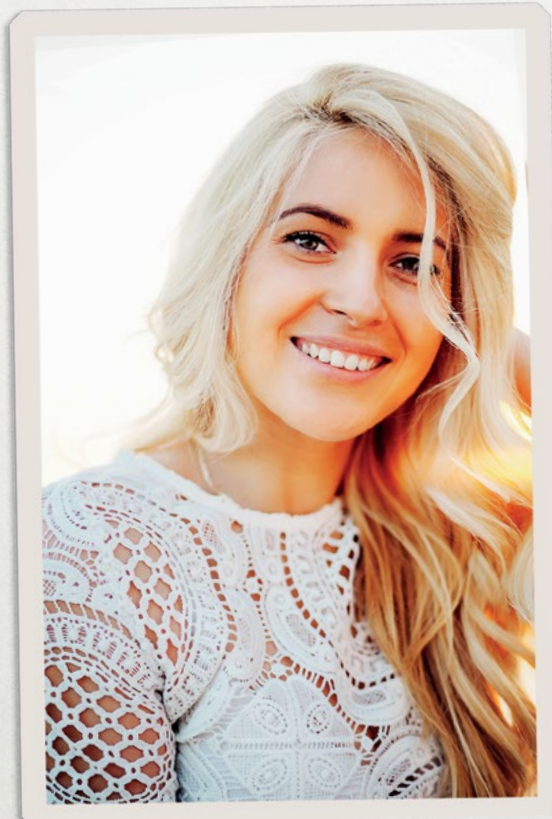
INVOLVING INVESTIGATORS FROM ONGOING CAMPAIGNS

Keepers who wish to use *Whatever Happened to Alicia Thorne?* as part of an ongoing campaign will struggle if their investigators aren't from Maine. In this case, one of the investigators can be contacted by a friend from university who is convinced that Alicia's death is worth looking into—perhaps they can't shake the fear that Ben's occult dabbling has had unforeseen consequences. This friend might invite them as a date to the reunion. If it would not make sense for all of the investigators to be present at the reunion, you might ask some of the Players to pick up one of the non-player character ("NPC") roles for this scene.

Keeper's Note: Take some time at the start of play and ask each player to explain their investigator's thoughts and memories of Milo and their time at school there. If any mention a love interest and doesn't name them, connect this investigator to Alicia or Ben and ask them to elaborate on their connection. If they mention the name of anyone, rename some of the NPCs below if their personality would match this person.

The tragedy of this scenario stands stark on its own, but it keeps harder if the investigators have a close personal connection: it is stronger still if it was the players who prompted these connections.

Alicia Thorne





Milo, Maine
Where Love Was Lost



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ALICIA THORNE?

often still post that they miss the videos, but no-one has pieced together her username with the local news of her disappearance.

MILO HIGH SCHOOL REUNION

Folding chairs have been cleared away to the edges of the sizeable town hall and well-meaning banners have been strung across the rear of the hall, “Welcoming Alumni of Milo High, Young and Old.” The air is stale and the floor smells of cheap bleach, but the atmosphere is warm and convivial.

When the investigators arrive, they’re among the first dozen or so people here, including the retired school dean, the long-suffering janitor who seems just as elderly as he always did. (If players ask if a particular person they mentioned from their past is here, call for a **Luck** roll. Success means they are and grants a bonus die on any interaction with that person. Unless of course that person is Alicia—she’s in a cave—or Ben—he’s out driving.)

THE LAY OF THE LAND

The town hall isn’t huge, but having been cleared there are a few distinct areas for party guests to congregate:

- ✂ At the far end of the room, the usual stage remains in place before moldering, burgundy curtains. It’s made up of half a dozen interlocking square platforms set on a foot-high scaffold. Later in the evening, the stage will become the focus for dancing (for those three or so that take to the floor), and large speakers and disco lights have been placed nearby in that expectation. The speakers bleat out fifteen-year-old pop that was as bad then as it is now.
- ✂ Beside the stage, a fire exit has been propped open, and the concrete patio beyond serves the smoking zone. There is no wind today, and from a distance, it’s hard to make out anyone standing in the cigarette-smoke haze.
- ✂ Down the right-most side of the hall, several trestle tables with garish wax-paper tablecloths are host to a wide and complex buffet

spread. Whatever sort of snacks investigators are looking for will be there, with the notable exception of any seafood. Instead of prawn bites, there’s a strange plant-based equivalent. Play up the “health” angle to prevent early deductive leaps to fish-folk.

- ✂ On the left-most side of the hall, a small kiosk has been repurposed into a (heavily subsidized) bar. Its stock is poor, but its price is good and the lines are well-managed and short. It’s staffed by the lunch lady who always wore her apron too tight and never plucked the hair from the mole on her jaw.
- ✂ Closer to the door than the bar, but on the same side, several tall tables are irregularly spaced with bowls of nuts and other finger foods in their center. At the beginning of the party, this will be the busiest place, until, eventually, that title is taken from it by the buffet and the smoking area. The few people who are here at the very beginning of the night will be the first to take to the dance floor when that moment strikes.

DEVELOPMENTS OVER TIME

The reunion party will likely take a third of the entire time for the investigation: it’s a convenient conceit that all of the informed and veracious townsfolk are in the same room and in a mood to talk! However, without managing a certain aspect of fluidity, the party could start to feel like a slog. While it’s fine for the investigators to feel bored, you should take steps to prevent your players from becoming so.

This is why only some of the NPCs are present at the beginning: during a lull in energy, the scene can change



Stephen Hill

MILO FIRE AND EMS STATION

THE TOWN HALL OF MILO, MAINE



- X PRIVATE ACCESS
- DOOR
- LOCKED DOOR AT TIME OF REUNION
- WINDOW

NOTING UNUSUAL IS TO BE FOUND IN THE BASEMENT OR THE TWO FLOORS ABOVE THE FIRST SO HAVE NOT BEEN INCLUDED.



