



THE
THINGS
WE
LEAVE
BEHIND



The Things We Leave Behind

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THE
THINGS
WE
LEAVE
BEHIND

FOR MATURE READERS



STYGIAN FOX

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Dedication

Simon: Dedicated to my wife, Carol Brake, and my friend, David J Rodger. And special thanks to the King in the Woods who dwells in the woods south of Chester, and Stephanie McAlea, who dwells within Chester's walls.

Stephanie: To my daughter who taught me to dream for others.

Jeff: To Cookie, who left me alone from house chores long enough.

INTRODUCTION AND MUSINGS ON TRIGGER WARNINGS

A little girl's stuffed ladybug backpack. One's identity and memories. A psychotic, rambling suicide note full of Dreamlands and sci-fi television references. A letter from a teenager's biological mother, postmarked from "one of those kinds of towns." A crazed rant about the futility of religion and the inevitable triumph of Satan. A tawdry hookup solicitation on a particularly sleazy personals bulletin board. What do these things all have in common? They are all things that have left behind by their owners, things that will draw your investigators into their orbits. Unpleasant, decaying orbits into darkness and terrible choices.

This is Stygian Fox's first book, and we're trying to set ourselves apart a bit, both in terms of style and substance, from other modern-era Call of Cthulhu treatments. One thing that we strove for is to structure each scenario so that it could start something bigger. When people asked me how long should a scenario be, I answered: "however long it needs to be to stand on its own." You'll see that there are freestanding cults, threads, and lots of other meat on the bones of a particular plot. If you don't like one scenario, then hopefully there are enough ideas that you can use to homebrew something of your own.

Another thing that we strove for is a more modern, photo-realistic look and feel. More "Tales From The Darkside" and "Night Gallery", less "Supernatural." There are greater elements of psychodrama and human failings than you might find in other Call of Cthulhu collections, and we wanted the presentation to reflect these elements. Why do people get drawn into the worship of monsters, alien entities and the like in the first place? Human failings: greed, weakness, cowardice, cultural indoctrination, or flat out madness. It isn't enough for us to say, "well, they found a book and read it, and it sent their minds on a walk off the map." The horror of the human interaction receives more attention here than it otherwise might.


The subject matter in this book is also for mature audiences only. Because we are dealing with human terror when confronted with the unknown, the weaknesses of humanity are on display here. We do not shy away from the worst things that people can do to each other, and to themselves. These are staples of the horror genre, and the heroic narrative lies in striving to be better and set things right. Even if you fail.

It is not our desire to demean or offend anyone, and we have striven to diversify our range of innocent victims. That said, there are suicides, gruesome murders, a child kidnapping, unforgiveable acts of predation, and other uncomfortable subject matters that may test a reader's comfort zone. None of us here at Stygian Fox glorify such matters. The only appropriate reactions on the part of your protagonists to such things are horror and a desire for justice, and (as in the real world) such agencies should come to a bad ending, or there is no catharsis. I am in the habit of making donations to appropriate charities when I feel that a story I wanted to tell goes to a dark place where society could use some help, and this project will be no exception.

Finally, we wanted to emphasize the importance of human agency. Choices have to be made by the players, choices which have consequences for themselves, their communities, and the world. The choices might not mean much in the end, when the sun is snuffed out or the world's true masters return. But choices are critical to the heroic narrative, and without them, a game is a railroad to nowhere.

We hope that you enjoy this. If you don't, please tell us why and I'll happily discuss with you what we can do to make the real world better. And thank you very much to our Kickstarter backers; without you, this would be a final draft in our Dropbox without maps and with little art.

-Jeff Moeller, October 2015



LADYBUG, LADYBUG, FLY AWAY HOME

by Jeff Moeller

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Ladybug, Ladybug, Fly Away Home is set in the modern-day United States, but can be moved to another country with minimal effort. The various law enforcement agencies discussed are their U.S. counterparts, but feel free to substitute appropriately. The precise city that it is set in is also unimportant; it will begin in a densely populated suburb in one state, shift to a shopping mall district in another nearby state, and end back where it started. For ease of description, things will start in suburban Cleveland, Ohio and move to suburban Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, but neither location is necessary.

A five-year old girl, Regina Balfour, with a serious health condition has been kidnapped in broad daylight from a big box store in the suburbs, while her mother's back was momentarily turned. Left behind was her ladybug shaped, stuffed animal backpack, which contained her intravenous steroid pump. She needs her medication to live more than a few days, and her condition will rapidly deteriorate without it. Also left behind was store surveillance footage of the abduction, and the body of one of at least two abductors. The abduction occurs on a Thursday evening. The scenario ends, one way or another, at sunset on the following Tuesday.

The now-dead conspirator, George Lewiston, stayed behind at the store, while his female accomplice escaped with Regina. He went on a noisy but mostly harmless rampage as

a distraction, and then fatally shot himself when the police closed in.

Lewiston will be discovered to be a retired Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agent with a history of investigating domestic terror cells, militia groups, and armed fringe religious movements. The investigators will learn that he has long been investigating Regina's family. The abduction is the second time that he has drawn his niece, Lindsay Peale, into the situation. Lindsay is a child protective services worker for the county where the abduction occurred, and is the second abductor.

George has long had suspicions about Regina's family, concerned about the odd, apparently extreme Fundamentalist, messianic doomsday cult that they lead, the Church of the Passover Angel. Outwardly Christian, the cult professes a belief in the end of the world via a replication of the plagues of Egypt, culminating in the deaths of the firstborn of all non-believers, on a variety of shifting and recalculated dates.

George learned that the Church of the Passover Angel, led by the Balfours from their tidy suburban home, was not Christian, but it was apocalyptic. After going undercover, he saw them summon up the Passover Angel—an avatar of Nyarlathotep in the form of an Old Testament angel of death—in a dry run last week, and understood that Regina is a doomsday device. When the stars were right—sunset on Tuesday—she would be sacrificed in the Balfour's backyard chapel, and the Passover Angel would rain down a plague on the Earth, decimating it and killing all non-believing firstborn children on the planet.

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Short of time, with no hard evidence of any crime, and with Lindsay being unable to intercede with a temporary protection placement because of a failed prior effort to take custody of Regina from her parents, Lindsay and George were forced to go rogue. They made plans, waited for an opportunity, snatched Regina from the store, and while George sacrificed himself to create a distraction, Lindsay whisked her away.

Lindsay has sedated the girl and is hiding in a randomly selected hotel room in another state. She does not plan on harming Regina if possible, but will kill her if necessary to avoid having her parents kill her at the appointed time—sunset on Tuesday. Regina's parents and their minions would like her back, and will be shadowing any investigation of which they are aware.

If it appears that they will fail to retrieve Regina in a timely fashion, the entire cult will nonetheless do their best, substituting Regina's mother at the appointed time. The results will be far less devastating than if they succeed in sacrificing their long-cultivated vessel, Regina. But death will nonetheless be slow and agonizing for the firstborn in the next several counties downwind.

To add a layer of complication to the whole affair, Regina's parents do not think that Regina will actually be harmed by the ritual. They believe that the Passover Angel will spare Regina, their firstborn, and restore to her life as a reward for their faith. They are mistaken, but their belief colors their actions. They think that the way to keep Regina alive through their prophesied doomsday is to get her back and kill her. No one ever said that they were particularly sane, but they are earnest.

INVOLVING THE INVESTIGATORS, AND WHAT IS KNOWN AT THE START

The investigators will be involved, one way or another, very shortly after the abduction—within a few hours. At least one of the investigators has to have a logical reason to be intimately involved in the investigation of a child disappearance. Most likely, one of them will be a law enforcement officer charged with solving the crime; the others can be persons who might be assisting with or following the investigation. If none of them are law enforcement officers, then any of them with experience in the occult could be brought in as consultants by law enforcement, and what they learn should cause them to either nose into the investigation or start a parallel one of their own. Most logically, one investigator would be a field agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, who will be called into assist with what appears to be a case of brazen child abduction, possibly across state lines.

Alternatively, they might be an overzealous news crew who decide to follow the investigation, and try to solve the crime themselves (or, at least, get the best footage and scoop the competition). This last option can work but requires considerable roleplaying, particularly when trying to interact with the law enforcement officials who are trying to control what information gets into the media.

None of the investigators should be related to Regina Balfour, but they might have a prior connection to George Lewiston. If so, they should know him as a good person and an expert on domestic, right-wing cults, someone who was unlikely to go rogue without an excellent reason.

Regina's kidnapping is all over the regional news within an hour of its occurrence, and the national news shortly thereafter. Law enforcement investigators, or those with official sanction, learn the information in *Ladybug, Ladybug, Investigator Handout #1* at their initial briefing. News crews can get this same information by bribing a law enforcement "leak". If one of the investigators is the F.B.I. agent coming in to assume charge of the investigation, this information comes from the local police who responded to the scene. Otherwise, it comes from an F.B.I. agent in charge, Lucy Bates, a career investigator with extensive experience in finding kidnapped children. Special Agent Bates is redundant and unnecessary if the investigators are in charge; otherwise, her statistics appear below.

THEMES, ATMOSPHERE, AND CREEPY OCCURRENCES

Atmosphere is extremely important to running this scenario effectively. The Mythos is redolent in what is going on, and while it is structured as a police procedural, the investigators should come to clearly understand, very early on, that something subtle but supernatural is definitely afoot.

The scenario starts on Thursday and the world is tentatively scheduled to begin its end on Tuesday at sunset. And if the Balfours get their daughter back before then and are not otherwise stopped, something close to that is exactly what will happen.

There are two thematic elements that should be worked into the narrative as the investigators move through the clue tree: the Biblical plagues of Egypt (in order); and the inescapable presence of security cameras.

THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT

There are ten in all, culminating in (according to the Torah) God himself walking the world and killing the firstborn of the non-believers. They are, in order:

1. Water, which turned to blood and killed all fish and other aquatic life (Exodus 7:14–25).
2. Frogs (Exodus 8:1–8:15).
3. Lice (Exodus 8:16–19).
4. Flies (Exodus 8:20–30).
5. Disease on livestock (Exodus 9:1–7).
6. Unhealable boils (Exodus 9:8–12).
7. Hail and thunder (Exodus 9:13–35).
8. Locusts (Exodus 10:1–20).

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LADYBUG, LADYBUG, INVESTIGATOR HANDOUT #1-WHAT IS KNOWN ON ARRIVAL

- ✘ Regina Balfour, a five-year old Caucasian female, was abducted at 6:30 P.M. earlier today while in the company of her mother, Sarah. The abduction occurred in a "big box" retail store while Regina was sitting in a shopping cart. Her mother was standing three feet away with her back turned.
- ✘ The abduction was caught on videotape. The videotape shows a large, older Caucasian man in a baseball hat and sunglasses walk brazenly and with purpose up to the cart, Taser the mother with a hidden stun gun, grab the girl out of the cart, and walk quickly for the exit. He momentarily leaves camera range, then comes back into range carrying the girl in an effort to retrieve a backpack that had been sitting next to Regina in the shopping cart. The backpack is shaped like a stuffed animal ladybug. Regina's mother, Sarah Balfour, manages to rouse herself enough to grab onto the ladybug backpack, and a brief tug-of-war ensues. The abductor kicks Sarah in the face, but lets the backpack go as a bystander tries to intervene. He then flees out of camera range with Regina; a security guard runs through the frame ten seconds later in pursuit.
- ✘ A second security camera at the exit of the store shows more. The abductor knocks over a uniformed greeter with Regina obviously struggling and screaming. He throws Regina into the back seat of a waiting car, a late model tan Ford Taurus, which speeds off. The abductor then pulls out a handgun and marches back into the store, shooting the greeter in the kneecap as he goes.
- ✘ The abductor can be seen on several different video feeds thereafter. He wanders through the store, gun in hand, toppling displays, brandishing his firearm at customers, and generally causing a panic. Shoppers stampede toward the exit. After about thirty minutes, a SWAT team arrives and heavily armed policemen wearing body armor appear in camera range. When he sees them, the abductor promptly shoots himself in the head. SAN loss 0/1.
- ✘ The Balfours (father's name: John) are frantic and at the local police station. They deny knowing the abductor.
- ✘ The Balfours are on an F.B.I. radicals/domestic terrorist watch list. They are the leaders of a fringe religious movement known as the Church of the Passover Angel. They run a website that is highly critical of the U.S. government, calling it the "head of the false serpent." They advocate the government's (non-violent) overthrow and replacement with a fundamentalist theocracy "following only God's law and that of his herald, the Passover Angel."
- ✘ The Balfours have been suspected for years of possessing and stockpiling illegal firearms, up to and including machine guns and bombs, but repeated Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (A.T.F.) investigations

have turned up nothing. The Church's website openly comments on this "ongoing persecution", saying that "when the time is right, God and his Passover Angel will smite the wicked in Washington as he did Egypt, with boils and blood, frogs and locusts, lice and flies, pestilence and darkness, and when the persecution of the Faithful persists, with the deaths of their firstborn."

- ✘ The abductor had dyed his hair, was wearing a fake moustache, had recently obscured his fingerprints with acid, and was carrying no identification. However, by chance, his picture was promptly recognized when posted on the news by officials with A.T.F. His name was George Lewiston, and he was a retired A.T.F. investigator with experience investigating suspected domestic terror groups. However, he had no (known) prior connections to any investigation of the Church of the Passover Angel.



Regina Balfour

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9. Darkness (Exodus 10:21–29).
10. Death of the first-born of all Egyptian humans and animals. (Exodus 11, Exodus 12).

Make a point of introducing these, hopefully in order, as the investigators make their way through the investigation. Do not be shy about it, put the thematic elements right in the investigators' faces. Suggestions on how to do this appear in following sections.

LUCY BATES, F.B.I. Agent, Missing and Exploited Children's Task Force

STR 55 CON 70 SIZ 60 INT 80 POW 70
DEX 60 APP 55 EDU 70 SAN 62 HP 14

Damage bonus: none.

Build: 0

Move: 8

ATTACKS

Firearms (Handguns) 70% (35/14), Colt Delta Elite Auto. 1d10+1, 7 shots, 15 yards base range, malfunction 98-00
Fighting (Brawling) 65% (32/12)

Skills: Computer Use 40%, Credit Rating 55%, Drive Auto 55%, First Aid 55%, Forensics 25%, Law 55%, Persuade 40%, Psychology 66%, Spot Hidden 50%.

Defenses: None above base; may wear bulletproof vest if anticipating gunplay.

Nationality: American

Age: 49

Education: Bachelor's Degree, Psychology, University of Virginia; F.B.I. training.

Quotes: "Get out of my crime scene!" "Stop interfering with my investigation!" "The only thing that matters is getting that little girl back to her mom and dad!"



SECURITY CAMERAS

It is no accident that so many of the clues in the investigation tree involve security cameras. Do not be subtle about this, either. If the investigators do not notice this on their own, have one of the Balfours point it out to them at some point. "Back in the days of the Egyptian Exodus, the Israelites were aware that the eyes of God were constantly upon them, judging their actions and their righteousness. The more things change, the more they stay the same, you know? God's judgment is coming. Be at peace with that fact."

BACKGROUND RESEARCH – REGINA BALFOUR AND HER PARENTS/CHURCH OF THE PASSOVER ANGEL WEBSITE

Keeper's Information: The Balfours are worshipping a familiar avatar of Nyarlathotep, the Black Wind (associated with the Cult of the Bloody Tongue). However, they do not really understand this on an intellectual level. They think that the Black Wind is the manifestation of God's wrath, and communicate with it through a herald, the Passover Angel. The Passover Angel, another avatar of Nyarlathotep, appears to them as a very Judeo-Christian angel of death, sent to answer some "prayers" that John Balfour learned on a youth mission to Kenya in his late teens.

Both Balfours are quite insane, utter slaves to the Passover Angel. However, because their understanding of what they are doing is far from perfect, they come across as relatively normal, albeit hyper-religious, hyper-right-wing people. They are able to function as very eccentric but passable members of society. They analyze everything in terms of how it squares up with Old Testament scripture and "submitting to God's will", and constantly turn discussions toward Bible stories and articles of faith.

The Balfours are absolutely frantic to get Regina back, but figure that this abduction must be a test of faith of some sort. They do not initially think that someone has abducted her to interfere with their plans, and Mrs. Balfour did not recognize George Lewiston at the store. Over the course of the scenario, they will remember him and start parallel plans to recover Regina. The investigators, in fact, if they are not law enforcement but hired private investigators, might well be the Balfours' parallel plan.

Regina is scheduled to be sacrificed at sunset on Tuesday, on orders from the Passover Angel, much as Abraham was asked to sacrifice Jacob, his first-born son. They are highly motivated to recover her before Tuesday if at all possible, lest they risk the wrath of God. They think that the Passover Angel will spare her (like Jacob was spared) when the Passover Angel smites the firstborn of the unbelievers. They are mistaken in this regard.

Background research into the Balfours can reveal the following. Bear in mind who the investigators are when determining how easy these various pieces of information are to get. Police officers or those working with them, who are looking for a little girl who has just been kidnapped, will receive a great deal of cooperation from everyone on all topics, except for questions that might make the Balfours look like

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bad or unsuitable parents. On these topics, the Balfours or their inner circle of cultists will not be cooperative.

Members of the press will probably struggle to get any information that would invade the Balfours' privacy or require disclosure of medical information about Regina, at least without hefty bribes to medical clerks. Then you should cynically make that information available to them.

People hired by the Balfours to find Regina will get cooperation from the Balfours (including disclosure of various law enforcement plots against them), short of acknowledging that they actually talk to an angel that they see; that they are plotting to destroy the world on Tuesday at sunset; or that they want Regina back before then for the purpose of sacrificing her.

MEDICAL RECORDS FOR REGINA BALFOUR

There is a ream of them. Regina Balfour suffers from a litany of chronic illnesses, the most serious of which is chronic pulmonary obstruction. Any of her doctors, including her primary physician, Lucien Dante, can tell the investigators that she requires constant, intravenous steroid medication to breathe effectively. Without them, or a ventilator, she will have trouble breathing, and she will gradually slip into severe and ultimately fatal oxygen deficit. She can live maybe a week without her medication pump (which was in her ladybug backpack).

- ✧ There is only one whiff of anything that sounds like possible mistreatment over the five years of her life,

and that is slight and unconvincing: she was seen by the doctor for head lice a few weeks ago. On the contrary, she has been taken for appropriate (and expensive) medical treatment by her parents, hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth over her short life.

- ✧ The Balfours do not have medical insurance; at least, they did not use it to pay for her treatment. They always paid cash.

LOCAL COURT RECORDS ON THE BALFOURS

These are difficult to find initially without the Balfours' cooperation, because they are sealed and indexed only with respect to initials (the file is called "In re: R.B., a juvenile"). Neither Balfour has any criminal convictions; they are squeaky, squeaky clean in that regard.

- ✧ The investigators might, on a hunch, wonder if there were not efforts by children's protective services to intervene, given how weird the Balfours are and their presence on domestic terror watch lists. Alternatively, they might ask the Balfours about this in a careful way (such as wondering who, if anyone, especially had it in for them). They are frustrated by all the search warrants, home inspections, and the like that they have been subjected to over the years, but if the subject of child protective services comes up, they are especially angry with a county child welfare investigator named Lindsay Peale. Ms. Peale started showing

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up and conducting a series of harassing “welfare checks” on Regina about three years ago. They were polite to her and nothing came of it for about a year. Then, Ms. Peale surprised them about two years ago, showing up on their doorstep with a cadre of local police officers. She served them with papers accusing them of child abuse. They had no idea what she was talking about, and she would not explain it to them.

- ✧ The court records about the child abuse claim (which can be obtained from either the courthouse with the parents’ or law enforcement’s permission during weekday business hours, or from the county or Balfours themselves) bear out the Balfours’ side of the story. It is a non-criminal complaint from two years ago, alleging child neglect and abuse, aimed at moving Regina into foster care and terminating the Balfours’ parental rights. The complaint is long on rhetoric about a dangerous household but short on details, and everything is based on an unnamed “confidential source.” Lindsay Peale signed the affidavit that began the process of removing Regina (then 3) from their care. This resulted in Regina being put in emergency temporary foster care at a county-operated shelter. The county obtained several continuances and managed to drag the initial court hearing (at which the Balfours had their first chance to defend themselves) out for six weeks. At the court hearing, the county attorney dismissed the complaint (over objection from Ms. Peale) and Regina was returned to her parents. The judge openly questioned the motivation for the petition in the first place given “the utter lack of any evidence of abuse.” The judge threatened to hold Ms. Peale in contempt of court if she ever tried anything like this again.

If the investigators review the Book of the Passover Angel and correlate the last missed doomsday prediction with the child protective services action, it was filed, and Regina removed from her parents, about a week before the predicted doomsday. (This is not a coincidence).

Ms. Peale cannot be located at her home (more details below) and she does not answer her cell phone, which has been turned off since the morning of the abduction.

MAINSTREAM FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT INVESTIGATORY RECORDS ON THE BALFOURS

There are files on the Balfours and their church in just about every Federal law enforcement agency’s records.

- ✧ A.T.F. has noted that the Balfours have (legally) purchased a small number of firearms and has investigated them on several occasions in the past decade to see if they have any illegal ones. Each time they have come up empty. However, the Balfours’

known church membership includes a cadre of known white supremacists, “militia” members, and survivalists, many of whom have illegal firearms related convictions. One name that keeps coming up as a connection and known associate of the Balfours is John “Johnny Zero” Zivovich, a survivalist with a long history of vocal anti-government protests but no major criminal record.

- ✧ The I.R.S. frequently audits their tax records. Their Church receives large charitable donations (averaging a few million dollars per year) from a wide variety of fringe movements, including (again) racial hate groups, extreme right wing political groups, and even some major corporations. (Feel free to name drop any Mythos-corrupted corporations that your players might recognize). Strangely, the Balfours themselves have never been heard to comment on racial matters or hot button social issues. They are all about doomsday and getting right with God before then, which means honoring God and following the teachings of the Pentateuch.

Dept. of State records on John Balfour

The U.S. Dept. of State has a small file on John Balfour. Mr. Balfour makes frequent trips to Kenya. He is under suspicion for providing material support to a Kenyan based political group known as the Red Trumpet. The Red Trumpet is an indigenous ethnic isolate, in an interior part of Kenya that is not under the effective control of the Kenyan government. Balfour spent a year there on a religious outreach mission on behalf of a fundamentalist Christian church about 15 years ago, when he was in college. A Cthulhu Mythos roll or appropriate research might suggest a connection between this area and the Cult of the Bloody Tongue, said to worship an avatar of Nyarlathotep. Again, however, it is all smoke and no fire.

CHURCH OF THE PASSOVER ANGEL WEBSITE

The website is a combination of whimsical and downright scary. The homepage is a splash of cute animated frogs and a warning to get right with God before the Apocalypse comes. Point this out. A countdown clock currently predicts the End Times to arrive this coming Tuesday, at sunset.

- ✧ The contact address for the Church is the same as the Balfours’ home address. No information is provided about Church meeting times or places.
- ✧ The website professes that the Church is a “non-denominational, fundamentalist Church devoted to total submission to the will of God and his herald, the Passover Angel.”
- ✧ According to their website, the Church believes that the Biblical End Times are near, and that righteousness will be restored to the world by God at the Rap-

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ture. They disagree that this will happen as predicted in the Apocalypse of John; rather, they believe in a vengeful, Old Testament style of God who will re-inflict the plagues of Egypt (summarized above) on the world, sparing only the most faithful.

- ✘ They have previously predicted several Days of Judgment, each of which came to pass without incident. These have been a little over five years ago, roughly two years ago, and currently next Tuesday.
- ✘ The Church will happily send you a book explaining their orthodoxy in exchange for a donation of \$29.95. They accept PayPal.

THE BOOK OF THE PASSOVER ANGEL

The Balfours might be persuaded to hand a copy over, although there will be a lot of fussing and fuming about why the investigators are not trying to find their daughter instead of reading scripture. There are also copies in the possession of various occult-investigating government agencies, as well as at A.T.F. in Washington, and one in George Lewiston's apartment. Or the investigators can order one from their website, but delivery time will put the delivery after Tuesday at sunset.

A summary from skimming the Book follows at *Ladybug, Ladybug, Investigator Handout #2*. There is no SAN loss, Mythos gain, or skill checks from a mere skim, which takes 4 hours. However, that is not to imply that the book is entirely innocent.

The last chapter, with the astrological charts, is incomprehensible except on extended study. Also, careful study of the typesetting of the text itself (which reveals a hidden, coded message in variant typesetting characters which correspond to numbers) produces a cryptic numerical sequence. The sequence corresponds to letters within the Book of Jeremiah (King James Version) and performing the substitution cipher reveals a disturbing message. If the investigators spot (Spot Hidden) the typeface issue and piece together the cipher (which takes 8 hours), reward(?) them with *Investigator Handout #3*. It is unlikely that they will stumble onto the Book of Jeremiah as the cipher reference, although if they find John Balfour's personal copy on the altar in his backyard chapel, the Book of Jeremiah is included as an appendix. Noticing that may lead to a deciphering effort.

A thorough study of The Book (most of which will be spent deciphering the incredibly complex astronomical charts in the last chapter) requires four weeks, and successful checks in both Occult and Science (Physics). If successful, the reader makes sense out of the astronomical charts, which strangely and logically predict that certain star and planetary alignments and tectonic shifts can affect the outcome of particle behavior on a quantum level. These alignments correspond to the various predictions of the End Times in the Book. Success in this regard gains +2% to Cthulhu Mythos, costs -1d4 SAN, and makes one spell potentially available: Entreat the Passover Angel. Entreat the Passover Angel is a variant Contact Nyarlathotep spell, which summons forth a faceless, shrouded, black winged angel who speaks in a solemn whisper.

LADYBUG, LADYBUG, INVESTIGATOR HANDOUT #2-SKIMMING THE BOOK OF THE PASSOVER ANGEL

This is a cheap paperback printed by a vanity press, about 200 pages in length. It is comprised of four chapters. The first two are word for word reprints of the King James versions of the books of Genesis and Exodus, although a clause from Exodus 11:6, about how the outcry of woe from the death of the firstborn will not ever be repeated, is notably omitted; the text simply skips from 11:5 to 11:7.

The third chapter is called the Kenyan Revelations, and is authored by the Reverend John Balfour. This too is short, and concerns his time performing a youth mission in interior Kenya. He is vague about exactly where in Kenya that he went, but it was clearly somewhere in the remote interior. He encountered a "wise prophet of the Lord" there. She posited that the Apocalypse of John was false and unreliable, and that it was far more likely that the end of the world would be visited by God upon mankind in some way that was consistent with both history and the laws of science. She then explained that the Ten Plagues of Egypt were a far more likely way that God would purge the wicked: they are all natural disasters that could follow from a volcanic cataclysm

and ensuing distortion of weather patterns, and God had purged the world of wickedness in this way before. The "wise prophet" openly challenges the interpretation of Exodus 11:6 that the plagues of Egypt were a one-time event, and promises that when the time comes, the Lord, acting through his Passover Angel, will purge the wicked in the same way.

Balfour even cites some scientific papers on this topic, including *The Plagues of Egypt: Archaeology, History, and Science Look at the Bible*, by Siro Igino Trevisanato, Georgia Press LLC, 2005; and Marr J.S., Malloy C.D., *An epidemiologic analysis of the ten plagues of Egypt*, Caduceus, (Springfield), Ill., 1996 Spring; 12(1):7-24.

The fourth chapter is a set of bizarre drawings, set forth as an Appendix to the Kenyan Revelations. There are star charts, Enochian occult drawings, incomprehensible diagrams depicting thaumaturgical triangles, magic circles, and the like, and complicated mathematical formulae, all without any sort of prose explanation.

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Exodus says that there shall never be a cry again like that heard in Egypt when the firstborn perished, but in Kenya we know this to be untrue. When the stars are right and the walls between the worlds are thin, the Angel of the Passover shall come down from the Mountain of the Black Wind, and the firstborn of the faithless shall perish from the Earth. And so we pray: la! Narlato wagh'nagl iszkur boret'!
The Angel comes on the wind!

Ladybug Handout #3

INITIAL RESEARCH AND INTERVIEWS

INTERVIEW, RESPONDING POLICE AND STORE WITNESSES/CRIME SCENE

There is only a little additional evidence to be gained at the big box store than what is on the videotapes, but interviews and a crime scene review may put things in context. A few people from the parking lot believe that a young Caucasian woman was driving the getaway car. The little girl was struggling and screaming for help as she was tossed in the back seat. No one got a license plate number.

Several people inside the store (including the greeter who was shot) can attest that the shooter could have gotten away cleanly, but deliberately came back into the store, and deliberately did not try to kill anyone. Indeed, it was apparent that he was deliberately trying to cause a large, distracting ruckus.

The shooter committed suicide against an outside wall of the store (where no one else was likely to get hit by a through and through shot). When the investigators get there, the store crew will be wanting to clean up the mess; the shot went into the fish tank section, and dying fish lie amid bloody water. Make a point of allowing the investigators to see this.

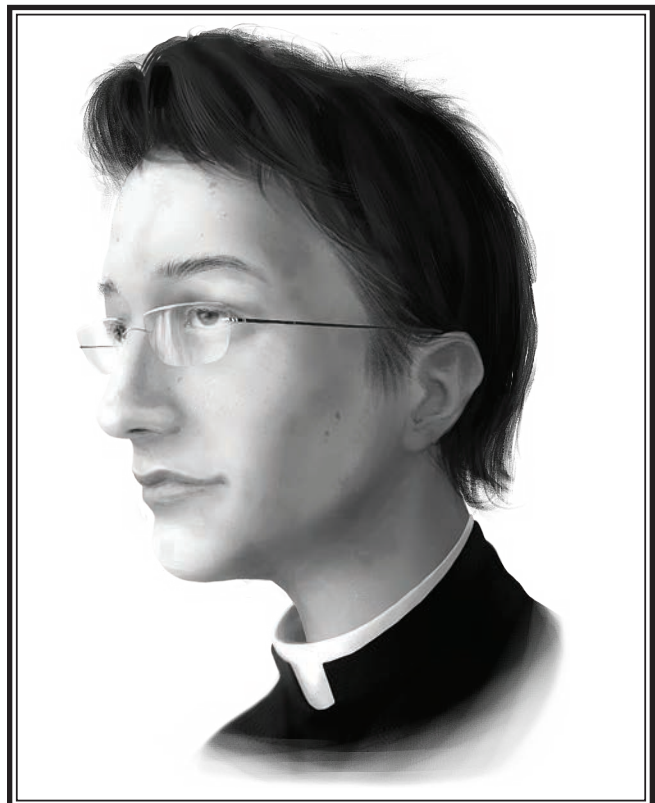
INTERVIEW, BALFOUR FAMILY

The Balfours are (until they go home in the wee hours of Friday morning to get some sleep) at the local police station, being comforted by grief counselors and questioned by various law enforcement personnel. Roleplay out initial interviews with them based on what they are aware of and believe at the outset. The Balfours are complete and utter slaves of the Passover Angel, but believe that they and their inner circle have been chosen as prophets of the same God that the investigators probably worship. They are frantic. Mrs. Balfour is in tears, has a black eye and broken nose from being kicked in the face by the abductor, and is on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Mr. Balfour is placidly angry; he will seem like he is trying to control his anger but it may erupt randomly.

They both seem to genuinely care for their daughter. They believe that they need to get her back before Tuesday's big summoning of the Passover Angel and the scheduled purging of the unfaithful. They believe that while they nominally have to sacrifice Regina at nightfall on Tuesday, it will be like Abraham's sacrifice of Jacob: the Passover Angel will intervene, and no real harm will come to her. They have no idea what will happen if Tuesday comes and they have to proceed without Regina. They are more worried that the abductor will kill Regina, and not at all worried that her scheduled stabbing on Tuesday will harm her at all, as irrational as that may be.

There are a lot of houseflies buzzing about the interrogation room. Point this out.

The Balfours will initially cooperate with law enforcement, up to the point of divulging the true significance



Reverend Balfour

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of Tuesday or what they intend to do with their daughter then. They will acknowledge that their current calculation for Armageddon, as stated on their website, is Tuesday at sunset. They will give a garbled and confusing answer as to why they think it is, combining “astrological analysis” with a divine revelation. They will avoid questions about deciphering encoded messages in the Book of the Passover Angel, or the Cthulhu Mythos in general—which they are unfamiliar with as such. They honestly think that the Passover Angel is an Old Testament angel, and know nothing of the rest of the Mythos or even the Mythos as a concept.

They also honestly have no idea, initially, who George Lewiston was. If they learn or are told that he was Lindsay Peale’s uncle, they will cheerfully tell the story about how Lindsay Peale tried—criminally and without any basis in fact—to take their daughter away from them two years ago. If it is pointed out to them that this effort coincided with a prior Apocalyptic prediction date, their eyes will go very wide and they will decide that they need to go home. At which point, a parallel effort to find Lindsay Peale on their part—with the use of cult members—will begin in earnest, as the motivation for the abduction will now be clear to them.

Likewise, if they are shown a picture of George Lewiston without his hat, sunglasses and added facial hair, they will recognize him as someone they know by the name of Zach Nowiski. He had joined their church about three years ago, and they trusted him. They may or may not confess to this (if they do not, a Psychology roll might suggest that they are withholding information). They will most certainly,

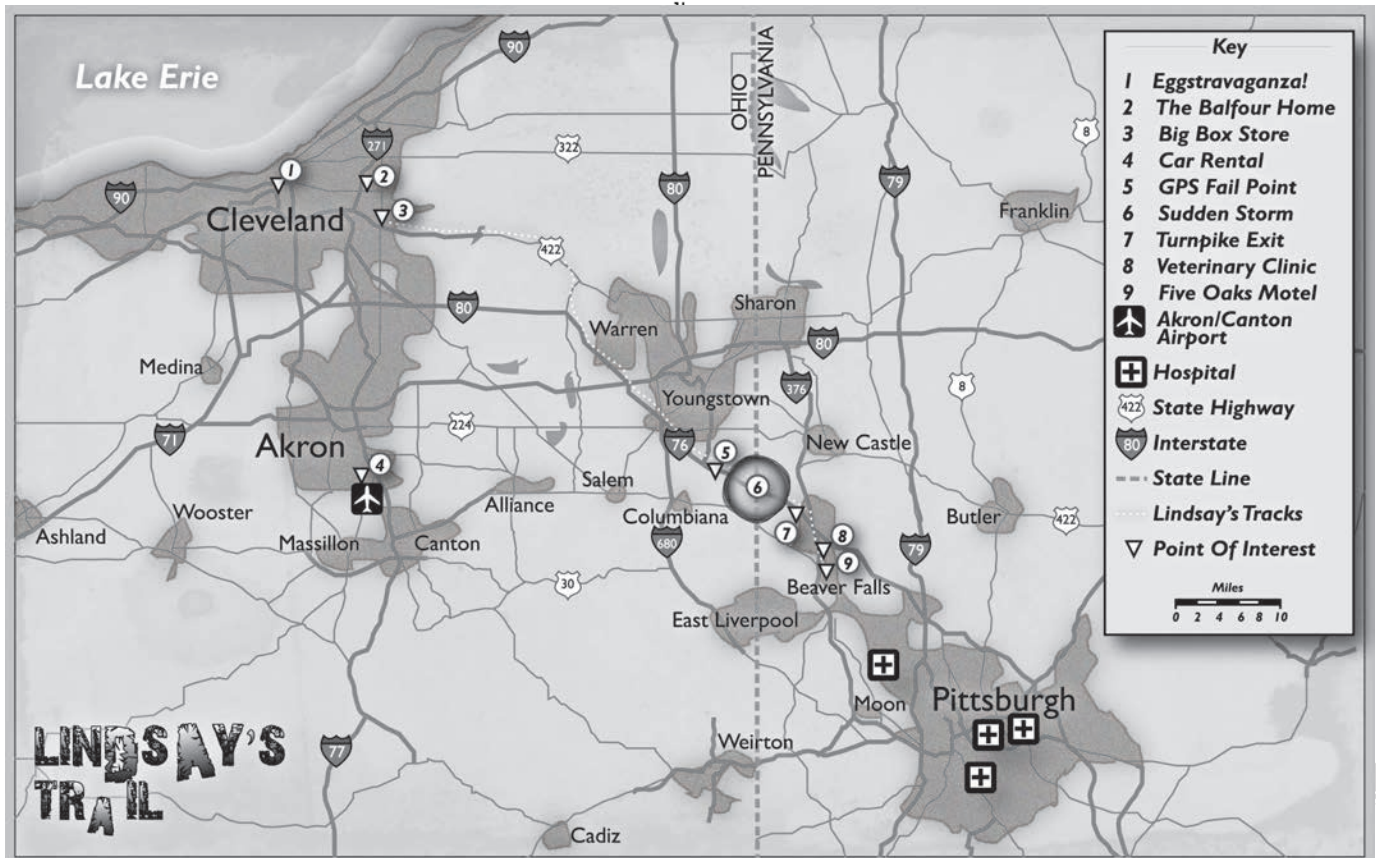
however, neglect to mention that they trusted him enough to actually attend and participate in a ritual at which the Passover Angel appeared about a week ago, and that they have been trying without luck to find and silence him since he ran out of the service and abruptly stopped “coming to church” thereafter.

OCCULT AND MYTHOS RESEARCH

There is nothing in any Mythos tomes or standard occult research sources implicating The Church of the Passover Angel in any occult or Mythos shenanigans. They are quite new and (except for John Balfour’s periodic sojourns to unpleasant parts of Kenya) not a part of any “networks.”

However, optionally, there may be files in any occult-oriented government agencies or quasi-government conspiracies on Mr. Lewiston. If such conspiracies or agencies exist in your campaign, this will become apparent if and when the investigators sufficiently search George Lewiston’s apartment. He was consulted for his expertise on militaristic cults on several occasions, although he was not an active “stringer” for any such groups.

Depending on how deep the investigators’ involvement in or connections to any such occult-oriented groups, they may be advised that Mr. Lewiston had been rumored to be looking into the Church of the Passover Angel, although not in conjunction with any sanctioned investigation. He had asked them for copies of prior files on them a little over three years ago, and then six months ago, but they did not have anything beyond what normal law enforcement channels had: all smoke, no fire. (Most of these will have seen The



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Book of the Passover Angel, but none will have ascribed any particular Mythos significance to it, or even paid attention to the typesetting issue, let alone decoded it. The Church is on their radar screen, but they have nothing concrete on it, and the only one who has ever taken anything more than a monitoring sort of interest in them is Lewiston).

INTERVIEWS, FRIENDS OF GEORGE LEWISTON

George Lewiston was retired, long divorced and lived alone. He has one daughter, Nicole, who lives in Cleveland. She is aware of George's general activities since his retirement: he worked as a government consultant on dangerous domestic survivalist and militia groups. He would assist in investigations conducted by the F.B.I. or A.T.F. from time to time.

With one exception, none of his relatives, friends or acquaintances knows anything about the Church of the Passover Angel or any interest on George Lewiston's part about them. No one has any idea why he would abduct a girl from a store or commit a spectacular public suicide. The one exception is Lindsay Peale, of course. If any of his friends or relatives is asked about a connection between George Lewiston and Lindsay Peale, Lindsay is his niece, and they were very close. Nicole has a key to George's apartment and the address.

GEORGE LEWISTON'S HOUSE, COMPUTER AND FINANCIAL RECORDS

Given that law enforcement was able to identify him quickly, Lewiston's house has already been searched and anything that looked like evidence (including what was left of his computer and financial records) has been seized and transported to the local police station. Police tape is up in front of his door.

George had destroyed his computer and cellular telephone with a sledgehammer and left the pieces on his desk. He had paid all of his outstanding bills and left his cat with a neighbor yesterday morning. He said that he would be away for a while, and left the neighbor some cash to pay for food and veterinarian bills. The cat is not well; it is covered with bandaged boils and in obvious discomfort. Point this out to them; have the neighbor come over with the cat in her arms if necessary.

Review of George's cellular telephone records reveal numerous calls to a cellular telephone registered to his niece, Lindsay Peale, stretching back years. There have been dozens of calls back and forth between them in the days leading up to the abduction. These stop cold three days before the abduction (Keeper's Information: at which point, both switched to burn phones). People who know his usual email address will give it to law enforcement, who can subpoena recent records off of servers, but they are unremarkable. (Keeper's information: he set up a special Gmail account that only he and Lindsay know about, to discuss issues surrounding Regina and their conspiracy, by saving emails in draft without sending them).

Either his neighbor or his daughter knows that George liked to frequent a diner called Eggstravaganza! in a grungy part of downtown Cleveland. (The people at the diner, if

they get wind of the press paying money for interviews with people who knew George, might call the media on their own, with their hands out). George was in Thursday morning for breakfast as usual. He paid his tab with a new debit card, and law enforcement or anyone sufficiently Persuasive, Charming, Intimidating or Fast Talking enough can get a look at the number. It corresponds to a brand new, pre-paid card bought at a local drug store earlier that week, for cash. The cashier at the restaurant, Sebastian Walligham, remembers that George had forgotten to call and authorize it, as it was its initial use. They have the card number—for asking on the part of law enforcement, or an appropriate fee for others. Since it was a new card, they even took down the expiration date and security code should someone wish to call the card company and misrepresent their identity in an effort to find out where else it might have been used.

Law enforcement, or anyone willing to commit a little fraud over the phone or hacking, can "check" on what balance is left on the card and the status of other charges to it. This is the vital clue that the investigators need to find to move things forward quickly, so err on the side of allowing them to find it. The prepaid card paid for a variety of things: a large bill at the same "big box" store from which Regina was abducted, earlier that day; and a charge to a rental car agency in Akron (or the appropriate next sizable city over from where the abduction occurred). More details on the rental car below.

Reviewing surveillance footage from earlier on Thursday at the site of the abduction reveals George Lewiston (in different clothing, without a hat) buying a shopping cart full of supplies and paying with his prepaid card. His shopping list included packaged food not requiring cooking to prepare; clothes sized for and appropriate to a five year old girl; a large first aid kit; toiletries; about a dozen children's DVDs and a portable DVD player; and a lot of energy drinks. Also purchased were several packages of night-time cold medicine, and importantly, a portable radio scanner capable of monitoring police, fire and EMT frequencies. (These are not illegal in Ohio). As noted above, he used his newly acquired, prepaid card to do so.

Review of his bank or normal credit card records provides other valuable clues. George paid all of his bills a few days ago, in advance. He withdrew \$2,000 in cash on Tuesday. \$1,000 went to the purchase of the prepaid card. The other \$1,000 is unaccounted for. (Keeper's information: he gave it to Lindsay, who ultimately used it to buy another prepaid card. More details below). He also bought two 12-gauge shotguns two weeks ago, along with two boxes of shells. (Neither was recovered from his apartment).

George did not have a vehicle corresponding to the get-away car. His daughter is aware that Lindsay does, however: a 2008 tan Ford Taurus. George's only car is in its garage.

The points are that George planned carefully and knew that he was not coming back; and, he was planning on taking care of a five year old girl for several days.

When the mail arrives around 5 P.M. on Friday, his daughter receives a letter in the mail from George, which is reproduced below as *Ladybug, Ladybug, Investigator Handout #4*. This is likely shared with law enforcement only, although

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nosy non-law enforcement investigators who are staking the daughter out might have a chance to engage in some mail theft.

number of trap shooting awards on her mantle. A perusal of these reveals several high placements at collegiate national-level shooting competitions, and there is a gun safe in her house. Lindsay Peale does have several shotguns registered in her name; two are missing from the gun safe (if they manage to access it).

Lindsay's work email (as a social worker) is archived for seven years. There is nothing recent that has anything to do with the Balfours, but there is one from George Lewiston's usual email address dated about three years ago. It simply reads: "Lindsay, I need to talk to you about a child in need of aid. Have you ever heard of the Church of the Passover Angel? It's going to be tough to believe. Let's do lunch. Uncle George." This lack of pertinent email traffic is quite unusual (Law roll or talking to co-workers) since she was involved in an effort to put Lindsay in foster care. There would ordinarily be lots of emails back and forth between her, supervisors and/or county prosecutors about any effort to take a child away from her parents. This date corresponds with the onset of the plague of "welfare checks" that the Balfours are only too happy to complain about.

INTERVIEWS, FRIENDS AND CO-WORKERS OF LINDSAY PEALE

As soon as any of Lindsay Peale's friends or co-workers hear that the investigators are looking into the disappearance of Regina Balfour, people have a lot to say on the subject, none of it positive about Lindsay. No one has any doubt that she was involved. Lindsay was suspended without pay for a month for her efforts to remove Regina Balfour from her parents two years ago. Everyone who knows her at all knows the basic story. She was acting on an "anonymous tip," but people think that the tip was not anonymous and that she was protecting her source. She bypassed all of the usual checks and procedures, and basically sweet-talked a county prosecutor into moving forward immediately on unsubstantiated and vague claims of child abuse. When she was accused, in effect, of dummied the whole thing up by the judge when the case was thrown out, she said nothing in her own defense.

Lindsay had seemed extremely stressed and distracted lately, but had not shared why. One of her co-workers found her distraught and sobbing in the restroom earlier this week, but Lindsay waved her off.

Her immediate supervisor, Roxanna Goldfarb, or her union representative, Jim Agostino, both know a little more. They were the only two people at her initial disciplinary proceeding. She did not appeal and simply quietly accepted the month's suspension without defending herself. Each agrees that, if she had had any prior negative work history, she might have been fired. At the end, she simply apologized and said that she did what she had to do, that they would not believe her if she explained her motivations, and that she would

Nicole

I'm sorry. By now I'm probably dead. Just understand that I did what I had to do, and that the little girl isn't going to be hurt. When the people trying to profile me see this:

Go home. Just go home.

I trust me. If you can't go home, then believe this: the Balfours are dangerous and insane, and you can't give their daughter back to them. You wouldn't believe me if I told you why, but it's on your head if you do.

Ladybug Handout #4

LINDSAY PEALE, M.S.W.—HOUSE, COMPUTER AND FINANCIAL RECORDS

Lindsay Peale's house is largely unremarkable. She lives alone. Anyone who knows her can advise that she has a laptop computer, but it is missing, along with her cellular phone. Her personal financial records offer no clues. (Keeper's information: her uncle paid for everything, and she is presently using a prepaid debit card, paid for with cash from her uncle).

There are several messages on her answering machine from her work, all from Thursday and Friday, wondering where the hell she is and complaining that she is not answering her cell phone. People who know her usual personal email address can give it to law enforcement, who can subpoena recent records off of servers, but they are unremarkable. (Keeper's information: George set up a special Gmail account that only he and Lindsay know about, to discuss issues surrounding Regina and their conspiracy via unsent draft messages).

The only thing noteworthy about her house is the large

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never do anything like this again. Except for this episode of rogue behavior, Lindsay was in all respects an exemplary social worker.

AT THE BALFOURS' HOUSE, PRIOR TO TUESDAY EVENING

The Balfours' house is on a large suburban lot on the west side of Cleveland, in an upper-middle class neighborhood. Although their church's financial records reveal millions in annual donations, they also reflect that they take only a modest salary out, and little about their house reflects otherwise.

The lot is long and rectangular, running away from the street. There is a modest, two story house toward the front of the lot, and a side driveway runs around toward the back. At the back is a small, one room, traditional looking, white-clapboard chapel with a small steeple. Thick trees and overgrown brush lie behind the chapel.

Review of prior law enforcement records (mostly A.T.F. records) will reveal that there is a well-hidden underground bomb shelter in the woods behind the chapel. The Balfours do not volunteer this information, but if law enforcement asking to search their property specifically asks to see it, they shrug and allow an inspection.

Their house is unremarkable. Imagine the nice but modest house of a very conservative preacher, without any idolatry. Regina's room is nicely furnished and she has ample clothing and age-appropriate dolls, toys and books (many with a religious theme). There is a mostly unremarkable home office; the one thing of interest is a 3D printer attached to their home computer. Their explanation for it is that they are preparing their daughter for the scientific end of her homeschooling, and they want her to learn computers at an early age. (The Balfours do not subscribe to 6,000 year timeline creationism; they may slip up and say something about how they have faith that the Earth existed in the bosom of God long before he saw fit to create mankind).

The chapel is (they will be surprised to learn) also unremarkable, at least on the surface. It seats about fifty people. They have services on Sunday morning, but those are closed to the public. Spying on a normal service (they are nightly or twice Sunday mornings) or infiltrating a normal service garners little information. It progresses very much like a typical fundamentalist, fire-and-brimstone Christian service, with hymns, passing the collection plate and finally a fiery sermon from Mr. Balfour, exhorting the faithful to get right with God before the world ends. The only odd thing is that he is convinced that this is going to happen on Tuesday night. Followers are called upon to mark their doorposts to avoid the wrath of the Passover Angel that night.

The bomb shelter is largely unremarkable, at least for a bomb shelter. It is ten feet down a concrete shaft with a ladder set into the walls as the only access, and a very sturdy hatch that locks from the inside. There are survival goods and sleeping cots for three, and a chemical toilet. There is also a police band scanner and a citizen's band radio, as well as copies of The Book of the Passover Angel. There are also six 12 gauge shotguns, with ammunition—all registered to Mr. Balfour

and all completely legal—in a gun safe.

There is something unusual about the bomb shelter, but one has to look for it specifically or get very lucky (Critical Spot Hidden). Around the lip of the hatch, visible from the outside there are very faint and subtle etchings in the metal rim, little more than scratches. Examining them reveals a number of symbols (Occult roll) common to Elizabethan era magical wards. One in particular, however, is clearly an Elder Sign (a Cthulhu Mythos roll or prior experience recognizes it). If asked about this, it came to Mr. Balfour in a revelation from the mighty Passover Angel, as a symbol with which to mark their doorposts to keep their children safe. (On Tuesday evening, they will paint the chapel and house's door posts with lamb's blood as well).

TAILING MR. AND MRS. BALFOUR

Mr. Balfour is not hard to find from the time that he and his wife leave the local police station in the wee hours of Friday morning. To the extent that he can get away with it, he is looking over the shoulders of law enforcement, unless he has a service to conduct. He is as involved in the investigation as the investigators will let him be. He will probably have to be told to go home several times, and spoken to about cramping the investigation. He may have to be dragged away in handcuffs. He keeps showing up, but stops short of getting himself arrested. If he gets threatened with arrest, he backs off and follows from a distance. Once he backs off, he oscillates between delivering loud street corner sermons about the impending Apocalypse on Tuesday and testing his luck with the investigators. He does go home nightly and on Sunday mornings for a while to conduct services for the faithful, unless the current situation makes this impossible.

Mr. Balfour wants to be there to collect his daughter and keep a close eye on her when she is found. If she is found, he will allow her to be checked on medically, as long as the Tuesday evening event is not at risk. If it is close, he demands to take her home in plenty of time to make it, involving an attorney to make threats if necessary.

Mrs. Balfour stays at home by the phone for most of the scenario, crying. She has a cellular phone that she uses, however, to make some discrete calls to some of the cult's more zealous followers. She has them gather, arm themselves with makeshift weapons (see below for more details), and stand by for orders. She also keeps in touch with her husband, in case some muscle is needed to make sure that Regina is home before sunset on Tuesday.

If the situation appears hopeless (i.e., it's Tuesday afternoon and as far as Mrs. Balfour knows, Regina is nowhere close to being found), she leaves the house and goes to a craft store. At the craft store, she buys some sackcloth, takes it home and makes a crude shift out of it for herself. She starts a fire in the fireplace, collects the ashes, and heads off to the chapel to pray.

Who Benefits? (Ruminations On Motives)

The investigators should be wondering just what the hell is going on at an early stage in the proceedings. The two per-

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petrators appear to be “good guys” who have done something desperate, and one of them has committed suicide as a distraction. Lindsay Peale has taken Regina out of circulation before, and it is no coincidence that this occurred at a time when her parents’ church was predicting that the world would end. The fact that George Lewiston tried to go back for the ladybug backpack, with Regina’s medication pump, tends to suggest that they want to keep her in good health. And if their research is thorough, the investigators should wonder if perhaps the abductors are not trying to prevent something.

This is exactly what they are trying to do, but when running the scenario, play these “smart” suspicions against pressure from supervisors, the media, the parents, and law enforcement to simply get the girl back to her parents. The disappearance of a little girl will be all over the news, and very few people are going to want to listen to crazy conspiracy theories about why Regina is better off kidnapped. This is particularly true in the absence of any sort of hard evidence of abuse or supernatural goings on. If the investigators are visibly putting any credence in the Apocalypse coming on Tuesday, have NPCs treat them like they are nuts. On the other hand, if there were not some reason, why would otherwise stable and reputable people be throwing away their lives and careers in this fashion?

ON THE TRAIL OF LINDSAY PEALE/ADVANCING THE ACTION

FINDING LINDSAY’S CAR

Lindsay’s tan Ford Taurus is parked in a hotel lot across the street from the rental agency, near the Akron/Canton airport. It will be easily found once the investigators find the rental agency; it is sitting by itself, as close to the street as possible. If the investigators need a hint, and assuming that the license plate number or description of Lindsay Peale’s car has been put out, a local police officer will eventually find the car and call it in, no later than Sunday morning after the abduction.

The Rental Car Agency

The rental car agency is extremely busy and located at a satellite lot near the airport. The rental agents will cooperate with law enforcement, and/or with sizable and discrete bribes. They did rent a car, a 2011 black Ford Focus, to Lindsay Peale late Thursday evening. They made her sign for it and show her driver’s license, and the agent who was on duty (who will be there second shift, or can be quickly summoned to work if necessary) recognizes a photo of her. It had been paid for already over the phone by a man with a debit card, corresponding to the prepaid card bought by George Lewiston. The agent remembers that she hesitated when asked for her driver’s license, and that she had to be reassured that no rental agency would rent her a car without one. She seemed nervous.

The rental agency does keep security cameras in the lot. The footage shows Lindsay Peale walking onto the lot from across the street and into the rental office. She comes out after

her transaction, unlocks the car, and then makes several trips back and forth across the street out of camera range, carrying luggage and grocery bags. On the last trip, she is carrying a car seat with a sleeping little girl in it.

Tracking Down the Rental Car—Quietly or Noisily

All modern day, major agency rental cars come equipped with GPS, which the rental agency can and will track for people with legitimate requests (i.e., law enforcement, or Regina’s parents in conjunction with law enforcement). The GPS, regrettably, has been disabled, with its last ping coming at a rest stop on the Ohio Turnpike (limited access toll road) between Cleveland and western Pennsylvania. Knowledgeable persons about automobiles or electronics in general can attest that this is not an easy thing to do.

Turnpike Cameras and Exit Booths

The Turnpike entries and exits all have security cameras that log cars getting on and off the Turnpike. Law enforcement can get these records, although it will take time to browse through them, and the investigators do not know where Lindsay Peale may have gotten on and off. Assuming that Lindsay got on the Turnpike somewhere near where she got the rental car is a safe bet (in fact, she hopped on at the closest entrance). Records from that toll booth show her getting on the Turnpike eastbound, about a half an hour after renting the car. A car seat with a little girl in it can be seen in the back seat, but the attendant (who sees thousands of cars per shift) remembers no further details.

Enough time reviewing video reveals that Lindsay Peale’s car got off of the Turnpike at the first exit over the state border between Ohio and Pennsylvania. This review should take a considerable amount of time, as there are about a dozen exits between where she got on and off to laboriously review.

If the investigators have a flash of inspiration, or go very public in the media with their search, they might call or track down the attendants and canvass them with pictures, or they might get a call from the pertinent exit booth. If they call or publicize their interest in hearing from exit booths about a black Ford Focus with a sick and/or unruly little girl, they are rewarded with a call from the pertinent exit booth. The toll booth attendant can identify pictures of both Lindsay Peale and Regina. Regina was coughing, wheezing, and in obvious respiratory distress. Lindsay was crying and looked very worried. She asked where the nearest hospital was, and was given directions to one about 20 miles away.

Eventually, this call to law enforcement will happen anyway, once Regina’s picture shows up on every television and the pertinent booth clerk notices it, but that will not be until Sunday or Monday.

DRIVING THE TURNPIKE & A STORM OF BIBLICAL PROPORTIONS

An important part of running this scenario successfully is to sow as much doubt as possible in the minds of the investigators about whether the Balfours are actually dangerous, or just crackpot parents worried about their daughter. One of

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the most effective ways to do this is to give the investigators different amounts of firsthand information and gauge how much they trust each other. You should stage this set piece as the investigators travel down the Ohio Turnpike (I-80), en route to the rest stop where the rental car's GPS cut out, and/or to where the exit booth staff reports seeing Regina and Lindsay exit.

The hail and lightning storm descends very quickly and without much warning. The weather report (and make sure that the investigators hear one) is for clear skies and no precipitation. Nonetheless, thunderheads form within minutes, the wind whips up, and a vicious microcell descends on the investigators' stretch of road. As described in Exodus, it is the worst hailstorm that the investigators (or later weather commentators) have ever seen, and lightning strikes several places along the road, including several cars.

If the investigators do not pull over immediately (and there is nowhere to pull over except the shoulder), they are in serious danger. If they try to keep driving, allow the investigators a group Luck roll to avoid having their car struck by a freakishly massive lightning and hail strike, which destroys the car, sends them into a ditch, and (barring a successful Drive Automobile roll) causes 2D6 points of damage to everyone in the car (4D6 if they are not wearing their seatbelts). If they do stop and stay in the car, it gets struck by lightning and the windshield gets smashed out by softball sized hail, doing 1D6 damage to anyone in the front seat. SAN loss is 1/1D3 for this clearly unnatural event. If they get out of the car and try to run in the middle of the storm, you are within your rights to fry them or have them sucked up by a funnel cloud.

If Mr. Balfour is tailing them, he can pick them out of their wrecked car and point out how nothing like this has been seen since Moses called down a hailstorm on Pharaoh. His car is strangely unharmed.

The fun part is to be had as the investigators are just getting the sense as to how bad the storm is, when it starts to change from "ordinary hailstorm" to "clearly not natural." Presumably the driver has his eyes on the road, but ask the passengers for a Spot Hidden. They'll probably wish that they had failed, when they see the unmistakably angry face in the clouds, framed by cloudy black angel's wings, as the lightning that hits their car flashes from its eyes. SAN loss is 1/1D10, and anyone who gains an insane insight thinks back to the plagues of Egypt and the sequence in which they occurred.

CANVASSING THE AREA AND LOGISTICS

Once the investigators figure out the general area where Regina may have been taken (the Turnpike exit), they should try to canvass the area. Since she was in distress and Lindsay Peale was asking about medical facilities, they might try to canvass those types of facilities. No area hospitals or any medical facilities that would have been open in the middle of the night on Thursday night/Friday morning have any record of any little girls in respiratory distress.

If they think to check with local law enforcement about any medical facility or pharmacy break-ins discovered in the

A storm of biblical proportions



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past few days, they do learn that around 4 A.M. Friday morning, after closing hours, a veterinary clinic in a busy, built up commercial district was burglarized. The door was smashed open. Valuable drugs of potential abuse were left behind, and only certain steroids (the veterinary preparation of what is used to treat Regina's respiratory illness) and IV equipment (needles, tubing, bags) were taken. Security camera footage shows a woman with a coat over her head perpetrating the offense. Footage from a second camera also shows her approaching on foot through the parking lot.

This is an important clue, as it suggests that Lindsay Peale must be close by. She is not in the rental car, nor any other car; and this occurs in the wee hours of the morning after she was seen at the nearest Turnpike exit booth with a sick child. (Keeper's information: this is consistent with the prior evidence suggesting that the abductors do not want to harm Regina. Also, her medical condition (Idea roll) would logically greatly limit the extent to which Regina could be moved without attracting attention; it would logically force the abductors to go to ground somewhere, if they were trying to keep her alive and avoid notice).

This incident might make the Pittsburgh local news on Sunday morning, if the investigators need a nudge.

Searching the area around the veterinary clinic finds the rental car without too much trouble. It is parked across the road from the clinic in a strip mall parking lot. It is locked and empty.

There is surveillance footage available for the strip mall parking lot, and a woman (matching the appearance of the one who breaks into the veterinary clinic) can be seen at about 3 A.M. Friday morning. Interestingly, she simply gets out of the car and leaves on foot. She does not unload any luggage, unload any little girls, or unload any supplies. This (Idea roll) means that she must have unloaded all of the supplies bought at the store, as well as Regina, somewhere nearby, within walking distance. The investigators cannot trace any other vehicle to the abductors, and canvassing nearby bus routes, taxi drivers, and the like comes up empty.

CONTROLLING(?) THE FLOW OF MEDIA

The abduction of a small, sick, Caucasian female is all over the national media, unavoidably, by early Saturday at the latest. This is when the media circus begins, if the investigators do not go to the media as part of a law enforcement led "hue and cry" even earlier. If they are leading the investigation, give the investigators an opportunity to respond or not respond to the inevitable, pestering reporters. If they are not (e.g., a news crew themselves, or private investigators working for the Balfours), Agent-in-charge Lucy Bates will not want to talk to them, at all, period. She will not want their help, and will just want them to stay out of her way. Unless they have information for her, of course.

Sharp investigators will learn and bear in mind that the abductors bought a police band scanner, and are presumably using it. This can be used to their advantage, or work to their gross disadvantage. Lindsay is monitoring the police and fire

frequencies, listening for hints that someone may be closing in on her location. She is also watching the local and national news coverage for any hints that people may be closing in on her hideout.

It is possible to mislead Lindsay and potentially get the drop on her in her hideout, by putting out "false normal" chatter or suggest they are closing in on a dummy location. Radio silence, by contrast, will only put her on edge. It is also possible to tip her off through careless radio activity. If she thinks that people are closing in but that she might be able to escape somehow, she might consider it. Her goal is to keep Regina safe until Wednesday morning, let her go, and then surrender or attempt to escape. Failing that, she wants to provoke a standoff that lasts until Wednesday morning and then surrender. Failing that, she wants to avoid having Regina retaken and will shoot both her and then herself. Surrender before Wednesday morning is not an option high up in her mind. The investigators' best chances for success—if that can be defined as rescuing Regina—are to catch Lindsay completely by surprise, or convince Lindsay to trust them in regard to not returning Regina to her parents.

FINDING THE MOTEL ROOM AFTER FINDING THE RENTAL CAR

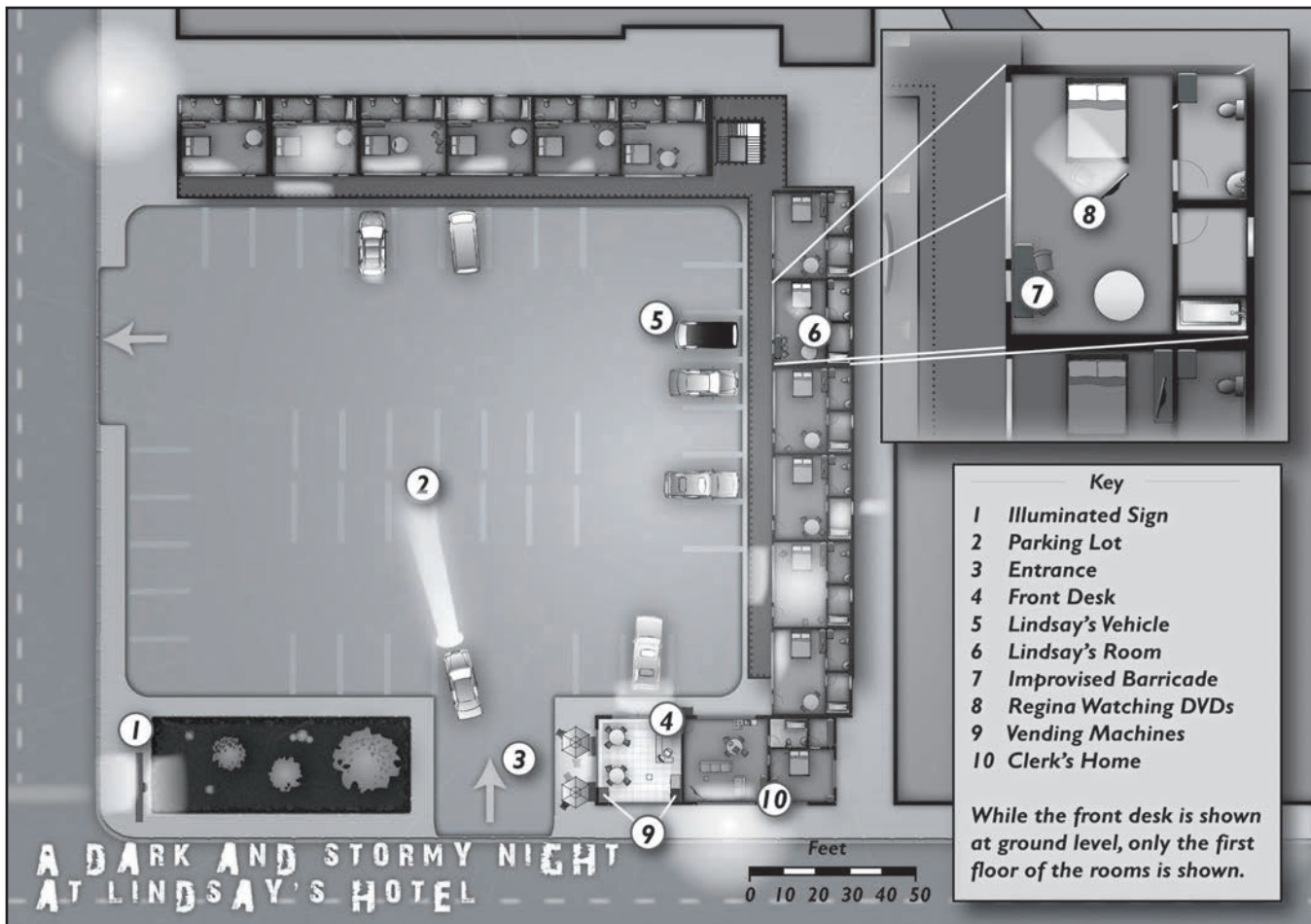
The investigators find themselves in a large, heavily developed suburban area anchored by a large shopping mall, with numerous satellite strip malls radiating out for a mile or so along every approaching road. Interspersed are representatives of each typical chain brand motel, one of each chain brand restaurant, many chain brand retail stores, as well as a number of more local establishments.

