

THE DEMONGROUND

Reflections of a Darker Future

JUNE 2001

VOL 12

THE SUPERNATURAL

COVER ART

Rising Shadows Neal Dickinson

ALL FLESH MUST BE EATEN

I Was a Zombie for the FBI

Dave Schuey

BUREAU 13

Doomsday Exam Nick Pollotta

CALL OF CTHULHU

Flesh For Eihort Linden Dunham

Insanity Timothy Wojciechowski

Ouch! Jonathan Turner

The Weave Norm Fenlason

DARK CONSPIRACY

Ghosts Ryan Rank

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Lee Williams and Chris Lewis

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DARK MATTER

Faith FX: Witchcraft

Christopher West and Ron Bedison

WITCHCRAFT

Daughters of Freya Paul Schulze

ReAnnunciation Thom Marrion

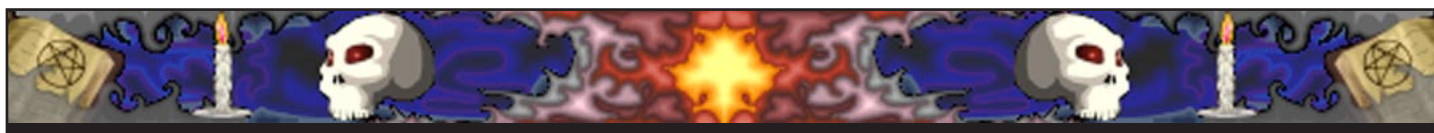
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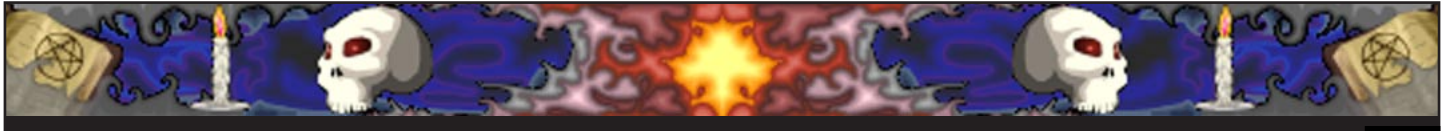
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Hi, my name is Becky. I am an assistant editor, wife, mother of two and Yes, *I see dead people*. That seems to be the appropriate catch phrase. Okay...maybe 'see' is too strong a word to describe the shadowy movement that flickers past the edge of peripheral vision. But it's more than simple sight. I've felt their presence too. You all probably think I'm nuts now, but my husband thinks that makes me the most experienced person to write the opening editorial for this issue of DEMONGROUND about The Supernatural.

I totally believe there are things out there that defy our comprehension, ghosts, witches, demons, angels and an occasional bump in the night. I'm sure most of you have seen *something* out of the corner of your eye, only to turn and find nothing there, or perhaps you've felt that eerie chill run down your back like something just touched you with unseen hands. I personally have had several unnerving experiences, which defy explanation.

I think I'll tell you only one of them, the first one, the one that

changed my view of these matters entirely.

I was at camp. I hated camp! I never got along with anyone and was lonely most of the time. We had to attend these campfire gatherings after dinner. It was cold, damp, and unless you were sitting up front you stayed cold and damp. All the cool kids sat up front.

They were all warm, doing the campfire singing thing and having a good time.

I was cold, damp and in the back. (Way in the back)

Now, about two years prior, my grandfather passed away. I never got to see him in the hospital before he died and it devastated me. He was essentially my best friend and I loved him dearly.

The gathering was almost over. I was still sitting in the back grumbling to myself about how I should have worn a sweatshirt and why I couldn't have been born cool, when it happened.

I could feel him. My grandfather. He was there with me. He wrapped

his arms around me and I was suddenly warm. From head to foot I felt peaceful and calm and didn't care about the cool kids or the sweatshirt. I sat there with him until the counselor called my name. All the kids had gone in and I was the only one left out there.

Sitting with my grandfather in front of the fire.

I will never forget the experience.

This was my first and only comforting "encounter". The rest, and there have been many, ranged from being mildly "freaked out" to being totally scared out of my mind. I am a firm believer that we are not alone in this world. There are many unexplainable things – both seen and unseen, all around us. Just because someone doesn't believe it doesn't make it untrue.

So watch those dark closets and pay attention to those things you see out of the corner of your eye – because they're real and they're watching you. ❖

OUCH

by Jonathan Turner

INTRODUCTION

Player characters are a singularly unlucky breed. They spend a lot of their time getting bitten, clawed, shot, stabbed or going mad. As a result, Keepers often have recourse to turn to the rules on first aid and recovery.

I prefer to keep my players in the dark about their characters' hit points. When they're injured, I describe the symptoms. That way, they *know* when they're in trouble.

To do that of course, you've got to know a bit about anatomy and trauma. That's where this article comes in. I've decided to go through the more common injuries - like gunshot wounds and animal attacks - and cover what damage the PC is likely to find inflicted on him.

Why bother doing all this? Well, the answer is simple: atmosphere.

There's nothing like a couple of badly injured PCs struggling to overcome 'monsters and their kynde' when the ichor hits the fan. Being able to keep the narrative flowing, but still accurately describe the injuries - and how they affect the PCs - adds and enriches the role-playing. Trust me on this.

In the CoC rules it mentions that you might want to steer clear of keeping track of which body parts are injured because of the extra book-keeping. I disagree, I'm afraid. Bad injuries cause scars, limps, blindness, irritable bowel syndrome - whatever. And that adds to the character: "Yeah, my leg's never been the same since the Harding expedition. Blasted crocodile took a chunk out of it, don't you know."

Your players will love you for it, and hate you at the same time. Kind of like when you smack a naughty puppy on the nose with a rolled up newspaper.

But there is a danger that a lot of this might seem very dry - after all, if you wanted to learn anatomy you'd go to med school or watch a lot of **ER**, right? If that's the case, don't worry. Just use this article like a Lucky Dip of Player

a scenario and it's quite possible your players will misinterpret them as something else entirely. Maybe they'll see convulsions caused by a head injury or fever as demonic possession or something.

Bear in mind also that some Mythos creatures will have similar anatomy to humans - the classic example being Deep Ones.

Right then doctor, if you've finished scrubbing up - let's give your PCs hell...

A word on First Aid

In the CoC rules, beginning characters have a **First Aid** skill of 30 per cent - a very generous figure in my opinion.

In the real world, **First Aid** covers what medical professionals call Immediate Care. And in my experience, the trained first aider spends a lot of his time trying to prevent people from doing stupid things which they think are what should be done. Things such as putting their fingers in the mouth of a fitting epileptic (you'll lose 'em) or pulling knives out of a casualty's chest (sucking chest wound, anyone?).

So in my opinion, I would give starting characters a lot less in beginning **First Aid**, maybe as low as 5 or 10 per cent. But that's bitter experience of how stupid people are for you.

First Aid of around 30 would suggest a person who has completed a quite comprehensive course, taking in everything from CPR to setting splints, deal-

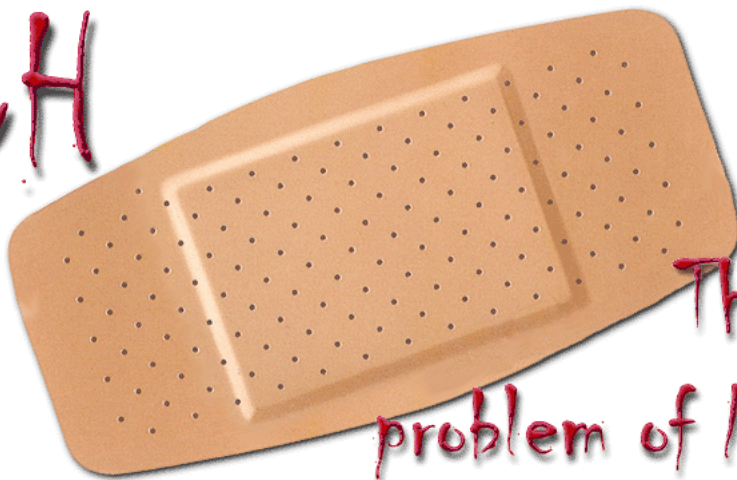
SURPRISINGLY SERIOUS BIT

I was a first aider for about three years before qualifying as an Emergency Medical Technician early in 1997. I feel I have to say that while I'm treating this subject with my trademark black humour, none of this is funny in real life.

So I'd like to dedicate this piece to those who spend their time dealing with this stuff for real - you wouldn't believe what it's like until you see it for yourself.

Torture. Pick a good injury (tension pneumothorax is my favourite) and wait for the right moment to use it. That'll really screw your PCs up.

Also, a lot of trauma injuries are scary - they are after all technically unnatural. You can introduce them into

The messy
problem of PC injury



ing with bleeding and other emergencies like convulsions or spinal injuries. In other words, a competent first aider.

Skills of between 30 to 55 per cent would cover a professional Emergency Medical Technician. At this level of Immediate Care, the character would be familiar with such procedures as giving Oxygen and the pain-killing gas Nitrous Oxide. They would also be familiar with the operation of equipment such as stretchers, Military Anti-Shock Trousers, artificial airways and a defibrillator.

At skill levels of 60 per cent or above, the character is either highly experienced or is a qualified paramedic. The main difference between paramedics and EMTs is that they can administer drugs and intubate casualties. Paramedics are extremely proficient at stabilising a casualty in the field - better even than most doctors! Skill levels above this would symbolise a professional who has an increasing amount of experience.

Bear all this in mind when justifying the skill levels of your characters.

Trauma 101

Each year, there are about 165,000 deaths from trauma in the United States, and for each case there are two cases of permanent disability. (See bibliography) Apart from madness, trauma is the affliction most likely to befall an investigator.

What I've decided to do is to briefly cover the most common types of injuries which an investigator will probably suffer. I've broken them up into several sections to make things easier, specifically gunshot wounds, melee injuries, vehicular accidents and explosions.

For my purposes, I've defined a serious injury as anything dealing more than four or five hit points. Of course, it all depends where you get hit. Two hit points is a lot if somebody stabs you in the eye with a pencil.

Join me then on a magical mystery tour of the human body, inside and out. And even some bits where the insides are out. Yuck.

GUNSHOT WOUNDS

Investigators are just as likely to inflict these on other people as to suffer them themselves. We all know that the severity of the injury depends on what you get shot with - but the symptoms are different, too.

Bullets from pistols, rifles and sub-machineguns, as opposed to the pellets from a shotgun, may well ricochet off bones and go all over the place, unless you're talking about a low calibre weapon like a .22.

In the movies, a bullet causes just one wound, where it enters the body. In real life though, it also causes an exit wound - and they are actually worse than where the victim got shot in the first place.

Exit wounds can be some distance from the entrance wound, and often not where you might expect it. One case which springs to mind was a guy who was shot in the shoulder by a police sniper. The cop probably thought he was doing him a favour by shooting to wound instead of going for a head shot.

The bullet had other ideas, though. It ricocheted off the target's clavicle, down through his chest and abdomen, and blew out half his back - killed him stone dead. I'm not exaggerating - this guy had a two or three foot wound cavity in his back.

And you thought a gun was a nice clean way to kill something. Basically - if you get shot - you're screwed.

That's a high velocity round such as a 7.62mm rifle bullet - but the principle is the same regardless.

When a bullet rips through a target, it not only tears through whatever internal organs happen to be in the way, it also leaves a temporary cavity in its wake.

This means all the internal organs and tissue get stretched and pushed out of the way as the bullet burrows through. This temporary cavity can be 30 times the size of the bullet that caused it!

As this collapses, it produces a vacuum along the path of the bullet -

one that is so powerful it can suck stuff inside from around the victim. That usually means pieces of clothing, but it's also been known to include leaves from nearby trees, pieces of paper, grass - you name it.

Shotguns are even more devastating. We all know that every investigator loves his or her shotgun - and for good reason. No good at any range, up close (under 10 yards) a shotgun can quite literally blow off an arm or a leg.

The tight pattern of shot at close ranges means the shot simply burrows into tissue. In fact, the trauma has more in common with blast injuries than gunshot wounds.

So, investigators who get shot are in trouble. A low velocity round like a .22 or maybe even something like a 9mm at range might well glance off a rib or a long bone like the femur and do very little internal damage. Maybe. I would still encourage rolls on the Resistance table (CON versus damage done) to stay conscious and battlin' on.

But they will still leave a nasty wound with a chunk of missing tissue - a wound that will be infected with bits of clothing and dirt and wadding if it was caused by a shotgun blast.

Serious injuries to the chest are immediately life-threatening - that potential cavity has just messed up your heart, lungs, and the biggest artery and veins in the body.

In fact, if you get a nick in your aorta (it lies more or less in the centre of the chest) you can die in seconds.

As for head shots... it all depends where the bullet hits. One high up in the skull will kill or cause coma and probably brain damage of some kind. One elsewhere may not be so serious though, believe it or not.

Bullet wounds in limbs can kill too, particularly an injury to the thigh. Like the aorta, a rupture of the femoral artery can drop a man in seconds.

The Aftermath: Most people fall down when they get shot, though it's a well documented fact that a lot of people take bullets to the chest and keep on truckin'. A wound to the femur will drop

you right away, and one to the head will knock you down if not kill you.

Gunshot victims - like most people who suffer serious trauma - invariably go into shock. They get pale and feel cold, anxious and jittery. They complain of thirst a lot. Their lips become blue and they often lose consciousness. Pass notes to the player involved and get him to role-play it. It can make things very difficult for the other PCs.

A True Story: A little story to round this section off with a dose of reality. I had a friend who was shot while he was fighting in Bosnia. He was a professional soldier, in the middle of a fire-fight.

Next thing - BANG - it feels like somebody punched him on the side of the jaw and laid him out. He came to and saw this distraught buddy of his trying to put a field dressing on his face. My friend got up, shook his head and was able to fall back unaided.

The bullet - from an AK-47 no less - had ricocheted off a pillar near where my buddy had been taking cover. It struck him sideways on the chin and lifted him off his feet. It pushed his lower front teeth all outta whack - something he got fixed at the dentist - but left him otherwise uninjured.

Luck Roll of 01, anyone?

MELEE INJURIES

What if it doesn't come to guns, then? What if it's a good old-fashioned bout of fisticuffs, or maybe a cavalry sabre versus a Sand Dweller's teeth and claws? Or, uh, a Nightgaunt's tickling? (Sorry - you've got me stumped there).

Technically speaking, there are two forms of damage in melee combat - blunt trauma and puncture wounds. (Three if you count tickling.)

Punching and kicking: The human body is well built to resist blunt trauma. Fists and feet in a fight can produce horrible stuff like broken teeth and noses - which both make breathing difficult (very distracting). Also, any wound to the head produces a lot of bleeding because of the rich supply of blood to

the brain. That blood gets into eyes and ears, making future Spot Hidden rolls that bit more difficult. Unless your character makes an Idea roll, I would also reduce their DEX by one or two points for the purposes of initiative.

Bruised, cracked or fractured ribs are a common injury in fights. A word of warning here for those players who are using elderly investigators - old people's bones crack a lot easier than younger folk because they're so brittle.

Untrained fighters often do themselves as much damage as their opponents when they connect. Some people are so dim they make a fist with their thumb *inside* their fingers - it gets broken when they thump their victim.

A sprained or broken wrist is another common injury, and of course when a punch connects with teeth your knuckles are gonna get sliced open.

If you're planning on kicking something, make sure you're wearing sensible shoes - a lot of dimwits break their toes while battering someone's ribs.

By the way, this type of damage is too common to be classed as a fumble, but a broken wrist from a bad fist attack sounds about right.

Advice for pugilistic investigators then - wear brass knuckles or gloves and steel toe-capped boots.

Stabbing: Statistics show that when they don't have a gun in hand, Americans like to stab each other instead.

Most stab wounds are in the abdomen, just above the umbilicus (sorry, but I always feel silly saying 'belly button').

Forensic psychologists would tell us that men usually stab in a downward arc while woman stab upwards.

Where sharp things are involved, there's two things to remember. Firstly, people have a natural instinct to try and fend off blows, commonly leading to defensive wounds in the forearms - some of which can be quite serious.

Also, when a knife or sword penetrates a victim's body, that body is gonna stick there. There's a suction process involved between the blade and the surrounding tissue and blood. Some bayo-

nets and knives have a blood trough in them to allow the weapon to be pulled out more easily.

And incidentally - if your PCs are foolish enough to pull an impaled object out - roll damage again. The right thing to do is strap it into place and get to a good trauma surgeon fast.

Stab wounds - and gunshots too - to the chest commonly cause sucking chest wounds, or pneumothorax. Open wounds to the chest - like a knife blow - cause simple pneumothorax.

In such an injury, air is coming into the chest through the wound instead of down the airway. This eventually leads to the affected lung collapsing - sometimes very quickly.

Needless to say, this is a real serious injury. The best treatment is to seal the wound with a dressing taped on three sides, which creates a type of flutter valve to allow air out - but prevent it getting sucked back in.

A PC with such an injury will be in extreme pain and suffering from shock. Unless they're treated soon, it's wooden overcoat time.

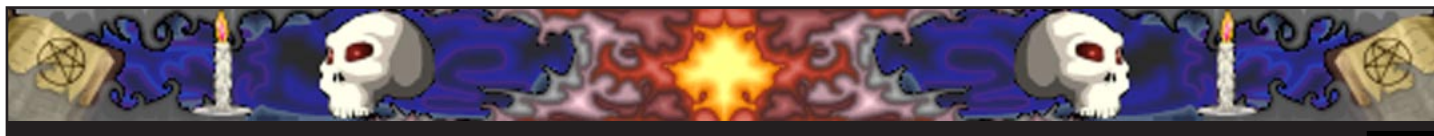
Abdominal injuries can cause evisceration of the abdominal cavity, which basically means being gutted. The best treatment is to cover the protruding intestines with something plastic and keep them moist. And of course, get to hospital fast.

ANIMAL ATTACKS

Claw and bite attacks from animals, whether terrene or not, can leave nasty injuries. Again, defensive wounds on the arms are a very common place to get hurt.

Claws and teeth bring with them an almost guaranteed infection, which should be treated aggressively with antibiotics. If you're playing in a decade where you can get them, of course. Otherwise, some pretty good CON rolls are needed.

Commonly, an animal attack results in avulsion of the skin, which basically means a big chunk gets torn off. Still, think of the scars you can brag about later.



Also: do Deep Ones or Nightgaunts carry rabies? I think we should be told, Chaosium.

VEHICULAR ACCIDENTS

Even in the twenties, people were dying all the time in car accidents. Deadly injuries can easily occur at speeds as low as 20 or 30mph.

If a PC is unlucky enough to crash, their body is involved in three collisions. First, the vehicle hits the wall, other car, Cthulhu's foot or whatever it is that stops it in the first place. Then the PC hits the inside of the car or whatever. Then his internal organs crash into the inside of his chest wall, his brain bounces into his skull, etc.

A word on those PCs who don't belt up. Even at relatively low speeds, unrestrained passengers are usually ejected from the vehicle - especially if it rolls. Next time you're driving along, take a look around at all the stuff you're passing at the side of the road. That's what you'll hit if you're thrown out of your car. People often die from head injuries caused by hitting the curb, trees or telegraph poles.

For those players who are wearing shoulder to hip belts, almost all damage they receive will be focussed on their clavicle or collar bone. Most people break their collar bones if there's a lot of speed involved - but hey, better that than crunching into a nearby phone booth.

Anyone wearing a lap belt, like the ones in the middle rear seat of most cars, is in worse trouble. Lap belts usually cause a rupture of the internal organs because of the forces involved.

Drivers also often injure their feet when they slide off the pedals in a collision. They may have a broken or sprained ankle, or serious cuts to the lower leg. If they're trapped in wreckage, that's an easy way to bleed to death.

Also, a lot of people break their hips as the car deforms around them. They get thrown forward and their knee cap strikes the glove compartment or whatever. The force of the impact is translated down their femur to the narrow

neck of the hip joint. Snap.

Anyone in a car accident can be assumed to have spinal damage, whether it's just whiplash or something much more serious.

A common injury in road traffic accidents is cardiac tamponade. This occurs when the driver's chest slams into the steering column. The heart is in a little bag called the pericardium. When that blunt trauma hits the chest wall, it causes bleeding inside the pericardium. As it fills with blood it puts additional pressure on the heart, which eventually stops beating. The only treatment is to insert a needle into the pericardium and drain the blood out.

And remember open pneumothorax? Road accident victims can also have tension pneumothorax, which is even more serious. Blunt trauma ruptures the lung internally, but the chest wall is still intact. Air from the injured lung is expelled into the pleural cavity (another bag, this time around the lungs). The air can't escape, so eventually the increase in pressure starts pushing the mediastinum, which is made up of the aorta, the venae cavae and the trachea or windpipe. You can recognise a casualty with this because their Adam's Apple is usually off to one side. When that happens the windpipe, aorta and venae cavae are sort of kinked, leading to rapid death. Again, the only treatment is to insert a needle and drain the air out of the affected pleural cavity.

One more charming chest injury: flail chest. This is when several ribs are broken in two places, causing an entire section of the rib cage to sort of drift free. When the casualty breathes in, this section of the rib cage gets sucked in inside of going outwards, and vice versa on exhalation. This is called paradoxical movement - and it's really painful for the patient. It can also lead to bruised lungs - and the shallow breathing caused by the injury can lead to hypoxia and eventually death or coma.

Of course, all these chest injuries could just as easily be caused by gunshot wounds, blunt trauma or by going hand-to-hand with a Yig or somebody.

Driving into somebody: A touch of Car Wars™ creeping in, huh? Well, if you decide to ram a humanoid figure like a Deep One or a mad cultist, they will take most of the initial impact about mid thigh. Then they will be thrown up onto the bonnet, with their head probably striking the windscreen. Then they'll bounce off onto the tarmac. If you hit 'em at any speed, they will be carried for some distance before falling off.

Needless to say, that's a good way to put anybody down. The head injury is the deadly one.

EXPLOSIONS

When something blows up, it creates a pressure wave. The strength of that wave depends on several factors, like the nature of the explosive and the medium around it. Water translates the pressure wave far better than air, making explosions in a liquid very dangerous for anyone else swimming around. (Therefore, Deep Ones + grenades = fish food.)

Being out in the open is a good thing in an explosion, because pressure waves are reflected and amplified off walls, causing more damage to those nearby.

Incidentally, if you're ever caught in a blast, I've been told the best advice is to clamp your hands over your ears and keep your mouth open. It's got something to do with the way the pressure wave affects your pulmonary system. But more of that later. (Living in Northern Ireland means you tend to pick up useless advice like that. Thankfully, I've never had recourse to see if it works.)

Primary blast injuries are those caused entirely by the pressure wave. Secondary injuries are caused by shrapnel and other flying debris, and should be treated like low velocity gunshot wounds. Tertiary injuries are caused when the victim is flung into something by the blast. Miscellaneous blast injuries include inhalation burns, crush injury from the collapse of buildings, toxic poisoning, etc. A casualty caught in an explosion will probably have a selection of injuries.

Primary blast injuries usually affect

the ear, the respiratory system and the gastrointestinal tract. Somebody tossing dynamite in a confined space like a mine? Fine. Have 'em role-play deafness for a few days. And your balance is gonna be up the left, too.

IN CLOSING

The Surgery Is Closed: Well, I hope your players are still gonna be talking to you after this. Use this as pick and mix if you can't be bothered remembering everything. You only need to sprinkle in one or two injuries like these to make things memorable. That's been my experience, anyway.

Hopefully this will help you add a bit of realistic horror to your scenarios - and make your PCs a bit more fearful into the bargain.

Well, that's it! Enjoy!

Bibliography:

Emergency Care in the Streets, Fifth Edition, Nancy L. Caroline. ISBN 0-316-12891-0

Nancy Caroline is the last word in pre-hospital care training and this book for paramedics is ideal to dip into and come up with a lot of interesting stuff. It's also a bit useful if you're doing a course in this stuff!

Emergency Medical Treatment: A Text for EMT-As and EMT-Intermediates, Third Edition, Nancy L. Caroline ISBN 0-316-12886-4

A slighter simpler text for Emergency Medical Technicians as opposed to paramedics. Some good basic anatomy in here.

The Black Medicine series by N. Mashiro, Ph.D. Published by Paladin Press.

These martial arts books mix anatomy and trauma care in with improvised weapons and dirty tricks to make a fascinating but gory read. Plenty of stuff to spring on your players in here.



WORLD WIDE WEB WATCH

www.osirs.net

Have you ever wanted to draw your players into a game using e-mail, but some immersion was lost due to the fact that you had to use a hotmail account? Do you wish you could have sent e-mail from Robert Hanssen, the FBI agent accused of being a spy? Osirs.net offers Game Masters a new tool to immerse players in to a world of intrigue.

Osirs.net mimics the internal computer network of the Hoffmann Institute; a fictitious organization set in the world of Dark Matter. The site can also be used easily by most modern day games. GM's gain access to the site by visiting <http://www.osirs.net/gm> and requesting an account. After replying to the invitational e-mail, GM's now have the ability to add each of their player's and their characters to the site. When the players visit <http://www.osirs.net> they see the Osirs.net login and password prompt.

GM's can add personnel files, complete with pictures. They can also add files on notorious NPC's. GM's now have the ability to add case files for their players to research.

If you wish to add spice and paranoia to the game you can set security levels on different files and sections, you can even password protect areas of personnel files. So when John goes to view Laura's personnel file he is blocked by a password. He can attempt to hack through it, however, his GM will receive an e-mail notifying him of each unsuccessful attempt. You can always leave a password lying in one of your games for your players to try on Osirs.net...

The entire site is designed to immerse the players into a real feeling internal network. This is accomplished through the use of well done graphics that mimic the way Hollywood movies often portray government websites. One of the most believable areas of the site is the e-mail system. The system duplicates the interface that we've all become so familiar with in today's popular e-mail clients. You can send attachments and e-mails to any member of your gaming group. However, each e-mail is actually fake. It never actually leaves the website. This allows the GM to create totally fictitious e-mail addresses to mail to the characters.

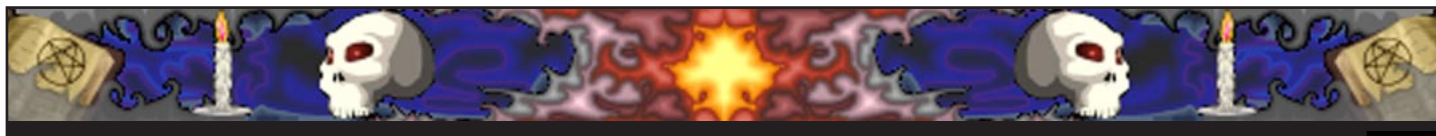
You can have multiple GM's working together. The site allows you to share personnel files, NPC's, and case-files between separate gaming groups. You can also have co-GM's to help you do all of this e-mailing.

Our Dark Matter games have become more exciting with the introduction of osirs.net. My players now role-play all week while waiting for the next sit down session. I have friends from around the country that login as co-GM's to play different contacts and staff of the Hoffmann Institute.

Article by: Shawn Schultz

Shawn is the creator of Osirs.net and also the Senior Web Developer for a major ISP. He is a certified instructor of Macromedia Cold Fusion. He's GM'ed for 20 years.





FAITH FX

WITCHCRAFT IN DARK•MATTER

by Christopher West and Ron Bedison
(with thanks to Wolfgang Baur)

Many forms of magic have inspired the human imagination over the ages, but few have garnered as much attention in the modern world as the collection of beliefs, stereotypes, and ideologies known collectively as “witchcraft”. It means many different things to many different people: To Wiccan and pagan believers it’s a natural spiritual path. To fundamentalists of other faiths, it’s a road to disaster and corruption. To Hollywood screenwriters it’s a ticket to box office success. To many others, it’s little more than superstitious nonsense. In the Dark Matter campaign setting, however, witchcraft is something more than any of that...it is a very real and dangerous force that few understand and fewer still have ever learned to master. The following is an adaptation of common witchcraft lore, adapted for use in the ALTERNITY® Science Fiction Roleplaying Game published by Wizards of the Coast. It is not intended as a perfect reflection of any specific belief system, but instead it is a combination of mythic folklore, popular stereotype, and creative license. Emphasis is placed on the use of this material in the Dark Matter campaign setting, but it would be appropriate to any campaign involving FX powers. In the context of this setting, Witchcraft exists as a rare manifestation of the faith of those gifted few who believe strongly in its power and have learned the ancient rituals necessary to unlock it. Certainly many Wiccans and other pagans have the strength of belief necessary to develop this FX, but often such individuals have not been introduced to the appropriate rituals and techniques. Many others have obtained the necessary lore but lack the strength of faith to empower the spells. Finally,

some people who possess both faith and lore simply lack the gift of magic...an elusive quality that not even the Hoffmann Institute is able to fully identify or explain. For these reasons, true manifestations of Witchcraft FX remain elusive. Gamemasters who wish to incorporate this material directly into an ongoing campaign might consider setting up witchcraft as a new oppositional force to diabolism. Perhaps evidence accumulated by the Hoffmann Institute suggests that many witches have begun to organize a dedicated yet secret opposition to diabolist groups, particularly the Illuminati faction known as the Final Church? Such a situation could establish some very interesting roleplaying opportunities, when monotheists and practitioners of witchcraft find themselves facing a common foe. Alternatively, witches might be portrayed within the campaign as a divided faction, facing internal conflict between rival covens. Perhaps various forces within the pagan community hold different ethics concerning the appropriate use of these powers. Finally, an ongoing plot may involve a conspiracy faction such as the Knights of Malta or the Hidden Order of St. Gregory which is determined to eradicate witchcraft and all who practice it using techniques perfected during the Inquisition. Agents of the Hoffmann Institute might be called in to investigate the disappearance of a coven of witches and stumble into a plot involving a religious conspiracy of global proportions. However it is used, this material should inspire plenty of adventure ideas for your Dark Matter campaign. Have fun with it!

Witchcraft

Widely accepted by fringe elements of society, yet vastly misunderstood in the mainstream is a school of magic commonly known as Witchcraft. While classified here as Faith FX, it exists on the border between Arcane Magic and Faith, requiring both ritual and strength of belief for its power. Witchcraft is concerned with the harnessing of natural energy and the focus of that energy towards specific goals. While the term “witch” is often used in connection with the religion of Wicca, it can be applied to anyone who uses nature-based magic (or “magick”, as many practitioners spell it). The traditional Wiccan coven member, the neopagan New Ager seeking communion with the Earth, and the wise old crone who brews herbal remedies for the sick are all potential practitioners of witchcraft. Witchcraft is frequently mistaken for diabolism due to widespread misinformation about the powers involved, even though the two types of magic operate on very different principles. Since most witches do not actively preach their beliefs and most diabolists are content to let witches take the blame for their activities, the misunderstanding continues...at least among the uninformed masses. Of course, just because most witches maintain a low profile and don’t actively denounce the lies does not mean that they remain inactive. A covert magical war between these factions may be brewing...if it hasn’t already begun. Most spells within the school of witchcraft require rituals of varying complexity to conjure forth the desired effect. Most pagans who practice witchcraft are polytheistic, and these rituals give structure to their appeals to various deities and spirits of nature. Not so much arcane formulae as they are elaborate prayers, the rituals a witch uses are frequently record in a “Book of Shadows”. These books are used to record every aspect of a witch’s occult and spiritual knowledge, and are kept extremely private. Marginal rituals may include simple rites such as the burning of a specially-colored candle or incense, a short period of focused meditation and prayer, or occasionally the ceremonial sacrifice of a minor personal belonging. A Marginal ritual can usually be concluded within one round. Ordinary rituals usually involve several minutes of ceremony, meditation, and/or prayer. Usually some form of ritual tool, such as a cup or wand, is required, in addition to a small amount of a natural element related to the spell being cast. Occasionally an ordinary ritual may require the sacrifice of an item of personal value.