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ALICIA THORNE?

with the arrival of some new guests (and that itself can provide fodder for small-talk, since “Did you see Gail and Fearné arrived together?!”), or with any of the following events:

- ✂ The president of the Parent Teacher Association takes to the stage with a corded microphone and reads a small speech, thanking people for coming and encouraging them to avail themselves of the buffet and the bar, and to consider whatever donation to the school they see fit in the small envelopes being passed around.
- ✂ A cheer erupts from the high tables when a new song comes on the speakers. The ladies with the best hair and tallest heels take to the stage with their glasses of pink wine. One brings the bottle with her.
- ✂ During a high point of jollity, there is a great crashing sound from the door and a drunken Stephen Hill blusters his way into the hall. He screams, “where is that Ben asshole?” and that “I know you did it!” It takes the efforts of a handful of people to talk him down, whereupon he crumples into a tearful heap. Stephen and Alicia were sweet on each other in elementary school.
- ✂ The town hall staff move people away from the trestle tables and they clear away the buffet.
- ✂ Late in the evening, a noted absentee makes an entrance. Their mood is at odds with the current atmosphere of the room: if things are somber, they arrive and excitedly greet some of the investigators and NPCs; if things are jovial, they arrive drunk and disheveled and head straight for the bar. This is as much to provide an easement of tone as it is to keep up the pace.
- ✂ Towards the end of the evening, whichever NPC the investigators have had the strongest emotional reaction to, takes the microphone and gives a heartfelt speech about Alicia’s death, saying that the community has lost a real gem. It is received earnestly by the guests.

PARTY GUESTS

Play the party guests with their primary mood quite strongly, to help them stand distinct in the players’ minds. If players named any characters from their past during the prologue, rename whichever character most closely fits their description. (If none do, instead rename whichever character would make for the biggest change since the investigators were younger.)

- ✂ **Terry Hunte** is tall and carries with him the significant heft of a gut. His shirt was white, once, and its collar is exceptionally crisp. Terry is the full-time caregiver for his disabled father and has been so since his mother passed away when you were all in school. He is enjoying himself this evening although he keeps checking the clock to make sure he’s not home too late. Terry thinks “Ben doesn’t have the balls to have killed Alicia,” although he never got why the two were dating.
- ✂ **Dorothy Louris** used to be the shy girl at school who’d hide behind her glasses and bangs. She’s now a snappy dresser who looks like she might have stepped off the set of an Audrey Hepburn movie, and she’s had laser eye surgery though she still has a habit of trying to adjust her glasses. Dorothy always liked Ben, though it smarts a bit that he rejected her advances a few months ago.
- ✂ **Fearné Demers** is very popular on social media, frequently getting thousands of likes for her somewhat risqué photographs in exotic locations. She’ll often post “#tbt images” (turn back time) of when she was in Bali, or Cambodia, or Prague. She can talk fairly well about the local cuisine, though it turns out she’d go out of her way to find familiar food. Fearné always disliked Ben, “he’s a Satanist, don’t you know? I saw him answer the front door in some Satanic robes.”
- ✂ **Esther Welder** was always the hippy pagan girl at school: big trouser cuffs and bigger hair. She’s leant more into that aesthetic since then and carries it with a certain charm. You could see her being invited onto Ellen to tell people about Mercury Retrograde, say. Esther works in the crystal shop in the next town over, and, “Ben came in once to ask for advice about pillar candles, but seemed to only care about the color and the smell. He’s no wizard.”
- ✂ **Mary Whitten** wrote some good stuff as editor of the school newspaper when she was young. She now makes a decent living as a playwright in New York somewhere. “Alicia’s disappearance is sad, but it always is the boyfriend who does it, hun.”
- ✂ **Gail Drake** will be wearing *the* best dress of the evening. She’s pretty much guaranteed to be wearing the best dress most evenings. She’s not the sort to gloat but picks out interesting details about what people are wearing and gives sensitive advice as to how to make that a key component of an outfit. “Alicia should have known better than to get involved with that Ben weirdo.”
- ✂ **Annamae Poole** has no intentions of leaving Milo. She likes it here: the food is good, the beer is good,

THE PARTY GUESTS



TERRY HUNTE



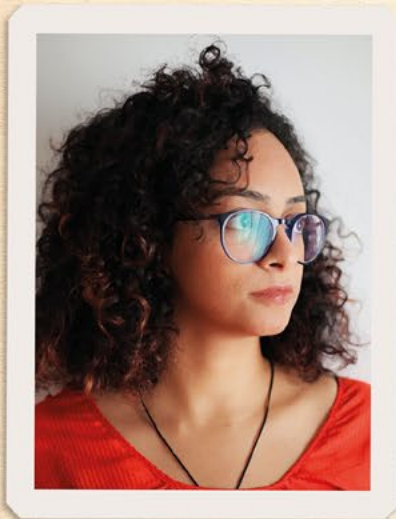
DOROTHY LOURIS



FEARNE DEMERS



ESTHER WELDER



MARY WHITTEN



GAIL DRAKE



ANNAMAE POOLE

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ALICIA THORNE?

the sunsets are great in the Fall and she can think of no better place to raise a dog. When the season's right, she does logging work and farm labor. Tonight she's in the smartest flannel you've ever seen. Annamae has been close with Ben and Alicia since school and always thought the two were well suited. She won't have a bad word said against either.