Finding the motel is simply a matter of legwork or phone calls, coupled with a little insight. Canvassing the area with photos of Lindsay Peale fails. Looking for people who prepaid for their room, and asked for a late check in on Thursday night, narrows the field to several contenders. Asking the hotel desks whether any one of these had also asked to pay in cash (to avoid leaving a paper trail) leads to the Five Oaks Motel.

The Five Oaks did have a telephone inquiry earlier this week as to whether a guest could pay in cash in advance. They were advised that state law requires picture identification to check in, even if cash is paid. The person then gave her name as Laura Jones and prepaid with a debit card. "Laura Jones" paid for Room 23 through Wednesday. She was specific that she wanted a room on the second floor, and not on an end. Her (alleged) travelling companion, a 19 year old named Kevin Lang with a local address, picked up the key early Friday morning. This information is readily available to law enforcement; others might have to resort to distraction and/or bribery to review the computerized guest register.

Mr. Lang lives in a nearby apartment and works at a chicken sandwich restaurant next door. Some lady who had been crying a lot gave him a prepaid debit card with about \$500 on it, in exchange for going into the motel, signing in for her and leaving the key in the door of Room 23. He can identify a picture of Lindsay Peale as the lady in question. She was on

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foot and came into his restaurant as it was closing. He did not see any little girls with her.

If the investigators hit a roadblock in terms of Fast Talking, Charming, Intimidating or Persuading the hotel clerk and/or Mr. Lang, the clerk's toddler daughter, Ellie Davidson, might pipe up and volunteer that there is a little girl staying up in Room 23. She hears a lot of My Little Pony cartoons playing through the door. She knocked on the door to see if she wanted to play, but no one answered.

Again, how subtly the investigators go about this inquiry is important to take note of. Remember that Lindsay is peering out the door occasionally, listening to the police and fire bands, and keeping an eye on the news coverage. If she concludes that she is hopelessly cornered, she will prepare for a final assault.

THE FIVE OAKS MOTEL

Despite the name, there is not an oak tree, or any other sort of tree, anywhere near these premises. The Five Oaks Motel is a two story, 24 unit, cinder block construction motel with parking spots directly in front of the doors and an office unit at the end. It is situated on the outskirts of a busy, suburban commercial district amidst second-tier retail stores, slightly run down strip malls, and the usual assortment of chain restaurants.

Lindsay Peale is holed up in Room 23, which is second from the far end from the office, and up on the second floor.

The curtains are closed, and she has laboriously screwed pieces of sheet iron over both the front window and bathroom window. (This cannot be seen through the curtains in the front, but is plainly visible from the rear). The "Do Not Disturb" sign is hung on the doorknob, and the door is locked, chained and barricaded with a dresser.

Lindsay can inch the dresser back a bit and peek out the front door, and nervously does so every now and then, unless she knows that she is being actively watched. Inside, she has kept Regina asleep most of the time through the judicious application of cold medicine, and quiet at other times through threats and showing her children's DVDs on a portable player. She herself is very amped up on energy drinks; she is listening to the police band scanner and keeps a loaded shotgun on her lap, with a backup shotgun at her side. Note again that she is a deadly accurate shot.

She has no intention of venturing out of the room until Wednesday unless she decides (under a very unlikely set of circumstances) that she and Regina are better off running for it. On Wednesday morning, she simply surrenders without harming Regina, or flees and calls the police with Regina's whereabouts.

Reviewing the motel's security cameras is wise, and it reveals the same woman as the one who broke into the veterinary (hoodie up) arriving at Room 23 by car circa very late Thursday evening. She unloads a sleeping small child wrapped up in a blanket, and several suitcases and bags of groceries, as well as two shotguns out of their cases. She is

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in the hotel room for about an hour, and then takes about ten minutes with a penknife and paintbrush, fiddling with the outside of the door. She then ventures out (to raid the nearby veterinary office). She is gone for about an hour, and comes back carrying one plastic bag. She has not ventured out since.

Lindsay's mindset is as follows: A few years ago, she allowed herself to be talked into harassing, and ultimately filing a child in need of aid (temporary foster care based on child abuse) petition against the Balfours by her uncle George. She was very close to her uncle, and knew that he was a retired A.T.F. agent who spent a lot of time investigating right-wing cults. He told her that he had a bad problem: a little girl was in trouble; he lacked evidence that would convince a court; but if he did not get the little girl away from her crazy parents just for a few weeks around a certain date, she would be killed. He explained to her that these parents, the Balfours, were only a danger to her welfare around times that they predicted the world to end. This was because their religion demanded that they sacrifice their firstborn child to the "Passover Angel," so that they and their followers would be spared from the end of the world. They also believed that she would be resurrected by the "Passover Angel," so that they were not actually endangering her by sacrificing her. Uncle George doubted the Angel's capacity to resurrect human sacrifices.

Lindsay read some of their religious material, and listened to some surreptitious audio recordings that her uncle had managed to make of some of the Church's services. Sure enough, they talked about the end of the world coming on a date certain, sacrificing little Regina, and how she would be resurrected due to their overwhelming faith in God and his

"Passover Angel". She also realized that her uncle would get in trouble for wiretapping crimes if she used this evidence in court. So, realizing that her uncle just needed to buy time, she reluctantly went along with his wishes. She tried to build a case, and ultimately (when the date grew close) filed an emergency petition to remove Regina from her parents. This got her out of the home, and then Lindsay just let the matter drop. She knew that she would be disciplined, but it was a hit that she was willing to take for her Uncle George.

About a week ago, her uncle approached her again, with much the same story and a target sacrifice date of a week from Tuesday evening. This time, though, there was something wrong with her uncle. He looked like he had not slept in days, and was pale, wide-eyed and shaking. Initially he refused to explain why, but when Lindsay would not help him again without a very good reason, he gave her one. This time he had gone undercover as a right-wing domestic terrorist, infiltrated the Church's membership over the past few years, and surreptitiously videotaped a ritual—one at which the "Passover Angel" had been summoned through a hideous blood ritual and appeared in the chapel behind the Balfour's house. The Angel issued orders to the faithful, and then looked right at the hidden camera and said, in a chilling, sepulchral voice: "There is nothing that you can do, little man. Nor you, little woman." George bolted for the door; the cultists simply watched him leave, apparently trusting in the Angel to set things right.

Lindsay initially still wanted to have nothing to do with the whole matter, but that changed over the course of the next forty-eight hours. Since seeing the video, she has been hallucinating. She has been seeing a dark, hooded, black-winged



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angel out of the corner of her eye at every turn. She keeps finding Bibles opened to Exodus 11-12 in inaccessible places, like hanging from her shower nozzle or on her pillow—including at the motel. Her dreams have been nightmares of ancient Egypt and Biblical plagues, and she has not slept well since. Her uncle warned her never to turn out the lights, and the one time that she did, for just a second, she saw a glimpse

of something huge, winged and serpentine outside her window, headed straight for her. That was enough. She believes that something demonic is after her and little Regina, and that she needs to keep her safe until Wednesday or monsters will eat her. She is correct on both scores.

MEANWHILE: MR. BALFOUR'S PARALLEL EFFORTS

Once the investigators locate the motel room, increased attention needs to be given to what Mr. Balfour is doing. Remember that Mr. Balfour is constantly following the investigators and “trying to help” as best he can. However, he is smart enough to realize that once the investigators do manage to locate Lindsay, they are unlikely to stage an immediate, direct assault. And he does not want this anyway. His goal is to rescue his daughter intact, and he does not want to take any chances with her safety, at least not at first. At the same time, he needs to get Regina home safe and sound by Tuesday at sunset, and he realizes that there is going to be a period of time after she is rescued where the authorities are going to have to be patiently dealt with as they check her out physically, take her statement, etc.

Therefore, Mr. Balfour has assigned himself a deadline of dawn Tuesday by which Regina must be liberated. If, by Monday evening, he knows where she is, but it does not appear as though this deadline is going to be met, he puts a backup plan into motion.

He will retreat to his car, drive about a mile away to a secluded location, and start praying to the Passover Angel for guidance. In other words, he will Entreat the Passover Angel (Contact Nyarlathotep), who will appear in his passenger seat appearing as a cloaked, feral, hooded, humanoid figure with a

LINDSAY PEALE

STR 55 CON 70 SIZ 60 INT 65 POW 65
DEX 90 APP 65 EDU 70 SAN 45 HP 13

Damage bonus: none.

Build: 0

Move: 8

ATTACKS

Firearms (Shotgun) 95% (47/18), Winchester 12 gauge M50 Shotgun, 1/round, magazine capacity 5, 50 yards base range, 4d6/2d6/1d6. Has about 100 rounds of reloads and an identical backup firearm

Skills: Computer Use 30%, Credit Rating 45%, Drive Auto 35%, First Aid 45%, Law 45%, Listen 50%, Other Language (Spanish) 40%, Persuade 40%, Pharmacy 35%, Psychology 56%, Psychoanalysis 25%, Spot Hidden 50%.

Defenses: None above base.

Spells: *Mark the Doorposts* (variant Elder Sign)

Nationality: American

Age: 29

Education: Bachelor's Degree, Psychology, Ohio State University; Master's Degree in Social Work, Cleveland State University.

Quotes: (Frantically, and in tears): “Don't make me hurt anyone!” “I haven't missed at this range since I was 12!” “You need to worry about her psycho parents, not me!” “I've SEEN the !@#&* Passover Angel, it's REAL!”



REVEREND JOHN BALFOUR

STR 70 CON 75 SIZ 70 INT 75 POW 90
DEX 65 APP 75 EDU 70 SAN 0 HP 14

Damage bonus: +1D4

Build: 1

Move: 8

ATTACKS

None above base.

Skills: Accounting 45%, Credit Rating 75%, Cthulhu Mythos 05%, Drive Automobile 35%, History 45%, Library Use 65%, Listen 50%, Occult 55%, Perform (Sing) 50%, Persuade 60%, Psychology 60%, Spot Hidden 50%, Stealth 50%.

Defenses: None above base.

Spells: *Entreat the Passover Angel* (Contact Nyarlathotep, Passover Angel form); *Mark the Doorposts* (Elder Sign); *Prepare the Way for the Passover Angel* (Call Nyarlathotep, Black Wind form).

Languages:

Nationality: American

Age: 33

Education: College-level Seminary Education.

Indefinite Insanities: Genocidal Maniac

Quotes: Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

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booming voice and black angel's wings. (SAN loss for viewing the Passover Angel in this form is 1/1D10).

If the investigators decided to tail Mr. Balfour from a discrete distance, they may actually be able to see this, which will cast a very different light on the entire proceeding. Under no circumstances, not even torture, will Mr. Balfour admit the accuracy of what they may see.

In exchange for a human sacrifice, which Mr. Balfour will wander off to pursue, killing the first person he can without detection with a pocketknife he keeps in his car trunk, Nyarlathotep will help the situation along. If Mr. Balfour cannot shake the investigators at this point, he will abandon this effort—he cannot risk arrest.

Nyarlathotep will try to help, at least. At some point, the locusts camped out in the Five Oaks' parking lot will abandon their torpid posture and start to swarm, battering themselves with seeming purpose at the door and window of Room 23 (SAN loss 0/1D3). This is a frightening distraction, especially if the investigators get the door open at that point, and you might give the investigators an increased chance, or a free round due to hesitation, to beat Lindsay Peale on the draw if they raid the room at that point. Nyarlathotep will also have a Hunting Horror standing by during nighttime hours, in case the lights happen to go out after the Elder Sign on the door frame is defaced.

Note however that the locusts do not swarm into the room, they stop at the door. The reason is the faint carvings on the outside of the door jamb (a variant Elder Sign, identical to the ones around the rim of the Balfours' bomb shelter hatch). This assumes that the investigators have not somehow stealthily defaced them.

SHOWDOWN AT ROOM 23

As the investigators close in on Lindsay's hotel room, throw some more overt horror at them. Begin by having a huge locust splat on their windshield without warning. Then another, then several. Before long, the locusts are so thick that they are at risk for an automobile accident if they do not stop. Locusts swarm all over their car, crawling in through the air vents. They come from seemingly nowhere, and then they are everywhere. If this were not bad enough, when they catch sight of the investigators, they stop moving and just stare at that them, thousands and thousands of faceted little eyes and chewing mandibles. They just freeze and stare. SAN loss 0/1.

They do not disperse, and do not attack the investigators or even touch them. They simply linger nearby, covering the pavement, the cars, the roof, and the light fixtures, and silently watch. No reports of any locust sightings are made except in the thoroughly paved over part of town where the investigators are—the last place one would expect to find a bunch of hungry grasshoppers.

A tactical map of the Five Oaks motel is nearby. There are three conventional access points: the front door, the front window (which only opens partway by design, not enough to let even a small child crawl through) and the bathroom window (ditto). The door to the hotel room has been barricaded with a dresser, and barring a large amount of explosives or a battering ram, it takes several minutes to batter through

it. The windows are more vulnerable, although Lindsay has screwed sheet steel over them (treat as HP 10, 10 points of armor to knock through).

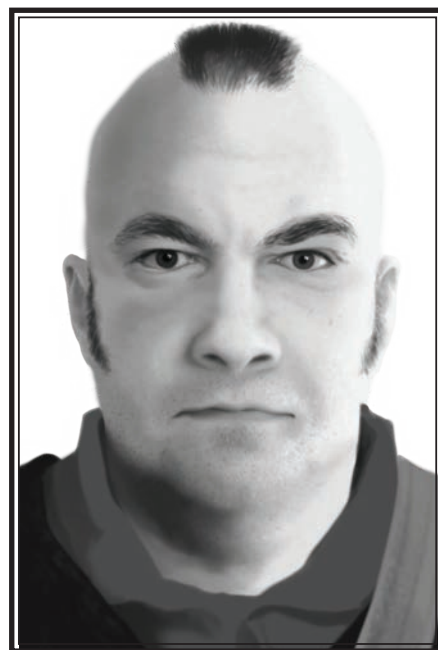
The roof or walls are not conventional options; it might be possible to quietly introduce a fiber optic cable (Stealth) to get a look at the inside through a hole in either, but smashing through them carries the same sorts of problems as smashing through the door and/or windows.

Thermal imaging or parabolic microphones are more practical intelligence gathering alternatives. The microphone may detect the sounds of cartoons playing quietly inside, plus movement if someone moves (say to go to the bathroom or fetch some food). Thermal imaging can also pinpoint the whereabouts of the people in the room. Unless Lindsay is about some task, she is sitting in a chair immediately next to Regina, and unless Regina is in the bathroom, she is lying in bed. Lindsay accompanies Regina to the bathroom, with a loaded shotgun. However, she does not (unless she is aware that people are outside) take Regina with her to the bathroom.

There are tiny, strange symbols faintly carved (and painted with a small brush in blood) into the woodwork around the door of Room 23. These glyphs are identical to those around the rim of the Balfour's bomb shelter. While they do not keep out the dream sendings or supernatural poltergeist shenanigans that she has been enduring, they do fend off the Passover Angel itself, as well as his more physical minions (like the locusts, or the stray Hunting Horror if he takes a direct hand).

Precisely how what will almost certainly turn into a hostage standoff/negotiation/tactical raid session goes down will simply have to be role-played out. Lindsay thinks that she is prepared to shoot Regina to save the world, but she is not a killer. She will hesitate and be willing to consider ways out that do not require her to kill anyone. Building her trust (rightly or wrongly) and somehow convincing her that Regina will not be given back to her parents until Wednesday is critical to gaining her cooperation in any way or defusing the situation. Psychoanalysis skill (to get her to calm down and trust the investigators) would be very helpful to such an effort.

If a tactical/SWAT team situation develops, the local police create problems. They summon snipers no matter how much they are argued with, led by a blow-hard, "reformed"



Officer Otis "O.G." Grey

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street tough turned cop named Otis “OG” Grey. He considers himself tougher than anyone around, is always convinced that “he has a shot”, and constantly agitates that he be allowed to take it. He’s not a good a sniper as he believes that he is, however: (Fighting (Rifle) 55%, Remington Model 700 in 30-.06 caliber, 2d6+4, base range 120 yards, 1/2 rate of fire, 4+1 capacity).

If Lindsay feels betrayed by hostage negotiators or is suddenly attacked, she shoots Regina and then herself, and matters will come down to who is quicker on the draw and whether the investigators can stun or surprise her long enough to disable her before she shoots. If she thinks that she is dealing with a small number of assailants, she may shoot them and try to relocate, but that is unlikely. More likely is that she will wing someone that she has a shot at, in an effort to discourage an all-out assault, impressing upon the investigators how good of a shot that she is.

If the investigators deface the subtle markings on the doorposts, they open the door (pardon the pun) for Nyarlathotep to possibly take a more direct hand in dealing with Lindsay. If the investigators also kill the power to the hotel (perhaps in an effort to exert pressure on Lindsay, or in preparation for a raid) all hell breaks loose. A Hunting Horror smashes its way through the roof in the darkness, and unless driven off by a lot of bright lights, scoops Lindsay up through a hail of shotgun fire and carries her off, never to be seen again. SAN loss is 1D3/1D10 for any such episode.

INTERVIEW, LINDSAY PEALE (PROBABLY SHOUTED THROUGH THE DOOR OR OVER THE PHONE, OR IF SHE IS APPREHENDED)

It will take a significant amount of Persuasion, trust building, Psychoanalysis, and most especially, convincing promises that Regina will not go back to her parents until at least Wednesday to defuse the situation. Lindsay is rightly convinced that giving Regina back to her parents in time for the Tuesday evening ritual will result in an Apocalypse.

If her trust can somehow be gained, which should be extremely difficult, she will desperately spill her guts about everything that she knows, in an effort to convince someone to keep Regina away from her parents. She has a copy of the Passover Angel ritual video recording as an insurance policy among her belongings, in one of the children’s DVD boxes. It is simply on a blank disk that does not match the box. SAN loss is 0/1 for the video, and watching it puts the investigators under the Passover Angel’s scrutiny (with similar dream sendings and poltergeist shenanigans to those suffered by Lindsay, until after the Tuesday night disaster).

Failing to gain her trust will result in Lindsay completely ignoring most overtures, or at best, responding with threats and perhaps (if she has a target through her barricades) a warning shot. She can inch the dresser barricade back, open the door on its chain, and shoot out the crack (with a limited line of sight).

Two things that will definitely get her attention are

attempting to deface the doorposts and/or kill the power. These will get her to start pleading through the door not to do that—the investigators have no idea what they are doing. She will not explain what she is afraid of, but will demand that they stop “or else.” If the door is defaced and the power is cut off, she will hesitate, but then move to kill both Regina and herself, since she knows what is coming. Whether she succeeds, fails, or is eaten by a Hunting Horror is up to you.

INTERVIEW, REGINA BALFOUR (POST RESCUE)

Regina Balfour is a five year old little girl in fragile health. She is of average intelligence and (surprisingly) psychologically well-adjusted. Her parents (while quite insane) partake of a flavor of sincerely held, belief-oriented insanity that allows them to muddle through life somewhat normally. They are good to Regina, she loves them, and she has never seen any monsters, dark angels or other weird things. In other word, Regina is utterly innocent.

Regina’s perspective on matters is as follows. Note that the Balfours will be resisting (through legal means, including lawyers) having Regina interviewed, taken to a hospital for observation, or the like to the extent they can. They will be especially demanding and litigious (ultimately running to court for a court order) as the day gets later on Tuesday.

- ✘ Her mommy and daddy are nice to her and this mean Lindsay lady kidnapped her. She did not hurt her, but she took her away from mommy and daddy and she wants to go home now.
- ✘ Lindsay had a gun and was crabby. Lindsay kept her sleepy with cold medicine and she was afraid. Lindsay took her away from her mommy and daddy before, for a few weeks, when she was littler. She remembers that Lindsay was nice that time, but she was mean this time.
- ✘ Daddy is a preacher. Mommy stays at home with her. They believe in God a lot and tell her that she should too. Daddy and Mommy talk a lot about the Passover Angel, who is a special angel who visits them and tells Daddy what God wants. She’s never seen him though.
- ✘ Daddy talks a lot about the end of the world. He says that when the world ends, she needs to go to the bomb shelter in her back yard and stay there until someone comes to find her.
- ✘ She remembers the mean man who grabbed her from mommy in the store. He was at their house a few times; he was one of Daddy’s church members, although he had differently colored hair and no moustache then. He used to be nice to her. (*Keeper’s note: this is an important clue. It suggests that Regina and George may have had some factual basis for their actions. Also, if the Balfours have not come clean about knowing George Lewiston, the fact that they have been less than completely forthright with the investigators will now be apparent.*)

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✧ If the investigators do a very good job of interviewing her (Psychoanalysis roll or asking the right sort of questions), Regina might talk about her favorite Bible story. She knows a lot of Bible stories, but her Daddy tells her one about the Binding of Isaac almost every day. Isaac was the son of Abraham and Abraham loved him a lot. God had promised that Isaac would have a lot of children, but Isaac was kind of a goof off and had not settled down yet and had kids. God tested Abraham's faith by ordering him to tie Isaac to a rock and kill him with a magic knife. This was just a test though; God would never let Isaac be hurt and a special angel appeared and stopped Isaac from getting hurt. God rewarded Abraham for having that much faith, even believing that God would bring Isaac back from the dead. Daddy says that this story means that we should always do what God says, even if it sounds crazy, because we cannot understand what God is thinking and he always rewards the faithful.

COME TUESDAY

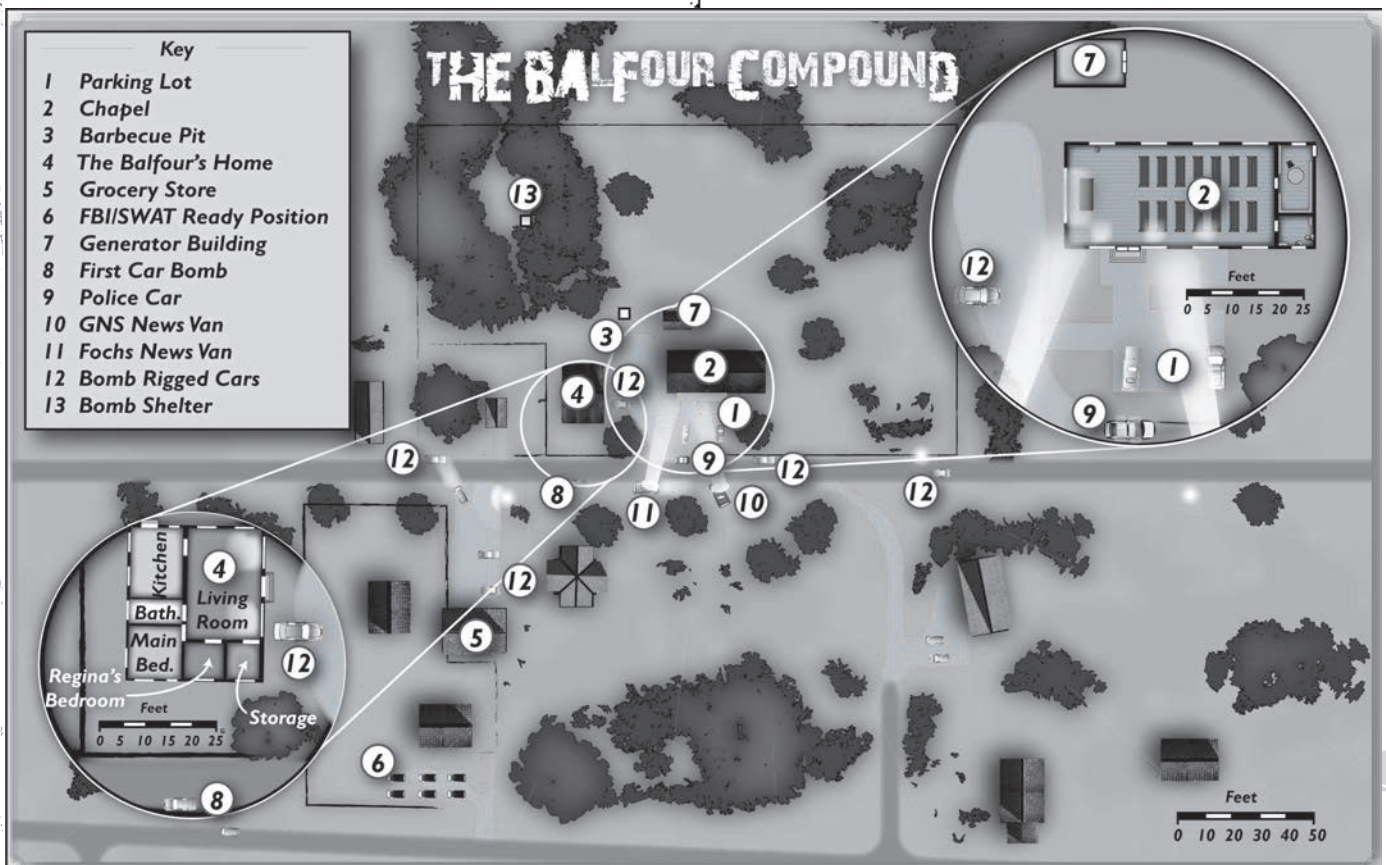
If the Balfours do not have possession of Regina back by Tuesday afternoon, they will take every conceivable action to get her back, depending on what they know and where she is. If she has not been found by Monday, you might wish to advance the action (such as by having the toll booth operator come forward), to get the hostage standoff part of the scenario in play. Or, if the investigators are just not making progress on the clue trail, the Passover Angel might tell Mr. Balfour where she is, and he might tip the investigators to try and extract

Regina. If Balfour notices the markings on the door frame of Room 23, he may well decry them as blasphemies against all that is holy and attempt to go up and deface them, having to be physically restrained. (Of course, if the investigators note that they are the same as are on his bomb shelter, he will be at a loss for words).

If Regina is rescued on Tuesday, the investigators will be able to hold on to her for about four hours, under the rubric of debriefing her and having her get a medical examination, before the Balfours show up with a court order instructing that she be given over to her parents "forthwith". It is about a two hour drive from the Five Oaks to the Balfours' home.

If it appears that the Balfours will manage to get her home before nightfall on Tuesday, things are calm at the Balfours. About an hour before nightfall, several dozen congregants, including the notorious "Johnny Zero", most having no idea what they are in for, arrive at their home and file into the chapel. This affair is not open to the general public, and the Balfours have an attorney (with no real authority other than to make threats and insist on law enforcement having warrants to enter) posted at their driveway, along with a couple of (armed, innocent) private security guards. One exception is that they might allow a news crew that has been helpful to their efforts to attend (creating another obstacle to a police raid). Also, law enforcement officers with warrants might bully their way in.

If it does not appear that Regina will be gotten back in time, things are much the same, except that Mrs. Balfour is busy earlier in the day. Regina's sacrificial sackcloth shift is too small for her, and since "Plan B" is for her to be offered up in Regina's stead, she goes to a store, buys some burlap, goes



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home, and sings hymns to herself as she works at her sewing machine.

Either way, Mrs. Balfour is busy throughout Tuesday, burning a lot of wood in their backyard barbecue pit and carrying the ashes into the chapel. The 3D printer in the office may also be busily humming away.

TUESDAY EVENING CHEZ BALFOUR

Regardless of the state of other affairs, about a half an hour before sundown on Tuesday, there is a massive power outage in the Balfours' neighborhood. This exacerbates a cloudy, moonless evening and plunges the area into abject darkness. If the investigators have been paying attention to the progression of Biblical plagues, this should come as no surprise, and they should be wondering when the firstborn are scheduled to die. The answer is "quite soon".

The Balfours are oddly well prepared for the blackout, and light up the chapel with candles. The barbecue pit is probably still burning as well, providing some light. However, unless the investigators do something to light the rest of the area, impose a -20% on ranged combat roles and Spot Hidden checks made without good illumination, and grant +20% to Stealth efforts.

A tactical map of the Balfours' house and outbuildings appears on page 27. Note that this is not in any sense some sort of secure compound, and most of the congregants are unarmed. Out of about 100 total congregants (including men, women and children), only ten of them (led by "Johnny Zero") are violent, inner circle cultists who are prepared to lay down their lives. If the churchgoers have been somehow frisked or searched on the way into the compound or neighborhood, good for the investigators, but they find nothing unless they are looking for concealed, improvised explosive devices, very well hidden and wrapped to avoid canine or vapor detection, within the frames of cars. At least one marked police car will be parked out from to keep annoying reporters away from the Balfours (marked on the map); at least one news van should be parked in front of the neighbors' house hoping for some airworthy footage (also marked on the map).

These ten cultists have at their disposal a total of six cars, each rigged to remotely detonate via cell phone, and each of them have cell phones that will set off any of them. Each car bomb is indicated on the tactical map, assuming no investigator interference or intense scrutiny. Beyond the car bombs, these ten can be quietly outfitted, once they are inside the chapel, with a variety of makeshift weaponry and gear designed to have been able to be manufactured, smuggled into and concealed in the chapel without attracting ATF attention. (Obviously, this does not happen under the direct scrutiny of the media or law enforcement). Available gear hidden in a secret compartment beneath the altar includes homemade Molotov cocktail components (wine bottles and generator fuel), combat knives, suicide explosive vests, and homemade zip guns (single shot, non-metallic firearms) made on the 3D printer in the Balfour's home office. The suicide vests are equipped with dead man's switches; once armed, if the wearer is rendered unconscious and/or releases a thumb trigger, the vest explodes. The combat knives, vests and zip guns have

been smuggled into the chapel and hidden under the altar; only a serious and dedicated search effort would find them.

The Balfours themselves are not armed, other than Mr. Balfour's sacrificial dagger, also kept hidden under the altar. It is an ancient, enchanted thing made of some alien, golden, metallic alloy that he brought back with him from his missionary days in Kenya. It is slightly radioactive as well.

When the Passover Angel arrives (see below) and general panic ensues, the armed cultists either act to bar the door to keep parishioners from fleeing in panic (if no law enforcement is inside), or they launch suicide attacks against any nearby law enforcement to prevent interference with the sacrifice. Statistics for the typical armed cultist appear in a box on the next page.

THE PASSOVER ANGEL ARRIVES

At sunset, having carefully done nothing at all illegal up until that point, the Balfours begin their religious service—even if a posse of armed Federal agents is somehow standing right there in the chapel watching them. The service begins very much like a normal church service, with some standard hymns. Rev. Balfour gives a prayer of thanksgiving (if Regina has been rescued) or offers a prayer in her memory (if she was killed), and then encourages the congregation to rise and follow him in a prayer to the Passover Angel. Again, it must be emphasized that he has done nothing illegal and, quite possibly, has an attorney nearby with a valid court order allowing him to proceed. Only incapacitating Mr. Balfour, or violating the court order and hauling him away, will prevent the service from proceeding apace. Regina (if she is back in

THE PASSOVER ANGEL

STR 95 CON 110 SIZ 90 INT 100 POW 110
DEX 115 HP 14

Damage bonus: +1D6

Build: 2

Move: 10/20 flying

ATTACKS

Grasp and Rend 95% (47/18), damage 1D6 +db, STR vs. STR check to escape or damage is automatic in ensuing rounds.

Skills: Any desired by the Keeper at 99%.

Armor: None, but non-enchanted physical attacks cannot harm the Passover Angel. The Passover Angel is barred by and recoils from the Elder Sign, and can be harmed by magic or enchanted weapons. It is vulnerable to Dismissals of Nyarlathotep, or other magic affecting Nyarlathotep specifically, as well.

Spells: Any desired by the Keeper, but can summon up a Hunting Horror of average statistics at will, in conditions of darkness, to do its bidding.

SAN Loss: 1/1D10 to see the Passover Angel. If the Passover Angel is killed, the Black Wind is loosed.

Quotes: Sepulchral laughter.

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their control) is sitting in the front row in sackcloth, clutching a replacement ladybug backpack; otherwise, Mrs. Balfour is there in her stead.

If law enforcement has a very tight lid on the Balfours' compound and they are basically proceeding under direct scrutiny of armed SWAT teams, nine of the armed cultists are a distance away in their five bomb-rigged vehicles, and have pre-equipped themselves with replacement equipment, listed above. The tenth will arrive for the service in a separate vehicle, unarmed. He has parked a second vehicle on the street early on Monday (belonging to the Balfours), which is rigged to blow in a way that would require it to be stripped down to detect (C-4 wrapped air tight and hidden in the frame and a compartment inside the gas tank). (This is marked as the "first car bomb" on the map). If scrutiny is not that tight, they park at various places in the chapel's parking lot, street and/or in the driveway of the Balfours' house, and arm themselves as they have a chance (perhaps not until after chaos erupts) with the gear under the altar.

When the time comes for a distraction (i.e., when the prayer to the Passover Angel reaches the point where the Angel manifests itself over the altar), the first, pre-positioned car bomb (parked on the street) is detonated. This blows out all the windows in the neighborhood, sets off a dozen car alarms, and causes a panic and a stampede for the doors inside the chapel. Any armed cultists in the chapel try to bar the doors and/or beset any law enforcement agents or investigators in the chapel, suicide bombing themselves as may be necessary. Any who are stationed away from the Balfours' home arrive within a couple of minutes, and do whatever will wreak the most chaos and force attention on themselves: running into groups of officers and detonating the car; jumping out and killing innocents to force the police to intervene; taking hostages; whatever will work to clear out the chapel from law enforcement attention.

The Passover Angel appears at the end of the prayer unless Rev. Balfour is incapacitated first, causing a 1/1D10 SAN loss to all present. Rev. Balfour will then usher Regina or his wife to the altar, lay them down upon it, yell "O Lord, I bow to your will, please spare my firstborn" (regardless of who is on the altar), and stab down. People trying to interfere with matters at this quite late stage have to deal with the hovering Passover Angel itself. Note that Rev. Balfour does not have to kill the sacrifice himself to loose the Black Wind; anyone can perform the stabbing, including (in Mrs. Balfour's case) Mrs. Balfour herself. And she will.

If the sacrifice is completed, the Passover Angel swells and changes, and the Black Wind is loosed upon the world. The sacrifice is (contrary to the Balfours' expectations) not spared, nor resurrected. She is just stabbed and killed.

If Regina is offered up as appropriate, the Black Wind is loosed at full strength. This is bad news for the entire region, and eventually, the world. A massive hell storm explodes out of the chapel and lays purposeful waste to the entire region (a 20 mile long, conical swath along prevailing wind patterns). This is complete with numerous tornadoes, fires caused by lightning strikes, floods, locust swarms, and a massive cholera outbreak in the ensuing chaos. This is a particularly nasty

strain of cholera, lethal absent a successful Medicine check. Funny thing is, the destruction only affects the firstborn. Second and subsequent children, without fail, mysteriously survive, perhaps found in a sheltered part of a basement surrounded by gore, or mysteriously deposited by the winds a mile away with only minor injuries.

The casualty list includes the investigators and all of the cultists, assuming that they are firstborn. Total casualties are in the tens of thousands, and meteorologists struggle to come up with a rational explanation. The only exception for a firstborn is if they are inside a shelter marked with the variant Elder Sign on its doorposts (such as the bomb shelter in the Balfours' back yard). If the Black Wind arises, the Balfours will grab Regina's body and run for their bomb shelter. Whether or not they make it is up to you. Ditto for any investigators running that way.

If you are running this scenario as part of a longer campaign, the arrival of the Black Wind should begin a distressing series of misfortunes for the world: frequent and especially bad plagues and natural disasters and a significant, general

Suicidal Passover Angel Cultists (x10)

STR 70 CON 75 SIZ 70 INT 50 POW 55
DEX 65 APP 50 EDU 50 SAN 0 HP 14

Damage bonus: +1D4

Build: 1

Move: 8

ATTACKS

Fighting (Handgun) 50% (25/10), Non-metallic Zip Gun (2x each), 1D6+1, 1 shot, malfunction 95-00, base range 10 yards.

Fighting (Combat Knife) 50% (25/10), 1D4+2+db

Molotov Cocktail (1x each) 50% (25/10), 1 round to light before throwing, 2D6 +ignite on a successful Luck roll; range 30 yards. Burning does 1d6 damage in each successive round; target may attempt a Luck or First Aid roll each round to stop the burning; malfunction 95-00.

Suicide Vest, automatic (connected to handheld dead man's switch), 1 round to arm dead man's switch, explosion centered on cultist, 4D6 explosion, base radius 3 yards. (All targets within base range take 4D6 within 3 yards, 3D6 within 3-6 yards, etc.). Dodging behind available cover (including another person) halves the damage.

Car Bomb, automatic, 1 round of cell phone dialing to activate (each can set off all six cars), explosion centered on car in question, 6D6 explosion, base radius 3 yards.

Skills: Drive Automobile 35%; Listen 50%; Spot Hidden 50%; Stealth 50%.

Defenses: None above base.

Spells: *Entreat the Passover Angel* (Contact Nyarlathotep, Passover Angel form); *Mark the Doorposts* (Elder Sign); *Prepare the Way for the Passover Angel* (Call Nyarlathotep, Black Wind form).

Nationality: American

Age: variable

Education: variable

Quotes: "Glory be to the Passover Angel!" "All unbelievers shall perish!"

THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND



uptick in Mythos activity. The cholera strain (which becomes known as the Cleveland Flu (or whichever city you set the scenario in)) goes viral (pardon the pun), spreads across the world, and claims many thousands of lives for decades to come.

If Regina is not sacrificed, and someone else (such as Mrs. Balfour) is offered up in her stead, the devastation still occurs, but it remains within the realm of rational explanation. The devastation zone is more akin to a very large tornadic storm, roughly a mile long. Casualties are in the hundreds rather than the tens of thousands, and the long term consequences for the world are far more attenuated.

Anyone daring to look outside at the massive black clouds may see, illuminated by the lightning strikes, what look an awful lot like titanic winged figures in the clouds. SAN loss 1/1D8.

HOW THINGS ARE LIKELY TO GO, AND KEEPER HINTS

Establish prior to beginning this scenario how many siblings each investigator has, and what their birth rank is. Firstborn investigators are at special risk of not surviving this scenario, and it is fun to offer a little substance to their firstborn status. Favor them with dreams of Biblical plagues and ancient Egypt, or fleeting glimpses out of the corner of their eyes of things with wings.

Make a point of carefully and fully describing each of the vignettes that is reflective of one of the plagues of Egypt. This helps focus the investigators on the thematic progression,

heightens the tension, and will prompt them to do research.

If at least one of the investigators is an appropriate law enforcement official who might be in charge of the kidnapping investigation, this scenario can be run straightforwardly. The investigators and any “outside consultants” should be allowed free rein to pursue the various leads.

More likely, the investigators will be called in for their experience with cults. Agent Lucy Bates will be in charge of the investigation and will be their point of contact. Play her as a “by the book”, somewhat full of herself, career investigator. She is well-intentioned and will respect the investigators’ opinions, but insist on doing things the “right way”, which means time consuming applications for search warrants, honoring requests for lawyers in the middle of interrogations, and zero sanction for breaking and entering absent clear proof of imminent danger. She will, however, accept investigator suggestions as to what kind of warrants ought to be pursued, and allow properly credentialed law enforcement agents to work the investigation under her. She is both a hindrance and a help, and the investigators should be offered opportunities to take shortcuts and “go rogue.”

Agent Bates will not believe that anything supernatural is afoot, unless she sees it with her own two eyes. Sadly, this is likely to occur at some point. The locust swarm out in front of the Five Oaks Motel will give her pause, and she will start to defer to the investigators more (to the point of overlooking any prior rogue activity on their part). If she sees something overtly supernatural (the Passover Angel, a Hunting Horror haul off Lindsay Peale, or, most likely, Lindsay Peale’s DVD of the Passover Angel summoning ritual), she allows the investi-

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gators to make the plans for further action (within the limits of the law).

Use the amount of time necessary to review camera footage, get records back from banks, etc. to pace the adventure and get the investigators to the Five Oaks Motel in sufficient time to have a confrontation with Lindsay, have it resolve, and potentially get Regina released to her parents before Tuesday evening. But do not force things. If Regina is rescued early enough to be reunited with her parents, this maximizes the number of hard choices that the investigators must make. But you can also just run it organically, and maybe everyone dies, or maybe Lindsay's scheme works. *Que sera, sera.*

If there is a raid on Room 23, it is helpful to the plot to have Agent Bates be one of the ones who gets shot by Lindsay Peale. Agent Bates' replacement will look to any law enforcement agents among the investigators for leadership going forward.

If the investigators are private investigators hired by the Balfours, the evidence is still what it is, but their access to it will be different, both for the better and for the worse. They will lack law enforcement credentials, and as a result, not have the ability to subpoena financial records. They will have to rely on persuasion, bribery, trickery or subterfuge to get at those sorts of records. On the other hand, the Balfours are much more forthcoming, up to the point where they deny any intention to sacrifice Regina. They firmly believe that the Passover Angel is real and will not deny that, but they (honestly) do not have any videotapes—that would be sacrilege.

Do not rule out the possibility that private investigators might try to broker information trades with Agent Bates. Successful trade brokering may well only occur after the investigators have been bullied, threatened with obstruction of justice charges and/or hauled in for questioning. But as long as the investigators agree quickly enough that Agent Bates is in charge of the investigation and promise (plausibly enough) to stay out of her way, information exchanges can be achieved.

It is possible to run this scenario with the investigators having no sanction whatsoever, in the form of an investigative news crew dispatched either by the Global News Service, or otherwise. The keys to success in this situation are Fast Talk and "bribery." They cannot subpoena information from private parties, or force people to talk to them, but many people might be more willing to talk in exchange for being on television and/or large sums of cash. Make this clear to them right up front, by having their producer make clear to them how big of a story this could be, and how big of a "consulting fee fund" they have. Encourage them to do research in the guise of shooting "B roll", and through the need to have as many updates and ancillary exposes as possible, to keep the news fresh. There should also be a greedy mole within the police investigation, who will leak them information in exchange for cash. The news crew will find itself in the position of following Agent Bates around, much to her annoyance.

A news crew can actually get a leg up on law enforcement through their willingness to pay "rewards" for "information." The crew at the diner may contact them (in the hope of getting paid for an "exclusive") to report that George Lewiston ate there regularly, including a few days earlier. The toll booth

operator may call them right after she reports her suspicions to Agent Bates. People like the rental car agent, the owner of the veterinary clinic, and the motel operator (in addition to numerous false leads) might well be motivated by the promise of large amounts of cash to err on the side of calling a news crew with tentative information before they verify it or call law enforcement with it. Bear in mind Agent Bates' fury at learning important information from some rabble-rousing, pro-vigilante talking head on a news program. This is a horribly nihilistic approach and somewhat difficult to orchestrate, but can by far be the most fun.

The Balfours, in their insanity, are happy to invite a "friendly" member of the media to witness their religious service; the assembled cultists may well try to fend off interfering law enforcement, concerned about what they might try to do, with chants of "the whole world is watching"!

Make sure that you handle the pursuit of George Lewiston's movements in a way that the investigators find the trail of his prepaid debit card, either legitimately or via surreptitious snooping at the diner.

If the investigators are stymied, eventually, the toll booth attendant in Pennsylvania will report seeing Regina and Lindsay, and that will nudge the investigators along toward locating the rental car.

REWARDS AND REPERCUSSIONS

Preventing the summoning of the Black Wind gains the investigators 2D6 SAN. If Regina is rescued without Lindsay Peale being killed, award 1D4 SAN. If Regina is killed, charge the investigators 1D4 SAN. If the Black Wind is summoned without Regina's sacrifice (the lesser catastrophe) charge the investigators 1D6 SAN on top of what they may suffer incident to what they see. It is at least possible to explain this away as a singularly awful tornadic incident. The horror of the Black Wind's full arrival—very difficult to explain away as a horrible tornadic incident—costs 2D6 SAN on top of other losses. Unless the investigators are not firstborn, or have taken shelter in a warded area, they are unlikely to survive being anywhere near a successful summoning of the Black Wind.





FORGET ME NOT

by *Brian M. Sammons*

This scenario is written as a standalone one-shot, where all of the investigators are members of a low budget ghost hunting TV show called *The Supernatural Files* (“TSF”). TSF is a typical example of the “reality” paranormal shows that are flooding American cable television stations. However, should the Keeper want to run this adventure for an ongoing group of investigators, very little would need to be changed in order to accomplish that. Mythos investigators are just as likely to poke their noses into a rumored haunted house as the cast and crew of TSF. Or perhaps the investigators were hired by another network or the Global News Service (if you are using that campaign thread) to look into the Cooper house. And for that matter, feel free to move the Cooper house to any place in the world you wish. But whatever the case, this story always begins the same: in media res, with the investigators simply coming to in a vehicle on the side of a wooded road.

WAKEY, WAKEY!

First things first, have the players make some rolls and record their results. Don't tell them what they are rolling for; just tell them what dice to roll. The Keeper should be familiar with the investigators' stats in these areas, or at least make a cheat sheet for this purpose beforehand. Let the players wonder and stew over what they are rolling. If they ask, just tell them never mind, it's for later in the game. This mysterious rolling is a good way to sprinkle in seeds of paranoia right from the start.

The rolls your players should make are: CON; LUCK; LUCK; SAN; SAN (so just tell them to roll percent dice five times) and then depending upon if they make or fail the two SAN rolls, either 1D8 for failing the first SAN roll (they lose only 1 point if they succeed) and then 1D6+3 or 1D20+3 for success/failure of the second SAN roll.

The investigator that made the CON roll by the most is the one that wakes up first. The investigators all find themselves in a van that is listing to one side, as if it is ready to topple over. Should the one who wakes first not try to rouse their companions, in short order they all wake up of their own accord. In addition to the investigators, the van is filled with wires, monitors, a busted laptop computer, lenses, microphones, and other equipment that a small, low budget TV show would use in the field. Oddly, there are no actual cameras present.

Now for that first LUCK roll. Those that failed wake up to discover they have a minor (1 HP) wound such as a gash on the forehead, or perhaps a broken nose. These people have dried blood crusted to their faces. Those that succeed are sore all over, but otherwise unwounded. Should anyone have fumbled this LUCK roll, they have suffered 1D4 points of damage and have a more severe wound, such as a bloody nose and a broken arm, or perhaps a cracked rib and a badly bitten tongue.

All of the investigators are filthy, with dirt caking their clothes, faces, and hair. Underneath their fingernails is packed with dirt, and should a woman have long nails, then at least

FORGET ME NOT

one of them has a bad and painful break down to the quick. Everyone is hurting all over. Their entire bodies ache, joints are stiff, throats feel raw, they've got pounding headaches, and sour, upset stomachs. Particularly mean keepers may have investigators make another LUCK roll here. If more than one fails, whoever failed the roll the worst gets the embarrassing news that they had wet themselves. This info should be passed on in secret, perhaps via a note, so the player can try to cover up his 'accident' if he so desires.

Finally, no one initially has any memory as to what happened, where they are, or even who they are. Checking their I.D.s, which can still be found in their wallets and purses, gives them their names and a sort of foggy recollection of, "Yeah, that's me," so the amnesia is not total, but it is nearly so.

Each investigator also has a set of keys on them appropriate to their personal lives (house, car, filing cabinet at work, locker for the local gym, etc.) and possibly a cell phone. This is what that second LUCK roll was for. Should anyone have failed it, their phone is missing or broken. Those with functioning phones in hand find out that the date is September 17th and the time is 8:24 PM. The phones are filled with names and numbers that initially have no meaning to them. Personal pictures can be found in those phones showing friends and family, perhaps loved ones in risqué photos best not shared, or even some pictures of the other investigators, thereby reinforcing their connection to each other. If their phones are equipped with GPS, then they discover that they are a couple of miles outside of the small city of Clio, Michigan. Clio can be found between the much larger cities of Flint and Saginaw, somewhat close to where the thumb and the rest of the "mitten" of Michigan's Lower Peninsula meet.

Lastly, each person also has a single key on a plastic key-chain. A little blue diamond of plastic reads "The Coach & Lantern Motel, 12705 W. Vienna St, Clio, MI" on one side, and

has a room number (starting with room #3 and continuing in order, with one number being skipped, until each investigator has a room) on the other.

Should the investigators try to drive away, they find it impossible to do so, although the van will start. Stepping outside, they discover why. Their van drove off a dirt road and wound up in a deep ditch. While the engine is fine, the vehicle will have to be towed. No matter how strong the investigators are, the big van is impossible to push out by hand due to the steep ditch.

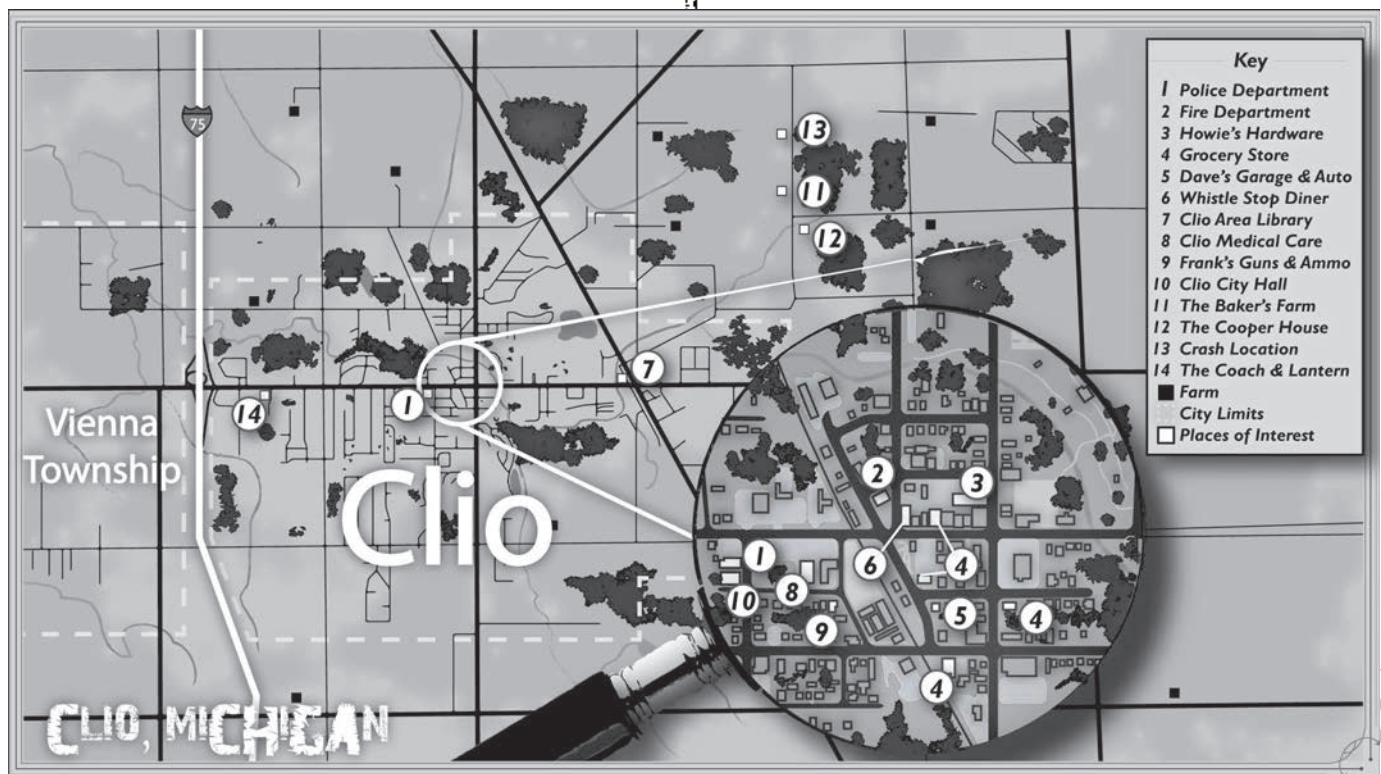
Looking around, the investigators see woods and farmland. About a mile and a half down the road, in the direction the van was facing, the lights of a farmhouse can be seen. Nothing but trees and cornfields, for as far as the eye can see, in the increasing gloom lies in the other three directions. Going to the farmhouse, the investigators could get some much needed information, like where they are or just the number of a garage with a tow truck. They should get a move on, because not only is it dusk with full on night fast approaching, but it has just started a cold September rain.

So to recap, the investigators have no real idea of who they are, who any of the others are, what they're doing together in a van, why they are all filthy, how their van ran off the road, and why they feel like they just went twelve rounds with a heavyweight boxing champion.

Let the fun begin.

KEEPER'S INFORMATION

So what happened to the investigators? While investigating the reportedly haunted Cooper house, the investigators were



THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND

led into a trap that ultimately brought them face to face with the Great Old One, Eihort. This scenario dares to make an assumption on the part of the investigators, something admittedly rarely done in Call of Cthulhu, and that it is: that faced with certain death, they would choose to live. That is a pretty safe assumption to make, given what Eihort did to poor Lyn Cartwright first (more on her soon). That is the deal Eihort offers to any that cross its path: do you want to live? The Lord of the Labyrinth asked the remaining investigators the same thing, they said yes, and only then did they learn the price of their continued existence.

One by one, Eihort shoved a long, pulsing, fleshy tube down each investigator's throat and pumped them full of its immature young, known as its Brood. Once that horror was done, Eihort wiped the memory of the event from everyone's mind, as it is wont to do, and then released them. The investigators, defiled, possibly insane (more on that in a moment), physically exhausted, and in pain, then crawled out of the hidden chamber underneath the basement of Cooper house. They lurched along, falling and crawling, some helping others that just couldn't make it on their own, before piling into the van and starting back for the town of Clio. All the while, Eihort's powerful Cloud Memory spell ate away at their minds. Within a matter of minutes, the investigators totally succumbed to the spell's power, and one by one they passed out, including the driver of the van. That is how their vehicle wound up in the ditch.

This horrible ordeal is what the two SAN rolls at the start were for, and why they were called for before the game began and in secret. The nightmarish events have already happened, and the investigators have had their memories purged of the events...at least for now. What the investigators don't know yet is that there is a missing member of their group, a woman by the name of Lyn Cartwright. She was the first person approached by Eihort and asked if she wanted to live. In a state

EIHORT'S LABYRINTH

This scenario changes things from the Call of Cthulhu rulebook a bit. Here, Eihort's labyrinth is much larger than presented there, and it is not just limited to being beneath England's Severn Valley. It is literally globe-spanning, and entrances to it can be found all over the world. Whether the labyrinth is physically that large, or it has extra-dimensional gates throughout it that connect individual, separate labyrinths together, is up to the Keeper to decide.

of shock from seeing the Great Old One, all the poor woman could do was to shake her head and cry hysterically. So Eihort crushed the woman to death. All of the investigators saw this and suffered 1/1D8 points of Sanity loss. After that demonstration, the investigators themselves agreed that they wanted to live. Just seeing Eihort costs Sanity, but suffering through its horrifying implantation also costs Sanity, so for that combined awful experience, the investigators lost 1D6+3/1D20+3 points of Sanity. See the nearby sections on how this Sanity loss and these horrible memories will affect the investigators during the game.

Now, the investigators have Eihort's living, growing, and multiplying Brood inside of them, and if they don't get rid of them soon, they are in for much more pain, madness, and finally death. Luckily for them, there is a way to purge the Brood from their bodies. Unfortunately for them, how to accomplish this lies with the person who set them up for their gruesome fate in the first place—a person that they currently do not even know exists.

EXPERIENCED INVESTIGATORS, AND DEALING WITH THE CRY OF "BUT MY INVESTIGATOR WOULDN'T HAVE DONE THAT!"

Should the Keeper be running this adventure for a group of continuing investigators who are used to facing monsters, and have weapons or perhaps even magic, once the players find out what happened to them, one or more might say something along the lines of: "Well what about my shotgun or my Withering spell? No way I'd just stand there like a punk and let Eihort do that to me." So be prepared for that.

If an investigator lost enough Sanity to go temporarily insane (a very likely possibility here, but technically the +3 modifier for the Eihort encounter comes after the bargain is made and the blobby monstrosity abuses them), or worse, then they would not have been in any shape to offer resistance, so those objections are easily handled.

If you know that one of your players is a 'go down fighting' kind of investigator and they made both SAN rolls and luckily lost only a few Sanity Points, then give them a sprained wrist, sore arm, or perhaps a broken arm. When they look for their favorite weapon, they find that it's missing. Then be sure, when you describe the memories of the horrible encounter later, that you have Eihort walk up to the annoying investigator and smack the weapon from their hands, injuring them in the process.

Lastly, the room where they encountered the Great Old One is not very big and was sealed behind them, so they had no place to run. It was either submit or die. And should someone stick their chin out and growl, "I would never have given in, I would rather have died first!" tell them yes, you always thought that, but when it came right down to it, when you actually saw inescapable death coming for you, you blinked. Both history and the world around us are full of people that had the strength of their convictions, right up until the moment they were truly tested, then they balked and hated themselves later. Call of Cthulhu is not a heroic game. It's a horror game, it's a hard game, and having someone live with their less than gloriously noble decisions is a hard thing to do, but it is a very real thing to do, and helps build great characters.

FORGET ME NOT



What really befell the investigators.

STARTING OFF CRAZY

Right from the start, the poor investigators are going to have lost some Sanity points, and quite likely be temporarily insane. Best case scenario, where an investigator made both SAN rolls and rolled the minimum for their Sanity losses, they will be down 5 points of Sanity. At worst, it will be a mind-shattering 31 points! Most will fall somewhere in between. This means that there is a good chance that one or more investigators are going to have a brand new indefinite insanity to play with, so you may need to pick an insanity for each investigator. Here are some suggestions, but feel free to go with any insanity that speaks best to you.

Arachnophobia: the fear of spiders. Eihort is a many-legged thing of darkness, and its brood is often described as spider-like. When the investigators encountered Eihort, it had a large number of its brood scuttling around and all over it. The reason for this phobia should be plain.

Claustrophobia: the fear of small, confined spaces. The horrible assault perpetrated upon the investigator happened in a relatively small and underground room. Now, whenever faced with a tight space, the investigator associates it with the awful nightmare that happened to him.

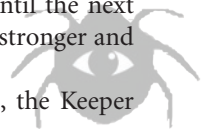
Sitophobia: the fear of eating. This is a real nasty one. Because of the vicious assault Eihort perpetrated on the investigator, he now has a hard time placing anything in his mouth or swallowing anything of substance. This can lead to starvation, more quickly to exhaustion, and, if not treated, death. Water

and thin liquids such as soup broth are fine, but anything thicker causes the person to gag and vomit. Even brushing one's teeth may be difficult to impossible. The investigator can survive for a while on a strict liquid diet, but weight loss and overall weakness will be a side effect.

Obsessive ritual/Mysophobia: fear of uncleanness and germs. After what the investigator went through, he can never feel clean. Can you blame him? This isn't exactly like mysophobia, where a person is reluctant to touch anything for fear of germs, it's just that everything he touches feels horribly filthy. Like a hot, putrid, flyblown, road kill skunk in June. Worse yet, he always feels dirty, as if a film of filth is constantly on him, one he can never scrub off no matter how many showers he takes. This can lead the victim to roughly wash his hands, face, or body until they bleed. Maybe he cuts off all his hair, because it always feels lank and disgusting? Perhaps he even starts scrubbing himself with bleach?

Now that you have an insanity chosen for the investigator(s), how should you implement it? The answer is over time. Also, feel free to embellish it for maximum fear factor. For example, if someone has arachnophobia, perhaps he reaches out for his breakfast plate, only to see it crawling with misshapen, white spiders. Pulling his hand away with a shriek, he looks again to see no spiders at all. The person with claustrophobia could go into their closet at the motel to get something and suddenly have a panic attack that lasts for a few minutes. When it's over, he's fine again...until the next time he's in a small space, and then the panic is stronger and lasts longer.

As for implementing the lost Sanity points, the Keeper



THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND

should make note of the total points lost, and then dole them out sparingly, whenever they remember something about their missing days or have an episode of insanity. For example, say investigator #1 lost a total of 14 Sanity Points in her encounter with Eihort. Should she recover a frightening memory of the event, such as wandering through the creepy, dark basement of the Cooper house, then she would lose two or three points of SAN. Even a mundane memory may cost a single Sanity Point, such as the investigator remembering talking to someone about the Cooper house during their first investigation into it. Lastly, should she have an episode of her insanity (in this case let's say its arachnophobia, and she wakes up screaming, convinced that spiders are crawling all over her) she could lose two to four points. Once Investigator #1 has lost all of her allotted 14 points of SAN, she will no longer lose any more due to the returning memories, but can still lose more Sanity points for other horrors as stated in this adventure.

MUDDLED MEMORIES

Exactly how, when, and where the investigators get their memories back is ultimately left up to the Keeper, although suggestions are offered. No one should get all of his missing memories in a big, single rush, though. They should be spread out and come back fragmented, piece by piece. As you read through this adventure there will be suggested memories from time to time, but they are only that; suggestions. Feel free to use any that you wish, ignore the ones you don't like, or make up new ones that fit the story and your players best.

If you have investigators who go far off the beaten path and don't come across any of the suggested ways for memories to be restored, you can have memories come to them in dreams, or as a sudden shock out of the blue. The mind is a mysterious thing, and there's no telling how it will react to the various traumas inflicted upon it by Eihort.

As for the "big reveal"; the memories of just what happened underneath the Cooper house and the investigators' encounter with the Great Old One, that is completely left up to the Keeper as to when that horrible genie is let out of the bottle. It should not be right away, and only after the investigators have had other memories and hopefully some nightmares and incidents of sickness from the Brood growing inside of them. This horrible memory should not be parceled out piece by piece, but delivered all at once, as a hammer blow.

AFTER THE ACCIDENT

If the investigators go to the nearby farmhouse, they must make a creepy and cold walk in the nighttime rain, and all that entails should be played up for maximum effect. Have the investigators jumping at shadows, seeing movement in the nearby forest or corn fields when none is there, and startle them with booms of thunder or flashes of lightning.

The family that owns the farmhouse, the Bakers, will gladly call a tow truck from Dave's Garage, which will arrive at the van an hour later. They will also offer to call the cops or an ambulance for the investigators, based on the looks of them.

Dave will pull the van out of the ditch for \$80. After that,

WHO DOES WHAT?

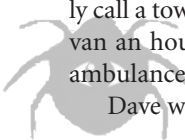
If the investigators are members of The Supernatural Files TV show, they will need to have appropriate jobs. The missing woman, Lyn Cartwright, was the show's field producer, so that leaves the following professions, listed here in order of importance to the show. Certain kinds of skill sets have to be part of the show for it to run properly. The Keeper should feel free to modify this list as he sees fit. For example, if you want two camera operators, that's not uncommon for many TV shows. Another addition that would be at home on this show would be a "psychic" on air personality, although whether or not that psychic is legitimately gifted with special powers, or just a fraud, is up to the Keeper to decide.

- ✂ On air host: *Credit Rating; Fast Talk; Persuade*
- ✂ Camera operator: *Computer Use; Photography; Spot Hidden*
- ✂ Sound engineer: *Electrical Repair; Electronics; Listen*
- ✂ Production assistant: *Computer Use; Drive Auto; Mechanical Repair*
- ✂ Co-host/supernatural expert: *History; Library Use; Occult*
- ✂ Co-host/science expert: *Biology; Chemistry; Physics*
- ✂ Co-host/psychologist: *Persuade; Psychoanalysis; Psychology.*

the investigators will be able to drive the van wherever they want. Neither the Bakers nor Dave the tow truck driver have anything of real worth to tell the investigators. They can give some them basic information on Clio. It's a small town that is a mix of subdivisions and farmland, with less than 2000 souls living in it. It is right off of Interstate 75, which runs from the top of Michigan's Lower Peninsula down to Miami, Florida. Despite that, it might accurately be called the middle of nowhere.

Should the investigators make a leap of logic and ask the Bakers if anything "strange" can be found down the road (McCumsey Road, the Bakers can tell them) that they were on when they ran into the ditch, the husband and wife will exchange a brief look and say no. A Psychology roll says that they are lying. A successful Persuade roll gets the father to say, "Well, there is the old Cooper farm. Folks around here have been saying it's haunted since before I was a kid. But that's just local superstition and nonsense, nothing more." A second Psychology roll reveals that Mr. Baker is hiding something: fear. Another Persuade roll will get him to tell them that as a kid he took a dare to go into the eerie Cooper house at night. While noting really happened to him, his childhood imagination got the better of him. He now believes that there might be something to that haunted house "nonsense", although he'll never admit that last part to anyone. If asked, he can give rough directions on how to find the Cooper house.

Memory: the first time that any investigator learns of the Cooper house, they are sure that they have been there before. They recall driving up to it during daylight, seeing the tall sea



FORGET ME NOT

of green corn stalks behind it; the old, dilapidated barn; and the ramshackle ruin of a house. There is a feeling of excitement, and maybe a bit of nervousness, associated with this memory.

GETTING MEDICAL ATTENTION?

The investigators may want to get medical help if they woke up with a serious injury in the van, or later once they discover that something is very wrong inside them. Clio is too small for a hospital, but it does have the Clio Urgent Medical Care Center. Think of it as a regular doctor's office, but with an ambulance, a blood lab, an x-ray machine, and it is open 24 hours. For more serious or specialized treatment, the nearest full sized hospital is St. Mary's of Michigan, which is 20 miles away in Saginaw.

The Clio Medical Center can give them blood tests and X-rays, but neither reveals anything out of the ordinary. If the investigators want a more high-tech look inside of them, they can get a MRI or CT and PET scans at the aforementioned Saginaw hospital. The doctor on call at St. Mary's is Andrew "Doc" Cowie.

Sophisticated imaging studies (MRI, CT, PET) will require you, as Keeper, to make a decision as to the outcome. You can have the scans show nothing at all, and thereby possibly increase the fear and paranoia as the investigators wonder if something is truly wrong with them, or if they are just insane.

You could have the machines breakdown or fail when used on the investigators. Perhaps the images rendered by the scanners are just dark, indistinct blobs, or maybe the machines

blow up dramatically in a shower of sparks. When you are dealing with the Mythos, anything is possible. This should tell the investigators that something is wrong with them, but still leave the mystery of what's inside them to be discovered later.