Good rituals require elaborate ceremonies involving at least half an hour (often a full hour) and a good deal of preparation time. Rituals of this quality require specific symbols and objects to be present and used during the rite, such a pentacle, a cup or chalice, or a wand or athame (ritual blade). Representative amounts of all the elements of nature are usually needed. Specific instruments vary with the witch’s tradition and path. The sacrifice of a noteworthy object of personal value to the caster may be appropriate. The Wiccan “Great Rite”, a lengthy ritual involving the symbolic (or actual) union of male and female elements, is an example of a Good-quality ritual. Amazing rituals require many hours or even days of carefully-planned ceremonies, performed at regular intervals or

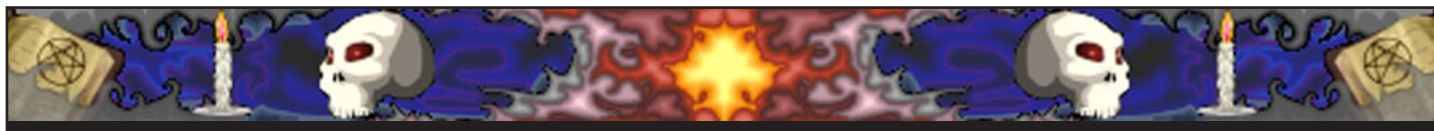
constantly over a period of time. These may involve the sacrifice of a very special item of great personal value to the caster, and require all sorts of appropriate spiritual tools, as mentioned above. Amazing rituals are almost always performed with a full coven of thirteen witches or large group of believers, but such a group isn’t necessarily required. Any time that a lesser ritual is substituted for the one required by a spell, a +2 penalty is applied to the roll for every degree of difference. For example, if a spell that calls for a Good ritual is cast with only a Marginal Ritual, the caster receives a +4 step penalty to the roll. Likewise, substituting a greater ritual for a lesser one conveys a similar bonus: the same spell cast with an Amazing ritual would receive a -2 step

bonus to the roll. Lastly, it’s also possible to cast a spell with no ritual at all. This counts as another stage of difference, so a spell that typically requires only a Marginal ritual could be cast in a single phase with no ritual at all, at a +2 penalty. (If a spell calling for a Good ritual was cast this way, it would carry a +6 penalty.) On occasion, multiple witches may wish to work together on the casting of a single spell. This follows the standard rules for assisting actions on page 50 of the Player’s Handbook, with the following exceptions: Characters without the Witchcraft FX broad skill may assist in the casting of a spell, but this causes all rolls related to the casting to suffer a +3 penalty. Also, characters who do not have at least one rank in the spell being cast cannot be the lead caster. While it is certainly possible to use the powers of witchcraft for negative purposes, many witches, particularly those of the Wiccan faith, believe that it is wrong to do harm to others and that using magick to do so brings the harm back upon the caster threefold. GMs are encouraged to remember this during the course of play and enforce this “threefold law” within the context of the game as they see fit.

Faith FX: Witchcraft

<i>Skill Name:</i>	<i>Cost:</i>
Witchcraft	13
<i>Blight of Ages</i> (WIL)	5
<i>Call Familiar</i> (PER)	3
Cast the Circle (WIL)	2
Crones’s Curse (PER)	4
Divination (WIL)	3
Earth Harvest (WIL)	2
<i>Part the Veil</i> (WIL)	4
Maiden’s Blessing (PER)	4
<i>Mother’s Touch</i> (PER)	4
<i>Out of Season</i> (WIL)	4
Spellbind (WIL)	2
<i>Ward of Protection</i> (WIL)	3

Skills that cannot be used untrained are shown in blue.



Blight of Ages

Transform spell: 2 FX points

This extremely rare and dangerous spell grants a caster the ability to affect the life force of another individual to cause premature aging, or even undo the ravages of time on a body.

Success in the casting allows the caster to change the age category of the target by one stage, making the character either older or younger. This change affects only physical characteristics and ability scores (STR, DEX, and CON); mental ability scores are not affected. (See page 20 of the *Gamemaster Guide* for details about aging and the effect it has on a character's ability scores.) Characters can not be regressed to a state younger than adolescence through the use of this spell, but they can be aged past the point of ancient, causing death. A lifeless body cannot be made younger or restored to life with this spell. Both the caster and the creature affected suffer one point of fatigue damage when the spell is cast. Because the magic of this spell is channeled through the caster and focused externally, a witch can't target herself with this spell.

The changes caused to a target by this spell last for one month on an Ordinary success, one year on a Good success, and are permanent if the caster achieves an Amazing success. (The affected creature continues to age naturally throughout the duration, but all changes wrought by the spell fade after the magic has expired.) If a caster tries to undo the effects of his own spell on the target before the duration has expired, his attempt (which requires another casting of the spell) receives a -2 step bonus. Any casting of this spell to cause a cumulative effect (aging a character who is already magically aged) carries a +2 penalty for each such spell already in effect on that individual.

While it is typically cast with an Amazing ritual for added bonuses, this spell actually requires only a Good ritual, throughout which the target must be present. It usually requires the sacrifice of an item dear to the target, though the caster may choose to make the sacrifice instead. Casting *Blight of Ages* on an unwilling victim is considered wrongful in the extreme by most witches. Those who abuse this power may find themselves facing serious opposition from witches who somehow learn of the deed.

Critical Failure: The caster fails to control the magic and suffers the effects of the spell instead of the target, aging one life stage permanently. (Even if the intent of the spell was to make the target younger.)

At ranks 4, 8, and 12, the caster gains the ability to cause or undo an additional degree of aging in the target creature. (So a caster with rank 12 is able to cause a young adult's body to become ancient.) Both the caster and the creature affected suffer one point of fatigue damage for each degree of aging caused or removed. (This damage can be healed normally.) The caster may choose to limit the effect to fewer stages than the roll allows, if he desires.

Eviscerant Theft: At rank 10, the caster can make himself more youthful by aging another character. For each life stage a victim is aged through the use of this spell, the caster may make himself one stage younger. (While it's an unpopular choice, a caster could also make himself older by making the target younger.)

Life Mastery: At rank 12, the caster achieves the ability to target himself with the effects of this spell, without involving any other characters.

Call Familiar

Summon spell: 1 FX point

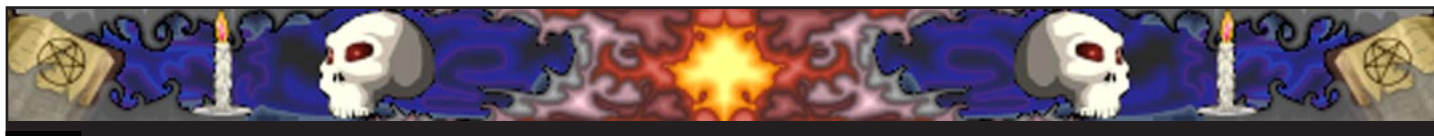
Through the use of this spell, a witch acknowledges to the universe that she is ready to accept the companionship of an animal guide and friend. A familiar often takes the form of a cat or raven, though nearly any sort of animal might appear. The form of the animal usually relates to the caster's personality, and should be determined by the player and GM before the spell is cast. Occasionally a long-time household pet is recognized as a familiar through the use of this spell.

If the roll to summon a familiar is successful, the FX energy point spent in the casting of this spell is permanently invested in the familiar and marked off of the caster's character sheet. This point represents the familiar's bond to the caster, though it can be spent without breaking the bond. (A familiar recovers its FX energy point every 24 hours.) The witch can likewise spend the familiar's FX point to fuel her own spells any time that the two are in contact. Being in contact with one's familiar also provides a -1 bonus to the use of Witchcraft FX spells. When the familiar dies, the FX energy point goes with it.

Any time that a familiar is within 10 meters of the witch it is bonded to, the two can communicate as if using the Telepathy-contact skill. No roll is required: communication is limited to simple concepts (brief questions and one-word answers), as if the caster had rolled an Ordinary success on that skill.

The familiar that manifests through the use of this spell has a starting attitude of "charmed" towards the caster. This can change over time depending on how the caster treats the animal. A familiar who reaches the "combative" attitude (through mistreatment or any other means) may permanently sever its bond with the caster, taking the caster's FX point with it. A familiar lost through mistreatment may even choose to work against the caster's interests or otherwise seek revenge.

The casting of this spell requires a Good ritual, usually involving tokens of interest to the desired animal and a statue or figurine representing it. [Note: while the caster may choose to tailor the spell to attract a specific sort of animal, the creature that appears might be very different. In any case, the GM and player should agree on the type of familiar beforehand.]



A character may have more than one familiar at a time. The quantity is limited only by the number of FX points that the caster is willing to invest in the creatures. Additional information about familiars can be found on page 85 of “Beyond Science: A Guide to FX”.

Critical Failure: The FX energy point spent in the casting is lost permanently, but no familiar appears. (This applies to the summoning only, not to the uses of this skill described below under rank benefits.)

Sensory Relay: At rank 3, the caster can (with a successful Witchcraft-call familiar skill check and the cost of 1 FX energy point) perceive the world through the familiar’s senses, seeing what it sees and hearing what it hears, etc, for up to one hour. Any Awareness-perception skill checks made through the familiar’s senses carry a +1 step penalty, as the senses of a different animal can be disorienting to a human. Some familiars may have special perceptions that are especially unfamiliar to humans, such as a bat’s ‘sonar’ hearing. The GM may apply additional penalties to the perception rolls of a caster trying to use these senses. At rank 6, this penalty is removed. The familiar must be within contact range for the sensory relay to function.

Remote Contact: The maximum distance at which a caster and familiar may communicate increases to 100 meters at rank 3, 1 kilometer at rank 6, 10 kilometers at rank 9, and 100 kilometers at rank 12.

Cast the Circle Conjure spell: 1 FX point

This common spell purifies an area, turning it temporarily into sacred space and rendering it ideal for more complex ritual work. Harmful spiritual forces are held at bay by the Circle, and magical energies are focused to aid the spell-casters. Any Witchcraft spell cast within a properly prepared circle receives a -1 bonus to the skill check. The spell ends when anyone other than the caster’s familiar enters or leaves the circle.

In order to enter the circle, a harmful spiritual force (ghost, demon, or anything else determined by the GM) must succeed on a Resolve-mental resolve skill check modified by the caster’s WIL resistance modifier and the degree of success achieved on the casting (Ordinary +1, Good +2, Amazing +3). Likewise, harmful magic spells cast at an individual within the circle receive the same penalty to the casting roll. If something does succeed in penetrating a circle in this way, the circle is considered broken and the spell ends.

The circle has an initial radius equal to the caster’s height, which doubles at rank 4, doubles again at rank 8, and doubles once more at rank 12. The area of effect is centered on the caster. If multiple casters are involved in the casting of this spell, their heights are added together to create the area of

effect, which then centers on the middle of the group.

Casting a circle requires only a Marginal ritual, which usually involves a gestured outlining of the circle with a wand or athame (ritual knife).

Critical Failure: Witchcraft spells cast within the circle receive a +1 penalty instead of a bonus, and harmful spiritual forces receive a -1 bonus in attempts to affect those within its area.

Crone’s Curse Transform spell: 1 FX Point

This spell calls upon various spirits or deities to look negatively upon the Cursed individual, temporarily plaguing the recipient with the effects of the “Bad Luck” flaw.

The effect of the initial casting lasts one day, and requires an Ordinary ritual. A witch may maintain this spell indefinitely by spending an additional FX point and performing an additional Marginal ritual for each day to be added to the duration. This can be done any time while the spell is still in effect. The initial casting causes one point of Fatigue damage to the caster, as does each subsequent extension of the effect. This damage is healed naturally.

A single individual may be the target of several curses, but multiple castings of this spell are not cumulative, even from multiple casters; only the worst of all applicable curses can affect a single skill check.

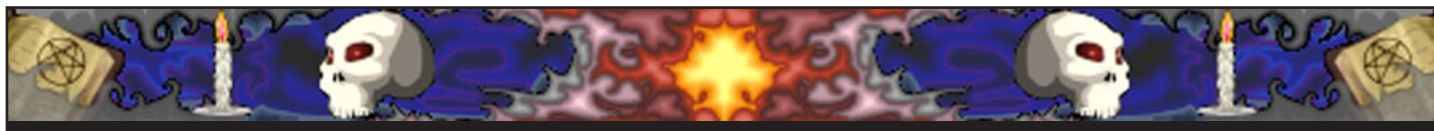
Those who cast misfortune upon others often find it returning to them. At any time that the caster has this spell in effect, the GM may apply the same effect to the caster, at her discretion.

Critical Failure: The spell instead acts as Maiden’s Blessing, below.

Cursed Item: At rank 2, the caster can place a curse on an item instead of a person. In this case, the curse affects anyone who possesses the item and keeps it with her. Other specifics of the spell remain unchanged. **Specific Curse:** At rank 3, the caster can fine-tune this effect to target specific aspects of the victim’s life. For example, such a curse might target the victim’s love life, health, or finances. In this case, the effect of the curse creates a Critical Failure whenever the victim rolls an 18, 19, or 20 on the control die for actions related to the specific focus of the curse. Other actions are not affected by the curse.

Remote Curse: At Rank 6, the the caster no longer needs to have a personal article of the recipient in order to target her with the curse, though the caster must have met or communicated with the target at some point in the past.

Stranger’s Curse: At Rank 12, the caster can target any individual with this curse, at any distance, whether she knows him personally or not.



Divination

Augur spell: 1 FX Point

Through the use of this spell, a witch can perceive distant individuals and the events that surround them with varying degrees of understanding and clarity. At higher ranks, the witch can observe events of the past as well as gain insight into a possible future.

The degree of success achieved on the skill roll determines the level of detail perceived. Ordinary: The caster can perceive the surroundings of the target with one non-visual sense determined by the Gamemaster. Good: The caster can perceive the target and events transpiring around him with two senses determined by the Gamemaster. Amazing: The caster can perceive the target and his surroundings with all of her senses, as if she were there with him.

Note: While this spell is usually cast to observe a living being, the caster can target an area or object instead of an individual, with a +2 penalty to the roll.

This spell requires an Ordinary ritual, usually involving a mirror, bowl of water, or ball of crystal (though any reflective surface will work). Any visions that appear in the surface can only be seen by the caster.

Scrye the Past: At rank 3, the caster can use this spell to perceive past events that have affected the individual or area in significant ways. Better degrees of success produce visions of more significant or relevant events.

Divine the Future: At rank 5, the caster can perceive future events that will significantly affect the individual or area if current tendencies continue unchanged. Better degrees of success produce visions of more significant or relevant events.

Contact the Distant Soul: At rank 7, the caster can attempt to send a message to an individual scryed with this spell. Only brief messages of a few words can be communicated to the subject's mind with each casting of this spell. Additionally, the messages can be easily lost among the subject's own thoughts, and might be overlooked completely. The target should roll Awareness-intuition, with a bonus determined by the level of success achieved on the caster's Divination roll. (Ordinary -1, Good -2, Amazing -3) This mental communication is one-way; the spell does not give the caster the ability to hear a subject's thoughts (though he might choose to speak a response out loud).

Earth Harvest

Conjure spell: 1 FX Point

This spell draws energy from the Earth to augment the caster's magical effort and refresh his reserve of FX energy. When the spell is cast, the witch can gain a number of FX

energy points determined by the FX skill check. (Ordinary: 2, Good: 3, Amazing: 4) These FX points gained can temporarily exceed a character's normal maximum limit, but any points in excess of that limit at the end of the scene are lost. The caster may choose to harvest fewer FX energy points than the roll indicates.

There is a cost to this "free" energy, however: each FX energy point harvested causes one point of fatigue damage to the caster, which manifests itself immediately after the scene in which the spell is cast. This fatigue damage does not heal naturally; instead, it remains permanent until the caster releases the same number of FX energy points back into the earth. Releasing one or more FX energy points requires another Marginal ritual, but no skill roll. Every FX point released in this way allows a point of fatigue damage caused by this spell to begin healing naturally.

A caster cannot harvest more FX energy points with this spell than the number of his empty fatigue boxes at the time of casting. If the fatigue damage caused by the casting of this spell forces the caster to fall unconscious, he must make a Resolve-physical resolve skill check once each day to awaken long enough to return the extra FX energy and begin the natural healing, as described above.

Earth Harvest is strongly affected by the changing of the seasons. It receives a -2 bonus during the summer, a -1 bonus in the spring, a +1 penalty in autumn, and a +2 penalty in the winter. If cast on midsummer's day, the spell receives a -3 bonus, but it suffers a +3 penalty on midwinter's night (Yule).

This spell requires only a Marginal ritual, usually involving focused meditation and direct contact with the ground or a plant rooted in it.

Critical Failure: No FX energy points are produced by the spell, but the caster still suffers one point of fatigue damage at the end of the scene, which heals normally.

Energy Storage: After achieving rank 3, the caster can store FX energy points produced by this spell within any natural crystal, such as quartz. Doing so requires a Marginal ritual and another skill check. (The FX point spent in the casting of this variation is the one stored in the crystal.) FX energy points stored through the use of this spell fade away during the next new moon (so points stored on the day before the new moon last only a day), and it requires a fist-sized amount of the crystal to hold a single FX point. Because of his bond to the stored energy, a character cannot have more FX energy points stored in crystals than his normal maximum limit of FX points. (A character with a max of 5 FX points can keep a total of 5 more FX points stored in crystals, in addition to his own normal reserve of energy.) FX energy points stored in crystals can only be used by the caster who stored them.

Increased Effect: At rank 6, the use of this spell can draw forth up to 3, 4, or 5 FX energy points on an Ordinary,

Good, and Amazing result, respectively. At rank 12, these numbers increase to 4, 5, and 6.

Improved Energy Storage: After achieving rank 9, the caster can store his own personal FX points within crystals (the rank 3 benefit only allows the storage of points harvested through this spell). Doing so functions just like the rank 3 benefit, but the maximum number of stored points doubles. (A character with a max of 5 FX points can keep a total of 10 FX points stored in crystals after reaching this rank.) Stored points fade away at the time of the next new moon after the spell is cast.

Part the Veil

Transform spell: 1 FX Point

Casting this sometimes-dangerous spell grants the witch the ability to step into a plane of shadows and speak with the spirits of the dead that are found there. If cast within a magic circle (see *Cast the Circle*, above), this spell presents little danger...as long as the caster remains within the circle, he is relatively safe from any hostile spirits that may be encountered. If this spell is cast without the protection of a circle, however, nothing stands between the caster and anything encountered in the shadowrealm. [Note: ghosts encountered in the shadowland do not gain the benefit of their "intangibility" defense, and can usually be seen without difficulty, but they are able to make "physical" attacks against those that walk in their world.] For more information about the spirit world, see page 48 of "*Beyond Science: A Guide to FX*".

The use of this spell does not convey any special power over the spirits that are encountered, nor does it compel any specific spirit to appear, but restless spirits rarely turn down an opportunity to communicate with the living...those who cast this spell frequently may find themselves quite popular on the other side (which is not always a good thing).

While his senses are tuned to the shadowrealm, the caster remains visible and tangible in our world...it is only the caster's perceptions that are altered. To uninformed observers, a witch using this spell appears to speak to beings that are not there and see visions that cannot be seen by others. If the caster explores the shadowrealm rather than remaining stationary, his body also moves correspondingly in the physical world. (Naturally, this can be very hazardous if the terrain in the spirit world does not match the terrain in the physical world.) If the caster's body dies while his spirit is in the shadowrealm, he remains trapped there indefinitely.

This spell requires a Good ritual, often involving a mirror or ball of crystal, and plenty of candles. (Usually black.) The caster can end the spell at any time.

Critical Failure: An error in the spell's casting (or foul luck) draws the attention of an extremely malevolent spirit or group of spirits, which may attempt to possess, mislead, or harm the caster.

Spirit Contact: At rank 3, the caster gains the ability to contact a specific spirit while in the realm of shadows, even if that spirit is not immediately present in the area or does not wish to be contacted. The caster must know the spirit's name to contact it, but this does not force the spirit to appear. It does, however, allow the caster to use his Interaction skills in communicating with the spirit.

Spirit Channeling: At rank 5, the caster can channel a spirit that is present in the area, allowing it to see the physical world through his eyes and speak with his voice. This differs from possession in that the caster remains completely in control of the situation, and can end the channeling at any time. Unwilling spirits cannot be forced to participate in this use of the spell, though they might be persuaded through other means.

Maiden's Blessing

Transform spell: 1 FX point

This spell calls upon various spirits or deities to look favorably upon the Blessed individual, temporarily granting the recipient the benefits of the "Good Luck" perk. Unlike the perk, however, the GM determines when the results of the blessing come into play. (Usually once per scene.)

A single individual may be the recipient of several blessings, but multiple castings of this spell are not cumulative, even from multiple casters; only the best of all applicable blessings can affect a single skill check. If a character has the "Good Luck" perk already, it continues to function as normal, independent of the benefits of this spell.

The effect of the initial casting lasts one day, and requires an Ordinary ritual. A witch may maintain this spell indefinitely by spending an additional FX point and performing an additional Marginal ritual for each day to be added to the duration. This can be done any time while the spell is still in effect.

While a witch can bless herself with this spell, doing so costs an additional FX point and the roll receives a +1 penalty. On the other hand, a GM might choose to apply the benefit of this spell to the caster whenever she has a blessing in effect on another person. (Many witches believe that the threefold law of return also applies to good deeds.)

Critical Failure: The spell instead acts as Crone's Curse, above.

Blessed Item: At rank 2, the caster can place a blessing on an item instead of a person. In this case, the blessing affects anyone (other than the caster) who possesses the item and keeps it with her. Other specifics of the spell remain unchanged.

Specific Blessing: At rank 3, the caster can fine-tune this effect to target specific aspects of the victim's life. For example, such a blessing might target the victim's love life, health, or finances. In this case, the effect of the spell



is doubled for rolls pertaining to the specific focus of the blessing. (The “perk” can be used twice in each scene, and the bonus provided by the “perk check” is increased by one step.) Actions that do not fall within the specific focus of this blessing are unaffected.

Remote Blessing: At Rank 6, the the caster no longer needs to have a personal article of the recipient in order to target him with the blessing, though the caster must have met or communicated with the recipient at some point in the past.

Stranger’s Blessing: At Rank 12, the caster can target any individual with this blessing at any range, whether she knows him personally or not.

Mother’s Touch

Transform spell: 2 FX Points

This spell calls upon a goddess (usually a Mother deity) to grant healing to a creature in need of aid. While the specific deity implored varies from tradition to tradition, the effect remains the same: the recipient finds peace and comfort while his body is cleansed of illness or infection.

The caster’s skill check determines the benefit received. Ordinary: The severity of the character’s disease is lessened by one degree, or one wound point is healed. Good: The severity of the character’s disease is lessened by two degrees, or 2 wound points are healed. Amazing: The severity of the character’s disease is lessened by three degrees (completely healed), or four wound points (or one mortal point) are healed. Note: Some disorders of a genetic origin or produced by a body’s natural state cannot be permanently cured through the use of this spell, even if their symptoms can be forced into remission. Likewise, some diseases are more persistent and invasive than others; attempts to cure illnesses such as HIV or cancer, for example, might carry a +4 or greater penalty. For more information about disease in the Alternity game, see page 57 in the Gamemaster Guide.

This spell requires an Ordinary ritual (usually involving special herbs) and physical contact with the person to be healed. It also causes one point of fatigue damage to the caster for each stage of healing provided by the spell (and one point even if the skill check is unsuccessful). The caster may choose to provide less healing than the roll indicates. For example, a caster who achieves an amazing result may choose to only heal two stages of the disease, and will then receive only two points of fatigue damage.

Mother’s Touch will only function on each individual recipient once per lunar cycle. The casting receives a -1 step bonus when the moon is waxing (-2 when it is full), but a +1 step penalty when it is waning (+2 during the new moon).

Critical Failure: The subject’s disease worsens by one degree, or he receives two additional points of wound damage.

Healing Gift: At rank 3 and higher, the caster no longer

requires contact with the recipient of the spell. Instead, the effect can be placed within a serving of food or a beverage; whoever ingests the material receives the effect of the spell. This enchantment lasts until the next new moon.

Out of Season

Conjure Spell: 2 FX Points

This spell brings about changes in local weather patterns at the will of the caster. Each time the spell is cast, the witch can change a single facet of the weather (temperature, wind, cloud cover, or rain) by up to three steps on the table below. The caster visualizes the desired change before casting. Each degree of success on the skill check shifts the existing conditions one step towards the caster’s desire. (Hence, a caster who achieves an amazing result could temporarily turn temperate conditions into arctic conditions, blazing conditions, or any state in between.) The effect lasts for 5 minutes.

TEMPERATURE	WIND (kph)	CLOUD COVER	RAIN*
Arctic	None	None	None
Cold	1-10	Hazy	Mist
Chilly	11-30	Wispy	Drizzle
Temperate	31-50	Partial	Light Rain
Warm	51-70	Half	Heavy Rain
Hot	71-90	Full	Downpour
Blazing	91+	Thunderclouds	Flash Flooding

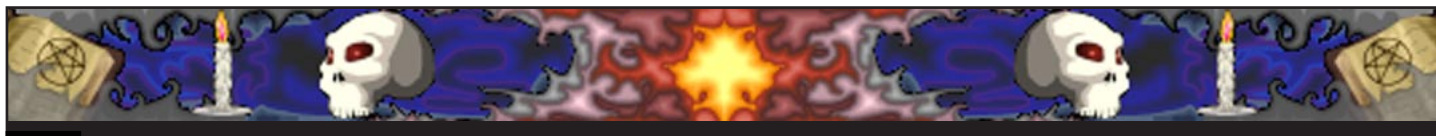
(*Increases in rain conditions require at least “partial” cloud cover. At “cold” or “arctic” temperatures, any precipitation falls as snow.)

The altered weather covers a circular area of up to 1 kilometer in diameter for each rank the caster has in this spell. (So a witch with rank 5 could alter the weather in a 5km diameter circle.) The effect is centered on the caster, who can choose to restrict the spell’s effect to smaller areas.

This spell requires an Amazing ritual, which usually involves incense, dance, and music.

Obscurement: At rank 3, the caster gains the ability to create fog under the right conditions. (Rain conditions of “mist”, wind no greater than 10kph, and cloud cover of at least “partial”.) If these conditions are present or achieved through the use of this spell, the caster can cause fog as part of the casting. An Ordinary or Good success creates Moderate visibility conditions, while an Amazing success creates Extreme conditions. See pages 39 and 48 of the Gamemaster Guide for more information about visibility.

Remote Prognostication: Starting at rank 5, the witch can cast this spell over a distant area, with a difficulty modified by her familiarity with the region to be affected. A witch casting this spell over her home town would receive only a +1 penalty, but affecting an area she had never seen before would carry a +4 penalty. Affections such as pho-



tographs or models of the area to be affected can lower these penalties, as could a sample of soil or leaves from the area. (An elaborate and detailed scale model of the location to be affected, made with elements taken from the site, might negate these penalties altogether.)

Increased Effect: At ranks 4, 8, and 12, the caster can change an additional aspect of the weather with the casting of this spell, and can change that aspect by one step for each degree of success achieved on the skill roll, as described above. For example, a witch that has rank 4 in this skill and rolls a Good success can turn a hazy day with no rain into one with partial cloud cover and a drizzle.

Increased Duration: The duration of the effect yielded by a successful casting of this spell increases to one hour at rank 3, one day at rank 6, and one week at rank 9.

Spellbind Transform spell: 1 FX Point

Often considered a witch's best defense against other spellcasters, this spell causes a targeted individual to experience an increased difficulty in using magical powers. The affected character receives a +3 penalty to any Arcane Magic FX or WIL-based Faith FX skill check made while the binding is in effect.

The casting of this spell is modified by the victim's normal WIL resistance modifier. The subject remains spellbound for 1 day on an Ordinary success, 1 week on a Good success, and 1 month on an Amazing success. Cumulative castings of this spell do not impose additional penalties on a targeted individual, but they can extend the duration.

This spell requires a Good ritual and an item pertaining to the target, such as a special piece of jewelry, a photograph, or a lock of hair.

Critical Failure: The caster suffers the penalizing effects of the spell for one day.

Broken Shackles: At rank 3, the caster is able to unravel the effects of another witch's binding by casting this spell. Each degree of success achieved on the skill check removes one step of penalties from a spellbound target. (This effect can't create a bonus...it only removes the penalties caused by a previous casting of this spell.) Also at this rank, a witch becomes able to terminate the effects of his own previous casting of this spell before the duration would normally expire. Doing so requires a subsequent Marginal ritual, but no skill check or FX expenditure is necessary for the caster to dismiss his own spell in this way.

Increased Effect: At ranks 4, 8, and 12, the penalty imposed by a successful casting of this spell increases by 1 step. (If cast to remove a binding, the number of penalties eliminated on a successful casting increases by one at each of these ranks.)

Bind the Soul: At rank 6 and higher, the casting of this spell to penalize another spellcaster also applies an equal penalty to the victim's WIL resistance modifier throughout the duration, making it harder for the affected individual to resist magical effects and other suggestions. (So a witch with rank 6 in this spell could apply a penalty of 4 steps to the victim's WIL resistance modifier, in addition to the +4 penalty to the target's WIL-based FX skill checks.)

Ward of Protection Conjure spell: 1 FX Point

This common spell is a witch's most reliable defense against otherworldly beings (such as ghosts, demons, elohim, and luciferans). If placed on a person or object, the subject cannot be harmed or otherwise affected by the force named in the warding, be it spirits, demons, or a specific type of magic. (Each FX broad skill is considered a separate type of magic for the purposes of this spell.) This spell can also be placed on a portal or entranceway, however...in which case the named force cannot pass through the entrance or the area immediately adjacent to it.

In order to defeat a ward of protection, a being must succeed on a Resolve-mental resolve skill check modified by both the caster's WIL resistance modifier, and the degree of success achieved on the skill check. (Ordinary +2, Good +4, Amazing +6) If something does succeed in getting past this defense, the spell is considered broken.

Unless the spell is broken, a ward of protection remains in effect for one hour from the time it is cast, or until the caster willingly dismisses it. Ending a ward of protection requires only a single action, and no die roll is necessary. The FX point spent in a successful casting of this spell can not be restored while the spell is still in effect.

Casting a ward of protection requires only a Marginal ritual, which often involves a small amount of an element unfavorable to the warded being. Salt, for example, is commonly used for the purposes of warding away spirits. (A Lore-occult lore skill check may be needed to determine the appropriate substance for a given entity. Strewing salt about oneself may be just the wrong way to ward against an etoile.) To add an element of uncertainty about the strength of a ward, Game-masters are encouraged to use the "Conspiracy Dice" optional rule on page 249 of the Dark Matter hardcover during the casting of this spell.

Critical Failure: The subject of the ward becomes more susceptible to its target, giving that force or being a -2 bonus to affect the subject. This effect lasts a single hour, or until a successful recasting.

Increased Duration: The duration of the effect yielded by a successful casting of this spell increases to one day at rank 4, one week at rank 8, and one month at rank 12.





PSYCHOKINETICS

PSYCHO: Relating to the Mind
KINETIC: Relating to Motion
PSYCHOKINETIC: Using the Mind to Control Motion

New Empathic Discipline for Dark Conspiracy by Steve King

EMPATHY

Overview

Psychokinetics exists in many forms, the most common form being the ability of 'mind over matter', or telekinesis, however, the Psychokineticists are less concerned with this ability than with the ability to control the motion of their own bodies.

Psychokinetics rigidly train their minds for years to achieve the control they have over their minds and bodies. Due to this training, they have some trouble believing in the impossible, but also can force themselves to ignore it for a very short time, in order to achieve their results.

In general, a Psychokinetic uses his mind to boost his reflexes, increase his strength and speed, and change the way he moves within his environmen.

History

Historically, Psychokinetics were the stuff of legends, using their wits and abilities to defeat evil. Wherever there was a story of someone incredibly fast or strong, there is a good chance it was a latent psychokinetic ability that was somehow permanently 'switched on' in that person - assuming of course that they really existed.

Psychokineticists are a rare breed - not everyone has the ability or determination to do what a Psychokineticist does. The trouble is, they are also one of the most hunted empathic sects - the Dark Minions greatly fear the abilities of the Psychokineticists.

Game Details: Becoming a Psychokineticist

Becoming a Psychokineticist requires years of dedicated training, and works best on the young. First, an empath must locate an existing Psychokineticist, which is never easy. They must be then tested by either that Psychokineticist, or taken before a Master to be tested in the three areas of Talent, Ability and Discipline. The three tests are simulated by succeeding at two DIFFICULT tests of Empathy, and one DIFFICULT test of Intelligence. A failure increases the following test to FORMIDIBLE, a Critical failure is a complete failure. A Critical success makes the subsequent rolls AVERAGE, and so forth.

If the rolls are made successfully, the empath may become a Psychokineticist. Two full terms of training under the supervision of a Master of the Disciplines is required. A Psychokineticist may only study for a total number of terms equal to Empathy - 1.

The first Term for a Psychokineticist MUST be basic training. This rigid training of the mind is the way a Psychokineticist focuses his or her power, and must be taught and practiced over and over until it is second nature.

Requirements:

- Foreign and/or Empathic Contact (GM's discretion)
- No greater than 24 yrs old at commencement of training
- Intelligence of 6 or greater
- Empathy of 4 or greater

First Term (Basic Training)

Skills :

Willpower	4
Foreboding	1
Peace of Mind	1

Contacts : 1 Specialist (Master Psychokineticist)

Secondary Activities : None Allowed

Special : Entry into the second term is automatic. No income is earned during training.

Second Term (Basic Training continued...)