TOPICS OF CONVERSATION

The party is an excellent opportunity to let the players stretch their roleplaying, where the other guests might bring up amusing anecdotes from their shared time together: "Do you remember the time Al Scoville cut his finger off in workshop?!" Don't feel the need to have guests leap to talking about Alicia and Ben. You won't need to call for **Charm** or **Persuade** checks to get the information, though they might help in holding court and directing the conversations where the players want.

Otherwise, people who have stayed in Milo will probably recount their experiences in the 2008 fire (a case of arson that destroyed almost half the buildings in town, without injury, where its perpetrator pleaded guilty in court), what they think about the others present, and if you are running an extended campaign some rumors that have come out of that. Guests might conceivably be the source of any of the clues from later in the investigation, just viewed through a lens of bias. Mary might think Alicia was wearing more concealer to hide bruises she'd gained from Ben, for example.

NIGHTCAP

Once the party is brought to an end, ask where the investigators would spend time reflecting on the things they have learned. Frame a short scene there, whether that's in someone's house, the bar of their hotel, or an all-night diner just off the interstate. This is an opportunity to both let the somber, tragic tone of the investigation build as well as provide a clear counterpoint to the bustle and chaos of the party. Investigators would have struggled to find a time earlier to talk openly about their suspicions and their next steps. Allow silences to sit around the table.

INVESTIGATING ALICIA

As the investigators look into Alicia's last few months before she vanished, they are likely to come to the wrong conclusions—and this is to be encouraged. When presenting information that supports one of the false conclusions, emphasize the elements of those facts that can be misread. This is not to lead your players on a wild goose chase, but rather deepen the emotional impact when they finally realize what these elements mean. Classic tragedy does well with its misconceptions.

ALICIA'S HOME

Cheryl and Walter Thorne live on the outskirts of Milo, the opposite side of town from the interstate. They are in their late sixties, with deep jowls and bright eyes. Cheryl wears several layers of thin silks and cashmere in clashing pastel colors. Walter has the yellow fingers of a chain-smoker and an impeccably ironed white undershirt.

Despite their recent tragic history, Cheryl and Walter are resilient folk. They have come to terms with Alicia's death (and will politely, but firmly, correct people looking into her disappearance). They were good foster parents, who took Alicia in when she was eighteen months old and never hid that fact from her.

Cheryl and Walter are happy to talk about their daughter, though they won't go into great length. A failed **Charm** or **Fast Talk** check still regales investigators with the information, but they must first sit through a showing of some photographs—all but one of which has been stored in a

Cheryl and Walter Thorne



CALL OF CTHULHU 7TH EDITION

box on a shelf in the living room, the last remaining on the mantelpiece still. Cheryl and Walter will happily share the following information about Alicia in conversation:

- ✂ She was always a personable woman who cared about other people. She was never competitive or proud. Her make-up videos were a really good tool she used to share her skills with other people.
- ✂ In the months before she died, Alicia had begun cancelling plans to go out. She was seeing fewer of her friends, though she would invite some to come over.
- ✂ She was growing her hair out before she died and had started wearing it down a lot more often. She was also wearing heavier make-up as a matter of habit.

Alicia's old room has been redecorated and is now the second guest room, but some of her items that were taken by the police, and subsequently returned, are in a cardboard boxes in the garage. Cheryl will happily let the investigators take a look with a **Charm** or **Persuade** check, or a **Hard Fast Talk** or **Intimidate**. In any case, investigators can access Alicia's belongings, but a failed roll will mean they are supervised by Walter.

The box in the garage is largely filled with paperwork and correspondence linked to deliveries of make-up for her video channel, but **Library Use** or **Spot Hidden** can quickly find the single most useful object—her diary. Alicia wasn't a particularly verbose diarist, but quickly moving through the diary spots a few concerning phrases that stand out: "I've got to make sure that I hide them, because I don't want people to be worried" and "I must have done something bad to deserve this." She never goes into greater depth about these and they weren't thoughts that she confided in her parents. In fact, if these details are brought up to Walter or Cheryl, they become a little withdrawn.

ALICIA'S WORKPLACE

Alicia had been working at Redd's Bar and Grille for a good half a dozen years, mostly doing bar and waitressing work.

The bar owner, Derek Redman, is a tall man with a dancer's waist and a lumberjack's forearms, not the quickest to smile but generally warm. Derek never had an issue with Alicia—she turned up promptly for work, often stayed late to help clear up the place, and she split half her tips with the kitchen staff.

Getting more information from him requires pressing him a little further, either with **Charm**, **Persuade**, or a **Hard Fast Talk**. Investigators who get him to open up further are invited back into the back office—a place Derek keeps impeccably clean and ordered—and he shares that Alicia had been asking for more and more evening shifts in the months before she went missing, that she became skittish if she was in a room with only one other person, and he says



Derek Redman

"while it's not really a barman's place, I couldn't help but check Benjamin's knuckles for bruises any time he came in."

ALICIA'S LAST SUPPER

Investigators might follow up with the few women that Alicia had drinks with on the night of her disappearance. It's up to the Keeper to decide which of the two women these were, since they should be the NPCs that the investigators had the strongest emotional reactions to—be that for good or ill. This is a tool you can use to tempt out deeper emotional responses from the players, which will lead to a more powerful finale.

Getting face-to-face with these women requires a few successful **Charm** or **Persuade** checks to get them to meet and to pin down a time and place that's convenient for all parties. So much of this investigation has the investigators coming across information freely and easily, and this is an opportunity to build a little frustration and to let them feel that they are having to do some legwork.

The main information that these women can give corroborates the facts shared by Alicia's parents: that she had taken to cancelling plans they had in town; that she was wearing a lot of concealer and foundation; that she was always wearing her hair down. The women can also say that Alicia had recently taken to a new favorite table in the bar—a tight, dark booth near the door to the kitchen rather than in the middle of the floor near the pool table.