Or, you could have the scans work as designed, and show dozens to hundreds of "little, round things" inside them. These dark spots appear all throughout the investigators' bodies, from head to toe. "Doc" Cowie is at a loss to explain them, but is very worried for the investigators. The dreaded "c-word" (cancer) is likely brought up, and the medical team will want to do exploratory surgery as soon as possible. This grim news costs 1/1D6 SAN. This is also the least advisable scenario for the Keeper to use. Why? Because as soon as the investigator is opened up, with even the most minor surgery, the Brood inside of them will panic and come bursting out of their shell. That shell being the investigator, who will not survive the process. As for the Brood, they will flee, squeezing under doors and through cracks, leaving only an empty, bloody corpse, and a very traumatized surgical team. Should the other investigators learn of the gruesome events, charge them 0/1D6 SAN.

Memory: if the investigator has their mouth/throat examined by a doctor, they are suddenly afflicted with a strong choking sensation. They "feel" something being rammed into their mouth and forced down their throat all the way down to their stomach. This is largely a tactile memory, but there is a single auditory component: a loud, rough voice saying "BE MINE". These two words are not so much heard as they are felt or just simply known. If the investigator is still losing Sanity Points

"Doc" Cowie



THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND

from returning memories, this one can cost up to 4. If they have already lost all the SAN from returned memories, then they still lose an additional 0/1D6 for this experience.

GETTING THE LAW INVOLVED

While a very small township, Clio does have its own police department. It is comprised of a chief, one detective, one sergeant (Joseph Kennedy), six officers, and three 911 operators/radio dispatchers, one per eight-hour shift for around the clock coverage. The investigator may wish to go to the police for help, but not knowing much of what happened to them, or who was behind it, what exactly can the cops do?

Even after they find out that someone they knew (Lyn Cartwright) could be missing, the cops could be slow to act. After all, if the investigators do not know what happened to them, how do they know that Lyn was with them when whatever “bad thing” it was befell them? Maybe she left hours or days before? And even if they do believe that a woman might be missing, the police will likely pull the old “you’ve got to wait 48 hours before filing a missing persons report” line. This is a myth, and a successful Law roll will tell the investigators this. A lot of police departments tell people this, because many who are reported missing return on their own accord within two days, and this saves the police from wasting resources looking for people who are not really missing. However, if the investigators call the cops’ bluff, then they will file a report and say they’ll start looking for her. Their efforts will nonetheless be half-hearted until 48 hours have passed, absent reason to believe that Lyn has become a crime victim or some other articulable reason that she may be in danger. This level of evidence is unlikely to be unearthed until toward the end of the scenario.

If the investigators convince the police to check out the Cooper house, with a very successful Persuade roll, then unless they have remembered the secret room in the basement, all that the cops will find is one or two pieces of equipment dropped by the investigators when they fled the house. That proves nothing, other than that the investigators may have been trespassing.

But if the investigators know about the secret room underneath the Cooper house, or they have proof of Lyn’s death, then things will play out differently, and the police could be of help in an ensuing confrontation. That is left up to the Keeper to decide upon.

AT THE MOTEL

When investigators make it (back) to The Coach & Lantern Motel, one of them (chosen by the Keeper) gets the following memory:

Memory: the investigator is sitting in the passenger seat of the van. Next to them, one of the other investigators (chosen by the Keeper) is driving the vehicle and says “This looks like the only game in town.” The van then pulls into the motel’s parking lot. From behind, the voice of a woman says, “all right, let’s get some rooms and then something to eat. I’m starving, and dinner is on me.” Turning around, the investigator sees a red-haired woman that he does not recognize, although he

feels that he should. This woman was not one of the people who awoke with the investigators in the van on the side of the road.

The Coach & Lantern is a smallish motel, located a mile from Interstate 75. It has a dozen reasonably clean rooms, a selection of vending machines, a swimming pool out back, and cable TV in every room. The investigators have the room keys starting with room #3 and continuing in a line until each person has a room, with the notable exception of room #4, which was Lyn Cartwright’s room. Lyn is the missing red-headed woman from the previous memory. She is the field producer of The Supernatural Files television show, killed by Eihort in the secret room beneath the Cooper house, although none of the investigators will know that yet.

An elderly couple, Bob and Anne Sawyer, run the motel with the part-time help of their full grown son, Thomas, and his wife, Lisa. They cannot tell the investigators much if questioned, but they do have a few helpful hints.

- ✘ The investigators arrived three days ago, and they each got a room. They said that they were in town to interview people for a TV show, but they did not go into greater detail.
- ✘ There were X of them that checked in (where X = the number of investigators + 1; the missing Lyn Cartwright). Bob Sawyer, who was running the motel’s check-in desk when the investigators arrived, can describe the missing person as “A pretty, redheaded lady. About mid-thirties. You all seemed to know each other well. How is it that you forgot her?”
- ✘ Just asking nicely will allow investigators to look at the motel’s computer that acts as its registry book. They will see all of their names, room numbers, and that they all checked in at the same time. They will also see the name of the missing woman, Lyn Cartwright, and that she was checking into room #4. It will take a Persuade roll to get the Sawyers to open up Lyn’s room for the investigators. Even if the investigators knew the woman, the motel owners say that they have to protect the privacy of their guests.

THE INVESTIGATORS’ ROOMS

The investigators stayed at the motel for two and a half days before leaving for the Cooper house, so any sort of pre-shooting day research can be found in their rooms. The clues and hints listed here should be divided between all of the investigators’ rooms, and if one of them misses finding one, the Keeper should move it into another investigator’s room for them to find.

- ✘ A black T-shirt with “TSF” on the left breast and “The Supernatural Files” printed on the back. Any member of the crew can have one of these, but probably not the on-camera talent, as they prefer to “look professional.”

FORGET ME NOT

- ✧ A manila folder with photocopies of old newspaper articles in it. (**Forget Me Not Handouts #1, #2, #3, & #4**).
- ✧ Several Digital Audio Tapes. These will be found in the room of whoever is the sound engineer. That person is a professional, so each tape is marked with annotations so that it can easily be linked up to the corresponding video, but those are the only marks on the tapes. The equipment needed to listen to these tapes is not in this room (it was dropped by the sound engineer when they fled from the Cooper house), nor is the corresponding video (that was dropped by the camera operator at the same place for the same reason). Should the investigators find a way to listen to these tapes, they will hear several audio interview with Clio locals about the Cooper house. This is a good time for the Keeper to break out any of their favorite haunted house stories, as these tall tales should be all over the place. An example of one is below.
- ✧ Laptop computer in the camera operator's room, onto which some video has been downloaded. The footage is silent "B-roll" coverage of the outside of the Cooper house, and various shots of the town of Clio, woods, and corn fields. The whole thing runs for close to three hours. The video was obviously shot to be background filler or establishing shots for the episode, to be used with spooky music or narration by the host running over it. Should the camera operator watch this, he remembers shooting some of the various locations, and when it shows the Cooper house, that triggers another memory.

Memory: this is an auditory memory, so the investigator will suddenly start hearing voices out of nowhere. "What do you mean the door is locked?" one of the investigators says. "I mean it's closed and locked. I can't open it," the camera operator remembers saying. "Wait, where is -" someone else begins, but is cut off by someone screaming. "What the hell is that?" a woman (Lyn Cartwright) shrieks. The rest is a cacophony of screams and shouts of "Get away from it!", "Run!", "How do we get out of here?" and the like. Then one voice cuts through the din; it is incredibly loud and powerful and it physically hurts to hear it: "DO YOU WANT TO LIVE?"

- ✧ Laptop computer in the on air host's room. When turned on, it is discovered to be password protected. The host investigator can try a halved Idea roll to remember the password, "whoyougonnacall," or a successful Computer Use roll with get around it. Inside the desktop wallpaper is a group shot of all the investigators standing in front of an old spooky house (not the Cooper house). Some wear The Supernatural Files t-shirts, some hold cameras, audio equipment, lights, etc. There is a pretty woman with red hair to the right of the host that the investigator knows that he knows, but cannot place. Also on the computer are several shooting scripts for old episodes. There are emails to a bunch of people that end with @

Clio Teen Still Missing

By ELLEN SHAW

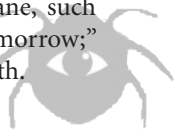
CLIO, MI—It has been four days since the parents of 15 year old Tiffany Jensen reported her missing, after she failed to come home from a bonfire party at a friend's house. On Friday, a group of Tiffany's classmates gathered to celebrate the end of another school year, a tradition followed by many Clio teens for years. The party was held behind the barn of a farm owned by the family of one of the high school students, but it has become apparent that it wasn't supervised, and that underage drinking and drug use may have been involved.

It has also become known that a group of kids then partook of another Clio tradition, scaring themselves by daring each other to enter the long abandoned Cooper house. The Cooper house is a local "haunted house" where the notorious Andy Cooper went crazy and murdered his wife and child in 1965. According to one seventeen-year-old: "A bunch of us walked to the Cooper house and then, one by one, we had to go in alone, find something and bring it out as proof. Well, I remember Tiffany going into the house, and I think she came back out, but I'm not sure. A lot of us were kind of drunk by then."

Both state and local police searched the Cooper house and the surrounding corn fields and woods, but reported no sign of the missing girl. Chief Wallman of the Clio Police Department issued a brief statement: "We are treating this as a missing person's case. There is no evidence that the girl was abducted, nor are we working under the assumption that she ran away. Right now all we know is that Ms. Jensen is missing and we are not ruling any possibility out."

Forget Me Not Handout #1—From the Saginaw News, June 19th, 1990

thesupernaturalfiles.com about a whole bunch of TV related things. A second Computer Use roll can trace that email address back to IP address from California. Only a few emails have "Cooper House" in their subject line and they are all rather mundane, such as "we're here;" "we begin interviewing tomorrow;" "everything is right on schedule," and so forth.



THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND

INSIDE LYN'S ROOM

The investigators are sure to want to get into the room of their missing colleague, once they become aware of her existence. A Persuade or Fast Talk roll with the motel owners could get them to open the door. Failing that, a Locksmith roll at the door, or a Luck roll at the back bathroom window to find it open, could do it. Should anyone take the very direct route and try to kick the door in, several minutes of noisy effort succeed.

Inside, the hint of Lyn's perfume remains (perhaps triggering the "Love Story" memory if nothing else has yet), Her two suitcases are sitting neatly by the single bed and her laptop computer is on the small desk. The suitcases only hold some clothes, toiletries, and a Stephen King paperback, 11/22/63, about the assassination of President Kennedy. Her laptop is password protected.

If you decided to use the lovers subplot, then that investigator can attempt a halved Idea roll to remember her

password (babybast, derived from the name of her cat). Failing that, it will take a Computer Use roll to get around the password. Failing that, the Keeper can have this info (a list of the people the investigators have talked to about the Cooper house, but have forgotten) written out on a pad of paper next to the missing woman's computer. This is *Forget Me Not, Investigator Handout #6*.

In addition to the list, if you are using the lovers subplot, there can be steamy emails and pictures from one of the investigators on Lyn's computer. There will also be a lot of email correspondence between Lyn and Miller/Frost Studios back in Los Angeles, California. After a bit of snooping, it becomes clear that Miller/Frost Studios is a small production house that produces *The Supernatural Files*. These emails cover mundane matters that a producer would need

to handle while shooting episodes in the field, such as travel arrangements, keeping an expense account, and sending raw "dailies" footage back to L.A. via a corporate file sharing site on the Internet. Many of the recent emails mention the Cooper house, but only that the crew was scheduled to shoot their latest episode there.

Should the Keeper want to play up the mystery of the missing woman and perhaps have the investigators question Lyn's loyalties, they can find an email to MrBlackk@freemail-forall.net that simply says; "No, I've told no one about it. They don't suspect a thing." There are no other emails to or from "Mr. Blackk." While this may sound sinister, this was actually just the next case that the TSF crew was going to shoot, but Lyn (who was known as a fun woman by those that remember her) was saving it for a surprise. Should the investigators look into the matter and somehow unravel it, all that it turns out to be is that Mr. Blackk runs a haunted house (as in an amusement attraction) in Illinois that is reportedly haunted for real. That's right, they were going to investigate a haunted "haunted house", something Lyn was sure no other ghost hunting or paranormal TV show had ever done before.

TO SLEEP, PERCHANCE TO DREAM

By the time that the investigators get back to the motel and do a quick search of their rooms for clues, it could be 11:00 PM

Unidentified Body Found: Mysterious Circumstances Abound

By MARK NEIMANN

CLIO, MI—Last night the body of an as yet unidentified man was found in a corn field, in the small town of Clio, with no clue as to how the man came to be where he was discovered. The closest building was a farmhouse on McCumsey Road that has been abandoned for well over a decade. Locals have begun to be questioned, but so far no one has reported anyone missing.

Police claim they are not ruling anything out, but they said that this case does not look to be one of foul play. One person close to the case, who wanted to remain anonymous, said, "There's no way a man could do that to another man. It is evident that the body wasn't dead long, but there wasn't a whole lot left of it. Most of its insides were just gone. To me it looked like a bear or something large and hungry got ahold of the poor fellow."

When asked about the possibility of an animal attack, Clio police declined to comment on the record.

A LOVE STORY?

As an option, the Keeper could set up a secret romance between Lyn the producer and the host of *The Supernatural Files*. This love affair could have been kept secret for professional reasons, or private ones. Perhaps one of the two is married to someone else, or if the host is a woman, then maybe one of the women is a closeted lesbian not ready to come out. Also, who knows how secret this workplace relationship really was? Perhaps one of the other investigators will remember it in time. If the Keeper wants to implement this option, then the host should find some romantic emails on their laptop from Lyn, and perhaps in this age of sexting and pic swapping, some sexy, naked photos of the woman. If so, cue another memory:

Memory: the investigator has a warm, sweet memory of Lyn come back to them. The couple is in bed together, they have just finished making love and they're in each other's arms. It plays out in their mind like a scene from a romance movie complete with candles, wine, and soft music. Everything is perfect. The investigator feels perfectly content and loved. Smash cut to a close up Lyn's bloody, tear-streaming, screaming face. The woman is shrieking in absolute pain and terror. Gore continues to pour down her face. Her eyes fill up with blood and begin to bulge from their sockets. And then a voice, inhumanly loud and strong fills the investigator's head, causing pain due to its incredible volume. It says: "THEN YOU WILL DIE." If the investigator is still losing SAN for recovered memories, this one costs 3 points. If not, then this horrible memory costs 1/1D6 SAN.

*Forget Me Not Handout #2—
From the Flint Journal, November
5th, 1979*

FORGET ME NOT

Detroit Free Press

189

On Guard for 134 Years

Wednesday, March 13, 1965

Murder In Clio

By PHIL BRESSLER

CLIO, MI—Yesterday, the small farming community of Clio in Genesee County was shocked to its core when one of their own apparently went mad, with deadly results. John Cooper, aged 51, a farmer, war veteran, volunteer fireman, and man held in high regard in his small community of less than 1800 souls, murdered his wife Edna, aged 45, and their son Thomas, aged 15. The town sheriff was called out to the Cooper house in the early morning, after nearest neighbors heard multiple gunshots coming from the direction of the house. By the time Sheriff Snyder made it out to the Cooper residence, both the mother and the child were dead, and according to officials, "John had mutilated the bodies after death, cutting them open and removing much of their insides."

According to Sheriff Snyder, "Mr. Cooper was in the front yard when I pulled up. He was splattered with blood, babbling, with tears running down his face. He was digging at the ground with his bare hands, cursing at it, and next to him was his pump shotgun. I approached carefully and asked him what had happened, but all he would say was, "They got to us. Somehow, I don't know when, but they were inside them. My Edna and my boy. They're inside me too." I apprehended Mr. Cooper without incident and once my deputy arrived, I inspected the house and found Mrs. Cooper and her son in their bedrooms in a horrible state. There were several empty shotgun shells on the floor, and it was plain that Mr. Cooper had butchered the bodies after their death."

Mr. Cooper is now in a Genesee County jail cell awaiting arraignment.

✧ You run as fast as you dare, one hand cupped over the flickering candle flame—your only source of light. You must not let that light go out. Higher and higher you climb the stairs. You know that it's a mistake to go up any more, but you cannot go back. It is behind you. In the dark. And it is coming for you. Now you are in the attic, there is nowhere else to run. A window is broken, and rain and wind blow in. Outside is only darkness. Outside of the attic door: darkness. It wants you. Then, with a gust of wind, the candle goes out and you are plunged shrieking into blackness. And in the dark, you know it is with you. The last thing you see is a three-lobed, burning eye. (+1% to Cthulhu Mythos, SAN loss 0/1D8)

✧ Drums. Drums awake you. It is the savage things again. From above, dancing, fornicating, and spilling blood in your name. Trying to win your favor. Fools. You care not for worship, you only wish to slumber. It is not time for you to awaken yet. Not fully. Still, now that they have roused you, your hunger returns.

Terrible, gnawing, unending hunger. So you sluggishly make your way through the red-lit darkness around you. Your ebony spawn slither quickly from your path. The way to the surface is long, but you have time, and the savage things above will not stop their drumming until you answer their summons. Of all the creatures that you have known over the aeons, man is the most persistent in its adulation. (+1% to Cthulhu Mythos, SAN loss 1/1D6, INT x3 to learn spell: Contact Tsathoggua)

✧ You move through a city that is completely empty of life, but it is far from silent. All around you the cries of sadness and terror can be heard, but there is no sign of those doing the weeping. While the strange city is lifeless, you are not alone. All around you are unmoving dark figures, but you know they are not ones who are crying. Time and time again, you reach out to the dark shapes, only to watch in horror as they crumble to dust and ash at your slightest caress. Then suddenly, someone is touching you, on the shoulder from behind. You twirl about, ecstatic to find another living soul in this dead place, but all joy vanishes when you see a figure clad in tattered, yellow robes, wearing a cracked, pallid mask. It asks you: "Tell me, have you seen the Yellow Sign?" (+1% to Cthulhu Mythos, SAN loss: 0/1D8).

Forget Me Not Handout #3—From the Detroit Free Press, March 13th, 1965

or later, and after their horrible (yet still forgotten for now) experience at the Cooper house, they will be exhausted and ready for bed. After turning in for the night, the investigators will start to realize just how much trouble they are in.

This is because as the Brood grow and multiply inside them, they have a side effect of sending dreams full of images and information on the Cthulhu Mythos into the minds of their host. As time goes by, these nightmares can also become waking visions and hallucinations. Furthermore, in addition to being haunting and Sanity draining, these dreams can impart Cthulhu Mythos skill and even spells. Here are a few suggestions for dreams, but the Keeper should feel free to come up with any weird and haunting ones that they like:

✧ Your hands are stained in blood. In one is a dripping knife, in the other is a yellowed skull covered in runes, with sentimental value to you. It belonged to your great-grandfather, the first of your line to speak with the children of the grave, the man who changed your family from simple peasants to the wealthiest house in Toulouse. All thanks to the secrets of those who eat death, and for the sacrifices that your family has made. A brief flash of sadness then fills you, but you quickly dismiss it. After all, your beautiful wife is still young and you can always have more children. (+1% to Cthulhu Mythos, SAN loss 1/1D6. INT x2 to learn spell: Contact Ghoul).



THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND

Clio Messenger

THREE-DAY WEATHER FORECAST		
TODAY	TOMORROW	FRIDAY
North: Dry with some showers Max 22C (72F) Min 14C (57F)	North: Warm, some sunny spells but rain in far north Max 22C (72F) Min 14C (57F)	North: An... Max 22C Min 13C
South: Rain spreading north, downpours in West Max 23C (73F) Min 14C (57F)	South: Hot and sunny Max 23C (90F) Min 14C (57F)	South: ... Max 23C Min 15C

HOME

APRIL 20TH, 2011

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No Horrors for Local Haunted House

BY SUSAN MARSH

In case you missed it, our very own Clio was all set to be the site of a horror movie, made by a production house from Canada called 7 Gate Films. The star of this show? The long rumored to be haunted Cooper house. According to film producer Trevor Cunningham, "We had heard about the tragic story behind Mr. Cooper, what he did to his family, and his mysterious death in prison, combined with some of the legends that have been in Clio for years, and we thought it would make a great setting for a mod-

estly budgeted, direct to DVD horror film shot in the found footage style. So we contacted the mayor and Ms. Volker (the realtor who oversees the Cooper House) and we thought everything was a go. So we came down from Vancouver to set things up on this end." However, some vocal locals also learned of a movie being made about our infamous Cooper house and petitioned the city council to revoke the filming permits need by the Canadian company to shoot here. Their reasoning being that a bloody horror movie was the wrong kind of image for the city of Clio. Proponents of the movie

cited the boon to local businesses that hosting a film crew would bring to Clio, but yesterday the city council voted 3 to 2 against letting the movie be shot here. Said Mr. Cunningham; "Naturally we're upset and confused by the ruling. We never intended to exploit your town or any of its tragedy, and many business owners here said they were happy to have us, but I guess what's done is done and we'll have to do another haunted house story is some other town that wants us."



Forget Me Not Handout #4—From the Clio Messenger, April 20th, 2011

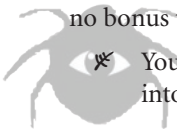
- ✘ Before you is an undulating mass of white, grub-like things with many scuttling legs, like a spider's. Corpulent and restless, the hoard rustles and writhes over everything and one another. They are too numerous to count, stretching out as far as your eye can see, a squirming sea of sickly, pus-colored life. There are millions of the things, and you know that they are waiting for when the time is right, to spill forth from below into the sunlit world above, to follow the will of their lord. And as alien as the creatures are, they do not repulse you...because you know that you are one of them. (+1% to Cthulhu Mythos, SAN loss 1/1D8).

Not all of the nightmares the investigators may suffer will be overtly Mythos oriented, or even directly derived from the Brood inside them. Once they know that something that is wrong with them, the investigators' minds can make up all sorts of horrors. Furthermore, subconsciously, they may know what has happened to them, even if they cannot remember, and their poor, insane minds may be trying to warn them in the only way they can; through dreams. These dreams are more like natural (albeit frightening) nightmares than the dreams forced into their minds by the Brood. Therefore they are more surreal, but less Sanity draining, and they provide no bonus to Cthulhu Mythos. Examples follow:

- ✘ You open your eyes to find yourself partially sealed into the walls of a cave. It seems that water deposits

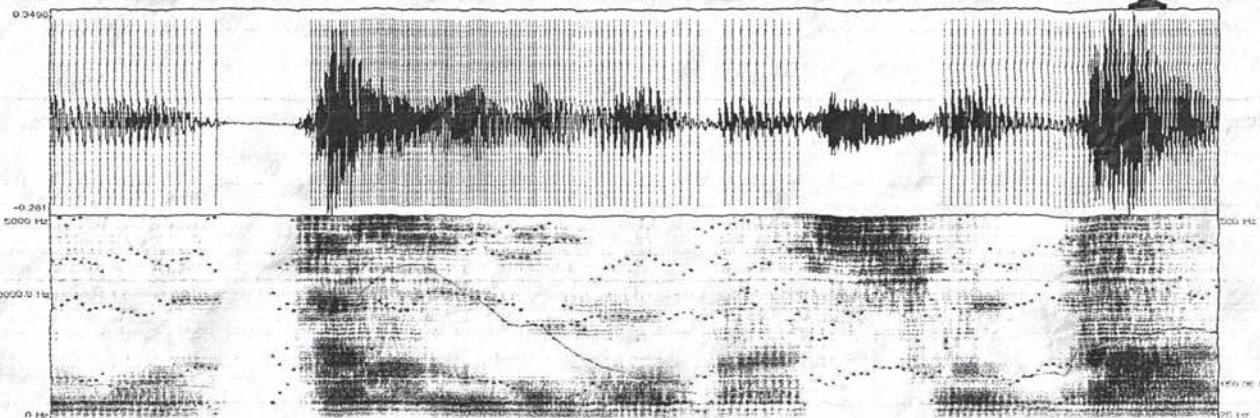
over a long time have sealed you in, making you part of the wall. All of a sudden, a deep and resoundingly haunting bellow or call echoes throughout the cave system, and you feel your jaw drop away unnaturally. Hundreds of tiny, featureless people run up your throat and out of your mouth. The tiny things all link up and head off, en masse, to some far away location, harking to the call of heaven knows what. (SAN loss 0/1).

- ✘ (This dream should be for any female investigator). You are walking towards a medical clinic and see a small but vocal crowd denouncing abortions outside of it. (If the player is pro-life): suddenly the protesters turn towards you and look on in horror at your swollen belly and scream "Quickly! Go in and get rid of them!" (If the player is pro-choice): you enter the clinic and take a seat. You notice that pregnant men as well as women are present in this room, each awaiting their turn to enter the private rooms. (For either opinion): You can feel movement in your distended belly. It is not the kick of a growing fetus, but a scuttling, scurrying sensation. Like a stomach full of worms or maggots. (SAN loss 0/2).
- ✘ It is dark and warm as your squirm inside the womb. You can hear muffled sounds around you, screams of pain and joy. Pressure builds around you, and you pulse forward, and then are shoved out through a tight orifice. You wiggle and squirm and squeak, and the Doctor, tall, looming with dark skin and very



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Sound File Transcript



+++ FILE: Clio-IV-29381_t04i1248_raw.aiff (24 bit, 96KHz, stereo, 120.2MiB)

Voice of sound engineer: "Tape 4, time index one-twelve-forty-eight. Interview with James Burke and Alexis Romanov..."

Voice of the host of *The Supernatural Files*: "So, James and Alexis, please tell us about the time you went into the Cooper house and what you saw."

Teenage boy (James): "Well, okay, so my friend Scotty dared us to go in and touch the bed where Cooper killed his kid, so we said sure."

Teenage girl (Alexis): "We found a window with the boards off of it around back, and Jimmy boosted me up into it the house, then I helped him up."

James: "And we were in the kitchen and there wasn't much to see there. So we went into the front room looking for the stairs up. It was all dark and very quiet inside the house, like too quiet. We couldn't hear anything outside no more. And there were all these big fat spiders all over the place."

Alexis: "Yeah, fat, ugly white ones. And then when we got to the stairs we both heard someone say 'Pa?'"

James: "Yeah, just like a little kid's voice. I heard it as well as I hear you now."

Alexis: "When we looked up the stairs at the second floor and we saw this figure. It was like a shadow, but it wasn't against the wall, it was at the top of the stairs. And it was small, like a little boy and while it didn't have a face, you could just tell it was looking at you. You could feel it."

James: "Yeah..."

Alexis: "And we were so scared..."

James: "Well, I wasn't that scared. So I tried to talk to the little boy, but then we heard a thump come from upstairs and the shadow kid just vanished. Then we heard a second thump, this one closer to the stairs."

Alexis: "And that's when we ran for it."

James: "Yeah, you just know it was the ghost of old Crazy Cooper and well, neither one of us wanted to see that."

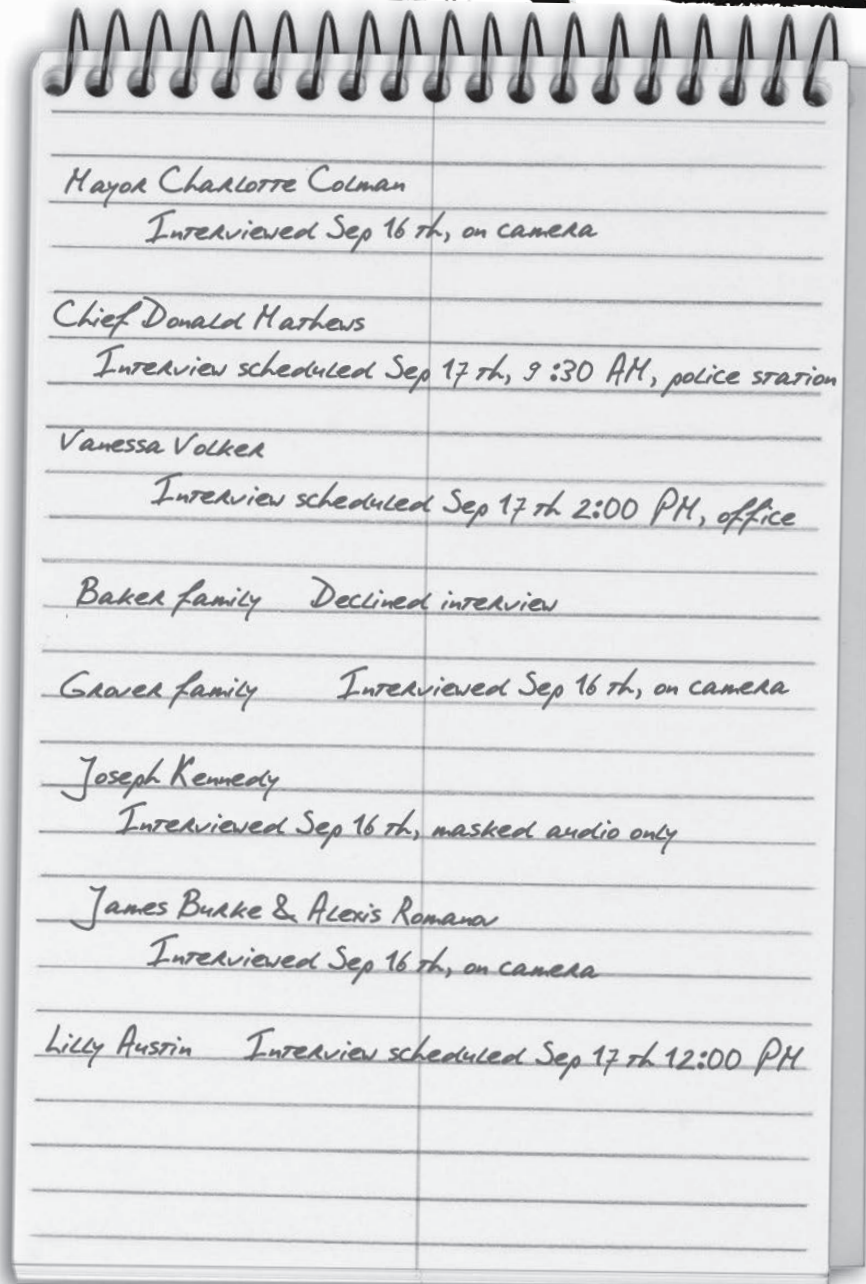
+++ FILE ENDS

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white teeth, announces that it's a (whatever gender the investigator is not). You are held up and then put on someone's bare chest. The owner of the chest which you are plopped on is you. You are staring up at yourself and a giant version of you stares back sightlessly, lacking awareness or recognition. Reflected in the eyes of the other you is the entirety all of the cosmos. (SAN loss 0/1).

- * (If possible, this dream should be had by the same investigator who suffered the one above). The folks at the nursing home really are not very nice. At 92 years old, you are incontinent, immobile and confined to bed. A blocky, hatchet-faced nurse rolls you over every few hours. An infected bed sore both hurts and smells. Sometimes she changes your diaper, sometimes she doesn't. Maggots wriggle and squirm in your offal, but no one seems to care. Corpulent, fleshy, younger versions of yourself come to visit you every day, claiming to be your children and grandchildren, trying to get you to eat, but you don't remember having any offspring. As night falls, a Doctor, tall, looming, with dark skin and very white teeth, comes in to see you. He looks at an X-ray and says, quite affably, not to worry—your pain will be over soon. The X-ray is a window and the things on the other side....well, it won't be much longer now...(SAN loss 0/1).

- * You are running, running, running in the dark. You have got to keep running, no matter how tired you are, you've got to get away from it. Soon, you find yourself running into narrower and narrower crevices to get away. (When the investigator awakes, he finds themselves crammed into some real world tight spot, like under their bed, or perhaps behind one of the vending machines outside of the motel. The investigator does not know how he got there, and is wearing the clothes he went to bed in. (Note: this is an actual psychological phenomenon. Those who have terminal cancer or have full-blown AIDS often have vivid dreams where they are attempting to outrun their fate in vain.) (SAN loss 0/1D3).



Forget Me Not Handout #6—List from Lyn's Room

I DON'T FEEL SO GOOD....

Eventually, the fast multiplying and growing Brood inside of the investigators will physically make themselves known. It will begin with stomach cramps and a headache, neither of which can be alleviated with medicine. Sudden hot and cold flashes will come and go, and hands will tremble uncontrollably for minutes on end, only to stop as suddenly as they began. Limbs could lose all strength without warning, causing the investigator to drop whatever they are holding, or to fall to the ground if it happens to a leg while walking or standing. Eventually a constant nausea sets in, making the investigator miserable and giving them a -10% to all skill rolls. This nausea can increase in severity as the Keeper sees fit, increasing the negatives to skill checks by -20% or -30%, at which time the investigators will become bedridden. Sudden and uncon-



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trollable bouts of diarrhea and vomiting may begin after a few days. The victim's vision could start to get blurry, imposing -10% to Spot Hidden and all ranged combat, in addition to the negatives imposed by nausea.

Why all the pain and suffering? Because the nasty Brood are gnawing their way through their fleshy incubator—the investigator. They are chewing tiny tunnels through meat, bone, muscle, and sinew, all to devastating effect. In fact, if the investigators take too long in finding a cure for what ails them, the damage will be too severe. In such a case, even if they expel the Brood from their bodies, they may well not survive the process. See the Balk Brood spell in the Call of Cthulhu rulebook, reproduced below, for details. Time is most certainly not on the investigators' side, so the Keeper should use some of the following horrible events to stress that point, and to sow fear and panic among your players.

- ✘ An investigator has an unexpected nosebleed, either at an inopportune time, or during their sleep, such that when they wake up the next morning, they are covered in blood. SAN loss for the latter is 0/1D2.
- ✘ An investigator suffers broken blood vessels in one or both of his eyes. This causes no damage, but their eye(s) is now blood red and is quite startling and unnerving. 0/1 SAN.
- ✘ During a powerful bout of vomiting, an investigator spews out blood and small, but noticeable, chunks of meat. This causes 1 Hit Point in damage that cannot be medically healed, and costs 0/1D3 SAN.

✘ Same bloody vomit as before, but the investigator also spews out 3 little white globs of pus...pus that suddenly scampers off on many, tiny legs! These little things are Eihort's Brood and they will head for darkness, underneath beds, or squeeze through cracks in doors or walls to get away. This nightmarish event costs 1 Hit Point in damage, but also 1/1D6+1 SAN the first time it happens. Furthermore, the first time that the Brood escape the investigator's body in this manner, the investigator is too stunned or freaked out to react quick enough to capture any of the fleeing creatures. Should this happen again, it cost 0/1D3 SAN, but a DEX x3 roll allows the investigator to react quickly enough to capture one of the Brood for later study.

✘ A more disgusting variant of above would be for an investigator to have a bowel movement and then, before flushing the toilet, they notice their own feces moving and wiggling. Breaking the fecal matter open to investigate releases four tiny Brood of Eihort, who make a run for it as described above. This costs 1/1D6 SAN the first time that it happens.

✘ Less disgusting, but just as horrible, while looking at himself in a mirror, an investigator notices two new lumps somewhere on their body, just below the skin. Poking at these lumps causes them to skitter around for a few seconds, still underneath their flesh, before retreating deeper into the investigator's body and out of view. This causes 1/1D6 SAN the first time that it happens.

CREEPY CRAWLERS

Once the investigators start spewing out the Brood, they may want to capture some for examination. This can be done in a number of ways, including just vomiting into a bucket and quickly sealing it.

Once they have secured a Broodling, they can get a good, close look at it, which costs 0/1D4 SAN. The Brood are small, off-white, globular creatures that have somewhat grub-like bodies, yet many spidery legs. They have little mouths stuffed with needle-like teeth and a number of eyes ranging from three to eight. The exact number varies from one creature to the next.

Dissecting one finds a rudimentary digestive system, no skeletal structure whatsoever, and some centralized organs that could be the tiny thing's brain, or heart, or lord only knows what. The Brood do not bleed, but leak a viscous foul smelling fluid when cut. However, such exploration had better be quick, as Brood turn to a white, formless goop a few minutes after death.

Trying to keep a Broodling alive for more extended study is hard. No matter what the investigators try to feed it, it will not eat in captivity. Within a day or two, any captured Brood will die of starvation and become a little pile of pus. They can also chew through almost anything if given enough time, so a caged Broodling might chew its way to freedom in the middle of the night, or when no one is looking.

RESEARCH – MAKING SOME CALLS

Investigators are likely going to want to look into some of the clues that they (re)discovered at the motel. First, they will almost certainly want to find out more information about themselves and The Supernatural Files. They can do that by calling Miller/Frost Studios in Los Angeles. After what are sure to be some awkward questions (no, really, you all got amnesia?) they can confirm who they are, who they work for, and why they were in Clio, Michigan. They will also confirm that someone else was with them (Lyn Cartwright), who was the show's producer and who is now missing. Other than that, no one at Miller/Frost has any useful information.

They may want to place a call to Canada and 7 Gate Films who were interested in making a movie at the Cooper house. Getting any info will require either a Persuade or Fast Talk roll, or perhaps a Credit Rating if someone plays the "hey, we're filming here now, maybe we can cut you in" card. If successful, they learn the same thing from the newspaper article. However, whoever they talk to hints that there could be more to the story. Further persuasion might get them to say that everyone at 7 Gate Films would just like to forget the Clio/Cooper project because two weeks after returning from it, a cameraman named David Kim disappeared. A week after that, his lighting assistant, Angie Walker, was gruesomely murdered. What they do not know is that both Kim and Walker were infested, mind wiped, and killed by erupting

THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND

Brood. The contact on the phone won't say more than that, and says that they have probably already said too much.

After that, calling the Vancouver police looking for information about the "murdered" woman, Angie Walker, will require someone pretending to be a member of law enforcement and making a heck of a Persuade or Fast Talk roll. A Law or Medicine roll might also convince the Canadian cops that they have a right to ask about such things. This gets the investigators some interesting information. Angie Walker was found alone in her apartment. The exact method of murder was unknown due to what the maniac did to the corpse after death. The poor woman was split down the middle and most of her insides were just gone. Quote: "It was like she was an empty bag. The crazy bastard must have taken her organs and even most of her bones with him. And if that wasn't weird enough, the door to the apartment was locked from the inside with a chain."

RESEARCH – THE LIBRARY AND INTERNET

Some useful information can be found at the library or the Internet. If the investigators want an old fashioned library, they will have to travel north to Saginaw or south to Flint to find a sizable one where Library Use rolls can be used. For the Internet, Computer Use rolls will be required.

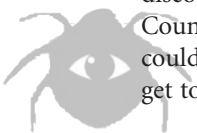
- ✘ The missing girl from 1990, Tiffany Jensen, was never found. What no one ever found out was that after leaving the Cooper house and Eihort, the girl wandered throughout the night, not knowing who she was. She made it to Interstate 75, where she was seen as easy prey for a rapist who abducted her. This ended badly for them both, when she literally exploded a few weeks later in captivity, after the Brood inside her matured. The rapist was sleeping in the dungeon he had constructed. His gnawed upon body (and the dungeon) have never been found.
- ✘ Looking for info on the unidentified and mutilated body found near the Cooper house in 1979 requires a Hard Computer Use roll. Success finds some authentic police crime scene photos on a sick, underground website that caters to the incredibly morbid. Called Beyond Bloody Death, the photos show the horrific scene of a man who appears to have burst from the inside out, from every conceivable, obsessive angle. Blood and viscera are strewn about the corpse, which is lying in knee-high weeds and patches of early November snow. Seeing this costs 0/1D4 SAN. Should the investigators have a good idea that the same fate could be in store for them, the SAN loss goes up to 1D2/1D8.
- ✘ Researching the original Cooper murders from 1965 discovers that John Cooper died in the Genesee County Jail, three weeks after his arrest but before he could stand trial. If the investigators can somehow get to the old police records, or those at the Genesee

County Medical Examiner, they learn the following. Soon after being put in jail, John Cooper was taken to the prison infirmary suffering from an unknown ailment. He was bedridden and continued to get worse for ten days. Then one night at 2:45 AM, he "died" (that is all any document says) and the very next day his body was cremated. There is no sign of any autopsy having been done.

RESEARCH – THE COOPER HOUSE

Looking further into the history of the Cooper house requires access to the local hall of records, or a large library and a successful Library Use roll, or the Internet and a Computer Use roll. Either way, it will take several hours to discover anything pertinent. One of the above rolls and 1d4 hours of digging will be needed for each clue. The clues are laid out in the order that the investigators will discover them. Should a roll fail, it can be attempted again, but each attempt takes another 1d4 hours.

- ✘ Before the Cooper house was "the Cooper house", it was the McCumsey house. It was built by Edmund McCumsey of Britain, who immigrated to the U.S. after World War II in 1946. He was joined by his wife Deborah and their three children. At the time, Clio was an even smaller place, and McCumsey not only built his house far from town, but paid to have a road laid out to it where none was before.
- ✘ Edmund McCumsey was a scholar and historian from the University of Birmingham. He is most noteworthy for writing a book in 1937 entitled *Before Daedalus: Labyrinths in History and Legend*.
- ✘ Shortly after coming to Clio, Edmund McCumsey rankled his new neighbors by not hiring locals to build his new home, instead importing German masons. Many Clio residents expressed resentment at the "Krauts" so soon after the war; others wondered why foreign experts were needed for a simple house.
- ✘ In December, 1947, the McCumsey's eldest son, Jacob, age 14, reportedly dies. However, no certificate of death can be found.
- ✘ In March, 1948, three local men (James Steely, Thomas Drake, John Drake) disappeared. Thomas' wife claimed that the trio planned to break into the McCumsey house to look for Edmund's rumored secret vault. It was thought in the town that the McCumsey family had money, and it was widely assumed that the German "bunker builders" (as they had become known) that Edmund had hired had built him a secret vault underneath his home, in which to hide his wealth. The McCumsey family was questioned and their house was searched. A day later, all three men came home, filthy and "confused" about the previous 48 hours. It was determined that all three men drank themselves into a stupor, as they were wont to do.



BEFORE DAEDALUS: LABYRINTHS IN HISTORY AND LEGEND

Once the investigators learn about Edmund McCumsey's book, they may want to read it. As it was from a university press, in England, in 1937, and was a book that was not well received, it is hard to find a copy in the U.S. in the modern day. Calling for a Luck roll to find a copy would not be out of hand. A Computer Use roll might find one for sale on eBay or BookFinder.com. The book would run about \$300 due to its scarcity, and if the investigators want it fast, they could have it shipped overnight for another \$60.

The book is not a Cthulhu Mythos tome, per se, but it is weird. It explains Mr. McCumsey's wild theory that an ancient and advanced civilization built roads encompassing the globe, now a forgotten series of tunnels. These ancients utilized this vast underground network to travel to far off places, even across oceans, in secrecy and safety. He uses this theory to explain why ancient Egyptian and South American civilizations both built pyramids and mummified their dead, and claims that these underground highways are the basis for many of the myths and legends of labyrinths and underground races. He even says these underground travelers were so prevalent that they formed their own religion, complete with a "God of the Labyrinth". Their god is a terrifyingly monstrous deity, but one that could be bargained with to provide safe passage through its tunnels.

Anyone who reads this book and makes a Cthulhu Mythos roll, or once someone remembers their encounter with Eihort and makes an Idea roll, can make the connection between this book and the Great Old One. They then gain +2% to Cthulhu Mythos and lose 1D6 SAN.

- ✘ In April, 1948, John Drake dies. Two weeks later, James Steely dies. Two days after that, his wife is institutionalized and their children become wards of the state. One week later, Thomas Drake and his family die in a house fire. No cause for the fire is listed.
- ✘ In October 1948, one of the McCumsey daughters, Rebecca, age 10, dies. No certificate of death can be found. The following month, Deborah returns to England with her last surviving child. Edmund stays behind in Clio.
- ✘ In February 1951, after no one can recall having seen the reclusive Edmund McCumsey for months, police go out to his house but find no trace of the man. They remark that the place looked to have not been lived in for quite some time.
- ✘ In 1955, after sitting empty for years, the McCumsey house is purchased by John Cooper. Cooper also purchases the surrounding land and turns the place into a family operated farm.

THE MCCUMSEY CONNECTION

Your players may never know all of the history behind this scenario and that is fine, some things should be left a mystery. However, as the Keeper, you should know everything. So here you go.

After looking for his fabled, globe-spanning labyrinth for years, Edmund came across some old British Army documents from the 1700s. They mentioned the Wammic Indians of Michigan and a place in their home territory that with an entrance to the "deepest darkness below." He came to Clio, and after investigating the area for some time, found that entrance on the rocky outcropping where he would one day build his house. Moving his family to the U.S. after the war, he wanted to explore and map out the labyrinth as much as possible before making another grand claim, as he had become an embarrassment and a laughing stock at his university after his book was published.

Edmund had his German bunker makers build a secret room that led to the labyrinth, and then his house over that. He then successfully explored and mapped the labyrinth for miles, but eventually his meddling drew the attention of Eihort.

Edmund was infested by the Brood, but he was lucky. Some of the knowledge that their horrible nightmares passed to him included how to contact Eihort anew. Edmund did so, and Eihort made him a second Bargain: if he brought others to it to accept its Bargain, Eihort would extend his life. Now quite insane, Edmund agreed and became a Chosen of Eihort (more on them below).

Edmund continued to follow this path for years, falling deeper and deeper into insanity along the way. He would sacrifice many others to keep his miserable existence going, including two of his own children. Then, one day, he waited too long to bring a new victim before his pale god, and when the would-be host refused Eihort's bargain, Edmund did not have enough time to find someone else. So the Brood inside him burst forth, killing Edmund and leaving his body in the secret underground chamber, where it could not be easily found.

Over the years since, Eihort had returned to the McCumsey/Cooper house periodically. If it sensed life nearby, it would open the secret passage leading to its chamber. Should anyone wander in, Eihort offers its infernal Bargain to them. Most have agreed. This is what happened to the poor Coopers and a few others over the years. But eventually, Eihort found another fool willing to become its Chosen. For information on that, see the **And The Villain Is...** section.

INTERVIEWS, TAKE TWO

Once the investigators realize that they have talked to people in town before, or had appointments to do so, they may want to talk to them again. Of course, they are going to have to explain to people that they have already spoken with why it is that they totally forgot conversations from just a day ago. During these interviews, investigators will likely have memories triggered of

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the first time they talked to these people.

One of these people, Vanessa Volker, is the one that arranged their horrific meeting with Eihort, but is also their best chance at salvation.

- ✘ Mayor Charlotte Colman is in her early forties, with a plump and pretty face and a pleasant demeanor. Lyn, as field producer for the show, arranged things with the mayor so that they could come and film in her town. On the 16th Lyn, the host, camera operator, and audio engineer did an interview with the woman. It was very brief, as the woman never had never been out to the Cooper house and doesn't believe in ghosts. She did mention growing up in Clio, was a young child when John Cooper murdered his family, and how that shocked the small farming community. The ghost stories about the house began almost right after the Cooper murders.
- ✘ Police Chief Donald Mathews was interviewed on the same day that the investigators met Eihort, but before they went to the Cooper house. He is a large bear of a man, with the stereotypical "cop mustache" and short cut brown hair, in his late thirties. He does not believe in ghost stories, but at least once or twice a year, he has to chase people, kids mostly, from the house. He has been a member of the Clio police for almost twenty years, but he won't talk about any past police cases, no matter how nicely anyone asks.
- ✘ Although the closest neighbors to the Cooper House, the Baker family declined to be interviewed despite repeated attempts by Lyn Cartwright. The reason for this lies with the father; see above. Even if he opens up to the investigators, he won't do so on camera (should they ask), as he does not want to be thought a fool.
- ✘ The Grover family (father Mark, mother Penelope, son Ethan, daughter Grace) are more distant neighbors to the Cooper house, on the other side from the Bakers. The father, mother, and son were all interviewed by TSF on the evening of the 16th. The family says that they do not "really" believe in ghosts, but they have all seen "odd things" at the Cooper house. The standard haunted house fare follows, such as stories about

strange lights or bloodcurdling screams coming from the house, or seeing mysterious figures at night wandering around the abandoned property. All of these can easily be explained by thrill seekers going to the famous Cooper house for a good scare. Should the Keeper want to share his own favorite haunted house story, this would be a good place to do it.

- ✘ James Burke & Alexis Romanov, age 16 and 15, are a snarky and hip pair of teenagers who are more than happy to be interviewed for TV. The couple snuck into the Cooper house on a dare, about a year back. They were interviewed on the afternoon of the 16th, and will tell the investigators their brief story again. That can be found earlier in this adventure in the boxed out section, The Supernatural (audio) Files.
- ✘ Joseph Kennedy is the sergeant of the Clio police department. He agreed to be interviewed on the 16th, but not videotaped, and only if his voice was altered so that no one could recognize it. A twenty-five-year veteran of the Clio police, he has been on the police force longer than the chief, but does not want anyone ribbing him for talking about ghosts, or reprimanding him for talking about past police cases. Because of this, if the investigators try to talk to the man again, saying that they got amnesia or that they lost the original interview, he will refuse to do cooperate. A successful Persuade roll will get him to reconsider, but only off the record. This time, he does not even want his voice recorded.
Joseph can tell the investigators whatever the Keeper wants to on the subject of the missing girl, Tiffany Jensen, not that there is much to tell. He mostly exists to be a contact within the police for the investigators, should the Keeper want to give them one. He believes that something is awfully wrong with the Cooper house, as he and a friend once snuck into the place when he was a kid and witnessed something horrible. If treated with respect, and a successful Persuade roll is made, he will tell his story. Furthermore, if asked if anything strange or weird has been happening in town recently, he will think for a moment and say, "Well, we've been contacted by the State Police about

FORGET ME NOT, INVESTIGATOR HANDOUT #7- JOSEPH KENNEDY'S STORY

"When I was about twelve, my buddy Dale Lafleur and I snuck into the Cooper house on a dare. We didn't see ghosts or anything like that, but we found this dead cat. It was an old tabby we found in a corner of the kitchen, all big and bloated. I assumed it was just bloated with gases like roadkill, and being a stupid kid, I poked it with a stick. Well that damn thing just...erupted. It busted and pouring out of it were these hideous, white, spider-like things. Dozens of them. I had never seen anything like them before or since. They weren't spiders, kind of slugs with legs. I know that don't make any sense. Anyway, they must have somehow crawled up inside the cat and were eating it from the inside out, because there wasn't much left of that poor, old tabby when they came tearing out. Dale and I ran out of that house screaming and we refused to tell anyone about it. A few years later he moved away, so I don't know if he still thinks about it or not, but I have never forgotten."

FORGET ME NOT

people going missing in this area. Nothing concrete, or at the least, they weren't inclined to share with us. There has been the occasional odd car left out at the motel or Hap's Bar (the town's only watering hole) that no one claimed. The state boys have collected four of them from us over some months back, but nothing recently."

✧ Lilly Austin is a feisty 64-year-old lady and head (and sole member) of the Clio Historical Society. She was interviewed on the 17th inside of her tiny museum, which largely focuses on farming and the two "famous" people from Clio: John D. Cherry, 60th Lieutenant Governor of Michigan; and Rudy Martinez, Question Mark of Question Mark & the Mysterians, a 1960s rock group best known for their hit single "96 Tears." She can fill in any of the hard facts on the history of the Cooper House, including some newspaper reporting on the original Cooper murders, but none of the inside information, like police or medical reports. She's got a bit of a ghoulish sense of humor and thinks it's "a kick" that her little town has its own haunted house. She's more than happy to recount a bunch of spooky stories about the house that she has collected over the years. She even has access to old records, should the investigators want to look into the Cooper house's history before the Coopers owned it.

✧ Vanessa Volker is the realtor in charge of the abandoned Cooper house. The investigators met with her on the 17th, right before going to the Cooper house. She refused to be interviewed on the grounds that it just wasn't professional. She accompanied the investigators to the house, as she had the keys to the building and to show them around. She is also the one that served them up to Eihort.

Meeting with her for a second time, the woman is all smiles and claims that the investigators never came to interview her. She assumed that they had either forgotten or got busy doing something else. If asked about the Cooper house, she says that they had contacted her, by phone, about doing an episode on it, but nothing was officially set. Both of these statements are lies.

She will explain her involvement with the Cooper house, and some of its history, if asked. After Cooper murdered his wife, the bank foreclosed on his farm. A year later, the bank sold the land to a nearby "big company" farm. Since the Cooper house and barn were on a rocky bit of land unsuitable for farming, the new landowners just left it standing, not wanting to pay the cost of tearing it down and carting it away, and just took over the surrounding farmland for crops. So now the farming company owns the Cooper house, and if they could find someone to buy it they would be happy, but it's not high on their list of priorities. Vanessa inherited responsibility for the Cooper account when the previous town realtor died two years ago.

This history behind the land rights regarding the



Vanessa Volker

Cooper house is accurate. What Vanessa fails to tell the investigators is that she murdered the previous realtor, just so that she could get access to the Cooper house. Why? Because she knows the secret that lies beneath it. How? Vanessa is a student of the black arts. Moreover, she actively sought the Great Old One out, just so that it could infest her with its Brood. Yes, she is insane, but she also has a plan.

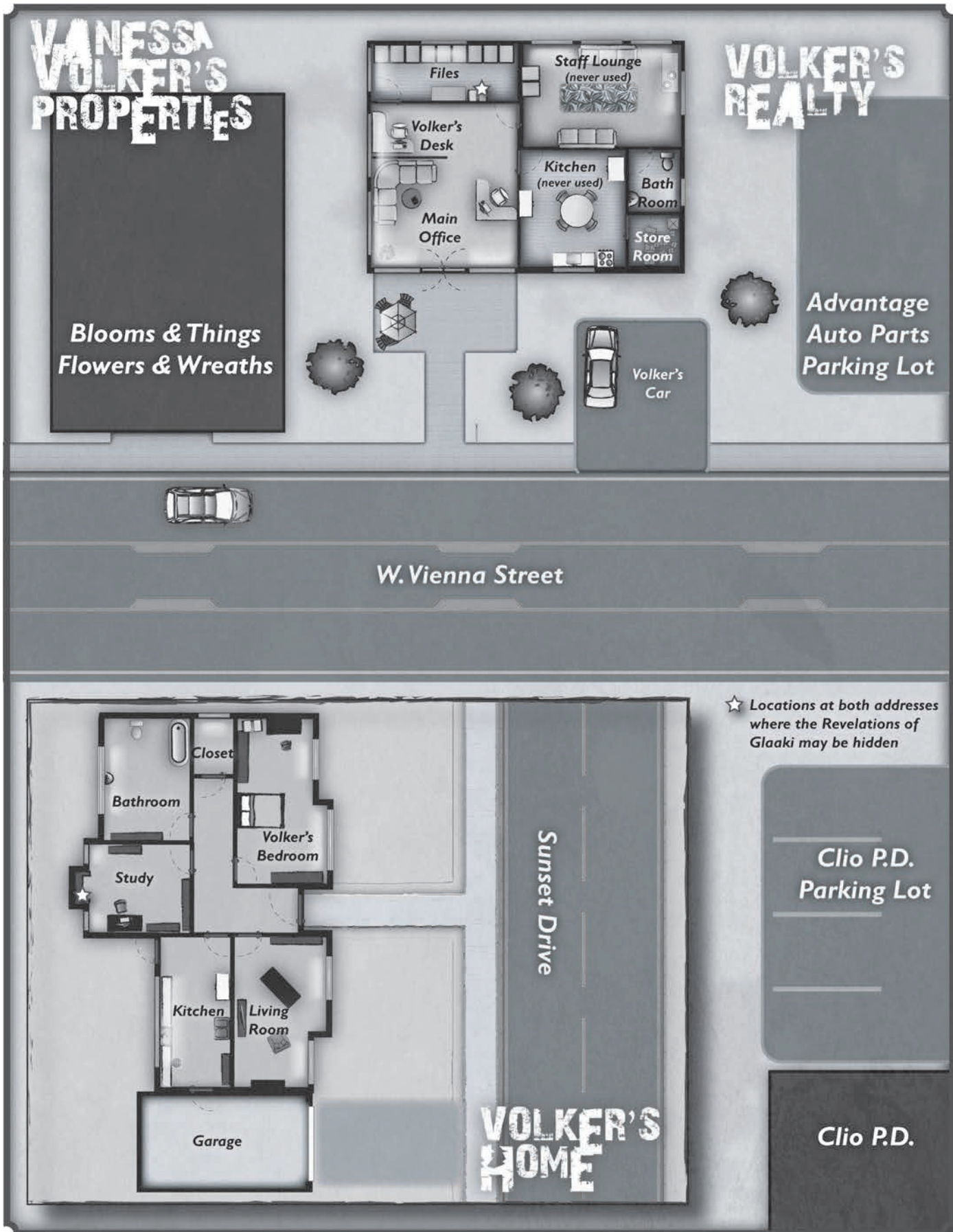
AND THE VILLAIN IS...

Vanessa is a beautiful, charming woman. She is also someone who has delved too deep into the mysteries of the Cthulhu Mythos, and become lost to them. Once a meek professor of Latin at Brown University, she was approached by an odd group (Call of Cthulhu investigators) and asked to translate some passages from an ancient tome into English. That book was a Latin edition of the Necronomicon. Translating the tome drove the woman mad, but also filled her with an infatuation to know more. Learning and practicing some of the spells from the book only fueled her obsession. That was over forty years ago, although through the use of her Steal Life spell, she still looks to be in her early thirties.

Eventually, Vanessa turned up a copy of Volume IV of the Revelations of Glaaki, which is largely concerned with Eihort. Through reading that book, she learned of the very rare Chosen of Eihort, and decided to play the dangerous game of becoming one.

Eihort cares not for adulation or human worshipers. It only desires to spawn lots and lots of offspring. With that purpose in mind, Eihort does recognize one additional potential use

THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND



HOW LONG DO THE INVESTIGATORS HAVE?

The Call of Cthulhu rulebook entry for Eihort says that its Brood will mature in D100 months. That could easily take years, and that is far too long for dramatic pacing purposes. So the author has sped things up a bit for the sake of ratcheting up the fear factor. However, it is ultimately up to the Keeper to decide when the Brood pop their meat balloons. No, you probably should not kill off any of your investigators with erupting Brood in this scenario, but your players should never know this! The most horrific fun of this story comes from twisting the knife of fear and paranoia in the minds of your players. Wrack the investigators with sickness, horrible nightmares, blurry memories, the occasional Broodling escaping from their body, and so on. Reinforce the idea that they are infested with horrible, scuttling, alien life that is devouring them from the inside out. Play up the ticking doomsday clock angle. If you tell the players, "roll D100. OK, your investigator has 71 months to get rid of the Brood inside them." then you will effectively neuter a good chunk of the fear that this scenario can provide. So never give them a timetable of their own demise, but remind them often that it's coming, and possibly coming soon.

When and how the debilitating side effects of the Brood infestation affect the investigators should also not come down to a CON x3 or the like. No matter how healthy a person is, it would not really matter if they were infested by a hoard of devouring parasites. Who gets sick the fastest and suffers the most should be random to represent the cold, uncaring universe that Lovecraft created. But ultimately, that is also left up to the will of the Keeper.

for humans who have struck the dreaded Bargain with it and have become impregnated with its Brood: to help it find even more gestation vessels for its endless supply of young. These individuals are known as the Chosen of Eihort.

To become Chosen, one must strike a second bargain with Eihort after becoming impregnated by it. This can be done either face to face, or through the use of the Contact Eihort spell. During the second negotiation, the infested person promises to bring others to the Great Old One for it to infest. In exchange, Eihort rewards such service by giving the Chosen a bit longer to live. To gain this stay of execution, the Chosen brings a victim to Eihort and the new potential host must agree to the Eihort's Bargain and accept a new load of Brood inside them. If a Bargain is struck with a new vessel, then Eihort reward the Chosen by de-aging the Brood inside them to their initial larval sate. The Great Old One can easily do this, for he has total control over his issue. This buys the Chosen a few more weeks or months of life, until the next time that the Brood gets close to the time of their birth. Then the Chosen must find a new victim to take their place again. This process also has the enviable side effect of reverting the age of the Chosen back to the time when the host was initially impregnated by Eihort, as they and the Brood inside them are linked on a metaphysical level. As long as the Chosen keeps bringing new people to accept Eihort's bargain,

they can essentially live forever and never age. But one misstep, one instance of failing to find a new vessel to accept the Bargain in time, and this very dangerous game ends messily.

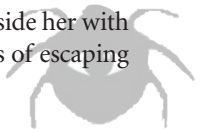
So why would someone become a Chosen of Eihort? So that they can get access to the knowledge that the growing Brood impart to their hosts through dreams and visions. That is why Vanessa did it. She had learned about Eihort and its Chosen and the only way to escape certain death from agreeing to Eihort's Bargain; the spell called Balk Brood (more on that later). Vanessa now plans to play the part of Chosen for as long as she can, in order to amass secrets and spells of the Mythos, and then use the Balk Brood spell to escape the consequences.

Vanessa has been a Chosen for little over a year now, and her usual victims are men whom she picks up at a bar. She leads them to the secret chamber under the Cooper house, and to Eihort, with a promise of intimacy. Once infested with the Brood and with his memory wiped by Eihort, Vanessa would take her victim back to the bar or their car and they would drive off, only for the victim die a horrible death some unknown time later and who knows how many miles away. Thanks to Clio being right off of a major interstate freeway, and the variable amount of time each victim has until they die, so far no one has been traced back to her. The abandoned cars that Sergeant Kennedy might mention are from the rare victim who refused Eihort's Bargain and was killed for doing so.

Over time, Vanessa has learned to improve her methods of covering her tracks and now, should anyone refuse the Great Old One and die, she tells a car thief from nearby Flint about the car, gives him the keys, and the pair split the profits after he delivers it to a chop shop.

Recent pesky refusals of the Bargain by some have almost spelled doom for Vanessa, and forced her to overplay her hand and deliver a group of people all at once (the investigators) to Eihort. She had never dared to hand over a group of people to the Great Old One before, but after her last two victims in a row refused the Bargain, she was desperate and running out of time before the Brood inside her killed her via mass exodus. Thankfully for the diabolical woman, the investigators agreed (mostly) to the Bargain. However, there were too many of them for Vanessa to handle afterwards, so she just left them to their own devices, and hoped that they would either go home or not be able to figure things out before the Brood inside of them silenced their inquiries forever.

Vanessa is a powerful sorceress, but she is loath to kill any of the investigators to stop their snooping. She is pretty sure that Eihort would not approve of her killing the vessels that house its growing Brood before they mature, and she does not want to get a god angry at her. She's not that crazy. She will misdirect the investigators if given the opportunity, and hope to keep them confused until they die or get too ill to carry on. If worst comes to worst, she would be willing to capture and imprison the investigators somehow. Locking them away or tying them up while feeding and taking care of them until the Brood emerge from their fleshy cocoons is an option. Only as a last resort will Vanessa use deadly violence to defend herself and if she does, then she will also kill the Brood inside her with her Balk Brood spell, and quickly flee in the hopes of escaping Eihort's wrath.



THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND

THE FINAL MEMORY, RETURNED

This memory should happen at the climax of the scenario, when it will have the most impact on proceedings. Elements of this horrific experience can be tailored to the investigators as you see fit. The only mandatory things are that Vanessa locked the investigators in the secret chamber; Lyn Cartwright refused the Bargain and was killed for it; and the rest of the investigators agreed to it and then were infested with Eihort's brood.

The investigators will eventually remember going to the Cooper house, with both Lyn and Vanessa with them. They look around the upper floors for a bit, videotaping as they go. Lyn asks if the house has a basement and Vanessa says that it does. "Great, what's a haunted house without a basement?" Lyn says, smiling.

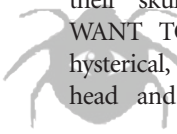
Once in the basement, they discover that a secret door to Eihort's labyrinth is open (thanks to Vanessa opening it the day before), and they go inside to investigate. The room beyond is small, round, and made of stone, with an open archway beyond. Suddenly, the door behind them closes, and Vanessa is not with them. The secret door will not open, no matter how hard they pound on it. Then one of the investigators notices the horror that is Eihort emerge from the dark tunnel, followed by a scurrying flood of its Brood. All of the investigators scream, panic, or if they lost more than 5 SAN for this encounter, go temporary insane and perhaps curl up in a fetal position. There is nowhere to run. The Keeper could have one of them make a break for the tunnel, only to find a crawling carpet of Brood there waiting for them. These quickly crawl up his legs, forcing him to go back into the circular room.