Skills : 12 levels in any of the Psychokinetic disciplines

Contacts : None

Secondary Activities : None

Special : At the end of this term, the Psychokineticist must make an AVERAGE test of Willpower. Failure indicates that the person may not learn any more of the Psychokinetic discipline, and has reached their limit. Success means that another term may be taken (without the need to roll for it) as a Psychokinetic. Age is not a factor for a Psychokineticist

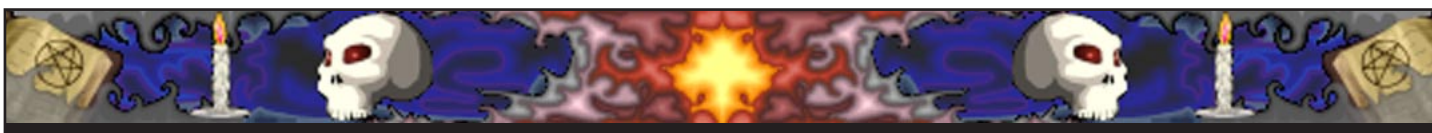
Subsequent Terms:

Skills : 8 levels in any of the Psychokinetic disciplines

Contacts : None

Secondary Activities : None

Special : To continue, a DIFFICULT test of Willpower must be successfully made. This increases by one difficulty level for each subsequent term, until it reaches IMPOSSIBLE. After this test is passed, the character makes no more rolls against Willpower ñ they are assumed to be able to continue to their maximum terms from here on in. If a character completes 4 terms as a Psychokineticist, they are awarded the title of Master (this counting includes the first term of training). If the character completes the 4 terms, their Master Psychokineticist contact from Term 1 becomes 2 Specialist (Psychokineticist) contacts.



Psychokinetic Disciplines

The Disciplines are broken up into major and minor disciplines. Minor disciplines are generally easier to master and require less concentration.

Major Disciplines

Speed of Thought

This ability allows the Psychokineticist to increase his reflexes and physical speed by an order of magnitude. This affects either physical (foot) speed, or reflexes.

Physical Speed: To boost physical speed in a non-combat situation is an EASY task, in combat this rises to AVERAGE. Boosting this allows the Psychokineticist to run much faster than normal for each stage of success. Stage One gives a slight boost, Stage 3 is effectively double speed, and Stage 6 is 4 times speed, allowing the empath to literally run like the wind. This lasts for as many minutes as the empath has levels of Willpower.

Reflexes: Boosting reflexes is an AVERAGE task out of combat, and DIFFICULT in it. Boosting reflexes gives faster reactions depending on the level of success. A Stage One success gives a bonus +1 to Initiative, a Stage Three success gives a further +1 bonus to this (for a total of +2), Stage Five giving another +1 bonus (total of +3) while a Stage Six success gives a formidable total bonus of +4 to Initiative. This bonus lasts for as many combat phases as the empath has levels of Willpower. (which might not be many, given how often he/she now acts)

Mental Leap

This power allows the empath to use their mental power to focus their muscular power to throw themselves high into the air. It is not levitation, for that would break the rules of the Universe, rather than just bend them for a few moments. To perform the Mental Leap out of combat is an EASY task, to do it in combat is a DIFFICULT task. The height attained is dependant on the stage of success. For ease of calculations, assume a Psychokineticist can leap half a metre up from a standing start without using this power. The height given is the maximum height attainable at that stage of success, not a fixed value. Thus, an empath trying to leap 4 metres high who scores a Stage 5 success does not overshoot by 4 metres, he or she simply makes the jump easily.

Basic Success :	1 metre
Stage 1 :	2 metres
Stage 2 :	3 metres
Stage 3 :	5 metres
Stage 4 :	6 metres
Stage 5 :	8 metres
Stage 6 :	10 metres

This power is not without its drawbacks if the empath miscalculates, they cannot stop themselves from falling.

Force of Will

Force of Will allows the empath to increase his physical strength by the power of his mind. To do this out of combat is an AVERAGE task, to do this in combat is DIFFICULT. The effect of Force of Will is dependant on the stage of success ñ for each stage of success, the empath can shift 1 point of Willpower directly to Strength ñ 1 at Basic Success to as many as 6 at Stage Five, then 8 at Stage Six. This ability has two limitations ñ firstly the amount of willpower to be transferred cannot be greater than the willpower that the empath has. Secondly, the effect only lasts as long as the willpower remaining. If the empath pushes their willpower to 0, the effect will last only for one phase. In combat, this effect is measured in rounds, out of combat, in minutes.

Rigid Thinking

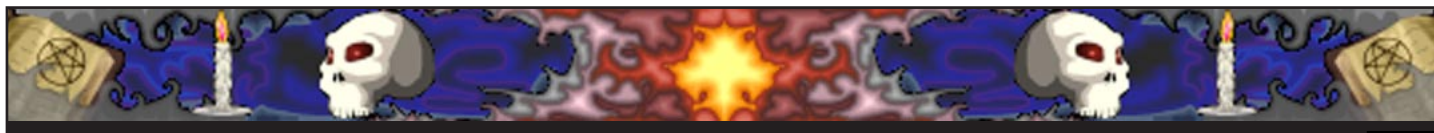
Rigid Thinking is the most powerful, yet most difficult ability of the Psychokineticist. Rigid Thinking allows the empath to push their control to its limit, so that when something happens, they are so tuned into themselves that they can react without hesitation. Rigid Thinking is treated as a combat skill, due to the timeframe it operates on. It is a DIFFICULT task at its easiest time, the more stress and activity happening when it is used pushing this higher. Rigid Thinking has two uses - one is to react to a surprise better than anyone else, and the other is to use it to turn the empath's body into a living weapon.

The surprise counter use of Rigid Thinking allows a split-second reaction time to counter the effects of the surprise. Rigid Thinking's effects depend on the stage of success. To use Rigid Thinking, a successful AVERAGE Foreboding roll must be made first.

Success Level	Effects of Rigid Thinking
Basic	No appreciable effect
Stage 1	+1 to dodging/evading rolls
Stage 2	+1 to quickdraw or other counter-striking roll
Stage 3	additional +1 to whatever counter-measure used
Stage 4	make DIFFICULT Foreboding to take action first
Stage 5	make EASY Foreboding to take counter first
Stage 6	Able to act before and counter the action

Countering the detected action does rely on being able to counter it. For example, if Wilhelm the Psychokineticist is ambushed, he could make the foreboding roll (despite the fact that the ambush has been sprung on him), then the DIFFICULT test of Rigid Thinking. He succeeds with both, and rolls a Stage Six success. He knows he is being shot at, but since he has little acrobatic skills of note, he could block the firer's shots IF he had something on hand that he could get in the way in time, such as a sheet of metal, but not a book, as the bullets would go through the book and into him.

What makes Rigid Thinking so useful is its second use. Using a combination of Rigid Thinking and Foreboding, the empath can enter melee combat (armed or unarmed) and use his ability over his reactions and body to gain an advantage.



To use this ability, the Psychokineticist must make the following successful rolls for each phase of the combat. The actual results depend on the action taken by the empath, and the stage of success. This does NOT allow the Empath to make a diving blow.

<i>Empath is Attacking</i>	<i>Success Stage</i>	<i>Empath is Defending</i>
Empath acts first if AGL is same	Basic Success	Empath acts first if AGL is same
+1 to attack	Stage 1	+1 to defense
+2 to attack	Stage 2	+2 to defense
+3 to attack	Stage 3	Defense does not cost action
Can strike twice in one phase	Stage 4	Can attack after the defense
No penalty for one aimed strike	Stage 5	Defense is automatically successful
No penalty for both aimed strikes	Stage 6	Attacker loses next phase

Minor Disciplines

The Minor Disciplines are fairly standard skills and abilities that a Psychokineticist can put some or all of his skill points into.

Peace of Mind

Peace of Mind is the ability to not panic, to keep the mind focused on the task at hand, and generally to stay cool under pressure. If the empath is ever surprised, panicked or under the effects of fear, a DIFFICULT task against *Peace of Mind* will enable them to ignore the effects. This differs from Rigid Thinking in that Rigid Thinking allows earlier action, whereas *Peace of Mind* can prevent the loss of action at all.

Mental Health

Mental Health allows the empath to accelerate their own natural healing processes. The effect of this however is to lower their overall effectiveness with their powers whilst their mind focuses on the body. The stage of success is below. Increase the difficulty by 1 level if the wound being affected is to the head.

<i>Wound Level</i>	<i>Task of Mental Health</i>
Scratch	Easy
Slight	Average
Serious	Difficult
Critical	Formidable

<i>Success Level</i>	<i>Effect</i>
Basic	.5 pt/per day acceleration, 1 wound
Stage 1	1pt/per day acceleration, 1 wound
Stage 2	2pts/per day acceleration, 1 wound
Stage 3	2pts/per day acceleration, 2 wounds
Stage 4	3pts/per day acceleration, 3 wounds
Stage 5	wound level down by 1, 1 wound
Stage 6	wound level down by 1, all wounds

The limitations for Mental Health is that for each day Mental Health is used, the empath's Willpower drops by 1 if they take no other actions (besides a slow walk, car ride or nothing that seriously involves the mind). If they do other things, the cost jumps to 2 pts. Activities with high stress levels (ie : combat) raise this to 4 points. If the empath does not have the willpower for the entire day, Mental Health has no effect. The willpower lost in this way comes back after a properly restful period (ie : a solid 12hr sleep). Whilst using Mental Health, the empath's Empathy & Intelligence are temporarily halved. These attributed return to normal as soon as the empath stops using Mental Health.

Other Abilities

A Psychokineticist's control over his mind gives him an opportunity to improve himself in other ways apart from his disciplines. The following list of skills can also be studied during the training.

Foreboding

These skills are identical to those given in the Rulebook.
 Melee Combat (Armed)
 Melee Combat (Unarmed)
 Observation
 Acrobatics
 Willpower

A Psychokineticist who studies for more than 2 terms (ie : 3 or more) gains a +1 to his initiative. This is not because he has trained in combat, but to reflect the lack of hesitation due to increased mental control. This bonus is lost if the empath has spent, or goes on to spend, time in the military, where thinking for oneself is not encouraged.

Penalties

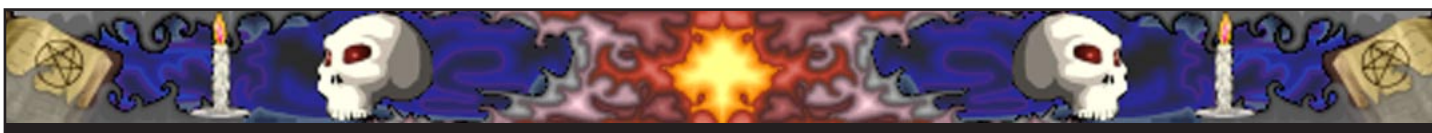
There are several drawbacks to being a psychokineticist.

The most obvious one is that the rigid disciplining of the mind makes them easier to locate via Empathic skills. Any Empath attempting a mind scan of an area containing a Psychokineticist makes the roll at one level of difficulty easier. This also applies to Darkling empathic abilities. The Psychokineticist may or may not be aware of this detection.

The second is the lack of ability with ranged weapons. These weapons are not controlled by the body and mind, and are affected by wind, range, gravity and the like. Psychokineticists make **all** rolls for any sort of ranged weapon at one degree of difficulty higher than normal.

Finally, Psychokineticists are among the top of the Darkling hit list, so trouble tends to find them without them trying to look for it.

Being a Psychokinetic is not always an easy task, as the study forces them into a very narrow pattern. However, a well trained Psychokinetic is a valuable asset to any Minion Hunter group, and the results are there in history.



Sample Character

Name: Master Simon Birch
Gender: Male
Age: 41
Nationality: British
Weight: 88 kg
Height: 6'
Load: 45 kg
Occupation: Operative for Empathic Cell
Social Class: Mike

Strength: 9
Agility: 7 (already adjusted for Age)
Constitution: 6
Intelligence: 7
Education: 3
Charisma: 3
Empathy: 7
Initiative: 4

Hit Capacity

	Current	Scratch	Slight	Serious	Critical
Head	8	16	32	33	34+
Chest	11	22	44	45	46+
Abdomen	8	16	32	33	34+
Right Arm	8	16	32	33	34+
Left Arm	8	16	32	33	34+
Right Leg	8	16	32	33	34+
Left Leg	8	16	32	33	34+

Base Hit Numbers

	Skill	Short	Medium	Long	Extreme
SA (Pistol)	2	11	5	2	1
SA (Rifle)	1	10	5	2	1
Archery	0	9	4	2	1
Hvy Weapons	0	9	4	2	1

Note: Base Hit numbers shown are already adjusted for Psychokineticist and non-skilled penalties.

Throw Range: 36
Thrown Weapon:
Unarmed Combat Damage: 5

Terms: 2 as Martial Artist, 4 as Psychokineticist
Age Penalties: -1 Agility
Mustering Out: Encounter
Cash : \$10,000

Skills :

Stealth	2	Willpower	6
Small Arms (Pistol)	2	Foreboding	4
Medical	2	Peace of Mind	4
Melee Combat (Unarmed)	6	Rigid Thinking	6
Vehicle Use (Motorbike)	2	Mental Leap	4
Acrobatics	2	Speed of Thought	6
Observation	4	Mental Health	2
		Force of Will	2

Equipment:

Flashlight
Field Pack
Grapple
Rope, 50m
Survival Kit
Binoculars
Medikit
Flak Jacket
Kevlar Helmet
Tanto (knife)
Katana (sword)
Shoulder Holster
Desert Eagle .44 pistol, fitted with silencer and laser sight
2 spare magazines for Desert Eagle

Background:

Left school with no desire to further study. Preferred to concentrate on martial arts, won some prize money at competitions. Recognized by empathic underground as being highly empathic. Met one of these people after a competition, taken to a cell. Along the way, the group were attacked by a group of Igors, saved by a mysterious newcomer. Taken by the newcomer to see a Master, started along the path of Psychokinetics. Spent time learning the ways, then slowly integrating the new powers with his existing skills. Accompanied several other empaths on a daring raid of a corporate research facility. During the operation, things went wrong and the group found themselves being stalked by Minions. In the resulting fracas, stretched newfound powers to help the group win. Currently active operative for minion hunts.

Contacts:

1 Business
1 Foreign Criminal
2 Specialist (Psychokineticist)



"These are the really slow ones, right? Okay stand back, I'm going to poke it with a stick."

- John 'Lefty' Sinclair (Former-Early 21st century minion hunter)



Sources & Sinks

by Norm Fenlason

Jeremy had a bad feeling about this. Something about the place...was it the smell or the weird lighting? Jeremy had no time to think about it now. All he had to do was open his special door through the wall and he and Robbi would unlock the steel door. Their friends were waiting just behind those oil drums. Jeremy couldn't see them, but he knew they were there. He had only to open the door.

"Hurry up, were awfully exposed here," Robbi hissed.

Jeremy turned to the warehouse wall, took a deep breath and cycled through his relaxation routines. With eyes half closed, his hands open, palms out, he started concentrating on forming the door. Robbi turned from watching the corner where the guard would show at any minute. She saw the mists forming, the swirling of the purple matter, the sheet metal of the wall start to twist into disorienting angles.

"Good." She turned back to watch the corner. "Hurry..."

Beads of sweat stood out on Jeremy's head as the door started to open. Through half-closed eyes he saw the door as it formed. A dark purple organic line was lengthening, widening in the middle, taking shape. Robbi's words came back to him about it looking like some giant sphincter muscle. Jeremy smiled slightly. A piece of cake.

"Ready," he rasped, gasping for breath. That was a lot harder than usual, he thought. I must really be nervous tonight!

Jeremy passed through and expecting Bobbi to squeeze through right after him, scanned the shadows of the warehouse. Deep shadows were cast from the glazed-over windows set near the ceiling 30 feet above. Tall crates and odd-looking machinery covered the center. A dim walkway through the tall stacks of plastic wrapped pallets led to a pale light near the office door.

"What the ..." Jeremy mumbled as he saw a dim shape detach itself from the shadow.

Jeremy drew a bead on the roughly human shape with his crossbow as he heard a stifled gasp ending in a gurgle behind him. Jeremy's shot went wild as he spun around to see his door tightening around Bobbi. The normally purple ectoplasm that formed the edges of the door had turned a bright red. Bright enough to blend with the blood that was oozing from Bobbi's struggling body trapped within it. The door was shrinking around Bobbi squeezing her within it terrible grasp. To Jeremy's utter horror Bobbi's skull was crushed and the

skin of her face fell to the floor at his feet, joining her left arm and part of her lower right leg. Jeremy's rising anger, warring to keep the bile in his throat, turned to icy dread as the voice whispered in his ear,

"We've been waiting for you."

Sources and Sinks

With the increased occurrence of empathic talents among humans, the variability of the human genome will produce an occasional oddity. There will occur, naturally among humans, what are termed empathic sources and sinks.

A source is a human empathic white noise generator providing a constant background noise like the hum of computer fans or the hiss of an air conditioning duct. Sources can be quite strong, more closely resembling the roar of surf or a heavy downpour. Sinks are natural empathic sponges drawing empathic energy from the environment and sending it to nowhere: an empathic black hole. Some sinks are like the slow leak from a tire, while some are like a tornado cone drawing energy away faster than it can be generated.

Sources have been nicknamed as candles, or just sparkies. Sinks are called dead heads, dead zones, or zones.

Creation in Game Terms

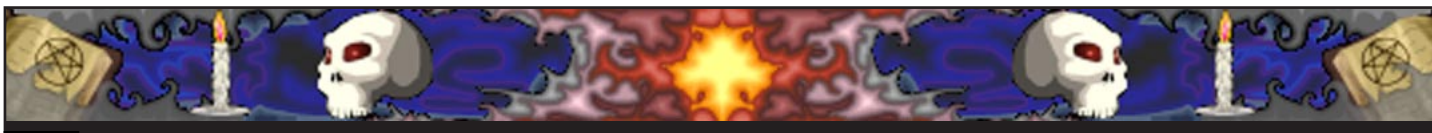
Sources and sinks are quite rare. When allowed by the GM, a human player character (PC) who has rolled a positive EMP attribute, rolls a d20 for the possibility of instead being a source or sink. On a roll of 1 on a d20, the character will be a source and the EMP attribute is handled differently than normal when empathic skills are employed. On a roll of 20 on the source/sink roll, the character is instead a sink. The EMP attribute indicates the level of empathic energy conducted away from the primary earth dimension.

NPCs

At the GM's discretion, human NPCs can be sinks or sources with all the effects described below. Non-humans cannot be sinks or sources.

Effects of a Source

In the presence of a source, the empathic background noise increases dramatically. This causes all empathic tasks directed into or performed in the vicinity of a source to increase in



difficulty. Within the source's radius of effect (in meters), an empath attempting to use empathic skills suffers an increased task resolution difficulty, also based on the EMP attribute.

For example, an empath or her target within 2 meters of a source (EMP 2) has an Easy test shifted to Impossible. Within 4 meters, an Easy task becomes Difficult. Up to 8 meters away, an Easy task becomes Average. This difficulty increase is in effect if the empath or the target is in the radius.

Sources can acquire proficiency in and perform empathic tasks, but all power levels are halved and rounded down. For the average human empath this makes using empathic skills very difficult. During skill selection for character generation and later during experience point spending, empathic skills cost double the skill points.

Effects of a Sink

Wherever a sink goes, empathic energy from the environment is sucked into the sink's empathic black hole. Any standing empathic effects like human, animal, or alien empathy are dragged away and empathic contact is not possible. Proximity to the empath or the target causes this effect. Empathy-based illusions of Dark Minions will fade the closer they get to a sink. For this reason, Minions will go far out of their way to destroy a sink. From an adventure perspective, a failed darkling illusion is a great way to introduce the PC to the Dark Conspiracy, whether from the PCs own sink abilities or those of a sink NPC in the area.

The EMP attribute determines the empathic power drain suffered by empaths operating in the area. The effect of a sink is to modify the empath's attained power level instead of the difficulty level. The GM determines the using empath's power level normally. However, when the using empath or her target is within the sink's radius of effect, the sink's EMP attribute is subtracted from the power level giving the true attained power level. This includes the effects of empathic sorcery as well.

For example, given a sink's EMP of 2, for an empath trying to perform Empathic Healing on the sink that attains a power level of 3, the level is reduced to 1 (Basic Success). Attempts to empathically determine if a sink is, herself empathic, suffer the sink's full EMP-levels of difficulty shift. To most empaths a sink appears to be a mundane.

A human sink, while having a positive empathic attribute, cannot develop empathic skills. Any empathic energy that the character generates is immediately drawn away to wherever it is that the energy goes, preventing the empath from gaining insight into her powers. Sinks can take EMP +1 during character creation.

Effects on the Astral Plane

The effects of sources and sinks extend into the astral plane as well. In the presence of a source, the astral plane thickens, becoming viscous. Travel and visibility through the astral plane are much harder in the presence of a source. Astral travelers must pass a difficult test of willpower for every meter

they move in the area of effect. The radius of the effect on the astral plane is usually 2xEMP. However, the GM sets the limits on the source's radius of effect on the astral plane. A sink affects the astral plan differently. In the proximity of a sink, the astral plane just does not exist. On the astral plane, there is a nothingness in the area of the sink – a void that has no appearance. The mystic traveling the astral plane cannot see or move into the area of the sink. The mystic may know this is due to a sink's presence, but cannot be sure. This range is usually 2xEMP, but the GM again makes the final determination.

Portals, Gates, and Proto-Dimensions

Sources make passage through the doorways between dimensions very difficult. Any living creature passing through a portal or gate that is within the radius of a source's EMP attribute in meters must make a difficult test versus willpower to pass through. Passing through such a portal feels like being squeezed through a thick viscous membrane complete with sucking noises. Within a sink's EMP radius, in meters, portals will collapse on a roll of 1 on 1d6. Creatures caught in a collapsing portal will be dismembered with severed appendages on both sides, if the gate collapsed. The result is an immediate critical wound inflicted on all affected body parts.

The physics of proto-dimensions are incredibly varied. Sources may have different appearances or different effects in proto-dimensions. For example, a source may glow brightly in a p-dim where a normal empath does not, or may cause gale force winds to circle around her.

A sink is the same as a mundane when traveling in p-dims. In addition, the link to an empath that must be maintained for a mundane to experience a p-dim, suffers the same difficulties as other empathic skills. Once within a p-dim, a sink may demonstrate strange physical effects. For example, a sink that enters a p-dim may cause the area around her to warp, visibly like a large crystal ball.

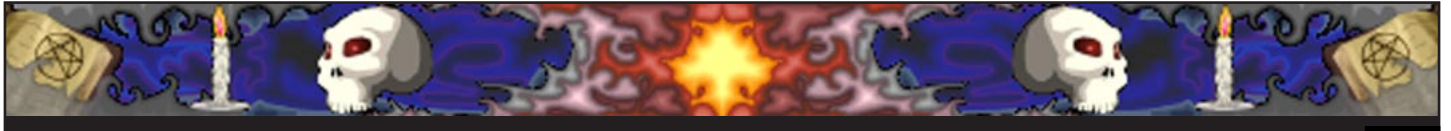
Downside

While being a source or a sink appears to be an advantage, the downside is that the power cannot be turned off or controlled. The source/sink affects their buddies as well as the baddies. Further, given any time in the proximity of a source or sink, an empathic Darkling will know immediately who and where its problems are coming from.

From a Darkling perspective sources make great batteries – source of empathic power that can be focused using Darktek. This makes sources sought after by Dark Minions. A victim source can end up trapped in Darktek powering a gate!

Even though sinks expose Darklings to the world at large, Darklings can put sinks to work as well. When transformed by Darktek, a sink may find herself (or parts of herself) providing an empathy damper protecting darkling secrets from other empaths.





GLAND PSYCHICS



by Lee Williams and Chris Lewis

One of the aspects of Dark Conspiracy that many of us enjoy, especially referees, is the use of Dark Tek devices. These are usually biological items, designed by Darklings and usually have a sinister function of some sort. Page 46 of the 1st edition Dark Tek sourcebook states 'the use of Dark Tek will leave a stain on the soul' of those foolish or desperate enough to use it.

However, the term Dark Tek does not merely refer only to those devices created either by or for the use of darkling beings. Humans themselves are quite capable of creating twisted devices that

have a deleterious effect on their users. One of these is a manufactured biotech device generally referred to by those in the know as a 'Gland', and those people who have one implanted are called 'Gland psychics'.

Some time during the early years of the 21st century, British defense scientists started to take the use of psi powers somewhat seriously. Study of several low-level empathys enabled them to pinpoint what they thought was the exact balance of neuro-chemicals that would stimulate empathy in the brains of non-empaths. For many months they worked

at the cellular level, creating a Gland they could implant which would stimulate the release of those particular chemicals into a subject's brain.

A simple test was devised to enable them to choose those who might have the potential to utilise this implant. The test was given to members of the armed forces, and those who were deemed suitable were given the Gland implant, and then formed into a special battalion. Expectations were high among the top brass and the defense scientists, but it soon became apparent that things were not going according to plan.

Psi Gland Table

Gland Use	Effects	Duration	Rest Period
Normal	Add 2 to the Skill Level	90 seconds	30 minutes
Heavy	Add 3 to the Skill Level	30 seconds	2 hours
Extreme	Add 4 to the Skill Level	5 seconds	6 hours

This table gives information according to the level of Gland usage: game effects, their duration and the following period during which the Gland may not be used.

If the Rest Period is not taken, add one Difficulty level to each following Empathy task. This is cumulative. If the accumulated extra Difficulty Levels reach Impossible, then a roll MUST be made on the failed Empathic Push Table (DC2 Players Handbook pg.109)

Any successful roll means that they collapse exhausted and remain unconscious for 1D10 hours, but suffer no further ill effects.

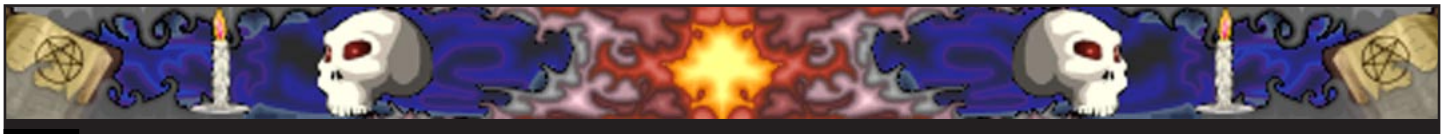
Failure results in the subject gaining another mental instability in addition to any they already have, and they also lose consciousness for 2D10 hours.

Also, you may wish to add one level of difficulty to ALL tasks, to represent the fatigue that the Gland-psychic is feeling.

User Cost Table

Gland Use	User Cost
Normal	Detection: 50
Heavy	Detection: 100
Extreme	Detection: 500

Feel free to adjust these factors to suit the particular circumstances of your game.



Many of the soldiers who had received implants began experiencing hallucinations and psychoses almost immediately. Others found that objects they came in contact with would suddenly fly into the air, or bend and break without warning. Still others became catatonic...eventually so few of the subjects remained sane and able to control their abilities that the project was cancelled, and all records sealed.

Of course, what had happened in DC terms was that the implants had 'awakened' the latent empathic abilities of some of the implant subjects (check out the Neuropathy chapter of the 1st edition Empathic Sourcebook for more details of the 'awakening' process). What made the situation worse was several of the implantees were not empathic at all. In their cases, the particular neuro-chemicals stimulated by the Gland merely drove them over the edge and into screaming fits and hallucinations. Sev-

eral of them were declared medically insane and still reside in mental care homes.

Those few, who survived with their sanity relatively intact, were able to use their new abilities, although this puts them under severe mental and physical strain every time they attempted use their Gland-given abilities. Almost without exception, they have developed certain 'eccentric' personality traits. Several have had their implants removed, to save the possibility of them also going insane.

If you wish to use a Gland-psychic character or NPC in your game, then here are a few things to take into account. Firstly, most of them tend to be good at only one aspect of empathy, i.e. one might be able to sense the location of a living being, whilst another would have a high Foreboding.

Secondly, the few surviving active Gland-psychics tend to exhibit unusual

behaviour. Most often this is an inability to interact socially with others, but all other forms of eccentricity are possible. Make them as weird as you like, to suit the level of weirdness you already have in your games ☺

Thirdly, as stated above, every use of the Gland places some form of strain on the user. This can be mental, physical or both. The tables below are intended as a guide only, but hopefully should be of some use.

One more thing to consider is the User Cost of the Gland. Although not necessarily a Darkling device its very nature means that it generates a User Cost of Detection (see second table below).

Finally, for those of you who might want to generate a Gland-psychic player character, a new career option is given below.



New Career:

Gland-Psychic Test Subject

You were an elite soldier, proud to serve your country in any way you could. When they told you that you "had the right stuff" to help research unusual phenomena you volunteered immediately. After all, although you never mentioned it to your mates you knew that your dear departed granny was watching you from the 'other side'...she told you herself. You were ready for anything when you awoke after the implant, except the screaming fits and hallucinations. Later, when they cancelled the tests, you were left with this thing in your head. Though you can usually control it now, weird things sometime happen that you still can't explain.

Entry:

STR+CON+AGL= 15+, Empathy 4+, previous term in military

First term skills:

Empathic Speciality* 3
Observation 1
Willpower 3

Subsequent term skills:

A total of 6 levels from any one or a combination of the following:

Act/Bluff
Disguise
Empathic Speciality*
Interrogation
Language
Medical
Observation
Psychology
Small Arms
Stealth
Willpower

Contacts:

2 per term; government, medical or military. Foreign on 1D10 roll of 10.

Special:

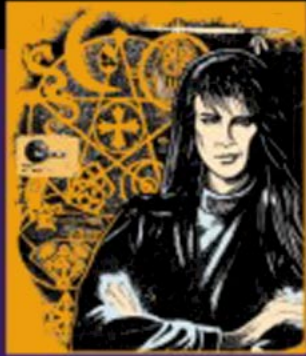
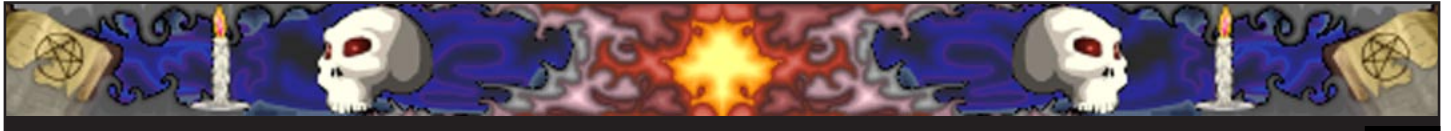
Characters must roll 1d20+10 on the neuropath failed push table (DC2 Players Handbook pg. 109)

* The empathic speciality must be chosen from the neuropaths powers list.

This will be the only empathic ability available to the Gland-psychic. In the event that a power requires that an empathic link must be established, a test may be made using the Gland-psychic's speciality level instead of animal/human empathy.

The original inspiration for this article came from the following books by Peter F Hamilton; Mindstar Rising, A Quantum Murder, and The Nanoflower. Well worth reading I can assure you.





Doomsday Exam *Nick Pollotta*

SAMPLE CHAPTER FROM
BUREAU 13: "DOOMSDAY EXAM"

By Nick Pollotta

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CHAPTER ONE

Waiting for a friend to arrive, I was standing on a street corner in downtown Chicago when a ton of glass showered down upon me. Staggering under the brutal impacts, I was driven gasping to my knees. My hat and sports jacket were slashed to ribbons and only the presence of my Bureau 13 issue body armor saved my life.

I barely had time to register these facts before something smashed onto the pavement next to me with a terrible wet crunch, blood spraying everywhere.

Forcing myself to look, I noted the tattered uniform on the pulped lump. Dark blue with black stripes. Oh, hell, it was a fellow cop. That was when I heard the screams and gunfire from above.

Painfully getting erect, I shielded my face with a trembling hand and glanced skyward. There seemed to be a window missing on fifteen, but at this range it was impossible to tell. The sounds of warfare continued. Slipping on my sunglasses, I dialed for maximum computer enhancement. Yep, broken window on fifteen. Okay, now I had a goal.

"Call the police!" I shouted to the gathering crowd of onlookers, as I stumbled into the apartment building.

Once I was out of view of the general public, I paused long enough in the lobby to drink a vial of healing potion. Instantly the pain diminished and the blood stopped running from the cuts on my head and neck. Ah, much better. Wish I could have done something for the officer splattered on the sidewalk, but no amount of magic could cure that wound.

As I headed for the elevator a muffled explosion sounded somewhere and the fire alarm started to clang. Spinning about, I changed direction. Gotta take the stairs.

Sprinting up the steps, I shucked my sports jacket and loosened both of the Smith & Wesson .357 Magnums in my double shoulder holster. Damnation, I was armed to go to the movies, not indulge in serious battle! I only hoped the situation wasn't as bad as it sounded. The whole thing could be attributed to a gas stove explosion. Highly improbable, but feasible. Maybe it was only a Mafia execution, or a terrorist attack. Something simple like that. Yeah, think positive.

Reaching fifteen, I eased open the exit door and scanned the hallway before entering. Go slow, keep low, that was my motto for the month. At the end of the hallway, there were two cursing police officers, reloading their Beretta 9mm automatics and not looking at all happy. Faintly, I heard snarls and moans of pain. It sounded worse than Saturday night at a cannibal brothel.

Carefully, I stepped into view, keeping my hands splayed and by my sides. Nervous cops had a bad habit of shooting first and apologizing later at your funeral. Although they did send flowers.

"Move along, mack!" the young cop snarled, snapping a fresh clip into her automatic. "It ain't healthy to be around here."

"Hey, he's armed!" the other shouted in warning. Instantly, their guns swiveled to point at little ol' me.

Approaching, I very slowly reached into my jacket and withdrew my commission booklet. "FBI," I announced calmly. "Special Federal agent Ed Alvarez. What's the situation, officers?"