With further **Persuade** or **Fast Talk** checks, the women will also share that Ben has been acting weirdly since the disappearance—especially that he's often seen going for long drives on the interstate after work and that he looks more and more tired. This information will be colored through the lens of their personal biases.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ALICIA THORNE?

INVESTIGATING BEN

Ben Facet lives just off one of the larger roads downtown, in a stubby, detached house dressed in white vinyl siding. It features a conspicuous raised porch and a set of stairs clear down to the basement at the back of the house. The driveway is wide and dwarfs Ben's car whenever it's home—which is increasingly rarely these days. Ben does back-end coding for a telecom company whose local offices are barely half an hour out of town, north up the interstate. He leaves early for work six days a week, though Thursdays through Saturdays he is often home by early afternoon. It used to be on Friday nights that he'd have some friends from out of town over to play RPGs in the basement—in fact, he's been seen answering the door in his Gamemaster's robes—but these have fallen by the wayside since Alicia's disappearance.



Ben Facet

TALKING WITH BEN

It can be tricky to find Ben in a position where the investigators can share some words with him. At the very least, call for a group **Luck** roll to see if they catch him at home, **Charm** or **Intimidate** to break his patterns enough to get him to start talking, then additional **Charm** or **Persuade** checks to keep him speaking.

He won't invite the investigators into his house, especially if they press him to do so. He's reluctant to visit the bar where Alicia worked. If it looks like you might come to an impasse, he will reluctantly suggest Luke's Diner, just two roads over. It's a five-minute walk, but Ben drives. A

Drive Auto check notices that the car is in especially poor condition and could use service.

Sitting and talking with Ben (he orders a red-eye coffee: black filter coffee topped off with a shot of espresso) is a much calmer prospect than having to tease him into the conversation. **Spot Hidden** or **Art and Crafts (Jewelry)** notices a subtle pewter ring with seeming occult sigils—though **History** or **Occult** recognize it as nothing more but a runic alphabet (or futharc). **First Aid** or **Medicine** makes certain that he is not sleeping much at the moment: he's got horrid, deep bags under his eyes, and his proprioception is off when he reaches for the sugar at the table. Ben constantly fidgets, often looking at the clock and then checking it against his own phone to see that the time is indeed accurate.

Ben answers questions with the fewest words he can, often taking quite some time to start speaking so he can marshal his thoughts. Any time he is talking about Alicia, he will absent-mindedly rub his left palm with the thumb of his other hand (as Keeper you should do this yourself, too). Anyone who asks for a **Psychology** check is certain that he's not telling the whole truth, though a successful check will surmise that he's thinking about someone else above his own interests.

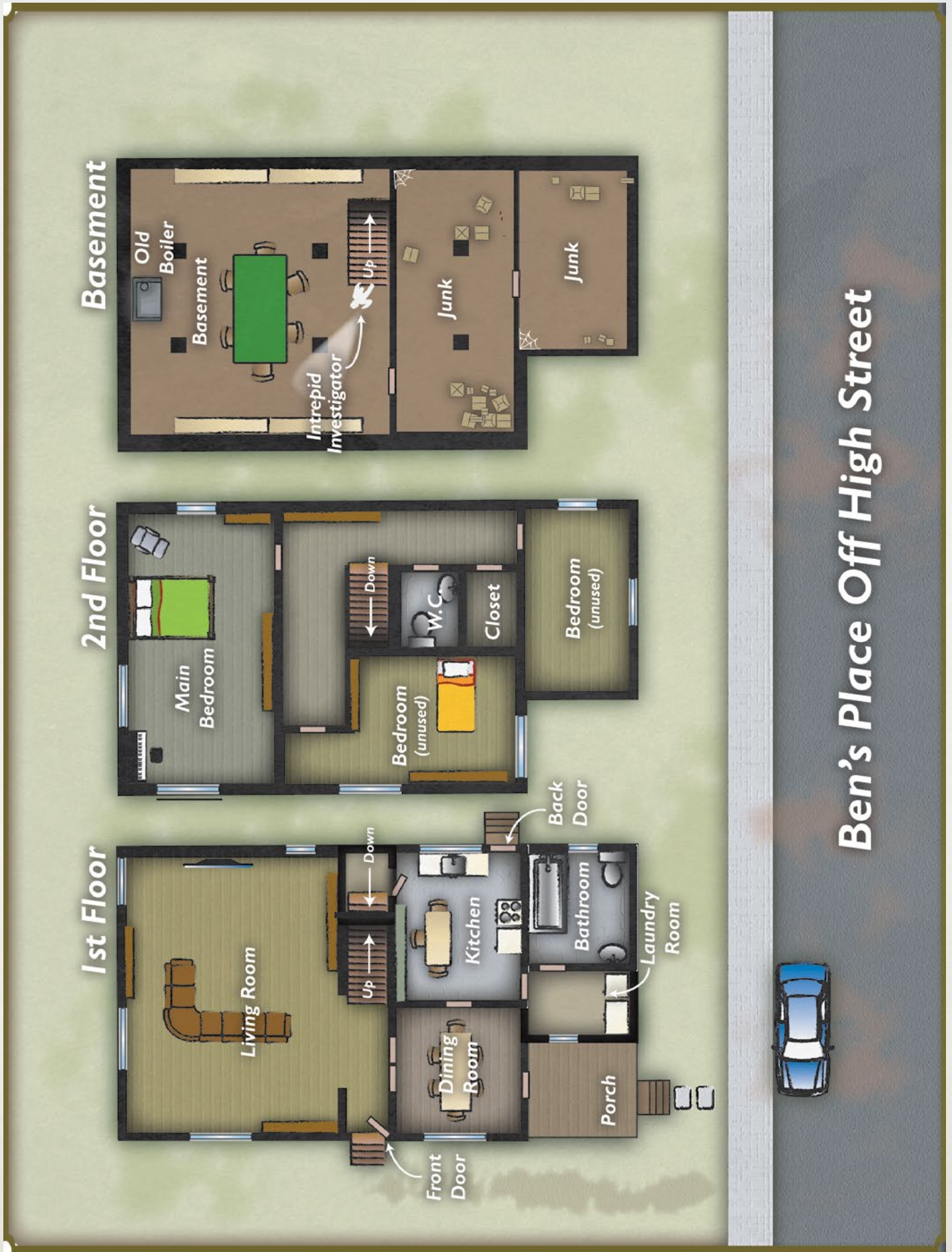
At some point during the investigator's questioning, the conversation is interrupted by a pretty woman in her mid-twenties. Ellen wears her hair up in a high ponytail and tells Ben that she's not had a call from him yet—but to let her know if he wants to hang out sometime.