Eihort approaches a cowering Lyn Cartwright first and asks, in a voice that they can all feel inside their skulls, "DO YOU WANT TO LIVE?". Lyn, hysterical, just shakes her head and babbles inco-

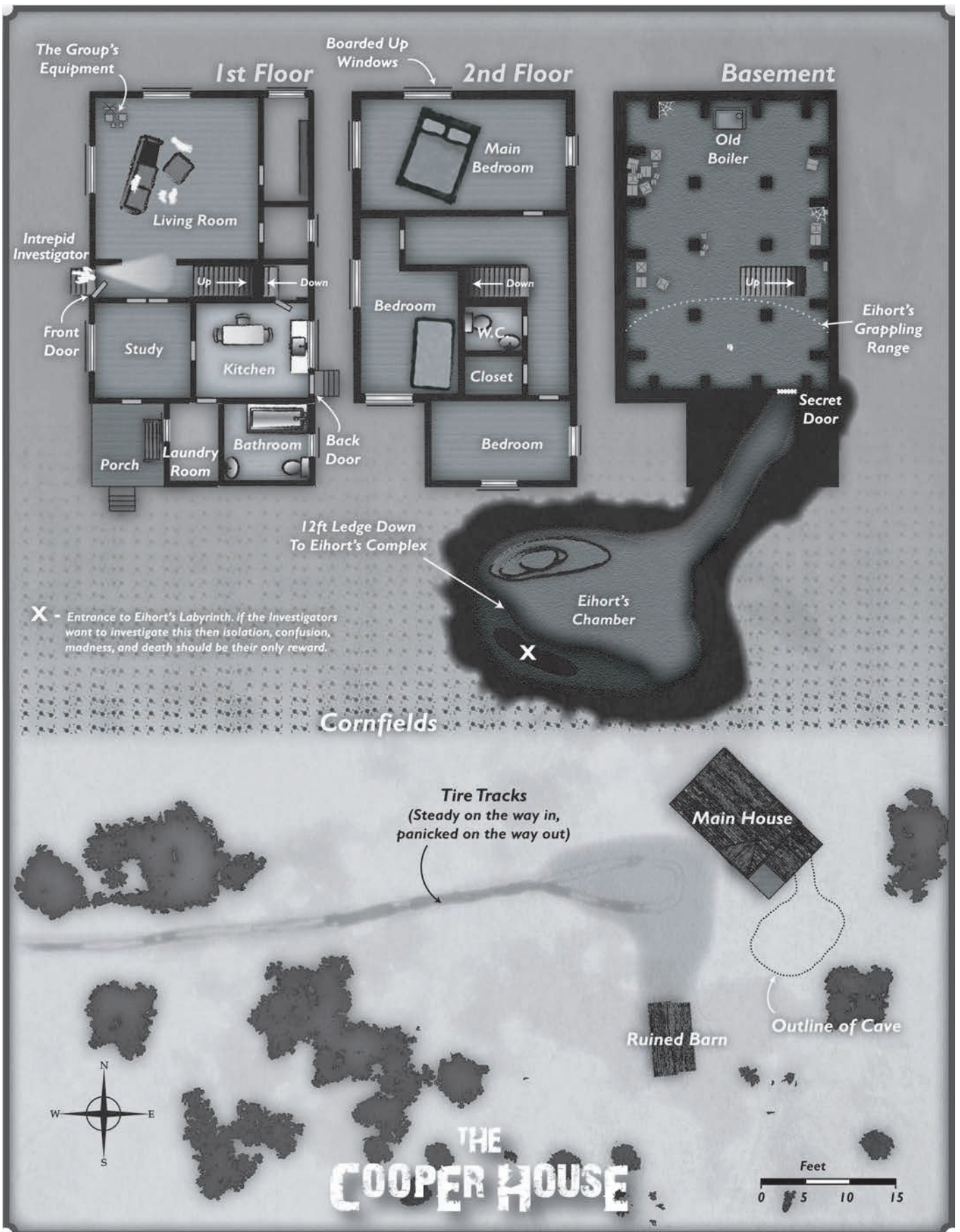
herently. "THEN DIE" the inhuman voice says, and the pale behemoth crushes the poor woman with one of its many legs and its huge bulk. Gore, pulp and brains splatter the remaining investigators. Eihort then turns to each investigator, one by one, and asks DO YOU WANT TO LIVE? Once everyone else says yes, it approaches one of them and a long, thick, dripping, worm-like appendage shoots out of the monster's diseased-looking flesh and shoves itself down the investigator's throat. Eihort says "BE MINE"! Eihort does this again and again to everyone there and then, the investigators black out.

If the investigator remembering this still owes any Sanity Points for this horrible event, then they lose all remaining ones in one fell swoop. Or, if you want to be extra mean, you can charge an extra 1/1D8 SAN for the returned memory.

The Cooper House



FORGET ME NOT



THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND

BACK TO THE COOPER HOUSE

The Cooper house sits on some rocky ground at the end of a weed-choked dirt path that acts as a driveway. It is surrounded on its left, right, and rear by a sea of tall, green cornstalks. Immediately behind the house is a small barn, about the size of a one-car garage. Its roof has collapsed, and it is now mostly inaccessible. The paint on the walls of the house is a sun-bleached blue where it has not chipped away, and every window has boards nailed over them. The front door hangs open, and the investigators can see tire marks on the dirt driveway, only a few days old (their own).

Inside the front room, they discover some of their abandoned filming equipment. Light stands, audio cable, a cooler filled with melted ice water, warm soda and energy drinks, and soggy submarine sandwiches sit in the middle of the floor. None of this was dropped in haste. Instead, it is all neatly stacked against one of the walls of the living room.

The ground floor also consists of a kitchen, a full bathroom, a side room suitable for a study or sewing room, and a few closets. There are the odd bits of furniture left behind: a table in the kitchen; a couch in the living room torn apart by animals for nesting materials; and an empty bookcase in the side room. But for the most part, these rooms are empty.

If the Keeper wishes, the investigators could see some of Eihort's Broodlings scuttling away into cracks in the walls or floor as they search these rooms. If the investigators have yet to learn

about or see the Brood, they will mistake them as fat, white spiders. A successful Spot Hidden roll sees them for what they truly are, and costs 0/1D4 SAN.

Upstairs are three bedrooms, a linen closet, and a half bathroom. One bedroom still has a double bed in it. A Spot Hidden finds one or two crumpled, used condoms tossed on the floor by adventurous locals looking to add some fear to their sex. Another room has a mattress pushed up to one of the walls with empty alcohol bottles, soup and beer cans, cigarette butts, and one or two used hypodermic needles lying around. There is not a large homeless population in Clio, but once in a while a drifter has passed through and found lodging in the Cooper house.

(Note that the rundown condition of the house is itself highly suspicious. The "fact" that there is a realtor "in charge" of this abandoned property, who has left it unlocked and open to vagrants, suggests that she is either utterly incompetent—to the point of being oblivious to the possibility of someone trespassing and injuring themselves—or is not acting with the typical motivations of a realtor).

Off of the kitchen is a back door to the house and one that leads to the basement. The basement door is open, and one of the TSF's microphones can be found on the stairs. In the basement are a few boxes full of junk, an old coal furnace, cobwebs galore, perhaps more of Eihort's Brood skittering about, and even more bits of the investigators' dropped TV equipment scattered about, such as a light meter or a shooting script for the host.

A Track or Spot Hidden roll here discovers a lot of footprints and even handprints where the investigators fell after escaping Eihort. There are also a few scattered, dried drops of blood. These tracks lead to, and come from, a stone wall. A Spot Hidden finds a well-hidden seam in the wall, denoting a hidden door. Failing that, the Keeper could give one of the investigators a memory of coming down into the basement the first time, and finding the secret door open and waiting for them. A second Spot Hidden or Luck roll finds the hidden opening device disguised as a stone in the wall.

Beyond is a small, round stone chamber, and on the opposite side from the secret door is a crevice in the wall that leads steeply down into Eihort's labyrinth. If the investigators have not yet had the horrible memory of encountering Eihort, they should enjoy it now.

Scattered around the hidden room is more of the investigators' dropped TV equipment, including at least one functioning camera. That camera contains video evidence of their first trip to this house, showing both Lyn and Vanessa with them. The audio engineer's boom mike and portable recorder/mixer are also here.

Also in this room are more than a dozen skeletons. (SAN loss 0/1). A Biology roll suggests that some of them are almost a hundred years old. Eihort's Brood are also here in abundance, with their numbers increasing as one moves towards the open crevice. Anyone trying to enter the labyrinth will have to clear the way of Brood or else have the tiny terrors crawl up them, costing 0/1D6 SAN.

Lastly, there is a twitching, pulsating, small mound of Brood in the corner. Scaring the Brood away finds the crushed and nearly stripped corpse of Lyn Cartwright, which the little critters were busily eating. Enough of the poor woman's face remains to identify her, and this costs 1/1D6 SAN (1/1D8 SAN for any

A GORY PREVIEW

If the Keeper wants to further traumatize the investigators, they might meet a homeless man in the Cooper house on their return trip. This poor vagrant came to the Cooper house some weeks before the investigators, found his way into the secret room in the basement, and was forced to make the Bargain with Eihort. Having had his mind wiped, he went on his way, but over the weeks since he has come to know that something horrible happened to him here. Like them, he has now come back looking for answers.

This filthy man, stinking of stale sweat, cigarettes, and booze, will accost the investigators. He is wild-eyed and drooling, with a fresh bloody nose and swinging an old chair leg. He shouts: "I know it was here, I know this place is what did it to me. What happened to me? Tell me, what happened to me!"

The investigators can fight or flee as they see fit, but after a few moments the man shrieks in absolute agony, drops anything he is holding, and grabs his head with both hands. Suddenly, a red tear in his flesh appears in the center of the man's forehead and as the investigators watch, it grows. His eyes and mouth quickly fill up with blood. His shirt writhes, pulses, and turns red from the inside. Then with a horrible, wet, ripping sound, the man splits open like an overcooked hotdog and out spill thousands and thousands of tiny, white, grub-like spider-things. The Brood scatter for the safety of darkness, over the feet (and possibly up the legs) of any nearby investigator, leaving only an empty husk of bloody meat and dirty clothes behind. Witnessing this costs 1/1D6 SAN. If the investigators already know that they are infested with the Brood, then that SAN loss increases to 1D3/1D8, because they have now seen firsthand what fate awaits them.

REVELATIONS OF GLAAKI, VOL. IV

This is a handwritten, leather bound copy of this single volume, penned by one of Glaaki's unnamed, undead servants. Vanessa acquired it from the estate sale of a noted occult expert. Its contents concern Eihort, its massive labyrinth, the Brood, the Chosen of Eihort, and the prophecy that proclaims that one day, millions and millions of Eihort's Brood will spill forth from their progenitor's labyrinth to cleanse the world for their master.

This book is written in English. Reading it from cover to cover takes 4 weeks, but skimming it only takes 8 hours. However, Vanessa has marked and highlighted key passages, so if the Keeper wishes to be kind, they can easily find the critical spell (Balk Brood) very quickly. San loss: 1D6, Cthulhu Mythos +1%/+2%, MR 9%; spells: Contact Eihort, Balk Brood.

Balk Brood: This spell requires 3 rounds to intone, and costs 1d3 SAN per participant. All participants who know the spell may contribute as many Magic Points as they have available. Those who touch the caster may contribute 1 Magic Point to the effort even if they do not know the spell. Match the total Magic Points invested against the number of days that have elapsed since infestation. If the spell succeeds, the Brood come pouring out of the victim, costing the victim 1d3 SAN and 1 Hit Point per day of infestations. (Hence, even a successful casting is devastatingly painful and possibly lethal). Each casting of the spell risks a 10% cumulative chance of causing Eihort to appear to wreak its vengeance.

A kindhearted Keeper might allow the spell to be learned without skill checks, and in a few hours.

investigator that she was romantically involved with). Her bones are obviously broken and smashed, as though she was repeatedly trampled on by a team of horses.

HOW DO THE INVESTIGATORS SURVIVE?

The key to survival lies in the investigators realizing that Vanessa Volker is their enemy. They can do this through recovered memories. Perhaps they remember her leading them to the Cooper house on the day that they forgot everything (when she claimed that she didn't go there with them). Even more damning is the memory of the investigators going into the open chamber underneath the Cooper house and then Vanessa closing it behind them, locking them in. Clues to the deeper and longer history of the Cooper house may get the investigators curious about the woman that is in charge of it. Talking to a member of the Grover family (the talkative neighbors of the Cooper house) could have one of them say: "Sure I saw you all go into the old Cooper place from across my field. There were X of you, and you were carrying in all sorts of equipment." Where X = the number of investigators plus 2, the two being the missing Lyn Cartwright and the lying Vanessa. If they return to the Cooper house and find some of their equipment that Vanessa has yet to come back to destroy, they could find video evidence that she was with them at the house, and perhaps even video of her leading them to the

secret chamber and sealing them inside it. Frankly, the fact that so many disappearances have been associated with the house, and the fact that it is suspiciously insecure for a property under realtor management, ought to make the investigators suspicious of her.

Once the investigators know about Vanessa's involvement, they are sure to either confront her or keep an eye on her. Confronting her brings only more lies and possibly a fight. If they follow her surreptitiously, she leads them to her house in the suburbs. Should the investigators break into or force their way into that house, they discover a locked study, in which any number of occult and mythos tomes will be kept. Also in that room is a locked, roll-top desk holding a copy of *The Revelations of Glaaki, Vol. IV*. This is the book that contains the spell *Balk Brood*, the only way to purge the investigators of the infestation that is killing them. This book is the key to their survival, so you should feel free to move it to Vanessa's desk in her realtor's office, if the investigators search that location first.

Failing that, an investigator might learn the spell *Contact Eihort* through their Brood-induced nightmares. They could then beseech the Great Old One for mercy, something that it does not have. However, it may offer them the same deal that it offered Vanessa, and before her Edmund McCumsey, a chance to become its Chosen. Should they have the lack of moral fiber needed to become such a monster, Lord help them.

Canny investigators could ask Eihort for a way to learn more about it, perhaps as a precursor to becoming its Chosen (whether this is a lie or not). If so, the Great Old One says: "YOUR KIND HAVE WRIT ABOUT ME. SEEK THE TOME NAMED FOR GLAAKI. IN THE FOURTH BOOK YOU SHALL FIND WORDS OF PRAISE FOR ME." Or, perhaps they have a dream of someone writing that very tome. Either of these could lead them into acquiring their own copy of the *Revelations of Glaaki*, or at least learning that the University of Michigan's library in Ann Arbor has a copy in their Special Collections. If they travel there and make a few *Persuade* or *Charm* rolls, they might be allowed to read the fourth volume of it.

Once they have the book and learn the *Balk Brood* spell, they can save themselves from certain death. But what do they do then?

THE END

The first and greatest goal of the investigators is to purge themselves of the Brood through use of the *Balk Brood* spell. Once that is done, what do they do next? They might have already dealt with Vanessa Volker in order to obtain her copy of the *Revelations of Glaaki*, but if not, then they might want to do that either out of revenge, justice for all her past victims, or to make sure that she can harm no one else.

What about Eihort? As this scenario is written, the Great Old One does not appear again after the investigators run into it during their first, forgotten meeting. If the investigators find and learn the spell: *Contact Eihort*, they could arrange a meeting in the secret room of the Cooper house. Or, if the investigators return to the Cooper house after purging themselves of the Brood, or bring someone with them who is not infested, then Eihort might sense their presence, and might come to the secret room of its own accord, should they enter the basement.

THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND

It is unlikely that the investigators could disperse the Great Old One, but anything is possible. Perhaps they trick Eihort into coming, only for the Great Old One to enter the secret room and find it packed to the ceiling with explosives? While Eihort can be blown apart, it cannot really die, but something that drastic could fill the investigators with some kind of satisfaction and also destroy the secret room and the Cooper house, thus making sure no one can fall into that particular trap again.

Short of blowing up or burning down the Cooper house, what do the investigators do with it? Leaving it standing with an entrance to Eihort's labyrinth could mean more innocents dying.

What if the investigators want to explore the labyrinth? Well, that is just asking for trouble, and quite the undertaking. It literally spans the globe, and is full of the Brood, not to mention Eihort itself. But if the investigators are determined, then they should be left to their fates as the Keeper sees fit.

REWARDS

Just surviving this nightmare is the real reward for the investigators, but there are some SAN points to be gained, too.

Ridding an investigator of their Brood infestation restores 1D8 SAN to that person.

Killing Vanessa Volker, so that she cannot harm anyone else, grants 1D8 SAN.

Making sure that no one else accidentally wanders into the secret room beneath the Cooper house and gets infested by Eihort grants 1D6 SAN.

Somehow dispersing or temporarily killing Eihort grants 1D20 SAN.

NPCs

VANESSA VOLKER, Chosen of Eihort

STR 100 CON 110 SIZ 45 INT 65 POW 21
DEX 60 APP 70 EDU 95 SAN 0 HP 15

Damage bonus: +1D4

Build: 0

Move: 9

ATTACKS

Fighting (Handgun) 35% (17/6), 9mm Automatic, damage 1D10, 15 yards, 2/round, 6 shots, malfunction 00.

Brood Swarm 100%, damage suffocation + sanity loss (see below)

Dodge 40% (20/8)

Armor: None

Skills: Charm 55%, Computer Use 60%, Credit Rating 55%; Cthulhu Mythos 39%, Fast Talk 65%, Listen 50%, Occult 70%, Other Language (Latin) 95%, Stealth 50%.

Defenses: See below

Nationality: American

Age: 73 (looks 30ish)

Spells: Balk Brood, Contact Eihort, Contact Ghoul, Create Zombie, Grasp of Cthulhu, Implant Fear, Shriveling, Steal Life, Stop Heart, Summon/Bind Byakhee, Summon/Bind Dark Young

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 SAN for seeing a Brood swarm; 1/1D8 for being a victim of a Brood swarm attack. Upon her death, all the Brood inside of Vanessa come spilling out of her; seeing that costs 1/1D6 SAN.

Vanessa's Special Abilities:

Bolstered Stats: due to the rejuvenating energy pumped into her by the Lord of the Labyrinth every few weeks or months, plus the myriad of psychically-endowed Brood reinforcing her, Vanessa is preternaturally strong, healthy, and spiritually powerful.

Brood Swarm: once per week, Vanessa can vomit out a large number of semi-mature Brood. Usually the Brood of Eihort just skitter away to the darkest places available when they burst forth, but due to the special connection between the Chosen and the Brood inside them, this squirming, writhing horde of white spider-like things are under her control. This Brood swarm has 10 Hit Points, but ignores singular attacks like gunshots, melee weapons, stomping feet, and the like. Only attacks that deal damage over an area will harm the swarm, such as fire, explosions, jugs of acid, electrifying the floor that they are crawling over, driving a steamroller over them, etc.

The tiny spider-things cannot really attack per se, but if a victim was immobilized or unconscious, then the Brood could gnaw the person to the bone in time, doing 1 Hit Point of damage per 1d10 minutes. Vanessa will instead use this flood of awfulness to suffocate a single target. Seeing this mass of tiny horrors costs 0/1D6 SAN, but the one targeted by this attack will lose much more, as the Brood clamor up their body and try to crawl down their nose and throat. This causes 1/1D8 San loss for the awful invasion, and Keepers should consult the drowning/suffocation rules in the Call of Cthulhu rulebook. Only destroying the Brood swarm completely will stop this attack; jumping into water or rolling on the ground will have no effect, as there are just too many creatures to crush and they do not need to breathe. Area affecting attacks which are effective against the Brood swarm, like fire and acid, will also deal damage to the one being suffocated by the tiny terrors.

Luckily the swarm moves slowly, only at a MOV of 4, or about half as fast as the typical person. So Vanessa will only use this attack on unsuspecting targets or in small, tight places where escape is difficult.

Hard to Kill: A Chosen of Eihort is very hardy. This is because the Brood inside continue to multiply as they grow, then become de-aged, and then grow and multiply again. In this endless process, the Brood will consume bones, muscle, and even organs inside their host to make room for their ever increasing numbers. The innate magical and parasitical nature of the Brood allows them to effectively mimic the organs and other internal bits they consume, so that their vessel can continue to live as they mature inside them. This makes the Chosen very resistant to damage, as attacks against them have less vital things to destroy. Because of this, Vanessa takes only 1 point of damage per attack, impaling or not, and is immune to drowning, poisons, and gas. Fire, explosions, or other damage that could harm her all over do normal damage, but Vanessa regenerates 2 Hit Points per round, as the Brood inside her have become so accustomed to their vessel and will repair damage to their host.





ROOTS

by *Simon Brake*

INTRODUCTION

Somewhere off the main roads, somewhere in the middle of the United States, somewhere where the woods never seem to end, where you might wander for hours without seeing anyone, a winding road heads in the direction of the setting sun. No cars have passed this way, for at least the length of time it's taken for the sun to reach the tops of the trees and turn fiery orange as it grazes the horizon. The colors, discounting the blazing sky, are muted, silhouettes and shadow obscured trees, leaves that litter the ground either side of the road muddy brown and black.

A lone figure walks along the road in the direction of the sun, shielding her eyes as she holds her coat around her with her other arm, her backpack feeling like it is gaining further weight with every step. Her sneakers have become covered in dirt and splashes of mud since she got off the bus some hours ago, and her feet are sore, but she has seen something ahead. She struggles to pull the bag from her shoulder as she approaches.

Reaching into her bag, she pulls out a folded sheet of paper, even though she already knows the name of the town, having read the letter from her mother a hundred times over, having committed the address to memory. She smiles as she reaches the sign, knowing that it can't be much further.

Welcome, the sign says, to Geverlon.

KEEPER'S INFORMATION

This scenario is set during the early 21st century and can theoretically take place in any month, although as written it presumes that it is summer. If you wish to change the month to accommodate a more treacherous climate, feel free. You might also want to check calendars for a period preceding a full moon. Although the scenario doesn't begin at any particular phase of the moon, the arrival of the full moon may well force a climax upon the situation.

This story involves an adopted girl, whom one of the investigators knows, running away to find her birth mother in a nearby town. She will be camping in the woods with friends when she goes missing, so it will be uncertain at first whether she has just run away or if other factors are at work.

The girl's birth mother lives in the town of Geverlon, a small town out in the woods far from any major city. Geverlon has an ancient history; it was established in colonial times in a part of the woods where there was once worship of Shub-Niggurath. The threat was thought to have been put down long ago by a powerful shaman from a tribe opposed to Shub-Niggurath's worship, although it cost them many men. As part of the containment, a Dark Young was bound into the form of a tree.

Generations later, when settlers came to the Americas, the tree was once more discovered, and the sap of the tree found

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to provide extra strength to those who'd braved the journey. Soon after, the town of Geverlon was founded, though it soon divided itself into two communities, the men who took to the woods, and adopted the form of the Wild Ones, and the women who remained in the town, to tend to the homes and children.

It is to this town that the missing girl returns. Or, at least, attempts to. For on the final stretch of road before the town, she is encouraged to step off the path and join the Wild Ones. The investigators will find the town and the girl's mother before she does, whereupon they may well be directed towards the woods. Either way, once the investigators enter the woods, even if they rescue the daughter, they are unlikely to escape in one piece.

The investigator's friend is referred to throughout as Mary, her husband as Joe and their adopted/missing daughter as Karen, but you should change the names if you're inserting this scenario into a campaign and already have a likely character to use in their places.

INVOLVING THE INVESTIGATORS

If you are playing through a campaign, you may want to establish this relationship with Mary in an earlier scenario, or you may exploit any investigators that have already mentioned a close relationship to a sister or a friend that has not yet been explored. Alternatively, the investigators might be private investigators hired by Mary to try and retrieve her daughter; or a friendly local social worker or friendly juvenile officer dealing with what seems to be yet another teenage runaway. In any event, once it becomes apparent that an older teenager appears to have run away to visit her birth mother, as opposed to having been abducted, this is something that the F.B.I. or heavily armed police are not likely to make a priority. But Karen's parents want action now, and so they are turning to people (who, out of friendship or other motivations) will move quickly.

The eventual involvement of a sheriff's deputy or two is certainly a possibility, if a solid lead on Karen's likely whereabouts develops and enough time passes that they are willing to devote resources to a runaway case (by Tuesday). But an unprepared deputy or two is unlikely to make much a dent in the proceedings. The more human-seeming people of Geverlon are skilled at appearing normal when their guards are up, and it will take the deaths of initial police responders or the discovery and successful reporting of something truly horrific in the woods to provoke a massive police response. If this eventually happens, though, *que sera, sera*.

Mary (the adoptive mother) is a woman somewhere between her late thirties and mid-forties, married, but unable to have kids of her own. Mary and Joe have three adopted children, all in their teens. If the hook to involve the investigators is a friendship or relationship with Mary, then she will live close to the investigator in question, and they will be common fixtures in each other's lives. They may have gone to school together (and, depending on the investigator selected, may have dated), and perhaps grew apart but renewed their

friendship after she had become a wife and mother. In recent years, the investigator may have become someone Mary regularly visits and confides in. Ultimately, Mary is the very human hook to get the investigators involved in the story, and is not a character that deliberately sets out to lure them into a trap, though in her emotional state and over-reliance on the investigators she might confuse the situation and cloud the judgment of those near her.

STARTING THE SCENARIO

This scenario begins on a Sunday evening. It's summer, so the kids are out of school, and it's possible that the investigators also have some vacation time to enjoy. Let the players decide what the characters are up to. It may well be that they're together somewhere, enjoying the last remaining hours of the weekend.



Karen

Mary will call the character that she has a connection with, somewhat frantic and worried about Karen, the oldest of her adopted daughters. Karen is nearly 18, a friendly young girl, something of a tomboy, well liked and well known around town (or around the neighborhood, depending on where your investigators are based). The investigator who has been called should be somewhat concerned, as Karen is someone that he (or she) had great affection for, as might any uncle (or aunt).

Karen has been away on a camping trip this weekend with

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friends (and the parents of her best friend, Ali). Once they've calmed down Mary enough to get her to talk clearly, she'll tell them that Karen has gone missing from the camping trip. Karen has gotten a call from Ali's mother, Kim, to say that Mary had had an argument with Ali and had (supposedly) gotten on a bus home. However, that was hours ago, and there's still been no sign of her. She's since spoken again to both Kim and Kim's husband Graham, to try to find out more, in particular why they let Karen wander off alone. They were incredibly apologetic, but not a great deal of help.

Mary goes on to say that she recently found a letter addressed to Karen from someone named Joy. Joy invites Karen to come visit some time, and Mary is upset and concerned that Karen may have been in contact with her birth mother, via the adoption agency. There's nothing in the letter to suggest anything untoward, but there is an address. The letter also mentions Karen's 18th birthday, fast approaching on the last day of the month. While Mary is worried that Karen may have run away to find her mother, she does not want to leave to find Karen herself in case she returns in her absence (and besides, she doesn't entirely trust her husband and other two kids to look after themselves). But she would like her friend/sibling to help out, either going to the campsite or the town of Geverlon, the address in the letter.

As it turns out, the campsite and Geverlon are suspiciously close to each other.

PLACING GEVERLON

Geverlon is not too far away from the area in which your investigators are based. If they are based in a large city, then it is less than a day's drive out. If they are already in Smalltown, USA, then Geverlon may be even closer, a couple of hours drive away. In any case, it is assumed that there is a bus route nearby that is no more than a few hours' trip to reach Karen's

home. In either case, the town is far off the beaten track, requiring the checking of maps to reach. Online research may also give you aerial shots and maps of the town, but frustratingly, any maps will lack street names. It appears to be a small community, based around a central road and town square, with a patchwork of small, orderly farm fields, surrounded by acres of woodland, connected to the world outside the woods by only one road that runs to it and a river that flows nearby.

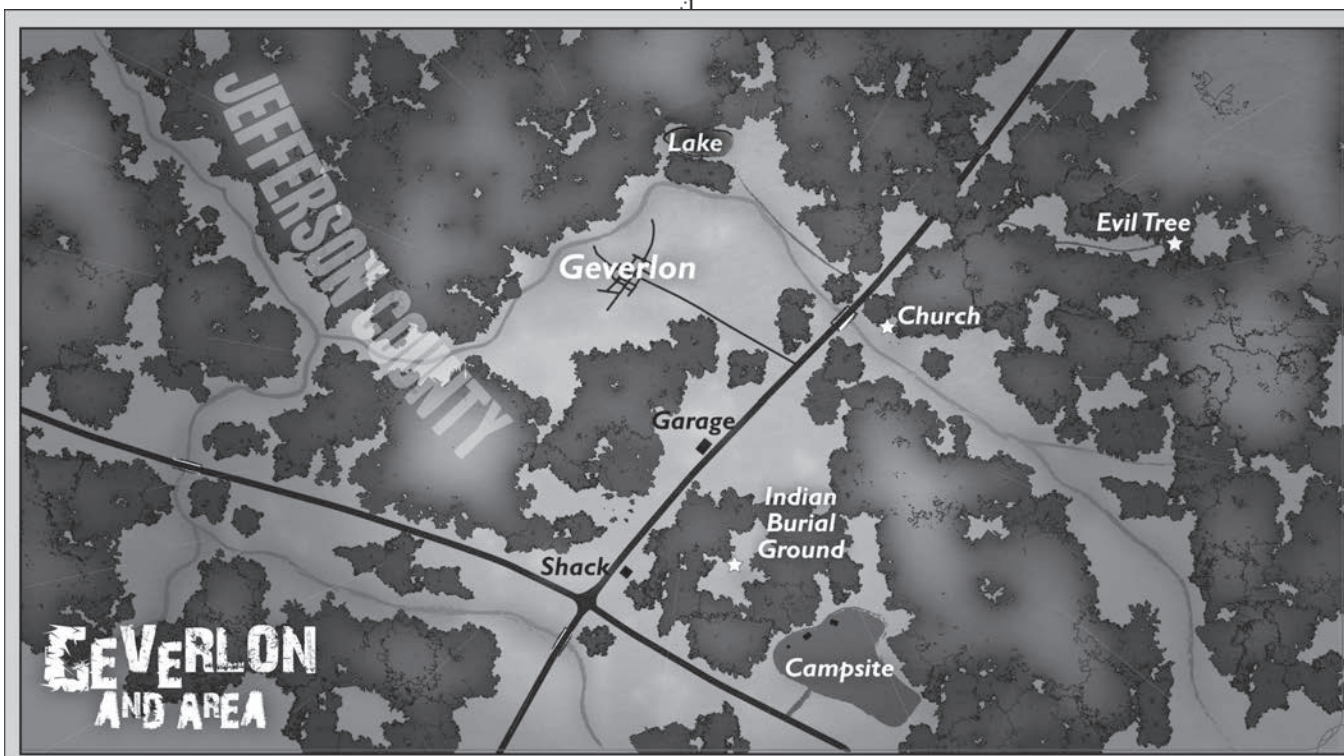
The campsite Karen was at with her friends is a three or four hours walk away from Geverlon. It won't be immediately apparent on any maps unless zoomed out and carefully looked at, consisting of a field, a small rectangular building with a picnic area around it, and a small car park.

DETAILS ABOUT KAREN

Karen is nearly 18 years old, with long, straight, dark blonde hair and blue eyes. She is quite a thin girl, and looks a little older than she actually is. She tends to dress in shorts and t-shirts, more sportswear and casual clothing than dresses and showy outfits. She has always come across as a well-mannered, upbeat and cheerful girl, pretty, with a slight tan and shining smile that makes her fit in with the popular kids. Karen also has a small red birthmark on the back of her right hand which, God willing, will make it a little bit easier to find her.

She has a close knit small group of friends that she spends most of her time with, both in and out of school. She has no boyfriend, at least as far as any of the adults who know her are aware, although her mixed group of friends is mostly boys. Her best friend is probably "Ali" (Alexandra) who she shares many classes with at the local high school, although the boy next door, Max Jensen, is also a close friend who has been part of her social circle for the last ten years.

Karen has a cell phone, but calls to it go straight to voice



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mail. It has been switched off (and hence, not pinging off of any relay towers) since her disappearance. Karen actually switched it off to conserve power, but didn't take it with her when she left the campsite. Although she misplaced it and thought she had it with her when she left, it may look to the investigators like she deliberately left it behind, when it is ultimately discovered.

INITIAL INVESTIGATIONS— AWAY FROM THE CAMPSITE

INTERVIEW, MARY AND JOE (KAREN'S ADOPTIVE PARENTS)

Mary and Joe are pretty shook up, but each demonstrates in their own way. Mary is noticeably upset and worried about her daughter, while Joe is on the edge, trying to keep it together for the sake of his family, but really wanting to rush out and find his daughter. The younger kids, Freddy (12) and Daniella (8), are also upset and confused, knowing only that their older sister has gone missing and reading cues from their parents, despite being assured that Karen will be fine and has just gone to visit friends.

Talking to any of the family reveals nothing sinister. The family is to all intents and purposes a normal one. The younger sister looks up to Karen, while the younger brother has more of a sibling love/hate relationship with her (icky girls!). The parents are genuinely concerned, but the police are unwilling to act on a teenage runaway report until 24 hours has passed, in the absence of any evidence of an abduction.

Careful questioning (Psychology check) only tends to confirm that Karen has run away, possibly out of frustration with her parents and to find out if her "real" mother offers anything better. On one level, it they act quite passionately about their missing daughter, but they seem distant toward one another and other types of unrelated squabbles keep intruding into the conversation (such as who is to blame for not paying more attention to Karen, and why). The truth is that the parents aren't completely perfect, and have in recent years grown apart, the father taking to watching late night films and drinking beer, the mother taking long baths and reading books to the exclusion of paying attention to her family. That's not to say they don't love each other, only that they've become more snappy each other, and each having different ways to deal with the stress of bringing up three kids, one just hitting puberty. Karen had been objecting to her parents sticking their noses into her business more as she got older, and Joe may have snapped at her once or twice while a little drunk, but there's never been any physical violence in the household. Both of the parents feel that Karen's disappearance may be due to something they've done, and maybe it has had some small effect, but the proximate cause of her running away is in fact the correspondence from Karen's birth mother.

The Letter from Geverlon

Mary has the letter with her. Any investigators reading it will discover the following details. It gives the birth mother's ad-

dress in Geverlon, as well as her first name, Joy. It appears to be a genuinely affectionate letter from a mother to her daughter, with best wishes for her approaching 18th birthday, and expresses sadness that she couldn't be there to celebrate. An Idea roll from anyone who knows Karen might allow them to suspect she'd be moved by this, perhaps to the extent of trying to track down her mother. A successful Psychology roll suggests that the letter is worded in such a way as to sway Karen's affections for her mother and the town of Geverlon. The regret that the mother couldn't make it to her 18th birthday or to get away from the town any time soon are emphasized a little too much, as if trying to make a point or provoke a reaction.

The letter does not mention Karen's father at all. There is no indication as to whether he is dead, absent, or just unimportant.

Karen's Room

Karen's room contains a few large posters of pop stars, but there's a generous selection of books and music on various shelves. She seems to be mostly into generic pop and dance music, and favors young adult dark fantasy fiction. Amongst the music, there's a small collection of flyers for a nearby bar in town called Spotlights, which seems to host nights for bands none of the investigators will have heard of. The bands named include Silver, We No Fear The Reaper, Broken Promises and Scarlet Swimmer – if the investigators were to research every band listed, advise them that it will take hours.

Karen also has a computer in her room, which if checked has all her regularly visited sites in the browser's history. These include a Hotmail account, a Myspace page which features many typical pictures of Karen and her friends, an infrequently updated blog which reveals very little, and several bookmarked musical video clips by a local singer named Scarlet Swimmer.

Karen also has a Facebook account with much the same photos (which is still logged into), but with a few more status updates and links to events and groups. It will take an hour or so to go through the recent notifications, invites, private messages and wall posts, but anyone spending the time to do so will find out that Karen has excused herself from a number of invites, including parties and a gig by Scarlet Swimmer at a nearby club, because she's planning to be 'out of town for that week'. Her most frequent messages seem to be among the same six or seven friends, particularly Ali and Max. A Psychology roll suggests, from the interaction, that Max likes Karen as more than just a friend, but that Karen seems to be entirely oblivious to it. There are no apparent communications with Joy or any adoption agency on the computer.

Most significant in the history of online activity are the pages in the cache that relate to the town of Geverlon, specifically maps showing how to get there.

A thorough search of Karen's room will uncover an additional letters from Joy, tucked behind the books on her shelves. These reveal only a little more, being an introduction to Karen from Joy and numerous apologies for having given her up for adoption. Again, there is no mention of Karen's father at all. The date of the first letter is about two and a half

months ago, two months before the address on the one that Mary found. Joy promises in the first letter promises to write again in a week and send a photograph, but this letter cannot be located (as Karen took it with her).

The investigators may, of course, request a photo or two of Karen to aid them in their search. Mary is more than happy to send a digital image to someone's phone, if they'd prefer.

INTERVIEW, MAX JENSON, LOVE-SICK BOY NEXT DOOR

Karen's friends are, for the most part, still at the campsite with Ali's parents, so the investigators are most likely to meet them there. Max Jenson, the boy next door, will be picked up by his parents shortly after the news of Karen's disappearance. If the investigators head straight out to the campsite themselves, they will catch up with Max and his parents there, before they return home. Alternatively, if they spend time chasing down local leads before heading out, the investigators may get to meet the family once the Jensons have brought their son back. It's entirely possible that the investigators miss Max completely, because he's being taken home at the same time they head out to the campsite or Geverlon. However, should their paths cross with Max in this initial stage of the investigation, much the same occurs whether they are at the campsite or not.

There is a chance that the Jensons already know the investigator who is close to Mary and Karen, but if not, then they will have to convince the family to interview their son. (Persuade check, or perhaps a phone call to Mary to confirm their connection). Otherwise, there is little chance that the investigators will be allowed to talk to Max. Should they allow the investigators to interview Max, his mother Carol would rather be present when they talk to him, barring a successful Persuade check. Alternatively, if they Persuade the son to talk, he may try to get his mother to leave himself.

Max honestly doesn't know what happened to Karen. He had been playing football with some of the guys when Ali and Karen were off talking, and apparently they had a fight. The next thing he knew, Ali was coming back to the campsite, looking pissed off and saying that Karen had decided to get a bus to go home. He looks worried and upset that his friend is missing, and he feels dreadful that he has been brought home and has left his friend behind.

Psychology rolls will reveal this is genuine concern rather than attempts to keep anything hidden, although if investigators have previously found conversations online that suggest that he is in love with Karen, they may want to question him on this. Unless handled very carefully, this line of questioning is unlikely to get him to admit to anything, and in fact is more likely to make him break down and cry. At which point, his mother will ask the investigators to leave (if she is not present, then she will come in after a brief period of Max crying and the investigators trying to calm him). In either case, Carol will be most unhappy if the investigators do not immediately leave. If they refuse, her husband William threatens to call the police. If the investigators have caught up with the family at the campsite, they will make their excuses and drive home.

INTERVIEW, THE ADOPTION AGENCY

This is not an easy avenue for the investigators to investigate, especially not on short notice or on a weekend, since they are not Karen's legal guardians. Even if they were to Fast Talk or Charm a careless receptionist, or get one of Karen's adoptive parents to call them, the agency explains that while they have some information about Karen's birth mother, the law requires that any letters seeking to establish contact between a birth parent and a minor child go through the agency without addresses, and be delivered to the adoptive parents, to ensure privacy. This was a sealed adoption, meaning that the birth mother would have no idea who adopted Karen or where she went, unless the adoptive parents were notified of her interest in contacting Karen and gave their consent.

The adoption agency categorically denies passing any letters to Karen directly, or illegally telling her mother where Karen was. In fact, they will tell Karen's adoptive parents, or law enforcement officers, that they have not heard a thing, ever, from Karen's birth parents since the adoption, and have never told them anything about where Karen might be or even who adopted her. Nor are they at liberty to confirm details about the birth mother's address, even to the adoptive parents, without a court order or a search warrant, again for legal reasons. If a court order or a police-requested search warrant is resorted to, which will take a couple of days (at least 24 hours, after which Karen is determined to officially be a missing person), the available records confirm that Joy is her birth mother and that Geverlon is the town where Joy lives, but the address they have is different from the one in the letter. Again, no information whatsoever is available about Karen's birth father; he is listed as "unknown" on Karen's original birth certificate.

SCARLET SWIMMER AND SPOTLIGHTS BAR

The investigators really ought to be asking themselves why, now of all times, Karen's birth mother suddenly decided to try and get involved in her life. Given that the adoption agency insists that it did not put them in touch with each other, they should also be wondering how Joy figured out where Karen was. Answers to these questions lie at Spotlights Bar.

The investigators may wish to contact Scarlet Swimmer on MySpace about one of her fans going missing, either to see if she knows anything, or to get her to launch some sort of appeal to anyone who may have seen her. She will not immediately respond on MySpace, unsure about whether to ignore the messages or write a lengthy reply, but the investigators have an alternative chance to catch up with Scarlet as she will be performing with her band on Tuesday night. After their gig, a light rock affair, the investigators may get a chance to catch up with the singer and her band whilst they get themselves a drink at the end of the night.

Scarlet has nothing to do with Karen's disappearance, and is genuinely sad to hear that one of her fans is missing. She explains that if the investigators or Karen's family put up some

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sort of online appeal for help, she can certainly direct people there via MySpace, Facebook and Twitter, but it's not really an appeal the band feels they should set up themselves. If the investigators start getting pushy with Scarlet, the band will intercede, in particular her partner, bassist James Babble. If things escalate further, the club's security, two tough looking bikers, will step in (and the bartender may call the police).

Spotlights Bar itself, of course, can be visited at any time it is open. The bartender, one Peter Mount, is typically there seven nights a week. He's a friendly guy, dressing a little eccentrically to allow for the musical slant of the bar. His thinning hair is regularly shaved right back, although he's only 25 – he'd look a little ill if he wasn't also a muscular guy. He wears a leather waistcoat over a black rock band t-shirt and motorcycle gloves. He looks a great deal like a biker gang member, although in fact he is not.

If shown a picture of Karen, Peter admits that he "vaguely" recognizes her, and that she was someone he'd seen fairly regularly at the club for the last six months or so, but he hasn't seen her since the last Scarlet Swimmer gig, about a month ago. He hasn't seen anything particularly out of the ordinary, and hasn't seen her speaking to any strange people or the like. He'd seen that she was part of a group of younger kids, including some hopeless love-sick puppy of a guy, but they seemed to keep to themselves mostly. Furthermore, Peter never served them alcohol. Although, strictly speaking, they shouldn't have been in the venue because of their ages, he tolerates underage teens being there to see the bands as long as they stick to soft drinks. This is absolutely true.

What Peter will conveniently neglect to mention is that he's originally from Geverlon, and tipped Joy off as to Karen's whereabouts. (Careful research into birth records, however, might reveal this if they have his last name). Karen started to get letters from her mother not long after she signed up to the mailing list at Spotlights. And this only came about when Peter noticed the birthmark on Karen's hand. For Peter has one too (Critical Spot Hidden or specifically looking for it). He also downplays how friendly he was with Karen, which checking with her circle of friends might reveal.

Peter actually likes Karen, and wouldn't want anything bad to happen to her. However, his standards of bad are not the same as most people's, including the investigators. If the investigators come to the bar, he will later contact people in Geverlon to see if Karen arrived safely. When he learns that she hasn't shown up, he may decide that he needs to find out what has happened to her. This is entirely up to the Keeper and how successful the investigators are. If they are stuck, he can turn up and nudge the plot along. While he won't start killing cultists to save anyone, he may do something short of this to protect Karen. Since moving away from Geverlon, he's actually learned a little about humanity and compassion. But only a little.

If the investigators make an intuitive leap as to Peter's involvement, and manage to have Peter arrested (say, for conspiring to interfere with her adoptive parents' custody), he will clam up, be uncooperative, and eventually make bail. The investigators will have to beat or torture answers out of him, but if they do, he knows everything that there is to know

about the history of Geverlon and how it functions. He can only guess, though, at what precisely happened to Karen.

The rest of the bar staff doesn't really know much about Karen. They appreciate that there were underage kids on the premises, but that's kids for you. Better they're in there, under a watchful eye and enjoying the music and drinks in the bar than running around the streets, right?

INVESTIGATIONS AWAY FROM TOWN

Eventually, the investigators will want to leave town to find Karen, heading for the campsite, Geverlon, or both. Ideally, at least as far as Mary and Joe are concerned, they will leave Sunday night or some time on Monday. If they drag things out longer (or if, at the very least, the person closest to Mary doesn't go), the parents will frantically follow up, wondering what they're doing and why they don't seem to be taking this seriously. Their precious daughter has gone missing and when asked to help, they've stayed in town. This may, if handled badly, call for Persuade rolls. If the rolls are failed badly, Mary begins to suspect the investigators may be trying to delay things because they're somehow involved. If or when the parents call the police to report their daughter missing, they may consider pointing the police in the direction of the investigators.

There are three places that the investigators should want to search. First there is the campsite, from which Karen went missing, and where some of her friends and one set of parents are (initially) still waiting. Second is the town of Geverlon, which lies to the northwest of the campsite. And finally, there's the sprawling woods between them, which an online search or map will reveal is peppered with the occasional building. The road from the campsite leads along the southern edge of the woods to a crossroads, where a long main road heads north, through the woods. At this crossroads is a bus stop of sorts, and a fifteen minute drive north is another bus stop. Near this second bus stop is a long winding dirt track, heading west towards Geverlon.

THE CAMPSITE

The journey to the campsite may take a while, depending on how far away you've set it. Regardless, by the time the investigators arrive, they will find most of a worried group of kids there, plus Ali's mother. If a while has passed, Max will have already been taken home by his parents. Graham Hall and one of the boys, Steve, will be out in the car looking for Karen, unless too much time has passed for this to be logical given nightfall, in which case they will have returned to the camp for the night.

Alternatively, if the investigators have drug their feet getting here, everyone may have already all returned home. If the investigators arrive on Wednesday or later, the police may now be involved and have begun to search the woods themselves.

The campsite is a small improved campsite, with a small shower block and some tables and benches set up nearby. The tents of visiting campers are set up in a small field on the edge

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of the woods, near a gravel parking lot. The Halls' camper van is the only vehicle here at the moment, unless the investigators' arrival coincides with the Jensons arriving in their car to pick up Max.

Ali's mother Kim is profusely apologetic about what has happened to Karen, but says that as soon as Ali came back to the campsite and told them that Karen had gone to get on a bus, Graham went after her in his car, to either bring her back or to drive her home, but found no trace of her between the campsite and the bus stop near the crossroads. They've already apologized to Karen's mother on the phone, and have remained here through a feeling of guilt and responsibility for a teenager that they should have been looking after, in the hope that they can find some clue as to where she went if she never got onto a bus.

Graham Hall is upset in his own way. He feels incredibly guilty about Karen having gone missing. This guilt may be misinterpreted as something else, since he was the person who went to find Karen in his car, alone, and returned to report that she was presumably already on a bus. Anyone of a suspicious nature may think he was in some way involved. In fact, depending on what else comes to light through the investigation, Mary might well jump to the same conclusion.

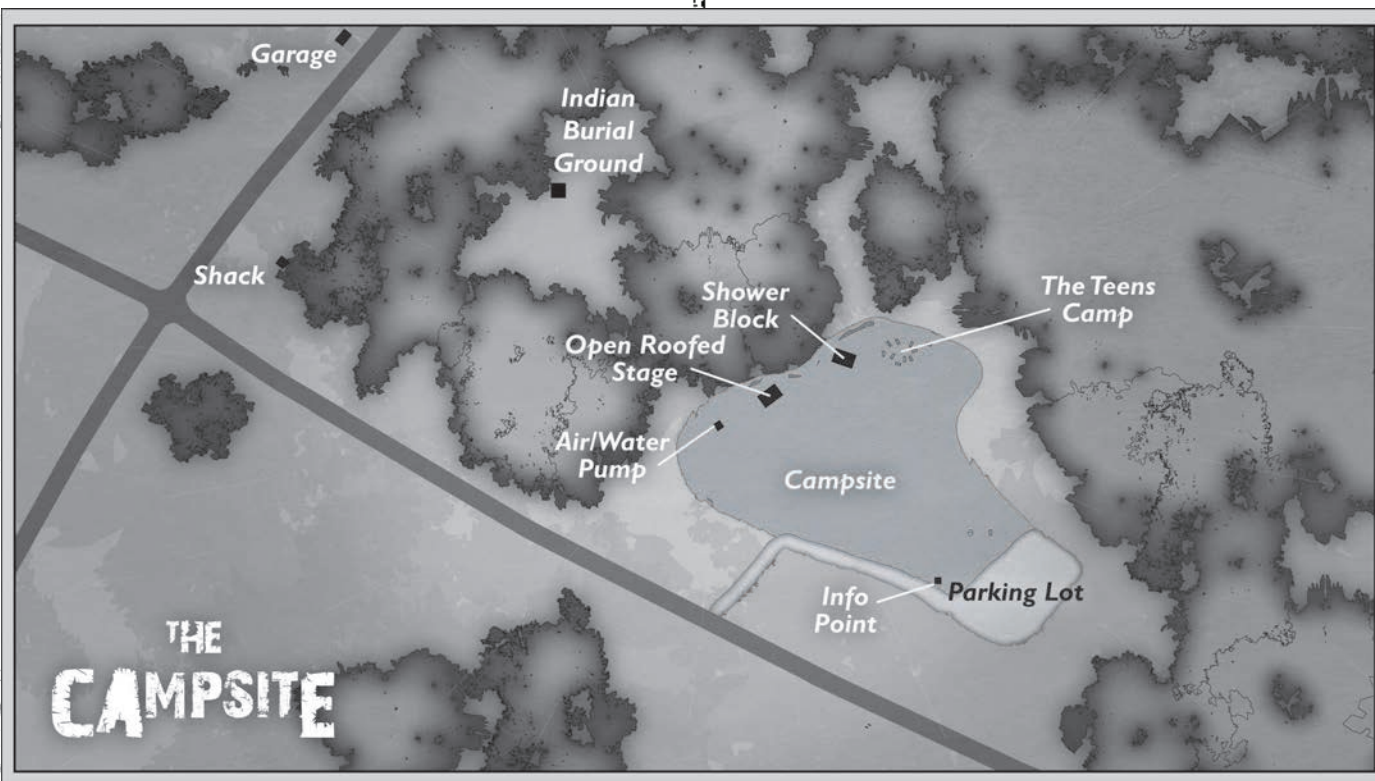
Karen's friends, of course, know plenty that the adults don't, but by the time the players think to talk to them, Karen's mother will have already tried to speak to her best friend Ali over the phone. Ali at first denies knowing anything about what Karen was doing. She says that they were arguing about boys, that Karen had accused Ali of flirting with some other guy even though she's going out with Gordon. Ali refuses to name names – in fact she's making the whole story up. If pressed, she'll say it was Bill, who Karen does have a thing for. A Psychology roll determines that Ali doesn't seem to

be particularly upset, certainly not when compared with the distraught Kim Hall.

Three of the four boys were playing football when Karen and Ali were supposedly arguing, Max, Bill and Gordon, along with Ali's dad Graham. These boys don't really know much. A Psychology roll will reveal that Bill isn't exactly comfortable being asked lots of questions, but the truth is that he's aware that Karen quite liked him, but he'd been playing it cool. Furthermore, he's dying for a cigarette, but can't sneak off and have one with all these grownups hanging around.

Once Graham Hall and Steve return to the campsite after a fruitless day of searching, the two visibly weary campers return to join the others. Graham Hall will be happy to answer questions, but has no more answers to give than his wife. He'll be a little more exhausted and a little less hysterical than her, but will try to be as helpful as he can be. He and Steve have spent most of the day following the obvious routes around the campsite, even asking at the gas station situated between the campsite and Geverlon. They did not go as far as the town itself.

Steve is a little bit nervous if questioned, and will possibly admit to the investigators something he could not bring himself to admit to his friend's parents. A successful Psychology roll reveals his discomfort, whilst a Persuade roll means he will confess to having been exploring the woods and having seen Ali and Karen speaking briefly, and not arguing. Ali and Karen hugged before Ali turned back towards the camp, and Karen went off down the road. He watched Karen until she had slipped from sight, disappearing around a bend on the way back to the main road, and then followed her slowly, hoping to jump out at her and surprise her. Before he reached the crossroads he heard what sounded like a bus slowing down on the main road ahead and then pulling off again up the



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road. By the time he got to the main road there was no sign of Karen, nor of a vehicle, although Steve is pretty certain the vehicle headed north. Steve is now worried that he didn't say or do anything sooner; this is the reason he's been so keen on helping to find her. Although he hasn't admitted to anyone that he knows Ali and Karen weren't fighting, he has tried to steer Graham towards driving north. So far, however, they have not stumbled upon Geverlon.

The only person who knows anything else substantive is the one who seems least concerned, Karen's best friend, Ali. If questioned further, she continues to make half-hearted attempts to feign ignorance, but if more pressure is applied, Ali suggests that maybe Karen just went for a walk in the woods. It will take a Persuade or Intimidate roll to convince Ali to admit that yes, she knows that Karen was talking about trying to get to Geverlon to find her birth mother. She didn't really know how serious she was, until she woke up in the middle of the night to see her leaving. Even with this story, Ali is still lying; she knew exactly what Karen was up to, and wished her good luck. She was expecting to get a call or text from Karen to confirm she got to Geverlon okay, and to come and get her some time later. So far, she hasn't heard anything. Unfortunately, she soon discovered that Karen had left her phone in the tent.

Karen's phone doesn't give any indication of where she has gone. Switching it on will reveal it's full of music and pictures of herself and friends, and similar messages to the ones on her Facebook account. A couple of older ones mention "visiting her REAL mom", but don't say who or where, just that she seems to be very excited about it. There are also several voice mails and texts. Most of these are from their adoptive mother and father. There's also a text from Max, begging her to get in contact with someone, soon after she went missing. If the investigators confiscate Ali's phone (which she'll kick up a big fuss about) or otherwise gain access to it, they will discover that Ali has sent a message to Karen on Sunday evening, to see if she was okay, getting no reply. Ali has already deleted this message from Karen's phone, not wanting to get into any trouble, before switching it off.

If asked what Karen was wearing when she left, everyone will remember she'd been wearing a red coat on the trip, and both Ali and Steve will say that's what she was wearing when they last saw her. Ali will add that her friend had blue jeans, a purple t-shirt with a distinctive "LET'S GO!" slogan, and pink and white sneakers.

The campers group will leave for home by Tuesday morning, and will be questioned by the police when they get home, by which point Mary will have officially reported her daughter missing. The initial police investigation (relatively low priority, given that it appears to be a teenage runaway and not an abduction) will come up to the campsite later that day, and by afternoon will move on to Geverlon.

ALONG THE BUS ROUTE

Heading south would have taken Karen back home, while travelling north three stops took her to the road branching off towards Geverlon. If the investigators try to contact the operators of the buses along the bus route, they'll have to wait

a few hours for confirmation. But eventually, they will receive it. One of the drivers picked up a lone young girl fitting Karen's description, and dropped her off after a short ride along his normal route north. If the investigators travel north themselves to investigate things, they'll find the next stop seems to be pretty much in the middle of nowhere (there's an old abandoned shack here), while two stops up is a gas station and garage. Each bus stop sits opposite an identical one for the route heading south.

The Shack at the Bus Stop

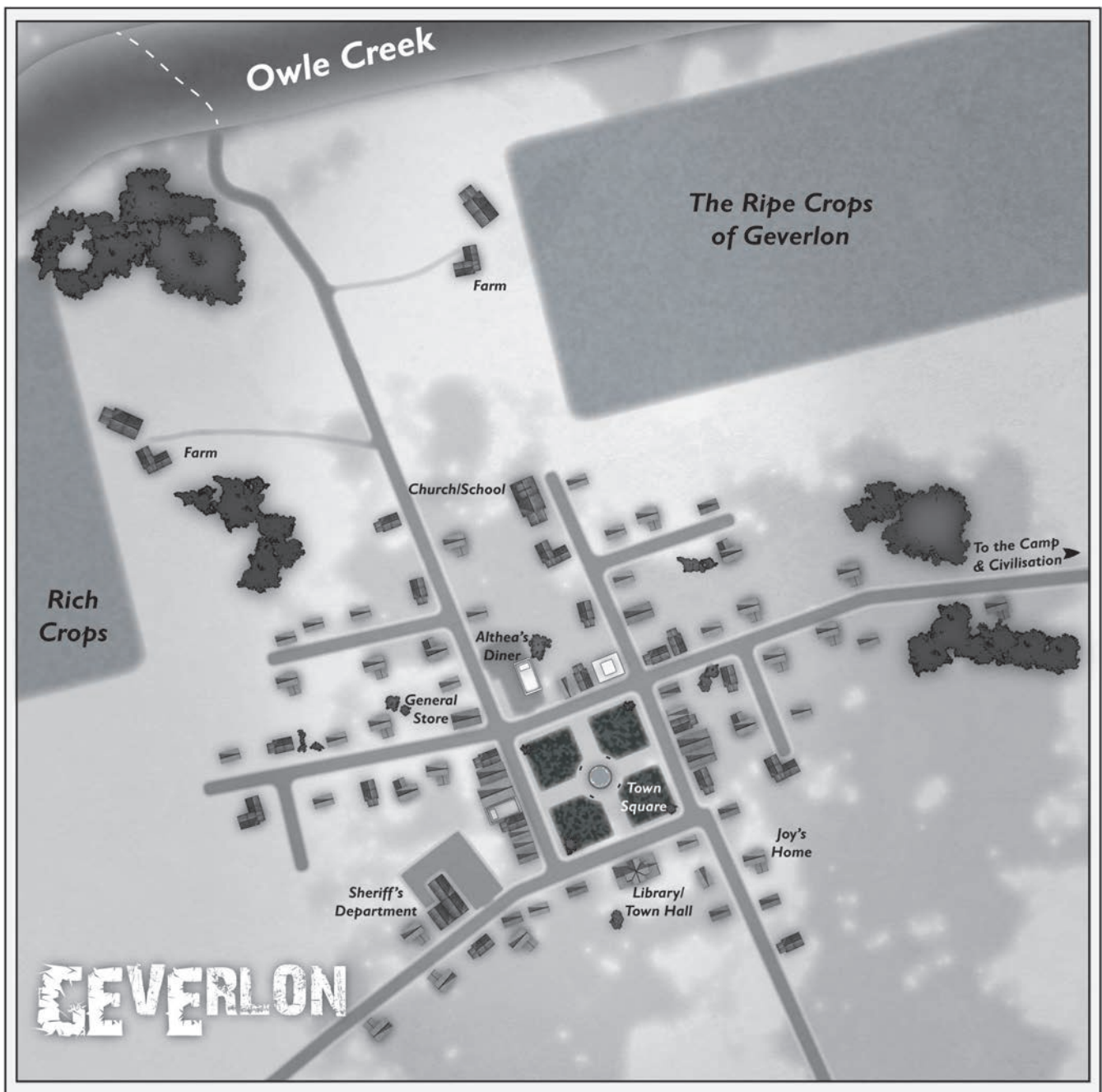
This is a small abandoned building, sitting in the woods a short distance from the bus stop for buses going north which serves as a metaphor for what lies beyond. It is not locked up and has been left to fend for itself. A notice nearby identifies the building as being structurally unsound and dangerous to enter. There's little real risk if people are light on their toes, but anyone running around could potentially go through the floor. Consider making an opposed roll of SIZ versus the STR of 75 for the warped wooden door. Failure indicates the character takes some sort of damage, suffering a minor fall, but they must make a Luck roll to avoid the fall turning out nastier, with a smash to the head, or impalement on a foot on a neglected metal tool. Possible damage will be 1D6/1D10, depending on the severity of the accident.

It's a little dusty inside, but mixed with dirt and woodland debris and water damage it's hard to tell whether anyone has been here recently. There are no signs of recent fires or occupation, and nothing underneath the building that you wouldn't expect to find amongst the typical dirt on the woodland floor, namely worms and insects and soil. In fact the

Hezekiah Smith



ROOTS



place does get visited, but rarely for any purpose other than temporary shelter. Something about it smells extremely odd, however, like heavy musk, particularly around the outside walls. This marks the outer edge of the Wild Ones' territory, and has been marked accordingly. Any dogs (including search dogs) act very uneasily around this shed as a result. Furthermore, past this shack in the direction of Geverlon, cell phone service becomes spotty and unreliable, often dropping at the least convenient moment.

The Gas Station at the Next Bus Stop

Further up the road from the shack, by the next south bound bus stop, is a gas station (with a mechanic's bay) owned and run by Cheryll Reynolds. She's a large, tough looking woman, in her late thirties, with short dark hair and glasses, but dressed in neat overalls. She works in the main part of

the gas station, while out back Hezekiah Smith, a man in his late fifties, fixes broken cars (or, alternatively, tinkers with his own). Cheryll is a cultist, while Hezekiah is more of a read-in wannabe, in thrall to the cult.

Cheryll Reynolds doesn't have a great deal to say about people passing through – she's friendly enough but she doesn't take any shit from men who think they know better. She has a license for the shotgun she keeps behind the counter, and she will not hesitate to use it, though she's more likely to come swinging with a baseball bat. As it happens, she hasn't seen (or heard of) Karen, who didn't pass the gas station on foot, but she'll most likely go to see the Sheriff in Geverlon if the investigators let slip that they think that is where Karen was going.

If she does have to leave the gas station, she'll leave it in the capable hands of Hezekiah, who she's grown fond of. He

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knows his place. He's a tough guy, not stupid and not especially talkative, who is capable of doing much of the heavy lifting required in the workshop. He's bearded, slightly balding, and almost always wears his oil smeared overalls. Not only is he the general mechanic for nearby Geverlon, he's also a driver and courier for the town. He's perfectly happy living at the gas station, as an extension of the town, but has a healthy fear of the Wild Ones in the woods, tempered by the responsibility he has to occasionally drive people out there to meet them. His closest friend is Stuart Woolley at the general store in town. He has little contact with most of the other men in or near town, aside from the Deputy who often patrols around the perimeter of the town. He has also met the enigmatic Father Allberry a few times, and has a healthy fear of him.

The Turnoff to Geverlon

If the investigators are pretty much clueless about where Geverlon is, then they'll probably only discover it by chance, by following the turn off to the west just past the next set of bus stops. The road winds for quite a way, a good half hour's walk, or five minutes by car. This will bring them to the first indication that they are on the right track, a sign that welcomes them to Geverlon, "Where Home Still Means Something." From there it is another 15 minutes on foot to reach the edge of town. None of the usual relevant signs for benevolent lodges or a chamber of commerce are found; however, the sign again features that same heavy, musky smell that will unnerve any dogs that might be in nearby.

ARRIVING AT GEVERLON

As the investigators head into Geverlon, the woods give way to a large open space, in which the small town has been built. It appears for a moment as if the road leaves the woods, but the trees still stretch away to either side, curving around to line the horizon in each direction, with the town actually being in the center of a large clearing. The town looks idyllic, houses largely painted white, with large front lawns facing the road, leading towards a high street that run along one edge of the Town Square, across from which sit civic buildings like the Town Hall and library. The main road continues on, past a turn off where the diner and general store sit, and then out of town towards a couple of nearby farms. The whole place has the appearance of perfect small town America, although it seems to be a little dated. There are no restaurant franchises or name brand banks, just smaller businesses and suburban houses on smaller roads branching off the main through road. Vehicles parked in front of buildings seem to be, for the most part, pick-up trucks and large family sedans, nothing flashy or, if checked, particularly new.

If it's daytime when the investigators arrive, then they will see what appears to be a thriving and happy little community. Assuming that the scenario is being set during summer vacation, kids can be found playing, though the majority will be off the streets, either playing in the small park on one edge

of the town square or in each other's gardens, although the older kids prefer to play (or 'explore') amongst the trees and the open ground between the town and the woods proper. A few children can be found cycling from one place to another, or simply chasing each other around town.

Adults, too, can be seen walking the streets, enjoying the pleasant weather. These are mostly women, with few adult men visible.

The later that the investigators arrive, the quieter the streets are. Younger children will be at home by 6 p.m., while teenagers gravitate towards the diner around 5 p.m. Most of the shops will close at around this time too, with just the town hall remaining open until 8p.m. The diner itself remains a social hub in the evenings, staying open until midnight. After midnight, the town is very quiet indeed, with just the occasional light on in a bedroom window.

THE PEOPLE OF GEVERLON

A Spot Hidden roll, if the players ask if there's anything noticeably weird about the town or its population, will reveal a couple of things. First, it will be apparent that the people look particularly healthy and well groomed, again as if they are part of an idyllic community. The people look almost television show perfect. Second, either on an Extreme Spot Hidden roll, or by specifically looking for the pattern, they may notice that the town seems to have a female to male ratio of 3:1. The people that the investigators encounter will be, for the most part, women and girls, but there are enough men and boys so that this disproportionality is not immediately apparent. You might make such a roll whenever the investigators are in the presence of a large group of townfolk (such as at the diner), as they will think they have walked into a women's club luncheon.

The investigator who knows Karen will most likely be keeping an eye out for her, and it is likely that the others will be looking for someone of the appropriate age, dress and hair color. While there will be a few girls that are similar, there will be no sign of Karen herself.

The investigators, as a group of comparatively rare outsiders, not among the usual collection of delivery people, county officials or the like who come to town now and again, will most likely draw some attention to themselves. This is particularly the case if they are mostly (or exclusively) male. People will be courteous towards men, but will be affirmatively curious as to what they're looking for. This attention will become increasingly negative if the investigators act shiftily, ask too many strange questions, or are seen to be paying particular attention towards teenaged girls. Women in the investigators' group will be accepted more warmly. The men of the town will act very respectfully towards women, but will be a little distant towards the men, not quite ignoring them but not quite sure how to treat them.

There are a few places where the investigators might get a more reasonable response but, in general, a bunch of men asking about a missing girl will not be given much time or cooperation. This is because they typically equate men in town with trouble. This will make many of the older folk less friendly, but would appear to have much the opposite effect

on the younger women in Geverlon.

Once the investigators have been seen by any younger women in town, assuming that there are several young men amongst them, one or two of the local younger women are likely to keep tabs on them, following them around the town. A slender, young, dark-complexioned woman named Vesta Braintree will be the most persistent of these. There will be frequent opportunities to pick up on the surveillance (Spot Hidden). The young women in Geverlon do not have cell phones, nor do they obsessively stalk the investigators, so there will be times when they will have returned to the larger group, or will have gone home. However, they are at least likely to follow the investigators for a short while after they leave the diner, or any other time they return through the center of town and make their presence known.

Furthermore, given that some of the investigators won't know Karen well enough to recognize her straight away, they may want to check the group of girls to see if any of them fit the description. If they make a successful Spot Hidden roll, or if they are asking specifically if a certain girl has the red birthmark Karen is known to have on the back of her right hand, they'll successfully find it. However, they must immediately make another Spot Hidden roll. If they succeed with this one, it becomes apparent that each of the girls who is following them around has the same birthmark in the same place. Make a SAN roll with a potential loss of 0/1 SAN when they eventually pick up on this unsettling fact.

In truth, this "birthmark" is a tattoo, a mark that all of the children born in this town are given. Further successful Spot Hidden rolls (or following up on this revelation) will reveal that everyone they meet in town, bar the investigators themselves, have the same birthmark. The first time they make this deduction a SAN roll gives a loss of 0/1d4 SAN. Peter at the Spotlights bar, as previously discussed, is originally from Geverlon, and has such a "birthmark" on his right hand (usually hidden beneath a glove).