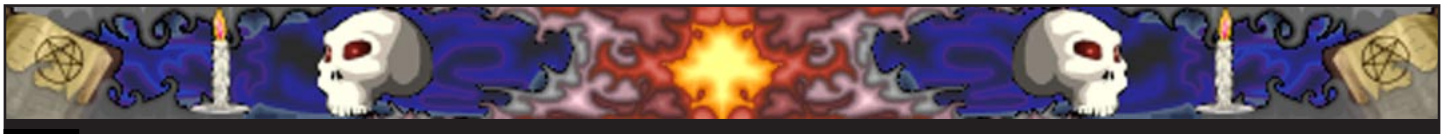
They seemed disgruntled, but accepted my arrival. At least, their Beretta automatics were no longer directed towards my tender stomach. Thank goodness, hot lead was so hard to digest after a pepperoni burrito.

"We were responding to a domestic, on the fifteenth floor," the woman reported quickly. "No response to our knock, we heard sounds of violence, announced our identity and kicked the door down."

The man shivered. "Some kind of animal was eating the tenants. Place resembled a slaughterhouse. We each pumped a full magazine into the beast before it even noticed we were there."

"Who went out the window?" I asked, feeling the tiny hairs on the back of the neck start to rise.

"Harry," the woman said. She was calmer now and a lot



more angry. "The fool tried to Mace the thing."

Weird noises were coming down the hallway. Snarling, growling and a crunching sound much too reminiscent of teeth on bones. It was not music to my ears. "What does it look like?"

"Big. Ugly. No hair."

Interesting. Briefly, I wondered if it was a bald werewolf, a squid-bear, or another of those giant mutant Chihuahuas again. We had been finding a lot of those lately. Must be the something in the water.

"Where is the animal now?" I asked.

"Who knows?"

"I called for emergency back-up," the man added. "But this is Chicago."

"With more crime than cops," I finished for him. "How long?"

"They get here when they get here."

Damn. "My people can arrive in five minutes. You want help?"

"Buddy, we need help," admitted the older and obviously wiser officer.

I nodded. "Done." Turning my back on the pair, I pressed the transmit switch on my wristwatch, a nifty little piece of Bureau equipment that could do everything but strap itself on your wrist and Technical Services was working on that.

"Alert," I whispered. "Possible homicidal supernatural at #175 Wacker Drive. Definitely bulletproof. Call in the troops, gang, this could be a toughie."

"We're on the way," a familiar voice replied.

"Don't stop for lunch, or it may be me."

"Gotcha, chief."

Tucking my badge into my belt so it would be on public display, I shrugged and both Magnums were in hand. The Model 42 ultra-light in my left was loaded with rubber stun bullets. The heavy stainless steel Model 66 in my right held a scenario load of an armor-piercing military round, soft lead dum-dum, explosive mercury tip, silver bullet, phosphorus tracer, and a blessed wood bullet. Not much, but it would have to do.

A scream of raw terror echoed along the hall and the three of us charged with guns drawn. Monster or not, no cop could ignore a cry for help.

Inside, the apartment was a mess, with torn clothing everywhere, furniture smashed, television smoking, carpet ripped, papers scattered and amid the fresh destruction stood the beast. It was no Chihuahua.

Vaguely resembling a hairless lion, the muscular animal must have weighed four hundred pounds easy. It had mottled, diseased-looking skin, long saber tooth tusks, prehensile claws, charnel house breath and a real bad attitude.

But according to my sunglasses, the creature possessed no Kirlian aura. None. That was impossible! Incredible! Everything living had an aura; white for good, black for evil, green for magic, and a million shades in between. Maybe this mon-

ster was off the visible spectrum. Had an ultra-violet, or infra-red aura. For one brief moment I debated trying to capture the thing alive for the lab crew. Then it turned and I saw a foot and slipper sticking out of its drooling snout. So much for capture, Lumpy the Lion died here and now. Eat a civilian in my town and you went down for the count. fast and hard. End of discussion.

"Aim for the head!" I cried, targeting the chest in an attempt to hit the heart. I forced myself to keep the instructions plain. No coded battle phrases, these were street cops, not federal secret agents.

Our four guns sounded louder than four hundred as we banged away in the small room. The muscular animal jerked with each pounding round, but no blood showed and the damage was minimal.

As the cops withdrew behind the wall to quickly reload, Lumpy bounded forward, so I tossed in my only grenade and joined the officers. In the future, I really should go shopping with more than just the bare essentials. However, bazookas simply ruined the lines of a good sports jacket.

A thunderous explosion shook the floor, flame and debris blasting out the doorway. Without waiting for the chaos to settle, I dashed inside to continue the fight but found only bits of the Bozo Boojum strewn about. Contemptuously, I snapped my fingers at the dead monster. Ha! Lumpy hadn't been so tough. I had in-laws who used grenades to dust the furniture. It really kept their place clean, but sure was very hard on the doilies.

But even as the smoke thinned, the pieces started slithering towards each other as the monster began to re-assemble. I felt my lunch pack its bags for a quick vacation as I watched the reverse dissection. Uh-oh. Total cellular unification. Every tiny piece of its body was a separate living organism. I could be here for a year trying to chill this boojum!

Then again, maybe not. Moving fast, I grabbed a foreleg, sprinted into the kitchenette, stuffed it into the microwave and turned the dial to high. The results were interesting. Wrapping my handkerchief around what resembled a brain, I dropped the pulsating gray cauliflower-like mass into the sink and flicked on the garbage disposal. Ah, instant lobotomy. Just add water.

In a spray of electrical sparks, the microwave shorted out and the door swung aside as the limb flopped towards freedom. Then the rumbling garbage disposal jammed to a halt and an undulating brain plopped out of the sink and started rolling across the floor. Holy Hannah! This thing was harder to stop than a Congressional pay raise!

Dumbfounded, the police officers could only watch from the doorway. This type of fighting was totally out of their experience, almost beyond comprehension. Each probably thought they were hallucinating, or dreaming. That was the standard reaction. But the cops were still here. If we survived this mess, the Bureau could have a couple of prime recruits.

Rummaging under the sink, I found a can of drain cleaner



and liberally sprinkled the acidic lye over anything that seemed healthy. Sizzling and dissolving under the chemical onslaught, the stubborn supernatural relentlessly continued to piece itself back together.

Tossing aside the can, I grabbed another limb and started to heave it out the window, but stopped. Not everybody in Chicago would be wearing protective armor and the next poor slob to get glass rained on them would die. Damn, damn, damn! Think, Alvarez, think!

I had never fought a true unkillable before, only read the Bureau manual on the subject. Unfortunately, I had just exhausted the usually helpful handbook. Time to be brilliant. Ah...er...

"Oven?" the young cop suggested.

With a grin, I slapped her on the arm. "Yes!"

As I wrestled with the struggling forearm, the woman turned the gas oven on and opened the door. Claws ripping at my chest, exposing the armor under what had been my favorite shirt. Slamming the leg against the tiled wall a few times, I barely managed to force the adamantine limb into the waiting stove. The cop slammed the metal door shut, while I grabbed the refrigerator and pushed it in front of the oven.

Immediately, a wild pounding could be heard, but the boojum stayed put. However, the smell coming from the exhaust vent was bad enough to peel the paint off a battleship; the fumes were reminiscent of sweaty gym socks, old cat litter and rancid hair tonic with just a hint of automobile transmission fluid. Whew! This thing could give a sick skunk an inferiority complex.

With a tremendous crash, the refrigerator toppled over and the smoking forearm bounded out of the oven.

"What the hell is this thing?" the older cop demanded, his automatic barking steadily as he tracked the legless runaway. "Some kind of organic robot?"

As good a lie as any. "Yes," I panted. "It escaped from Fort Sheridan early this morning."

"But that was closed years ago!"

Was it? "Just a cover story to hide the secret government lab."

"Son of a bitch!" the woman cursed, hacking at the brain with a meat cleaver. Arcing around her, the two pieces just moved faster.

Going into the living room, I yanked a cord from the wall and began tying grisly monster chunks to doorknobs and bathroom fixtures. About halfway complete, the living jigsaw puzzle flipped and flopped in a feeble attack, but couldn't regroup. For the moment.

The man poured a box of rat poison into a gaping section of the creature's intestines, but the deadly food only seemed to accelerate the healing process. A reverse metabolism? Damn, and I had drunk my only vial of Healing potion.

This was getting serious. If Lumpy reformed before help arrived, we stood about as much chance of staying in one piece, as it presently did of not. Electricity? Nyah, it was

only house voltage, couldn't kill a dog. Set the place on fire? No good, too risky. Might murder hundreds of innocents. If only we had some fast setting cement, we could dump it in the lake. My mind began rifling through six years of fighting every damn thing on Earth, trying to find a solution.

"Hey, what's going on, Officers?" a man asked, leading a group of people standing by the open door. Some teenager in a bathrobe had a goddamn Toshiba video recorder. Sweet Jesus! This was just what I needed, civilians with a camera.

"Run!" I bellowed, stepping between them and the boojum. Ripping off my watch, I clicked on the self-destruct sequence. That should buy me enough time to get them to safety.

Multiple hands yanked the bystanders away and in charged four people I knew well: a beautiful oriental woman in silk pajamas carrying a short double-barreled gun, a plump man in a sweat suit lugging a four foot long M-60 machine rifle, a trim, muscular woman holding a sword whose blade shimmered with rainbows, and a tall pale man in bikini swim trunks holding a silver staff.

Grinning, I clicked off the self-destruct. Yahoo! The cavalry had arrived, and not a bit too soon.

Leveling his silver magic wand, Raul Horta gestured and a shimmering lattice of golden bars appeared in the air. Cops and civilians were rudely shoved into the hallway, the camera smashing against the jamb, then the door slammed shut, bolted, locked and the couch slid in front.

"Roach motel!" I ordered, pointing at Lumpy.

In a series of musical twangs, the cords snapped and the monster slapped together finishing its regeneration. Standing rampant, the misshapen beast roared like some primordial nightmare from Hell! God almighty, what awful breath.

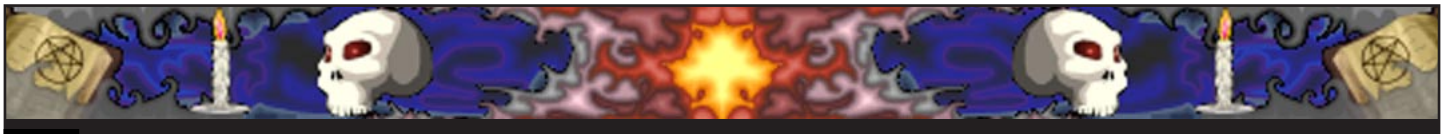
You want it alive? Jessica asked in my mind. Even the telepathic broadcast of my wife carried a faint trace of her Chinese accent. *Wouldn't a Bate's Motel be more appropriate?*

Of course, I want it dead, but he's an unkillable, I thought. *Capture is our only chance. Tell the gang.*

Done.

They frowned, but obeyed. Thank goodness for trained professionals, and high explosives.

Ramming the end of his staff into the stained carpet, Raul ran past the monster dragging the wand behind him. In its wake, was formed a shining line. The boojum started after him in a bound. Her sword flashing, Mindy Jennings chopped off a pointed cat ear. Howling in pain, the creature turned and Raul dashed by again. Confused, the beast headed for the smashed window. Working the bolt on his ungainly machine rifle, George Renault put a stuttering stream of high velocity lead slugs into Lumpy forcing the creature to remain where it was. Only a blur, Raul angled by a third and forth time. The hairless feline began clawing at the floor and Mindy chopped off a paw. Spitting in unbridled fury, the beast crouched, preparing to leap and Jessica gave it both barrels of her taser stun pistol. Twin hooked barbs, small as a matchhead, buried



themselves in the boojum's rump and trailing the hooks were hair thin wires connected to a powerful accumulator in the handle. As the barbs made contact, 12,000 volts automatically shunted into the beast. Enough hard electrical current to stun a Republican on election night. Lumpy toppled over as both rear legs went momentarily numb.

Snarling myself, I put a couple more .357 distractions into the mottled head, Jess gave it a spray of mace from a fountain pen, and Raul shot by on his jet-powered roller skates for the last time. Mages are mighty useful folk, but so damn weird.

Sheathing her sword, Mindy swatted the thing across the throat with the scabbard. Eyes bulging, the beast began hacking and coughing. Personally, I thought the monster was damn lucky it didn't have external genitalia. That was always Mindy's favorite target and, magical or not, it was one attack which stopped the male of any species.

"...!" the wizard shouted. As our creature jumped, it rebounded from the immaterial barrier of the pentagram the beast was trapped inside.

Glaring an almost tangible hate, the beast slammed its resilient body against the magical forceshield. The ruined apartment reverberated from the strident impacts, pictures danced off the walls and a mirror cracked.

Breathing a sigh of relief, I holstered my lightweight Magnum, and reloaded the 66 with Glaser Sure-Kill Safety Slugs. The miniature shotgun rounds should at least annoy Lumpy if he got free again.

"Good work," I complemented as my team gathered round. "Where's the van?"

"Parked outside taking up four spots," Mindy said, patrolling around the pentagram. Lumpy matched her movements and they growled menacingly at each other.

"What's the plan, Ed?" Jessica asked unhappily. "Cement shoes and the lake?" She sounded sad, but then telepaths were such sensitive folk. Killing anything bothered them. I even had to be gentle turning off the television.

Unwrapping a beef stick, George placed it in his mouth as if it were a greasy cigar. "No way," the soldier grunted. "Laughing Boy would be free and running amuck within the hour."

On cue, Lumpy launched itself at the ceiling and cracked the industrial grade concrete with its head. Sheesh! I wanted to toss this thing a dictionary so it could discover the meaning of the word surrender.

"Then we send it to the Holding Facility," Raul said. Slowly, he diminished in height as his superskates converted into sneakers once more. Transparent plastic sneakers, with the socks underneath woven to resemble bare feet, but that was only to be expected. I'd seen worse.

"Check," I said. "I'll call ahead saying that we're sending in a problem child and have them prep an Omega cell. Technical Services can puzzle over how to kill this boojum in their copious spare time."

"What do we do about the folks outside," George asked,

jerking a thumb towards the hallway.

At a nod from me, Jessica touched her forehead and scrunched her face in concentration. The shouting and bewildered cries from the other side of the portal slowed, then stopped and we heard people casually chatting and walking away.

Going pale, Jessica wobbled, so I helped my wife into a cushionless chair. "Wiping ten minutes of memory from fourteen people is something of a strain," she admitted. "Luckily nobody was a natural immune."

In consolation, I gave her a pat on the arm and a kiss. In her prime, my bride could have Brain Blasted the entire state of Illinois. But she was still recuperating from our battle with the Brotherhood of Darkness last week. Those yahoos had even less intelligence than Lumpy here.

Sprinkling powders while chanting, Raul Horta formed a huge, meter wide, rune on a smooth section of the floor. I busied myself feeding the appropriate code phrases into my watch to relay a priority signal to the big radio in our van and on to the headquarters of our organization. Wherever that was. We had once found what I thought was Bureau HQ, but by the next week the office building had been converted into a parking garage. I guess the chief didn't trust anybody, and not without cause. Occasionally, Bureau 13 agents did go bad.

I got an answering bleep on my wristwatch, just as the mystic letter of power began to glow and a shimmering oval portal formed in the air. Lumpy snarled and spit, but we paid it no attention.

Tugging on my sleeve, George pulled me aside.

"Something wrong?" I asked puzzled.

He tried to appear casual. "I may be mistaken," George whispered around his beef stick. "But when you said we were going to send Felix over there to the Holding Facility, I could have sworn I saw it smile."

Contemptuously, I arched an eyebrow. "Eh? You're nuts."

"Could be. Yet I saw, what I saw."

"And why would anything be pleased that it was going to be incarcerated in the most escape-proof jail in the history of the world?"

The soldier shrugged. "Beats me. Maybe it's trying to pull a Briar Rabbit routine. But I don't like the very concept."

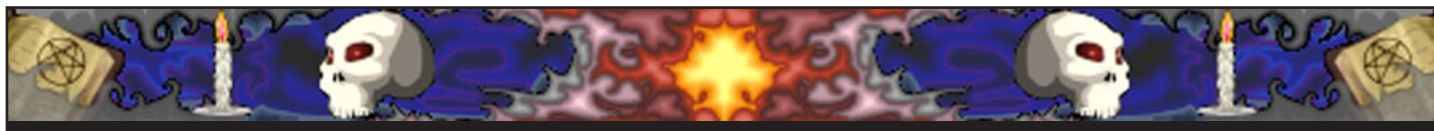
Me neither. George may be paranoid, most Bureau agents were, but that was only because we did have so many enemies and they were everywhere.

"Raul," I said. "Cancel the portal spell, we're hauling Lumpy in personally."

And damn me if the beast didn't maintain the most amazingly neutral expression that I have ever seen this side of a poker table.

Hmm.





Ghosts

by Ryan Rank

A Note From the Author

This article does not involve the kind of ghosts that are usually found in a rule book. I (disturbingly) find that many of these books list hit points for a ghost, which indicates that they can get into combat. I will not address those here. The following will show what ghosts will do for a game.

Hauntings

How many of us G.M.'s out there have had PCs kill an N.P.C.? I'm guessing pretty much all of us. I know mine have a murder streak longer than many serial killers. Kinda makes us wonder who the villain really is...

But outside of the law enforcement, why can't the N.P.C.'s come back and haunt the characters for a while? Many players are not afraid of law enforcement agencies arresting them (mainly because of lenient Game Masters...myself included), but they may start to think twice if they can't sleep at night.

They may start to think twice about it if they hear things. See things that aren't actually there. Hey, I have this feeling something is following me. Hey, who's that standing next to you? Oh, my God, it's a rotting CORPSE! Paranoia is a very powerful tool for a Game Master. Use it wisely.

On the same token, paranoia can be over used. It should be used at moments of either extremely high tension (they all make a stealth roll, only to have the

ghost give away their position), or at a very dull note. They are able to keep a great interest in a game.

They are also a great way to invade a character's dreams. In the case of a haunting, a ghost can cause the character to have horrible nightmares. Maybe the character can be at the other end of the gun. Or they are being tortured (my personal favorite involves fingernails and a pair of pliers) by the person that they killed.

But a great kind of dream is the kind that they live out a day in their sleep. The ghost makes them think that they have done something very important, but in reality, all the character did was toss and turn in his sleep. Not only does that make the character completely disoriented, but it makes them go through the same actions twice, possibly with different results. These effects are not exclusive to characters with mental powers (Empaths, Magickians, etc.); anyone can be haunted.

There is a downside to this. Nothing can be more frustrating to a player than a Game Master that over uses the dream sequence. It seems to make the players feel like they aren't getting anywhere in the game. Use the dream sequence sparingly. Consider yourself warned.

If you do use the dream sequence and have a combat designed into it, make up spare copies of the characters sheets. You do not want the players marking off valuable health and ammunition only to have them wake up unharmed.

Beneficial Ghosts

Not all ghosts are evil in nature. There are ghosts that mean to help others. They are few and far between. The characters should have some sort of advantage picked up at character generation explaining the "guardian angel." Or they should have done something benign during the game for a ghost to watch over them. It will not simply be a good friend. Maybe it was someone who's life he saved, only to have the (now) ghost die at some later time in an unrelated incident. The method of life saving cannot be anything small, either. It must be something like taking a bullet for someone. Not something like shooting first (which is a simple matter of initiative). There has to be some sort of self sacrifice involved.

This ghost should never directly change the outcome of a battle. It will do little things like brushing up against a sniper just before shooting. It will move a twig out of the way quickly before a character steps on it. Maybe it will distract a guard just long enough for the character to sneak into the door.

The ghost will never take a bullet. It will never directly damage an enemy. A ghost is a form of raw emotion, and that raw emotion translates into some powers that can play with people's minds; make them see things. Many have a small form of telekinesis. A very few can even cause, or stop, a small breeze. No matter how powerful the ghost (directly translated from the power of the emo-

tion), it will never be able to take on a physical form and damage someone on the material plane. Ever.

One thing that a ghost can do is communicate with it's connection to the world. Every ghost has something holding it to this world. This is usually a person or pet; something living. Very rarely, though possible, a ghost will stay attached to a non living thing.

The way a ghost can communicate is though a form of telepathy. When welcome (note this for hauntings, only when welcome) a character can simply think what he wants to say to the ghost, and the ghost will hear it. And the ghost will respond back through thought. However, the ghost will always, either welcome or not, be able to communicate to the target character. Which brings me

to the next subject...

Ghosts As Spies

The best spies are ghosts. They are undetectable by any standard mean. They can scout out an entire area and report back to someone. They can follow a group, listen in on plans, and report back to whoever they want. They can also remember things like how people act, and more importantly, what they have done. All very important information for a potential enemy.

Of coarse, for a prepared enemy, a ghost is the worst kind of spy. It not only gives away the fact that they are being spied on, but also shows that they have to be more prepared than normal because their enemy has a small edge.

A little deeper than that, the ghost

probably does not know who he/she is spying on. So the enemy can either capture the ghost, or feed it misinformation. How? Have the guards to different than normal rotations. Move large weaponry to completely illogical locations, among other things.

Closing

Ghosts can be very useful things for spicing up a relatively stale campaign. But, as I was warning throughout the entire article, never use a ghost too much. This also goes for the party. Ghosts can feel betrayed and used, too.

So, I ask you. If you were a form of raw emotion held here by the person you most hate, what would you do?



ART GALLERY

This issue, the Art spotlight falls on Eyal Feingersch. While considering names for this untitled piece, we came up with "There's a Light...", and since it was 3:30am at the time ... our imaginations ran a bit afield. The words, incidentally are not part of the original art. :) Thanks for the inspiration, Eyal! -mjm

Say, Janet.

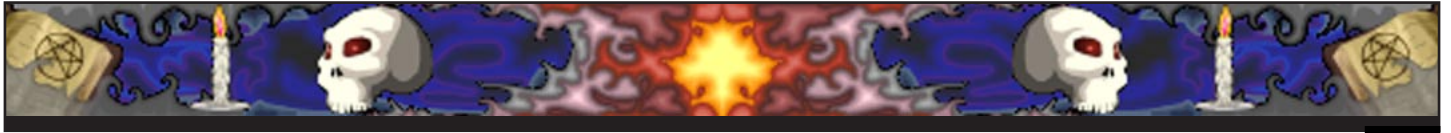
Didn't we pass a castle back down the road a few miles?

Maybe they have a telephone we might use.



Oh Brad. Look! There's a light...

Instead of her handbag, Janet absentmindedly slung a MAT-49 submachinegun over her shoulder... and the movie took quite a different path...



JOURNAL OF TIMOTHY J. (JUNIUS) LUMIN

I am insane. I make no qualms about it. There are no pretences associated with my neurosis. I have absolutely no desire to hide neither my paranoia or my agoraphobia. Indeed the psychiatrists and psychologists are united in their support of my claim. Some of the major works of clinical and medical research on insanity are being theorised as I fill this journal. Although current works on psychoses prove conclusively that I suffer from a range of disorders from "schizophreniform to involution melancholia", to use the pleasant medical terms ascribed to my bizarre behaviour. None have yet reached the level of detail or curiosity that my particular case incurs.

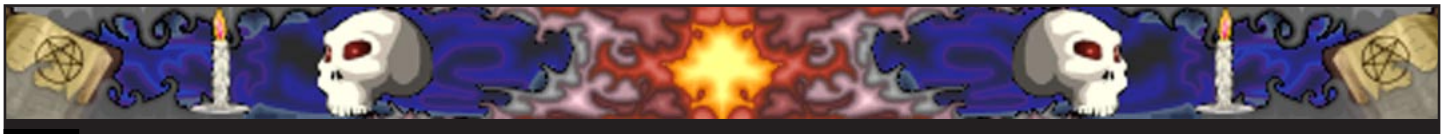
by Timothy Wojciechowski

Are you still unconvinced. Lacking in the belief that I may have absolutely no redeeming features whatsoever. Staggered by my mental petulance. Welcome to my world. It is this correlation between my lack of conviction in the answers of modern psychology, and the continual threshold of pain my mind sinks into deeper and deeper. I cling hopefully to the belief that I am insane, yet despair that I cant be convinced of my madness.

Consider this. Were I not insane, I very much doubt that my existence would be something that could possibly sustain itself for another day. This endless wheel of life that some have called our futile meaningless perpetuation. Freud would suggest that it was my mother, who left me alone for so many years, before finally succumbing to the need to abandon me. The lack of love from my father, who worked as a professor in Arkham, and spent one out of ten day at home. Researching to ungodly hours weird archaeological findings and other cryptic epitaphs and musing of bygone centuries. Perhaps this is why I am unhinged. I think not.

It is far more likely that the general consensus for my insanity occurred when I started babbling about my trip to Arborea. Yes I know, that is not on any modern map that you know of. And yes, it is an impossible dot amidst that most unusually placed island chain of the Veletians in the middle of nowhere. But it does exist. Believe me, it does exist. I went there as part of field research I was doing on the etymology of earlier prehistoric or ancient civilisations. I was not sure what information on either that I would find. But somehow

Are you still unconvinced
I may have absolutely
so ever. Staggered
Welcome to my world



I was swept off course, ever so slightly, ever so suddenly. That I doubt I would ever be able to find it again were I even sane enough to try. Fortunately I am not. Such a disastrous trip has lent such credibility to my profession, that to even assist others in unravelling the maddening secrets that I have obtained, glimpsed, would be a certain chilling sentence for the discoverer. Far more terrible than any death poor modern man could imagine. More horrible a fate than I could bare upon my worst enemy.

So I say to you, were I not insane, and these vivid visuals of sunken monstrosities, gargantuan monoliths, and oddly angled buildings were not so real, then I would be able to find exactly where my last ill fated voyage ended up. Such is the burnt imprint in my imperilled mind, that I may not escape its view, though I pull at my hair. That I might tear my brain from its prism which has been opened up the vast, no longer mysterious perils that no man should ever see. That I could, were I sane enough, end up unerringly back into the jaws of doom as I once did unwittingly before. That was until I was restrained, before the chemical experiments began, and my dilutions became blurred by the treatments. Whence this antiquated form of suffering was inflicted upon me. Antiquated I suggest, because I am not born of this time, any more than the barbaric cult of the Shoggi is of this time, yet it exists in all times, as do these dark secrets that would torment me in eternal suffering and damnation.

But that would require my belief, in the therapy that countless quacks have uselessly availed themselves upon me, as a lab rat with unbridled mental prominence and endless possibilities. Indeed some feel that if they could explain and somehow rationalise my unbelievable experiences, they could somehow place themselves in the annals along with Freud and Jung. Yet I have seen the real annals. First hand. Like the dust that dries up with the ages, thus are the pages of man written. The annals of history, of a time when man pulled himself out of the primordial slime. I have seen what dwelt then countless eons before we were even a thought, a spec in the cosmos. That's far reaching influence, could see us only as an insect, so minute, that we were not even worth the effort of stepping on or crushing. An ant that if we were crunched under heel, no one would be the wiser of the ending of our race.

What I have seen cant be explained away by rational man. Though they may try. So clearly I am insane. And that is my security, my salvation. For if my mind was right, and what occurred, did in fact happen, then we are all doomed, awaiting our end, as insignificant and unworthy of existence as the rare yet useless elements of nature. The species that we have terminated with such careless resolve that have arisen such fears that we would some day live upon a barren world. Such arrogance to think that we are not but one of these species, and that this barren world may not be a coincidental development as we dissipate before beings that are so high above us as to be described as anything less than gods would be faith-

fully demeaning to their superb yet terrible enormity. I shall recount some of my madness now, such as it is. Then you too will see just how hopelessly lost I am, how far I have left the threshold between normality and the perverse. The partial sanity that the average man shares in his need to communicate and coexist with fellow man, however fleeting that existence may be, is well beyond my grasp. I have entered the abyss, and my mind has become, perhaps always was, unhinged.

No text book could contain that which my eyes could see. Do justice to the sight that blinded me such, that opened me up helpless and alone implacably in the centre of nothingness. Not even these words as I describe them can begin the contemplation, illustrate the incomprehensible as I perceived it that day, as I so painfully and uncontrollably receive its discord in my very synapses. Such that I have slept not for days, not for weeks, without mercilessly shuddering and starting awake at the faintest sound, at the presence of my very own breathing. That I cannot look at shadows, or cracks, apertures and angles as I once believed them to be, inanimate, safe. Walls that I once could rest my shoulders or back upon, and feel comforted in the firm strength of their structure/design/craft. Fill me with such fear, that there is no safety, wherever I may be. Nothing anymore is real, translucent, invisible, ungraspable, emptiness fills all space, the doomed confines that we eek out our inconsequential lives. Like sand or water sifting through my hands, the ground at my feet is not really there, it just awaits a time when it may suck me into its vortex of misery.

I confess that I had been reading the esoteric works of C. D. Thomas, *Some New Evidence for Human Survival*, Rudolf Steiners' *Atlantis and Lemuria*, E. Ostys' famous work, *Supernormal faculties of man*. A particularly interesting read, its synopsis. Not to mention L. Spences three volumes on *Atlantis*. Of particular interest was L. Spences three volumes on *Atlantis*. How I came upon such texts is of no particular concern, they were all inherited from my work. Donations from an estate that I had visited in my researches but once, whose deceased occupant had in their fading moments felt the need to invest upon me. I thought little of it then, but now the suspicious intent of the owner is all too clear to me. The truth of his gift, all too terrible to dwell upon.

If you have experienced half of what I have experienced, or haven't experienced as the cold hard clinical rationalist that call themselves medical practitioners, doctors, quacks remind me. Though they are losing patience. Then you may find some use in this account, some answer that may spare you where I have failed in my temerity. If nothing else, I hope this is a warning to you to keep clear of the dark seas, to avoid any references or artefacts of the past as long as you might. To live your life passion and spirit for such short time as you have left before the stars fall right and the darkness descends upon man. For we live in the gods playground, and at any moment, all shall end....





NECROMAN

by Raymond J. Hancock

FICTION

I can't remember what they used to say. Their voices are faint memories. No wait, I do remember some of it. Oh what was it. Weren't they the ones that said, "If you live your life a certain way that it would be what you wanted it"? Didn't they say if you felt the "burning" then you were meant to have something, someone? They have always been and will always be I suppose.

Funny how what they say is usually meant to help you understand what's happening, but it never really does. How they say it to make you feel better, but it just makes you feel worse. You force a smile and say thank you. When really what you want to say is, burn in the sulfur-ridden depths of rotting hell!

Why am I even thinking these things? Over and over just a whirling spin of trash. They are the heaps of the world mixed with all kinds. From the lost faithless people to men and women of God. No matter how hard I look I can't seem to see where I fit.

I once heard that what you are is what you came from. That is one of the greatest truths I have ever heard. I was born in an alley, yeah a rat infested, stinking alley. My coked up mother had no idea she was pregnant. She went on and off her cycle and up and down with her weight. I guess crack, heroin, and coke do that to a woman. She thought that it was just another freaky thing in her cycle. You bet it was, it was me.

When I was born I weighed 5 pounds 7 ounces. She was oblivious to my existence, even though I had just dropped out of her uterus 5 seconds prior. She turned into a garbage can and proceeded to throw up. There I lay face down in a the murky sludge of an alley and if it weren't for a passing bag lady picking me up and swatting life into me, that would have been it. I was alive.

My Mom always told me I was a miracle. Some miracle. Sometimes I would listen at church to the story of Jesus birth in a manger. I would think for a moment that maybe it didn't matter where you came from, but rather what you chose to be. Life showed me otherwise.

As long as I can remember I have believed and had faith in God. That was the only thing my mother ever taught me. She was just a playmate, someone to occupy my young days playing. I called her by her first name until she died when I was 15.

So, do I blame God? He's the one that created the heavens and the earth, and me. He has all the power in the entire infinite universe; I have little to no power. Who is to blame? Sin? Satan? Adam and Eve? Ok now I'm getting pretty far fetched. Yeah, I believe in all of it, but let's not get off the subject!

I can remember the first time I let go of the rage. I was

only 11 years old. A passing neighbor boy named Mike Laller laughed at me as I tripped and fell. For some reason that made me so mad. Some punk laughing at me. I had two tennis rackets in my hands. I yelled all kinds of burns about his trailer trash gutter slut mom and so on. This enraged the little boy, which is exactly what I wanted. He came up to me and I started hitting him with the rackets. He tried to fight back, to fight for his moms honor, but she really was a whore, and he knew it. Maybe that's why he was so mad. I had given him a perfect opportunity take out his young rage.

His rage was nothing compared to what he was about to experience. I hit him so hard with the rackets that they broke against his body. I kept hitting him with what was left of the handles. Raking those pointed aluminum shanks across him until he fell from pain. I kept going. He shouldn't have hit me; it just made me angrier.