When Ben has finished his coffee, he apologizes that he can't stay longer and then leaves the investigators with the bill.

TALKING ABOUT BEN

Investigators can talk with the proprietors of Luke's Diner (Luke) or Redd's Bar and Grille (Derek) to ask about Ben. They won't take too much prodding to talk, but Ben didn't necessarily make a massive impact on them. Call for **Fast Talk** and **Persuade** checks, more to scaffold and guide the conversations and peoples' thought processes, rather than to get to the information itself. Ben and Alicia had been dating for several years and always seemed to be a good couple, and after she went missing he seems to have drawn into himself a bit—which is impressive since he was never the most outgoing anyway.

Talking with some of the guests from the school reunion is likely to get deeper insights, though these will obviously be colored by peoples' opinions of Ben. Esther, for instance, will say that she's particularly worried for Ben—maybe he blames himself for what happened and doesn't have anyone he can turn to, and he's clearly not looking after himself well at the moment. Gail acknowledges that it's a bit of a crackpot theory, but she's sure that Ben murdered Alicia in some kind of ritual which is why the cops couldn't find anything and clearly he's not been able to sleep with the guilt of it all.



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ALICIA THORNE?

Regardless of who the investigators speak with, people have seen him go out for long drives in the evenings, especially in the last six months, often driving south on the interstate.

BEN'S HOUSE

Ben is often not at home, and investigators often have poor adherence to trespassing laws. Nonetheless, if investigators intend to get into his house, call for a group **Luck** roll to see if he is away. Regardless of the result, he won't be here—but if the roll is failed, their ingress will be interrupted at the worst possible time, either by Ben's return, or a neighbor arriving to check that everything is going well, or some officers who have been called to the scene.

There are three main areas of interest in Ben's house:

- ✘ The kitchen isn't especially clean but it is quite tidy. There are huge stores of bottled and canned goods, especially fruit juices, tuna fish, spinach, creamed corn. The immediate impression is of an apocalypse prep, at least in terms of bulk, though clearly these are being organized into individual meals and partitioned as such in the large fridge. There are also several bottles of multivitamins and **Spot Hidden** checks notice traces of pill-dust in a pestle and mortar next to a huge jar of mayo.
- ✘ Ben's bedroom is mostly a holding-place for clothes and it's clear that the bed itself hasn't been used in quite some time. A plush blanket is tossed over the back of a worn armchair whose cushions are heavily dented.
- ✘ The basement is dominated by a massive, green baize card table surrounded by metal folding chairs. There are several humanoid models on the surface, showing an impressive attention to detail with color and lighting, but also wearing a heavy cloak of dust—and in some cases a tight spiderweb too. The room smells of stale beer bottles and the tang of old, flat Mountain Dew. **Spot Hidden** notices that the largest chair (with a theatrical cotton robe draped across it) sits at a standard desk, upon which is a map of the local area. Several points along the Penobscot River have been circled (**Geology** or **Natural World** suggests that these might be caves) and there is a clear pattern of crosses over the circles, starting from the source of the river and heading downriver. After a while, these crosses stop, leaving a couple of uncrossed circles close to Bucksport.

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

Investigators looking into disappearances in Maine, within recent memory, find fifty-year-old reports that bear several coincidental resemblances to this case. **History** or **Library Use** finds: a beautiful woman, who was a respected member of her community, vanished from a casual gathering without a trace of accident or malice. Nadine Atherton was a widow from the Second World War, lived not far from the Canadian border, and left behind a teenage girl who was taken into foster care. With her daughter being a minor, further details were not published. (Investigators diving deep with police or county contacts or a leverage of **Law** might discover that her daughter was named Casey, and she, herself, had a daughter taken into care years later.) Grainy photographs of Nadine from the time of her disappearance show a vampish woman with striking resemblance to Alicia. The Innsmouth taint skips a generation, it seems.

Both instances of adoption were orchestrated by an old mission called No Gates to Benevolence. The organization closed a dozen years ago and if investigators dig deeper into its past with **Hard Accounting, Law**, or **Library Use** checks, they learn that the information has been expunged.