The family unit in Geverlon is based around the mother, the daughter and the sister. Boys born in the town are typically single children. Townsfolk tend to refer to members of the same generation as 'cousin', to those of a higher generation as 'auntie' (or 'uncle'), and to those of a younger generation as 'niece' (or 'nephew'). No-one talks of fathers and brothers, at least to strangers.

Apart from this, everyone one in town is a normal human, statistically speaking, without spells or other magic at their disposal, unless otherwise noted. They are also all cultists, with 0 SAN, although the folk who live in town, fortunately, are not particularly murderous, violent or bloodthirsty. At least not most of the time, without being so ordered. Things among the menfolk out in the woods are, of course, a bit different.

THE TRUTH ABOUT GEVERLON, AND IMPORTANT PLACES IN TOWN

Geverlon does not exist in a vacuum—it has a symbiotic relationship with the encroaching woods. The town has a tradition of supporting a matriarchal society, which is in some ways a cult, while the boys born of the town tend to be raised by The Wild Ones in the woods, a male-dominated cult. While the women retain a cultured and generally peaceful outlook, and are more forward thinking, The Wild Ones indulge in darker practices and passions, some in the name of survival, many in the name of pleasure.

At certain ordained times, a woman of the town will go visit The Wild Ones in the woods to conceive a child and then, nine months later, return to the woods to give birth. Upon the child's birth, it is given a mark upon the right hand by a Wild One witch, and then returned to the mother's care. A son that is brought back to town is often raised until it gains some measure of independence, usually between six and ten, before being handed over to the Wild Ones. While raising a boy, the mother is forbidden from having further children. Furthermore, on occasion, a mother decides that she cannot bear to part with her son, and thereupon sacrifices her right to bear further children. Women who cling to their sons become barren, and those sons become the occasional male in town.

Sometimes, women conceive through an ill-advised union with one of the few male townsfolk, or a stranger who has decided he wants to settle down in Geverlon. Alas, such a man will discover that their days are numbered, if not their minutes, as it is the women's custom to kill the male partner after the act if he has not already given himself, heart and soul, to the worship of Shub-Niggurath. Female strangers are welcome to settle down in the town, but they are rarely encouraged to join the cult. If they stumble upon it, they are given a choice of "join or die." Most join. If they are married, they may find that their husbands go missing (possibly having been seduced by one of the townswomen first), and children are likely to be brought into the fold before adults are.

Similarly, but on rarer occasions, a woman will end up living amongst The Wild Ones. When the woman has turned her back on the society of Geverlon and instead chosen to pursue her wildest impulses, the woman is welcomed into the throng as a witch and mate to whomever she would have, although she will never bear children of her own. Such a woman is known as a Wild Woman. As the scenario begins the Wild Ones have had one Wild Woman, Sarah, for the past ten years or so. The only other type of woman likely to dwell among The Wild Ones will be someone like Karen who has lost her way in the woods, and her short time amongst them will not be a happy one. Men who are discovered by The Wild Ones wandering in their woods are likely to be hunted and killed almost immediately, as some sort of primitive sport. And possibly eaten.

If the group has planned ahead, they may already have an idea of where they are going—Joy's address. Alternatively, they may just investigate particularly noteworthy buildings. It is likely that, if they've come to the town on the assumption

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that Karen has come to look for her mother, they will head there straightaway. There are, however, other places that the investigators may want to visit first.

THE DINER

Althena's Diner is a pretty relaxed looking place, with music playing on the radio. It seems to be particularly popular amongst kids and older people, and while there are mixed groups of boys and girls, albeit many more girls than boys, the older generations seem to sit apart. There are a couple of girls behind the counter, with the names Abbie and Laura on their name tags, and at least one person (an older woman can be seen) in the kitchen area. The kids will stop their nattering when strangers walk in. If there are mainly men in the group they will watch them for a while, the music on the radio the only sound for a bit. This will likely make some of the older patrons look up from their food, or papers, to check out the new arrivals.

The girls behind the counter will be friendly if the investigators order food before they start asking questions. They seem genuinely friendly and happy to meet decent folk, if that's how the investigators are acting. If they come straight out and mention they're looking for a missing girl upon entering the diner, then the girls behind the counter will both stop to consider the question. Laura will shake her head and say she hasn't seen anyone new in town except the investigators, and Abbie, chewing gum, will confirm she hasn't seen anyone either. In either case, one of them will offer to check whether the owner of the diner, 'Althie' has seen anyone, and will head into the back.

If the investigators are predominately male, then one of the teenage girls in the diner will call over: "You're looking for a girl? Will I do?" All the girls will be looking towards the investigators, particularly those with a high APP, although the one or two boys in the group are looking away, trying to keep out of it. It is likely that the attitude of the girls, none of whom is older than eighteen, is likely to unnerve the investigators somewhat – the girls are sexually aware and confident, and will hold the investigators' gazes with a slightly sinister, or predatory, smile. If this makes the players a little uncomfortable, good, but the owner of the diner will interrupt before anything too serious occurs.

'Althie', Althena Roney, is a stocky but not fat woman in her late forties. She comes across at first as a little cautious, as if she doesn't trust strangers, but she'll make a point of telling the girls to hush down if they're making a scene, at which point they'll most likely leave (and hang around outside, waiting for the investigators to leave). She's a friendly enough woman, her face marked by laughter lines and her brown hair threaded through with the occasional grey and white hair. She wears a lot of colored wooden beaded jewelry around her wrists and neck, and wears a thick grey sweatshirt, even though it's summer.

She honestly hasn't seen a girl called Karen, or any strangers visiting town that match her description, although she is happy to point the direction to the Sheriff's office in order to report it (her "cousin" Joe works there). Furthermore, if they ask about 'Joy', the person who wrote letters to Karen, then

she can give an address, which matches the one they should already have, and directions. She'll even draw a quick map on a napkin if it helps. Lastly, if they ask her any questions about the town itself, she'll be forthcoming enough, but there's not a great deal to tell.

If the investigators mention that Karen most likely came through the woods, then it's possible that someone will notice she seems a little concerned, but says nothing. Once the investigators have gone, she'll ring the Sheriff's office herself, to report what the investigators have said.

THE GENERAL STORE

The general store, opposite the diner, is simply marked 'General Store' in big letters. It is run by Stuart Woolley, an old but upbeat man in his late sixties, who has lived in the town all his life. He'll also be able to relate some of the history of the town. The shop that has remained within his family's possession ever since he was a young boy and his father left ("to fight in the war"). He doesn't know much about what goes on in town, knowing only really to refer the investigators to Althie in the diner or Sheriff Reynolds for information. He does not know 'Joy'. He probably does know the dozen or so men in town, by name at least, although he's only on friendly terms with Hezekiah Smith, who works at the gas station outside of town and often brings goods into town from elsewhere.

The general store is pretty much run by Woolley alone, although as he is getting on he is sometimes aided by his "niece" Ann McMahon, a ginger-haired young lady with a charming personality and boundless curiosity about the world outside Geverlon. She's genuinely curious, but that doesn't mean she'll side with the investigators against anything they uncover later in the scenario.

THE TOWN SQUARE

Fairly nondescript, the town square has a small tree in each corner, with a path that crosses through a central area in which four benches face each other in a diamond shape, surrounded by flowers. There's a small raised pool in the middle, with lily pads floating on the surface. There's absolutely nothing unusual about the pool, although feel free to let the investigators poke around in it. This is simply a place for relaxation.

THE TOWN HALL AND LIBRARY

Essentially two wings of the same building, the Town Hall and Library can be reached by crossing over the Town Square. The main foyer in the Town Hall has a large staircase that ascends around a receptionist's front desk and a door into the rooms on the ground floor. Immediately on the right is a set of double doors leading into the Library in the east wing.

There are some glass cases mounted on the walls which give a brief (and completely sanitary) version of the town's history, along with photos and small items of interest (such as the town founder's watch, Civil War memorabilia, and a Native American arrowhead). To wit, the town was founded in 1760 by early settlers to the area. They encountered no

resistance from any local Native American tribes, enabling the settlement to quickly stabilize and grow. Local legend ascribes the name of the town, Geverlon, as a rough translation of a Native American term meaning “tree of life” or “iron wood”, depending on who you believe.

There is also a hand drawn map of the local area, which includes the roads the investigators will most likely have travelled along (but does not mark the camp site), and shows that the woods totally circle Geverlon. It also makes mention of a few sites of historical interest dotted around the woods. These include a small lake to the north (Lake Nemi) that, curiously, wasn't on any online maps the investigators may have checked earlier, and an Indian Burial Ground a little further east, back on the other side of the main road (somewhere northeast of the abandoned shack). The Denning River runs between the town and the lake and flows east, under a bridge at Owle Creek which the main road crosses, and winds off north east.

The investigators will not be able to easily see the Mayor, Emily Bale, without an appointment. Theoretically, they can try to grab her when she leaves the building at the end of



Joy

the working day, but then the chances are they won't know her to recognize her.

The library is stocked mostly with old paperbacks from the last twenty or so years, with a handful of hardback non-fiction books. Most were brought by people from Geverlon who have travelled out to one the bigger towns or cities, although a large number have been 'donated' by people who were passing through. There are a small number of books that have people's names still written inside, though

usually just first names. The investigators could spend a long time looking for one with the name Karen written inside it, but even if they find one they will have no way of knowing if it was a gift to a different Karen, now dead and buried.

The lone librarian is named Hazel May—she's tall, blonde, wears glasses and comes across as a friendly lady, but knows nothing about any missing girls. She can, however, provide some information about some of the local historical sites. Lake Nemi, she can point out, is a small lake that feeds into the nearby river, and is perhaps best known for the wooden sculptures that stand between trees staring out into the waters. There's an old Native American burial ground somewhere further east, near an unnamed cave (sometimes just referred to as 'The Indian Cave'). There's no actual indication that the cave was used by Native Americans, however, as everyone knows that none were living in the area at the time of Geverlon's settlement (which is odd).

THE CHURCH (REALLY, THE SCHOOL)

If the investigators look for a church, they might see the spire at the north end of town and head that way. The building, which has a bell tower, is labeled Saint Mary's, although it looks as if it's more of a school than a church. In truth it began as a church, before the community found their faith elsewhere, and while the building continues to serve a purpose, the original faith itself did not. Still, the town does not like strangers poking around too much, and will refer to the building as a church. There is no local church representative in the town, although people may refer to a “Father Allberry” who is currently out of town on business, due to return in a couple of days. If the investigators linger in town more than a day or two, Father Allberry may be sent for, from the woods, to attend to them.

The building is kept locked, and its interior is not consistent with the public version of events, should the investigators happen to break into it. Inside, the church hall has been converted into a large meeting hall, five classrooms, toilets and a storeroom. The building lacks modern equipment such as computers, in addition to lacking any church trappings at all.

The women in the town profess to worship Mother Mary as a saint, and little “Mary On The Half Shell” lawn statues are common fixtures in people's front yards, but this is how they symbolize the female aspect of Shub-Niggurath. The women in town have very little to do with cult and ritual practice, unlike the Wild Ones, except that every full moon they travel to Lake Nemi to participate in an orgy that celebrates the union of the male and female aspects of life.

JOY'S HOUSE

If the investigators have been directed there, they'll have no trouble finding the address. The house is fairly nondescript, in that it looks much like the other houses in town, boards painted white and a beautiful display of flowers lining the garden path. Music can be heard playing through the door, and any knocking on the door (or ringing of the doorbell) will bring a woman in her forties to the door. She is a slightly rough

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looking, thin, blonde haired woman who bears little evident resemblance to the missing Karen. She'll be surprised if she's met by a group of men, and guarded, but should only a couple of investigators have come to the door, or just women, then she'll be a lot more friendlier.

She will admit to being named Joy if she's asked, even going so far as to add her last name Henderson to a less threatening group. If the story about Karen comes out, in particular if they ask if she's seen her, they'll be invited in, and offered tea.

Joy will be concerned to hear that Karen has gone missing, but a successful Psychology roll suggests that she is not as distraught as she perhaps ought to be. Depending on how they come across, Joy may open up and relate parts of her story. When she was younger, she discovered that she was pregnant, but felt unable to take on the responsibility of motherhood. When the child was born, she found it hard to connect with the baby girl, particularly since the father had (supposedly) died before she was born, (supposedly) in a car crash at the bridge by Owle Creek. (This story is, of course, complete hogwash). She left town with her young daughter, trying to start again somewhere new, but found it impossible to cope, eventually giving up the child for adoption before finally returning to Geverlon. She's recently contacted the agency again to get back in contact, because she wanted to know how her young girl had turned out.

Numerous aspects of this story are false, as a further Psychology roll will reveal. For a start, Joy has not contacted the agency, and if the investigators state that they know she hasn't (whether they've discovered this or not), she will insist she has, although she will become frustrated and flustered rather than upset. More importantly, she is not actually Karen's mother, although she knew her. Karen's real mother, Holly, was an outsider brought into the community whose husband died shortly after their child was conceived. When she was taken into the woods to give birth, and Karen received her mark from The Wild Ones, Holly went temporarily insane, but retained enough of her sanity to escape the town with her child some weeks later. She was killed not long after in a car crash, after running into the enigmatic Father Allberry, and her child was taken into foster care by the local authorities elsewhere.

Joy's role in the town is to get in contact with children that were born locally but, for whatever reason, grew up outside Geverlon. She then slowly attempts to return them to the fold. Normally it would be expected that this would be a gradual progress; the child would visit the town and slowly become part of the cult. In this instance, with Karen having lived close enough to Geverlon to attempt to visit under her own steam, without adult supervision, the whole situation has become a lot more unpredictable and uncontrolled. Strangers have arrived asking questions and looking for answers, and they may find out plenty that the town does not want discovered.

Because of this, Joy will most likely play the concerned mother, before suggesting they head to the local Sheriff's office. This is what she has been trained to do, and it is all part of the town's pre-existing and carefully orchestrated contingency plan for dealing with strangers. They funnel them to well-composed senior cult members who have been trained in how to effectively deal with strangers (e.g., Althie, Joy and the

Sheriff's staff), lead them around by the nose until they get a version of events that they can handle, and then, if they cannot get them to leave town quietly, send for Father Allberry. Other townsfolk, as noted above, might get nervous at questions and try too hard to get the investigators to talk to someone they ought to be talking to, which might tip them off that things are not quite right in Geverlon.

ALEX STEEL, Deputy

STR 80 CON 80 SIZ 80 INT 60 POW 60
DEX 65 APP 65 EDU 60 SAN 00 HP 16

Damage bonus: +1D4.

Build: 1

Move: 8

ATTACKS

Firearms (Handguns) 50% (25/10), Colt Delta Elite Auto, 1D10+1, 7 shots, 15 yards base range, malfunction 98-00

Fighting (Shotgun) 50% (25/10), 12 gauge pump, 4D6/2D6/1D6, 1/round, 5 shots, range 10/20/50 yards, malfunction 00

Fighting (Brawling) 50% (25/10)

Dodge 50% (25/10)

Skills: Computer Use 30%, Credit Rating 45%, Drive Auto 45%, First Aid 55%, Forensics 25%, Law 25%, Intimidate 40%, Psychology 36%, Spot Hidden 50%, Stealth 50%, Track 50%.

Defenses: None above base; may wear bulletproof vest if anticipating gunplay.

Nationality: American

Age: 32

Education: High School; Police Academy.

Quotes: "Don't worry, I know these woods like the back of my hand. We'll find your Candy--sorry, Karen—if she's out there." "I told you that you should have left this to legitimate authorities of this town, but you just wouldn't listen, would you (cocks shotgun)?"



THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE

During daylight hours, two people can typically be found in the Sheriff's office, Sheriff Mabel Reynolds and (surprisingly male) Deputy Alex Steel. Between them, they can usually handle both sides of the community existing between the town and the woods, as well as handle strangers. Both are large (muscular) and dark haired, although Alex is around ten years younger than Sheriff Reynolds' 42 years. Also, unknown to the townsfolk, Steel is not just her Deputy but her lover, which breaks just about every rule there is in Geverlon. Deputy Alex will deal with the investigators unless they insist on talking to the Sheriff, which isn't going to make them her friends, even though it will get her attention.

On hearing what the investigators have to say about a missing girl, believed to be headed to meet her birth mother in Geverlon who then disappeared, Sheriff Reynolds will tell her Deputy to take the patrol car out onto the roads and see what he can find. He'll take this cue to go out into the woods and speak with the Wild Ones. If it's early, he'll first drive over to the gas station, and make a show of checking the nearby old shack. As evening draws near, he'll park his car on the embankment by the bridge to the north at Owle Creek, and visit the ruins of the old church there. Once there, he'll ring the old bell to arrange a meeting with any Wild Ones nearby. See below for details of the bridge and the ruins at Owle Creek, and what happens if the investigators should follow the Deputy there.

If events either in Geverlon or at Owle Creek lead to the investigators (or some of them) getting arrested, but they have not uncovered anything sinister yet, they will be brought back here and locked up. They'll be seen by the Sheriff and possibly any friendly contacts they've made, but will most likely be forced to stay in jail overnight. Nothing will happen to them, although you are welcome to play on their fears a bit.

MABEL REYNOLDS, Sheriff

STR 65 CON 70 SIZ 65 INT 65 POW 65
DEX 60 APP 55 EDU 60 SAN 00 HP 13

Damage bonus: +1D4.

Build: I

Move: 8

ATTACKS

Firearms (Handguns) 52% (26/10), Colt Delta Elite Auto, 1d10+1, 7 shots, 15 yards base range, malfunction 98-00

Skills: Accounting 38%, Computer Use 35%, Credit Rating 55%, Drive Auto 55%, First Aid 55%, Forensics 25%, Law 35%, Persuade 40%, Psychology 46%, Spot Hidden 50%.

Defenses: None above base; may wear bulletproof vest if anticipating gunplay.

Nationality: American

Age: 42

Education: High School; Police Academy.

Quotes: "Ma'am, I ASSURE you that EVERYTHING that can be done, is being done to find your daughter. But we do not even know that she is in our jurisdiction. I promise, we'll conduct a sweep of the woods just as soon as she is reported missing."

After the first night, if the investigators have yet to make any discoveries about Karen's whereabouts and have some sort of friendly contact in Geverlon, they will be released into her company, under the pretense that she has paid their bail, but she will have been appointed their third party custodian as a bail condition for as long as they remain in town, until their initial court date in two weeks.

By contrast, if the investigators have made some sort of discovery, they will be visited in their cells by Father Allberry early one evening, who will "invite" them to accompany him to see Karen in the woods, where she is very much alive. The invitation will be at gunpoint or gunpoints belonging to as many townsfolk as might be necessary to dissuade resistance, if things come to that. At the very least, the Deputy will come with them, to the Tree, as night falls.

GEVERLON FARMS

There are four small farms both to the north and west of Geverlon, each one run by an older woman and her daughters. Typically they employ those men who have remained with the town to do the heavy manual work. Occasionally the women may take a man as a mate, but by the next morning he can expect to be food for the crops or animals (and an indoctrinated local will generally do so willingly).

If the investigators venture out this far, they might see people in the fields, but they won't find them particularly friendly unless a woman addresses them. Heading north from the town past two of the farms will lead to the tree-line beyond which the flows the Denning River, and stepping stones across it leading to the northern half of the woods.

Men killed by the women of Geverlon traditionally end up buried in the fields of the farms, to put their bodies to good use in fertilizing the crops. Waste not, want not.

FATHER ALLBERRY

The investigators may hear about Father Allberry before they meet him. Although he dresses as a priest, for the sake of appearing as a gentle and approachable man, he is not a Father of any faith, this instead being his title as one of the local inhabitants of the woods. Magic allows him some measure of control over his appearance and the cyclic nature of Wild One existence, but he still retains the beard and grin that are common amongst them. He'll be introduced to the investigators, a quiet elder man in glasses, but with a firm handshake. He'll behave in an incredibly civil manner.

If the investigators have yet to scratch the surface of their investigations, he'll try to offer helpful advice. He has not seen the missing girl, but he refers the investigators to some of the abandoned buildings off the main road, such as the Shack, or the ruins of the church at Owle Creek. If they have explored a little, he'll wonder aloud at other places, such as further up the road through the Woods. In either case, he's happy to offer the investigators a place to stay, in a small house near the School/Church. If the investigators have made any friends amongst the locals, they will most likely be warned against staying the night at Father Allberry's, but they are quite safe there. They're safer there than at most other houses in the

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town. Father Allberry is in charge of handling strangers, and it would not do to have too many simply disappear.

A Spot Hidden roll at his house will reveal a fine layer of dust on most things. He doesn't use this house often, and will in fact need to visit the grocer before he has any decent food in the house.

If they meet Father Allberry after they have deduced that the town is not safe, and/or that there are people living in the woods, he will be coming to see them to take them to Karen. He doesn't wish to see any unnecessary bloodshed.

"FATHER" ALLBERRY

STR 60 CON 70 SIZ 60 INT 80 POW 90
DEX 60 APP 45 EDU 70 SAN 00 HP 13

Damage bonus: none.

Build: 0

Move: 10

ATTACKS

Hasn't hit anyone in years

Skills: Be Affably Evil 90%, Credit Rating in Geverlon 90%, Cthulhu Mythos 7%, Persuade 55%, Psychology 55%.

Defenses: If anticipating trouble, may have cast Flesh Ward.

Nationality: American?

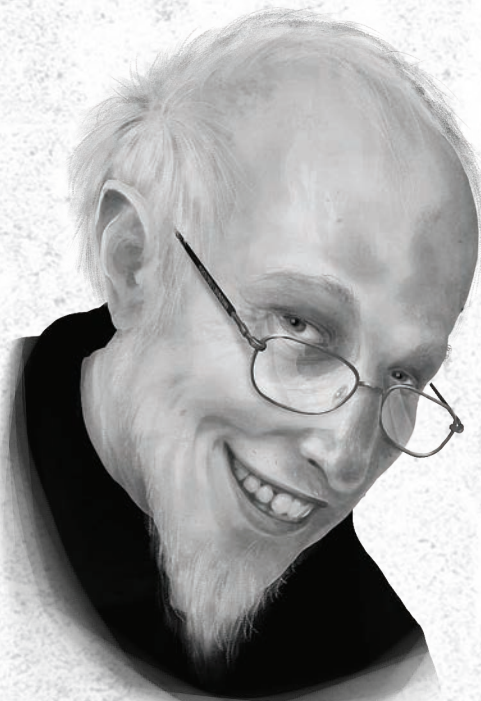
Age: ?? (seems 50ish)

Education: Obscured in ambiguity.

Spells: Call Shub-Niggurath; Summon/Bind Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath; Conact Nyarlathotep (Black Man form); Flesh Ward; Shrivelling; Elder Sign; others in the Keeper's discretion.

SAN Loss: None under normal circumstances; if seen naked and satyr-like, 0/1D4.

Quotes: "Don't worry, it's all under control."



He's honest in this regard – he'd rather the blood was spilt ritually in the woods. He will invite the investigators to join him in 'his car', although at the request of the Sheriff, he will ask any female investigators to remain in town, by way of 'insurance'. In fact, he expects that the men will not return, and any female investigators will be invited to join the community rather than being left to go free. Joining requires partaking in the next full moon ritual orgy.

Father Allberry and the male investigators will be chauffeur-driven out of town by the mechanic, Hezekiah Smith, where they will cross over the bridge at Owle Creek, continue past a turn off to the left and take one to the right, and finally walk on foot to the Tree. By this time, it will be getting dark. Should the investigators try to run away on foot at any time, Father Allberry will not try to stop them. The Wild Ones will get them before they get too far.

Father Allberry is unique amongst the Wild Ones. He is a tool of the Wild Women, and acts as an emissary to the human world. As a messenger, a spy and a killer, he will often travel further afield. Father Allberry uses magic to appear human in regular society, and even in the woods he tends to remain clothed and remarkably tame. He may even prove an unlikely ally, as he is capricious and willing to save those who have proved entertaining or embraced the violent nature that may prove the best way to survive the woods.

STAYING OVERNIGHT IN GEVERLON?

If the investigators decide to stay in town overnight, their first problem will be finding a place to stay. This is not a tourist town, and has no hotel. However, Father Allberry is happy to put up the investigators at his (seldom used) place. Alternatively, if they've endeared themselves to anyone—likely folk being Joy Henderson, Hazel the librarian or, at a push, Stuart Woolley's niece Ann McMahon—they may be offered a place to stay overnight. Both Joy and Ann have houses with spare bedrooms, and all have a couch and a couple of chairs that can be used at short notice. The only alternative, should the investigators decide they need to remain in the area to search the woods, is to camp out. Certainly staying at Geverlon will be more comfortable, although it has its own risks.

If a male character has proved to be particularly charming to their hostess, she will try to find some way to spend a little time alone with him. She is unlikely to try to lure them away to her bed on the first night, unless there is no-one else around, but she will be trying to procure a mate. It is likely that this course of events will be play out over a couple of days, and the investigator may naturally come to believe that he can trust her, or even that he needs to protect her.

If the investigators make known that they will be heading into the woods to look for Karen, the prospective mate will be encouraged to wait until day light next day, and the hostess will attempt to make her move that evening. Likewise, if there is talk of a police sweep through the woods the next day, and the investigators volunteer to join it, the prospective mate will be invited to bed that night.

That evening, the hostess will then administer the "lucky"

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investigator a poison that also acts as an aphrodisiac, which will initially prompt the investigator into performing lustful acts, before making him drowsy and causing partial paralysis shortly after the act. At this point, the Geverlon woman will sacrifice her new mate with a ritual knife. The next morning, she'll ask after the investigator, as if expecting the character to still be there, and hopefully throwing suspicion off herself. At the same time, she will likely seek her next victim, perhaps someone who is sympathetic to her worry about the missing investigator. The body of the previous victim will remain in the bedroom, temporarily stuffed into a cupboard with the bloody bed clothes. If discovered, the remains will prompt a SAN roll, with a loss of 1/1D6 SAN.

Alternatively, the hostess may invite the lone investigator for a romantic walk to see Lake Nemi, where she will attempt to seduce him. She is happy enough to have the other investigators accompany them (or so she says, although a successful Psychology roll suggests otherwise), but will reconsider her plan. Her initial plan involves killing the investigator without relying on the aphrodisiac, but within sight of the Watchers and several hidden but active Wild Ones. The Wild Ones will not kill the investigator themselves, but will keep the investigator from escaping, allowing the woman the joy of the kill. If she cannot persuade an investigator to go without his associates, she will lead the investigators on, and then leave them to the Wild Ones.

As it is, discoveries at Lake Nemi may well change the course of events.

If the investigators are in Geverlon on Tuesday afternoon, they will witness the arrival of a police car from out of town. Mary will by that point have reported her daughter as an officially missing person, and they will have come to investigate themselves. Police officers Dale Wriggley and Gerald Nash will go to see the Sheriff and will leave shortly after, having been persuaded that the local police force, and volunteers, will attempt a thorough sweep of the woods the following day. If the investigators try to persuade the out of town cops that something odd is going on, they will defer to the local Sheriff. If they nonetheless manage to Persuade Officers Wriggley and/or Nash, they may be able to convince them that something is wrong, but they will take their suspicions home with them. Their suspicions are unlikely to affect the game as they intend to follow police procedure by the book, which includes deference to the local authorities, which is beyond the timeframe this scenario is likely to unfold.

If the investigators are locked up when the cops visit, they are unlikely to encounter them. The Sheriff would rather not have anyone connect Karen or the investigators to this town. If Wriggley and Nash discover the investigators present, and hear any of their story, they will want to take them back with them. While this does extract the investigators from a dangerous situation, Geverlon will quickly attempt to cover things up—see *How The Story Ends*, below, for more details.

OWLE CREEK

If the investigators ignored the turn off to Geverlon, or head back out of town to further explore the area, they will come upon the bridge that crosses over Owle Creek. There are rocky

banks on either side of the river, upon which the bridge firmly sits, and the road continues north through the woods, winding a little but continuing in a northern direction. The river itself flows from the west, and winds around before heading northeast. Both banks, away from the rocks, are topped with trees, although there appears to be some sort of old stone structure on the northern bank, which the northeast bound river wraps around. Closer examination will reveal it to be the remains of a church. It's not clear what happened to it, but the structure is almost completely overgrown with plants, although given the fact some of them are pressed down it looks likely that the church is visited. Anyone looking around gets a Spot Hidden to notice a frayed rope hanging from the bell tower and attached to a bell, as will anyone looking up. Pulling the rope will ring the bell. The odd, musky smell is the same as at the old Shack, and any dogs along will be similarly discomfited.

If they have followed Deputy Steel to the bridge (or just happen to stumble across him there), he parks his car up on the south bank of the creek, next to the bridge, his car pointing towards the ruins of the church, the headlights illuminating them. After ascertaining that no-one is there already, he will get out, make his way to the ruins, and ring the bell. The Deputy will only come here when it has started to get dark, so any investigators using obvious light sources will give themselves away (allow a Listen roll to hear the approaching vehicle and, if you're feeling generous, a Luck roll to glimpse the approaching lights of the car).

If the investigators are at the ruins when the Deputy arrives, a successful Stealth roll allows them to find cover and observe him. Creeping up on the Deputy when he is already in the ruins is nearly impossible to do silently. In either case, if he spots an investigator he will pull out his gun and confront the characters, but once he knows who is there, he will claim to be out looking for the missing girl. He will be curious as to what the investigators are up to, especially if they are doing it in the dark, but will readily accept that they are out there looking for Karen, too. In fact, he does not know for certain what has happened to Karen, but he has his suspicions. He will warn the characters that it is dangerous to be poking around in the dark, but he will happily let them do so. If they say they are heading into the woods to search for Karen, he will offer to come with them, but he will go get his shotgun from the trunk of the car. Despite any fears that the investigators may have, he will not attack them, but will lead them into the woods.

RINGING THE BELL

When the bell is rung, it is heard clearly across the woods. The sound does not travel as far as Geverlon or the campsite, nor the Shack on the road, but can be dimly heard from as far away as the Lake, the Cave, the Tree and the Gas Station. It is not that the bell is particularly loud, but the ringing seems to carry a lot further than it should.

During daylight hours, there is little obvious response. However, the bell has been heard. If Deputy Steel is in earshot, he will come to investigate (and will not be so accommodating as he would have been if he had just discovered the group

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searching the ruins—he'll likely order them to be on their way, or else will arrest them and take them back to Geverlon). If the Deputy is elsewhere, Hezekiah Smith will be sent to investigate the ringing of the bell, as no one who knows about the bell rings it during the daytime.

If nothing else, the Wild Ones are likely to wander by the church sometime after nightfall, without being prompted.

If the bell is rung as night is falling, or after dark, the church will shortly be visited by the Wild Ones. The Wild Ones will converge on the church, keeping to the shadows and the trees, and the most senior of the group will address the person(s) in the ruins of the church. While the Wild Ones will be curious as to who has summoned them, it will soon become clear that the summoners are not affiliated with Geverlon, and therefore are fair game for their sport. If the Deputy has rung the bell, and is being observed, investigators need to make a Stealth roll (doubled, if watching from the south bank of the river) to avoid the Wild Ones finding them lurking in the shadows. If found, they will be treated as would any other person they would find wandering the woods, although they are more likely to call out to any men they see, while simply snatching away any women they see from behind.

If the investigators remain undiscovered, they will witness someone in the darkness, staying half hidden in shadows. They can glimpse a bearded face and a naked but hairy chest, but other details are unclear. The figure speaks softly, and cannot be heard by the investigators, but the Deputy, if a Listen roll is made, will initially greet the figure as 'Brother', then will ask whether a teenaged girl has come their way recently, a child of Geverlon. After a muted response, he will mention that outsiders have been asking around after her, and that he

wishes that they had not done that. After another pause he will suggest that without there being any evidence, the outsiders should eventually move on without any hassle. If they do cause any hassle, he adds, he will leave it up to his Brother to arrange their disappearance. Although there are indications that these outsiders may have passed through this way, there is nothing to indicate they ended up in the woods, and he is confident that a sweep of the woods will be left to the local authorities (i.e., the Geverlon police force and any volunteers they can rustle up). The Deputy then bids his Brother farewell, and leaves.

When the Deputy and the Wild Ones leave the church, any Investigators will need to make a further Stealth roll to avoid detection. If they fail, allow the Deputy a Spot Hidden roll. If he succeeds, he spots someone who failed their roll, and calls them out of hiding, looking around until he finds all those who failed their rolls. He will shoot them if he has to but will, more likely, order the investigators to his car and drive them back to Geverlon (although he will leave any women with the Wild Ones). If the Deputy failed his Spot Hidden roll, the poorly hidden have instead been spotted by the Wild Ones, who will wait for the Deputy to leave (and, presumably, for all the investigators to come out of hiding) before tackling them.

INTO THE WOODS

Beyond Geverlon, there are a few locations that the investigators may end up exploring. If the investigators deviate anywhere from the road between the Campsite and the northern edge of the woods, they will most likely stumble across the locations in the order presented below. Alternatively, they may

ROOTS

end up exploring these in another order altogether, especially if they have visited Geverlon before venturing off the road.

That said, the paths through the woods are well used, and many of these paths link to particular places, or back to the main road. Between such locations there are likely to be small glades and unique looking trees, so feel free to keep the investigators guessing. If they have compasses, or phones that can pinpoint their locations, they may (or may not) work, but they will not help them find any locations they have yet to visit.

THE INDIAN CAVE

Heading straight into the woods from the Campsite, or alternatively the Shack, can lead the investigators to the cave, near which is an old Native American burial ground. There are no obvious markers to indicate where the bodies are buried, but there is a small rise alongside the side of the cave, and one of the trees has a hastily painted cross painted on it in white, presumably not one of the original Natives. Anyone digging here will, eventually, uncover old bones, the bare threads of clothes in which they were buried, and feathers.

The spirits of those buried here have, for the most part, been long gone, but there is still a presence that lingers here. Call for a Luck roll. Anyone who succeeds has the feeling that they are being watched. Furthermore, anyone who has been digging up remains gets a definite chill down their spine and hears whispers, losing 0/1 SAN. Those who have not been defiling the graves may make a second Luck roll to determine what is watching them; success gives the investigator the sense that someone (or something) is in the cave.

The grave is built into the soil alongside the cave, and so the cave cannot be seen directly into. Trees are dotted around the mouth of the cave as well, so it is not immediately obvious that it is there. Anyone investigating the trees may make a Spot Hidden roll to notice that the trees have disturbing patterns in the surface of the bark, making it look like the trees are gazing into the cave with grimacing faces. With that realization, the investigators may also notice that the branches look uncannily like arms. Make a SAN roll and lose 0/1 SAN.

The cave itself is relatively small, with barely enough room for several people to fit into it. The layers of the rock have pushed out of the surrounding ground enough to provide some small shelter, but the cave does not go back far before it becomes just a crack into darkness. Anyone who has successfully passed the first two Luck rolls may make another (or the investigators may make a Spot Hidden roll if they wish to search); success this time reveals a small amulet, a small golden disk which has a bird, perhaps a crow, carved on it. It no longer has the necklace once attached to it, having deteriorated long ago, but it can be worn if someone provides another.

The amulet is a fetish for the spirit of the shaman who originally bound the dark spirit that the Wild Ones worship to the Tree. Much as it bound the spirit to a form of wood, it also wards Wild Ones, and those who are connected to them, draining Magic Points from any nearby at the rate of one per minute, to a minimum of 1 MP. This drain also affects those who have desecrated the burial grave. Anyone allowing their MP to fall below half its original score will feel incredibly dis-

oriented and afraid (with a SAN loss of 1/1D3). Furthermore, Wild Ones who lose MP to the amulet will slowly begin to solidify into wood. A Wild One who has been reduced to 1 MP has one final minute before the amulet permanently turns the individual into a tree. The Wild One may escape the Magic drain process by fleeing at any time, but their POW, DEX and CON will be permanently reduced to the level of their current MP. The amulet affects an area of ten feet, but anyone coming within three feet of the amulet suffers double the effect.

Anyone wearing the amulet (or holding it in their hand) gradually develops a calm mind and an appreciation of the woods. Although it does not come to them immediately (allow a few minutes), once it does, they will be able to instinctively pinpoint natural landmarks like the River, Owle Creek, and the Lake. They can also locate the Tree which binds the dark spirit that the Wild Ones worship. This calm mind also keeps any SAN losses to the minimum possible while in the woods. The stabilizing effect of the amulet also brings anyone out of temporary insanity from sources related to the Wild Ones. The sense of calm gradually disappears if the amulet is passed on to someone else. Carrying the amulet in a pocket or a bag means that this aspect of the amulet does not become apparent.

The spirit of the shaman is not a strong enough presence to talk with or see. It is more a presence that makes itself gradually felt, and may bring with it as many questions as those about the town of Geverlon or the Tree. The spirit and the amulet are the slightest glimmer of hope in an otherwise dark situation.

If you prefer your horror stories bleak and hopeless, you might decide that the amulet's magic died with the shaman, and that it is nothing more than a fascinating trinket.

THE RIVER

The Denning River runs past the town of Geverlon from east to west, under the bridge and past the ruined church at Owle Creek, and carries on through the woods and out many miles away, somewhere to the northeast. It effectively splits the woods in two, with the Campsite and Geverlon to the south and the Lake and the Tree in the north. The Wild Ones are concentrated in the northern half of the woods, and so it is unlikely that the investigators will run into them before crossing the river.

The Wild Ones are perfectly capable of swimming, so hurling yourself into the river does little good.

The river is about twenty feet wide at Owle Creek. To the west, where it runs between Geverlon and Lake Nemi, it is about fifteen feet wide, with a series of stepping stones crossing the water. Further east (and northeast), it turns into a series of drops that would be perfect for wild water rafting, less perfect for swimming. If they can find something to use as a makeshift raft, they've got a slightly better chance of surviving a trip down river unscathed.

THE WOODS OF THE WILD ONES

The investigators are unlikely to run into the Wild Ones, or at least a group of Wild Ones, until they cross the river at night. They sometimes haunt the road to Geverlon, ready to

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approach any lone individual on foot, but that's usually as far as they'll go. Only in exceptional circumstances will they venture into town or as far south as the Shack or Gas Station (excepting Father Allberry, who is often required to travel further abroad).

The woods themselves are expansive, but not unnatural in themselves, aside from what can be found at either The Lake or The Tree. The investigators could wander around for a long time before they find anything, and that is how the Wild Ones like it. If they are investigating the woods in the middle of the day, they will only find the oddly shaped wooden carvings. If they are investigating the woods at any time between dusk and dawn (and maybe a few twilight hours either side), the Wild Ones will find them.

THE WILD ONES

The Wild Ones are men—all men—who have drunk the sap of the Tree. During the daylight hours, they hide in the deepest parts of the forest and take on wooden form, looking like nothing more than disturbingly realistic, weathered wooden carvings of creatures not unlike the satyrs of classical myth. (SAN loss 0/1). In these forms, they hibernate during the day, and from these forms they can be awoken as the sun begins to set.

Usually, they must be awoken by being 'anointed' with warm bodily fluids. Blood and semen will work quicker (instantaneously) than sweat or urine (a minute or so), but any fluids will do. (SAN loss 1/1D6 to see a Wild One awaken). Although the Wild Ones will usually be awoken by the women who have chosen to live with them, each Wild One can awaken others through the use of his own fluids. However it is not unknown for an animal marking its territory to awaken a Wild One. It costs them a single MP when they transition into their wooden hibernating form, which is regained when they awaken.

The Wild Ones are the male counterparts to the women of Geverlon. While in Geverlon it is a female aspect of Shub-Niggurath that is worshiped, the Wild Ones embrace Shub-Niggurath as the Great God Pan. While, on the surface, the Wild Ones look very much like the Gof'nn Hupadgh Shub-Niggurath ("The Blessed of Shub-Niggurath") often found worshiping the Outer God, they are in many ways more like the satyrs of legend, prone to giving in to their basest urges and celebrating life in all its guises. For the most part this means eating, abusing and killing, but it also includes playing. In particular, the Wild Ones enjoying playing with those they intend to eat, abuse or kill.

The process of becoming a Wild One is a gradual one, as the initiate becomes more and more satyr-like. The first time that they are able to turn into wood usually comes after having drunk the sap of the Tree twelve times. Children raised amongst the Wild Ones will drink of the sap once a year, while those over the age of twelve will be fed the sap once a month. In very exceptional cases, such as when a potential initiate is wounded, the sap may be fed to someone over a quicker period.

For the most part, the process of becoming a Wild One matures a boy faster, so once they become a Wild One they

are physically more like an older teenager. Adults who are already mature may become wizened and bent over before they are permanently immortalized in their Wild One form. Regardless, the maturing process is physical, not mental or emotional—in many respects the transforming man is likely to become less mature with time. A fully transformed Wild One gradually develops skin that naturally adopts the color of

WILD ONES, Lots of Yang, No Yin

STR 80 CON 80 SIZ 65 INT 50 POW 55
DEX 60 APP N/A EDU N/A SAN 00 HP 14

Damage bonus: +1D4.

Build: 0

Move: 10 (slightly faster than even a quick human)

ATTACKS

Fighting (Brawling) 60% (30/12)

Bite 30% (15/6), damage 1D4.

Skills: Stealth 85%, Spot Hidden 60%, Listen 60%, Track 60%.

Defenses: 2 points of tough hide and fur. Are able to see in the dark.

Nationality: American?

Age: variable

Education: None worth mentioning.

SAN Loss: 1/1D6 for combination of satyr-like mutations and extreme, frothing, anti-social behavior.

Quotes: Any number of lewd jokes, taunts, and animalistic howling.



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light wood, and feet that are practically silent on the leaf-laden ground of the woods, making them very difficult to spot or track, unless they want to be seen.

Unless you'd like to add an additional twist, there are no partially transformed Wild Ones in this scenario. If you would like to add one, to provide either a clue or a challenge, or to provide an encounter in the woods during the daytime, they may meet Danny, apparently a simpleton that lives in the woods. He claims to be the King In The Woods. He's not as stupid as he may seem, but since he is not fully a Wild One, he won't consider attacking the investigators. He'll most likely be encountered near the Tree, watching over it by day, and sleeping near it by night.

The Wild Ones have a truce with the women with Geverlon, as they exist only by co-existing. The women often come to the Wild Ones in order to conceive healthy children, and the women provide in other ways for the Wild Ones. The Wild Ones see the folk of Geverlon as their equals, as family, but that does not mean that they consider the townsfolk untouchable. They usually prefer to deal with the men of the town, and keep away from the women. Women of Geverlon who come into the woods willingly, to join the Wild Ones, are revered above all else.

The Wild Ones recognize a certain hierarchy amongst themselves, based upon strength and attitude. They do not act in packs as such, instead being drawn towards noises or scents in the air, and recognizing the dominant member present. When hunting prey, they will usually follow the lead of this dominant male. Above him are the sacred females of the family, those who have joined the Wild Ones and embraced their dark magic. The most dominant Wild Ones recognize their right to mate with these females, but likewise recognize these females' right to mate with whoever they like.

The most dominant Wild One is a "man" called Markus, also known amongst the Wild Ones and the women of Geverlon as "The King in the Woods". It is most likely that any

verbal contact made with the Wild Ones will be with Markus. Alternatively, you may wish to keep him in reserve for later.

When the Wild Ones encounter the investigators, most of them will remain distant, unobserved, in the foliage and deep in the darker forest. The dominant Wild One will speak from the shadows, asking the investigators where they are going. He will offer to assist, suggesting where they might find what they are looking for (this might be accompanied by snickering and hooting from previously unseen Wild Ones, coming from a variety of directions). If they say they are looking for a girl, he might casually mention the girl in the red coat that came by this way just a few days ago. If they ask what happened to her, he might say that he will take them to her...if they can catch him. He will then run off in the direction of the Tree.

If the investigators set off in pursuit, let them roll dice in an effort to keep up. Anyone failing rolls badly may take damage as they stumble in the dark. Be sure to make a note of the order in which they are running, with successful rolls making the gaps between people shorter, failed rolls making the gap larger. There is no chance that the lead investigator will catch the dominant Wild One, but as they run, the hidden Wild Ones will join in the chase, and pick off the stragglers one at a time. As people fail rolls, take them aside and explain how they are suddenly knocked to the ground. Impose a SAN roll (with a loss of 1/1D6 SAN) for coming face to face with a Wild One, and give them a chance to fight. Each Wild One's aim here, for now, is to knock the investigators out, or to otherwise subdue them, whether by bashing their opponents' head against the ground, or throttling him, until he passes out. At some point, the lead investigator will become aware of the situation and stop chasing the Wild One. At this point, the dominant Wild One will circle round in order to take out the investigator himself.

Much the same thing will happen if the investigators simply turn and run away from the Wild Ones. The investigators may try something else, perhaps pulling out a gun and firing on the Wild Ones. They can take down some of the Wild Ones in this way, but ultimately the Wild Ones have strength of numbers.

If the investigators have come into the woods with Deputy Steel, he will have his shotgun raised and pointed at the Wild Ones, but will not shoot. If the investigators run, he will remain behind—he knows these people, and they will not harm him. If they resort to weapons, he will point his shotgun at the investigator who he perceives to be the biggest threat, and tell him to drop his weapon. If he hesitates, the Deputy will shoot. The Deputy will then order the investigators to the Tree at gunpoint, while the Wild Ones will walk with them, distantly, between the trees.

Should any of the investigators be wearing or holding the amulet from the Indian Cave, it will protect them. However, a few young Wild Ones are likely to test their luck and attempt to bring the investigator down.

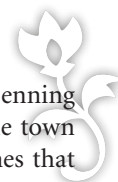
LAKE NEMI

Lake Nemi is a small lake north of Geverlon and the Denning River. It can be reached from Geverlon by leaving the town via the northern road that leads to the stepping stones that

A NOTE ON KNOWING YOUR PLAYERS AND NOT CROSSING UNDUE BOUNDARIES

No one enjoys having the details of exactly how their player character is abused by Mythos monsters while in captivity described to them in any sort of detail. It is better, and perhaps even more horrific, for the details to be left unaddressed or occur "off camera", and for the worst of things that may (or may not) have happened to them, happen after they lose consciousness.

Note that, in all likelihood, given the typical group of investigators, an attack on their persons will lead to a fight to the death, and there will likely be casualties. The Keeper might consider having Father Allberry present, and successfully prevail on the assembled horde to simply chain them to the Tree after comparatively minor abuse, even if he does not lead the investigators there.



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The Tree

cross the river, or indirectly by taking the route across the bridge at Owle Creek and then taking the first road west (the only way to get there by vehicle).

The lake is relatively small, almost entirely covered by the branches of the large trees that surround it. Dotted here and there are what appear to be life-sized wood carvings of bestial looking men, with the legs and tails of animals. They all look out towards the center of the lake.

These Wild Ones are known as the Watchers. They are old by the town's standards, and only ever woken for the monthly orgies held here between the Wild Ones of the woods and the women of Geverlon, every full moon. The Watchers are not as satyr-like as their modern kin, having worshiped the dark spirit within the Tree under another guise, but they recognize their kinship. In many ways they more resemble the wolves and bears of the forest, and are likely to be stronger and more dangerous because of it. There are eight of them dotted around the Lake, but it will take time to locate them all.

The amulet from the Indian Cave can be used to great effect here. It will still cause the already wooden Wild Ones to turn into trees, while they are unable to get away. An investigator could, conceivably, turn the whole lot of Wild Ones into inanimate trees, without even being aware he is doing so.

Alternatively, if the investigators are convinced that the Tree and the wood carvings are at the heart of the evil here, they have their best chance to destroy them during daylight, simply by setting them alight. The Wild Ones will burn, and

are unable to do anything about it, but will take a good ten minutes or so to do so (per 5 points of SIZ). Should they somehow be awoken during this process, they will immediately roll amongst the foliage in an attempt to put out the flames, but will have lost 1 hit point for every minute that they have been burning.

The Lake itself has no particular properties, although it is where the bodies of those killed nearby are usually dumped.

If the investigators find the Lake before the end of Tuesday, they will find Karen's red coat hung by the hood over a particularly wolfish looking Watcher. During Tuesday night, this coat will be taken down. Depending on how your investigators are doing, it will end up in the possession of either one of the teenaged girls of Geverlon or Father Allberry (if he needs to convince them that he can take them to Karen).

THE TREE

The Tree is a large ancient oak in the forest, atop a small rise. The Tree is very much a central point, with no other plants beneath its wide spread branches, so that it effectively stands at the center of a glade. The Tree is dark barked and imposing with its size, but does not animate or attack the investigators, whatever their fears. The surface of the bark is carved with numerous occult ruins (a successful Occult roll will recognize them as Native American protective symbols, while a Cthulhu Mythos roll will reveal that the carvings are variations of binding runes and Elder Signs).

Hardened, pale yellow sap sticks to the trunk of the tree. If broken free the Tree, it will likely weep fresh sap from the

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wounds. Any male drinking the sap pure (a mug or bowl full) is on his way to becoming a Wild One. A woman who drinks the sap will instead open herself up to the mystical potential in her blood, though if not previously a denizen of Geverlon, this magic is likely attenuated. There has never been a female Wild One, but if a woman drank of the sap enough times, they would become one. This would break all sorts of traditions but would more likely be considered unacceptable to the women of Geverlon than to the Wild Ones (or the women that dwell with them).

A Spot Hidden roll, or enough time searching, will uncover coils of rope and chains stashed amongst the roots of the tree.

While the Indian Cave amulet is useful against the Wild Ones and their allies, it has no noticeable effect on the Tree itself.

IF THEY DISCOVER THE TREE DURING DAYLIGHT

They will find life sized carvings of satyrs dotted amongst the trees surrounding it, all facing inwards. These, of course, are the Wild Ones. It will require a Spot Hidden roll to see them at first, since they are the same color and texture as the surrounding trees. There are thirty-three of them dotted around the Tree, but it will take time and careful searching (and/or successful Spot Hidden rolls) to locate them all.

If one of the investigators has the amulet from the Indian Cave, it will cause the already wooden Wild Ones to turn into trees, unable to get away, under the same conditions as those at Lake Nemi.

If the Tree itself is set alight, not an easy feat but possible if the investigators have access to an accelerant, the Tree will not move itself, but the Wild Women currently resting within it will appear to step out of it, with some minor burns (reduce their HP by 1D6). This includes Karen. They will attack the investigators, enraged, but if Sarah is defeated, Karen will stop fighting, breaking down and sobbing. The Tree itself will be unable to do anything about the fire, but if the investigators wait to watch it burn, it will take the best part of an hour. In this time, the smoke will likely draw the Deputy from Geverlon, who will desperately attempt to shoot the investigators

KAREN, On Her Way To Being A Wild Woman

STR 55 CON 70 SIZ 60 INT 60 POW 60
DEX 60 APP 60 EDU 60 SAN 20 HP 13

Damage bonus: none.

Build: 0

Move: 8

ATTACKS

None above base.

Skills: Computer Use 40%, Drive Auto 25%, Fast Talk 35%, Spot Hidden 50%, Stranger Danger 0%.

Defenses: None above base.

Nationality: American?

Age: 18

Education: High School Student.

Quotes: Any number of inappropriately and uncomfortably salacious innuendos.

SARAH, Wild Woman

STR 70 CON 90 SIZ 65 INT 70 POW 90
DEX 70 APP N/A EDU 70 SAN 00 HP 15

Damage bonus: +1D4.

Build: 1

Move: 10 (slightly faster than even a quick human).

ATTACKS

Fighting (Brawling) 60% (30/12)

Bite 30% (15/6), damage 1D4.

Ritual Sacrificial Knife 60% (30/12) 1D6 +db.

Skills: Stealth 85% Spot Hidden 60%, Listen 60%, Track 60%.

Defenses: Two points of general toughness and altered physiology. Is able to see in the dark.

Nationality: American?

Age: indeterminable

Education: None worth mentioning.

Spells: Call Shub-Niggurath; Summon/Bind Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath.

SAN Loss: 0/1D4 for combination of inhuman mutations and extreme, bloodthirsty behavior.

Quotes: "Now what should I do with you? Mate, kill, or both?"



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and then find something to put out the fire.

If the investigators stumble across the Tree with people from Geverlon in tow, they will not show any signs of recognizing it or the carvings, but will advise against setting fire to, or otherwise harming, anything. These are carvings of historical value, after all, and the Tree is undoubtedly very old and valuable. If the investigators insist, any accompanying townsfolk will abandon pretense and attempt to restrain them. There is likely to be a fight before the investigators have a chance to destroy the Tree, as a result.

INVESTIGATORS WHO ARRIVE AT THE TREE AT NIGHT, WITHOUT HAVING BEEN CAPTURED BY THE WILD ONES

These will likely come across the Tree while under the watch of the Wild Ones. Even if they enter the woods without Father Allberry, by the time that they reach the Tree they will have attracted the attentions of the Wild Ones, who will try to pick them off one by one.

Regardless of who they are with or how they get there, they will witness the Wild Ones at play, some dancing around a fire, some jumping through it, singing while one plays pipes, a couple tearing apart a rabbit they have caught and feasting greedily on its guts. Another few fight amongst themselves, claws and teeth drawing blood but laughing all the same. Seeing the Wild Ones in such numbers and out in the open requires a SAN check (1/1D6).

Investigators who find themselves in this situation are badly outnumbered, and unlikely to escape without casualties, no matter how many firearms they are packing. The investigator with the amulet is effectively untouchable, although not invulnerable should the Deputy and his shotgun arrive.

The Wild Ones will soon stop what they are doing to watch the investigators, grinning. Father Allberry (if present) will call out to Karen, who will arrive shortly after, emerging from the tree line with an older woman, both naked. (SAN loss is 1/1D4 to see women literally walk out of a tree). Father Allberry (if present) will make himself scarce during this reunion, leaving the investigators surrounded by Wild Ones and facing the Wild Women. Karen will speak with the investigators, but once they have finished speaking, she will invite her relative/friend (or the male investigator with the highest APP, if a different hook has been used) to remain with her. Any other investigators she will tell to run, if they ever want to leave the woods. This is the only chance that they will get. Once out of sight of the Tree, the Wild Ones will begin pursuit, and most likely capture the investigators, unless they role-play out their escape very well. The road south, or the river northeast, are the most likely effective escape routes—see How The Story Ends.

IF THE INVESTIGATORS SURRENDER, OR REFUSE TO RUN

They will be set upon, and then chained to the Tree. If they resist, the Wild Ones will most likely try to knock the investigator(s) out, or otherwise overwhelm them with sheer numbers. Everyone will likely be tortured and abused for a while; impose a SAN roll with a loss of 1D4/2D4 SAN, and a loss of 1D6 HP. Then they are chained securely to the Tree.

Once any captured investigators are chained to the Tree, Karen and the Wild Woman Sarah will return to the Tree and inspect the captives. They will offer a drink of the sap to the investigator with the highest APP, or the investigator that she already has a relationship with. She will speak with this investigator for a while, but will not release him.

Sarah the Wild Woman is dark haired and full bodied, yet still able to move gracefully and without sound. The Wild Woman has darker skin, but it is like smooth light wood, lighter and smoother than the skin of the Wild Ones. Sarah will say very little to the investigators, instead concentrating her attention on Karen. If anyone makes a point of shouting at the Wild Woman, trying to pick a fight, she will be amused by his display of spirit. She will ask for the Wild Ones to unbind him. Sarah will then instruct the investigator that he has five minutes to run, and then she will come for him. When five minutes pass, she will chase after him with her sacrificial knife. If (or more likely when) she gets to him, she will knock him down, straddle him, taunt his failings and then attempt to stab him through the heart before washing herself in his still warm blood. She will then return, splattered in red gore, causing a SAN loss of 1/1D6 to any of the investigators who see her. If the investigator refused to run, then the remaining investigators will witness her kill him in front of them all.

Regardless of whether she has killed a man or has remained here, Sarah then asks Karen to pick a sacrifice, at which point Karen will select either the person with the highest APP or the highest SIZ. The older Wild Woman will slash the victim's neck with a knife, causing 1D6 points of damage and causing blood to run down the victim's neck and torso, pouring onto the trunk of the tree at the same time.

Some Wild Ones and Wild Women will then begin chanting as they dance around the Tree, others of them standing and watching them with hungry eyes. "Ia! Ia!" they cry, "Shub-Niggurath!" In moments, drawn by the blood on its bark, the Tree comes to life, writhing under the bound investigators, triggering another SAN roll with a loss of 1/1D6 SAN. In particular, the bark will ripple around the heavily bleeding victim, as branch-like tentacles wrap around the investigator, latching onto the neck wound and draining a further 1D6 HP every turn. The Tree will continue drinking once the victim is dead, and will remain awake for the rest of the night, and can be felt breathing beneath the still chained investigators. Make a further SAN roll, with a SAN loss of 1/1D3.

By morning's light, the Wild Ones will arrange themselves at the edge of the clearing, turning to wood. Witness-



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ing this causes another potential loss of 0/1 SAN. Karen will say there is no point attempting to run, but will suggest the investigator with the highest APP considering joining her. She'll give each investigator some water, if they will accept it, and will then disappear with the older Wild Woman from sight behind the Tree (in fact climbing into its branches and becoming part of the Tree). The Tree, too, slowly ceases its breathing and falls back into an inanimate sleep.

The investigators are unlikely to be able to escape on their own, and will lose a point of HP for every day they are bound there, due to malnutrition (1D6 if they refused water). They'll lose a similar amount of SAN. If you're feeling kind, you might bring in the cavalry to save them. Similarly, if you're feeling particularly nasty you might like to have them escape somehow but reveal it to be the fever dream of an investigator close to death. The investigators are unlikely to remain awake all day, being physically exhausted. Assuming that they are not rescued, you can jump to the next version of events, where the investigators are brought to the Tree unconscious.

IF ALL THE INVESTIGATORS ARE BROUGHT TO THE TREE UNCONSCIOUS

They will awaken in a number of situations later that night. The Tree will not be awoken as above, but the investigators will be taunted, poked and insulted. There is potential for SAN and hit point loss, but limit it to 1 or 2 points. The investigators are undoubtedly in a bad way already by this stage.

The investigator with the highest APP, or the one that Karen knows best, will be elsewhere too. Take the player aside and explain how he awakens to the taste of foul sap from the Tree. While this may heal the investigator somewhat, it is not at all refreshing. Karen is attempting to revive and restore the investigator in a shallow ditch some distance from the Tree. While there are sounds of Wild Ones at play, and possibly the screams of other investigators, it seems quite a distance away. As before, Karen is naked, and close enough to make the investigator incredibly uncomfortable (with a potential SAN loss of 0/1), but even as she attempts to tend to the investigator, she also attempts to seduce him (or her). Karen will ask increasingly disturbing questions: Do you love me? Am I beautiful? You know I'm 18 now, right? Do you want to be with me?

There are two ways that you can run this. You can either run this as an uncomfortable dialogue, but have the player narrate how his investigator reacts. Alternatively you can leave the results of this encounter down to a SAN roll and quickly draw a veil over proceedings. With a SAN roll the investigator loses 2/2D6 SAN, and if he failed he stands to have lost a lot more (and cost Karen a lot more). The events are even more horrible than simply the gross impropriety. Although he will have effectively saved himself from being slaughtered by the Wild Ones, it will be at great cost. The character is retired from the game until the end; see How The Story Ends.

Role-playing the encounter instead offers greatest opportunities to wring out the tragedy of the situation. Although

Karen has embraced the life of the Wild Ones, and is on the path to becoming a Wild Woman, ultimately she is a very shaken up, terrified teenaged girl who desperately wants to belong (and not to die). She has not had enough experience of the Cthulhu Mythos, or of the local way of life, to have completely changed her world view in a matter of days. She is doing what she can to survive, under the watchful eyes of the Wild Woman Sarah. She is transferring some of her fear of being alone and unloved into bringing the investigator into the fold, but also in an attempt to save them from being slaughtered. Her SAN has not been completely reduced, however, and if she can be reasoned with, she will attempt to help the investigators escape. The best opportunity for this is when the Wild Ones have turned to wood for the day, and there is just Sarah to contend with.

This being said, Sarah is no fool. She knows that Karen is wearing a mask of sorts, and it is up to her to break down her resolve, to initiate her into the practices of the Wild Women, and to get her to perform her first kill. Only bathed in blood will she ascend to her role as a Wild Woman.

Yes, this means anyone who says they will become her lover will die eventually. But at least they will not be torn to shreds by the Wild Ones. Karen does not know this at first, but as the night of the full moon draws nearer, she becomes more aware of this fact.

If the investigator voluntarily chooses to be with Karen, he loses 2D6 SAN for both the profound betrayal as well as the horrific details (in addition to being a louse and a coward).

If the investigator fails to convince Karen to help them, and she fails to convince him to join her, he loses just 2 SAN, and she will sadly call for the Wild Ones to bind him once more to the Tree. Any investigators tied to the Tree at the end of the night are offered water, as above, and are then left there for another day. Depending on how far away the night of the full moon is, this cycle may repeat over and over, with multiple HP losses and opportunities for rescue (or the slaughter of potential search parties, come Tuesday). Karen may once again take the investigator aside to try to get him to join her. On the last night before the full moon, she'll make one last desperate attempt, even though she knows the investigator will die during the ritual.

ESCAPE?

There are three ways in which any investigators might escape from being chained up to the Tree...

RESCUE

Someone may turn up to help the investigators, during the daylight hours when the Wild Ones are sleeping. If someone finds them in the woods, they may get a chance to burn the Wild Ones and the Tree as above. Or they may get ambushed by Deputy Steel. Or the exodus from the woods may take them past nightfall, leading to a confused and violent denouement.

KILLING SARAH

If Sarah the Wild Woman is killed at any point, the Wild Ones



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are effectively leaderless. The competition for replacement leader runs three ways. Firstly there is Markus, the dominant Wild One, who will have the support of the younger Wild Ones. There is Karen herself, who will be championed by some of the older Wild Ones, although they may recognize Markus as having to rule until Karen can be fully initiated.

Finally, and least obviously, is Father Allberry. Although he will back Karen's claim to leadership, he has a less violent and more deceitfully sadistic streak to him. He may affably answer questions put to him, and is completely honest about his role in things, if not exactly who or what he is. He is a tool for the Keeper, to explain any back-story you need explained to the investigators, such as who was writing to Karen and who her real mother was, safe in the knowledge that most of them will not survive to tell the tale, and those who do survive will not be inclined to.

Most pertinently, he is also willing to help anyone who would stab a friend in the back to save themselves. If he turns up at the Tree when the investigators are awaiting the full moon and their eventually sacrifice, he will happily make them each an offer to free them. But only one offer will be made, without an opportunity to confer. The deal will be to drink the sap of the tree and kill one of their fellows. Anyone who takes his devil's bargain is on a fast track to joining the cult at the next full moon ceremony. Kindly Father Allberry realizes that the best way to truly neutralize is to compromise them to the point where they will call off reinforcements. But, if no one will bite, the woods are big.

UNDER A FULL MOON

The final escape possibility is no real escape at all. The investigators will be released from the Tree for a final time, and taken by the Wild Ones and the Wild Women to Lake Nemi. When the full moon is due, the two communities will come together under its light on the banks of Lake Nemi. The Wild Ones and the women of Geverlon bring any captured investigators (or NPCs) with them, bound by the hands. It is possible that the investigators will stumble across this ceremony independently, but unless they make impressive Stealth rolls, they will be discovered by the Wild Ones and brought forward to participate.

The women of the town undress, leaving their clothes in neat little piles by the trees. The Wild Woman Sarah will sacrifice the victim with the greatest vitality remaining (highest total MP and hit points) and collect the blood in a large bowl that the women of Geverlon will have brought from the town hall. They will all anoint themselves with the blood, and then the remaining blood will be poured over the wooden "carvings", bringing the Watchers to life. The Watchers will then be allowed to slaughter the remaining victims, biting deep and spraying blood. The other celebrants will bathe in the rain of blood as it falls around them, smearing it across their naked skins. Once the last victim is dead, the orgy proper begins. This slaughter costs 2/2D6 SAN to witness.

There are only two ways that investigators can be brought here and remain unharmed. The first involves anyone who has drunk the sap of the Tree. They are given the offer to remain amongst the Wild Ones and become one of them (or a Wild

Woman), or to die now, and let their blood flow into the soil here. Alternatively, any women brought from Geverlon may be invited to join the female community, or else—well, the rituals make people hungry. In either case, if the investigator chooses to live rather than die, there will be a ritual initiation, which involves participation in the bacchanalia, before the initiate can be given the Mark that declares them one of the family.

Witnessing the balance of the post-slaughter ritualized orgy requires a SAN roll and a loss of 1/1D6 SAN. Partaking in the ritual requires a further SAN roll, with a loss of 2/2D6 SAN.

If an investigator has chosen to be with Karen as her mate, they will be the last to be 'initiated'. In truth it is her initiation—upon its completion she will stab the investigator through the heart, and bathe herself in his warm blood, to the cheers of the gathered crowd. This costs a final 1/1D6 SAN to friends of the investigators.

As before, anyone having the amulet from the Indian Cave has a much better chance of survival than anyone who does not, as the crowd will find it difficult to even get close to the individual. And fortunately, except for the Deputy and the Sheriff, the town is not much for guns.

SALVATION(?) AND A GENERAL OVERVIEW

This scenario should play out on a fairly predictable timetable, with the investigators' actions tending to determine whether things turn violent and deadly, or remain primarily investigative. How much they poke the proverbial bear will drive the action.

Smart and experienced investigators will nose around (primarily during the daytime), pick up on the odd behavior of the townsfolk in Geverlon and oddities in the surrounding woods, and quickly rein it in. Smart and experienced investigators will try very hard to round up reinforcements, organize search parties, and involve the police. They will also use cell phones or email (or at least try) to keep people apprised (as much as possible) as to their movements. Cell service is regrettably unreliable beyond the Shack, and there is a sad dearth of Internet kiosks in Geverlon (not even at the library).

Roleplaying the police reaction becomes very important, as a result, especially during the first few days. Because Karen is nearly 18 (and then turns 18), and appears to simply be a runaway (as distinct from an abductee), they will want the police in Geverlon to handle things, and will give them a chance to look into things, organize search parties, and the like.