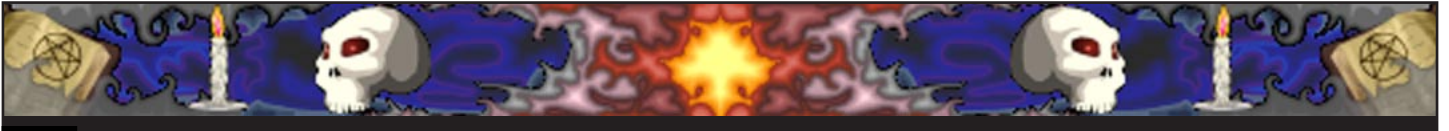
By the time some guy from a nearby apartment pulled me off Mike Laller he was a bloody mess. I never saw him again, although I heard he lost an eye from our altercation. At the time I thought he deserved it because he was trash and trash doesn't laugh at me.

Most times when the rage came the only things I would pound were the walls. My mother quit the dope and got hooked on a different kind of drug. The government breast. You know, the check that comes every month from that mysterious place where the government gives all this money away. Let me tell you, there is nothing that gives a child more self-esteem and character than career day at school. When it comes time for you to stand and say what your parents do for a living you just say "my moms on welfare." Then they laugh. The teacher catches on after a while and just discretely starts skipping you. She might as well have put a flashing red light on my head and a sign that read "welfare loser right here". All the other kids knew why she skipped me, so did I.

For the most part (except for the walls) I kept the rage in. I grew up to be stronger and bigger than 90% of people. So no one really wanted to tangle. I guess that's what kept it in for so long.

I was 29 when I met him. Who was he? Give me a minute and I'll get to that.

I was eating at a local all night diner. I sipped my after meal coffee trying to waste as much time as possible before I headed back to my lonely pad. I had been watching him for while and every time I took a drink I eyed him. He was a small man maybe five foot five, 160 pounds. It was hard to tell because he was sitting in a booth. He wore a polyester jacket, light gray if I remember correctly. A pair of brown Levis, a dark pink button up shirt. Not to out of place for 1995, but more suited to 1970.



He had a sinister aura about him. He sat alone, like myself, but something was different about him. My attention was drawn to him for a reason. I didn't know the reason at the time, but it felt like something was about to happen.

Being the prepared person I am, or paranoid as others like to say. I unbuttoned my Glock that I carried in a leather hip holster. I loved the nickname "smoke wagon". I had heard it in many westerns. I've been carrying my smoke wagon since I was 21, the legal age and have it with me at all times. I didn't wear it so much for safety, because safety starts with a person using their noodle to stay out of bad situations. However, some bad situations find you, and as far as I was concerned I was going to be ready. Not to mention I love guns, how they smell, how they feel, how they shoot.

It was almost like he knew I was searching for anything to be ready for. Almost like he could read my mind, knowing that I believed something was up. Before long he approached my table. As he crossed the 20 feet or so my hand moved to my Glock. I gripped the handle between the web of my right hand, I was ready. He sat down across from me; sliding in the booth so effortlessly it was as if the seat were greased. My gun came out; I briefly glanced around to see if my actions had attracted any ones attention. No one seemed to notice that I had the pistol trained in my guests' direction under the table.

"Did you have a good meal?" He said.

I said nothing.

"So here all alone?" He asked.

I shook my head in annoyance of his disruption.

"So why are the two of us all by ourselves at 2 o'clock in the morning?" He said.

"Cause that's just the way it is." I finally replied to him.

"Why don't you and I go have some fun?"

"Look pal I don't know you from Adam. So why don't you just get up and have a good night."

"Why don't you just shoot me?"

I was a little surprised! How did he know?

"I will if you try anything. Just keep your hands where I can see them."

He then stuck his hands beneath the table. He smiled as if to say, "Now what are you going to do?" My grasp was firm, my finger on the trigger. I grabbed the bill and put my gun away in the same motion. I got up keeping my eyes trained on him.

"Night freak." I said to him.

I paid my bill and headed for the door. As I was leaving I glanced back at my table and he wasn't there. I had only taken my eyes off of him for three seconds. Good, I thought, he must have gone back to his table.

My car was close to the front of the restaurant. I unholstered my gun again and opened my car door. No one else was in the parking lot, only a few cars of late night patrons. I looked in the car as the dome light came on like I always do before getting in. There he was laying on my back seat. Now my heart started to race. I felt a sharp pain settle in my lower

back, which always happens with my adrenaline rushes.

I pointed my pistol at him and Yelled, "you get out of my F&#%ing car or I'll kill you." I meant it, I was pissed not afraid.

He just put up his hands and waved playfully. It was like he was toying with me. I began to wonder if this was one of those freaks that just play with people like me then run to the cops and say I threatened him with my gun. Which was true I did threaten him, but with good cause. I suppose if I had no gun I would have ran back into the restaurant and called the police. That thought crossed my mind; I knew carrying a gun didn't make me a cop.

He opened my back door and sat with his legs dangling out. They barely reached the ground. I could see his hands, which I watched like a hawk. I scanned the lot for his possible accomplices. I couldn't see anyone but that didn't mean they weren't there. The tone in his voice was relaxed like he had everything under control. At that point I started to wonder what was up?

"Look I'm not here to hurt you", he said. "I'm here to help. So why don't we go somewhere we can talk. It's just a matter of time before someone sees you pointing that gun at me and calls the police."

"Well good then you can explain why you're in my car and why you're messing with me!"

"Hey I just want to help you that's all."

"You have a freaky way of approaching people you want to help."

"Yea I guess I do, but I'm a freaky guy."

With that he pulled off his shirt and started to take off his pants.

"What are you doing?" I yelled.

"Showing you I have no weapons. I couldn't hurt you if I wanted to. You weigh three times more than me. So even without that gun you could crush me with your bare hands."

"Ok fine, just put your clothes back on!"

I could clearly see that he had no weapons on his top half, but I went one step further and asked him to pull up is pant legs. Which he did, he was truly unarmed.

"Get in the car and drive. I don't care where, just drive." He said.

"Alright but you get up front right now. I don't want you sitting behind me." I replied.

Before I let him move anywhere in the car I searched it for weapons he might have stashed to use after I relaxed. I found nothing. He got in the passenger side and I drove off.

I still kept my eyes on him. It was so weird. Who was this guy, what did he want? He was clean, he sounded sane, and he didn't look like a bum. I wondered what he wanted? That's when he started.

"I'll just get to the point since you're the most paranoid bastard I have ever met. I've been watching you, all alone at night. I think you like the night. It's quieter, not as many peer-ing eyes. I've seen your solitude and your moods when you're



alone. I believe you're exactly who I'm looking for. Don't ask me how I know, I just do. You know what I'm talking about. It's like how you feel someone is scum or not. Yes, I know you feel it, or at least you believe you do. How many times have you been called judgmental? I would guess a lot. But you really believe you can tell just by looking at or watching someone. How they move when they talk or just how they talk. What they look like or who they are with when you see them. You're absolutely right. Maybe that's how I knew you were the one I was looking for. Maybe I could see you had this talent that so few choose to sharpen. I would guess that you didn't choose to sharpen it though; it most likely developed in you out of necessity.

I just drove and listened to him. At this point I was curious to what he had to say. It did make sense to me.

"So that brings me to why? How many times have you said something like, 'That dirt bag deserves to die.' Or 'someone should whack off that perv's nards.' I'm willing to bet a lot. To top it all off your what, about 30? You don't feel you've found a place in life. Everything you have ever reached for has run away. I'm pretty close, huh? Rhetorical my friend, rhetorical. Moving on... now you're all alone or you wouldn't be out late as often as you are. You probably have a middle of the road job that makes it possible to live comfortably. But you're not happy you're not even content. Maybe I'm going out on a limb, but from the look on your face I think I've got you pegged. Now my point, how would you like to make a difference? How would you like to be the one that whacks off that perv's nards?" He finished with silence.

I didn't say anything for a moment everything he said was sinking in.

"What like Charles Bronson in those vigilante flicks? I'm not crazy man; I don't want to kill anyone. Besides I'd get caught and that would be it."

"Of course you don't want to kill anybody. And no you wouldn't get caught. Whether you believe me or not I can make you as silent as a butterfly, as stealthy as the night, and well you are already as hungry as a lion."

He then did something I would never forget. He reached to the back seat of my car and pulled out a long, thin, black briefcase. I was so amazed I was speechless. I looked at him with wonder. I started to think he was a demon or an angel. When I was 15 my friends Dad who was a pastor told us that if you shake a persons hand and it was cool and clammy it was a possessed person or a demon. At that point I was a little to surprised to shake his hand, but I thought he was something else.

"I'm going to leave this with you. Go home and whatever you do don't think this all over. People think all to often when they should act. Just remember this, if you choose to use what's in this case you will be something extraordinary." He finished.

Then he instructed me to stop the car, which I did. He got out right there at the side of no street in particular. He left the

case and waved goodbye. I drove off quickly. I didn't know what to say. I wanted to tell him to go back to the hell cave from which he came. I wanted to tell him to take his case with him, but everything he said was true. I didn't know what to do.

I drove around for a while longer. Going way out of my way before I went home. In case he followed me or something. I kept looking at that case wondering what it contained. My imagination was flying. Finally I got home, it was still dark and would be for a couple hours or so. I went inside, sat the case on my couch and stared at it some more.

I put the case in my cluttered closet and tried to go to sleep. Which didn't happen until I could hear birds singing to the rising sun. Days led to weeks. I hadn't seen that man yet. Some days I didn't think about the case, others it was all I could think about. Finally when I came home to a note on my car from my girlfriend, I had had enough. The note said what all notes like that say. Work sucked that day. So I went into my closet and got the case out. I wiped off the dust and laid it on the couch.

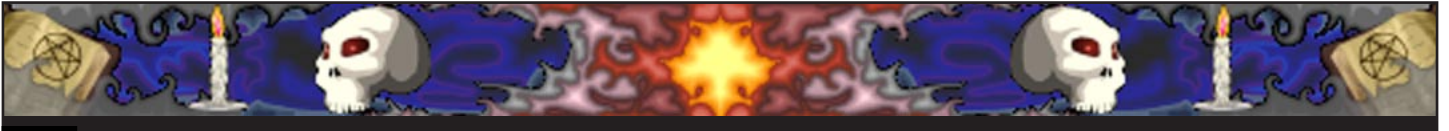
Again I stared at it, but this time only for a few minutes. I put it in my lap and pressed the latches. They popped right up. I opened the lid of the case. I didn't know it then, but my life would never be the same again.

Inside the plush case were two of the finest pistols I had ever seen and a straight double edged knife. Black handles on all the weapons. Satin finish, titanium, extended clip, silenced .44 magnum dessert eagles. I picked them up and felt the grips. They were perfect. I racked the slides and a round popped out. I unloaded both of them to safely be able to point them about. I aimed at the television, I shaved the hair off a spot on my arm with the knives 8 inch blade. They were very nice.

I began to wonder? What could two pistols do for me? I already had way more than 2 guns. Especially pistols that were way more practical, not so big and bulky, but certainly not as powerful. What did he mean by all that stuff he said? I believed he was telling me to use these guns against those that I had thought deserved it. How could I do that? How could I become a killer a murderer?

It made me think about how anyone becomes a murderer. A friend of mine in law enforcement once told me that murder more often than not is a crime of passion. You know the type where you come home and find the mailman with your wife so you put buckshot from your shotgun in him. I didn't have a wife!

So what then, how? Something at that point changed in me. Maybe I killed something for the first time right at that moment. I was always taught that killing is wrong except in self-defense. What would I say to God when I faced him at the end of my days? I didn't care any more. I was so fed up with the heaping, festering crap that was the world. I was going to change things. Yea, I knew it was a horrible way to do it, but hey you play with the hand your dealt.



That brings us to the present. That didn't take too long did it? Here's where the fun begins. Here's where you see it through my eyes. Maybe you will be horrified, maybe you will be disgusted? You know what? There's not a one of you who hasn't thought about the very things I am going to do. Who knows if you stick around long enough you might just get a surprise or two.

I knew exactly who would be first. A long time friend of mine has been going out with this Neanderthal punk. You can always tell how long it has been since he strapped her on and then rolled over and went to sleep. Because he would act more and more pissy. He would treat her more and more like an idiot. She was far from an idiot. He had her so afraid of him that she would do whatever it took to keep him normal. She was an emotionally abused pincushion.

Her life needed to change. Time and time again I would tell her that, but time and time again she did nothing. Well I am going to do something. I think it's like blowing a tire or being struck by lightning. Both of those things happen for no seeming reason, but they change our lives. That's what it was going to be like, a bolt of lightning or a blown tire and I was going to change her life.

In the next couple of days I purchased some custom leather holsters for the pistols, their clips, and the knife. One pistol hung low in the small of my back in the right hand position. The other was more to the front left side but still with the grip pointing to my right for that hand to draw. The knife I placed on some black web gear on the left front strap with the handle facing down. I had 10 extra clips in tension clip holsters on my black latigo belt. Both weapons on my left side I could draw with my left hand if I needed to, and the other pistol was solely for the right hand.

Don't believe what you see in movies that are made for teenagers. A pistol in each hand is going to hit nothing. It looks impressive enough, but you aren't going to hit anything firing both pistols. Just take one in your hand, grip it firmly, keep both eyes open and blast away. The other pistol is there in case you don't have time to reload, in the off chance you might have to cover more than one point, or you want to look impressive and sling a bunch of lead at someone.

It was 11 at night, it was time. I grabbed my black sweat jacket to cover my ordinance and headed to my car. Here I am sitting in my little beater mobile. The whining four-cylinder engine buzzed as I backed out of my parking slot. I watched as the soft pink street lights flitted by. It's weird, I don't feel anything. No excitement, no fear, no anger, nothing. I had never done this before I didn't know what to expect. I tried to imagine what it might be like. The quickening of the blood, the adrenaline, but I really had no idea.

Her house was on the left. I flicked off the lights and turned off the motor a few dozen feet from the front. I parked on the street in front of the house. I got out of the car with not a care in the world and walked right up to the front door. I knocked lightly not wanting to wake her up. I knew he would

be sitting on the living room couch watching television as she slept alone in the bedroom. He came to the door and opened it.

"Hey asswipe." Is all he said.

"Hey, I thought I'd come over and kill some time (man I almost cracked up at the irony)."

"Sure nut licker come on in." He spoke with child like metaphors.

I stepped inside gently closing the door behind me. He plopped back down on the couch. I walked in the kitchen where he couldn't see me. He still hadn't said anything more to me. I reached for one of the pistols; I wondered how silent a "silencer" would be? Would she wake up? I couldn't hurt her. There was no way I could do that!

"So whatchya' been up to?" He yelled from his sweaty little spot on the couch.

"Just thought I'd stop by. Hadn't been over in a while." I retorted as I turned on the water as if to get a drink or something.

That's when it all hit me. So many thoughts running through my head. I couldn't begin to describe them all. In my guts I knew this was wrong, but the more I thought about that lump of nothing out there on the couch the angrier I became. The rage was forming I could feel the pain in my lower back. It was here. I pulled out the pistol and stepped into the living room. At that very moment I heard the toilet flush. He looked at me in disbelief.

"What are you going to do hot shot? Shoot me?" He uttered his last words. Though he didn't know it then.

I pulled up my left hand to cup my right. Both thumbs were parallel with the pistols smooth barrel. I put the first round right where it belonged, directly in his mouth. The gun was unexpectedly silent, barely louder than a strong whisper. I couldn't stop there. As the back of his head sprayed all over the wall behind the couch, I kept firing. Bullet after bullet tore through this bag of fecal matter.

On the fifth bullet she came walking out of the hall that connected to the bathroom. I was still firing as each shot flared a muzzle blast 5 feet from the front of the gun. It only took me 5 or 6 seconds longer to pump the last of the twenty rounds into him. She was frozen, I saw her there, and the thought of putting a couple in her crossed my mind. I couldn't do that, but if I let her live the cops would be on my doorstep within the hour.

The slide on the .44 locked back awaiting a fresh clip to feed its hunger. I slapped one in and racked the slide. I walked around the back of the couch where she stood frozen. I could see where the .44 caliber rounds had torn through him and the couch. A mixture of blood and couch stuffing coated the floor.

I didn't think about it, but I walked right through the bloody mess on the floor. The empty shells lay strewn about the room. Forensics would love this one. I trained the weapon on her head. She passed out. I glanced for a moment at his



lifeless body. It made me feel sick, I started to shake and sweat. What I had just done started to hit me.

"Oh God." I muttered.

She lay there unconscious, he... well he was a goner. The thick haze of bluish gun smoke blurred my view of the television. The sweet taste of burnt gunpowder lingered in the back of my throat. The television was the only backdrop to what had just occurred. The incident was so quiet it amazed me. She hadn't even screamed. No one had a clue of what had just happened. I holstered the gun and just left, walking back across the blood. I didn't pick up the shells, and I knew my fingerprints were on each and every casing.

I pulled into my parking spot and just sat there, I felt numb. I went into my apartment. I put my gear away and just waited for the police. Sleep was a distant friend at that point. Twelve o'clock, 2, 3, 4, they never came. I went through every thing that had occurred. Step by step I retraced my motions. They had to know it was I, surely she told them or they found my prints on the door or casings.

Then as I imagined the scene that only took place a few hours ago I saw something that I hadn't before. It happened right in front of me and I didn't even see it. I could see everything as if it were happening all over again I had a spectator seat. This time as I watched, I saw when I walked through the blood sloppily leaving perfect imprints of my size tens. The footprints disappeared as I walked through the blood! Even before that in the silence of my shooting surely I would have heard the shells striking the wall and floor as they were ejecting from the .44. Now I saw or rather heard nothing. No shells hitting anything. And seconds after she saw me she just passed out. Did she see anything?

It was slowly becoming clear to me what he meant when he said that I wouldn't be caught. No foot prints, no shells left behind, and most likely no prints. What about the bullets I left in his carcass and in the couch? Would they be there? I bet she will not remember me either. This was incredible.

I did nothing for a long time. I just went to my job and lived my life. No one ever came to see me, no cops, she didn't come either. I didn't care to see how she is doing I believe it to be better. Now she can do whatever she wants with her life without useless weight holding her down. If she finds another loser like they always do then I'd take care of him to.

I expected a visit from that man from the diner but he hadn't come. I was left to my own plans. I felt like a super hero. Only hero didn't seem right. I grew up in a time of comic books. You remember the Thing, the Fantastic Four, and Superman. I decided I needed a name. It didn't take me long to decide. I would call myself Necroman. After all the dead would soon surround me. Who would ever know this name? I wasn't sure, but it felt right.

I started to wonder if I would be like some high-minded vigilante. No I knew I wouldn't be like that because I didn't care who died. I decided if an innocent accidentally bit it, it would be a small price to pay and they will have not died in

vain. I am in new waters.

I don't sleep that much anymore. The night is far to interesting a place. I find myself more in it than ever before. Even though I work days. I started to conceive who would be next. I decided that I would choose carefully and not let my emotions decide for me. I didn't want to become some random mass murderer.

Strangely enough that one killing set me free. Not the uninhibited crap you hear in the movies or read in books. No this is different. It is kinda' like when you turn 21. Finally you feel like you can do anything, get a license, buy liquor and guns, and join the military. Like you know nothing is holding you back.

Especially since I have the power to leave not a trace. I dwell on that a lot. How was that all possible? I knew it had to do with that man. I am convinced he is something else, yes something else! I don't know what else to call him! Why would a demon want scumbags dead? Yet why would an angel want anyone dead? That is why I call him something else because he is. I think he is neither a demon nor an angel.

The night is cool tonight. I sit in front of my computer responding to some email. I have the door open to let the breeze run through the living room. I turn to glance outside and there he is, the man from the diner.

"I haven't seen you for a while" I said moving quickly to the door to let him in. How he found me never even crossed my mind.

"Yes it has been some time hasn't it? I thought it time to get more involved with you?" He replied.

"What do you mean involved? I have been doing fine."

"No you have been doing nothing! How did it feel to snuff a filthy turd? I bet it was exhilarating! But you have done nothing for weeks. What's wrong?"

"I am just getting a feel for it. How did all that happen? How where none of my prints or shells never found? Why didn't she say anything?"

"Did it ever occur to you that she was glad he was dead? As for the rest suffice it to say you can not be caught."

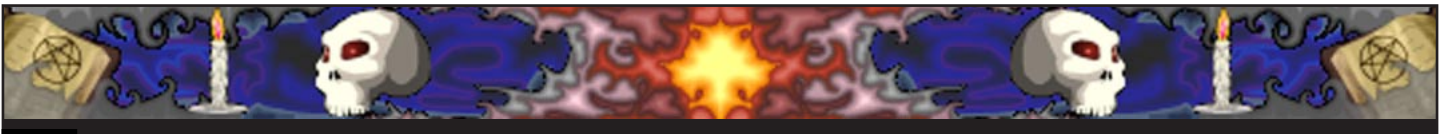
"What or who are you?"

"I am something else." He replied with a big grin as if my thoughts were no longer just my own.

"Look enough chatting. Here's the deal. You call yourself Necroman right? So start earning that name! Go out there and make those dirt balls pay. Change peoples lives!" He continued.

"Why don't you do it yourself?" I asked.

"My boy I do, I do. Much like a small business that grows into a big one. Eventually you need employees. There's just too much work for lil' ol' me to do! Look I know like any knew job it takes a while settle in. That's why I'm here. There is a man Name Steve Jensen. He is a police officer. Not the good kind though. He's one of those guys that stops the drunken teenagers and then let's them work off the infraction if you know what I mean. You know the kind that makes



a couple of pit stops at his girlfriends houses before he gets home and tells the wife he had to work late. Believe this guy's kids and wife, hell his whole family will be better off without him. You go take care of him. He's a real maggot." He finished.

Nothing more was said. Somehow this mans presence calmed me. He somehow offered peace amid the storm. He left, that was it. The next thing I know I'm in my car driving down the road.

I am in a trance like state following an instinct that I have never felt before, but feels like a trusted friend. The town I live in is under 150,000 people and we have maybe 8 cops on duty at one time. I knew that if I wandered around enough, with this gut instinct leading me, I would find him if he were out here.

It is close to 4 a.m. I have been driving for hours with nothing. The feeling in my belly is still here. I started on some back roads not to far from a couple main arterials. They led behind the airport. That's when I passed a cop car and another car. Both cars had no lights on, but when my headlights came around the sharp bend in the road I could tell they were so engrossed they had no clue. The officer was standing facing the driver side window. A young girl was half out of the car. From the unbuckled nature of his pants I could tell something was amiss. Plus how often do cops pull people over without leaving at least their headlights on.

As I passed the whole scene I felt a horrible burning in my midsection. It threatened to double me over pulling the car with me. I barely could hold my composure as I passed them by. My Lord it was so intense I had never felt anything like it. It was like the worse stomach cramp you can imagine coupled with the fiery hotness of mega heartburn. I managed to get a glimpse of the cop and two girls in the car. They eyeballed as I passed by but did nothing else.

I stopped the car a few hundred feet down from the cop and the girls. I got out and started to walk back. I noticed I made no sound, even though I walked on a gravel road. As quiet as a butterfly? As I came around the bend on foot I could see very well in the dark, to well. I was paying attention to every detail this time. I wanted to learn all there was to me, the new me.

The cop was standing in the same spot he was before, but talk about getting caught with you pants down! The girl in the passenger side seemed to whacked out on something to have a care in the world. I pulled my smoke wagon from its harness. I caught a whiff of the cleaning solution I put on it, I love that smell! I took aim as I was standing about 50 feet to the back and left of the scumbag. I guess I should have been paying more attention because I heard the approaching vehicle way before it came around the bend. I was just so in to the situation that I was oblivious.

I dodged into the ditch. The car careened into the same ditch a couple hundred feet down from me. The occupants no doubt unconscious after seeing me. The scumbag situated

himself, drew his gun and started towards the car. I knew what he was going to do. There was no way he was going to let them seeing him end his way of life. Little did he know that I was about to do that for him!

As he passed me I moved up behind him .44 magnum ready. I don't know why but he turned directly at me. The ensuing firefight was short. His little pop sounds from his 9mm were all the sound of the battle. I steadied and shot until he fell which were only 3 rounds. I walked up on him. He was still writhing, I leveled my magnum on his crotch and gave him one round just before I put another in his forehead. He went limp like a rag doll. No matter how many television shows and movies you see it's nothing compared to the simplicity of reality. They just go limp. No fancy whipping or thrashing, just limp.

The girls were passed out now having seen me, but I knew it was very possible the cops' shots would bring company. I jogged to my car and got in. That's when I noticed my front covered in blood. What the hell!! That guy didn't explode all over me! How the hell? As I got in I pulled up my shirt then I froze.

Two little holes were in my chest, but I had felt nothing! I got scared! I know in an adrenaline rush a person might not feel things, but being shot!? I drove off quickly with my lights off to insure no one possibly coming could see me. I wasn't sure if they would loose consciousness if they just saw my car. When I got home I pulled my black sweat jacket around me to conceal the blood and went inside.

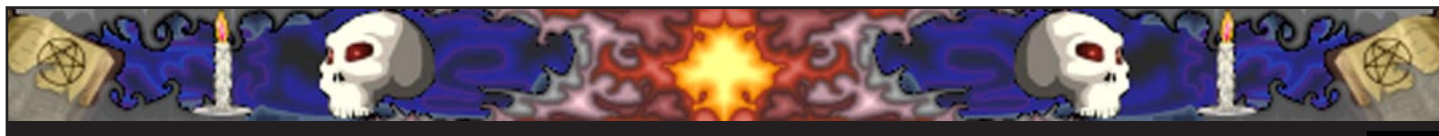
I tore off my gear and shirt. I went directly to the bathroom. It had been at least 10 minutes since I had been shot yet I still hadn't felt a thing! I peered at the holes in the mirror. I pulled them open as to assess the overall damage. They were shrinking right before my eyes. I stood there for the several minutes it took for them to seal completely. Now this was incredible!

I got cleaned up and threw away that shirt. I sat on my couch staring at my chest. No holes not even a sign of damage and I still felt as right as rain. This thing just keeps getting better and better. Now I see what is happening, the picture is becoming a little clearer. This man I met somehow made me this. I don't know how, the picture isn't that full yet. I cannot be killed, at least not by bullets, I can sense things I seek, I am more silent than silence itself, and I leave no traces of ever being anywhere.

Now this man leads me to my next victim. I sat there wondering if he was training me or using me? That cop was complete scum true, he deserved every round I gave him, but that was not someone I chose. The man chose him.

I knew my life would never be the same the day I opened the black case. But now I started to wonder if I would ever be human again. Because now I was something else.





I WAS A ZOMBIE FOR THE F.B.I.



by Dave Schuey

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, in response to the rising tide of attacks by seemingly walking dead perpetrators, has decided to assign teams of agents to what their analysis reveal to be to hotbeds of such activity. The teams are free to enlist whatever logistical support and backup they deem necessary, pending bureau approval. The players may play entirely as such support elements, they may create their own FBI agents, or two players may play the agents included with this adventure while the others play support.

Part One: The Briefing

Assistant Director Ecklind sat behind his desk sullenly. The drapes were open behind him but the blinds were closed. This silhouetted him in a hazy light. He seemed somehow unreal. My partner and I sat down when we entered, waiting for the AD to begin the briefing.

"I suppose you've heard about the recent attacks in New Orleans, Greenville, Denver, Portland and others? The ones reportedly committed by 'Walking Dead'?"

My partner and I looked at one another. Of course these attacks had been all over the news, and while the media was eating it up, the official line was that the perps were homeless indigents hopped up on crack. I answered first.

"Yes sir. I was under the impression we were letting the local law enforcement handle them."

"That was the plan agent, until this lab report came back." He tossed the manila folder across the desk. My partner picked it up and carefully check that his security clearance was adequate to view its contents. Reading the first few paragraphs and scanning the attached pages he suddenly looked stunned. I took the folder and read as he did. His reaction soon made a lot of sense to me.

"That's right agents. The bureau has determined that the wounds on the victims were indeed caused by corpses. We don't know how this is possible, but if the increasing number and scope of these attacks remains unchecked....well...I don't want to imagine the consequences.

My partner regained his wits first. "What is our assignment sir?"

"I want you to go to New Orleans and find out what the devil is behind this. You'll have the full support of the bureau, as well as any local talent you wish to recruit, just fill out the proper paperwork. When you're ready to make a bust, if such a thing is possible, just call in the troops."

For this adventure feel free to place the players in any city you wish, keeping in mind the peculiarities of some cities burial situations (New Orleans for

example). The report will not be available to non-FBI characters, but some details of it may be revealed if the players or Zombie Master deem necessary. The bureau will consider virtually any force appropriate in stopping this menace.

There have been a growing number of attacks, mostly near graveyards, funeral parlors and morgue's, in over a dozen cities nationwide. The first attack was about a week ago and the number and frequency have been growing. New cities seem to fall victim every day. The attacks generally take the same pattern. An individual or couple find themselves alone in a secluded spot. With little warning, a figure lurches at them from the dark. The assailant is slow in most cases, sometimes mumbling something which has been reported as 'Must Eat' 'Brains' and 'Flesh'. There have been 4 deaths thus far, although no bodies have been recovered...whole. There are also many wounded and frightened people. Physical evidence from the areas of the attacks and the parts of victims that have been found led to the bureau's conclusion that corpses were present when the attacks occurred. There is no evidence to explain how a corpse might be walking, or why it might attack people.

Part Two: Local Law Enforcement

The Local Bureau Office

We picked up our rental and went straight to the local Bureau office. The local FBI, while professional and well-trained, have had to live with the horrible possibility of the walking dead for over a week now, and they are scared. The don't let it show in their demeanor or day to day activities, but you can hear it in their voices and see it in their faces.

"So where do we begin? Have you checked with the local mortuaries?"

The agents exchanged a furtive glance and said nothing.

"You have called the funeral parlors?"

One of them spoke up at last, "They seem to be very busy. They aren't answering their phones."

"All of them? Don't you think that's unusual?"

"Well....."

"Have you sent anyone out to talk to them?"

Again, a covert glance, this time to two desks near the back of the office. "Yes, we did. Agents Kirk and LeVoy. Two days ago."

"And?"

"They haven't reported in."

"WHAT? Are you insane, agent? Hasn't it occurred to you they might be in trouble? Why would they...?"

"YES SIR. We are worried. But we don't know what to do." These agents were obviously paralyzed with fear.

"Well, we'll show you what to do. Where did they go?"

The Local Police

The local police are stymied by these attacks, but traditionally reluctant to cooperate with the FBI. If a real emergency comes up, they will activate, but will be slow to do so. They know the city well and are well armed, but the sight of walking dead will cause many to run in fear. Those that don't will likely be overcome before they can determine the zombie's weakness.

Use the standard Police Officer Archetype for uniformed officers and the Detective Archetype for all others.

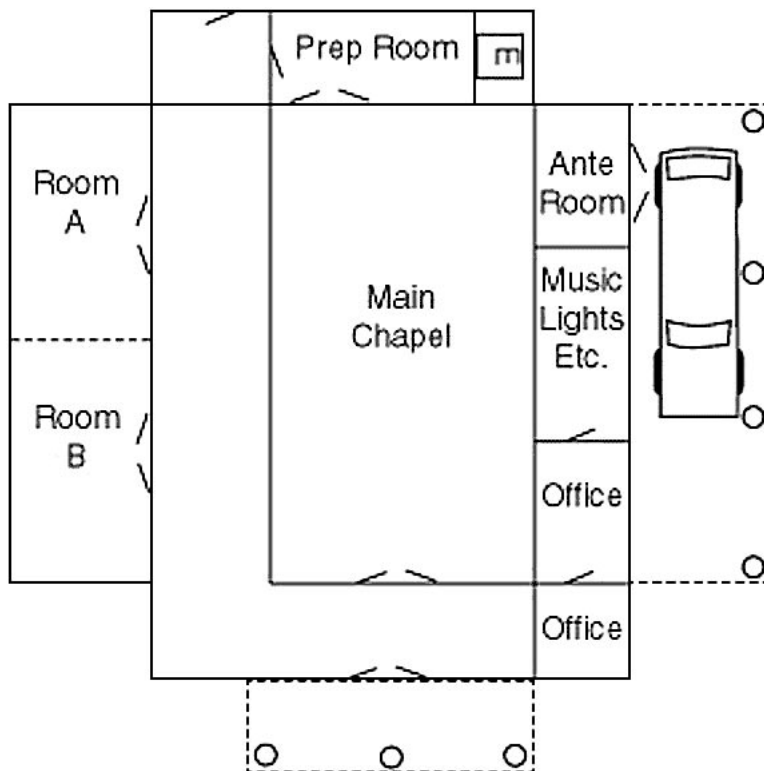
Part Three: The Night Has Eyes

The Mortuary

We pulled up to mortuary about noon. It looked deserted, not busy. There were a few cars parked around, but no people. Not even a groundskeeper. The doors were locked and the shades drawn. The hearse was parked around back near the exit doors as if waiting for the end of a service.

"What do you think?" I asked my partner.

"I think this is creepy, that's what."



A search of the grounds will reveal many of the mausoleums open and empty. Some graves are also empty, while others seem mildly disturbed. There will be some evidence of attacks, i.e. scuff marks, torn clothing, dried blood, near some graves, but no bodies.

If they call for a warrant to search the premises, an agent will arrive with it near dark. If they opt to break in they will find some evidence of disturbance on the first ground floor, but again no bodies.