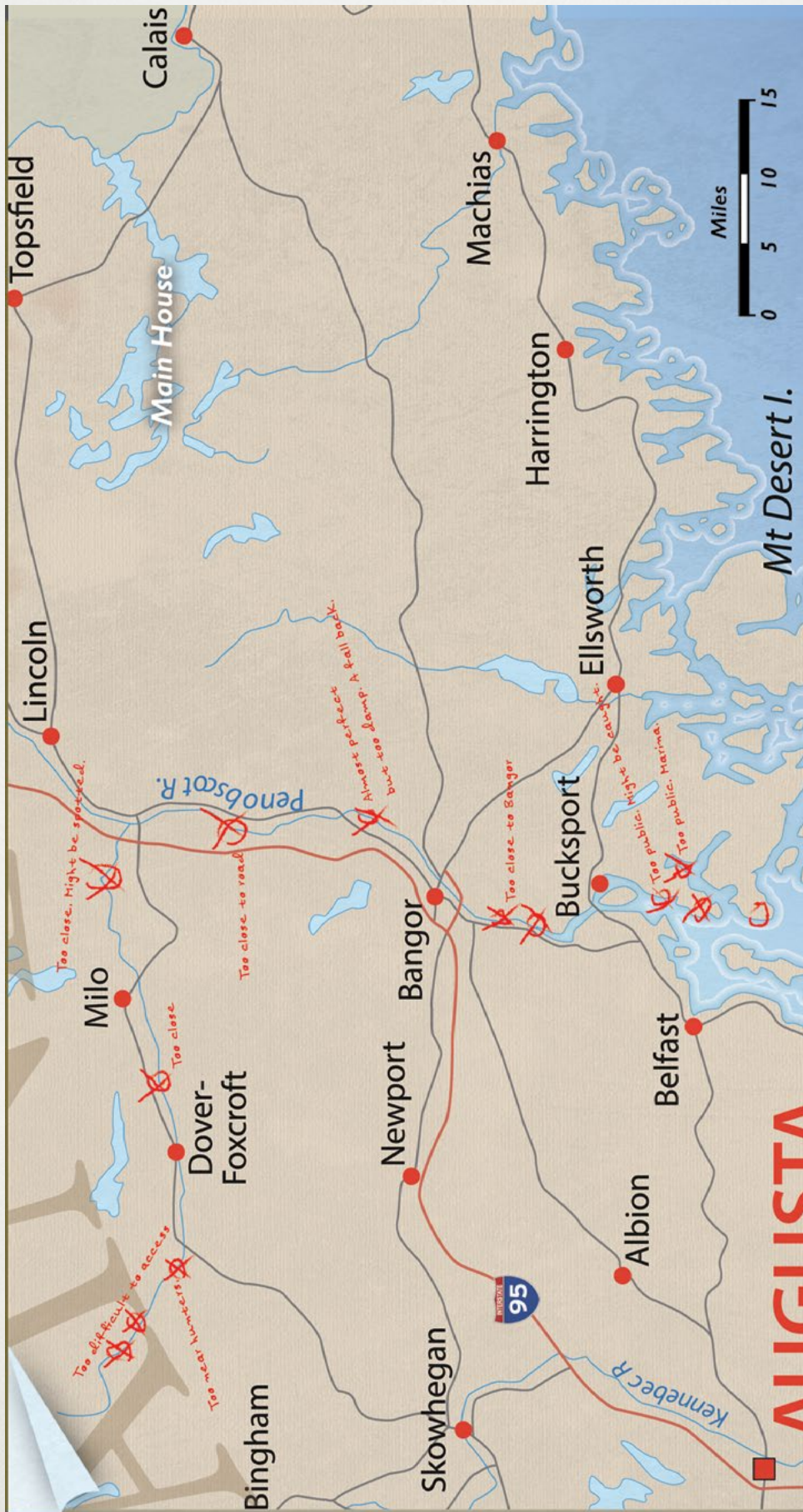
VISITING ALICIA

Whatever the investigators' exact suspicions are, they will likely realize that they need to head out of town to find the information that will unlock this mystery.

Investigators who explored Ben's basement will be able to make their own way to the cave where Alicia resides. If they don't know exactly where to go, they will have to tail Ben as he drives off on one of his nighttime visits to the cave. Call for a **Drive Auto** then a **Stealth** check, though Ben won't notice even on a failure—instead it'll become apparent that he's particularly oblivious to his surroundings.

The final sequence will play out differently depending on if Ben is present, and whether he is directly challenged.

Ben has decided that his care is Alicia's best chance at a "good" life. He has drawn this conclusion from the first few nights they spent together after he eventually found her, four months after the cops gave up. At that point, Alicia was still in panic and survival mode, particularly terrified by the strange dreams and alien instincts she was experiencing. Since establishing this new normal (and having been chained to the rock in this cave), she has had a lot of time to think, and to think calmly on the matter. This is no longer the life she wishes to lead and the investigators' arrival will prove the catalyst to change her fortunes.



GETTING TO THE CAVE

A few miles north of Bucksport, I-95 swings past the Penobscot River. There's a scenic pull-off that offers a decent view of the river, the river-mouth, and Atlantic Ocean beyond. From here, a rough gravel path leads down to the water's edge itself, and if this is followed upstream for a mile, a natural cave opening extends beneath the road itself. It is within this cave that Alicia has been living these past ten months.

Gravel paths aren't best for sustaining footprints, but a Hard **Track** check will see that someone with heavy boots has been walking this way and back, alone, fairly often. You'd expect to see pawprints or discolored vegetation with this kind of footprint pattern, but these are absent.

Gravel paths also aren't the best for quiet. If the investigators are tailing Ben, call for a Hard **Sneak** check (unless they wait for him to get inside the cave-mouth, in which case a Regular success will be enough). Failure means Ben will hear and confront them. He's not armed, per se, but Ben does carry a flare gun to frighten off any predatory wildlife and that could easily scar or maim an investigator. Ben will not accept that his secret might have been learned, will insist that what he did "was for her own good, I swear" and he'll consistently reiterate "I love her, I love her," though seemingly more to comfort himself than as explanation. It will take a lot of effort (an Extreme

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ALICIA THORNE?