Not until Tuesday (roughly 48 hours after Karen goes missing) will her hometown police, in response to never-ending nagging by her adoptive parents, take anything in the way of action. They may even mislead the investigators a bit by suggesting that there is not anything that they can do for 48 hours. This is not true (Law roll), but regardless of whether this is pointed out to them, they will drag their feet until then, absent proof of an imminent threat. And even

then, a more sincere effort will consist of sending a couple of cops out to Geverlon to see what is going on. If the investigators have fallen off the map by this point, the police in Geverlon will add them to their “to do” list as well. In short, non-local police will stay out of the situation, at least for a few days. Eventually, if it appears safe to do so, the Geverlon police will take charge of a sweep through the Woods—in the daytime—which will not uncover anything worthwhile.

For this situation to change, one of several things will have to happen. First, if a good bit of time (a week or so) goes by, and the investigators or Karen’s parents start plausibly complaining that the local police seem to be doing nothing, the state police might start inquiring. The Geverlon police very much do not want state or federal involvement, but frankly, given what has happened to Karen, after a week to ten days, it is probably inevitable, unless Karen resurfaces.

Finally, after the full moon ritual goes down, and assuming that the investigators fail, Karen will resurface if necessary. If the investigators utterly fail to find anything, she will just remain vanished. Otherwise, to discourage further suspicions, she may resurface; make nice with her adoptive parents; point out that she is now 18; and advise them that she has decided to live in Geverlon and stay with her birth mother for a while. She promises to visit, but simply is not very good about it. Any investigators who have been co-opted into the cult have little choice but to back up her story. Missing investigators will be chalked up by Karen and any co-opted investigators as having left town together after Karen was found, and simply have not been heard from. How well this story will hold up under careful scrutiny is questionable, and might serve as a basis for further adventures. As a result, you might want to schedule the next full moon ritual to occur before enough time has passed that it becomes implausible for a massive, out-of-town police effort to wait any longer.

Second, investigator action (either honest or deceptive) might change the situation. To force a police reaction from out of town, the investigators will have to plausibly convince someone that either Karen, or themselves, have been abducted or subjected to serious criminal abuse. Unless the local police are alleged (honestly or through a plausible lie) to be involved, efforts will still be made (out of professional courtesy) to coordinate with local police, but the cult is immobile and tied to the location of the Tree. This is likely to occur if one or more abused investigators manage to escape from the Woods, in a more or less disheveled state, after encountering the Wild Ones themselves.

Finally, there are a number of third parties, summarized below, who might intervene to destabilize or move the situation along. Again, however, either someone escapes with a plausible story of Karen or others being kidnapped or subjected to violence, and the police descend on the Woods; or, they do not, the full moon ritual goes down, Karen resurfaces long enough to “call off the dogs”, and the immediate situation is defused.

Graham Hall

Ali’s father may well drive out to Geverlon to help the investigators, possibly with his less-than-helpful daughter. While they will essentially be in the same boat as the investigators, the locals will want to avoid having more people going missing. They will attempt to help out as much as they can, but if the investigators are nowhere to be found, the locals will suggest that they moved on north. Graham is unlikely to go traipsing off into the woods, unless he’s around when the police have asked for volunteers for a sweep of the woods. The women of Geverlon will try to discourage that anyway (not wanting events to lead to yet another disappearance), but will be especially insistent if Ali is on scene too. The Hall family is unlikely to prove saviors to the investigators, but Ali will recognize Karen’s red coat from the moment that it puts in an appearance.

Max Jenson

Knowing that Karen came here, lovesick Max may take a bus up here himself to find Karen. If he does so, he is likely to act in much the same way as the investigators. If he comes to Geverlon, he will get a lot of attention from the local girls, before one of the older women tries to arrange for him to go home. If he wanders into the woods, he will either run afoul of the Wild Ones or discover something of interest by daylight. Max can be used to pick up clues the investigators may have missed. If he visits Geverlon first, and finds the map in the town hall and library, he could set out to explore the Indian Cave and discover the amulet, and will certainly cut down any investigators he finds at The Tree. As with Ali above, he will recognize Karen’s red coat if it turns up.

Peter Mount

The bartender from Spotlights bar thought that Karen was a cool kid, and has mixed feelings about her being mixed up in this business, even though he threw her to the wolves in the first place. If he drives out to investigate, then he will drive to the Gas Station and chat with Hezekiah Smith first, to learn what he can. He will avoid Geverlon itself, and will likely head towards The Tree himself, by daylight. He will be armed, but his priority will be to save Karen, not the investigators. Depending on what he hears, he may bring Hezekiah along as back-up. Peter Mount may rescue any investigator who has previously mentioned a close connection to Karen, but will not risk the wrath of the Wild Ones by freeing them all.

Deputy Alex Steel

The town’s Deputy is the main male authority figure in a town full of women (if you ignore Father Allberry, who strictly speaking doesn’t represent Geverlon). He feels a strong loyalty to both the Wild Ones and the town but, should his little secret be revealed, the fact that he and the Sheriff are lovers, it is likely that he will be forced to flee the town either to join the Wild Ones proper, or to flee the locality for good. He will become more concerned about saving his own hide, and might be co-opted to some extent by the investigators. In any case, he is of little use as an ally against the Wild Ones

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themselves, out in the Woods. In Geverlon, however, he might be persuaded to help the investigators get away, particularly if they can help him escape too. He is also keen to avoid bloodshed if the investigators have yet to uncover any damning evidence that Karen was here.

Danny

Danny is an eight year old Wild One in the making, who looks about eleven. He is typical of a young boy raised in the woods, a self-proclaimed “Lost Boy” who has yet to learn how to hibernate in wooden form. Danny is the only one of these that the investigators are likely to discover, since they are often awake and moving around by daylight in the vast expanses of woodland to the north, and sleeping by night, and the investigators are unlikely to get that far from Geverlon. Danny will likely be discovered close to the river, and can help the investigators look for Karen, taking them first to The Lake (where her coat is) and then to The Tree (where she is). He will attempt to stretch this out so that they reach The Tree as darkness falls, and will likely hang around The Tree from that point on to taunt them.

HOW THE STORY ENDS

Broadly speaking, there are four possible endings.

First, the investigators find nothing incriminating, and give up. They explore the town and woods by day, they resist all temptation, and they fail to find any clues as to Karen’s disappearance. The police eventually arrange a sweep of the Woods (by day) that also uncovers nothing. There is a SAN loss of 1D6 for each investigator. No-one ever hears of Karen again, unless they return to Geverlon and risk the Woods once more. The cult perceives no need for her to resurface and explain herself in order to dissuade further searches of the area.

Second, the investigators discover too much, they are attacked, but some of them escape. They have some idea of what has happened to Karen, and may even be able to escape with her, but for the most part they uncover a terrible secret and are traumatized by it. The police eventually respond in force, likely motivated by the brutalized states of the surviving investigators (and perhaps, cell phone footage), and the Wild Ones have to deal with eventual SWAT teams going in at night. There is a SAN loss of 2D6 for each investigator, but 2D6 SAN is restored if they reunite Karen with her adopted family. Father Allberry may track down various people who helped the investigators escape and kill them, leaving a messy situation and several loose ends.

Third, the investigators discover too much, they are attacked, and are all eventually either killed or inducted into the community of Geverlon and the Wild Ones. Those who survive lose a further 2D6 SAN but, effectively, their stories are over. Karen probably has to resurface (after her formal induction) and placate her adoptive parents and the police. Further events in terms of follow-up investigations into what happened to the first set of investigators are in the discretion of the Keeper.

Finally, the investigators manage to piece together enough to destroy the Wild Ones and The Tree, rescuing Karen in the process. The town of Geverlon may survive, or may be destroyed in the fall-out but, either way, Karen is brought home to her adopted family, and all the investigators regain 2D6 SAN. Meanwhile, Father Allberry leaves Geverlon and the woods behind, taking his talents somewhere new.

AUTHOR’S NOTES

There are several inspirations for this story, some of them fictional, such as fairy tales that warn of stepping from the path in the woods (and, most obviously, the tale of Little Red Riding Hood), but also some less obvious ones such as children’s book *Where The Wild Things Are*. There is, of course, Machen’s story *The Great God Pan*. A few films in particular are noteworthy. *Less Wicker Man* and more *Darklands* for the setting of a town that conspire together and are based very much around motherhood and fatherhood over summer crops (or, God forbid, bees!). *A Company of Wolves* is a less obvious tie in to the *Red Riding Hood* story and a girl warned of the dangers of the woods yet being enticed to join them. And *The Guardian* is a horror story about a babysitting witch or dryad who steals babies for the monstrous tree in the woods, which lends a decent spoonful of inspiration to the *Wild Women* in this scenario.

But, in a large way, the main influence was a wood carving of a satyr at the edge of the woods near the town of Chester that comes with a poem explaining “I’m the king in the woods, I’m the silence in the leaves”—the idea of there being a mischievous figure amongst the trees held great inspiration. Finally, the name Geverlon is a simple anagram of Everlong, the Foo Fighters song I was listening to when I first started writing the piece, and which features axe wielding psychotics running through the woods in the video. Other noteworthy videos include *Aisha*, by *Death in Vegas*, and *Pretty When You Cry*, by *VAST*, which both play with red-coated girls fleeing through the woods.



HELL IN TEXAS



by Scott Dorward

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

An evangelical church in the fictitious, East Texas town of Leland is trying to save itself from its weak finances, by hosting a deliberately shocking and controversial Halloween haunted house. Pastor Ted Weaver has been influenced by the “hell houses” of the Parachurch movement, but cannot afford the same kinds of materials, expertise and special effects. Instead, he has bought a local residence with a dark reputation—the Angerstein house, and is relying on volunteer labor and low tech solutions to stage the show. He plans to sell the house for a much-needed profit once its reputation has been repaired.

Unbeknownst to Pastor Weaver, there is a lloigor trapped in the earth below the Angerstein house, injured and isolated. It has learned how to feed on human pain, and aims to generate enough to finally heal itself and set itself free.

The house has been vacant for over twenty years, during which time the lloigor has slept. Now that the house is abuzz with church volunteers, it has woken up again, and its appetite for suffering is huge. It is manipulating the minds of those who have come into its reach, and is preparing a nutritious atrocity.

The hell house depicted in this scenario is inspired by real Halloween haunted houses, organized by evangelical churches across the United States. None of the material presented is exaggerated; if anything, some of it is toned down.

As the scenario opens, one of the young church volunteers preparing the hell house, Kelly Landrom, has hung herself in the hell house. Left behind was a rambling screed painted on the walls of the hell house about the futility of religion and the mastery of Satan.

Kelly Landrom was a bright young woman who went astray in her early teens. Her father, Mitch, was a violent drunk, and she spent her teens trying to avoid him, sneaking out of the house whenever possible. Her schoolwork suffered, and she dropped out of high school. Kelly’s next few years were a haze of drink and drugs, especially meth. She had a string of abusive relationships with dealers, pimps and fellow addicts.

Eight months ago, she approached Pastor Weaver for help. After joining the Leland Free Evangelical Church, Kelly turned her life around, staying sober and becoming a beloved member of the congregation. Everyone was shocked when she killed herself at the age of 25.

In her final weeks, Kelly had been helping decorate the hell house. The other volunteers noticed her becoming moody and withdrawn. Given the effect the lloigor has on everyone in the house, this was not unusual, but Kelly suffered more than most. Kelly confided to her friend Dawn that she heard “Satan” talking to her, and she was fighting the impulse to use again. The day before she died, Kelly told Dawn that she would do anything to stop the whispering from the dark places. Dawn told her to see Pastor Weaver for guidance, but the next day Kelly was dead.

THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND

Kelly's death was the result of a mixture of suicide and mental coercion. She had been painting in the School Shooting room when the voice of the lloigor filled her head. After painting a sort of suicide note on the wall, Kelly picked up a box cutter, fighting the impulse to cut her wrists. The lloigor, sensing her reluctance, used its telekinetic ability to force her hand, making her cut her own throat. Kelly was dead by the time that she reached the hospital.

The fact that Kelly had transformed her life in the months before her death, combined with the strange nature of the fatal wound, has led a number of people, especially Mitch Landrom, to question whether her death was a suicide. Police Chief Daniel Weaver (Pastor Weaver's brother) has unprofessionally rushed the investigation, to make sure the hell house opens as planned and avoid any outside investigation.

The depiction of the Leland Free Evangelical Church's social views should not be mistaken for endorsement.

Thanks to Tiffany C. G. Sanderson for her help in researching hell houses, and Brian Murphy for answering my questions about East Texas.

INVOLVING THE INVESTIGATORS

The death of Kelly Landrom is the easiest way to draw in investigators. Possible ways of doing this include:

- ✘ Mitch Landrom is devastated to have lost his daughter before he had a chance to make amends with her. He believes that the Weavers are covering something up, and has been posting online in various forums under the name kellytruth to get people interested in Kelly's story.
- ✘ One or more of the investigators may be old friends of Kelly. Mitch Landrom will have invited them to the funeral.
- ✘ An investigative news team planning to cover the hell house as a local interest story becomes more interested given the odd "suicide", and starts digging. Or, a news team with experience with weird events may take notice of the various social media postings, and decide to do an in depth piece.

Other possible avenues include:

- ✘ Investigator groups actively looking for weird events might come across the newspaper article and Reddit thread. If they need more inducement, the Reddit thread can grow over time, with other volunteers discussing weird events at the hell house.
- ✘ A group of new investigators could be members of the Leland Free Evangelical Church or other locals, hearing stories of strange events at the hell house and the possible cover-up of Kelly's death.



BACKGROUND & RESEARCH

LELAND, TEXAS

Leland is a town of 2,800 souls, located in Angelina County, Texas, near Lufkin. The residents are deeply religious, and religion plays an important role in their lives and identities.

THE HISTORY OF THE ANGERSTEIN HOUSE

Investigators can uncover the following information through Library Use checks in civic records, newspaper archives, libraries, etc.

A former water prospector, Augustus Angerstein, struck it rich when the Corsicana oil field was discovered in 1894, but retired due to ill-health ten years later. In 1905, he built a house outside his home town of Leland and settled there, but committed suicide in 1912. His son, Beauregard, lived in the house for only a year, before selling it and moving to Louisiana.

Two families have lived in the house since 1913. The Page family lived there until 1925, but moved out following the unexplained deaths of their two teenaged children.

The Buckner family bought the house the following year, and three generations lived there until 1989, when Samuel Buckner killed his wife and infant daughter with a shotgun before turning it on himself. While none of the Buckners died violent deaths at the house before this, careful reading of medical records might disclose regular physical abuse of the Buckner children.

The house has stood empty since the Bucker murder/suicide. Local realtors struggled and failed to sell it. Rumors of hauntings began, and not even vagrants would stay there. Local children often dared each other to go inside, and some tell stories of strange sounds or things moving on their own.

In May of this year, Ted Weaver, pastor of the Leland Free Evangelical Church, bought the house at auction for \$10,000. Weaver conducted a high-profile blessing at the house in July, promising that the light of Jesus would cleanse its evil reputation. He announced that it will be used to host Leland's first Halloween haunted house this October. This "hell house" will open to the public on the evening of October 24th, and run until the 31st. Admission is \$15.

HELL HOUSES

A hell house is a Halloween haunted house, run by extremely conservative churches, designed to spread the Gospel through the use of horrific vignettes on the nature of sin intended to shock and disgust the viewer. They use special effects, makeup, lighting and actors to portray sins that may lead the participants into perdition, presented as cautionary tales. The choice between sin and salvation is an important part of these events, and audience members are usually presented with a choice to seek salvation at the end of their tour through the house, with volunteers ready to help visitors give themselves over to Christ. Investigators with

HELL IN TEXAS

When East Texas Wants To Know


Leland Chronicle

OCTOBER 20

NEWS SPORTS LIFE OBITS PHOTOS VIDEOS ADS AUTOS

Best Headlines: New figures show Las Vegas highest rate of STDs in nation

Haunted House Death Ruled Suicide



The death of Leland woman Kelly Landrom has been ruled a suicide by the Angelina County Coroner.

Landrom, 25, was taken to Lufkin Memorial Hospital on October 16th, after being found by fellow volunteers at the Halloween haunted house organized by the Leland Free Evangelical Church. Landrom died from her injuries before reaching the hospital.

Pastor Ted Weaver told the Leland Chronicle, "Miss Landrom was more troubled than any of us knew. If we had seen the signs we could have helped her before she made this terrible decision. While scripture is unambiguous on the subject of suicide, everyone at the church is praying for those who loved Kelly."

Funeral services have been arranged for October 23rd in Leland.

Study reveals East Texas housing Chilli Bake

Hell in Texas Handout #1—Leland Chronicle website, October 20th

detailed questions about "hell houses" might be directed to a fictitious professor of anthropology at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Michael J. Raymond, who can answer their questions about what to expect about either the theology of the Leland Free Evangelical Church or the history of "hell houses."

While the first hell house was held in the early 1970s, they only became widespread in the mid-1990s. They were brought to the public's larger attention by the 2001 documentary *Hell House*, which is recommended viewing for any Keeper planning to run this scenario.

Most hell houses are custom-built structures, allowing for the installation of ducts, false floors and a carefully designed path through the scenes. The Leland Free Evangelical Church does not have the resources to erect a dedicated structure, hence its unfortunate adaptation of the Angerstein house.

The Leland Free Evangelical Church: While the Free Evangelical Church is the predominant church in Leland, it has been steadily losing its congregation to the New Life megachurch in Lufkin. New Life has an auditorium that can seat 3,000, and offers charismatic guest speakers, a professional choir and regular musical acts. Compared to this, the Free Evangelical comes off as rustic and amateurish, and Pastor Weaver is fighting for his church's life.

NEWS REPORTS OF KELLY'S DEATH

A typical example, from the local newspaper's website, appears at Hell Papers #1, to the left.

SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY

Conspiracy theories have quickly begun to gain traction about how Kelly's death might not have been a suicide. Typical of these online discussions is the Reddit discussion at *Hell Papers* #2, on page 89.

KELLY'S FUNERAL

The funeral takes place at 10 AM on the 23rd of October, at the Gallion Cemetery in Leland. This is a large, well-maintained graveyard with headstones dating back 150 years.

As Kelly's death has been ruled a suicide, Pastor Weaver has refused to hold her service at the church, insisting that she died in sin. He has agreed to speak some words at her graveside. While he mentions how she was loved by those who knew her and what a bright, caring woman she was, Pastor Weaver carefully avoids any mention of God. He believes that Kelly's action damned her. While this saddens him, he believes that God's judgment is final.

At the end of the service, Mitch Landrom confronts Pastor Weaver, demanding that he tell the truth about what happened to Kelly. Pastor Weaver refuses to engage him. Officer Martinez steps in, stopping Mitch from punching Pastor Weaver, and leads Mitch away.

The funeral should be presented as an opportunity for investigators to talk to the other mourners. A number of people present, especially Mitch and Officer Martinez, will share their theories about Kelly's death.

Mitch Landrom

An alcoholic since his mid-twenties, given to bouts of drunken violence, Mitch Landrom recently sobered up with the help of Alcoholics Anonymous and is trying to rebuild his life. This has made the unexpected death of Kelly all the more painful, as she died before he had a chance to make amends. His sobriety is in grave jeopardy.

Roleplaying Hooks:

- ✘ Wants to know what really happened to his daughter, and what Pastor Weaver is hiding.
- ✘ Often on the verge of losing his temper, poking his finger in people's chests or shouting threats.

MITCH LANDROM, Bereaved Father, Fighting the Urge to Drink

STR 65 CON 40 SIZ 80 INT 65 POW 40
DEX 45 APP 50 EDU 45 SAN 35 HP 12



THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND

Damage bonus: +1D4

Build: 1

Move: 6

ATTACKS

Fighting (Shotgun) 40% (20/8), Winchester 12 gauge M50 Shotgun, 1/round, magazine capacity 5, 50 yards base range, 4D6/2D6/1D6.

Skills: Mechanical Repair 60%.

Defenses: None above base.

Nationality: American

Age: 53

Education: Trade School.

Personal Description: Mitch is a large, powerfully built white man, with shaggy grey hair and an unkempt beard. He wears a flannel shirt, jeans and work boots. His face bears the burst blood vessels of a heavy drinker, and his eyes are haunted.

Traits: Given to angry outbursts, threatening body language and frequent profanity.

Officer Aaron Martinez

The newest recruit to the police department, Martinez has tried to fit in to the town, but is failing. A practicing Catholic, he has resisted Chief Weaver's "invitations" to join the Free Evangelical Church, and now feels like an outsider in the department.

Martinez is troubled by the Landrom case. Kelly was his high-school girlfriend, before she went off the rails. While Martinez knows how troubled Kelly was, having arrested her on multiple occasions, he finds it difficult to believe that she killed herself after getting her life back together. He is especially incredulous that she (or anyone) would have cut her own throat.

Martinez has been conducting an investigation of his own, despite the chief's attempts to keep things to himself. He has learned that the coroner expedited his report at the



Pastor Ted Weaver

chief's request, and may have been pressured into giving a verdict of suicide. Martinez also knows that the scene of Kelly's death was cleaned up quickly, including the note she left on the wall. Photographs of it (see *Hell Papers #3*, on page 90) were supposed to be in the case file, but Martinez found them locked in the chief's desk drawer. Martinez has surreptitiously made his own copies and saved them on his smartphone.

Roleplaying Hooks:

- ✂ Wants to find someone he can trust, to help him learn what really happened to Kelly.
- ✂ Distrusts the motivations of the chief and the chief's brother.

Personal Description: Tall and broad-shouldered, with the beginnings of a pot belly. Frowns a lot. Sad eyes.

Traits: Quick-tempered, but quick to cool down again.

Pastor Ted Weaver

Ted Weaver is the founder of the Leland Free Evangelical Church, and has served as its chief pastor for twenty-seven years. His devotion is all-consuming, and his identity is fused with that of the church.

The decrease in attendance, and resulting financial difficulties, have hit Weaver hard. He has been fighting to keep his congregation and to draw new parishioners, staging community events funded by church coffers and his own savings. This has left both Weaver and the church close to bankruptcy.

Pastor Weaver's plan is to sell the Angerstein house after Halloween. By showing that it has been blessed by Jesus, he hopes to shake the house's evil reputation and greatly improve its sale value. The profit will then be used to settle both the church's and Weaver's debts.

Roleplaying Hooks:

- ✂ Uses his authority in the church and community to ensure that the hell house event goes ahead.
- ✂ Tries to cover up any strange incidents that occur.

PASTOR TED WEAVER, Desperate Man of God

STR 40 CON 50 SIZ 60 INT 70 POW 70

DEX 55 APP 75 EDU 65 SAN 67 HP 11

Damage bonus: none.

Build: 0

Move: 6

ATTACKS

None above base

Skills: Charm 50%, Credit Rating 40%, Lore (Religion) 60%, Persuade 60%, Psychology 40%.

Defenses: None above base.

Nationality: American

Age: 56

Education: B.A., Religion, Oral Roberts University

Personal Description: A tall, slender white man with piercing blue eyes and wavy grey hair. He wears a dark, sober suit with a white



HELL IN TEXAS

shirt and light-blue tie. While outwardly cheerful, Weaver's distress is evident in the lines on his face and the way he slouches when he thinks no one is looking.

Traits: Uses his charm to build trust. Unconsciously wrings his hands as a nervous habit.

Quotes: "Trust in Jesus."

THE LELAND FREE EVANGELICAL CHURCH BUILDING

The church itself is a boxy wooden building, painted white, with a small bell tower. It seats three hundred people, but is usually half-empty at services. The grounds are well-kept, although the grass is yellow and patchy.

The hall is furnished with modern wooden pews. A dais

holds a simple wooden lectern and a number of collapsible chairs for visiting speakers and musical performers. The floor and dais are carpeted in plush fuchsia; although the carpet is bright and clean, it is worn in places. The walls are white, with stained glass windows of bright, abstract patterns.

Pastor Weaver's office is in the church building. It is a simply decorated room, with one wall dominated by a wooden cross. Two bookshelves hold religious and reference texts, and there is an antique wooden desk with a green leather cover. A copy of *The Book of the Passover Angel* (see *Ladybug, Ladybug, Fly Away Home*) is on his desk, personally signed by Rev. John Balfour. He is planning to write Rev.

Hell in Texas Handout #2—Reddit Thread

EastTexas
comments related other discussions (4)

BS KELLY'S DEATH COVERED UP (lelandchronicle.com)
submitted on 22 October at 02:27 AM by kellytruth

This is bullshit. I knew Kelly better than anyone and she was not suicidal. Sure she screwed up, but she had kicked the meth, found Jesus and was getting her shit together. And who kills themselves by cutting their own throat?

We would have heard the truth if the brother of the pastor of the Leland Evangelical church wasn't the one investigating Kelly's death. They're hiding something.

Call or email Chief Weaver and tell him that he needs to get off his fat ass and investigate this like a real police officer.

2 comments share save hide give gold report

all 2 comments
sorted by: **best (suggested)**

↑ 29 ↓

↑ 5 ↓ [-] jesusismycodependent 35 points on 22 October at 08:43 AM
I know your sad and angry, but your wrong. Kelly did kill herself. My sister is a volunteer at the hell house and she saw the crazy stuff she wrote on the wall about satan. She took pictures. I will try to get them off her iPhone.

↑ 3 ↓ [-] rainbowviper 2 points on 22 October at 10:56 AM
I don't know what happened to Kelly but I volunteered as a carpenter in that house for a week and it's haunted. I always felt like I was being watched. While I didn't see anything I nearly cut off my fingers with a bandsaw when something pushed me and there wasn't anyone else around. I never worked anywhere that creeped me out like that.

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THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND

THIS IS SATANS HOUSE. YOU CANNOT DRIVE OUT SATAN. YOU CAN CALL TO GOD BUT GOD WILL NOT HELP YOU BECAUSE SATAN KILLED HIM. SATAN OWNS THIS HOUSE AND EVERYONE IN IT. THIS IS SATANS HOUSE. SATAN HAS A PLAN FOR US ALL. SATAN IS ALWAYS WITH US AND WITHIN US. HE IS THE FIRE AND THE SERPENT AND THE DEVIL IN THE DARKNESS AND ALL OUR BAD THOUGHTS. THIS IS SATANS HOUSE AND IT IS TOO LATE TO LEAVE.

Hell in Texas Handout #3—Screed Written on the Wall of the Angerstein House

Balfour a letter denouncing his heretical views, as they are not precisely the same as his.

A locked metal filing cabinet holds church records, including accounting records. Pastor Weaver keeps the key in the top drawer of his desk. Anyone examining these accounts and making an Accounting roll will learn the following:

- ✘ Attendance has been dropping steadily for the past three years, along with donations.
- ✘ The Weaver brothers have their own money tied up in the church, and stand to lose heavily if it fails.
- ✘ Ted Weaver bought the Angerstein house in his own name, and will gain personally if it is sold at a profit.

Pastor Weaver spends most of his working day here. While he would never admit it, he avoids the Angerstein house because he finds the atmosphere disturbing. He will go to the house if called to an emergency, and plans to attend the opening on the 24th.

Given Pastor Weaver's secretiveness, the strange events at the house, the weird book sitting on his desk, and Chief Weaver's willingness to cover up deaths, experienced investigators may mistakenly decide the church is a Mythos cult. The Keeper should play up this ambiguity whenever possible.



Steve Ellis



HELL IN TEXAS

THE LELAND POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Leland Police Department is located in City Hall, a squat two-story, white brick building with peeling paintwork. The department is comprised of Chief Daniel Weaver; two officers (Aáron Martinez and Steve Ellis) and a receptionist/dispatcher, Cynthia Fuhrman.

Steve Ellis is a member of the Free Evangelical Church, and loyal to the Weaver brothers. He is however a generally good sort of fellow, who has taken an interest in the youth of the Church and tried to mentor some of them. He is frequently at the hell house, providing security and volunteering on his off hours.

Fuhrman is in her late sixties, morbidly obese, and uses an electric scooter to get around. She wears dark glasses, even indoors, out of vanity. Fuhrman's voice is gravelly from a lifetime of smoking unfiltered cigarettes.

Police Chief Daniel Weaver

The younger brother of Pastor Ted, Daniel Weaver has headed up the police department in Leland for eighteen years, and is close to retirement. He is devoted to the church, having been a member of the congregation since its inception.

Chief Weaver is frightened that Kelly Landrom's death is going to lead to the hell house coming under wider investigation, risking financial ruin for the church and his brother. This fear manifests as belligerence, and Chief Weaver is not shy about throwing his weight around. As events escalate, Chief Weaver will be drawn deeper into conspiracy, covering up deaths and quashing rumors. He will stop short of murder, but is happy to intimidate or frame outsiders, locking them up on false charges.

Roleplaying Hooks:

- ✘ Deny any wrongdoing on the part of the church in a direct, aggressive manner.
- ✘ Remind people just how much trouble you can make for them.

CHIEF DANIEL WEAVER, Loyal Little Brother

STR 40 CON 50 SIZ 60 INT 70 POW 70
DEX 55 APP 75 EDU 65 SAN 67 HP 11

Damage bonus: none.

Build: 0

Move: 6

ATTACKS

Fighting (Handgun) 50% (25/10), Colt Delta Elite Auto, damage 1D10+1, 7 shots, 15 yards base range, malfunction 98-00

Skills: Intimidate 70%, Listen 35%, Psychology 40%, Spot Hidden 50%.

Defenses: None above base; may wear bulletproof vest if anticipating gunplay.

Nationality: American

Age: 53

Education: B.A., Criminal Justice, Stephen F. Austin University.

Personal Description: Chief Weaver has similarly striking eyes to his brother, but is shorter and stouter in stature. His habitual look is

one of suspicion. He chews tobacco, and spits unapologetically when outdoors.

Traits: Believes that people are lying to him until proven otherwise.

Quotes: "I run this town. Don't forget that."

THE HELL HOUSE

The Angerstein house is a two-story wood-framed structure (plus an attic), recently renovated and painted white. In the run-up to the opening, it is a hive of activity, filled with the sounds of hammers and power tools, with people coming and going bearing everything from tarpaulins to rubber vampire bats.

INVESTIGATING THE ANGERSTEIN HOUSE

While the hell house is under construction, it is easy enough for a group of investigators to simply walk in. Volunteers will strike up friendly conversations with them, including questions about whether they attend the church and if they have come to help. Depending on the stories the investigators offer, the Keeper may ask for Fast Talk or Persuade rolls.

The surest way of gaining access to the house is to simply volunteer to work on it. While most of the volunteers are members of the congregation, some have roped in friends and family, and Lauren Crawley is happy to take any help offered. The hell house is close to opening, and there is still much work to be done.

THE GROUNDS

The Angerstein house sits on four acres of private grounds, now trimmed and tamed by church volunteers. Much of the lawn has been set aside for car parking, although there are rarely more than two dozen vehicles there before opening night. The grounds immediately surrounding the house are filled with tents, trailers, generators and trestle tables bearing boxes of doughnuts and coffee urns. The grounds are surrounded by pine woods, some of which make up part of the property.

The volunteers largely ignore the woods, but if the investigators take an interest and make a Spot Hidden roll, they will notice someone standing several yards into the tree line. The figure is visible at night because of the light coming from a mobile phone and a cigarette. This is Bradley Koehler, and he will not notice them if the investigators approach cautiously.

BRADLEY KOEHLER

A vocal member of the LGBT community in Angelina County, Koehler has been trying to draw attention to the homophobic message of the hell house, based on what he has heard from volunteers. While his initial plan was to scout out the area prior to his planned protest on the opening night, the lloigor has touched his mind, feeding his anger and disgust, and making him obsessive.

THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND



The Angerstein House

Koehler now visits the grounds at all hours, taking photographs with his phone. While he has told fellow activists that the protest will be peaceful, Koehler plans to make Molotov cocktails and burn the house down on opening night. This idea was planted subconsciously by the lloigor, and Koehler is barely aware of the dozens of bottles and eight jerry cans of gasoline that he has stashed in the woods. Investigators talking to Koehler can make Spot Hidden rolls to smell the fumes. If asked about the gasoline, Koehler looks blank and says, "It wants to burn." He has no idea what "it" is, and will forget saying this immediately.

While Koehler thinks that he has only taken a few photographs to help plan the protest, anyone examining his phone will find hundreds of pictures, dating back over the last few days. A Spot Hidden roll while perusing these photographs reveals two things:

- ✘ Many of the photographs contain the same distortion as the screens in the control room (see Control Room, below). This mainly affects pictures taken closer to the house.
- ✘ One of the pictures appears to show a large, shadowy form with glowing red eyes looking out of the window of the School Shooting room at night. The shape is indistinct, and could be a trick of the light.

If Koehler is convinced to go home, he will return some hours later, still in the thrall of the lloigor. It has plans for him

(see Arson Attack, below). However, Chief Weaver will be more than happy to lock him up, if the Molotov cocktail preparations are called to his attention.

Roleplaying Hooks:

- ✘ Dazed and forgetful, letting sentences trail off or repeating himself.
- ✘ Angry about the church's homophobia and the hateful message of the hell house.

BRADLEY KOEHLER, Protestor and Thrall of Ancient Evil

STR 60 CON 60 SIZ 65 INT 60 POW 35
DEX 75 APP 60 EDU 70 SAN 22 HP 12

Damage bonus: none.

Build: 0

Move: 8

ATTACKS

Fighting (Handgun) 40% (20/8), 9mm Automatic, damage 1D10, 15 yards base range, 2/round, 6 shots, malfunction 00.

Skills: Art (Photography) 40%, Throw 40%.

Defenses: None above base.

Nationality: American

Age: 28

Education: B.A., Sociology, University of Texas-Austin.

Personal Description: A young, sandy-haired white man in a polo shirt and expensive slacks. His eyes look vacant, with dark shadows underneath, and his speech is slow and slurred. He smells like he hasn't bathed in days.

Traits: Quick to challenge injustice when he sees it.



HELL IN TEXAS

Indefinite Insanity: Puppet of the lloigor, manifesting as maniacal obsession with the hell house.

Quotes: "It wants to burn. Burn in hell."

Please refer to the map of the hell house; room descriptions and encounters follow.

VOLUNTEERS

Lauren Crawley

In the absence of Pastor Weaver, management of the hell house falls to Lauren Crawley, one of the congregation and a woman of tireless enthusiasm. Despite this, the stress and long hours are getting to Crawley. While there have been plenty of volunteers, few of them have the expertise needed, and their work is shoddy and slow. Crawley is suffering from headaches, and largely keeps to the control room, where she can switch the lights off and only talk to people when they need something.

Almost every volunteer has complained to her about weirdness in the house—inexplicable accidents, movements in the shadows, strange whispers—but Crawley is in denial. She knows that Pastor Weaver blessed the house personally, so of course there can be no demonic activity going on. Everyone is simply tired and overworked. Crawley knows deep down that this isn't true, but admitting problems will just get in the way of the opening. Crawley helps with the church accounts, and knows how much is riding on the opening of the hell house. While she is strong in her moral beliefs, she will cave to pressure from the Weaver brothers in covering up any further incidents.

Roleplaying Hooks:

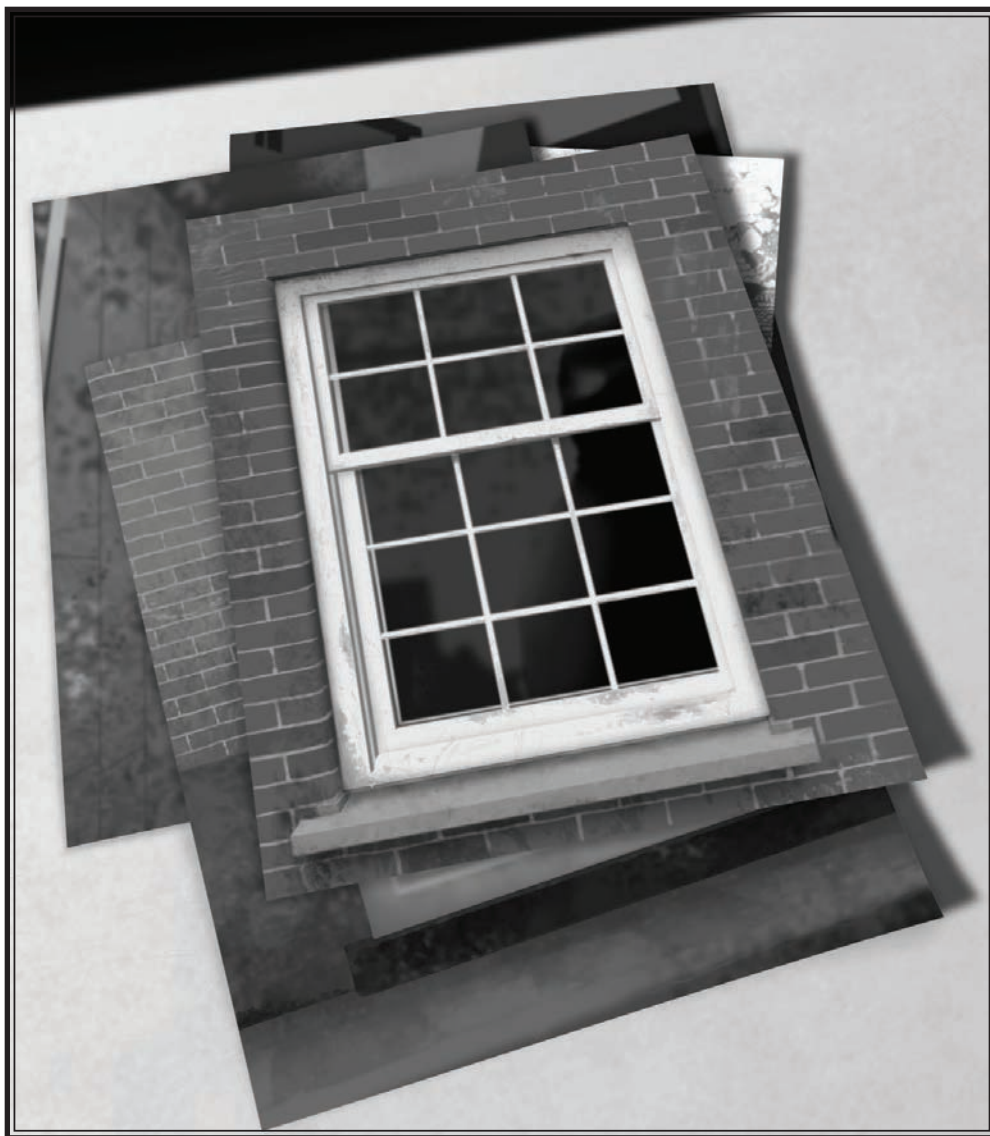
- ✘ Takes advantage of any offers of help.
- ✘ Dismissive of any reports of strange events.

Personal Description: A short, heavy-set black woman in her early forties, dressed impeccably. She has a permanent frown, caused more by headaches than ill-temper.

Traits: Tries to see the best in everyone around her.

Dawn Ellers

A pretty, shy black woman, she had befriended Kelly Landrom and is distraught about her death. While she refuses to accept



From Koehler's Phone

that there was anything strange about Kelly's suicide, this is denial, as she too is succumbing to the lloigor and is close to suicide. Ellers has seen the lloigor manifest its reptilian form in the attic, and believes it to be Satan. Her faith is crumbling, as she believes that failing Kelly has led to God turning his back on her. Ellers hides all this behind a brave façade, but a Psychology roll will reveal just how disturbed she is.

If the investigators ask for someone to show them round the house, Lauren Crawley will nominate Ellers, who is working up in the Rave Culture room.

Sasha Reinstad

Sasha stopped coming to the house altogether for several days, claiming conflicts with work as a carpenter. In fact, Reinstad was frightened by a strange accident with his bandsaw; his left hand is still partly bandaged. Social pressure has brought him back to the house. He is the Reddit poster rainbowvipser, and can be convinced to talk about his fears with a Psychoanalysis or Persuade roll.



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HELL IN TEXAS

Eva Delgado

A brash teenage girl, cast as one of the demonic tour guides. She has taken to wearing her costume all the time, cavorting around the house in a top hat and tails, face covered with greasepaint, sporting plastic fangs and a rubber devil's tail poking out from her coat. When in character, she speaks in a hissing, growling voice filled with mockery. Sometimes the lloigor whispers to her, sharing secrets it has plucked from other minds, and she uses this to goad people. This is beginning to disturb other volunteers, who avoid her when possible. Delgado will latch onto the investigators, mentioning elements from their backstories once the lloigor has made contact with their minds. She will ascribe any information that she could not possibly have known of to "lucky guesses" or "the will of Jesus."

INSIDE THE HOUSE

The Control Room

Once the Hell House opens, Lauren Crawley will run operations from this room. It contains three desks holding a dozen flat-screen monitors, hooked up to CCTV cameras mounted throughout the house. Three laptops control sound and lighting effects. There is a rack of walkie-talkies for volunteers.

Crawley is concerned that the poor picture quality of the video streams is indicative of electrical interference that may interfere with other systems. If any investigators offer to track down the root of this problem, Crawley will be only too happy to take them up on this. Such efforts will prove fruitless, however, as there are no problems to be found: the wavy lines are caused by the presence of the lloigor—a precursor to the visible disturbances that result when it creates a vortex.

The Attic

The hell house tour only follows the first two floors. The attic is not a part of the show, and is being used for storage. There are cans of paint, ladders, tools and boxes crammed in here, making it difficult to move around safely, especially given the poor lighting. A Spot Hidden roll reveals some sharp items with dried blood on them from accidents.

Some boxes contain old junk, including broken picture frames, a few holding Buckner family photographs. The lloigor will take advantage of anyone investigating these boxes (see The Injured Lloigor, below), and someone on their hands and knees may find themselves tumbling face-first into a box of broken glass, receiving 1D6 damage and some horrifying wounds.

The attic is one of the lloigor's favorite places to manifest, and it may do so to any lone investigators, especially at night, in the hope of driving them mad.

THE TOUR

Once the hell house opens, visitors buy tickets from a booth outside the front porch, join a group of up to 20 people, and wait until there is a guide to take them through. Groups are kept moving through the house quickly, entering each room as soon as the actors and set dressers can reset. The house can hold six groups at a time, each with a "demon" tour guide. Once the tour is finished, the visitors are taken out through the Heaven tent.

The stages of the tour follow, describing the room (use this for investigators going through the house before opening) and then outlining the performance.

Room 1: Homosexuality

A hospital room, with a metal bed in the center; chairs, drips and medical equipment surround it, with three large spotlights overhead. The walls are hospital green and the floor is covered with linoleum tiles.

The performance centers on Bruce, a gay man dying of HIV/AIDS. His parents have gathered at his bedside to convince him to repent, renounce homosexuality and accept Jesus. Bruce insists that he was born gay and is not a sinner. The performance ends with Bruce dying, unrepentant, and his parents wailing as Satan drags their son to Hell.

Room 2: Abortion

A medical suite in a clinic, with a repurposed dentist's chair, covered with a sheet, in the center.

The performance depicts Nancy, a young woman, undergoing an abortion; there is plenty of fake blood and a wet plop as a latex doll lands in a metal bowl. Images of aborted fetuses are projected on the walls, accompanied by the screams of children. Later, Nancy is visited by an angel and shown images of the daughter she would have had and the life she was denied. Nancy repents and is saved, becoming a pro-life campaigner.

Room 3: Rave Culture

This room is decorated in two halves, with no barrier between them. The first is Lauren Crawley's idea of a nightclub, with garish flashing lights and graffiti-covered walls. The other half is a young woman's bedroom.

If the investigators visit the house before the opening, they will find Dawn Ellers spraying graffiti on the walls.

In the performance, Julia, a teenage girl, is reluctantly convinced to go to a rave by friends. Julia is offered ecstasy at the club, which turns out to be a date rape drug (the script is non-specific about this). Later Julia discovers she has contracted a venereal disease and kills herself in shame, before being dragged off to Hell.

Room 4: School Shooting

This room is filled with school desks. A blackboard hangs on one wall, covered with badly formed equations in chalk. The floor has been covered with lumpy linoleum; this was

THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND

done quickly to cover the bloodstains left by Kelly's death. A Spot Hidden roll reveals traces of the writing she left on the wall, covered with paint and now indecipherable.

At various times, the sound of gunfire can be heard coming from this room. None of the volunteers seem perturbed, although some flinch. Kevin Cho is rehearsing with blanks, under the supervision of Officer Ellis, getting used to the noise. They are both wearing earplugs.

The performance tells the story of Marty, played by Cho, who is bullied at school. Offered guidance by his pastor, he instead becomes a Goth, wearing black clothes and make-up and listening to "satanic" music. Finally, he snaps and takes a handgun to school, shooting his classmates before turning the gun on himself. His Christian classmates pass on to heaven, while Marty is damned.

Kevin Cho

A studious, antisocial and unathletic boy who has undergone bullying himself, Kevin Cho has found that the character of Marty resonates with him disturbingly. Pastor Weaver suggested Cho play a role at the hell house to bring him out of his shell; Lauren Crawley suggested Marty, as Cho is the right age.

Exposed to the lloigor's influence, Cho's fear has turned to rage. He has become short-tempered, and quick to snap at everyone. Cho carries a pocketful of live rounds with him at all times; he plans to replace the blanks in his gun on opening night, gunning down as many people as he can.

Officer Ellis has been mentoring Cho, and has even taken him down to the firing range to help his confidence. Cho is becoming a much better shot.

Roleplaying Hooks

- ✘ Looking for an opportunity to get maximum body count. If the lloigor senses that the opening night may be cancelled, it will prompt Cho into killing volunteers, investigators or anyone else who happens to be at the house.
- ✘ Twitchy and reluctant to make eye contact. When someone does meet his eyes, he glares at them with barely suppressed rage.

KEVIN CHO, Pretend Spree Killer and Thrall of Ancient Evil

STR 35 CON 60 SIZ 45 INT 75 POW 50
DEX 75 APP 60 EDU 65 SAN 42 HP 11

Damage bonus: none.

Build: 0

Move: 8

ATTACKS

Fighting (Handgun) 45% (22/9), 9mm Automatic, damage 1D10, 15 yards base range, 2/round, 6 shots, malfunction 00.

Skills: Listen 40%, Spot Hidden 40%, Stealth 40%.

Defenses: None above base.

Nationality: American

Age: 15

Education: High School Student

Personal Description: Gangly and slight, with short, spiky black hair. Often slouches, as if trying to make himself smaller.

Traits: Talks to himself when he thinks no one is around. He is actually talking to the lloigor, sharing plans.

Indefinite Insanity: Puppet of the lloigor, manifesting as fantasy realization in the school shooting room.

Room 5: Domestic Abuse

A living room in a low-income household, with second-hand furniture, peeling walls and a stained carpet. There are dirty dishes and empty bottles of bourbon everywhere.

Dawn Ellers knows that Kelly Landrom refused to enter this room; it reminded her too much of her childhood.

The performance revolves around Jake, a drunken husband and father whose wife, Alice, challenges him for beating their children. Jake punches her, drawing blood, before she smashes a bottle over his head and runs, taking the children with her. Jake is offered a chance to change by a Christian friend, but laughs it off and drinks himself to death before being dragged to Hell.

Room 6: Hell

The walls are mottled with papier-mâché, painted to look like a cavern. Manacles hang from the walls, and resin stalagmites and stalactites are fastened to the floor and ceiling. Incense burners charged with sulfur are tucked out of sight, to be lit before performances; tests have left a hint of brimstone in the air.

The lloigor will occasionally take form here when the room is dark, letting people in the corridor catch the indistinct form of enormous reptilian coils and glowing red eyes. As soon as anyone enters or illuminates the room, the lloigor disappears. Witnessing the lloigor's manifestation provokes a SAN roll (0/1D6).

During shows, performers dressed as the damned souls from the other rooms (not the same actors, who will be busy with their own performances) are shackled to the walls. Images of flames are projected over them, and the sounds of screams and flames piped in over speakers. The performers plead with audience members to repent and not to make the same mistakes they did. Other performers costumed as devils mock them and prod with plastic pitchforks.

Heaven Tent

Every group leaving the house is brought out through this tent, which is affixed to the back door. The tent is made of white fabric, with strings of colorful lights hanging from the poles. Wooden benches sit alongside tables containing evangelical literature.

As groups pass into the tent, volunteers ask if they have been affected by what they have witnessed, and whether they want to avoid damnation by giving themselves to Christ. The volunteers talk and pray with people, hoping to connect on a deep emotional level.

Any visitors who are not moved to repent can exit on the far side and head back to their cars.

HELL IN TEXAS

EVENTS IN THE HOUSE

Bad things keep happening in the hell house, as the Keeper sees fit, to keep the sense of drama high and advance the action. The following provides a series of events that can be used to escalate tension at the house. Some have times associated with them, while others are fluid. The Keeper should use, adapt or abandon these as appropriate.

The order of these events represents the growing influence of the lloigor, as the suffering and death in the house give it strength. The goal of the lloigor is to heal itself, regain its physical form and escape. The Keeper should look for opportunities for the lloigor to feed.

ACCIDENTS

The lloigor uses its telekinetic abilities to create small accidents around the house—tripping on stairs, mishaps with power tools, and so on (see **The Injured Lloigor**, below), the suffering from which feeds it. A Spot Hidden roll will reveal that almost everyone working in the house has a minor wound. While most of the volunteers have rationalized this as normal mishaps, a Psychology roll will reveal genuine fear.

The investigators will be targeted by the lloigor in this way shortly after their arrival.

DAWN ELLERS HANGS HERSELF

Unless the investigators intervene or convince Ellers to leave the house, she will succumb to the lloigor and kill herself on the night of the 23rd. She is working late when she feels the compulsion to go up to the attic. Ellers makes a hasty noose from electrical cable, strings it over a beam, and hangs herself.

If the investigators don't find her first, Lauren Crawley will discover Ellers' body while fetching light bulbs half an hour later. Crawley immediately calls Chief Weaver, who arrives at the house ten minutes later. The chief convinces Crawley to keep this quiet until after the opening, and the two of them wrap Ellers' body in a roll of carpet and take it out to the police car. Chief Weaver takes Ellers' body back to her house to make it appear that she died there; given that he will be in charge of the investigation, this should pose no problem.

The attic has a lingering smell of excrement afterwards, from Dawn's bowels voiding at the moment of death, and this can be traced to a pool of liquid under where she died. A Spot Hidden roll will reveal the discarded length of electrical cord, tied in a noose.

MITCH LANDROM TURNS UP DRUNK AND ANGRY

Mitch drives up to the house in his pickup truck, gets out with a bottle of bourbon in one hand and a shotgun in the other, and demands to see Pastor Weaver. When told that the pastor isn't there, Mitch storms through the house looking for him, shouting drunken abuse at the volunteers, demanding to be told the truth about his daughter's death, and waving his shotgun around.

The lloigor gets inside of Mitch's head, provoking a gun-

fight between Mitch and Officer Ellis. Unless the investigators intervene, Ellis shoots Mitch dead, and the chief has another death to deal with.

DOORS OPEN

Turnout for the first night is disappointing. At 6 P.M., opening time, only thirty vehicles have arrived, along with two local news teams. Numbers grow as the evening progresses, although there will rarely be more than 100 people present, including volunteers.

THE PROTEST

A group of a dozen LGBT protestors gather for the opening, but Bradley Koehler is not there to coordinate. They hold a rainbow flag banner and placards with messages like "God Loves Everyone" and "Fight Homophobia". Their plan is to protest peacefully, letting themselves be arrested if necessary.

At first Lauren Crawley asks them to leave politely. As the lloigor influences everyone's minds, however, the atmosphere grows heated, and some volunteers come out to back Crawley up. The confrontation turns violent, with the protestors beaten with improvised clubs and driven off of the property.

This is caught on camera, both by visitors and reporters, and tensions remain high for the rest of the evening as the Weaver brothers try to downplay the situation.

THE SCHOOL SHOOTING TURNS REAL

After several performances, when the house is full, Kevin Cho swaps the blanks in his gun for live ammunition. Cho is able to empty his pistol before anyone realizes what is happening, killing two people (starting with Officer Ellis) and seriously injuring six more. Unless the investigators intervene, he will get a chance to reload and stalk through the house, gunning down anyone he can. It will only take five deaths before the lloigor can create a vortex attack, potentially killing everyone else in the house.

ARSON ATTACK

Assuming that the investigators have not stopped Koehler's plans, he will attempt to set fire to the house. There is no fixed timetable for this. The lloigor wants to maximize casualties, and is ready to improvise if its plans are disrupted. This may mean that Koehler attempts to burn down the house before it opens to the public, as long as there are at least twenty people present.

Koehler sneaks around the outside of the house, splashing gasoline and leaving canisters tucked in the shrubbery. He shoots anyone who interrupts him. He then uses a Molotov cocktail to start the fire, then circles the house, using his pistol and firebombs to pick off anyone trying to escape.

Chief Weaver used his influence to get the fire marshal to certify the house, even though the fire exits are insufficient. A fire will cause panic, with people fighting to get to the exits. The lloigor manifests its spectral reptilian form to herd people and provoke further panic.

The main dangers for investigators caught inside the

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burning house are smoke inhalation and panic. Once the house is filled with smoke (1D6+3 rounds from the start of the fire), investigators must make CON rolls each round that they do not have access to fresh air, losing 1D6 hit points on a failure. A group moving through the burning house should have the investigator with the lowest Luck make a Luck roll whenever entering a new room or area. On a failure, the route is impassable because of flames or structural collapse. If there are panicking crowds, investigators must make STR or SIZ rolls to move through them without being knocked to the ground. Failure results in 1D6 damage from trampling per round until the investigator passes a STR or SIZ roll to get up again.

WRAPPING IT ALL UP

This is a difficult scenario for the investigators to “win”. They face an invisible, formless foe. The only way to stop the lloigor taking form is to deny it sustenance, which means convincing people to abandon the Angerstein house. Given that the fu-

ture of the church is at stake, this will be a hard sell.

Burning the house down may prove the best option, but it will be occupied constantly from the time the scenario starts. The lloigor will use compulsion and trickery to keep victims in the house if it burns, and if five or more die, it will use its vortex attack to kill everyone else in the vicinity.

The Keeper should be open to creative solutions in the part of the players. If these fail, the investigators may end up shot by Kevin Cho, suffocated when Bradley Koehler burns down the house, or killed by the vortex attack. Survival is not guaranteed.

If the lloigor gains physical form and escapes . . . -1D6 SAN

If the lloigor is prevented from escaping +1D6 SAN

If Kevin Cho is prevented from killing anyone . . +1D6 SAN



HELL IN TEXAS

THE INJURED LLOIGOR - ISOLATED, UNPREDICTABLE AND HUNGRY

Even from the alien perspective of the lloigor, it is insane, acting on instinct and in survival mode. It differs greatly from the lloigor in the Call of Cthulhu rulebook.

The lloigor's priority is to recover its strength. As there are no other lloigor to help it, it has learned to harvest energy in new ways: through the physical and mental suffering of humans, especially from death. The lloigor is adept at driving people to murder or suicide. Luckily, its weakened state means that the lloigor can only feed on people in the house or within a quarter mile of it.

The lloigor has intruded into the thoughts of the church volunteers. Playing on their fears, it has presented itself as Satan. Many are in denial, although everyone is frightened.

Should the lloigor manage to manifest physically, use the following stats.

STR 130 CON 100 SIZ 200 INT 20 POW 14
DEX 25 HP 30

Damage bonus: +4D6

Build: 6

Move: 7/3 through stone as immaterial

Magic Points: 14

ATTACKS

Fighting 30% (15/6). 1 per round (2 while in reptilian form), damage 1D6 +db. Assumes a physical manifestation, of course.

Special Abilities: Given the number of people upon whom the lloigor can feed, it would be too fiddly to keep track of magic points. In the case of minor powers, the expenditure of magic points will be more than matched by those the lloigor harvests from the distress of its victims. The more extreme abilities are powered by specific events.

Use the following chart to determine which of its powers the lloigor can manifest at any given time.

Power	Prerequisite
Telekinetic effects (e.g. nudging, tripping and pushing people)	People present in the house or grounds.
Psychic attacks	The victim must be injured by the lloigor first.
Manifesting spectral form	Once per day, or following a death in the house or on the grounds.
Vortex attack	Five or more people dying on the grounds within an hour (e.g. from the school shooting or arson attack).
Taking physical form	Twenty or more people dying in one day or on the grounds at once (e.g. from the vortex attack).

Once the lloigor has manifested a physical form, it is fully healed and free to leave the house in search of others of its kind.

Telekinetic Effects: The lloigor can push, pull or trip people in the house and grounds, or move power tools or sharp objects to create accidents. These attacks use opposed rolls against the target's STR (for brute-force attacks) or DEX (when tripping the target on the stairs or trying to push them off a stepladder) using a STR of 80 and a DEX of 70. While the lloigor can do this at will, it avoids attacking targets too often, as that would risk scaring its food away. Each investigator should be targeted once, with subsequent attacks only if they act against the lloigor's interests or put themselves at risk of a fatal accident (such as climbing on the roof). Being attacked in this way provokes a SAN roll (0/1D4).

Psychic Attacks: Once a person has been attacked by the lloigor, it is able to get inside its victims mind. On a successful opposed POW roll, it will learn about the person's fears and weaknesses. Anyone so targeted loses 1D3 SAN points per visit to the house; the lloigor feeds upon this distress. Victims sense this influence as moving shadows, voiceless whispers and an atmosphere of impending doom. Most volunteers have rationalized this as the effect of constant reminders about Satan and Hell.

Reptilian Manifestation: Until healed, the lloigor is unable to manifest a physical form. It can project the spectral form of reptilian shape, appearing as a huge serpent with glowing red eyes, but cannot interact with the material world. If it kills 20 or more people within the space of a day, it will be able to heal itself and escape its prison underneath the house.

Vortex Attack: Enabled if the lloigor manages to kill five or more people within an hour. This most fearsome weapon is a type of implosion sounding like the roll of distant thunder. Everything in the house and for 20 yards around it is torn to pieces and the ground collapses in a huge sinkhole. Everyone within the circle loses 1D100 hit points. Alert investigators may notice the tell-tale effects of swirling lines appearing in the air and a half-unheard throbbing noise penetrating their bodies. If this attack kills at least 20 people, the lloigor will take physical form and flee through the woods.

Spells: Cloud Memory, Dominate, Flesh Ward, Mental Suggestion.

Armor: 8-point reptilian hide. In its immaterial state, it cannot be harmed by any physical weapons, magical or not.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D8 as reptile; when invisible—no Sanity loss. Mind contact costs 1/1D4 Sanity points.



THE NIGHT SEASON

by Jeff Moeller

INTRODUCTION

Gates Michelle Ivory, commonly known as “Shelly”, is a very odd, 30ish year old woman living in an upper middle class section of Anchorage, Alaska with her mother—a neighborhood beyond her apparent means. Shelly’s mother, Pamela Ivory, is 48 years old, single, and has never married. The exact identity of Shelly’s father is an open mystery; Pamela became pregnant with Shelly as a teenager at a room party during a science fiction convention in Columbus, Ohio, and she has no idea.

Pamela is a drunk, a drug abuser, and dabbled in the occult as a teenager; she does not have clear memories of everything that she did in that era. Among the things that Pamela did, however, was consume a variety of Mythos influenced and occult tinged substances while pregnant with Shelly. As a result of these activities, Shelly was born—different. While (theoretically) Shelly is capable of performing intellectual tasks at an average level, the brain damage that she suffered as a result of being exposed in utero to substances ranging from marijuana, to the Plutonian Drug, to Moonwine consumed by her mother during drugged expeditions to the Dreamlands, has warped Shelly.

Shelly is odd, spacey, and lives in her own little world. Worse, Shelly has the ability to make you live in her own little world. Shelly exists simultaneously in the waking world and the Dreamlands. She is immature, pathologically self-absorbed, interested only in certain things, and has poor social skills, but she is an incredibly powerful dreamer. Her subconscious also

can, and does, subtly affect the waking world around her. The house just magically got paid for, by way of example.

Shelly also has the capacity, when angered, to more overtly twist reality in the waking world, by allowing her daydreams and fantasies to intrude on reality. Shelly is potentially incredibly dangerous, but is fortunately generally benign, due to being so extremely self-absorbed.

Furthermore, to effectively communicate with Shelly, one has to put oneself in a context that she can understand: she thinks of herself as a character in a shifting variety of science fiction television shows. Or, if you wish, she thinks of herself as a cast member in one particular show that she is utterly obsessed with. She stays in her room at almost all times, nowadays, although largely unsuccessful efforts were made up through the end of high school to educate her in mainstream education classes.

Her room is full of science fiction television show paraphernalia, and some genre TV show plays on her DVD at all times. She interprets visitors to her room (other than her mother) as characters from whatever show she is most obsessed with at the moment, and interacts with them through that filter.

At night, when she is asleep, Shelly’s consciousness presides over a small, isolated pocket of the Dreamlands where her power is near absolute. There, she is Queen Gates of the City, a mostly beneficent if extremely dotty ruler in a magnificent “cloud city” hovering miles over the Enchanted Wood. The foregoing assumes that you are making use of the copyright friendly, fictitious science fiction TV show that Gates is most

THE NIGHT SEASON

THE NIGHT SEASON HANDOUT #1-A SYNOPSIS OF THE CORONER'S REPORT INTO ROBERT HORN'S SUICIDE

The coroner's report includes both an autopsy as well as copies of the police report and interview notes. In Anchorage, Alaska, the coroner is a State of Alaska employee.

Robert Horn was found in his bedroom at his home at 2513 W. 39th St. in Anchorage. His door was locked from the inside, and his parents broke it down when he failed to get up in the morning for school. The only window was locked from the inside as well.

Robert had been stabbed in the stomach by an odd, artistic looking blade, and bled out. Initially puzzled by the blade, the police approached the matter as a potential homicide. However, the angle of the stab, lack of fingerprints or other trace evidence, and locked nature of the room led to a conclusion of suicide before long. The coroner concluded that the angle of the wound was consistent with stabbing oneself while in a seated position.

The nature of the knife eluded the coroner, although a picture of it is in the file. His parents and the police were unable to identify it or where it might have come from, as were others who were interviewed. Since it was obviously a suicide based on the forensics, this line of inquiry was not pursued further.

Interviews were conducted with his parents, John and Maggie Horn; his recent ex-girlfriend, Brittany Long; and his school's assistant principal, Phillip Zentkowski. They all reported versions of the same thing: Robert was a comparatively normal 18 year old boy; an average to below average student; who played football on the varsity squad; and showed no prior signs of mental illness until shortly before his death. He was a jock whose hobbies included loud music, partying, cars, sports and chasing after girls.

Robert had gotten into some minor disciplinary scrapes at school for pranks or bullying, but never any serious criminal trouble. He showed no signs of depression until the weekend two weeks before his suicide, at which point, he suddenly became seriously depressed. He complained about not being able to sleep, became withdrawn, and suddenly ended his relationship with Ms. Long without explanation. He was absent from school, whereabouts unknown, for the entire week preceding his suicide, and the assistant principal had set a parent/teacher conference for the morning on which he was found.

A bizarre, rambling, crudely drawn suicide note, done in ballpoint pen and spattered with blood, was found near the body.

obsessed with, *The City in the Clouds*. Otherwise, feel free to use a space station, star base or other set from a program of your choosing.

The investigators' challenge, should they choose to accept it, is to look into a cold case and figure out, if they can, what drove teenager Robert Horn to suicide. The truth is that Robert Horn was an obnoxious jock who lived next door to, and went to high school with, Shelly. In a predatory way, he ingratiated herself with Shelly, snuck into her room one night about thirteen years ago, and seduced her. Robert got much more than he bargained for. Shelly interpreted him as a love interest character from her shows, and decided to keep him. When he tried to leave her room, Shelly imprisoned his soul in the Dreamlands, where it remains to this day as her plaything/unwilling theater participant.

Without his soul and unable to dream, Robert quickly went insane in the waking world, and committed suicide a few weeks later, leaving behind a suicide note redolent with Dreamlands and Mythos references. The police were baffled, and after the coroner ruled it a suicide, did not conduct any further investigation.

INVOLVING THE INVESTIGATORS

The investigators might become involved in one of two ways, depending on how you want to approach the scenario. One is by stumbling across Robert Horn's suicide note during the course of performing research into law enforcement records

concerning any of the topics referenced in the note. The note is found in a thirteen year old police file from Anchorage, Alaska. It pertains to the death of Robert Horn, 18, a high school senior. The case was ruled a suicide by the coroner and thereupon closed. A synopsis of the coroner's report follows at *The Night Season, Investigator Handout #1*. The suicide note itself follows as *The Night Season, Investigator Handout #2*.