If they move on to the basement they will discover almost every room filled to capacity with corpses. If this happens at night, the corpses will be up and moving for the door. During the day they are immobile. If exposed to sunlight they will begin to decay rapidly, turning to dust in just a few minutes. If the corpses are removed to the city morgue before sundown they will begin their nocturnal activities there. If not, they return to their usual stomping grounds.

If the players manage to get the locals clearing the mortuaries before dark, they have the option of returning to their hotel before the fun begins.

The Hotel

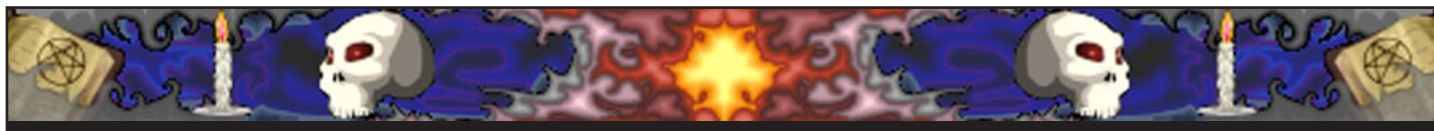
We got back to our hotel near dark and I asked my partner if she was up for a few drinks. She said she was going to catch the news and turn in. I asked if I could join her and we got a couple of beers from the fridge in the room.

The news had barely begun when we realized something strange was going on.

"We are receiving conflicting reports from all over the city. Apparently the attacks by 'Walking Dead' have reached a fever pitch. All sectors of the city are phoning in incidents of such attacks..." Suddenly there was a loud crash in the studio, and for just a moment before the screen went dead I saw the pretty newscaster in the hands of what looked like a pale, dirt covered, old man.

We grabbed our coats and guns and opened the door...to come face to face with death.

If it gets this far the players will be faced with a city in the grips of madness. Everywhere zombies will be attacking, and if they can make it out of the hotel they will have to fight their way to the



airport on clogged highways. If they can get to the airport they will find it filled with panicked people and not a few zombies. Calling for help from the FBI will be almost pointless at this time, as the same catastrophe has beset all the other cities where the dead have been rising. If the players can get into the air they might be able to find a temporary safe haven, but what goes up must come down...and the dead will be waiting.



The Zombies

Norm
Str: 2
Dex: 1
Con: 2
Int: -2
Per: 1
Wil: 2
Eps: n/a
Spd: 2

Essence Pool: 8
Attack: Bite Damage D4 X 2(4) slashing
Weak Spot: Brain, Sunlight
Getting Around: Slow and Steady
Strength: Dead Joe Average
Senses: Like the Dead, Life Sense
Sustenance: Daily; All Flesh Must Be Eaten
Intelligence: Dumb As Dead Wood
Spreading the Love: See AFMBE Rules
Power: 15
Special: Nocturnal, dormant during day

Agent Wolf Demlur

Norm
Str: 2
Dex: 2
Con: 3
Int: 2
Per: 3
Wil: 2
Lps: 36
Eps: 26
Spd: 10
Essence: 14

Qualities/Drawbacks:
Addiction (Pornography) (-1)
Depression (-2)
Contacts (FBI) 3 (3)
Hard to Kill 2 (2)
Nerves of Steel (3)

Skills:

Brawling 2
Bureaucracy 1
Computers 1
Driving (Car) 2
Electronic Surveillance 2
First Aid 1
Guns (Handgun) 2
Guns (Automatic Rifle) 1
Humanities
(Criminal Law) 2
Intimidation 2
Notice 2
Questioning 3
Research/Investigation 3
Stealth 2
Streetwise 2
Surveillance 3

Gear:

Cell Phone, Handgun, FBI I.D.



Agent Dena Lyclus

Norm
Str: 1
Dex: 2
Con: 3
Int: 3
Per: 3
Wil: 2
Lps: 32
Eps: 23
Spd: 10
Essence: 14

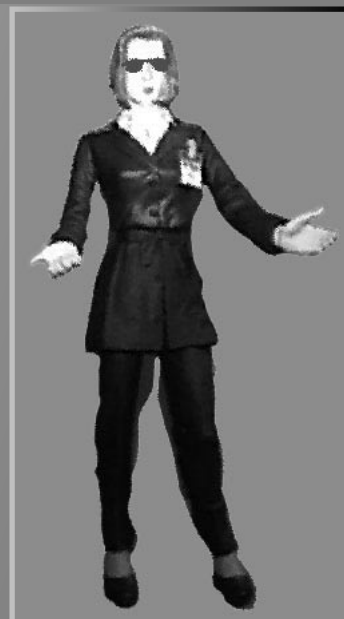
Qualities/Drawbacks:
Emotional Dependency (-1)
Adversary (-2)
Contacts (FBI) 3 (3)
Hard to Kill 2 (2)
Nerves of Steel (3)

Skills:

Medicine 3
Bureaucracy 1
Computers 3
Driving (Car) 2
Electronic Surveillance 2
Guns (Handgun) 2
Guns (Automatic Rifle) 1
Humanities
(Criminal Law) 2
Intimidation 2
Notice 2
Questioning 3
Research/Investigation 3
Stealth 2
Surveillance 3

Gear:

Cell Phone, Handgun, FBI I.D.



HEALTH CARE

HOURS: 6:00am - 11:30pm
by James D. Pearson

blood have especially dark features against the soiled cream-colored backdrop that is your journal. From ceiling to floor the tiny room that you call home is covered in the intricacies of your labor; the extent of your devotion. Yes, you know that the prize will be yours!

You tug again at the cold steel chain that holds your right arm close to the wall. Again it does not give. Again the pain rips through your shoulder. You must be free, free to finish what you have begun. You know that you cannot fight your destiny.

Like an animal, crazed, and caught in a trap you see only one way out. You writhe and tug, trying one last time to force the shackle free from your wrist. No avail. So you begin. The blood is warm and sweet in your mouth, the flesh gives easily as you pull at it. With your free hand you claw at the shackle. You don't even notice the pain through the determi-

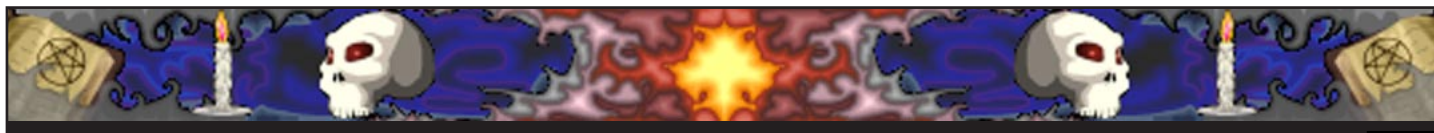
Preface

The moonlight which trickles in leaves a zebra-stripe pattern on the floor across the small room, just out of your reach. The floor feels coarse against your face and smells of moldy canvas and piss. The leather straps taste salty and old in your mouth. Your breath is loud against the floor as you regroup, resting just a moment longer. You tax your stomach muscles to pull yourself to a kneeling position. The light from the tiny barred window above is barely enough to illuminate your etchings. Years of writing, and scribbles and notes. The characters have faded or browned with age. Those written in

nation to remove the offending limb, the very same limb that was a part of the great work surrounding you, but which hinders its completion.

You claw and chew, rip and tear and finally, with one last tug and the snapping of bones the cuff is free. The horrible, offending limb lays on the floor, the musty canvas drinking up the last of its life essence. The hand twitches and convulses as if still under your command.

Smiling at your achievement you pull yourself to the edge of the room. There, the last bit of unfinished canvas awaits you. Your body offers up its ink. Plenty of ink with which to



finish your task.

As you pull the final breaths of air through your lungs you settle your head upon the warm, wet floor. Dipping the stylus which is your finger into the bountiful ink that spills out around you, you finish the task you were destined to.

When the nurses and doctors find your cold, blood drained corpse the next day they will marvel at your fortitude and perseverance. They will stand in awe of the great work which the master has commissioned you to complete. There, beside your body they will see the final few sentences written clumsily on the wall, in your own blood.

Health Care

It's a terrible thing when your players find themselves in need of medical attention. Beaten and battered they make their way to the health care facility of their choosing. Often times this facility is substandard at best, depending upon the nature of their injuries and the details of your game world. After all, the street doctor is a lot less likely to ask questions, as long as the payments are upfront and in cash.

However, in a horror game such as *Dark Conspiracy*, a trip to the hospital should be something more than a respite from the evils of the world, a vacation from their problems. The following scenario will leave your characters praying for mercy and a little rest from the horrors of the world of *Dark Conspiracy*.

The scenario can be introduced during any visit to a medical facility. While it is written specifically for a trip to a "standard" hospital, a few minor adjustments can fit it in at any point when the characters are receiving medical treatment, regardless of the exact nature or location.

The only real requirements for this scenario is that the characters spend the night, check their weapons at the door, and that all of them be present for this overnight visit. Of course, this works especially well if all of them are wounded and the Doctor orders a night of recuperation and rest. Also, the characters, while wounded, should not be so critical that a little combat and mayhem would instantly kill them off (unless of course, that's what you're interested in).

Introduction

The local hospital isn't exactly the place you want to seek medical attention. Conditions are poor, the waiting is long, and the doctors are overworked and extremely underpaid. However, since you're not living in the Dreamlands, it's the best you're going to get.

The characters drag themselves, battered and broken, into the hospital. The Emergency waiting room is full, despite the fact that it's late. The smell of urine and blood fills the air. Most of the patients look to be homeless. Crying children and coughs keep the room from ever being totally quiet.

After a long wait, the characters should be admitted and their wounds treated. This process should require a significant amount of paperwork, ID's and anything else that will

frustrate your players and let the dismal reality of life in the world of *Dark Conspiracy* sink in.

Having stabilized and treated the characters' wounds, the Doctor informs them that they must remain overnight. The wounds are serious and should be tended to and watched for at least 24 hours. Any non-injured characters are certainly welcome to spend the night in one of the ever-so-comfortable hospital chairs conveniently located in each room.

Strange Happenings

After a good amount of time, preferably after the characters have settled in and fallen asleep, one of them should notice or be awoken by something scurrying across the floor. If the character gets up to investigate, she should not easily locate the source of the noise. However, every now and then have her catch a glimpse of something shooting across the floor out of the corner of her eye. Describe the light scratching sound, like a rat with extra long claws.

If possible have this go on for some time, before the occurrence ceases altogether. The goal is to get the players paranoid. Also, after a while, they should venture down the hall.

Too Quiet

Hopefully the strange noises and sense of paranoia will get the players up and about. Investigating the hallway they should immediately notice a deathly silence. Also, the nurses' station is completely deserted. As the group continues down the hall surprise them with a blood curdling scream and a man stepping out of his room.

The man is covered in blood. His left arm ends in a bloody stump, still spurting as he holds it up and cries out in horror and pain.

Investigating the man's room reveals that he has shattered the mirror in his bathroom. The bathroom is splashed in red, from ceiling to floor. Bits of flesh and bone and shards of glass are scattered about. It should be apparent that the man has severed his own hand.

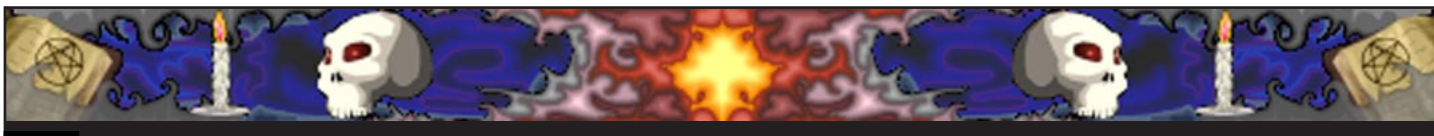
There is no trace of the hand.

Lend a Helping Hand

From this point on the scenario should be fast-paced, even frantic. After coming across the first patient, the group should be encouraged to continue investigating. If they do not continue on, then have the next wave of patients come to them.

Opening the fire doors that lead to the next wing reveals a scene that will make even the most hardy of Minion Hunters cringe. A cacophony of screams, wailing, and unintelligible mutterings of all the patients and staff on the floor bombard the group at this point.

Those that have not already freed their hands from their bodies are currently attempting to do so with nearly any means available. Scalpels, surgical saws, even heavy objects are being used to remove at least one (two is more difficult) hand from every body.



It is also at this point that the players should see that the now free hands are animated and scurrying about. They aid people in removing their hands.

The hands seem to work collectively, as if driven by an intelligent force. They work in groups to achieve common goals. The immediate goal appears to be severing as many hands from as many bodies as possible.

People who have passed out or died due to shock and blood loss are covered with several hands that chop, cut, and tear away at the remaining hand.

Can I Give You a Hand?

Let the horror of the situation sink in a little before you introduce the next part of the plot. At this point the characters should be quite concerned. Not only are they recovering from a previous session, but they are without weapons and unprepared. However, nothing can prepare them for what is about to happen next.

Sensitive characters, if they haven't already, should feel an increasingly stronger sense of doom. This feeling should be a mix of agitation and despair.

The order in which you select your characters for the next event is somewhat important. Begin by choosing the sensitive characters first. This should be followed by the most wounded characters. Of course, the most wounded sensitive characters have the pleasure of "going first".

This is the part of the scenario that my players still talk about! Using the pecking order stated above have each player make a difficult Willpower Test. If they fail slip that player a piece of paper or card with the following:

You are suddenly overcome with an extreme sense of rage, madness even. Follow these directions closely. 1) Tell me what handedness your character is by simply looking at me and saying right or left. 2) Roll 1D6 (1 - 3 = left 4 - 6 = right). 3) Tell me the results of this role, again say only the word. 4) Roleplay the following:

The source of this extreme anger is your hand (the one indicated by the die roll above)! It causes you great physical pain and grief. The only solution you currently see is to separate it from your body! You must do this any way you see fit. Grab the nearest sharp instrument, chew it off, chop it off, it doesn't matter, just remove it! Seriously! You must roleplay this and roleplay it well. No matter what anyone says or does your only desire, your only burning passion is to sever the hand from your body. Remember, you are in (and will be) in great pain and agony.

Now the fun begins.

This portion of the scenario is not necessarily meant to kill off the characters. However, passing out from shock or blood loss are acceptable. This process can be repeated on a regular basis. The longer they stay in the hospital the more difficult it will become to resist.

Follow the Bloodstained Brick Road

The hospital should now be crawling (literally) with hundreds of hands. Chaos and confusion should be found everywhere. However, through it all the characters should begin to noticing that the hands are now working towards a different unified purpose.

Hands can be seen carrying all sorts of objects. Flashlights, batteries, electrical wire in abundance, extension cords, and just about anything electrical or metal are being dragged, carried, pushed, and pulled down the halls to the stairwell.

For the most part the hands will stay on task and ignore the characters (unless of course they have a good hand or two left). If attacked or there is an attempt to stop them from their task, the appendages will, en masse, grapple, choke, or otherwise subdue their attackers.

The characters can easily follow the pilgrimage of hands into the lower levels of the hospital. This section of the hospital is dark and old. It is an abandoned wing whose purpose will soon become apparent. The hall is long and as the group makes their way they notice that the wall is broken up by heavy wooden doors with a small metal panel that covers a barred window.

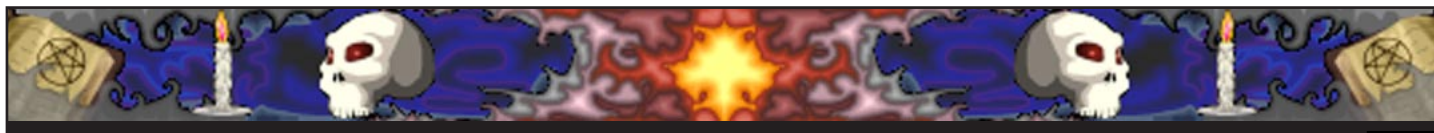
Investigating one of these rooms reveals a deteriorating, padded cell – reminiscent of an old insane asylum.

The darkness of the basement is interrupted by a light coming from the last cell. Hundreds of hands, busy at various tasks and carrying an elaborate array of wires and cables block the way. The only way to approach is to wade through the sea of hands.

In the final cell hands scurry about, up and down the walls, and over each other. The walls are covered with writing. Upon closer inspection the writing is made up of several strange languages. The text is written in whatever seems to have been handy at the time. Blood, ink, pencil, chalk, have all been used to cover nearly every inch of the wall.

To the left is a small barred window, its glass long since gone. Through it the moonlight of a new moon shines brightly on the scene. Directly across from the door the project which has demanded the hands' attention is revealed.

Before the characters is a portal. Actually, it is currently just the outline of a portal, created by the hands who have combined the electrical components and wires to form the rough outline of a door. There is also, off to the right, a device which, with a difficult Electronics roll can be recognized as a power generator of some sort. At the time that the characters enter, the hands are working their way to the bulb hanging



from a thin electrical wire in the ceiling. They are carrying a plug, which is connected to the generator, which is connected to the portal.

Clearly the players should stop this event from happening. Within a few short minutes of the power being connected a portal will open. It will take 3 to 5 minutes before there is enough power stored in the device to open the portal.

As soon as the capacitors reach full power, the lights in the hospital will begin to dim and flicker. The crude outline of the portal on the wall that the hands have created from wire and metal will begin to glow an eerie yellow and pulse. A portal will then open.

Killer Lemmings

As soon as the portal is opened the hands will pour into the other dimension. The small cell will quickly clear out. Within a few minutes the hands will begin to return to the cell, with new instructions.

The hands' task is to recover as many humans as possible, and bring them through the portal. Of course, they now have an abundance of subjects in the hospital to choose from. The hands will work together like an army of ants, lifting passed out patients or dragging them along. Patients, or PCs, who are not unconscious will be subdued by as many hands as it takes. Note that the intention is to bring living subjects to the proto-dimensions for its inhabitants to torture and play with. Dead subjects are of little use and should be ignored.

We're Not in Kansas Anymore ...

If the players decide to visit the proto-dimension they will find the strange land of Cenobil (see the notes on the proto-dimension Cenobil). Depending upon the time available and the type of scenario you are running, the PCs may encounter the native Hunters of Cenobil. Such an encounter can be a good source of combat, since the hands are just too numerous to destroy or stop.

In Cenobil the players will notice that the portal anchor is built out of a large rock formation. It has similar inscriptions on it to the ones in the cell. Attempts to destroy or damage this side of the anchor are fruitless, not to mention that it would more than likely trap the players in Cenobil.

Stop the Madness

Once the portal is open, even removing the power from it will not close it. It must be closed by someone with the Dimension Walk skill or by sealing the portal. How difficult these tasks are is left up to the GM. The availability of the proper dampening materials, the quantity needed, etc. can all be adjusted depending on how easy or difficult the GM wishes this part of the scenario to be.

Closing the portal with the Dimension Walk skill and then disassembling the gateway device will permanently close the portal. As soon as the portal is closed, the hands will cease to be animated and will collapse, limp on the floor.

Any sensitive character will feel the rips in the dimensional fabric in this location. This energy will remain even after the portal has been closed. This makes the cell a dangerous location since sorcerers and mages could tap its power in the future.

Aftermath

Once the players have successfully closed the portal you can paint a picture of the destruction and suffering left behind. As they make their way back to the waiting area of the emergency room, emphasize the number of patients laying about. The amount of blood. The hundreds of hands that cover the floor and must be stepped over or kicked out of the way to move about.

There are basically two ways to end this scenario (that is, unless you've killed off all the PCs). The method you choose will depend on how dark your Dark Conspiracy world is. First, you may leave the hospital and your PCs as they are. If they've lost a hand or two, oh well. If the hospital and all its patients are in the same state, just leave them. This is, after all, the work of a seriously twisted Dark Lord. However, this work leaves some very obvious results. This can, of course, be explained away by some "mass hysteria" effect or by blaming something or someone in the hospital.

If your Dark Conspiracy world is more conspiratorial, or you simply can't stomach leaving hundreds of innocents and a small band of minion hunters without their hands, then this second approach might be more to your liking.

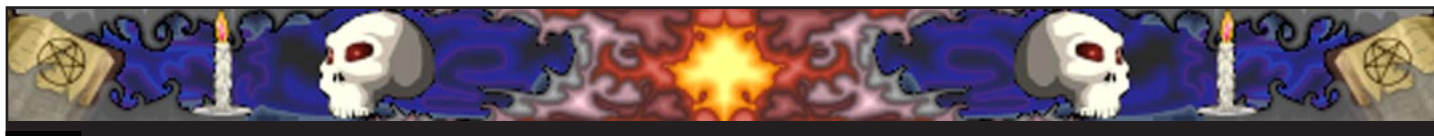
As the characters return to the Emergency Room waiting area they are greeted by the same dismal display as in the first option. Bodies, hands, blood. However, at this point the characters should begin to feel weak and dizzy. Whether this effect is their wounds catching up with them now that the adrenaline rush is gone, or is the effect of a more mysterious power is up to you, the GM.

In this ending, the players should begin to fade out of consciousness. However, just before they pass out, the doors to the waiting room burst open. In pours a team of people dressed completely in white contamination suits. They carry white duffel bags. Immediately the waiting room is filled with a dozen or so of these people. The white clad team is immediately followed by 3 Men in Black. These men step in, survey the situation and begin directing the team in white. At this point the characters pass out.

Leaving your players at this point until your next gaming session is an excellent cliffhanger and I guarantee will keep them talking about this scenario for quite some time to come. At your next meeting, open the session with the next section.

The Morning After

The last thing you remember is the waiting room ... the nurses and doctors and police and the men in long black overcoats and the men in white suits rushing around picking people up and bandaging their wounds and



A bright light shines directly in your face ... "Scalpel" ... "Yes doctor" ... "Increase the IN. drip" ... "Another 20 c.c.s" ...

Flash, flash, flash, flash, like the beat of some steady drum as the lights go by overhead ... blinking - no, whooshing by ...

You awaken to the sterile smell of a hospital. It takes a moment to collect yourself, get your bearings. Your eyes, try to focus, like a child awakening from a deep sleep ... with both of your hands!

You snap awake ... you look down at your hands ... you're beautiful hands. You turn them over and touch them, feeling for a stitch or a seam or something that will tell you that what you vaguely remember was real. But you find nothing. What did happen? You know that you're not crazy, that what you experienced had to be real, but here you lay, whole.

"Ah, good morning! I see you've finally decided to rejoin the living." The young nurse smiles at you



Cenobil: A Proto-Dimension

Name: Cenobil

Type: Halfland

Discontinuity: 2

Assimilation Effect Value: Special

Cenobil's ground is like that of a dried and baked riverbed. The hard black earth is cracked and rocky. There are hills and small mountains scattered throughout the land. These rock formations include caves that wind and weave through the dimension. A dark dusk-like sky hangs overhead. There is no apparent passage of time or seasons in Cenobil. The sky occasionally seems to move as black shapes shift through the air like clouds, but no moon, sun or other indication of time is ever visible. In Cenobil a few minutes can seem like an eternity. Time passes slowly in Cenobil. The time ratio is about 10 to 1 between Cenobil and Earth. 10 hours in Cenobil is but a day on Earth.

A rather small proto-dimension, Cenobil has relative borders that extend just beyond the largest set of mountains. Characters will find it increasingly difficult to move beyond this point. The air becomes thinner, and the feeling of wading through mud will quickly tire even the most fit character.

While at first Cenobil appears to be devoid of life and completely desolate, characters will soon learn otherwise. Cries and screams echo through the caverns. These are the cries of the souls unfortunate enough to have been captured by the creatures currently inhabiting Cenobil. Know simply as "The Hunters" these beasts resemble a human in basic form. However, a Hunter's skin is a thick leathery covering, that is nearly pitch black. Also the Hunter's head is elongated at the face, almost snout-like, but thicker and encompassing more of the face. Eyes and hair are also coal black.

The Hunters will begin hunting anyone who enters their proto-dimension within 1/2 hour of arrival. The will not stop until their prey is either captured, or leaves. All prisoners of the hunters will be brought into the network of caves and caverns and tortured! This torture is most typically inflicted through whips, cuttings and mutilations.

Unfortunately, for the characters, one odd effect of Cenobil is that no one can die there! No matter how severe the damage as long as the person remains in Cenobil, they will not die. However, every pit of the pain inflicted due to the damage is felt in its entirety. This not only makes the Hunters more than worthy opponents, but it also makes the suffering of their victims all that much more pleasurable to them!

Anyone who leaves Cenobil with mortal wounds will die instantly. That is, unless they go directly to a proto-dimension that counteracts this physics shift ...

Assimilation

In addition to the inability to die, after 1 hour of time in the proto-dimension characters will begin the transformation into a Hunter! While painful (excruciatingly) this causes no real damage. However, the person will "shed" their old skin as the new one emerges. The process takes about 2 - 4 hours.

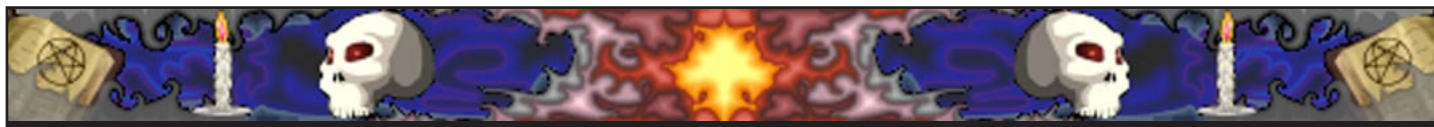
Also, after the physical conversion, the character will be completely mad and behave as a 'native' Hunter. The desire to inflict pain on others is insatiable.

Unfortunately, once the process of assimilation is complete, it is irreversible.



"Easy Missions are called 'Milk Runs' because they always seem to go sour."

-Zena Marley (Early 21st century mercenary-philosopher)



FLESH FOR EIHORT

by Linden Dunham

INTRODUCTION

Flesh for Eihort is a Call of Cthulhu adventure for 3-6 experienced investigators. A chance encounter leads the investigators into a hunt for a serial killer with links to the cult of Eihort. The setting is Ramsey Campbell's fictional Gloucestershire town of Brichester where the Great Old One has its lair.

I've followed the common convention of expressing SAN losses as two numbers separated by a "/". The first number is the loss following a successful SAN roll; the second number is the loss for a failed roll.



ON THE STREET AT NIGHT

An investigator (Keeper's choice) is walking along Bristol Road, a main arterial road through Lower Brichester, at half past eleven on a Monday evening in November. The reason for this will have to be determined by the Keeper but it could be related to the investigator's normal job e.g. a police officer could be on patrol in the area, a reporter following up a lead, a doctor making a late night house call. The reason might even be something as banal as the investigator going home from the pub or walking his or her dog. As they make their way down the road someone stumbles out of a terraced side street. The figure cries "Help me" in a weak voice and then falls to the ground. As the investigator approaches the prone body they see a fat white spider-like creature detach itself from the fallen man's back and scuttle into a nearby drain. The investigator loses 0/1 points of SAN upon witnessing this disturbing sight. If the investigator inspects the drain s/he will find no sign of the spider or any clue as to where it might have gone.

The man on the ground has been stripped to the waist. He is bleeding from a head wound and also from several long cuts made crisscross fashion in his chest to form a star-like design.

The chest wounds are not immediately life threatening; the man is in far more danger from his head injury. If the investigator succeeds in a First Aid roll s/he will manage to stop the bleeding and the man will revive long enough to mutter "...in the tunnels," before lapsing back into unconsciousness.

By this time, a couple of other people have arrived on the scene. One of them will call an ambulance and the police if the investigator doesn't think to do so. The injured man is carted off to a nearby hospital while the investigator is taken to the police station to make a statement. The investigator is kept waiting for an hour at the station before being led into an interview room by Detective Inspector Neil Barrett. Before starting the interview, Barrett tells the investiga-

tor, "We've just heard that the man you found has died at the hospital. Looks like this is a murder enquiry now."

Barrett initially asks the investigator to describe how they came across the victim and what actions were taken to render aid. He then proceeds to ask numerous questions in an apparent effort to find out if the investigator saw anything that might provide a clue as to who attacked the victim. (Note: Barrett is a worshipper of Eihort and believes that the incident in which the investigator was involved might compromise the Great Old One's cult. He is actually trying to find out how much the investigator saw to determine how much of a threat s/he is to Eihort.)

The investigator probably won't mention the spider-like creature they saw vanish into the drain. If they do, Barrett will appear skeptical and asks the investigator if they have been drinking. In either case, once Barrett is satisfied that he has obtained all the information he can from the investigator, he will conclude the interview and allow them to go home.

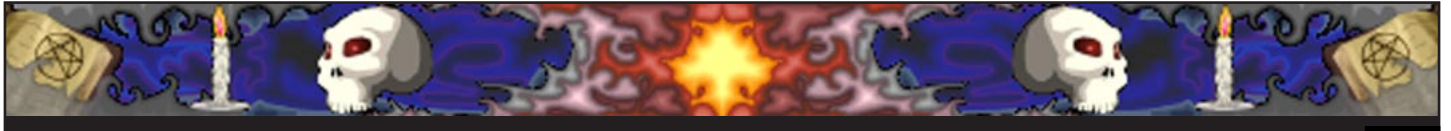
KEEPER'S INFORMATION

The dead man was named Gerald Cornwell. He was a victim of Henry Chubb, a serial killer and worshipper of Eihort. Chubb has been preying on the transient and homeless population of Brichester for the past decade. His usual modus operandi is to befriend poor young men and invite them back to his house where he gives them a hot meal, offers them a bed for the night and plies them with drink. Once the victim is safely asleep Chubb batters him to death, removes some choice "souvenirs" from the body, and buries it in his cellar. Chubb enjoys the company of his victims and likes to have something to remember them by. Six months ago Chubb came into contact with the mythos, which has resulted in a serious alteration in his methods.

While burying the body of his latest victim Chubb broke through his cellar floor into a tunnel. Almost immediately he was set upon by a pack of ghouls

that had been alerted by the sound of digging. The ghouls were worshippers of Eihort and intended to kill and eat Chubb and take portions of his body to offer to their master. However, upon seeing the corpse and discovering the remains of Chubb's other victims, the pack leader realized that it had found someone who could be extremely useful to its master. Chubb was given a simple choice: Join the cult of Eihort or be killed. Not surprisingly, Chubb opted for the former. The ghouls took Chubb to Eihort's cavern to induct him into the Great Old One's cult. Chubb was spared impregnation with Eihort's young on the condition that he provided the monster with a regular supply of human flesh. As a result, Chubb must now kill at least once a month, sometimes more if Eihort and the ghouls require it. Before his "conversion", intervals of up to a year would pass before Chubb felt the need to go trawling for another victim. When at last he could resist his urges no longer, the murders were always meticulously planned and carried out. Being extremely careful has allowed Chubb to go undetected for the last ten years. But now, coming into contact with Eihort has made Chubb sloppy: He no longer has the time to plan things properly and his sanity has become so eroded that he doesn't care about leaving a trail. This will ultimately provide the investigators the key to finding Chubb.

With the sudden spate of disappearances, Brichester's transients have become aware that someone or something is preying on them. Many have left town or found ways to get off the streets, even if only temporarily. This has left Chubb a steadily shrinking pool of derelicts to prey upon. In selecting his last victim Chubb resorted to killing someone he knew through his job at the Brichester Housing Association. He met Gerald Cornwell and ended up getting him drunk and taking him home. He bludgeoned Cornwell as he lay semi-conscious on the sofa. Half drunk himself, Chubb made a botched job of the killing. Cornwell was still alive when the ghouls came and carried his body



to their lair where they began to prepare if for offering to Eihort. The pain of having a ritual mark cut into his chest caused Cornwell to revive and he fled from the surprised ghouls into the surrounding tunnels, plowing through a swarm of Eihort's children as he ran. The ghouls gave chase, pursuing him for some time before he managed to find an exit leading into the basement of an abandoned house in Lower Brichester. Unwilling to risk being seen on the streets by humans the ghouls broke off pursuit. Cornwell staggered into the street where he collapsed in sight of our wayward investigator, and later died from his wounds in the hospital.

In addition to not killing him outright Chubb made several potentially fatal mistakes with Cornwell: Firstly, he neglected to remove the man's personal effects after bludgeoning him thus leaving a number of clues for investigators to follow. Secondly, he was seen in several public places with Cornwell and eyewitnesses will recall seeing them together if they are questioned. Thirdly, selecting Cornwell himself was a mistake. Gerald Cornwell's brother John is a highly successful, and violent, London gangster. When he hears of Gerald's death John will travel up to Brichester, bound and determined to take revenge on his brother's killer. Gerald might have been a broken down alkie whom he hadn't seen in years but as far as John is concerned, it's a commandment carved in stone that you don't let people take liberties with family.

IN BETWEEN DAYS

After leaving the police station, the investigator is at last free to contact his/her colleagues so that they can begin their own enquiry into the obviously mythos-related murder in Lower Brichester. The investigators have two days before they will be contacted by John Cornwell, the brother of the murdered man (see *The Enforcer* below). There are a number of sources they can consult in the mean time:

The Police: The day after the murder the police identify the dead man from

his fingerprints. He is Gerald Cornwell, age 47. Cornwell was a well-known street drinker around Brichester. He had been arrested numerous times for drunkenness and minor disorderly conduct offences.