VARIANT: NO SUICIDE OPTION

Alicia's default mindset is that she no longer wants to live. However, suicidal ideation can be significantly triggering for a broad swath of players (and quite possibly a fact that they have not disclosed to your or the group). If you know that this outcome is off the table or not one you wish to explore in a role-playing game, you may instead play Alicia that she has come to terms with her transformation and willingly wishes to take to the oceans to understand her new life. Of course, Ben has not come to terms with this.

Intimidate or **Persuade** check) to convince him to let the investigators accompany him (though give investigators a bonus die if they leverage information they've learned in town).

The natural cave is half submerged when the tide is high, but there's a walkway next to the deeper channel. Nevertheless, it's damp and treacherous in here, and lighting is poor. (If anyone rushes through, a successful **DEX** roll means they won't fall and cut themselves for 1D4 damage.) A hundred yards into the cave, the deep channel opens into a wide pool and the walkway becomes a shallow beach. At the far side of the wide pool is a sizeable rock, with the

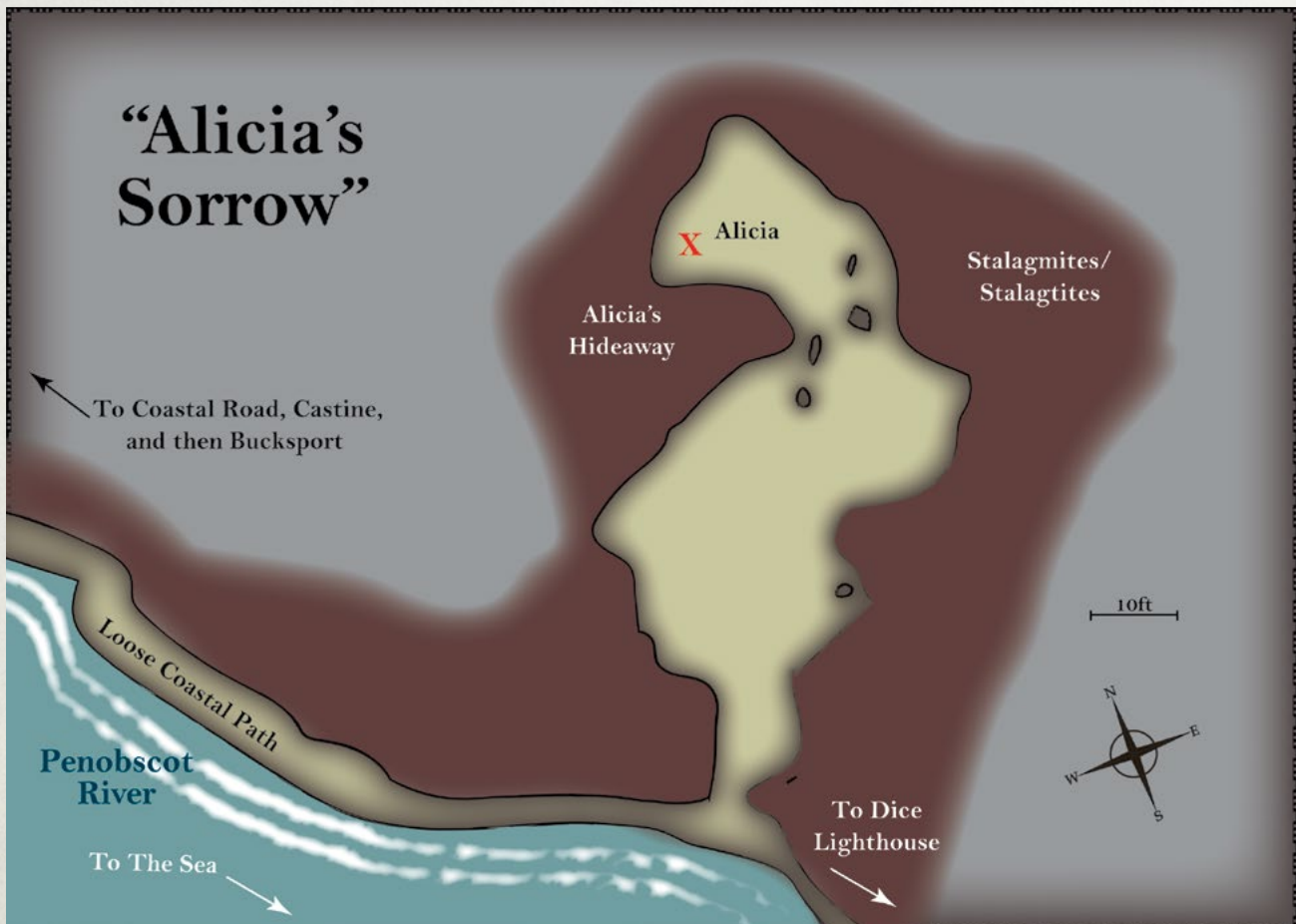
flash of stainless-steel chain and the obscured silhouette of Alicia. If Ben is here and does not know that the investigators have followed him, **Listen** checks make out soothing conversation from Ben, non-sequitur small talk about inconsequential happenings in town, encouragement to eat her tuna—they are responded with a low gurgling noise, like from a happy baby.