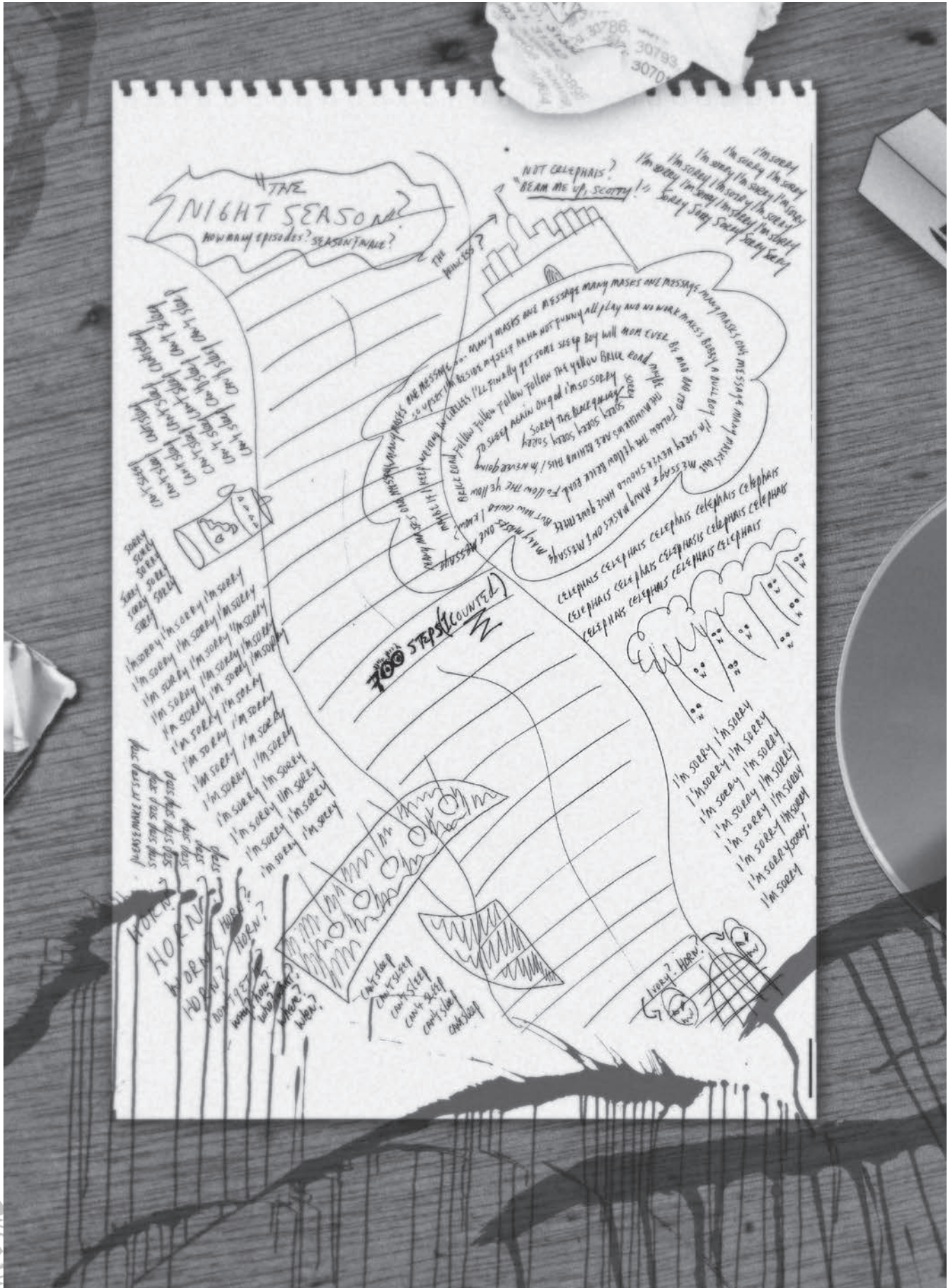
Alternatively, Robert Horn's parents, never satisfied with the idea that their son would have committed suicide, might hire investigators with a reputation for investigating the occult or weird, to try and provide some additional answers. These might be private investigators, or even an investigative news crew.

STAGING NOTES FOR RUNNING THIS SCENARIO

One option for running this adventure is to go all in with Shelly's fantasy life and have her be completely obsessed with one specific science fiction television show. A fictitious television show called *The City in the Clouds* is provided below, and certain clues (the knife) assume that you are using *The City in the Clouds*, as does the description of the end game in the Dreamlands.

Alternatively, you could go with an actual genre television show. Or, you could mix and match from the gamut of the entire genre. Depending on the extent to which you take things, doing so may require a great deal of Keeper preparation and familiarity with the applicable show(s). The basic plot and the clue tree will not change regardless of the show(s) that Shelly is obsessed with, but some of the color and fluff will. In

THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND



The Night Season Handout #2—Robert Horn's Suicide Note

THE NIGHT SEASON

particular, you will want to replace the knife with a symbolic weapon of your focus television show, and the City over which Gates lords things in the Dreamlands should be adjusted to be a replica of a setting from your focus show (ship, base, what have you).

Once the investigators get to Anchorage, and after they first encounter Shelly, they will begin a decaying orbit into her twisted version of reality. At that point, you should begin to have things and people that they encounter remind them of whatever her focus show(s) is or are. Have people that they meet remind them of actors from the show(s). If you can stomach it, have them end up at a table next to one of the actors, in Alaska on a vacation. Start dropping catchphrases from the show(s) into their interactions with NPCs.

For example, a state welfare agent might look like a therapist character; a police officer sound and act like a head of security character; an officious bureaucrat might look and sound like a pain in the ass command rank officer; the barista at the coffeehouse might look like a bartender character, and actors might be in town at a restaurant or hotel lobby in connection with a dramatic reading or convention. This tactic can be particularly effective if, before they met Shelly, these people were already interviewed by the investigators and looked quite different, which might provoke minor SAN losses if particularly implausible.

A lot of the fun of the scenario lies in the placement of “Easter eggs”, including in places where they were not previously. Minor SAN losses (0/1D3) should be imposed when, for example, the Celtic looking, redheaded school counselor they met before meeting Shelly, now looks Greek and shows a lot of cleavage the day after they meet Shelly—and everyone thinks that the investigators are nuts for suggesting there has been any change. This is particularly true when they realize that reality has shifted to have this change have always been the case, despite their contrary memories.

Finally, there may come a point in time where Shelly becomes angry at or afraid of either the investigators, or someone else (such as Matt Walter, her mother’s boyfriend). This is referred to throughout as getting on Shelly’s “bad side.” When this happens, her daydreams and obsessions need to become downright, overtly intrusive onto reality. Really ramp things up to a near constant bombardment level at this point, and apply minor SAN losses liberally. More details on suggested set pieces for people or groups on Shelly’s “bad side” appear in a later section.

INTERPRETING THE SUICIDE NOTE

Aspects of the suicide note will only become apparent to the investigators if they are familiar with the Dreamlands (successful Dream Lore check) or engage in appropriate Dream Lore research. (Recall that base Dream Lore is ½ of Cthulhu Mythos). Alternatively, if they are familiar with the Dreamlands based on having adventured there previously, or show the note to someone who is, they may be able get some of the references in the note off of their own recollections.

Among the more basic Dreamlands references in the suicide note are:

- ✖ The 700 steps down to the Gates of Deeper Slumber, which dreamers pass through to reach the Dreamlands;
- ✖ A drawing of a woodland setting inhabited by feral creatures (the Enchanted Wood that lies just beyond the Gates);
- ✖ A black galley (which are said to be manned by the loathsome Men from Leng);
- ✖ References to the great dream city of Celephais, which depict a castle in the clouds, and is apparently not where the princess lives.

References to “Horn and Ivory” at the gates of sleep are literary references, with true dreams coming from the gate of horn, and false, deceiving dreams coming from the gate of ivory. (A simple Internet search with those terms discloses this; the reference originated in the *Odyssey*). Of course, as the investigators will learn, they have a double meaning here. “The Night Season” is likewise (a simple Internet search discloses) a literary reference to dreams, courtesy of Dickens. Although here, there is a double meaning as well, as reflected by the musing note about the number of episodes and season finale.

Psychoanalysis of the suicide note suggests someone in the grips of a manic episode as well as (perhaps no surprise) someone feeling tremendous guilt for something that they did.

Perhaps the critical references, however, as the players will learn, are the references to television in general and science fiction television in particular. Although Robert’s parents have seen the suicide note, his friends from high school and school officials have not, and the science fiction television references may provoke a response from them.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH ABOUT ROBERT HORN

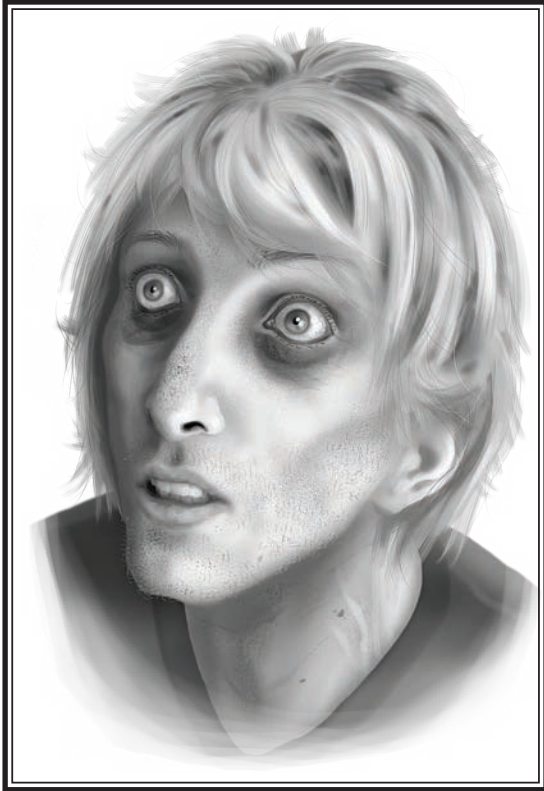
INTERVIEWS, FRIENDS AND PARENTS

Robert’s parents, John and Maggie, now live in a middle-class, single family home in a neighborhood in south Anchorage. Anchorage, Alaska is a modern, cosmopolitan port city with an area population of about 350,000 people, a downtown skyscraper district, and a maritime climate. There is nothing special about the locale, and if you wish, move the scenario to another city. Robert’s parents told everything that they know to the police, and can shed little additional light on matters through an interview, but they do still have a box of Robert’s things (see below).

Interview, Brittany Long and Cassidy Fitzpatrick
Brittany Long has since married and moved to Seattle. She now works as a secretary and goes by the surname Pitko. Robert’s parents have her address and phone number, and she will agree to a brief interview with investigators working on their

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behalf. Cassidy Fitzpatrick, Robert's best male friend from high school, still lives in town, working two weeks on, two weeks off on the North Slope oil fields, and Horn's parents have his cell phone number. These two exemplify what high school friends of Robert's might know about his background, breakdown and suicide, plus a little more.



Robert Horn

Robert was a tough guy jock and a barely average student. He partied on the weekends, socialized with similar youths, and generally treated Brittany well. He drank alcohol and smoked pot, but was not particularly violent. He did get into a couple of minor scrapes with the law, mostly as a result of minor bullying and pranks. He would not usually be the instigator of pranks, but he and his jock friends would sometimes dare one another or bet with one another about who could do something cruel, and he would sometimes play along. He would particularly take bets and dares that involved humiliating nerds; he often talked down to people with nerdy interests. He often told Brittany later that he felt bad about doing these kinds of things, but didn't want to look weak to his "friends."

Both Brittany and Cassidy think that Robert did something on a dare the weekend before he dumped Brittany, but aren't sure exactly what. They just know that "Bobby" was a nervous wreck at school the next Monday morning. He complained that he couldn't sleep. He broke up with Brittany and actually started crying, which he never did, and then quit coming to school. He ignored Brittany's calls for a few days, and she gave up trying to call. The next thing that anyone knew, Robert had killed himself.

Brittany had gone steady with Robert from sophomore year on. She is reluctant to discuss this, but if specifically asked, she admits that she was sexually active with Robert and while she used birth control, they did not use condoms. If the subject comes up, she will volunteer that any purchased condoms must not have been for her, and maybe that's what he was feeling so guilty about.

Showing His Friends the Suicide Note, Or Bringing Up Science Fiction Television

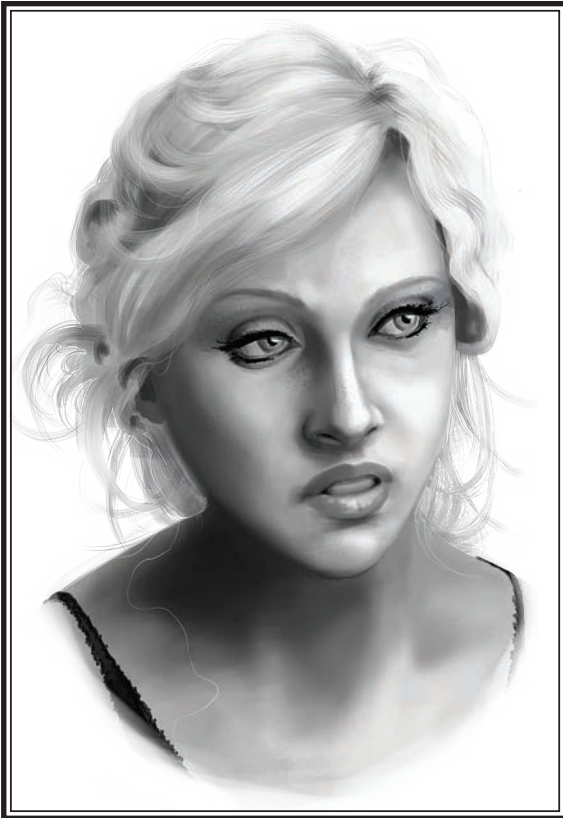
Brittany or Cassidy will, if the subject of science fiction television shows comes up, remember that there was this weird girl in high school who was completely obsessed with those kinds of shows. She was extremely odd, bordering on not normal, although you could talk to her, "as long as you wanted to talk about television shows like that." They don't remember her name, but the guys would tease her in the hallway because she "was very well developed, even though she was totally spacey and weird." They would often dare each other to ask her for a date, as a cruel sort of joke. This girl lived somewhere near Robert; they remember that she took the same bus to school as he did.

Either Brittany or any of the school officials can refer the investigators to a high school yearbook. A brief perusal leads to an obvious candidate for the name of the female student: Gates Michelle "Shelly" Ivory. She is depicted in her yearbook photo in a scanty, cleavage bearing, science fiction television show uniform. She is a very odd looking girl: very well endowed and shapely (think Megan Fox or Scarlett Johansson), with a great deal of cleavage on display; but small, having facial structure oddities and a generally spacey, faraway look. A



Cassidy Fitzpatrick

THE NIGHT SEASON



"Shelly" Ivory

Medicine roll suggests some sort of mild birth defect, but fails to identify any specific one. A couple of other photos in the yearbook depict her, and she likewise appears in these as a very short, but very well endowed, young woman making poor eye contact with the camera.

Strangely (Spot Hidden or looking specifically for the pattern), Shelly is always at the center of any group photograph she is in.

INTERVIEWS, SCHOOL OFFICIALS

Interview, Phillip Zentkowski

Assistant Principal Zentkowski is still at the high school, and can confirm that Robert was a minor disciplinary problem, and that he occasionally got into scrapes because he and the members of the football team often dared each other to do things like tie a nerd to a flagpole, or pull the fire alarm. He remembers seeing Robert crying in the hallway one Monday morning


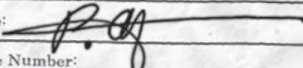
two weeks before his suicide, and referred him to the school psychologist, Brigid Haney.

If the investigators have a signed waiver from Robert's parents, they can look at his school records. (A waiver is easy to obtain, as they are fully cooperative with the investigation). There is one additional matter in his disciplinary file, an incident that occurred 3 months before his suicide, summarized as *The Night Season, Investigator Handout #3*.

Initial Interview, Brigid Haney, School Psychologist

The first time that they meet Ms. Haney (still on duty at the school), portray her as a thin, angular featured, somewhat prudish and stiff woman in her late 40s, with curly red hair and thick glasses. She does not particularly remember Robert Horn other than what her files reflect, and that he committed suicide after stopping coming to school. She does not remember the bra snapping incident, but does not deny that it happened either. She is frosty, grudgingly semi-cooperative, and constantly defers to whatever her records say, unless and until they bring up science fiction television (or Shelly Ivory by name), or show her the suicide note.

The Night Season Handout #3—From Robert Horn's School Disciplinary File

↑ Insert Fax This Way Do not write on back		Do not send cover sheets Do not send multiple sheets at one time		↑	458978342
 Alaska State Department of Education RECORD OF DISCIPLINARY ACTION FORM FAX: completed form to (907) 555-0199					
STUDENT NAME Robert Horn			GENDER Male		
STATEMENT MADE BY Bridget Haney	STATUS Counselor	TYPE OF STATEMENT Inapp. Conduct			
STATEMENT					
<p><i>This afternoon, while in the main corridor I witnessed Robert Horn snap the bra strap of a fellow student, Shelly. While the girl did not wish to report the incident I believe it is a violation of school policy & disciplinary action is warranted.</i></p>					
DISCIPLINARY ACTION ADMINISTERED					
<p><i>One-day Suspension Issued</i></p>					
Authorized Party: P. Zentkowski (A.P.)			Signature: 		
Date:			Telephone Number:		

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Showing School Officials The Suicide Note, Or Bringing Up Science Fiction Television (or Mentioning Shelly Ivory by Name)

Any of these tactics provokes a noticeable start from either of the school officials. Regardless of which one is first involved, they call in the other, have a hushed conversation with the investigators waiting out in the hall, and then tell them that they cannot discuss the matter further as it would involve discussing confidential matters affecting a juvenile. They offer that they would have to get the consent of the student's parent or guardian, or the student herself (they use the feminine pronoun), and they doubt that they could do that. They will not give out names or contact information for this student, as that is confidential. However, the investigators might wish to look at the applicable yearbook. They look decidedly uneasy if Shelly Ivory is mentioned by name, and do not want to talk about her at all by name.

The next time that the investigators encounter either Zentkowski or Haney, they resemble appropriate characters from whichever television show(s) Shelly is obsessed with, which should provoke SAN losses. Further SAN losses should be applied when every picture or record that they can find reveals that Zentkowski or Haney always have appeared like they now do, except to the investigators' own memories.

WHAT THE POLICE FAILED TO GRASP DURING THEIR INITIAL INVESTIGATION

The Drug Store Receipt And Things From Robert's Room

Robert's parents kept a box of things belonging to their son. The police collected all of this stuff from Robert's room, and then returned it once the coroner determined that it was a suicide. The box includes an old VHS tape with recorded television shows, and a drug store receipt. Both of these date from three weeks from before his suicide (a few days before his breakdown). The VHS tape holds recordings of some programs airing on local TV, complete with commercials and news bumpers (enabling it to be dated easily upon viewing). The drug store receipt is for a box of condoms, an important clue when talking to Brittany Long. No condoms were found in Robert's room.

The recorded television shows are of an obscure 1970s science fiction television show called *The City in the Clouds* (if you are using it), or of whatever science fiction television show(s) is the center of Shelly's world.

A cast photo of several of the actors can be found online. They are a number of stock character actors from that era, and chiefly include Christian Lehmann as Captain Christian

THE NIGHT SEASON, INVESTIGATOR HANDOUT #4-BACKGROUND AND SYNOPSIS OF "THE CITY IN THE CLOUDS"

The City in the Clouds was a Mexican-produced, English language science fiction television program. It was filmed in 1977 and aired in limited syndication in the U.S. in 1978. Only one season, consisting of 16 episodes, was produced. The series had a very low budget, and production values on a par with especially cheap episodes of the original *Star Trek* or *Lost in Space*. The main set was a borrowed church, with matte painting in the background to create an illusion of being in the sky.

The series was a joint project between sixteen independent science fiction authors, each of whom wrote an episode in round robin format. It blended episodic television with ongoing plot themes, along with a strong dose of telenovella style, bodice-ripping, soap opera romance stories. It aired occasionally in syndication up through the late 1990s, but has not aired in the U.S. since. It has never been commercially available, due to the inability of the sixteen authors to agree on its release. Bootleg recordings are available on the black market, but efforts to post it on file-sharing sites have been the subject of vigorous take down actions.

Plot-wise, the show was centered on (and rarely left, due to budget concerns) the eponymous City in the Clouds. The City was a port of call and trading post, set above a forest moon that was off limits to off-worlders. Several different cultures came together in the City, engaged in skullduggery, fought duels, and romanced one another. The City was overseen by the Queen in

the Clouds, played by a voluptuous former centerfold model. The Queen dressed provocatively, and was wooed by alliance-seeking members of all the factions and humanoid races that frequented the City. The Queen, however, was in love with the dashing and athletic Christian, the captain of her Cloud Guards. Theirs was a furtive, politically impossible, star-crossed romance, and Christian gives his life for his Queen in the last episode.

The Cloud Guards fought with swords (indeed, bladed weapons were carried by just about everyone, and swordfights were a frequent occurrence on the show), and wore medieval green livery. A running joke throughout the series concerned the ineptness and short lifespan of any Cloud Guard who was more than anything than an extra in the background.

The alien races trading and inveigling at the City included the warlike, honor bound Zeplarks; the vaguely reptilian, sneaky, mercantile Slithliks; the dwarfish Lippits (played by short actresses, regardless of the gender of the character) and the inscrutable, pallid, seven foot tall, genderless Gaunnts, who are slowly laying the groundwork for an invasion and conquest of the City. Zeplarks are quick to commit to suicide with long, nasty artistic knives if their honor is stained, and in several episodes the Queen must talk one down off the proverbial ledge over a misunderstanding.

Notwithstanding all of this, the series has a cult following online, and is now viewed as being ahead of its time.

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Cast Photo from “The City in the Clouds”

of the Guard; Nathaniel Wainthrop as Hislik, leader of the Slithliks; Jeffrey Reef as Grark, leader of the Zeplarks; Janet McCandlas as Lilla, head of the Lipputs; and Mobius, head of the Gauntts.

Grark, as pictured, is wielding the ubiquitous Zeplark Honor Knife, a weird, ornate, and very distinctive artistic knife.

There is nothing to be gained by running down the writers, actors or producers of the show, with one exception. No one—literally no one—that the investigators can find, through no amount of digging—honestly has any idea who the actor who played Mobius is. He refused to be credited, other than as “Mobius”. If they dig hard enough, they can find out that he was personable on set, but would not divulge his name. He insisted on being paid in cash, and did his own makeup and costuming. He was last seen at the wrap party (which he attended in costume), and left no forwarding contact information. Speculation runs rampant online about who he was.

The Knife

The police offered the knife back to Robert’s family when their investigation concluded, and although they thought better of it, they took it in case it might be needed later in conjunction with their ongoing belief that Robert’s death was suspicious. It is in the box with the rest of the belongings from Robert’s room. It is an odd, artistic looking, 18” long weapon, resembling something that a high end fantasy knife maker might have made.

With a Library Use roll, or consultation with a knowl-

edgeable science fiction television nerd (including Matt Walter), the investigators will be able to identify the knife as based on an obscure artifact from a television show. If you are using *City in the Clouds*, this is an Honor Knife, carried by all Zeplarks. These sources also reveal that in the show, it is brought to a warrior by an eldest son or close friend when they can no longer face their enemies, or must expunge some deep shame, to “do the right thing”. It also matches the knife in the easily found *City in the Clouds* cast photo.

The investigators will be unable to trace the knife’s manufacturing origin. (It was wished into existence by Gates; it displays no manufacturing marks and, at the time of the suicide, no one was selling such things commercially). Matt Walter will be aware of this immediately if told about the year of its possible manufacture. Furthermore, it will appear to a knowledgeable eye to have been expertly forged, and is not a mass-produced replica. (If you are using some other show, substitute some recognizable weapon to that show that one could stab or cut oneself with).

FINDING SHELLY AND INTERVIEW, SHELLY’S MOTHER

Robert’s parents, once given the name Shelly Ivory, know exactly where to find her: Shelly and her mother, Pamela, lived in the other half of the duplex where they lived at the time Robert committed suicide. They have since moved to an upper middle class neighborhood, but their address is public.

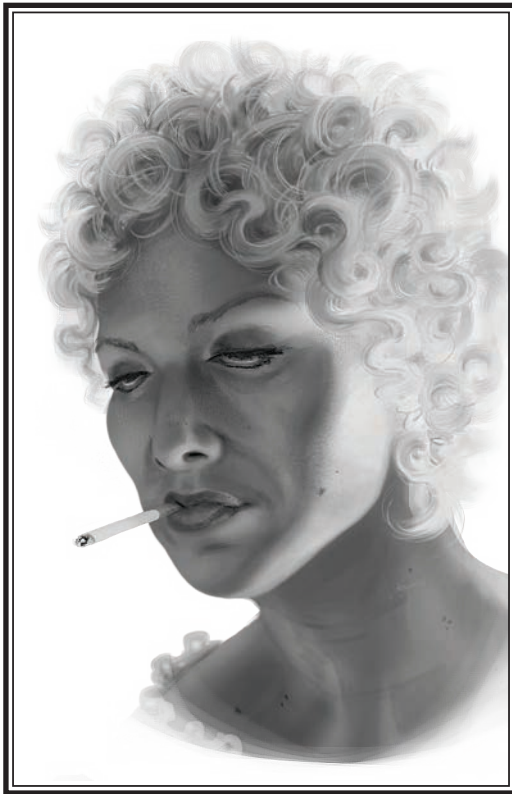
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A simple directory search for Pamela Ivory finds their current address.

They did not socialize much, but Robert's parents remember them. Shelly was "odd—not slow exactly, but very spacey." She was also "very curvy" and completely obsessed with science fiction television shows. She often wore costumes from various shows around the neighborhood. You could have a conversation with her, although she babbled a lot about science fiction television shows. Pamela, the mother, smoked outside a lot on the stoop, and frequently came home late at night drunk. There was no father around. They were not close friends with the Ivories; they think Pamela worked at a series of bars back in the day.

Pamela Ivory is not going to win any awards for anything any time soon. She is 48 years old and has the look of an aging barfly: pot belly on a thin frame, fake blonde perm, constantly smoking, and the sallow skin tone associated with three decades of regular smoking, drinking and recreational drug use. She appears as though she might have been quite attractive once, when much younger.

Pamela is chatty but crass, acerbic and insulting. She is very reluctant to let strangers come into her nice house (nicer



Pamela Ivory

than her income level would seem to permit). She is employed as a bartender at a local strip club, meaning that she is usually absent on weekends and evenings and present during the day. If questioned about how she can afford such a place on her earnings, she changes the subject and noticeably gets uncomfortable. Research into public records fails to reveal that there was ever a mortgage for the property; it is simply deeded to her from "Mobius, LLC" several years ago.

Pamela is not much of a mother, either. She is Shelly's legal guardian, as Shelly is legally incompetent and on permanent mental-health related disability. She spends the money for Shelly's care as she sees fit. As long as Shelly is clean and fed, the occasional welfare worker inspection is satisfied, since they have long since concluded Shelly's condition cannot be improved. And as long as Shelly has enough TV and DVDs to watch, Shelly is happy. This leaves plenty of Shelly's caretaking money for booze and cigarettes. She surfs the web a lot, as does Shelly (they chat on genre boards as "Gates4ever1" and "Gates4ever2", respectively).

Although Pamela is chatty, meaningful interviews attempted to be had with Pamela in person are initially refused. Persuade rolls, Fast Talk rolls, bluffs involving money (paid interviews regarding science fiction fandom), ruses involving the investigators being involved in welfare checks related to Pamela's continuing ability to receive disability payments on behalf of Shelly, or similar tricks, result in an appointment for later the same day. In the interval, Pamela cleans up the house and airs it out from the marijuana smell as best she can. She is then rather indifferent to the whole interview process, and will answer most questions in a bored tone of voice, as long as they do not sound like they will lead to trouble for her or Shelly. If they do, she wants the investigators out of the house, and knows enough when to shut up and call a lawyer for advice.

Shelly does not answer the door or the phone, or go out, when her mother is not home, and she calls 911 if there is an intrusion. She will not call the police, however, if Matt Walter is accompanying the investigators. Shelly only occasionally goes out with her mother to the comic book store owned by Matt Walter, to the grocery store, or to the park.

Pamela (and by extension, Shelly) often attend science fiction genre conventions, both locally and worldwide. She has an extensive collection of science fiction television paraphernalia, from signed photos on the wall to props to costumes to wear at these conventions. Money for these things magically appears as needed, when needed, in her pocket. Shelly may peek out of her room during an interview with Pamela, but does not join in any conversations involving her mother.

Pamela is very protective of Shelly (at least superficially) and dismisses open investigator efforts at interviewing Shelly as "pointless." She uses insensitive and inaccurate terms to describe Shelly's mental capacity ("talking to her is pointless, she's slow"), even in Shelly's presence, and insists that talking to Shelly about anything is a waste of time. Questions about Shelly's father are ducked; she actually has no idea who he might be.

There is a latch and padlock visibly installed on the outside of Shelly's bedroom door. It is open during the day; Pamela latches and locks it whenever Pamela leaves for work, or at night when Shelly is sleeping. This would be seen as abusive by the court system and, if reported, might result in a visit from a social worker. If forced to take it down, Pamela will immediately put it back up, because she instinctively, semi-consciously, fears what would happen if someone got into Shelly's room at night. Pamela justifies the padlock in terms of needing to keep Shelly from wandering, but this

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story does not add up: Shelly both leaves the house with Pamela (under loose supervision) and has Internet access in her room. Also, Shelly's windows are open to the outside.

Pamela does remember the Horn family, and does remember that Robert killed himself when they lived next door. (These questions will puzzle her). Pamela will admit that Shelly has had some problems with predatory boys over the years, but "I do my best to fend them off, because, well... Shelly's not all there, you know?"

If specifically asked if Robert Horn ever displayed any inappropriate interest in Shelly, she denies it rather insistently, but a Psychology roll might detect that she is surprised and discomfited by the question.

The Photograph of the 1980 Science Fiction Convention

Any lengthy interview with Pamela will require her to open her patio door and stand in its doorway for a semi-distracted cigarette break. This might allow the investigators to take a quick, surreptitious snoop around the living room. They might also do the same if they get into the house at a time when Pamela is not at home, of course.

Although there are a lot of figurines, posters, signed cast photos, and the like adorning the living room, there are very few pictures of Pamela, and none whatsoever of Shelly, in the house. (Her tendency to migrate to the center of any photographs taken of her is disturbing to her mother). Looking around for them, though, reveals *The Night Season, Investigator Handout #5*.

THE NIGHT SEASON, INVESTIGATOR HANDOUT #5-A FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH ON PAMELA IVORY'S WALL



This is a color photograph of a much younger and actually rather attractive version of Pamela, apparently in a hotel room. She is dressed in a blue Star Trek (original series) mini skirt costume (essentially, in costume as Yeoman Rand). She is accompanied by a pack of male characters from a variety of science fiction television shows and movies, all pre-1980, in full costume (including makeup). Pamela looks drunk and is the only female in the picture.

The picture is most noteworthy for what Pamela is holding: a faceted, red colored glass (?) jug, decorated with a wide variety of fantastic creatures: unicorns, griffins, dragons and other less recognizable creatures.

The photograph is quite striking, even haunting; there is something oddly alluring about Pamela. Pamela is at the center of the picture.



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Allow a Dream Lore or Cthulhu Mythos roll, whichever is higher, when studying the photograph. Success indicates that the jug that Pamela is drinking from resembles a flagon of the fabled Moonwine, said to be trafficked by the loathsome Men of Leng aboard their sinister black galleys, and to be made of the stuff of dreams itself...

A notation on the back of the photo reads "me and the guys, Columbus, 6/12/1980."

Shelly's birthday, public records might disclose, is 4/15/1981, a little short of a full gestation period later.

Appropriate Cthulhu Mythos research into Moonwine may reveal rumors of a few known instances where especially powerful dreamers, or the use of rare magic, have succeeded in bringing things from the Dreamlands into the waking world. Flagon of Moonwine are among the most common targets of such activity, since Moonwine can allow a powerful enough dreamer or wizards (if used carefully) to shape the waking world with their subconscious. Or, it can turn their lives into living nightmares. Instances of such incursions have been reported (depending on tome date and coverage) in Kentucky circa 1925; again in Kentucky circa 1845; and in French Guyana circa 1942.

WHAT SHELLY'S MOTHER DOESN'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT/MEDICAL RECORDS & COURT RECORDS

The Moonwine flagon, or Cthulhu Mythos knowledge in general: Bringing these topics up with Pamela provokes a hostile reaction. She clams up, orders the investigators out of either her house or the bar (if they are questioning her at work), and runs home and locks the door if either of these topics comes up. She is not involved in Mythos activity any longer (and has not been since she was a teen), but knows enough. She suspects that her consumption of Moonwine and other Mythos tainted substances has something to do with the way that her daughter is, and knows that her daughter has odd, subconscious reality twisting powers of some sort. She also half suspects that Robert Horn ran afoul of her daughter, and thinks that he molested her (for reasons elaborated on below), but is not going to get involved in any investigation of old business like that.

And truth be told, Pamela is afraid of Shelly, with good reason. If things get really out of control, it is possible that Pamela will freak out, start to tell the investigators everything that she knows, and incur Shelly's wrath. This will, in turn, lead to a pack of robots or aliens from some science fiction television program eliminating her publicly, or a similar genre-reflecting death, at an opportune moment.

"You don't get it. I don't really even like all that sci-fi occult crap any more. That was something the guys liked in high school, and I looked good in the miniskirts and low cut tops. But I have to like it. I don't know what'll happen if I don't [cries and shakes]! I've got to keep her CALM!"—Pamela Ivory, last words after she panics and starts to spill her guts to the investigators.

Court Records

Figuring out that Shelly's full name is Gates Michelle Ivory (initials "G.M.I.") and having her approximate date of birth enables some potential illegal shenanigans at the Anchorage courthouse. Records of this age will be on microfiche in the courthouse basement, and they are sealed because they pertain to a juvenile. Getting at this information will be a challenge, but some basic information can be gotten off of the public computer information terminal. The basic information is the existence of an indexed record in a court matter called *In re G.M.I.*, a juvenile, filed about three months after Robert Horn's suicide, and a reference to a type of case (by reference to a statute number) that tells the investigators (Law roll or appropriate research) what kind of case that it likely was: involuntary hygiene and sterilization. The timing should appropriately make the investigators wonder as to why it was brought.

Medical Records

Shortly after the closing date of the court file (which was expedited), there are consistent medical records at a local hospital. They are likewise in hard copy archive only, and should prove challenging to retrieve, but they are there. Optionally, a copy of these ancient (abortion and tubal ligation) records might be in some storage totes at Pamela's duplex. If the investigators go to the hospital looking for these very traumatic and emotional records, a situation that Shelly still dwells on occasionally, the hospital should be populated by a grotesquerie of medical personnel from a wide variety of genre television shows, to the point where minor SAN losses should be on the table.

INTERVIEW, MATT WALTER (SHELLY'S MOTHER'S BOYFRIEND)

Surveillance efforts, or talking to the neighbors, should lead to Matt Walter, Pamela's current boyfriend. Matt manages a large local comic book store. He is not athletic, nor is he particularly attractive or concerned with personal style. He is reasonably intelligent but introverted, and his relationship with Pamela is on again/off again. He has an apartment, but spends many evenings when Pamela is not working with her, at her place. They fight about Pamela's insistence on going to "her place", because Matt is thoroughly creeped out by Shelly. Matt is also a knowledgeable science fiction geek, and is the person that the investigators are most likely to find if they go looking for local experts or knife sources, and/or anyone in the fanboy community who knows Pamela.

Matt will be reasonably cooperative with investigators who are open that they are conducting an investigation. He will ask the investigators logical questions back that are suggested by their line of inquiry. If their questioning suggests it, he will even muse aloud about the correct line of inquiry: do they think that this Robert Horn kid molested Shelly and that he was under some kind of psychological pressure because of it? Shelly likes boys and is impulsive, Matt will volunteer, so that is entirely possible.

Matt has been dating Pamela on and off for years, and



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is aware that Shelly was sterilized many years ago. He is uncomfortable talking about Shelly. Shelly's not "slow" exactly, despite what her mother says, but she is obsessive, more than a little weird, and "curvy" and oddly alluring as well. Matt knows that Pamela has had trouble with men harassing Shelly before. Shelly is also interested in men, and (he might reveal) Shelly has gotten flirtatious with him before. (He is quick to deny any wrongdoing in this regard).

Matt is desperate for adventure, and it will not be too difficult to talk him into arranging a direct interview with Shelly at some time when her mother is not around. He volunteers to come up with some kind of a story and play dumb if Pamela gets mad at him, as long as he feels like he is being included in some kind of grand scheme and that no one will be hurt. (Convincing him to cooperate in such shenanigans will probably require a convincing display of appropriate law enforcement credentials).

Matt is quite knowledgeable about geek culture matters, and will be able to both identify any suicide blade and realize

that such things were not widely available at the time. He will speculate that it is an actual set prop (as distinct from having been dreamed into existence).

If asked whether there is anything dangerous or scary about Shelly or her mother, Matt may mention that he has been warned never to go into Shelly's room when Shelly is sleeping. Her mother is very paranoid about this, and has even installed a padlock on the outside of Shelly's door, which she is very fastidious about locking at night, or when she leaves the house.

INTERVIEW, GATES "SHELLY" IVORY

Should the investigators manage to wrangle a direct interaction with Shelly, they should come away quite uneasy.

Shelly is a study in contradictions. She is mentally average in many regards, but looks and acts quite odd. She is obsessed with science fiction television, to the point of not being able to

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Matt Walter

fully care for herself. This is not to say that she is hopeless to interact with, or that one cannot communicate with her; treat most conversations with her as ones with an inappropriately flirtatious, coquettish young teenager (even though she is a 30ish year old woman), who makes very poor eye contact and only wants to talk about science fiction television. Any other topic of conversation is both transient and a chore, and she tends to “role-play” conversations as though she were a fictional character talking to another character.

There is something eldritch and alluring about Shelly, despite her evident oddity. She is very curvy, dresses provocatively (a lot of cleavage and tight fitting clothes, often genre television costumes) and regardless, she weirdly captivates one’s attention. When she is in the room and wanting to interact with you, it requires a POW x5 check to change one’s focus. Make this roll secretly, and if it fails, simply impress on the investigators that there is something odd, fascinating, and almost hypnotic about her, and that they change their minds and keep talking to her about what she wants to talk about. This is not natural, and the investigators should not be misled into thinking otherwise. Others witnessing the conversation can clearly observe their companions acting like they were fascinated and talking to an uncomfortably attractive member of whatever gender they might be interested in.

Shelly will not usefully answer any questions from ordinary interrogation techniques, except as noted below. She really wants to talk about genre television, “in character”. She warms up, smiles and is friendly to anyone doing a reasonably good job of playing along, and may get inappropriately flirty with any such investigators.

Asking any pointed questions about what happened to

Robert Horn, if he ever bothered her, if she or her mother did something to him, or making any kind of negative comment about her or her favorite television show, is like flipping a switch. So is displaying any knowledge at all about the Dreamlands. She announces, in an inappropriately loud voice, that she does not like you any longer, and that you’d better watch out. Such people are permanently on Shelly’s (waking world, at least) “bad side” and are in potential danger from sudden attacks by marauding science fiction villains, or science fiction inspired accidents.

A Psychoanalysis roll (which requires time), however, or excellent roleplaying, might get the investigators some pertinent information, primarily from reading between the lines.

- ✧ Talking to Shelly about any topic in terms of a discussion about genre television, or trying to draw an analogy to genre television, can be very illuminating. For example, talking about doomed romantic relationships or lingering sexual subtext might get her to analogize. Shelly might say something like: “It’s against protocol for officers like me to fraternize with enlisted personnel, at least while on duty. But when I’m off duty, the captain doesn’t try to tell me what I can and can’t do.”
- ✧ Truly excellent roleplaying might get Shelly to make an allusion to the City in the Clouds, a realm in the clouds where she is Queen and has a handsome prince who loves her and would die for her. She knows every detail about this show and loves to talk about it. If she gets on this topic, she will talk and talk about any details the investigators wish about how the City in the Clouds operates. She will not discuss how to get there; “that’s a secret and it’s only for off duty time.” This response, itself, is a clue, however.
- ✧ She gets very nervous and starts to tic and flap her hands if asked whether anyone else plays with her in the City in the Clouds, or if Robert Horn has ever been there. (The investigators learn what they need to know, as a result, but end up on Shelly’s “bad side”, with consequences described below).
- ✧ Indeed, talking to Shelly about things by analogy to genre television will leave a trained psychiatrist or psychotherapist very puzzled, since during these conversations she seems to be functioning at a much higher intellectual level than at any other time. She displays remarkable insight into literary tropes and characterization subtleties. When roleplaying Shelly, her mannerisms and level of sophistication should swing wildly at the drop of a hat.
- ✧ She loves to talk about alternate timelines, virtual realities, adventures where the actors are playing within a computer program, and other scenarios where the characters are, to some extent, able to shape their own surroundings. She is very sophisticated when talking about such matters.

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EXAMPLES OF HOW TO PUNISH PEOPLE ON SHELLY'S "BAD SIDE"

- ✘ A large, muscular, bearded, bumpy-headed humanoid comes out of nowhere and takes a swing at the investigator with a crescent shaped, two-handed bladed weapon. 80% chance to hit, 1D8 + 1D4 db damage, can impale. This happens suddenly; he materializes out of nowhere, takes one swing, and then is just gone. If the strike kills the victim, the weapon is left behind in the victim. SAN loss 1/1D6 for any witnesses.
- ✘ A small, young blonde girl, about 18-20 years of age, silences an NPC in view of witnesses (materializing from nowhere, so that the investigators are unlikely to be able to interfere). She again comes out of thin air, and then is just gone. She stabs the offending NPC with a wooden stake, and he crumbles into dust with an audible poof and wind howling sound. The stake and dust pile are left behind. SAN loss 1/1D6 for any witnesses.
- ✘ The offending NPC or PC finds what looks like a clunky, old, silver and black flip phone in his pocket. If they flip it open, a Scottish accented voice says "Energizing" and the person disappears from the planet in a familiar sparkly and buzzy display of special effects. SAN loss 1/1D6 for any witnesses. Where and whether the victim reappears in is in the Keeper's discretion; he may possibly be transported to the black galley in the Dreamlands.
- ✘ The victim is found to have taken 40 lashes from a bizarre, electrified whip, left at the victim's feet.
- ✘ The offender is crushed by a pot of petunias dropped from high orbit.
- ✘ The offender is found rigid, eyes wide staring, with a number of circular burns or sucker marks all over their face. An autopsy reveals that they have been completely drained of salt, and died from shock.
- ✘ With use of The City in the Clouds, they are dressed in the green livery of a City guard, and appear to have been on the losing end of a sword fight. Query how they came by the uniform, and they will have been seen dressed normally shortly before they were killed.

- ✘ Asking about the padlock on her door is the proverbial "sweet spot" for an interrogator. Shelly looks very uncomfortable, and blurts out "My mom doesn't like it when I have boyfriends over. I got into trouble once, and she doesn't want me keeping boyfriends or babies. Once was enough, she says." Shelly shifts into a sad and upset state of mind from here on out, and is easily set off into tics and hand flapping rage by anyone and anything. Her mother's time on this planet becomes very short indeed thereafter, as she winds up on Shelly's "bad side" and is spectacularly eliminated by a daydream made real, probably in front of the investigators at a public place, after panicking and blurting out her own last words about keeping Shelly "calm". (See above). The investigators might end up there as well, depending on how they react to this revelation.
- ✘ Way under Shelly's bed is a thirteen year old, unopened box of condoms, with a price sticker matching the receipt in the box of Robert Horn's things.

Attempting to Contact Shelly Online

Matt Walter knows Shelly's online forum identity (Gate-s4Ever2), and that she frequents numerous science fiction oriented chat rooms. The investigators can easily, if Matt is cooperating with them, find out her forum handle and chat with her online. They can ask Shelly any questions that they can type, although if they are not heavily genre-oriented, she is not likely interested enough in them to bother to answer.

Approaching Shelly physically in her room when she is asleep is a dangerous proposition, and is discussed below.

When Shelly Gets Agitated, Or, Ramping Up The Horror Quotient (Or, What Happened To Matt?)

If Shelly gets agitated at the investigators ("on her bad side"), it is almost certainly going to be because they finagled an interview with her without her mother present. Matt Walter is very likely going to have been involved in this—he doesn't like her (she cramps his style and makes him nervous—and how could she be so captivating?) and she doesn't like him (he divides her mother's attention). At that point, Matt dies horribly and in some genre appropriate way, quickly, as she knows him the best and he is already swept up in her wake of daydream-influenced, subjective reality.

This will take the form of an open assault by a familiar, villainous character from a genre television show, wielding a familiar weapon, on the street or in his comic book shop (generating a major media buzz). The "guy in the suit" will leave the weapon behind and disappear without a trace. The weapon will be impossible to trace, and well made. SAN loss is 1/1d6 for any witnesses. Other horrible ways to die from genre TV might be substituted, depending on your reference frame for Shelly's interests.

In any case, once the investigators are on Shelly's proverbial radar screen and identified as someone that is a threat (i.e., on her "bad side"), things get weird in a major way. The subtle things that you should have been doing when the investigators start sniffing around sensitive areas or important clues (eerie coincidences and reflections of Shelly's obsessions) should get seriously cranked up, to the point where it is obvious that something supernatural is going on.

Even if the investigators manage to avoid being on her "bad side" and completely caught up in her psychic riptide,

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after she becomes aware of them and “part of her world”, they should gradually suffer genre television incursions, noticeably and regularly.

In Shelly’s Room, When She Is Asleep

There is a padlock on Shelly’s bedroom door for a good reason. When she is sleeping, Shelly’s Dreamlands consciousness is able to perceive what her waking world form might (if she were awake). She can, in this case, cause people in her room to get thrust entirely and physically into the Dreamlands (as though they had passed through a Gate of Oneirology) on a POW vs. POW check, checked every minute that they remain in her room. In fact, this happens regardless of whether Shelly is angry or frightened; the investigators might try to back out the way they came, and find themselves walking down the 700 Steps of Deeper Slumber. More details on how this plays out follows in a subsequent section.

Alternatively, some sort of Dreamlands or nightmare beast that is bound in service to her in the Dreamlands might reach out of her closet or from under her bed. Such a creature might grab any intruders, and either slaughter them or haul them physically into the Dreamlands.

NIGHTMARE CREATURE FROM THE CLOSET

STR N/A CON N/A SIZ N/A INT 60 POW 70
DEX N/A (acts on 14) HP 14

Damage bonus: none.

Build: 0

Move: N/A (can reach anywhere in Shelly’s room, or those within line of sight of her open bedroom door)

ATTACKS

Tendril, must win a POW vs. POW check to “hit”, 1D8+3 damage.

Grapple, must win a POW vs. POW check to “hit”, victim is hauled into Shelly’s closet (thereby forcibly, physically transitioning into the Dreamlands).

Armor: 4 points of non-terrene composition. Regenerates 4 points/round.

SAN Loss: 1/1D6

IN THE DREAMLANDS?

The Dreamlands (for those unfamiliar), simply described, are a vast parallel dimension that certain special, psychically powerful people can mentally access in their dreams. Thorough familiarity with the Dreamlands, or prior experience there, is not necessary to run this scenario, as the investigators (even if they end up there) need not be free to move about. Although it is anticipated that they will end up there, the following sections will focus on what the investigators will encounter and what you need to know. If you wish to allow them to run around in the Dreamlands at large, instead of heading to their one specific destination, you would be well advised to familiarize yourself with the larger setting.

The Dreamlands are, generally speaking, a high fantasy realm, with a medieval flavor. Players who find themselves

there are mentally unchanged, but their clothing, equipment and gear shift to a medieval counterpart (guns become swords or bows; clothing shifts to an appropriate medieval counterpart). In this instance, however, they shift into characters appropriate to the show at the center of Shelly’s world.

ARRIVAL IN THE DREAMLANDS, OTHER THAN WITH SHELLY’S ASSISTANCE

If the players are experienced dreamers who knew how to access the Dreamlands before this scenario, things will be different for them if they try to access it during this scenario.

Shelly is incredibly powerful in the Dreamlands, a potential threat of enormous magnitude. She is not known by that name; in the Dreamlands, she is Queen Gates, a mysterious and poorly known figure who (like King Kuranos of Celephais) wished an entire capital into existence in the clouds.

Friendly Dreamlands entities who are asked about a girl named Shelly will not recognize the name, but if asked about an odd girl named Gates, they get noticeably nervous, like some omnipresent and omnipotent being might be listening. (This includes even such powerful entities as Nasht and Kaman-Tha, at their post at the top of the 700 Steps of Deeper Slumber). They warn the investigators in hushed tones not to speak of such things. That woman (they will not mention her by name) is not evil, but incredibly capricious and utterly powerful. If they come to her attention, their dreaming will take on a singular focus. Other dreamers who have come to her attention in the past have disappeared, last seen heading, like moths to a flame, for a particular black galley that patrols the skies over the Enchanted Wood. It anchors sometimes at the edge of the Wood, very near the 700 Steps of Deeper Slumber and just past the gates to the Dreamlands. She is so powerful that dreamers seeking her, or whom she seeks, are drawn to her City like a leaf floating downstream. The black galley has been seen ferrying people to her City on rare occasions, but no one has ever come back that way.

Anyone proceeding down the 700 Steps of Deeper Slumber who have come to Shelly’s attention in any significant way find themselves inexorably drawn to a certain black galley, floating in the sky at the edge of the Enchanted Wood, right outside of the terminus of the Seven Hundred Steps. The galley is moored to the gates of dream, specifically the ivory gate from which false and misleading dreams emanate. (If she were able to remember those days well, Pamela might remember that her daughter’s name was suggested to her by the leader of the cult that she was involved with).

Furthermore, such people can only leave the Dreamlands through normal means either with Queen Gates’ leave, or a successful POW vs. POW check against her POW of 125. This generally may only be attempted once, although if Shelly is killed in the waking world, her Dreamlands self will be distracted and despondent, lifting this prohibition long enough to escape. This POW vs. POW check should be made in secret, and the dreamer’s effort to escape should be role-played out as they journey for an exit, while being chased by Queen Gates’ servitors. Failure means they are caught and impris-

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oned in the brig of the black galley. Appropriate roleplaying might garner a second POW vs. POW check, with the result dictating whether her servitors catch up to the dreamer prior to successful escape.

TOSSED INTO THE DREAMLANDS BY SHELLY?

Such people are, for starters, physically in the Dreamlands. Death while physically in the Dreamlands is death in every sense.

Any investigator who is cast into the Dreamlands by Shelly (which would include being “beamed away” to an unknown location by an angry Shelly in the waking world) begins in one of two places. If Shelly was especially angry with them (“beamed away”, hauled off by a monster while Shelly was asleep in her bedroom), they end up in the brig of the black galley. Otherwise, they find themselves walking down the last few Steps of Deeper Slumber, and emerging at the gates of dream to see the black galley moored to the gate of ivory.

The Black Galley

Despite the quasi-medieval, high fantasy cast that the Dreamlands usually takes on, and how the Dreamlands denizens might describe it, the black galley does not look like a sailing ship. In particular, it is not the stereotypical Dreamlands black galley crawling with Men from Leng. It is black, but looks like a small, satellite transport from an appropriate sci-fi television show. This can be either one that strikes your fancy, or if Shelly is obsessed with one particular show, one from that

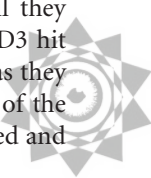
particular show. It just happens to be black.

Regardless, however, there will be a “below decks” area that the investigators will be warned by the pilot not to enter, and an attendant/pilot dressed in whatever sort of uniform one might expect for that sort of transport. His job will be to ferry them to the City, where Queen Gates awaits them.

SHELLY IS ANGRY/THE BRIG

How the brig of the black galley appears is somewhat variable, but it will appear somewhat more like the normal Dreamlands brig of a black Leng galley. Basically, if the investigators have been cast into the brig, their own nightmares and the “default” collective unconscious which shapes the Dreamlands in most cases will dominate.

People condemned to the brig suddenly find themselves there, in the reeking, creaking, rotting, foul smelling wooden bilge of a black-hued sailing galley, chained and in water up to their waists. Occasionally, a loathsome, whip-wielding Moonbeast may look in on them, throw them a survival ration of some rancid and suspicious raw meat, and/or scourge them just for fun. Any person in the brig should be assessed a 1d6 SAN loss and lose 1D6 hit points by the soonest time that they might be discovered, in addition to one lost characteristic point at random. Each day that elapses in the waking world from the time they are condemned to the brig until they are rescued should result in another 1D6 SAN loss, 1D3 hit points loss, and another random characteristic point as they are subjected to the cruel attentions and deprivations of the Moonbeast. Make this experience as graphically detailed and descriptively horrible as your players can stomach.



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Freeing someone from the brig will require them to go into the hatch leading from the black galley, and defeating the jailer Moonbeast. The area beneath decks is much bigger than it ought to be, based on the size of the galley itself.

JAILER MOONBEAST, Eyeless, Tentacled, Toadlike, Loathsome and Slippery

STR 85 CON 65 SIZ 100 INT 80 POW 70
DEX 70 HP 17

Damage bonus: +1D6

Build: 2

Move: 7

ATTACKS

Spear 50% (25/10), 1D10+1+db, can impale

Armor: Firearms do minimum possible damage.

SAN Loss: 0/1D8

SHELLY INVITED THEM, OR THEY GET LOOSE/TRANSPORT TO THE CITY

Assuming they do not find themselves in the Brig, people who manage to physically access the Dreamlands by virtue of Shelly will find themselves descending the last few of the 700 Steps of Deeper Slumber, emerging at the gates of sleep, and see the galley moored right there. You might, if you wish, describe the surroundings (the Enchanted Wood starts there, with its horde of inquisitive zoogs peering out hungrily from the trees as indicated on Horn's suicide note). Efforts to escape or avoid the black galley should be role-played out, but probably ultimately thwarted: the zoogs do not much like Queen Gates and her black galley, and "encourage" people to get on their way with as much pointy-toothed "persuasion" (and harassing attacks in the Enchanted Wood) as necessary. If they head toward the galley, they are herded that way; if they try to go another direction, a lot of zoogs will worry them until they head toward the galley.

It is possible that the investigators will parley with the zoogs, or perhaps even manage to avoid them somehow. This could lead into a more extended foray into the Enchanted Wood in general, and perhaps the Dreamlands lying beyond. Such matters are largely beyond the scope of this scenario, other than to note that the forces of Queen Gates will relentlessly scour the Dreamlands for them. People throughout the Dreamlands desperately do not want to interact with her, for reasons that the zoogs or any other comparatively friendly entity can discuss: she is extremely powerful, completely erratic and quite unpredictable, but leaves people alone as long as her gaze does not settle on them. At the same time, she is not malicious, so no one is interested in challenging her. Moreover, people doubt that she could be successfully challenged: she seems as supreme in her realm as the mighty dreamer King Kuranos is in his capital of Celephais, perhaps more so.

Eventually, investigators attempting to avoid heading to the City will either be run to ground, or somehow find a way

to escape the Dreamlands, but they will have accomplished nothing in terms of the problem of Shelly, other than to gauge how serious it is in the Dreamlands.

ZOOGS, Curious, Carnivorous, Numerous and Quite Unsettled

STR 20 CON 35 SIZ 10 INT 65 POW 55
DEX 100 HP 5

Damage bonus: -1D6

Build: 0

Move: 8

ATTACKS

Bite 30% (15/6), damage 1D4+db

Dart 20% (10/4), damage 1D6+1/2 db, base range 30 feet

Dodge 50% (25/10)

Skills: Climb 60%, Dream Lore 75%, Stealth 70%, Track 50%.

Armor: none

SAN Loss: 0/1D3

Once the investigators board the black galley, the pilot will greet them (by name, if Shelly knows their names) and tell them that Queen Gates wishes to speak with them. He encourages them to sit back and relax. Overpowering the pilot, torturing him, killing him, or similar antisocial acts result in the pilot disappearing, and anyone involved in the misbehavior suddenly finding himself chained in the brig.

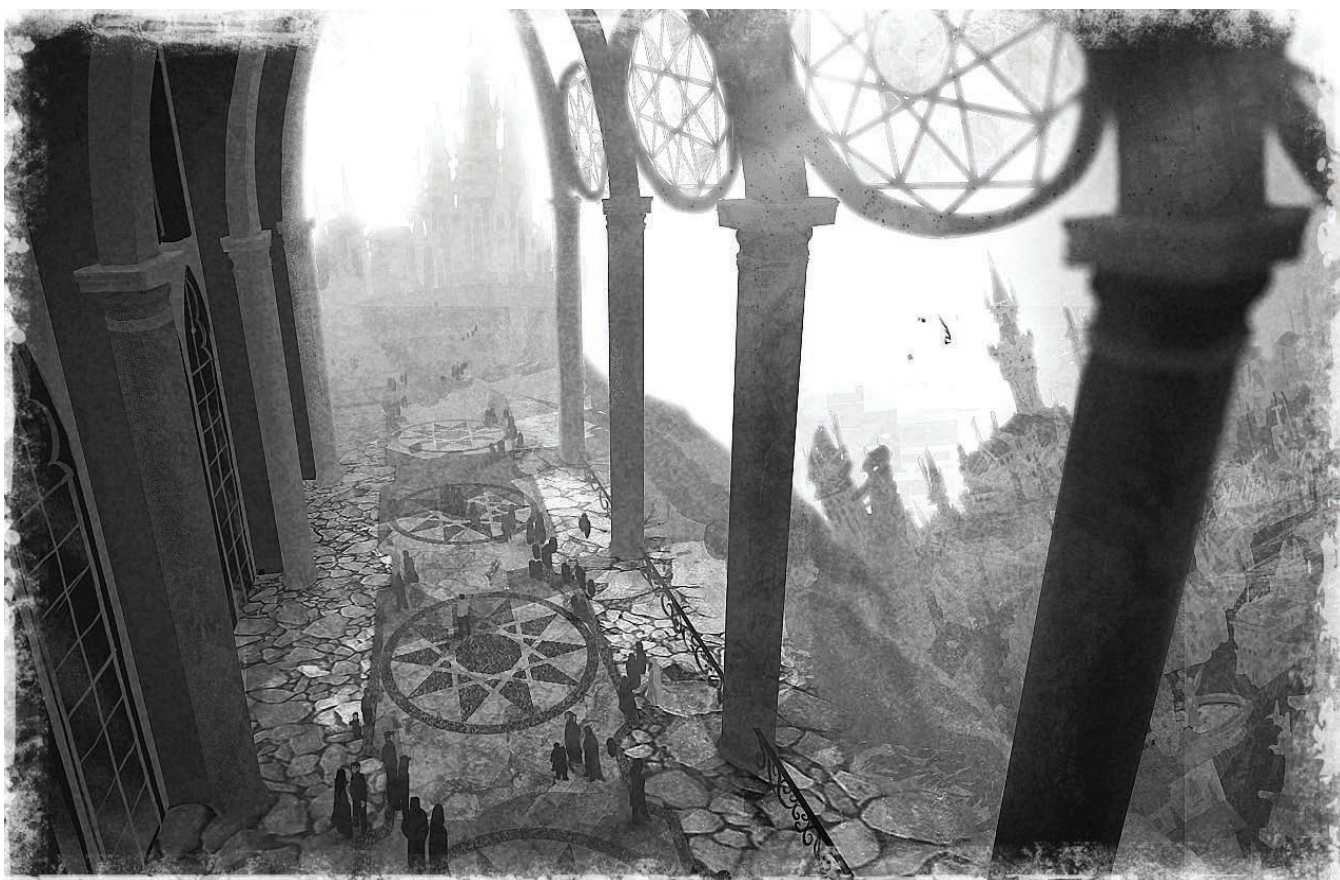
The pilot might engage in some pleasant conversation with well-mannered investigators. He will identify himself as an appropriate character in whichever sci-fi television show he belongs to, and behave appropriately. He is a creature of his own surroundings; he believes that he is on assignment as a liaison to the court of Queen Gates, which he will explain by reference to whatever show he comes from as a pocket dimension, colony moon, candidate for membership, etc. He knows nothing of the Dreamlands as such. He may warn that Queen Gates is rather eccentric and extremely powerful.

THE CITY, OR, "THAT'S NO MOON...."

The City is unlike anything else that might be found in the Dreamlands. What exactly it looks like depends on the reference frame you have been using throughout. If you are using The City in the Clouds, it is a mammoth cloud city hovering over the Enchanted Wood, not far at all from the 700 Steps of Deeper Slumber, looking much like it did in the television series: very cathedral-like, with fantastic scenery in the background. Or it might be an appropriate space ship or space station.

Regardless of its form, unlike the rest of the Dreamlands, it is not a high fantasy, quasi-medieval setting. Anyone and anything from any sci-fi television show that might be found in a "good guy" oriented space station might be found here, all in a giant, cross-show, chaotic mish-mash. Overlooking the City, atop a tall spire, are Queen Gates' chambers. Her security personnel are everywhere in the station, and she is literally aware of everything that goes on. The City is a

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mental construct of hers; the sum total of her obsession and hyper-narrow interests all in one place. The investigators are now surrounded by her fantasy. Leaving the Dreamlands at this point is only by her leave, or subject to the POW vs. POW check described, ante.

Allow the investigators as much time as they like, or as you can stomach, admiring the sights. Apart from the overlay of genre mish-mash, it is Episode 1 of Season 2 of *City in the Clouds*—a new season in the Dreamlands. Captain Christian is, alas, still dead, and Mobius, leader of the Gauntts, his killer, is at large in the City. A manhunt is underway.

Eventually Queen Gates' security personnel will arrive to escort the investigators to the top of the spire. Her security personnel are made up of representatives of "good guy" aliens from every sci-fi television show that you can imagine, all dressed in green livery.

With two exceptions, the various denizens of the City all have the same outlook on things. They have no concept of the Cthulhu Mythos, the Dreamlands, or any similar matters. They each believe that they are from their respective fictional universes, with all that this would entail. They think that the City is some sort of nexus point at a wormhole between their various universes; that Queen Gates is some sort of immortal, beneficent Elder of the Multiverse; and that they are here to learn, trade and generally engage in their respective overarching "good guy" goals. None has anything but the highest praise for her wisdom, beauty and power.

ROBERT HORN IN THE DREAMLANDS

The detached, imprisoned soul of Robert Horn is one exception; he is one of the only two things here that are not strictly products of Shelly's imagination. He is a disgusting sight: emaciated, foul, unwashed, dressed in rags, but unable to die here in the Dreamlands because Shelly will not allow it.

Robert understands quite well that he is in the Dreamlands and that this is a part of them that is under the control of Shelly, a weird girl that he cruelly seduced on a dare. Only here, she's smart and completely in charge of everything. He has sunk into a deep depression, and wanders the halls aimlessly.

Should he encounter someone from the waking world, Robert Horn may well choose to talk to them. Most likely, whatever he has to say will come in a frantic, clutching, insane blurt, punctuated by pleas to intercede on his behalf with Shelly. He has begged her for mercy and to let him go, but she always says that she will only do so when he has earned her love here in the City, and that there is a fat chance of that. Robert is aware that he is dead in the waking world.

Robert will have a secret way to sneak off of the City and from there, out of the Dreamlands. Whatever this is should be genre appropriate: a bypass code to the transportation system (allowing the investigators to return directly back to the waking world once they overpower the guards and technicians); an override code that will allow a shuttle to depart without approval from traffic control; or the stop password for the virtual reality simulation. He will want something in return—revenge against Shelly in the waking world—and



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point out to them that he is the only help that they can expect here.

Employing this option should involve some skulking and skullduggery. Shelly plays “according to Hoyle” (i.e., how things would play out on television), and tries to have her (bumbling) security stop the investigators. Robert can lead them most of the way to the proverbial “escape hatch.” Security guards can have their weapons taken away from them and turned against them, as well (they won’t work on Shelly, though). There should be a chase and a fight, with Robert perhaps falling prey or staying behind to man the controls and serve as a distraction as the investigators escape. He is dead in the waking world, and unless you are feeling really, really evil, his escaped soul will simply dissipate, as opposed to, say, reanimate his skeletal, long-buried remains.

City Security Guard

STR 70 CON 70 SIZ 70 INT 65 POW 65
DEX 70 HP 14

Damage bonus: +1D4

Build: 1

Move: 8

ATTACKS

Fighting (Brawling) 50% (25/10), 1D3 +db

Futuristic Ray Gun, 50% (25/10), damage variable (4D6 stun or 3D6+2 normal), 1/round. Stun setting requires successful CON check vs. 5x damage rolled, or the victim is knocked unconscious for 2D10 minutes; range is 30 yards.

Sword, 50% (25/10), 1D8 +db, can impale.

Dodge 50% (25/10)

Skills: Listen 50%, Spot Hidden 50%, Stealth 50%, Get Fooled By Rudimentary Ruse Despite Nominal Intelligence Level 90%, Charge Recklessly Around Corner Into Lethal Opposing Fire Despite Nominal Intelligence Level 50%.

Armor: 4 points of advanced protective fibers

If the investigators successfully escape using this option, they find themselves back in Shelly’s bedroom in the waking world, and had better act quickly before they are thrown back in to the Dreamlands (if she is sleeping) or her daydreams come to her defense (if she is awake).

The second exception is Mobius. At an appropriately dramatic time as the investigators try to escape, they might encounter him, attempting to escape the same way in the wake of having killed Captain Christian at the end of season 1. Mobius knows exactly who they are, exactly how they got here, and exactly what is going on. He should be both cryptic (teasing and mocking them with his unfathomable levels of knowledge) and phantasmal. Any efforts to grab him, harm him, or physically interact with him pass right through him. He laughs if they ask him who he really is, “the only reality is the illusion, you know.” He has whatever it is you decide that they might need to escape (the launch code, the password, etc.), and will ally himself with the investigators if they help him escape as well. Should they take him up on his offer, he is true to his bargain, only to mysteriously disappear on arrival in the waking world. From Shelly’s television in the waking world, his voice tells them what they probably already know: there is only one sure way to stop Shelly.



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DEALING WITH SHELLY IN THE DREAMLANDS

Canonically, the author suggests having the investigators stumble upon Robert Horn and his daring escape plan after a less than successful encounter with Queen Gates. It is likely that Queen Gates decides not to trust some or all of the investigators, so they will need some way out.

Eventually, however, they will have to go see Shelly in her throne room atop the City. If they want to wander around the City for a while, though, either before meeting with Shelly or afterwards, let them.

Optionally, what they might take away from any such distractions is this: a very imaginative person is behind this place, and (depending on their familiarity with the shows) plot lines left unresolved when a particular show went off the air have been advanced in this pseudo-reality, as though another season were underway. This is entirely optional and subject to your comfort level with narrating such matters. You might also give them an opportunity to do some research into some long nagging puzzle or loose end from other scenarios; there are wise “mystics”, advanced “computer databases” and other sources of information available on the City. If your comfort level begins to erode, simply have the security forces show up to escort them to see Queen Gates.