On the second day the police have the results of the post-mortem: Barrett will be unwilling to release the pathologist's report to the investigators. If they persist he will warn them to stay clear of his investigation, as he doesn't want a bunch of civilians mucking up his case. If the investigators still want the report they will have to resort to asking a favor of an existing police or hospital contact, or bribing or fast-talking someone in the pathology department at Mercy Hill.

The report states that the cause of death was due to a fractured skull and internal bleeding. Cornwell had been beaten about the head but survived for

some time after the attack. The pathologist notes that the cuts on the chest did not cause Cornwell's death and speculates that these might have had some ritual significance to the killer. The final point of interest is that soil traces were found on Cornwell's body suggesting that he might have been underground at some time prior to death.

The Papers: The day after the murder the "Brichester Herald" runs the following story:

Crime Scene: If the investigators return to Bristol Road they will find the spot where Cornwell died cordoned off with yellow tape. A couple of police notices fixed to lampposts repeat Barrett's call for witnesses. Any investigator who makes a Spot Hidden roll will notice a large bloodstain on the pavement at the junction of Bristol Road and Goatswood Terrace, a side street. The

MUGGING VICTIM DIES

Police confirmed today that a man found lying in Bristol Road yesterday evening had died in hospital. The man, identified as 47 year-old Gerald Cornwell, of Lower Brichester, had been beaten severely about the head. Detective Inspector Neil Barrett who is leading the police enquiry into the attack said: "At the moment it appears to have been a mugging that went wrong but we are treating Mr. Cornwell's death as murder and we will be bringing every resource to bear in catching his assailant."

Inspector Barrett declined to say whether the police were pursuing any particular leads although he did appeal to anyone who witnessed the attack to come forward."

investigator who originally encountered Cornwell will remember that the dying man staggered out of Goatswood Terrace onto the main road. A successful Track roll enables the investigators to follow a trail of smaller bloodstains down the terrace. The last stain is on the doorstep of number 23, a derelict house at the end of the street. The property's windows have been smashed and the interior stripped bare. Anyone trying the front door will find that it swings open quite easily. Inside the house another bloodstain on the front room floorboards strongly suggest that Cornwell must have been inside just prior to his death.

Mischievous Keepers may want to have their investigators waste their time exploring the house encountering such hazards as creaky floorboards, rotten staircases and aggressive rats. Eventually though the investigators should find a flight of blood splotted brick steps leading down into pitch darkness. Assuming the investigators have sufficient illumination and follow the steps down they find themselves in a small stone flagged cellar. One of the corner flagstones has been pushed aside revealing a hole in the floor just wide enough for a man to crawl through. Anyone exploring the hole finds a narrow tunnel leading downward at a shallow angle. The tunnel extends for around ten meters and is then blocked by a fall of earth. An investigator who makes a Know roll will realize that the tunnel's roof had been deliberately collapsed.

Digging though the earth will be a lengthy and hazardous process. As well as restricted room and the risk of cave-in, the investigators can also expect to be harassed by local residents, officials from the city council (which owns the house), and the police (especially Inspector Barrett). In the unlikely event that the investigators manage to reopen the tunnel they will find that it leads to a larger tunnel which forms part of Eihort's maze (see The Labyrinth below).

Street People: With Cornwell being a well-known street drinker the investigators might decide to interview some

of his peers. Like all British cities Brichester has a hardcore contingent of outdoor alcoholics who can be found drinking al fresco in all but the worst weather. Despite this the investigators find it difficult to track any down. The alleyways and benches of the town center seem strangely bereft of drinkers. If the investigators check with any local drug/alcohol abuse or homeless charities they will be told that there has been a decline in the numbers of people seeking help. This will be attributed to Brichester police adopting a zero tolerance policy towards beggars and drinkers, which has encouraged many of them to leave town. Investigators who make a Law roll will realize that this is incorrect. Brichester police do have such a policy but it isn't rigorously enforced by officers on the beat. There must be some other reason for the decline in Brichester's transient population.

Witnesses: If the investigators decide to canvass the area where Cornwell died they find the residents of Goatswood Terrace generally uncooperative. Most will say that they've already talked to the police and then shut their door. Those who actually deign to speak with the investigators will claim not to have heard anything the night Cornwell died or that they thought his cries for help were just kids messing around. The only helpful person is Wayne Baker an unemployed man who rents an upstairs room at the front of the house opposite number 23. On the night that Cornwell died he says he heard screaming and the sound of a struggle coming from across the road. When he looked out of the window he saw a man come running out of the doorway of no. 23. A few seconds later something else appeared in the doorway:

"I could see it in the light from the street lamps. It was man-sized but it wasn't human...it had claws and a face that reminded me of a mad dog: All bulging eyes and teeth. It was chasing after that poor bloke who was killed, but it stopped for a second, looked up and saw me and then went back in the house. I tell you I was shocked by the sight of

it -- I just stood there frozen for at least fifteen minutes. I only came to when the police and ambulance arrived. "

The only other thing that Baker remembers about the creature is that it was "all naked and muscley." Baker also advises the investigators that he told the same story to Detective Inspector Barrett but he didn't seem very interested.

Investigators who listen to Baker's account and make a subsequent Cthulhu Mythos roll will guess that the creature he saw was a ghoul.

Cthulhu Mythos Knowledge: Investigators who make a Mythos roll will realize that the mark found on Cornwell's chest is connected with Eihort. The crisscross lines are a stylized representation of the Great Old One's spider-like appearance.

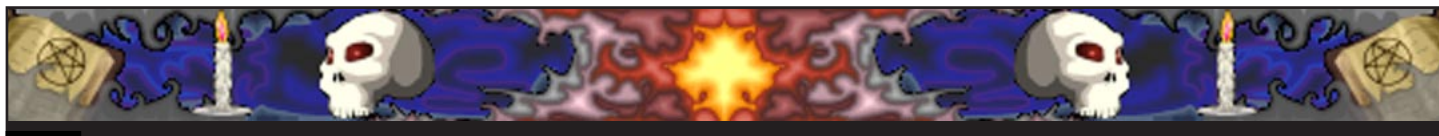
This information may also be available, at the Keeper's discretion, from a suitable mythos tome (see "Cthulhoid Books" below).

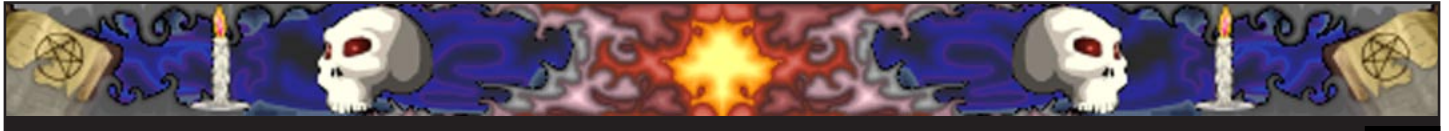
Cthulhoid Books: The following passage can be found in *Cultes des Ghouls*, *The Revelations of Glaaki* or *We Pass from View* (other books are at the Keeper's discretion but they should have some connection with the Severn Valley, or at least the UK):

"Many are the ghouls who worship the God of the Labyrinth. They bear his mark and travel his tunnels at will. They are spared the bearing of his young because they bring him that which he craves from the cemeteries in the surrounding country. These children of the night are greatly welcome at the feast of Eihort."

THE ENFORCER

On late Wednesday afternoon the investigator who originally encountered Gerald Cornwell receives a telephone call from a caller who introduces himself as John Cornwell, the brother of the dead man. He has a London accent although a successful Linguist roll will enable the investigator to detect faint traces of an underlying Gloucestershire burr. John Cornwell asks to see the investigator regarding his brother's death. He will agree to any reasonable time and





venue suggested by the investigator and will have no objection to the investigator having colleagues present.

When they eventually meet Cornwell tells the investigators that he wants to ask some questions about his brother's death. These follow much the same pattern as those asked by the police. When he has finished Cornwell pauses for a moment and then says that he would like to hire the investigators to find his brother's killer: *"I've been checking up on you lot. You like to get involved when there's something creepy going on. I reckon whoever killed Gerald was a Satanist or something, the way they cut that funny symbol into his chest. I don't know anything about the occult so I need some people who do know what to look for."*

Cornwell offers to the investigators £50.00 per day each plus expenses if they take the job on (he can be bargained up to £80.00 per day) plus a bonus of £1000 each if they eventually find whoever killed his brother.

Once terms have been agreed Cornwell produces a carrier bag containing his brother's effects: "Just got these back from the Old Bill. Thought they'd want to keep them as evidence but they didn't seem interested. Anyway, you might find something useful in this lot."

Cornwell leaves the investigators his mobile phone number and tells them that he will be staying in town until the inquest and funeral "although there doesn't seem much chance of either happening in the near future."

Gerald Cornwell's belongings consist of the following:

1) A letter from Brichester Housing Association asking Gerald to call their Lower Brichester Office on the previous Monday at 11:00 a.m. It is signed by Henry Chubb, Housing Officer.

2) A bunch of keys.

3) A book of matches with the "Royal Oak Public House, Bristol Road, Brichester" embossed on the cover.

4) A screwed up receipt for a chicken and fries meal from the Corner Garage, Bristol Road, Brichester. The receipt was produced by a computerized till and in addition to much extraneous information lists the name of the cashier as Sarah.

5) A packet of cigarettes only two of which appear to have been smoked.

ENQUIRIES

Gerald Cornwell's Flat: The flat is located on the first floor of four story 1960's built block in Lower Brichester (see Map 1 - Flats). The investigators can obtain the address from the Hous-

ing Association's letter. The keys found with Cornwell's effects will open the front door. The interior of the flat is filthy with empty beer cans and bottles strewn all over the place. The investigators will not find any clues in the flat. The only item of interest is a framed photo of Gerald and John Cornwell on the bedside table. The photo was obviously taken some time ago as both men appear to be in their early twenties and are dressed in lurid 1970's fashions. They are both smiling.

Questioning Cornwell's neighbors reveal that he was regarded as a nuisance by the other residents of the block. Mrs. O'Grady, the downstairs neighbor is fairly typical: "They say you shouldn't speak ill of the dead but he was a horrible man. Always getting drunk and banging and crashing and shouting all hours of the night. I complained about him several times to the Association but they never did anything about it. I hate to say it but I'm glad he's dead. Maybe I'll get some peace and quiet now."

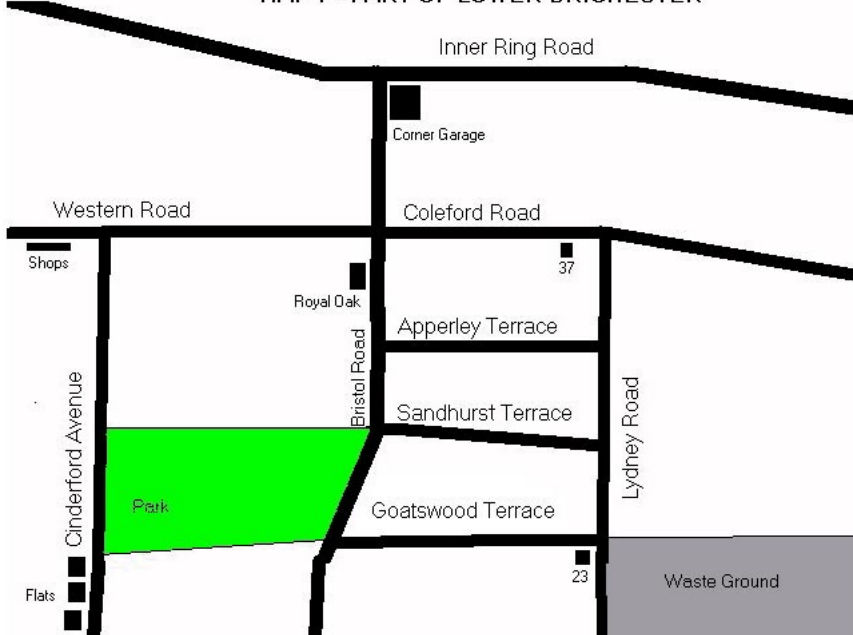
More importantly, Mrs. O'Grady remembers seeing Cornwell leaving his flat at about 5.15 pm on the night he died: "I was just coming back from the shops. He got in a car with someone and they drove off." Mrs. O'Grady recalls that the person with Cornwell was Mr. Chubb the local housing officer. She thinks the car was a Metro but isn't completely sure.

If the investigators think to ask Mrs. O'Grady will tell them she was interviewed by that "nice Inspector Barrett from the police. I told him exactly what I've just told you"

Local Housing Office: This is located in a parade of shops near the flats (see Map 1 - Shops). The address is at the top of Cornwell's letter. If the investigators visit here on a weekday Chubb will be out doing his rounds. The PCs are told by Karen Walters, Chubb's manager, that they are welcome to wait if they want although she does add that "Your guess is as good as mine as to when he'll be back."

If the investigators follow up on this remark they will need to make a Per-

MAP 1 - PART OF LOWER BRICHESTER



suade roll before Ms. Walters tells them that Chubb's performance at work has deteriorated over the last few weeks. His time keeping is erratic and he disappears from the office for long periods. When he is in the office he appears distracted and his paperwork is a mess. The manager has overlooked all of this because of Chubb's previously excellent record. She had hoped that if he was left alone he would pull himself together. Unfortunately he seems to have gotten worse.

After 1D3 hours a blue Metro pulls into the small car park outside the outside the offices and a nondescript man with thinning hair gets out. A couple of minutes later the investigators are introduced to Henry Chubb.

Chubb will pretend that he has been badly shocked by Cornwell's death and will appear eager to co-operate with the investigators' enquiry. He will readily admit that Cornwell was a far from ideal tenant and the Association was seriously considering evicting him because of the numerous complaints from his neighbors. The appointment on Monday was to advise Cornwell that he had one last chance to clean up his act. If there were any more complaints against him proceedings would be taken to evict him from his property. Cornwell reacted angrily to this ultimatum and stormed out of the office.

If pressed Chubb will also admit visiting Cornwell on the evening of the same day to see if he could be reasoned with having had some time calm down. Chubb found that Cornwell had cooled off enough to accept a lift into town. "It's against guidelines but he said he needed to get into town to have prescription filled at the late night chemist. I thought we could discuss things in the car." This is a lie. Investigator's succeeding in a Psychology roll will realize this as Chubb's body language is all wrong. Confronting Chubb with the lie will be counterproductive, as he will call for the office's two security guards to remove the investigators from the premises. Chubb will subsequently also contact his ghoulish allies with the intention of having the investigators dealt with on

a more permanent basis (see **EVENTS** below).

Late Night Chemist: Investigators lacking the psychology skills to detect Chubb's lies can take the more laborious route of checking community information listings in back issues of the local papers and making a Library roll. The only chemist open late in town on Monday was Morrison's in the town center. A Persuade roll is then required to get the pharmacist to check his records. There will be no record of a Gerald Cornwell having had a prescription filled on Monday (or indeed ever).

The Royal Oak: A large Victorian pub located on one of the main roads in and out of Brichester (see Map 1). Kevin Powers, the landlord, is unaware of the murder. He is too busy most days to read the papers. He has not been interviewed by the police about the murder.

If the investigators describe Cornwell to him, Powers will quickly remember "a tramp" coming in on Monday night. Powers says his first instinct was to throw Cornwell out but he held back seeing that he was accompanied by someone who was respectably dressed. If asked to describe the other man Powers will find it difficult to recall any detail other than "he was going a bit bald...Definitely wearing a suit though."

Powers ended up asking both men to leave when it became evident that Cornwell had had too much to drink: "*He was shouting and swearing at the top of his voice, upsetting all the other customers.*"

The Corner Garage: Situated at a junction of Bristol Road and the Inner Ring Road this is a combination of petrol station/secondhand car lot/video shop/super-market/off license/fast food outlet (see Map 1).

If the investigators interview Carl Greenwood, the manager, he will tell them that he wasn't on duty at the time that the receipt was issued. The investigators will need to talk to the night staff. However, the manager does remember Cornwell quite well. He was a regular customer at the garage, often stopping to buy bottles of cider or strong wine in

the late morning on his way into town.

When the investigators return in the evening they will find that the night staff is composed exclusively of Brichester University students. The Sarah listed in the receipt is Sarah Davis. She recalls serving Cornwell with chicken and fries.

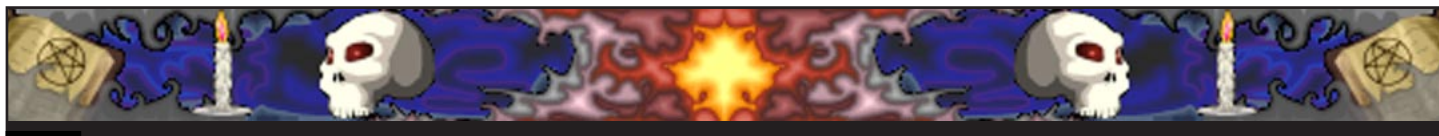
"He didn't have enough money and he got stropky when I said he had to pay up or he wasn't getting anything. In the end he went and got some money from his mate in the car outside."

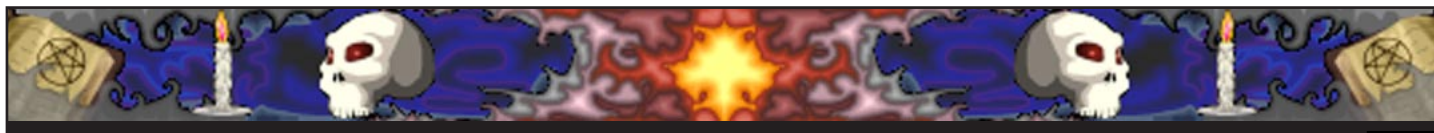
Sarah can't recall what sort of car Cornwell's friend drove but as she talks to the investigators it occurs to her that the car might have been caught on the forecourt security camera. A Persuade roll is required before she will allow the investigators to view that night's tape. Alternatively, she can be persuaded with a voluntary donation to her "education fund". She will ask for £50.00 but can be Bargained as low as £20.00.

The tapes and video recorder are kept in a back office. The cassettes are cycled on a weekly basis so that Monday evening's tape won't be recorded over until the following Monday (if the investigators are slow in following up this lead then that's tough luck). If the investigators find the tape for Monday evening they will have to endure sitting through three hours of monotonous footage of cars pulling in and out of the garage. Eventually they come to the section that shows Cornwell get out of a blue Metro which parked on the garage forecourt. Cornwell goes into the garage shop and comes out a few minutes later looking angry. He goes over to the car and speaks with the shadowy figure. Money changes hands and Cornwell goes back into the shop re-emerging shortly thereafter clutching a couple of cardboard cartons. He gets in the car and it drives off. As it pulls out of the exit the rear number plate can clearly be seen.

If the investigators think to ask, neither Sarah Davis or Carl Greenwood have been interviewed by the police about Cornwell's death.

Car Registration: There are a number of ways the investigators can





follow up this lead:

Any investigator who has already visited the Housing Office and makes a Luck roll followed by a Know roll at INT x 2 will remember that the number plate is the same as the one on Chubb's car.

The investigators can take the registration to the police although this will have to be over John Cornwell's objections. The investigators will be assured by Barrett that he will put the number through the computer as soon as possible and will get in touch as soon as he has something. Barrett will of course do no such thing. If the investigators persist in bothering him about it he will start making arrangements for having them dealt with (see **EVENTS** below).

As an alternative to using the police any investigator who makes a Law (or Idea roll at Keeper's discretion) will realize that vehicle ownership details can be checked with the DVLA for a small fee. As the investigators are trying to discover the name and address of the owner they will have to apply in writing to the DVLA and will also have to show good cause as to why they require this information. (Write English and Law rolls required). Assuming that the investigators' letter is sufficiently persuasive obtaining the details takes 1D4+2 days: The car seen on the video belongs to Henry Thomas Chubb of 37 Coleford Road, Lower Brichester, Brichester, Gloschestershire.

CHUBB'S HOUSE - MAP 2

37 Coleford Road is a Victorian terraced house in an area of Lower Brichester that escaped redevelopment in the 1960's. The local residents tend to mind their own business but if investigators blatantly force an entry of no.37 the neighbors *will* call the police. If questioned, Chubb's neighbors will say that he is a quiet man who keeps very much to himself. One of them, Dave Pearce will describe Chubb disparagingly as "that poof who works for the Council or something." He will say that he has seen Chubb bringing men back to the house late at night although he will not recall

ever seeing anyone leave.

1. Front Room: Entered directly via the front door from the small front garden. Contains a TV, video, stereo and a three-piece sectional sofa suite. There is a large, dark stain on the sofa (blood).

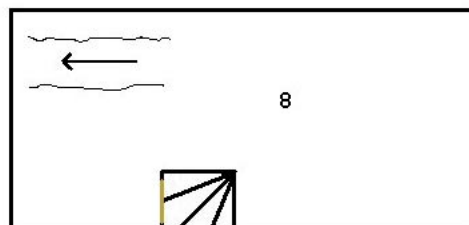
2. Dining Room: The main feature here is a dining table and four chairs. There is also a liquor cabinet containing a healthy supply of bottled spirits. A door in one corner leads to the main

staircase, which goes up to the first and second floor and down to the cellar.

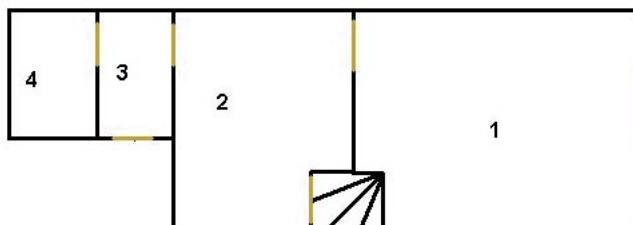
3. Kitchen: This is in a state of complete chaos with dirty utensils and crockery scattered all over the place, evidence of the growing disorder in Chubb's mind. The bottom of the sink is encrusted with a red - brown deposit (KNOW roll required to recognize it as blood). There is similar colored staining on the floor by the door of the fridge. The only items in the fridge are a pint of

Map 2: No. 37 Coleford Terrace

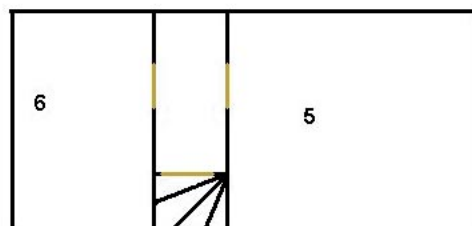
Cellar



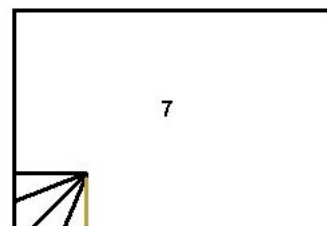
Ground Floor

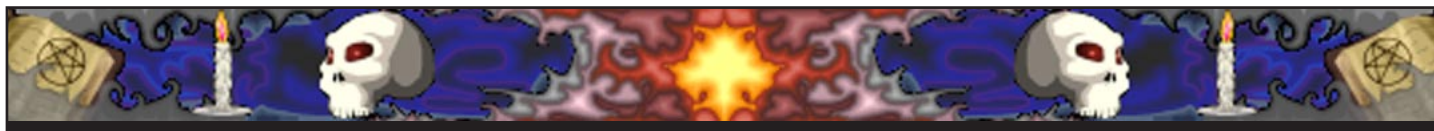


First Floor



Second Floor





milk, some cans of strong lager and the battered, severed head of one of Chubb's previous victims (1/1D6 SAN loss to view).

4. Bathroom/Toilet: Like the kitchen this is also in a filthy state with both the bath and toilet heavily stained with dried blood. An iron bar and a couple of large knives have been thrown carelessly into the bath. There is a large supply of painkillers in the bathroom cabinet.

5. Study: A converted bedroom lined with shelves full of books, mostly sci-fi and horror paperbacks. There is also a high quality digital camera with timer device and desktop PC. Logging on to the PC requires entry of a password ("Thomas" - Chubb's middle name) or a Computer Use roll at half the usual percentage. The PC's hard drive is chock full of pictures of Chubb's victims taken with a digital camera. All of the subjects are dead and have horrific head injuries. They are posed in normal attitudes, sitting propped up in armchairs or at the dining room table. Some have had glasses or cutlery placed in their hands as if they are having a drink or eating a meal. Chubb appears in a number of the pictures smiling broadly, obviously enjoying the corpse's company.

The overall impression given by the pictures is of an obscene parody of someone entertaining a particularly welcome guest. Despite the lack of myths related material amongst the pictures viewing Chubb's photo collection costs 1/1D3 SAN.

6. Spare Bedroom: This is where Chubb kills his victims. In contrast to the carpeting in the rest of the house the floor is surfaced in an easy-to-clean linoleum. If investigators think to strip the linen off the bed they find the mattress underneath heavily stained with blood.

7. Second Floor Bedroom: Chubb sleeps in this room. It contains a bed, wardrobe and a chest of drawers. There is dank smell in the room that can be traced to a metal box stowed in the bottom of the wardrobe. The box contains Chubb's "souvenirs" - various body parts removed from his victims post mortem. Most are fairly rotten, hence

the smell. It costs 1/1D4 SAN to view this collection of grisly mementoes.

8. Cellar: The cellar has a brick floor, which is very uneven. Anyone who makes an Idea roll will realize that it has been dug up. If the investigators pry up a few bricks there is a 50% chance of finding human remains under a thin layer of soil (0/1D3 SAN loss).

There is a large hole in one corner of the cellar where the floor has collapsed into a space underneath. Earth and bricks have been piled up on one side of the hole to form a ramp leading into the darkness below. Investigators descending the ramp find themselves in a stone flagged tunnel. Human bones are scattered around for a radius of several meters. Many bones show distinct signs of having been gnawed.

If the investigators proceed any further the Keeper should refer to **THE LABYRINTH** below.

THE LABYRINTH - MAP 3

1. Goatswood Terrace Entrance: As noted previously this has been blocked by the ghouls following Gerald Cornwell's escape. It's not impossible for Investigators to clear the blockage but it's unlikely that they'll manage it.

2. Coleford Road Entrance: The hole in Chubb's cellar.

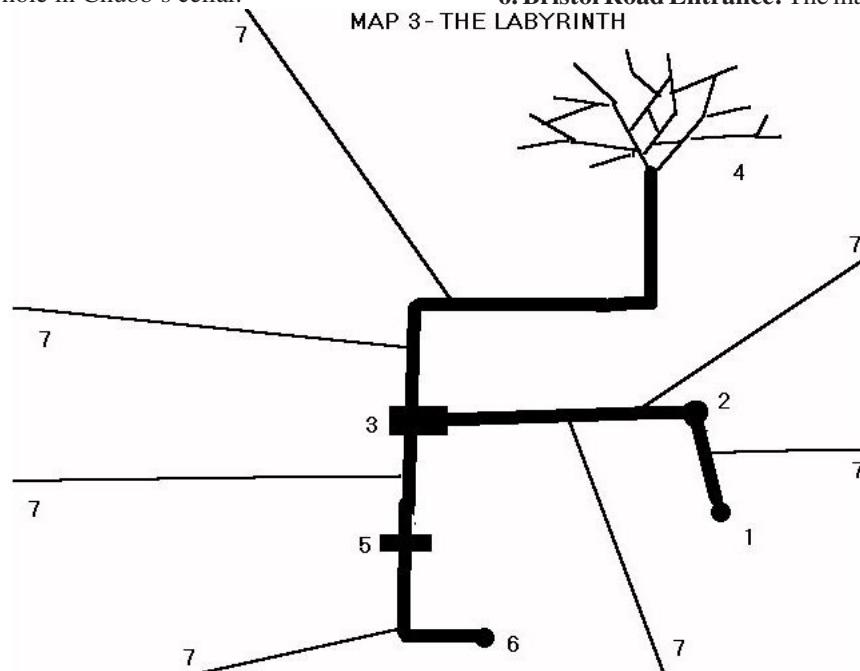
3. Ghoul's Chamber: The Ghouls live in an old disused sewer cistern left over from the nineteenth century. This vault is squalid and horrible beyond belief with human bones, pieces of rotting flesh and other trash covering the floor. All of the ghouls can usually be found in here during the day, resting until nighttime or sleeping off a particularly heavy meal. At night they are active in the tunnels visiting Chubb, ransacking the Mercy Hill Cemetery or attending cult ceremonies in Eihort's cavern.

Two tunnels lead from the Ghoul's chamber: One goes to Mercy Hill Cemetery, the other to a cult robing room.

4. Mercy Hill Cemetery: The main passage leads to a network of earth tunnels some of which are only just wide enough for a person to crawl through. All of the tunnels terminate in graves or vaults containing broken open empty coffins. It is obvious that the ghouls have been systematically plundering the cemetery for some time. Discovering this disturbing fact costs the investigators 0/1D4 SAN.

5. Robing Room: A small chamber containing gray robes hanging on racks. Eihort's human minions use this room to dress themselves prior to attending cult ceremonies.

6. Bristol Road Entrance: The main





entry point into the labyrinth for Eihort's human worshippers. The door is set into a wall in a side alley off the main road. It is disguised to blend in with the surrounding brickwork and requires a Spot Hidden roll to detect.

7. Minor Tunnels: There are numerous narrower passages branching off from the main tunnels. Investigators who insist on investigating the side tunnels must make an Idea roll or become completely lost in a network of stone corridors, disused sewers and earthen passageways. After 1D6 hours they should be allowed another Idea roll in order to find their way back to the surface. Failure means an encounter from the list below followed by another 1D6 hours wandering before they can attempt another Idea roll.

LABYRINTH ENCOUNTERS

These encounters are primarily meant for the Keeper's use if the investigators become lost. They are listed in escalating order of danger and I would suggest that the Keeper applies them in sequence, each time an Idea roll is failed. Alternatively, the Keeper might like to use encounters 1 to 3 anyway as the investigators explore the tunnels, even if they do manage to stay on track. Encounter 4 should only be used if the investigators have been exceptionally stupid.

1. Eihort's Brood: The investigators encounter a swarm of Eihort's young. Although horrible to look at these spider-like creatures are more nuisance than threat (see CoC rulebook for details).

2. The Blessed of Eihort: The investigators find a trio of human bodies standing upright in an alcove. They are swathed in what appears to be thick spider's web and appear to be dead. As the investigators approach one of the figures opens its eyes and begins to babble incoherently. These wretches are cult members who have been infected with Eihort's young and all are beyond help. If the investigators remain with them for more than five minutes the semi-conscious cultist gives birth. His skin splits open and dozens of fat wide spiders disgorge themselves onto the floor

and scurry away in all directions. It costs 1/1D8 SAN to witness the birth of Eihort's children.

3. Eihort's Cult: The investigators' blundering around has attracted the attention of the Great Old One's worshippers. They are now on the intruders' trail and are intent on eliminating them. There will be one ghoul per investigator with the Keeper determining which particular individuals (see **The Ghouls** below) are involved in the hunt. If the investigators outnumber the ghouls then their numbers will be filled out by human cultists armed with ceremonial knives.

4. Eihort's Lair: After hours of wandering the investigators stumble into a large chamber with passageways leading off in all directions. As the investigators consider their next move they hear the sound of something massive stirring in the well at the center of the room. Seconds later Eihort itself lurches into view from the well mouth. Meeting the Great Old One should almost certainly be fatal to the investigators. Kindly Keepers can allow those who make a Dodge roll to run from the sight of the horror. They flee blindly down a side passage emerging in daylight many hours later. Their experiences in the tunnels will have driven them insane but at least they are alive. Where the investigators end up is for the Keeper to determine but it should be far away from where they first entered the Labyrinth.

EVENTS

Chubb is completely insane but not oblivious. If the investigators make it too obvious that they suspect him he will take action against them. If the investigators persistently harass him he may well lash out against them e.g. by launching a frenzied knife attack at anyone shadowing him. If he succeeds in an Idea roll he will make a more measured response. He will wait until he can contact the ghouls and request their assistance in disposing of the investigators. Any subsequent attack will take place at night and may involve the ghouls breaking into the investigators' homes or ambushing them in narrow

side streets.

Barrett will also do all he can to impede the investigators. His obstructiveness will vary from refusing to share information to planting evidence in order to frame the investigators and get them out of the way.

If the investigators become a serious nuisance to the Eihort cult a combined effort by Barrett and the ghouls should not be ruled out e.g. Barrett suggests that the investigators meet him away from the station for an unofficial evidence sharing session. When they arrive at the rendezvous the investigators are bushwhacked by ghouls.

It should also be remembered that John Cornwell has his own agenda: He wants to find his brother's murderer and kill him. Once the murderer has been identified he is unlikely to want to hold off while the investigators make painstaking enquiries into Chubb's cult activities. Of course the investigators may also have some moral qualms about assisting Cornwell once they know his intentions. A confrontation between the London hardman and the investigators could then be a real possibility.

CONCLUSION

The investigators can congratulate themselves if they manage to stop Chubb and his ghoul cohorts. If they managed to neutralize Barrett as well this is a bonus. If the investigators fail to deal with Chubb he will be caught shortly afterwards but not before he has killed twice more. An undefeated Barrett may continue to be a thorn in the investigators' side especially if they have inflicted significant damage on Eihort's cult. SAN awards are as follows:

Defeating Chubb	+1D6
Defeating the Ghouls	+1D6
Defeating Barrett	+1D6
Chubb still at large	-1D6
More than 50% of ghoul pack still alive	-1D3

Moralistic Keepers could impose SAN losses on investigators who allow, or actively help, Cornwell to execute Chubb.