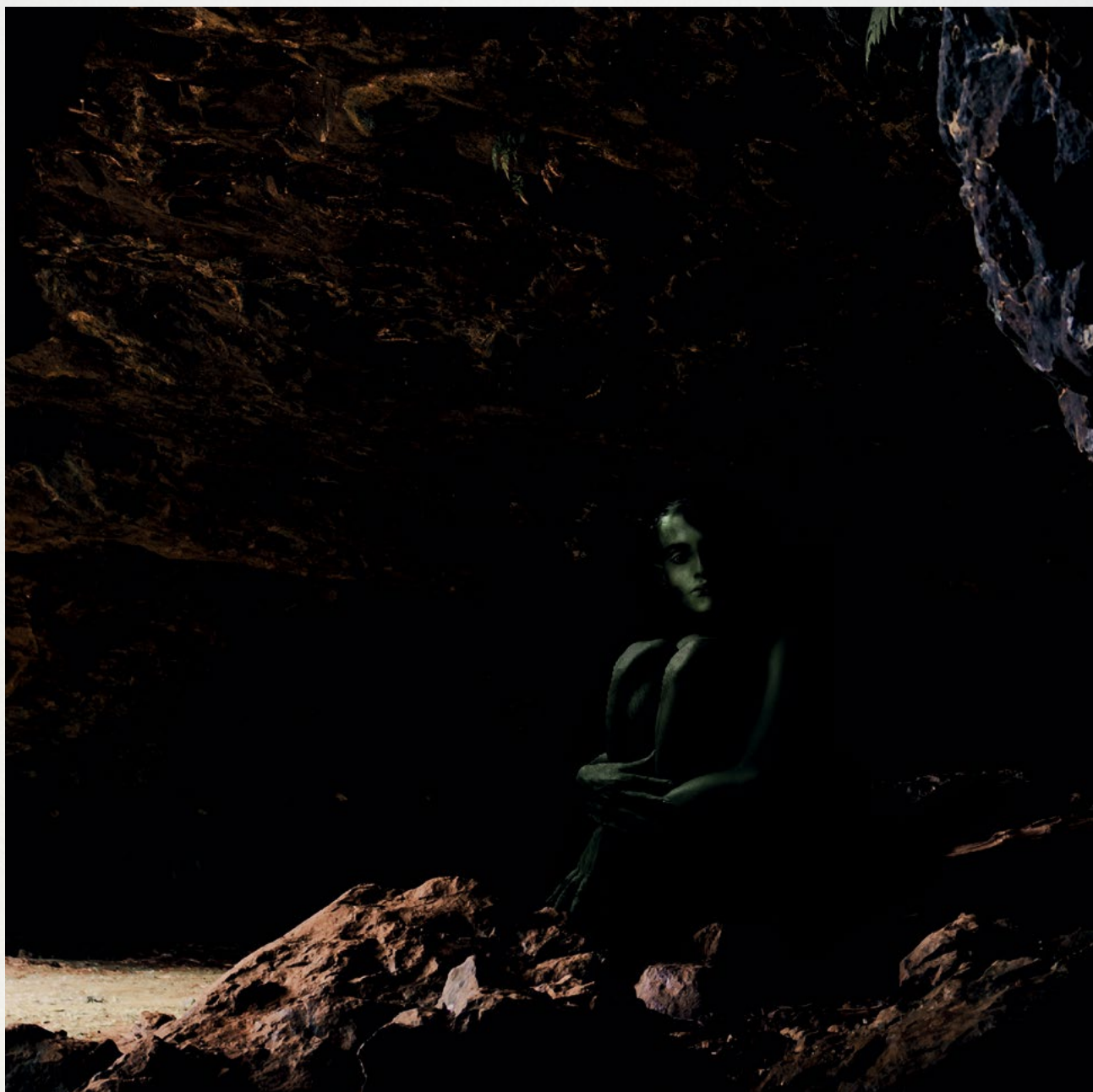
Alicia is in the late stages of transformation into a Deep One Hybrid. Her jaw has slackened and lengthened, her cheekbones raised and ridged, her hair matted into seaweed-like ropes. Thin, vivid gills flare beneath her atrophied ears. Seeing Alicia's transformation calls for a **SAN** check, 1/1D6.

Regardless of Ben's presence here, Alicia sees the investigators' visit as the perfect opportunity to end her discomfort. She still doesn't understand what is happening to her, except that her dreams of the ocean feel like people are trying to communicate with her and invite her to come home. She asked, initially, to be chained here when Ben found her because she was worried about swimming out to the ocean in a half-sleep state, but now this cell no longer offers the comfort and support it once did. She loves Ben and he can't live his whole life in deference and supplication to her, he can't put his life on hold to keep this secret.

Alicia wants things to change; she wants finality.

Ben wants things to remain the same but will defer to Alicia's wishes no matter how much that hurts him.





Again, as the investigators discuss their options amongst themselves, let silences sit. This will feel uncomfortable, and it will help leverage the full weight of the tragedy.

Once a decision is made, narrate its action in a clean and detached way, then fade to black.

CONCLUSION

Spin time on by two days, then invite each player in turn to narrate a short epilogue from the perspective of their investigator. Then, describe ripples on a calm ocean as caught by the setting sun, and end the session.

REWARDS

There is no peace of mind to be had from the discovering whatever happened to Alicia Thorne. The investigators didn't thwart a great evil or prevent some terrible catastrophe from befalling the town of Milo...instead, for those new to the Mythos, they've glimpsed part of the larger world, one in which we are not alone. There is no **SAN** reward for this scenario.

And either way, they witnessed, and possibly were party to, a tragedy that befell a good person who just needed to escape their fate. There is no joy to this, and the only comfort that one might take away is that it was Alicia's final wish that the investigators might've helped to fulfil.



A year ago, thirty-year-old Alicia Thorne left Redd's Bar and Grille after a few quiet drinks with casual friends.

She never got home.

Public opinion then, as it remains now, is that her partner, Ben Facet, kidnapped and murdered her. A recluse who collects strange books and manuscripts, Ben has been the focus of police attention and local suspicion.

Can the investigators find Alicia's body and the evidence needed to bring Ben Facet to justice?

'Whatever Happened To Alicia Thorne?' is a Modern-Day scenario is set in Milo, Maine and is suitable for 2-6 investigators, but also lends itself well to a single investigator (plus a Keeper).