Queen Gates holds court in chambers atop a spire overlooking the rest of the city. She looks just like Shelly in the waking world, except immaculately dressed and coiffed. She is stunning and displays no hints of any birth defects, while being every bit as captivating as Shelly in the waking world. Shelly in the Dreamlands acts much like Shelly in the waking world in many particulars: she is coquettish, flirtatious, borderline inappropriate, self-absorbed, and likes to turn discussions to herself or sci-fi television.

Here, however, her INT is 90 and she makes good eye contact. She is fully aware of the nature of the Dreamlands and her role in it; the nature of her powers; and even how it is that she came to be the way she is. She will also remember and be fully cognizant of everything that happened in the waking world: every slight, every insult, every kindness. She will not trust anyone that insulted her, treated her badly, offended her, or threatened or attacked her. Those people will not be leaving the City, and if they do not behave while they are here, they will end up in the brig, or worse. She has some job openings in the City’s security forces, if they are interested, but that is a hazardous occupation.

She may or may not answer the investigators’ questions about her mother, what happened to Robert Horn, or how she came to be the way she is, depending on how polite and deferential they are, and whether she sees any harm or advantage in answering.

People who treated Shelly kindly in the waking world might—maybe—be allowed to leave (albeit without those whom she does not trust). Role-play this out. She is obviously concerned with her welfare in the waking world; she knows that she is not able to fully care for herself there. If (as is likely under investigative pressure) she lashed out and killed her mother, she will be regretful and know that she really ought to be under some sort of close supervision in the waking world. Credible promises to take care of her in the waking world, backed up by a plausible

sounding, concrete plan to accomplish this, are what are most likely to succeed in getting someone released back to the waking world. The idea that the rest of the investigators will stay behind as hostages will also appeal to her. But she will have to be truly convinced that the departing investigators will be good to their word.

Anyone allowed to leave is granted a genre appropriate means of transport away from the City and reappears in Shelly’s waking world bedroom.

Note again that if Shelly is killed in the waking world, this will be a shock that will take her some time to get over in the Dreamlands. There will be an uproar in the City that the Queen has been stricken, and a well role-played escape in the confusion should be allowed to succeed. This includes any investigators who remained behind in the City as hostages.

SO WHAT’S THE POINT?

The point is this: the investigators have to decide what to do with Shelly. Likely, one of the better behaved investigators who has tried to gain her trust will have to kill her with the aid of surprise, to keep her from running amok in the waking world after her mother dies. Although the investigators might find elements of this scenario light-hearted, tongue-in-cheek and amusing, the end of it should be thoroughly nihilistic and anything but funny.

The investigators may have been hired by an unhappy set of parents who wanted some closure about what happened to their son. Their son seduced a teenaged girl, who was awkward (at best), as a prank. This makes him a pig at least and quite possibly a criminal, depending on how one evaluates Shelly’s ability to consent. There are no happy answers for the Horns. Claiming failure is probably the kindest thing to do for the Horns, and besides, telling them that their son’s spirit lives on in torment in a hellish sort of alternate dimension will just sound crazy.

The investigators may have simply stumbled onto the Dreamlands-referencing suicide note and been goaded into finding out the back story. They will have figured it out, and in the course of doing so, destabilized a potentially dangerous situation. Just walking away results in a horrible loss of innocent life: eventually Shelly leaves her duplex to find food, bumps into someone, the police and social workers get involved, and people start dying. Shelly will get agitated eventually, and there is going to be quite a cover up when sci-fi inspired deaths erupt in Anchorage, ending when some terrified cop shoots her in the back after several others are killed.

There really is no happy ending for Shelly, either, no matter how good any containment and care plan might sound on the surface. Her mother is likely to be killed by one of Shelly’s daydreams during the course of this scenario, leaving the investigators (and the world) in an awkward spot indeed. Shelly’s mother had, by dint of 30+ years of practice, been able to keep Shelly effectively isolated and (except for the Robert Horn incident) from hurting anyone. Shelly is not malicious, but she is just plain dangerous, and by the end of the scenario the investigators will know that.

What do they do with her, having kicked the proverbial

THE NIGHT SEASON

hornet's nest? She's not safe in an institution or a group home. She can't take care of herself long term without assistance. Se-dating her is no solution, since her dream self remains aware of her immediate surroundings while she is sleeping and people near her sleeping self may get sucked into the Dreamlands. Shelly is subject to potential exploitation and abuse by shadowy government agencies if they learn of her (and they will take note of the bizarre occurrences in Anchorage). While the author does not want to rule out the possibility of the investigators having specialized resources that can deal with Shelly, ordinary mental health facilities will not suffice, and if Shelly gets unhappy, reality goes wonky. Let them wrestle with the moral quandary, and simply play out the legal and logical consequences of whatever they choose to do.

REWARDS AND REPERCUSSIONS

Survivors receive 1D6 SAN if they achieve some sort of satisfactory resolution to the problem of Gates Michelle Ivory. This might be offset by the 1D6 SAN loss for anyone involved in murdering her. Anyone who travels to the Dreamlands should get a skill check for Dream Lore. Walking away from the problem after getting an idea of its magnitude costs the investigators 2D4 SAN when they inevitably hear of the carnage in Anchorage, which cannot be completely covered up given the dozens of deaths that will be involved.

IMPORTANT NPCs

GATES MICHELLE "SHELLY" IVORY, Victim of Irresponsibility and Queen of the City

STR 50 CON 60 SIZ 40 INT 35/90* POW 125
DEX 50 APP 60/90* EDU 30 SAN 00 HP 10

*Dreamlands statistics are higher.

Damage bonus: -1D4

Build: -1

Move: 9

ATTACKS

None above base.

Skills: Computer Use 10%, Charm 40% Cthulhu Mythos 05%, Dream Lore 50%, Dreaming 100%, Listen 45%, Lore (Genre Television) 99%, Occult 30%, Own Language (English) 30%, Other Language (Any Science Fiction Television Alien Language) 30%, Spot Hidden 40%.

Spells: None in the waking world, but within the boundaries of her ability to focus, she is able to (within limits) bend reality, in a way shaped by her current obsessions. For example, if she begins to desire revenge against someone for a slight, they might find themselves under attack by a sci-fi genre assassin. Or her toy ray-gun might suddenly work.

Shelly can also, with a POW vs. POW check, force someone's soul to enter the Dreamlands and remain there until she releases them, or until she is killed in either the waking or dreaming world. Such persons are plagued by waking dreams of what goes on in the Dreamlands, and cannot fall asleep (since they, in a

sense, already are asleep). Such persons lose 1d6 SAN per day, with suggested insanities including suicidal despair or babbling catatonia. Special rules apply when Shelly is asleep; people encountering her then might end up physically transitioned into the Dreamlands.

In the Dreamlands, Shelly knows Dreamlands magic in the Keeper's discretion.

Defenses: When asleep in the waking world, or at any time when in the Dreamlands, Shelly can warp reality, acting as though she had a DEX equal to her POW (125), and her daydreams manifest and act immediately. Thus, a summoned villainous alien appears and acts, or sci-fi TV calamity happens, at DEX rank 125, and the investigators had best have caught her by surprise (almost impossible when she is asleep in the waking world).

When awake in the waking world, she reacts and summons up her daydreams to defend her on her DEX rank of 50. She is much more vulnerable, as a result, when awake in the waking world.

Nationality: American

Age: 30ish

Education: Poor performance in high school; not fully functional in society, except for genre television trivia and in the Dreamlands, where she is, respectively, an expert and disturbingly cogent.

Indefinite Insanities: Monomania (obsessed with genre television).

PAMELA IVORY, Barfly and Retired Cult Groupie

STR 50 CON 50 SIZ 50 INT 55 POW 80
DEX 60 APP 45 EDU 55 SAN 20 HP 10

Damage bonus: none.

Build: 0

Move: 8

ATTACKS

None above base.

Skills: Computer Use 30%, Cthulhu Mythos 05%, Drive Auto 35%, Fast Talk 35%, Library Use 40%, Listen 45%, Lore (Geek Culture) 50%, Occult 30%, Own Language (English) 60%, Persuade 40%, Psychology 35%, Spot Hidden 60%.

Defenses: none.

Nationality: American

Age: 48

Education: G.E.D.

Indefinite Insanities: Substance Abuse Disorder (Alcoholism).

MATT WALTER, Comic Book Store Manager and Geek

STR 65 CON 55 SIZ 65 INT 65 POW 55
DEX 45 APP 50 EDU 65 SAN 55 HP 12

Damage bonus: +1D4

Build: 1

Move: 8

ATTACKS

None above base.

Skills: Accounting 40%, Credit Rating 40%, Computer Use 50%, Drive Auto 45%, History 40%, Library Use 60%, Listen 35%, Lore (Geek Culture) 70%, Occult 30%, Own Language (English) 80%, Persuade 40%, Photography 30%, Psychology 35%, Spot Hidden 55%.

Defenses: none.

Nationality: American

Age: 41

Education: High School, some undergraduate college.



INTIMATE ENCOUNTERS



by *Oscar Rios*

Our story can be set in any large city, so long as there are lonely people with a desperate need to connect in our anonymous digital age, decaying infrastructure, and the morbid human fascination with serial killers. It involves a series of mysterious deaths, a stalled investigation, an online “dating” site specializing in linking individuals seeking casual sexual encounters, and an alien entity trapped in our reality trying to return to its native dimension. Left behind are the fat-drained shells of a series of victims, their corporeal emptiness reflecting their spiritual emptiness.

INTRODUCTION/THE INADVERTENT SUMMONING

Our story really begins nine years ago, when the last tenant of the Summerset Grove Industrial Park moved out of the complex. Jackson Appliances had rented space there for both its main factory, which produced microwave ovens, and corporate offices. However, the company abandoned Summerset Grove after chronic issues with the both the septic system and substandard wiring. Today, Jackson Appliances is no more, first moving to another state before closing down altogether. For the last four years, a small portion of the former Jackson Appliance factory has been rented by NCS, National Com-

munication Services, where it maintains a large cellular relay tower. The rest is vacant, waiting for a tenant that will never come until the infrastructure is repaired, which no one wants to pay for.

Three weeks ago, a solitary NCS worker, David Eugenson, was sent to service and inspect the cellular relay tower at Summerset Grove, and was “slightly” injured in a work

EDITOR’S NOTE

While not a direct inspiration for this scenario, anyone wishing to run it would be well served to watch a particularly brilliant and Lovecraftian episode of the original *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* series, entitled *They Have Been, They Are, They Will Be* (1974). It is widely available online nowadays. It nicely juxtaposes the mundane self-absorption of the main characters with the utter alien-ness yet matching mundane self-absorption of the “monster of the week”, a fat-sucking, invisible alien that has crash landed on Earth and is simply trying to get the hell off of this backwater planet. As it does so, in the words of Kolchak, it just wants a place to stay for the night, a bite to eat, and to fix its car. The episode provides some nice cues on how to track down such a creature. Fast Talk your way into a stalled police investigation, and some useful roleplaying cues on how to stage the alien’s perception of Earth as a roadside quickie mart here to serve its immediate needs and nothing more.

INTIMATE ENCOUNTERS

related accident. While trying to troubleshoot an issue with the cell tower, there was a power surge, which interacted with both the hazardous chemicals illegally stored in the vacant facility, the shoddy electrical system, and a ley line intersection nearby. This combination of factors opened a rift into another dimension for just a fraction of a second, but that was long enough for a being from another reality to become trapped within our dimension.

THE DARK MATTER ENTITY

This creature is comprised of mostly Dark Matter, and being exposed to the open air was quickly killing it. It needed a place to shield itself, to survive until it could find a way to return home. It found a safe haven inside the body of David Eugenson. When The Dark Matter Entity entered Mr. Eugenson, all of his consciousness was absorbed by the creature, his body becoming nothing more than an organic environment suit. The creature finished the repairs that Eugenson was making to avoid drawing undue attention to itself, and reported having a "minor" accident to Eugenson's supervisor over his laptop. It then forged a note from a fictitious doctor granting him extended medical leave, emailed it to Eugenson's supervisor, and began working on returning to its home.

The Dark Matter Entity possesses intelligence beyond that of the most brilliant human mind. It quickly figured out that it needed to construct a machine to replicate the accident which brought it to our world. The machine would re-open the dimensional rift, allowing it to pass safely back to its home reality. However, a side effect of this would be a temporal explosion, triggered nine seconds after the machine was activated. This explosion will cause a blast of about twenty kilotons, 1/3rd stronger than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. It could care less, viewing the matter as the functional equivalent of running over an anthill as it pulls out of a car repair shop. The entity has the machine nearly complete, and is now waiting for the final components to be delivered.

The Dark Matter Entity has found our world quite easy to manipulate. It has been able to project a portion of its vast intelligence into our digital communication system. Upon doing so, it was able to manipulate the Internet and access linked data bases with ease. Thus it was able to order, pay for, and have delivered all the components and tools needed to assemble the machine to return home, as well as to forge any needed documents and defeat any online security systems. However, a wrinkle soon developed in its plan.

THE BODIES

The body of David Eugenson was rapidly failing. The alien drained nearly all of Eugenson's body fat for energy, and absorbed his liver for minerals. The biological damage caused by the creature's dark matter nature was immense. The body of Mr. Eugenson no longer ate or slept, and all tissues were quickly becoming cancerous. The entity needed a new body, and quickly. It knew that it would need to change bodies several times before its machine was completed, to give it sufficient time to finish its work. It decided to use the Internet, and exploit humanity's need for intimate connections, as a

method of obtaining new bodies.

The creature set up a meeting between "David Eugenson" and Charlene Mendel, a full figured woman seeking anonymous sex through a website called Intimate Encounters. Once alone, in a seedy no-tell motel, the creature switched bodies, shedding the ruined corpse of Mr. Eugenson for the fresh body of Charlene Mendel. The creature has done this three more since then; doing so a total of four times thus far. A body lasts it between five and seven days, depending on how quickly each body wears out. Factors include the amount of fatty tissue in a host body, its liver size, and the entity's activity level. The Dark Matter Entity's ideal host body is a full figured alcoholic, its gender being a non-factor. So far the entity has snatched the following bodies:

- ✘ 1st body – David Eugenson (September 9th – September 14th)
- ✘ 2nd body – Charlene Mendel (September 14th – 20th)
- ✘ 3rd body – Robert Hoff (September 20th – September 25th)
- ✘ 4th body – Miranda Tinoco (September 25th – September 30th)
- ✘ Current Body – Scott Parker

THE OFFICIAL INVESTIGATION

This trail of bodies has not gone unnoticed, by either the authorities or the media. They have dubbed the mysterious "serial killer" "The Lipo Killer", due to the removal of the victim's body fat. However, very few actual facts have been discovered, due to the efforts of the Entity. As it has a digital existence within the Internet, it is constantly monitoring area servers for anyone making inquiries into its actions. Once it detects threatening activity, it destroys the source computer, either with power surges or by inserting an ultra-complex computer virus which turns electronics into smoking piles of slag. So far, the authorities have incurred tens of thousands of dollars' worth of damage to their electronics investigating this case. The authorities believe that the killer is a master hacker, some sort of computer savant, who is covering his tracks.

The official investigation is at a standstill, and the computer virus/power surges are being kept out of the media. The Entity does not consider the mass media's inquiries to be a threat, and views the confusion that it ends up spreading to actually be helpful to its security.

INVOLVING THE INVESTIGATORS

The investigators being looking into this case for one of a number of reasons: because they are assigned the story by a sleazy source of "journalism"; because they are hired by a frustrated relative of one of the victims to shadow the official investigation; or because they hear about the mysterious

THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND

murders and correctly assume there is an otherworldly aspect to them. The investigators must backtrack the trail of victims to David Eugenson, and from there explore the abandoned industrial park of Summerset Grove. There, they must defeat The Dark Matter Entity before it finishes its machine, which if activated, may cause an explosion killing about five thousand people in a four mile radius. One of the investigators would be well served to be very well-versed in Fast Talking and/or Stealth, as well as Computer Use. Also, the investigators should have access to someone with a solid Engineering roll; given the typical makeup of a group of investigators, this may well be an outside consultant. (See **Jeremy Dugard's Really Bad Day**, in a box toward the end of the scenario).

CONDUCTING THE INVESTIGATION

The investigators may follow any course that they wish in trying to find the Lipo Killer. The most obvious lines of investigation are discussed below, and may be explored in any order that the investigators wish. It is not necessary for investigators to follow them all, or even succeed in uncovering the relevant clues in each, so long as they gather enough information allowing them to track the Entity to its lair. The investigation should begin on the night that the latest victim of the Lipo Killer (Miranda Tinoco) is discovered.

THE MOST RECENT CRIME SCENE

Investigators find out about this from a television report, Internet news update, or by monitoring police channels. The reports say that it seems likely that the Lipo Killer has struck for a fourth time, as an unidentified female victim was just discovered at the The Honey Spot motel, one of a dozen short stay motels in a depressed section of the city. Keepers are setting this in. The report states that the victim's body fat appears to have been removed.

By the time that the investigators arrive at The Honey Spot, news vans are already at the location, with field reporters doing live coverage. The local police have secured the crime scene, with Detective Andrew Niccum, a twenty-year veteran of the force, leading the investigation. Even this seasoned detective is disturbed by the scene and baffled by the case. Investigators must get past him to have access to the crime scene, which requires a Fast Talk or Persuade check. He (or any of the lingering reporters) can also share the common facts known about this case (see Common Facts), and will also share the unreported facts so long as it would make sense to do so in light of their backgrounds and/or they succeed in getting him to slip up as he angrily hustles them out of his way (Fast Talk). (Otherwise, they can bribe these details out, or schmooze them out, or Fast Talk them out, of unscrupulous clerks at his precincts). Investigators making a successful Psychology roll realize that Detective Niccum is near the end of his career, world weary in general and inwardly overwhelmed by the strangeness of this case.

COMMONLY KNOWN/ REPORTED FACTS ABOUT THE LIPO KILLER

- ✖ The prior victims had all placed ads seeking a "Casual Rendezvous" on a website called Intimate Encounters, a social board for those seeking anonymous sexual connections.
- ✖ The prior victims were all found with their body fat drained out of them; just why is unclear. They were all larger, but healthy, people.
- ✖ The prior victims have been found over the last three weeks (see About the Victims).
- ✖ All prior victims have been found in various seedy motel rooms across the city.

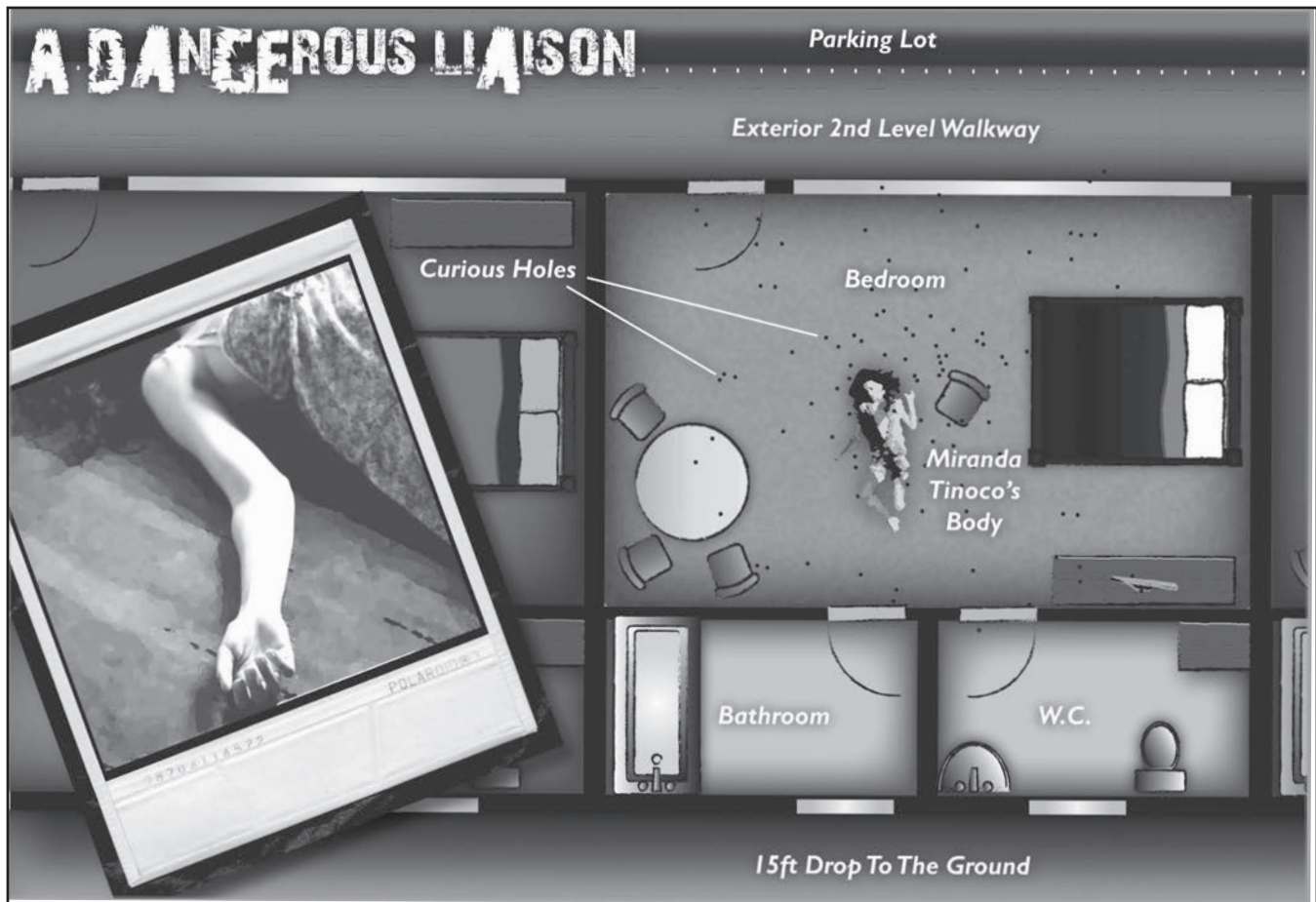
UNREPORTED FACTS ABOUT THE LIPO KILLER

- ✖ All prior victims are also missing their livers.
- ✖ There is no surgical evidence on the prior bodies to explain how the liver and body fat were removed.
- ✖ All prior victims were found to have multiple forms of advanced cancer. Their medical records show no sign of any cancer at their most recent checkups.
- ✖ All prior victims have traces amounts of human fecal matter on their bottom of their shoes, from multiple individuals.
- ✖ All surveillance cameras, including traffic cameras, show nothing but static for a two hour period in a 2 mile radius corresponding to the time of the prior deaths.
- ✖ The killer must be some sort of a super hacker. Many of the electronic devices used while investigating the case have been either hopelessly infected with a devastating computer virus, or outright broken. This has severely hampered the police investigation.

All of these facts will eventually be determined to hold true with respect to the most recent victim as well.

Should the investigators manage to gain access to the crime scene (anything beyond nosing past the guards at the door will require a successful Stealth or Fast Talk roll, or appropriate law enforcement credentials), they may examine the room for several minutes before the coroner arrives to remove the victim. Details from within the room might alternately be briefly glimpsed from an outside vantage point with

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a successful Spot Hidden. Investigators seeking to move or take anything from the room must make a further successful Stealth or Fast Talk check once inside.

The room is what one would expect of a seedy motel room, a single bed, a nightstand, television and bathroom. On the floor is a body in unexpectedly horrible condition. All body fat has been removed, giving the dead woman's skin a very loose appearance. One can guess her age to be about thirty; her clothing and shoes are provocative. No purse or I.D. can be found, although fingerprints, dental records, and facial recognition software can be used to identify her, albeit with difficulty (see **The Digital Guardian**). SAN loss is 1/1D6.

All around the room are tiny circular holes, similar to scorch marks but without any sign of ash or charring. The holes are simply missing matter, disintegrated out of existence. They can be found in the carpet, bedspread, foam ceiling tiles, and even portions of wallpaper. If someone studies their dispersal pattern, it can be determined with a successful Idea role that these marks radiated from a central spot, about two feet in front of where the victim was standing.

THE DIGITAL GUARDIAN

The Dark Matter Entity has a portion of its consciousness roaming the Internet, constantly searching for inquiries into its nature and activities. The vast majority of these it ignores, as it does not consider them any threat. However, when it detects organized research which might jeopardize its security, it moves to shut down that investigation. It does this by destroy-

ing the hardware they are using to conduct their research, be it a laptop, tablet, smart phone, or desktop computer and its dedicated server. Digital security systems are easily circumvented by The Dark Matter Entity, and even the most secure and complex government defense systems would represent little challenge to it.

For each search into the Entity's activities, the chance of the inquirer being noticed, and shut down, increases by 40%. For example, if the investigators make a digital search for information on one of the victims, the first bit of information found is perfectly fine, the next has a 40% chance of being opposed, the third a 80% chance, and the fourth (if one is lucky enough to get this far) always causes the device to be disabled.

Devices shut down by The Dark Matter Entity are destroyed, their inner workings fried, and their databanks helplessly corrupted with destructive alien code. Any electronics linked to the destroyed devices are similarly corrupted and disabled, preventing them from being properly diagnosed. This is the reason the F.B.I. is resisting taking on this case. They are getting an idea of what they are dealing with. Their cybersecurity division is terrified of the implications to national security, and they are consulting with the N.S.A. and the C.I.A. They suspect a foreign power is using the Lipo Killer investigation to test some new highly advanced, and apparently self-aware, computer virus.

Persistent investigators, willing to sacrifice multiple digital devices during their inquiries, can obtain whatever information they require. Also, the old fashioned methods of

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checking newspapers, visiting libraries, and physically speaking to witnesses cannot be opposed by the creature. However, humanity no longer lives in an age where physical records are the primary method for storing information, and Keepers should take this into consideration.

If The Dark Matter Entity detects someone doing persistent investigation on multiple devices, or resorting to “old school” non-digital research, it immediately feels deeply threatened. Keepers should then have the Entity become rather proactive in its defense. With access to security and traffic cameras, the Entity can track their location and cause them all manner of difficulties. For example, traveling Investigators could become delayed in traffic, trapped in an elevator, or stranded between stops on a subway for hours. Investigators might also be put on terrorist watch lists or listed on lists of registered sex offenders. The entity might set up websites filled with child pornography, with the investigators listed as the owners and managers. They could even have warrants issued for them, identifying them as being armed and extremely dangerous.

The Entity isn't trying to destroy the world, corrupt mankind, prey upon or enslave humanity; it just wants to return to its home. Slowing down the investigators works fine for this, because all that it requires is time to complete its machine to escape our dimension (plus some snacks while it works). It is smart enough to know that direct confrontation with all of mankind would be a losing proposition.

THE POLICE

Detective Niccum and the whole of the police department won't be of much help to the investigators. The bulk of their computer systems have either been corrupted or destroyed by The Digital Guardian. The majority of their resources are aimed at restoring their critical databases. Their hope is that the F.B.I. becomes involved in the case and helps them restore order. This hope will not be fulfilled. Federal agencies are keeping their distance until the nature of this computer virus is better understood.

Investigators making successful Persuade, Fast Talk, or Credit Rating checks can get some limited cooperation, such as the details on the other victims which the police learned before their systems crashed (see above). These details can also be obtained by the investigators doing a bit of sleuthing work themselves, although the workings of The Digital Guardian are sure to make it a long, complicated, and probably expensive prospect.

THE CORONER AND THE BODIES

Investigators may seek out Dr. Glen Vandehey, the coroner assigned to this case. He has already examined the bodies of Charlene Mendel and Robert Hoff, and should be examining the most recent victim (Miranda Tinoco) shortly. He is fascinated by this case and recognizes the otherworldly nature of it. Dr. Vandehey is a shrewd scientist of about fifty years, not someone to take stock in conspiracy theories or claims of the supernatural. However, he also trusts his own eyes and his faculties.

If the investigators have the proper medical credentials, or they make a successful Fast Talk or Persuade check, Dr Vandehey shares his findings. He explains that when he first entered his notes into the computer, every terminal in the building crashed. The IT department has yet to restore them, and he is convinced by now that they never will. Since then, he has taken to recording everything by hand in notebooks, commenting that “there is no school like old school”. He suggests that they head over to a nearby bar, Sullivan's, after his shift



Robert Hoff

(which ends in about 90 minutes), for beer and burgers for a nice chat. Dr. Vandehey comments that he'd even bring his notebooks for them to review. He runs up a tab of about \$25, which he expects the investigators to pick up as a courtesy for his cooperation.

The Findings of Dr. Vandehey

- ✘ All three bodies that he has examined are missing their livers and all traces of body fat. There is no evidence of how this was accomplished (no incisions or signs of a medical procedure of any kind).
- ✘ None of the victims' remains showed signs of sexual contact, nor had any obvious violence been committed against them.
- ✘ Examination of the remaining tissues showed that a huge percentage of cells, from various parts of their body, showed signs of advanced cancer. The condition was so advanced that it is unlikely that they would

INTIMATE ENCOUNTERS

INFORMATION ABOUT THE VICTIMS

1ST VICTIM, DAVID EUGENSON

- ✘ He created his profile at Intimate Encounters on September 14th, the day that he was found dead. The media has figured out and previously reported on his profile handle, "CableSnake69".
- ✘ He is listed with his employer, NCS, as currently on medical leave.
- ✘ *He contacted twenty women on September 14th, all fuller figured ladies looking for a "Casual Rendezvous". 14 of these women either had posted comments about drinking or photos of themselves holding cocktails.*
- ✘ *He set the time and location of the meeting with Charlene Mendel.*

2ND VICTIM, CHARLENE MENDEL

- ✘ The media has likewise figured out and reported on her profile handle, "BBW4U24".
- ✘ She dropped out of sight the day after her encounter with David Eugenson, calling in sick and canceling all appointments. No one had seen her, and her cat wasn't fed in her apartment. It appears that she never returned home after her "Casual Rendezvous" with Mr. Eugenson.
- ✘ *While usually checking Intimate Encounters every day, to send messages or troll profiles, she stopped visiting the site for four days before her death. She returned to the site on the day of her death, and her activity was four times above her normal rate.*
- ✘ She changed her public profile picture to a much thinner one at that time (A successful Computer Use roll allows investigators to realize it's digitally altered).
- ✘ She made public posts that day to explain that she's lost a lot of weight, is hoping to try out her new body, and is looking for a "teddy bear who can hold his liquor" to be her "new mommy or daddy". She also changed her public status from heterosexual to bisexual.
- ✘ *She made the arrangements to meet Robert Hoff, on September 20th, the day that her body was found.*

3RD VICTIM, ROBERT HOFF

- ✘ While a member of the site for several years, and quite active on it, *he seldom ever got any replies to his messages.* The media has likewise figured out and publicized his profile handle, "MakeMeWriteBadChecks."
- ✘ The majority of his public posts come across as desperate, apologetic, and insecure.
- ✘ He had a closet interest in being a submissive, and had several memberships to Fem-Dom pornographic sites. However, *he never posted about this interest on Intimate*

Encounters and doesn't seem to have ever explored in real life.

- ✘ He struggled with alcoholism and had a suspended license for DUI. Hints of this information can be found on his public Intimate Encounters posts.
- ✘ *He was courted very heavily and provocatively by Charlene Mendel, who demanded to see him for "Her fix". She assumed a dominant role and he responded to it with somewhat embarrassed enthusiasm.*
- ✘ He dropped out of sight the day after Charlene Mendel was found dead, quitting his job, and not returning to his apartment. There was no sign of him anywhere, until he was found dead.
- ✘ The day that he died, he posted a new, more attractive (digitally altered) photo and arranged a meeting with Miranda Tinoco.

4TH VICTIM, MIRANDA TINOCO

- ✘ She had been on the site for four years, with very limited public traffic; her profile name is easy to find ("MTinoco1"). She only checked the site once every two or three months.
- ✘ At 51, she was years older than most people on the site.
- ✘ *She has canceled her membership and rejoined twice; she also changes her status from "Seeks LTR" (Long Term Relationship) to "Seeking Casual Rendezvous" frequently when she is on.*
- ✘ *The last time that she changed her status, to "Seeking Casual Rendezvous", was the day before she was found died.*
- ✘ Her profile mentions that she is "Three eyes sober, so please no drinkers".
- ✘ *She accepted a date for a "Casual Rendezvous" from Robert Hoff, who claimed to "not usually do this sort of thing", and that "he is really looking to find a special someone to spend time with."*
- ✘ *Mr. Hoff's writing style and attitude in these communications is confident, nurturing, considerate, and respectfully "take charge", without a hint of his previous submissive insecurity.*
- ✘ *It also seems to be precisely what Miranda Tinoco had been longing for. She posted on her public Facebook profile that "I may have finally found the one..."*
- ✘ *She then dropped out of sight until she was found dead, after arranging a date earlier that day with a man named Scott Parker (profile name: "ParkerScottisCan'tLose") who she invited to go to a "cheap motel, split a bottle of tequila, and get it on", completely out of prior character.*

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have been able to stand, let alone have the ability to partake in an amorous encounter. None of the victims' medical histories shows any signs of cancer, yet the progress of the disease would have taken several months to reach this point.

- ✘ He can find no specific cause of death in the victims. However, having one's liver and body fat removed, and suddenly having advanced systemic cancer, is enough to kill anyone. He is more puzzled as to how these people were able to function normally, leading up to their being found.

RESEARCHING THE VICTIMS

Investigators researching the backgrounds of each of the victims will find some interesting things. It is only after they gain full access to the victims' online accounts at Intimate Encounters will they find a clear but unusual pattern. Each of them has such an account. However, the website owner, Jon Nord, will not initially be cooperative towards the investigators' inquiries.

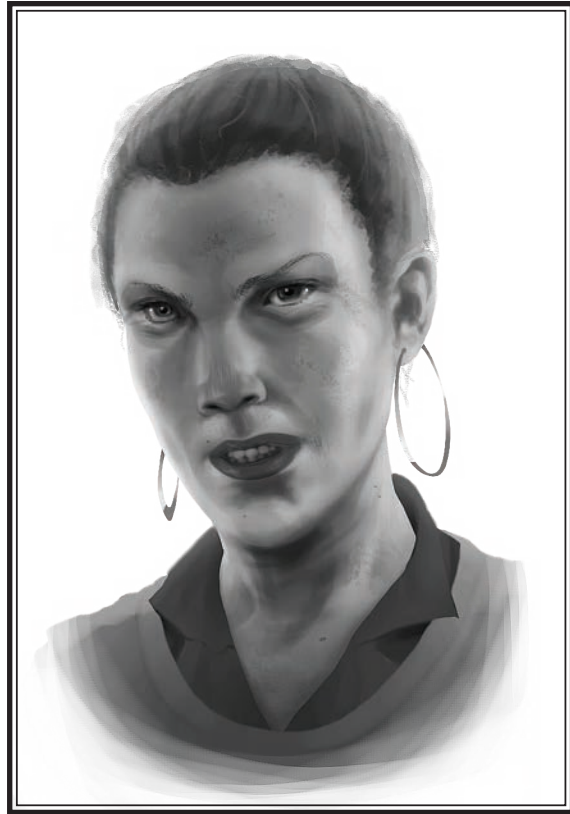
THE OFFICES OF INTIMATE ENCOUNTERS

Located near the city's center business district, this set of third floor offices is now ground zero for a media circus. There is at least one news team posted outside here from dawn until midnight, uploading nearly hourly reports. Print and online reporters are here as well, loitering about hoping for a scoop or actively trying to find a way inside. All of them are desperate for an exclusive interview with Jon Nord, who has made several official statements defending his clients' rights to privacy.

Jon Nord is in his mid-thirties, balding, with an obvious comb-over and goatee. He is never seen wearing anything but tailored track suits and mirrored sunglasses. He speaks loudly and often uses, or rather misuses, an overinflated vocabulary. Publicly, Mr. Nord is trying to turn his unwillingness to hand over his client's records and account information into a freedom of privacy statement. He has made statements about the oppression of the religious right trying to control the actions of consenting adults. Mr. Nord has also said publicly that he feels the state and the church are now hand in hand, marching in lockstep in an effort to force sexual conformity on the masses.

While trying to appear to be a crusader for personal liberty, all that he really believes in is publicity and profit. He is an opportunistic parasite, promoting his website by exploiting the tragedy, and waiting for someone to pay him a huge sum of money for an exclusive interview or book deal. He insulates himself from the authorities with layers of shady lawyers, who are happy to tie things up in the courts just to delay any forced cooperation.

Investigators trying to convince Mr. Nord into giving them access to Intimate Encounters face a steep challenge (or coming up with a very, very large bribe). He only allows the



Miranda Tinoco

investigators into his offices, for just two hours of research, with an Extreme success on a Fast Talk, Persuade or Intimidate roll. Otherwise, a pair of large men in uniform, his office security guards, controls the crowd and enforces Mr. Nord's orders. Failing this, which is likely, the investigators have the option of breaking in (while avoiding camped out media members). The office is closed between 7 P.M. and 8 A.M., with maintenance staff in and out of the building three hours after close and before opening. Thus, the ideal time to attempt a break in is between 10 P.M. and 5 A.M. Security after hours is light, requiring the investigators to only make a Stealth roll to sneak past camped out reporters, a Locksmith roll, and two Computer Use checks (A Hard one to shut down the security system which records office activities and summons police, and a regular one to access the database).

Investigators able to access Intimate Encounters' full database gain access to the non-public italicized information in each victim's section. Certain sections of some of the victims' anonymous profiles and message traffic are public. Also, research in the offices of Intimate Encounters is typically ignored by The Dark Matter Entity as not aimed at it. The first three checks are never noticed by the entity, and the rate it notices inquiries after that are halved (20% cumulative).

UNDERSTANDING THE PATTERN

The investigators should be able to develop a rough understanding of what is happening after studying the history of each victim. The "killer" is setting up "victims" using the Intimate Encounters website, and moving from one body into another. The apparent "victim" at each crime scene is the shed

INTIMATE ENCOUNTERS

body of the “killer”, while the missing person in the encounter is the new host body of The Dark Matter Entity. Once the investigators understand this, they can develop an effective strategy for locating this creature. They may:

- ✘ Begin hunting for Scott Parker, who is now the “killer”.
- ✘ They can wait for Scott Parker to seek out a new victim, and either “catfish” him or ambush him.
- ✘ They can backtrack to the beginning of the cycle, look into Patient Zero (David Eugenson), and possibly discover the lair of The Dark Matter Entity.



Scott Parker

HUNTING SCOTT PARKER

The Dark Matter Entity, protected by a portion of its intellect in the form of The Digital Guardian, is very good at protecting its privacy. Any searches on the Internet about Scott Parker have a 50% chance of attracting the attention of The Digital Guardian. This line of inquiry yields information but no real results, as “Scott Parker” won’t be leaving the Summerset Grove Industrial Park until he needs to switch bodies again. Investigators can learn the following, however, by either digital or physical investigations into Scott Parker:

- ✘ He is currently on vacation from his job at Grenko (a warehouse style shopping outlet store). He reported to his boss that he needed to attend his mother’s funeral out of state.

- ✘ His mother actually died nine years ago.
- ✘ He has not been back to his apartment since the night that the investigation began.
- ✘ None of his neighbors have seen him since he left on the night of his date with Miranda Tinoco.
- ✘ He is 25 years old, a heavy drinker who is slightly overweight, with a fetish for much older women.

CATFISHING THE DARK MATTER ENTITY

Investigators who figure out the hunting pattern of The Dark Matter Entity should realize that sometime around the 4th of October, the Lipo Killer will strike again. This time, if they’ve done their homework, they’ll know the identity of the killer (Scott Parker), and may have been able to identify his profile. This gives investigators the option of setting an ambush for the creature.

Some investigator may make a fake profile on Intimate Encounters trying to attract the Lipo Killer, but with thousands of victims for the entity to choose from, the chances this works are quite remote unless Scott Parker’s profile is known. Only if they specifically construct a profile of a desperate, older, overweight alcoholic (gender is irrelevant) do they have any chance of success (a success on a Luck check). Alternatively, if they know that Scott Parker is their target and have figured out his profile, they could approach him for a date.

Should Scott Parker make contact with the investigators, or they contact him, to attempt to set up a “Casual Rendezvous”, the investigators get one chance of convincing the creature that they are for real. Play this out to the extent that your players are comfortable with the details. Success requires that the investigators make a successful Charm or Fast Talk roll. While The Dark Matter Entity is a being of vast intellect, by October 4th it is starting to weaken, as the body of Mr. Parker wears out. Mentally, this causes it to be sluggish, desperate, and impaired in its decision making.

If successfully Charmed or Fast Talked, it sets up a meeting at a random short term stay motel, asking the investigator to meet “him” there. It will not waver in that condition; unless the investigator meets the entity where it suggests, it immediately breaks off contact. If the investigators succeed in all these requirements (The Luck check, the Charm or Fast Talk roll, and agreeing to the location of its choosing) they succeed in drawing the creature out. Keepers should then go to the section entitled Final Battle.

DROPPING IN UNEXPECTEDLY

If the investigators have identified Scott Parker by name and simply watch his public traffic on Casual Encounters, they can see when Scott Parker re-emerges on the site and track who he is speaking to, to the extent that information is public. However, Scott Parker is speaking to eight people at once (both men and women as he has changed his Intimate Encounters

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status to bi-sexual). Each contact seems to fit the criteria for Lipo Killer's victims, and even if the investigators guess the correct victim, they'll still have no idea where they're meeting. The best solution is to hack the Intimate Encounters accounts of the people Scott Parker is speaking to. This requires the investigators make a Computer Use check on the correct victim (keepers may determine this randomly on a roll of 1D8).

If investigators manage to hack the right account, they learn that a woman named Nala Maldovies has agreed to meet Scott Parker later that very evening. She is a thickly built woman, thirty years old, a hard drinking, adventurous woman about to get much more adventure than she bargained for. She's been asked to meet him around 10:00 P.M. at room 318 of the Garden Motor Inn, on the edge of town. It is a remote and seedy location, quite close to a local highway. The investigators can then plan the ambush in any number of ways, such as intercepting Ms. Maldovies and going up to room 318 in her place, trying to arrive at the room before her, arriving very early and trying to confront Scott Parker in the parking garage, getting into room 318 before either of them do and wait, storming the room shortly after Ms. Maldovies enters it...the possibilities are limited only by the tactical imagination of the investigators. Keepers should go to the Final Battle section to resolve this encounter.

WHAT IS THIS THING?

This scenario, rather deliberately, does not provide a pat answer, or a "monster label", for The Dark Matter Entity. Ideally, the investigators should be left wondering at the end just what it was that they stumbled onto. It should be utterly alien on the one hand, and utterly mundane on the other (it wanted to get a bite to eat, "fix its car", and get back on the road). This scenario is completely nihilistic in that regard.

However, if the Keeper would rather have things (pardon the pun) more "by the book", Mythos research in an appropriate tome, if successful, might hang a label on this thing, as well as add to the sense of urgency. Appropriate tomes might contain references to a race of "Dark Travelers" which "wear the skins of men and women" to be able to interact with our world. Their motives are inscrutable, their actions always mysterious, and often they simply leave as abruptly as they came, "their eyes reflecting the stars". Their arrivals and departures are often heralded by "lightning and storms", often very destructive storms.

Alternatively, the investigators might use the fogging of cameras that heralds its approach against The Dark Matter Entity, by simply splitting up, driving around town with surveillance equipment, and lucking into a mysterious camera outage. (Or by watching social media for complaints of such outages). They might then be able to triangulate the target of the interference, and stumble onto Scott Parker as he makes his move. A Hard group Luck roll might allow this tactic to succeed.

Dial 911!

Calling in the authorities won't be an option. The Digital Guardian moves to keep the police distracted, by making dozens of false reports of officers shot and needing assistance on the other side of town for a three hour period (9pm - 11pm). This keeps the police too busy to help the investigators, even if they believe that they might have a real lead in the case.

Backtracking the Entity

The investigators may also seek to backtrack where all this began. If so, they focus on David Eugenson, the very first victim. Everything seems to have started the day he dropped out of sight, after reporting having an accident at the Summerset Grove Industrial Park on September 9th. Investigators can either visit Summerset Grove, or do some research on the place beforehand. Either way, this is where The Dark Matter Entity has made its lair, and unless it is stopped soon, this will be the epicenter of an enormous explosion.

RESEARCHING SUMMERSET GROVE INDUSTRIAL PARK

The Mysterious Mysteries of the Unknown, a cable paranormal investigative show, did a segment on the abandoned Summerset Grove Industrial Park two years ago. The episode, "304: The Summerset Spooks", is available online from their website. It begins by claiming that spiritualists believe that the site was constructed at the juncture between two ley lines (the Summerset and Morriston ley lines), explaining that ley lines are ribbons of mystical energy tied to locations, thought to be caused by natural crystal formations or mineral deposits.

The program recorded statements from multiple people of seeing strange lights, moving shadows, and twisting colors that do not appear in nature. There were also reports of people suffering spontaneous migraines when in the vicinity, smelling and hearing things that they cannot describe, and undergoing feelings of vertigo and profound dread.

Surprisingly, the team deemed the place "Not Haunted". They concluded that the facility had a long history of faulty wiring and substandard septic systems. The owners were accused of, but never charged with, the improper storage of harmful industrial chemicals. They also mention that the only thing in operation at the site is a massive cellular relay tower. They determined that all recorded experiences could have been caused by improperly stored chemicals and/or the presence of high level electromagnetic fields (which have been known to cause hallucinations). Keepers can also present this information via other forms of mass media (i.e. old newspapers, local community websites, or area paranormal organizations).

EXPLORING SUMMERSET GROVE INDUSTRIAL PARK

Investigators must break into Summerset Grove Industrial Park, but this is a simple matter because it is both remote and poorly secured. By picking a lock, cutting a chain, or scaling

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a seven foot chain link fence, the investigators can enter the compound. They find a collection of nine abandoned buildings, a mix of warehouses, offices, and factories.

However, something seems wrong here. Investigators experience feelings of paranoia and illogical fear, sudden flashes of vertigo, and nausea. Those failing a POW check may also experience a hallucination (strange light, floating color, or inexplicable moving shadow; -1 SAN), feelings of incredible dread (lose 1D3 SAN), or physical maladies (migraine, full body ache, or uncontrollable muscle spasms, suffering 1 HP of damage). The area near the cellular tower seems to hum with electricity, and random blue, white, sparks race along its length. Every few minutes, an odd otherworldly black spark is created, which crackles and fizzles in the air like a child's sparkler before it vanishes.

A search of the area shows clear signs of recent habitation, especially outside of the old Jackson Appliances factory. There are tire tracks in the fallen leaves; the delivery door shows signs of recent use; and investigators peaking in the windows can find a white van clearly marked as belonging to National Communication Services (due to the efforts of The Digital Guardian, the company doesn't even know it's missing, as records show that it is being serviced). Should the investigators enter this building, they see over sixty delivery boxes, some quite small while others are massive, in a corner of the factory warehouse. Packing material, plastic sheeting, and delivery invoices are haphazardly scattered everywhere. If examined, the invoices show that the items in the boxes were an odd mishmash of tools, large electronic devices, technical parts, computer components, wires, vintage vacuum tubes, or

various large crystals. From this area, a clear trail in the dusty floor can be seen, as many of the larger items needed to be dragged off. The trail leads to a large security door, which has already been forced open but is currently closed.

Investigators opening the secured room are immediately hit by an incredible stench of stinging, choking chemicals and raw sewage. The massive room contains about fifty barrels of hazardous waste, some of which are rusty, and a few even show signs of leaking. Concealed behind a few of these barrels is a massive hole in the concrete floor, about nine feet across. It drops down twenty feet into a large and faulty septic tank. From this hole the investigators can hear the sounds of running machinery, see flashes of strange colored light and sparks, and smell indescribable scents never before experienced by the human mind. SAN loss for seeing the machine is 1/1D6.

LAIR OF THE DARK MATTER ENTITY

The walls of this large chamber, actually a forty foot square septic tank, are smeared with the sludge of old human waste. The floor is still covered in about three inches of sewage as well. In the center of the chamber is a massive machine, utterly alien in design. It is a combination of glowing crystals, spinning concentric metallic hoops, massive electrical condensers, various generators, banks of batteries, bundles of cables and wires, and multiple cross-angled emitters. The machine is running, emitting strange glowing lights, multi colored bursts of sparks, and an otherworldly hum. It produces colors, sounds, and smells which do not exist in our

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reality, and the human mind experiences other indescribable sensations as well. Just being within 40 feet of the machine costs 1 SAN for every 10 minutes of exposure.

STOPPING THE MACHINE

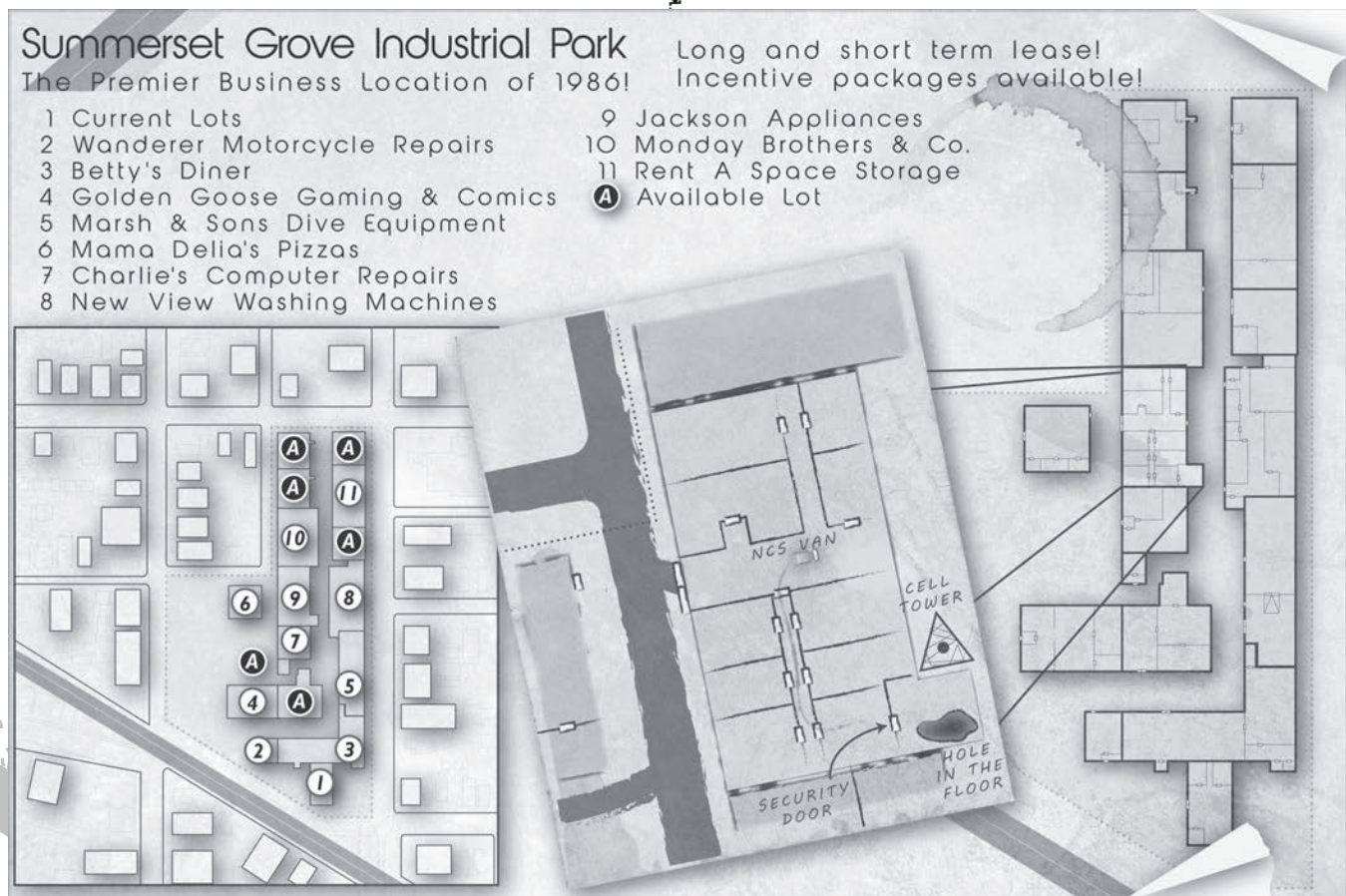
Investigators making a successful Engineering skill check, or succeeding in an Idea roll if driven temporarily insane by the sight of the machine, will be able to figure out a few basic facts about the machine:

- ✘ The machine is operating on hitherto undiscovered principles of physics.
- ✘ The machine is not yet complete, although it is nearly so.
- ✘ The machine is building and storing an incredible amount of power, which will be discharged upon completion.
- ✘ The resulting discharge should cause a very devastating explosion, with a radius of at least a couple of miles.
- ✘ The machine is likely not meant to be a bomb, because there are much less complicated ways to cause a similar sized explosion.
- ✘ They figure out an easy and safe method for shutting the machine down, or damaging it in such a way that the majority of components will be fried (basically destroying 80% of its function, requiring a huge amount of rebuilding).

- ✘ Capturing the machine intact and reverse engineering it would likely advance mankind's understanding of the universe by decades, if not centuries.
- ✘ The effect that the machine is having on the human mind makes exposure to it very dangerous.

Those making a Hard success on the same Engineering skill check, a successful Physics check, or a successful Cthulhu Mythos roll, realize the following additional facts:

- ✘ The machine's purpose is to punch a small hole in the fabric of space/time/reality, allowing travel between dimensions for a few seconds.
- ✘ A likely byproduct of this hole punching should be a blast equal to about twenty kilotons.
- ✘ It is possible that the malfunctioning cell tower, combined with the chemicals and substandard wiring, centered on the intersection of two ley lines may have produced a tiny tear, for a few tenths of a second, in the dimensional fabric. The machine is seeking to do the same thing, in reverse, on a much more stable (and thus more powerful) scale.
- ✘ The machine is configured in such a way that only an object composed of Dark Matter should be able to cross through the barrier.
- ✘ The machine can be subtly reconfigured such that when it is turned on, it does not create a rip in the



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dimensional fabric, but rather triggers a Dark Matter/Matter reaction equal to about 10 tons of TNT. This would completely destroy the industrial park, and the immediately surrounding area, which is unpopulated. (In its frazzled state, The Dark Matter Entity would have to succeed in a Hard Idea roll to notice such a subtle rewiring).

JEREMY DUGARD'S REALLY BAD DAY

The chances of a group of investigators having any sort of meaningful Engineering check is rather slim. They will also not have any real idea that The Dark Matter Entity is building some sort of infernal contraption until they lay eyes on it, and once they are that far in, any potential responses are constrained. The Dark Matter Entity tends to hang out there, working on the machine, unless it is out hunting for a new body or picking up a package. If it sees them, they are quickly fighting it. If they happen to stumble on the machine while The Dark Matter Entity is briefly away, however, then they have a decision to make: do they try to sabotage the machine, and if so, how?

First, there is the “no calling 911” problem, which they have already probably experienced. Calling in any kind of warning focused on the industrial park (or even trying to call from the industrial park) immediately attracts the attention of the Entity. It immediately shuts them down and comes running back, fully on its guard. At the same time, they should realize (Idea roll) that the Entity will not be away for long, so

searching for and waiting for some expert “cavalry” to ride to the rescue is a poor idea as well.

Two avenues are available to them to roust someone out to the site quickly, while not attracting undue attention from the Entity. One is to subtly sabotage the cellular relay tower (e.g., throw a breaker). This generates an automated alarm, but comes as no great surprise to the Entity. It is concerned, but it doesn't come running unless something else happens. (In fact, the investigators would be wise to disguise themselves as NCS workers or groundskeepers, so as not to attract undue attention on any security cameras in the area). The second is to leave the industrial park and find a consulting engineer very nearby, who is willing to drop whatever he is doing and run out there, with few details, to render some on the spot analysis.

Either approach leads to Jeremy Dugard, d/b/a JD Engineering Consultants. Jeremy (he prefers to be called “Buzz”) is a partly retired journeyman engineer who lives at and works from his house (1 mile away from the industrial park) with his most recent wife/phone answerer Bev (“Wife No. 5”) and her three cats. He is a former employee of Jackson Appliances who was laid off when the plant closed. Since then, he has worked as a part-time contractor for a variety of employers (including NCS) as well as cultivated relationships with a network of attorneys who work for insurance companies, doing failure analysis and cause and origin reports. He usually charges \$150/hour, but \$250/hour with a 4 hour retainer will cause him to clear his schedule for an emergency and get out there in 20 minutes. He arrives in a pickup truck with a variety of tools, measuring devices, and meters in the back, with

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a placard reading “JD Engineering Consultants” on the side.

If the investigators trip a function alarm with the cellular relay tower, with Eugenson dead, NCS will call him to do assessment and repair. If the investigators search the Yellow Pages for a very nearby consulting engineer, he is very nearby. If they risk using the Internet or asking Siri for a nearby consulting engineer, they likewise get pointed to him. Finally, if they call NCS to report “some kind of problem with the relay”, NCS calls “Buzz.” All that he needs to saddle up is a plausible story that will get him paid. “We represent a potential buyer and were looking at the property but there’s some kind of squatter running some kind of machine and we need to shut it off safely” works just fine.

If contacted, he will try to convince the investigators to hire him. He can honestly tell them that he is familiar with the facility and has worked on the relay tower before on a “pinch-hitter” basis. In short, it’s easy to get him out there, and he even has a key to the front gate. He will want to take 15 minutes to fill out a form contract before going in, which has the investigators representing that they have authority to enter the premises and to hold him harmless against any claims resulting from his inspection (including personal injury or death to himself). Then he heads in.

Assuming that The Dark Matter Entity is not home, “Buzz” curses and swears like a sailor after seeing the inside of the Jackson Appliances building, wants to make sure whatever is running “ain’t gonna !@#%^^ blow up in the next five minutes”, and then will want to call the police. When he sees the machine, he loses 2 SAN, succeeds in a base Engineering roll (at a minimum, give him a chance to hit a Hard success), soils himself, and all thoughts of calling the police flee his mind. His frantic babbling is the investigators’ chance to learn what the machine is. Regardless of the truth of the matter, however, “Buzz” is convinced that the thing will overload and “blow up real good.”

JEREMY DUGARD, “Shoulda Stood In Bed”

STR 50 CON 50 SIZ 70 INT 60 POW 50
DEX 50 APP 45 EDU 75 SAN 50 HP 12

Damage bonus: none.

Build: 1

Move: 6 (he’s old, short, heavy and slow)

ATTACKS

None above base.

Skills: Accounting 25%, Computer Use 30%, Drive Auto 35%, Electrical Repair 50%, Engineering 50%, Library Use 40%, Listen 45%, Mechanical Repair 50%, Own Language (English) 75%, Persuade 40%, Physics 20%, Serial Monogamy 50%, Spot Hidden 60%.

Defenses: none

Nationality: American

Age: 66

Education: Bachelor’s Degree in Engineering, plus many years of experience.

FINAL BATTLE

There are several ways to defeat The Dark Matter Entity. The easiest way is to subtly sabotage the machine, in such a way as to destroy The Dark Matter Entity when it attempts to use it.

The investigators can also disable the machine in such a way that The Dark Matter Entity must reconstruct the device. While not a true solution, it prevents the entity from triggering the massive explosion for a time, giving investigators longer to stop the creature. They might (with successful checks) figure out a way to do this safely, or they might just try to blow it up or smash it. The Keeper is within his rights to have any number of deadly or amusing complications happen from simply taking a sledgehammer to it, from eerie transformations to quantum implosions to random Gates to who knows where being flung open. Let your imagination run wild.

Another way to stop The Dark Matter Entity is to hunt it down or ambush it while it is trying to switch bodies, receiving a delivery of components, or moving between its lair and the outside world.

Grand answers as to what The Dark Matter Entity was up to may be unavailable. Or, you might juxtapose an image of Scott Parker’s discarded and drained body on top of a pile of fast food wrappers; an image of an old automobile repair manual among the incomprehensible invoices; and have the investigators accidentally step on an anthill when they scale the industrial park’s fence.

THE DARK MATTER ENTITY

STR 90 CON 70 SIZ 100 INT 165 POW 100*
DEX 30 HP 100*

Damage bonus: none

Build: 1

Move: 8

ATTACKS

Fighting (Brawling) 50% (25/10), 1D3 +db

Energy Tendril 50% (25/10), damage 1D4 points of SIZ, 2 attacks per round.

Engulf 50% (25/10), damage 2D6 Points of SIZ, once every other round.

Victims drained to zero SIZ die from shock, and are incapacitated upon losing ½ their SIZ.

Paralysis and Body Switch 75% (37/15) costs the entity 5 magic points per round, for a total of 15 magic points over the 3 rounds it takes to switch bodies. Once a successful hit is achieved, the victim is frozen until the Entity breaks off the attack to focus on someone else.

Dodge 50% (25/10)

Skills: Stealth 70%, Engineering 100%.

Defenses: This creature is unlike any living being in our dimension.

It has no true physical form, being an entity comprised of pure Dark Matter. Being in our dimension causes it to slowly disintegrate, unless it uses a physical human body as a form of protective suit. This only allows the entity to exist in this dimension for a few days before it must switch forms, as its nature quickly destroys whatever body it inhabits. Outwardly, the body appears quite normal, but under the skin, body tissues quickly become cancerous. Once combat begins, the entity sheds its human skin,



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and appears as a living mass of crackling black energy. Being outside of a body causes the creature to lose 1 hit point per round.

SAN Loss: 1/1D10

Keepers should think of The Dark Matter Entity as a living battery, a bundle of energy with consciousness. Physical matter is destroyed when it comes into contact with the entity, but the entity loses its personal energy in the process. Each bullet which hits it does 1 point of damage to the creature, a shotgun blast does 4 points of damage to the creature, and being struck with a melee weapon does either 1 point (for small weapons, like daggers), or 2 point (for larger weapons, like clubs). Investigators may realize this and begin throwing larger objects, which do between 3-8 points depending on the size (3 would be about the size of a table, while 8 would be something the size of a motorcycle). However, all such matter is destroyed, so an investigator punching the dark matter entity would inflict 1 point of damage and have their hand disintegrated, losing 1 SIZ.

The entity attacks by lashing out at opponents, sacrificing some of its energy to disintegrate them. Each time that it does this it weakens, so it is loath to enter such frays. It may lash out with up to two tendrils of energy, which disintegrate 1D4 points of damage worth of SIZ per hit and inflict a corresponding amount of damage to the Entity. Human beings can only lose 50% of their SIZ before being incapacitated. If an opponent seems very dangerous, the creature can attempt to fully envelop them, disintegrating 2D6 points of SIZ, but losing an equal number of hit points. If the creature is reduced to less than 18 hit points while outside of a body, it is finished; it will not have enough energy to complete a body snatching.

The attacks of The Dark Matter Entity are vicious and likely to leave investigators crippled, with portions of their bodies forever lost. However, the creature loses energy every time it attacks, so the investigators' sacrifices ultimately help defeat the creature. Investigators who strike hard and fast, with multiple attacks, or are clever enough to hurl items into the creature, may be able to bring it low before too much damage is done.

FAILING TO STOP THE DARK MATTER ENTITY

If the investigators fail to stop The Dark Matter Entity, then a large portion of the city they are in may be destroyed by a massive explosion. It is possible that they may be caught in the blast as well. (Or, if you are feeling especially nihilistic and mean, and they fail to stop The Dark Matter Entity, nothing happens. It simply leaves; their efforts were for naught and they would have been better off helping it finish its machine). If you opt for a cataclysm, the official story becomes that a low yield, homemade atomic weapon was set off by domestic terrorists. Either way, The Dark Matter Entity returns to its home dimension, where none of the other Dark Matter Entities believe its story about being abducted by aliens, trapped on another world, forced to eat bad fast food, and cobbling together its own escape out of third dimensional bailing wire and spit.

REWARDS AND REPERCUSSIONS

For saving the life of the last victim, Naya Maldovies +1D4 SAN
For stopping The Dark Matter Entity. +1D6 SAN
For disabling the machine +1D4 SAN
For sabotaging the machine in a way so as to destroy The Dark Matter Entity +1D10 SAN



KICKSTARTER BACKER LIST

SACRIFICIAL VICTIMS

Ian McFarlin
Carol Brake
Mike Lafferty
Duncan Usher-McGee
Katewithcake
Geneviève Fournier
Scott Ash

LOYAL CULTISTS

Sister Persephone Bärwald
Julian Breen, friend to Mr Alzis
Jef Wilkins, Cyenobite

THE BRAVE DEAD

Albi N Omintboy, Brobdingnagian Cephalopod
Adam Brown, Private Investigator
Tyler Lynn, Private Eye
The Vanguard' at Darker Hue Studios
Niall Casey, Codebreaker
Stuart Skilton, Dilettante

THE LIVING YET MAD

Andy Hicks, Professor
Joonas Teurokoski, George Clooney's body double
Matthew Greaves, Author
Robert W. Chambers, Author and Sign Painter

Bryan Jones. Psychiatrist and Investigator of the causes of Insanity

Stewart Robertson, Clerk

Jan "TIE" Kock, Freelance Location Scout

Troels Frosthalm, Professor in secret societies

Mark "Butters" Grehan, Cuddly Security Agent

Sacha Ratcliffe, Historian of Science

James 'The Great Old One' Burke, Instigator, Private Detective, & Professor

Joe Davidson, Psychologist

Stephen A Turner, Archaeologist (Romano Britain)

Michael J Raymond PhD, Professor of Anthropology

THE INTREPID SURVIVORS

Mobius Oblidus

Rob Meyer, Engineer

Janet McCandlas, Musician

Andrew "Doc" Cowie, Forensic Xenopsychologist

Matt Wayne, author

Adam T Alexander, Hedge Wizard

Stephen Joseph Ellis, Bibliomancer and Gaming Architect

Christian Lehmann, medical doctor, novelist

Geoffrey Riutta, Ley Line Plotter

Wil Hall (aka. wilfish), Software Occultist.

Peter Cakebread & Ken Walton of Cakebread & Walton, purveyors of fine funerals