NPCs

John Cornwell Male Age: 49

STR: 14 DEX: 15 INT: 15 Idea: 75
 CON: 15 APP: 13 POW: 16 Luck: 80
 SIZ: 15 SAN: 68* EDU: 13 Know: 65
 Damage Bonus: 1D4 Hit Points: 15

Skills: Accounting 30%, Bargain 40%, Credit Rating 40%, Dodge 40%, Drive Auto 50%, Persuade 50%, Fist/Punch 70%, Handgun 50%, Knife 40%, Law 30%, Headbutt 30%, Kick 40%, Martial Arts 40%, Shotgun 40%

Notes: Cornwell left Brichester for London in the 1970's. Being naturally tough and aggressive he soon found work for as an enforcer for a London "firm" run by the notorious Roy and Dave Dixon. The Dixon brothers specialized primarily in porn and prostitution with occasional forays into armed robbery to improve cash flow. Possessing brains as well as brawn Cornwell worked his way up to become the firm's chief enforcer and fixer. The Dixons disappeared in 1978, killed by Cornwell with the connivance of Roy's wife, Kate. Cornwell and Kate took over the brothers' organization and have remained in charge ever since. Unlike the Dixons neither has any interest in high-risk capers like bank or security van robberies preferring instead to diversify into legitimate enterprises like haulage and construction. Although much of the firm's core business remains illegal Cornwell likes to present himself as a respectable businessperson. His illusion of respectability is further bolstered by his role as a family man. He and Kate married in 1980 and they have two daughters at university.

Cornwell isn't as fearsome as he was in his early days but he can still be ruthless when the situation demands: He is determined to find and kill his brother's murderer and nothing is going to stand in his way. Cornwell has little regard for the police, which is why he hired the investigators. He realizes that the circumstances of Gerald's death require specialist inquiry. Being from Brichester Cornwell finds it easy to accept that the murder has an occult aspect although he does not actually believe in the supernatural. He regards the various strange tales about the town as proof of its essential backwardness. Cornwell is none too pleased to be back home amongst people he regards as superstitious bumpkins.

For his trip to Brichester Cornwell has armed himself with some brass knuckles and a flick knife both of which he carries at all times. He also has a Browning

Hi-power pistol which he only carries when expecting serious trouble. The rest of the time it is concealed in his suitcase back at his hotel.

**Lowered SAN is due to participating in several gruesome gangland killings as a young man.*

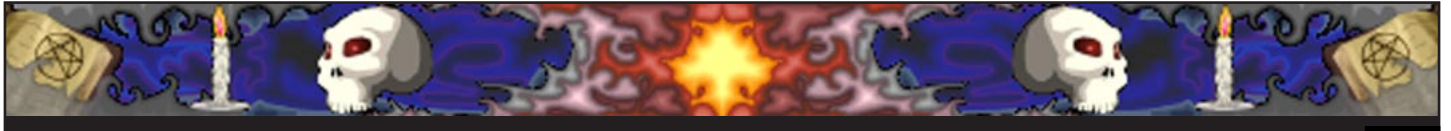
Henry Thomas Chubb Male Age: 37

STR: 12 DEX: 10 INT: 16 Idea: 80
 CON: 13 APP: 12 POW: 12 Luck: 60
 SIZ: 13 SAN: 00 EDU: 15 Know: 75
 Dam Bonus: 1D4 Hit Points: 13

Skills: Accounting 30%, Bargain 40%, Computer Use 50%, Club 50%, Drive Auto 40%, Fast Talk 30%, Knife 40%, Law 30%, Oratory 50%, Photography 60%

Notes: Chubb was the weedy kid at school whom all the other children laughed at. Being a sensitive child he was unable to shrug off the insults and became introverted. Things got worse for him in adulthood when his parents were both killed in a car crash and the few friends had made at high school left Brichester for more prosperous parts of the country. Getting a job first with the local council and then a housing association enabled him to develop his social skills. It also brought him into contact with the poorer sections of society, particularly the homeless. At first Chubb was desperate to help the indigent, especially young single men who were always lowest priority for any available housing. Partly out of this desire to help, and partly from loneliness, Chubb began inviting some of these men back to stay at his house. None of them stayed long though. Something in Chubb's manner disturbed them and they left usually disappearing from the house while their host was at work often helping themselves to his belongings before they went. One day Chubb returned home early from work to catch one of his guests leaving with his video recorder. Enraged by this latest act of betrayal Chubb snapped and beat the man to death with a table ornament. As he looked at his victim's corpse Chubb had an epiphany: He realized that the dead couldn't leave. Since then he has killed several other men, usually keeping their bodies around the house until the decomposition becomes so bad that they have to be disposed of in the cellar. Chubb found that killing eased his overwhelming feelings of loneliness although the respite was only temporary. He has killed many times over the last ten years but he has always been very careful to select only those who won't be missed.

Since meeting the ghouls Chubb no longer murders for company. Now has to kill to stay alive: He knows the ghouls will tear him to pieces if he fails to provide them and their master with the fresh meat they crave. Chubb is a reluctant cult member and could be persuaded to turn against Eihort. His precarious mental state makes him a dangerous ally though, even if Cornwell was prepared to allow it.



Det Insp Neil Barrett Male Age: 35

STR:12 **DEX:**16 **INT:**15 **Idea:**75
CON:15 **APP:**13 **POW:**14 **Luck:**70
SIZ:13 **SAN:**00 **EDU:**14 **Know:**70
Dam Bonus: +1D4 **Hit Points:** 14

Skills: Cthulhu Mythos 06%, Drive Auto 60%, Fast Talk 50%, First Aid 40%, Fist/Punch 60%, Headbutt 30%, Hide 50%, Kick 40%, Knife 40%, Law 40%, Listen 30%, Martial Arts 30%, Spot Hidden 30%, Sneak 40%, Club (Truncheon/Baton) 50%.

Spells: Contact Ghoul

Notes: Barrett is just one of the outwardly respectable Brichester residents who are members of the Eihort cult. Other members include teachers, lawyers and other police officers. Barrett was recruited by a more senior colleague who recognized in the younger man, certain assets: he was intelligent, corruptible and not afraid to use violence when necessary. Barrett joined the cult believing it to be a quasi-Masonic organization membership of which would help his career. Barrett discovered the truth at his initiation, a face-to-face meeting with Eihort that drove him insane.

Barrett is now a devoted worshipper of Eihort. He still nurses the delusion that membership of the cult will lead to greater things: Barrett believes he will be given a position of power by Eihort when the Great Old Ones return. It is more likely that he will end up as brood fodder, a fate that awaits most of Eihort's worshippers. For the moment though, Barrett is the cult's chief troubleshooter dealing with threats to the group by whatever means he feels are appropriate.

THE GHOULS

Priest

STR:15 **SIZ:**13 **POW:**17
CON:13 **INT:**15 **DEX:**12
Hit Points: 13

Move: 9

Armor: Firearms only do half damage

Attacks:

Claws: 30% 1D6+1D4
Bite: 30% 1D6+1D4+worry
Knife: 40% 1D6+1D4 (can impale)

Skills: Hide 60%, Listen 70%, Spot Hidden 50%, Climb 85%, Jump 75%, Sneak 80%

Spells: Contact Eihort, Contact Ghoul, Enchant Item (ceremonial knife)

Notes: Priest is the ghouls' leader. He isn't really a priest, or even a sorcerer. He only knows a few spells. However, this rudimentary magical ability combined with his age and high POW make Priest a wise man figure in the eyes of the other ghouls. He carries an ornate ceremonial knife that he uses in cult ceremonies for preparing meat for Eihort. The knife is a magic weapon but has no other special properties.

Squaddie

STR:18 **SIZ:**13 **POW:**12
CON:15 **INT:**13 **DEX:**14
Hit Points: 14

Move: 9

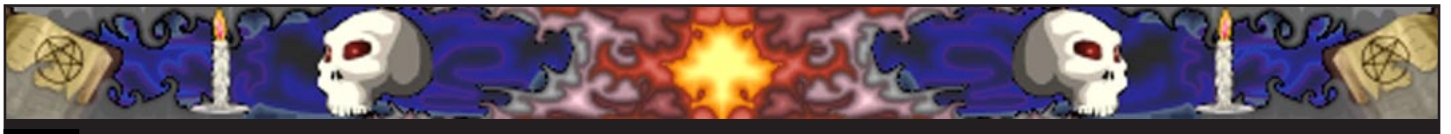
Armor: Firearms only do half damage

Attacks:

Claws: 60% 1D6+1D4
Bite: 50% 1D6+1D4+worry
Knife: 60% 1D6+1D4 (can impale)

Skills: Camouflage 60%, Hide 80%, Listen 80%, Spot Hidden 60%, Climb 85%, Jump 75%, Martial Arts 50%, Sneak 90%

Notes: A former soldier who developed a taste for human flesh while working abroad as a mercenary. Trapped behind enemy lines, he ate portions of his dead comrades to stay alive. After returning from overseas he found he still had the taste for human flesh. Transformation into a ghoul soon followed. Despite his degeneration Squaddie has retained his military training, which makes him very dangerous. Squaddie still possesses a commando knife from his previous existence. In combat he will prefer the knife to his teeth and claws.



Junior

STR:14 **SIZ:**10 **POW:**12
CON:14 **INT:**14 **DEX:**10
Hit Points: 12

Move: 9

Armor: Firearms only do half damage

Attacks:

Claws: 30% 1D6

Bite: 30% 1D6+worry

Skills: Hide 60%, Listen 70%, Spot Hidden 50%, Climb 85%, Jump 75%, Sneak 80%

Notes: The youngest of the ghouls. A teenage death metal fan that took the music a bit too seriously and started doing things bands only sing about. A penchant for vandalizing graveyards brought him into contact with the ghouls. He cheerfully joined up with them figuring a bunch of cannibals who lived underground had to be cool. Junior still wears the tattered remnants of his favorite band T-shirt.

Stick

STR:13 **SIZ:**11 **POW:**11
CON:9 **INT:**12 **DEX:**11
Hit Points: 10

Move: 9

Armor: Firearms only do half damage

Attacks:

Claws: 30% 1D6

Bite: 30% 1D6+worry

Skills: Hide 60%, Listen 70%, Spot Hidden 50%, Climb 85%, Jump 75%, Sneak 80%

Notes: A tall, emaciated looking ghoul. He is a voracious eater but always stays painfully thin regardless of how much meat he puts away. Being all too aware of his fragility he will generally shy away from combat.

SOURCES

The main inspiration for this scenario was Ted Lewis's trilogy of Jack Carter novels, particularly **Get Carter** (aka Jack's Return Home) and the film adaptation directed by Mike Hodges and starring Michael Caine. A US remake with Sylvester Stallone in the title role may well be in the cinemas as you read this.

The short stories **Before the Storm**, **The Franklyn Paragraphs** and **The Interloper** by Ramsey Cambell. These provided hints and suggestions about the Eihort cult although from a scenario writer's perspective they don't provide much in the way of the necessary specifics. I've tried to extrapolate from the details that are given: The Franklyn Paragraphs suggests that Eihort has a propensity for eating human flesh. Thus it would seem an ideal deity for ghouls to worship. That said, it's still something of a mystery why anyone or thing would want to worship what is a deeply unpleasant creature (even by mythos standards) in the first place.

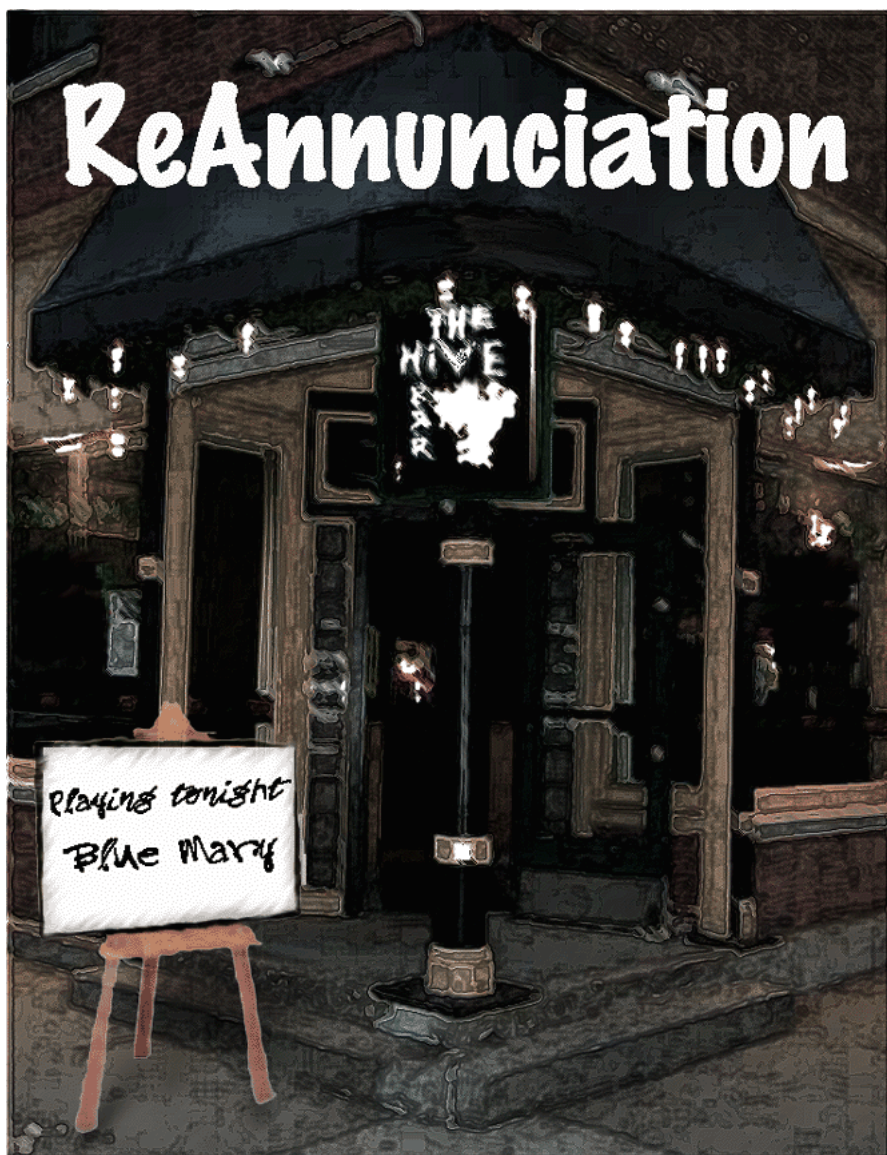
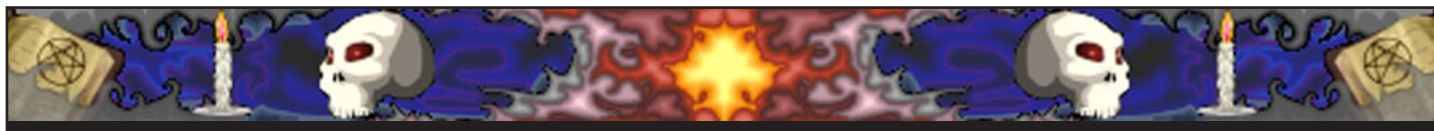
Thin Jack by Michael C LaBossiere. CoC scenario from Challenge magazine no 74. It features a rather contrived monster but it's also a model of brevity and logical structuring which I've tried to emulate in this scenario.

The **DVLA** website at www.dvla.gov.uk for details on obtaining vehicle registration information.

I also have to acknowledge the influence of the many television programs and newspaper articles about Dennis Neilsen and Jeffrey Dahmer in creating the character of Chubb.

The area of Lower Brichester shown on Map 2 is very loosely based on the London Road area of Gloucester where I lived from April 1998 to August 1999.





by Thom Marrion

ReAnnunciation is an adventure for Three to Six Players set in New York City. Six prewritten Cast Members have been supplied, though if you are running this adventure as part of a pre-existing campaign then there is no reason why you couldn't have the Players use their own characters. Though the adventure is set in New York City, it will work in any large urban area.

Another Saturday Night

New York is one of the largest cities on Earth. There is always something going on, the trick is finding it. This Saturday, a band named Blue Mary is

going to be playing at a small club in the Bowery called the Hive. There is a seven dollar cover, sixteen and up can come (But only twenty-one and up can drink).

The Hive is a dark roomy place with wood floors, brick walls, and the most horrifying restrooms on the planet. There is a low stage that bands use on the weekends and poets use on Wednesday nights for Poetry Slams. It is not the most glamorous spot in the city, but it is cheap entertainment.

The main motivation for the Cast Members to go are cheap entertainment and rumors that Blue Mary are really good. If the pregenerated Cast Mem-

bers are used, that reason will hold true for most of them as well. Tamora is going because her Syberite friends in the House of Thanatos told her that Blue Mary puts on a great show. Zuzu is going because they let sixteen year olds in and she loves music. She also knows the guy at the door, so she can usually get in. Sam is going because she has seen fliers for it all over her neighborhood and it isn't all that far from where she lives. Cicero is going because Sam invited him (The Storm Dragons and the Cabal of Psyche are on good terms with each other. Subsequently, Cicero and Sam are on pretty good terms with each other). Fletcher is going because he has been wandering around the city aimlessly and ended up here. It looks like a good distraction, and Fletcher feels like a good distraction. Howard is going because his Seneschal told him that there was some suspicious activity taken place around the club.

The Templars suspect possible Combine involvement. Maybe they are going to test something at the club?

Curiouser and Curiouser

Any Gifted who approach the Hive will notice something not quite right. By succeeding at a Difficult Perception Test, the Cast Members will be able to sense a tiny amount of Sadicas, the twisted Essence caused by Black Magic. Tamora and any of the other Cast Members who can see spirits will notice that the immaterial will come no closer than a block to the Hive. The silent ghost of an old Chinese woman sets foot on the street, looks at the Hive, and then turns around quickly and leaves. Animals do the same thing, a flock of pigeons fly towards the club and then veer sharply to go around it. These things will be noticed on a Simple Perception Test modified with a -2.

What a Lovely Audience

The Hive is starting to fill up as the Cast Members arrive. The place is designed to hold fifty people, by the time Blue Mary gets on stage there will be sixty-three people in the audience

(not counting the Cast). With four security guys, two bartenders, and the door guy, that makes a total of seventy. What this means is that if the Crowd Effect comes up, 37 points of Essence will be neutralized.

The Chronicler can use the time before Blue Mary gets on stage for any sorts of minor encounters he wishes to inflict on the Cast. Someone might try to hit on a character, or get upset because she thought the character was hitting on her. Someone might get upset because the character wasn't hitting on him. Drinks may be spilt, fights may be started and narrowly avoided. Anything is possible.

It's also the idea time to get the Cast Members together. Cicero and Sam arrived with each other. Sam knows Fletcher, but also knows that the Rosicrucians think that members of the Cabal of Psyche are agents of the Combine. Cicero might just lie and claim to be a Solitaire to avoid conflict. Tamora knows both Fletcher and Cicero, and will recognize them when she sees them. Zuzu recognizes Tamora, but doesn't know the others. Howard (Who is under his Charles Stockton identity) stands out like a sore thumb in this crowd. Even though the others might not recognize him, they are sure to notice him.

If the Players are using their own characters, then the Cast Members have probably been fighting evil for months and already know each other. They will still have to deal with having drinks spilled on them, being hit on, offending someone, trying to talk over the really loud music that is being blasted on the speakers before the band plays (It's a mix of the Pixies, Sky Cries Mary, Pylon, Miranda Sex Garden, Marvin Gaye, and Buddy Holly), and all the usual trials and tribulations of going out to a club.

The Devil Made Him Do It

At 9:32 pm. the lights dim a bit (Which is quite a feat in a dark place like this) and Blue Mary takes the stage. The lead singer is a young woman named Renee, her bass player is a punker in

his twenties names Shane, the guitarist is a dark-haired young woman named Tanith, and the drummer is a spike-haired surfer named Gordan. Renee's singing is haunting and beautiful. It is the tortured voice of someone who feels that the future of the world depends on her. The audience is enchanted by her voice and watch in silent awe. When Renee screams and the music becomes more urgent, the crowd starts dancing like mad. Some group mind that exists in mosh pits gets the crowd to thrash all at once.

Renee Le Chateau



The Cast Members might get caught up in this or they might pay special attention to what is happening on the stage. Tanith and Gordan are playing their instruments. Any supernatural detection will show that they are perfectly Mundane. Renee is belting out the sorrowful lyrics of their opening song. Any supernatural detection will probably show her as normal because she has an Invisible Essence Shield up. The Protection Level of the Shield is 20, and she has 25 points from her Essence Pool tied up in it. Shane is beginning to twirl his bass around his head and swinging it at the audience. Any supernatural detection will reveal that he is possessed by

a demon (Specifically, the Fiend named Pod).

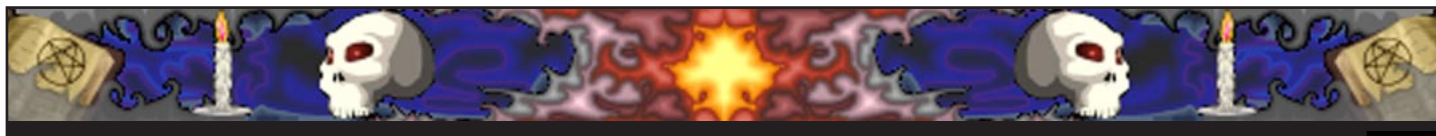
Fiends are not very good at controlling their natural urges to hurt humans a lot, and Pod has been forced to keep these desires in check for quite awhile now. Pod has been possessing Shane sporadically for quite some time, and it has picked this moment to let loose. Pod leaps into the audience and starts thrashing around. Those close to him realize that they are being attacked by a maniac, but the crowd further away think that Shane is just being punk. Doing a little crowd surfing, getting wild in the mosh pit. The Cast Members should be able to tell that something dangerous is happening by passing a Simple Perception Test.

All Hell Breaks Loose

If the Cast Members heads towards the demon possessed bass player, it will look like they are attacking the stage. That is when Roland steps in. Roland Martel is a member of a secret organization called the Priory and his duty is to protect Renee at all costs. He will tell the staff that the Cast Members are attacking the band, and so the Cast will have some muscle-bound mundanes to deal with on top of everything else.

On a Simple Perception Test, the Cast Members will notice the manipulation of Essence as Roland activates his Vigor Boon. For the duration of the fight, his Physical Attributes will be the higher second number in his write-up. He has no qualms about using a gun in a crowded bar to protect Renee.

If the Cast Members get too close to Renee, then she will use what Boons she has to protect herself. She will channel Essence for two turns and then activate a Physical Shield with an Armor Value of 5 and a Damage Capacity of 25. Unlike the Essence Shield, the Physical Shield will not be invisible. With a Simple Perception Test, the Cast Members will see that Renee is surrounded by a blue halo of light. If anyone attacks her directly, she will try to defend herself by casting 5 Essence Soulfire blasts at them. Then again, if any of the Cast Members



attacks Renee directly, they will have to deal with Roland and Pod. Roland's whole existence is centered on defending Renee, and Pod is still not going to let anything happen to the girl despite his current state. To do anything else would go against the wishes of his demonic superiors, and Fiends do not go against the wishes of their demonic superiors.

Closing Time

Eventually, the smoke will clear and the Cast Members will want to find out what just happened. Tanith and Gordan have no idea what is going on. They just wanted to be in a band. Once Pod leaves the body of Shane, the bass player will have no recollection of what happened. Roland believes that the possession was an attack on Renee, because of who she is. Depending on how the Cast Members behaved and what exactly happened in the bar, Roland might go on to explain that he is a Chevalier of the Priory charged with protecting Renee. Renee will explain that she is the Scion of the Holy Bloodline of Christ, and that her unborn child will be the reborn Messiah.

The Cast Members might believe this, or might think that Renee and Roland are nuts. Whether they come out of this adventure as friends or enemies, they have just discovered a new Covenant. They have just crossed paths with the Priory.

The Priory



The Prieuré de Sion or Sionis Priouratus (Priory of Zion) was a secret religious order that is first mentioned in 1099. The order became rich and powerful over the next few centuries and was involved in the usual conspiratory rumors as any other secret order until it seems to have disappeared in 1619. The Priory was concerned with affairs in the Holy Land, but its main goal was to restore the Merovingian bloodline to the throne of France. The Merovingians ruled the Kingdom of the Franks, but grew weaker in power and influence until their Dynasty finally ended with a whimper in 754. Branches of the bloodline still existed, but there were no more Merovingian kings.

The Priory keeps track of the Merovingian bloodline and seeks to preserve it and keep it strong. One day, they will see a Merovingian in power over France again. The reason that they are so devoted to this particular dynasty is not because of any special reverence for ancient Frankish Kings like Clovis or Dagobert, but because they believe the bloodline is much older. The Priory believes that the Merovingian bloodline was started by Mary Magdalene who fled to the Gaul after the Crucifixion. There she raised her child, who was fathered by none other than Jesus of Nazareth. The Merovingian bloodline is the holy bloodline of the direct descendants of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Sang Real which is the True Holy Grail.

This is what the Priory believes, and it couldn't be farther from the truth. The Merovingian bloodline was actually started by the Hierophant Belial, one of the most powerful of the Fallen Archangels in Hell. Belial has been fathering children with woman of that bloodline for almost two thousand years in an attempt to give birth to someone who will combine the special Gifts of Humanity with the Powers of the Infernal Legion. For lack of a better word, Belial refers to this progeny as the Antichrist. So far, the Merovingian line has produced Nephelim and Gifted, but no wonderchild to use as a weapon in the

war with the Heavenly Host..

Belial doesn't mind. He is an immortal being who is infinitely patient. Signs are pointing to an approaching Reckoning. Belial feels that now is the time when his True Child will be born. Meanwhile the Priory are convinced that they are carrying on the true work of the creator, and that one of the children born of Merovingian blood will be the Second Coming. All the Fallen in Abaddon are amused that a small Covenant which believes it is serving the Host of Heaven has been doing the work of the Infernal Legion for the over a thousand years.

The Priory is lead by a Grand Master called the Nautonnier or Navigator. This is the Hierophant Belial, who appears Christlike when he reveals himself to the lower ranks of the Priory. Underneath the Grand Master are three Senseschals (All of whom are Seraphim of Hell) and nine Constables (All of whom are Qliphothim). All thirteen of them are known as the Arch Kyria, and the rest of the Priory has no idea that they dwell in the Pit of Gehenna. There are twenty-seven Commanders who form the human leadership of the Priory. They are all Gifted. Most of the Commanders use Invocations, though some are skilled with Necromancy or the Sight. Below the Commanders are eighty-one Chevaliers, most of whom are either Mundane or have the Gift because of an Infernal Spirit Patron. Of course all of the Commanders and Chevaliers believe that their patrons are divine and not infernal. The lowest rank in the Priory are the Prieux. They have not been initiated into the Priory, though they carry the Merovingian bloodline in their veins. There are currently 243 Prieux in the world today.

* * *

The Cast

Cicero Mills

Streetwise Seer

Gifted Cabal of Psyche Reluctant Hero

Cicero is an African-American man in his late twenties. He has a small soul patch on his chin and long thin dreads which he ties back in a ponytail. He dresses in standard streetwear, really baggy jeans, hooded sweatshirt, backwards baseball cap, that kind of thing. Cicero works at a Community Center in Harlem, and the teens with whom he works relate to him better than they would to some guy in a suit.

Cicero grew up on the streets on New York and got into his fair share of trouble as a youth. He ran with a gang, committed a number of misdemeanors, got into a few fights. He would have probably ended up in jail if the Sight hadn't manifested in him at the age of fifteen. With the insight that reading the minds of others gave him, Cicero just didn't have the heart to continue leading the gangbanger lifestyle anymore. It didn't take very long before he came to the attention of the Cabal of Psyche.

They taught him how to use the Sight, but they also taught him other things. It is because of the Cabal of Psyche that Cicero was able to finish High School and then attend New York University. He studied History and after getting his degree decided to do some work in his old neighborhood. He now works as a Counselor at a community center in Harlem. This allows him to work with kids who are gangs, like he was. It also allows him to look for kids who have the Sight, like he does.

STR 2 INT 2
DEX 2 PER 3
CON 2 WIL 4

Life Points: 26

Endurance Points: 29

Speed: 8

Essence: 15

Qualities: The Gift, Essence
Channeling 4, Situational
Awareness

Drawbacks: Cowardly -1,
Emotional Problem (Fear of
Commitment), Honorable -1,
Minority (African-American)

Skills: Brawling 1, Computers 2, Dancing (Hip Hop) 1, Driving (Car) 2, First Aid 2, Guns (Handgun) 1, Hand weapon (Knife) 1, Humanities (History) 3, Instruction 3, Language (French) 2, Smooth Talking 3, Streetwise 2, Writing (Academic) 2

Metaphysics: Mindsight Art 2, Mindsight Strength 2, Mindtalk Art 2, Mindtalk Strength 2, Mindhands Art 2 Mindhands Strength 3,

Possessions: A small apartment in Harlem full of books (Mostly History, especially Black History, but he also has some that cover more esoteric and mystical subjects), a lot of casual clothes, a few dress clothes, a refrigerator full of pizza and Chinese take-out, and a 9mm Handgun (Something from his old days that he should probably get rid of, but never has.)



Howard White

Knight of the Lance

Lesser Gifted Templar Avenger

Howard is a big muscle-bound guy of thirty with a permanent scowl and a military buzzcut. The look of a career military man who finds himself in the civilian world and isn't very happy about it. Howard dresses in well tailored suits which always have suspicious bulges underneath the arms, where he keeps his guns. Most people never notice them, because most people don't expect to run into a combat trained agent of a conspiratory secret society.

Howard developed the Sight at an early age, but wanted nothing more to fit in with everybody else. He never wanted to be a freak. This need for discipline and conformity was one of the things that led him to join the Marines at the age of eighteen. He did well in the service, even though he still caught the occasional flash of other people's thoughts. Howard knew that it was only a matter of becoming more disciplined to get rid of those flashes.

Things continued like this until Howard was sent to the Gulf as part of Desert Storm. While everybody was fighting Saddam and freeing Kuwait, his unit was being sent on a different kind of mission. - one that involved raiding hidden bunkers and loading crates on unmarked black helicopters. Howard picked out the word Combine from his Commanding Officer's head, and when he asked around trying to find out what the Combine was, that is when everyone in his platoon started dying.

The only thing that saved him from 'disappearing' was the intervention of a Naval Intelligence Officer who turned out to also be a Knight of the Grail in Templars. He explained to Howard about the Combine, and how the Templars were in a secret war with them. He also explained that Howard's Gift was a tool and not something to be hidden away and feared. Howard decided that he wanted to do his part in this secret war. The Templar got him discharged and out of Iraq alive, and Howard has been serving the Templars ever since.

STR 4 INT 2
DEX 5 PER 4
CON 4 WIL 3

Life Points: 42

Endurance Points: 38

Speed: 18

Essence: 32

Qualities: Fast Reaction Time, the Gift, Multiple Identities (2), Resources (Well-Off) 2, Status 1 (Free from Resources), Influence 1

Drawbacks: Attractiveness -1, Humorless, Cruel -1

Skills: Bureaucracy 2, Climbing 2, Computers 2, Demolitions 3, Dodge 3, Questioning 2, Guns (Handgun) 3, Hand Weapons (Knife) 3, Martial Arts (Karate) 3, Stealth 2, Surveillance 2

Combat Moves: Punch 3, Kick 3, Counterpunch 3, Stabbing Hand 3, Crescent Kick 3, Spin Kick 3

Metaphysics: Increased Essence Pool + 10, Key of War, Mindsight Art 2, Mindsight Strength 1

Possessions: Some nice suits, a laptop, a hands-free radio, an auto injector and three doses of Curare, infrared goggles, black Class III body armor and helmet, a .357 High-Velocity Handgun with armor-piercing bullets, a large knife, a spartan apartment in upper Manhattan, a black sports car, a set of papers identifying him as Charles Stockton (That is the name on the lease and the note for the car), a set of papers identifying him as Edward Parker (Including a passport and some frequent flyer miles. Edward Parker is the identity he uses when traveling overseas.)



Yen Sam Thien

Second Level Adept
Lesser Gifted Storm Dragon Warrior

Sam is an athletic looking Vietnamese woman in her twenties with hazel eyes and short black hair. She usually wears a black tee shirt, black leather pants, boots, a black leather coat and a pair of sunglasses with round dark lenses. The look of a woman who can beat the crap out of pretty much anyone, so it's a good thing she can beat the crap out of pretty much anyone.

Yen Sam Thien was born in Viet Nam, but she left that country at the age of four when her family decided that there was a better life waiting for them in the United States. The Thiens moved to New York and became part of the Vietnamese community there. One of the people in her neighborhood was an old man named Chi Tho Phan. He talked to her about philosophy and the martial arts, and when he decided she was ready he talked to her about the Way of the Soul. Tao Chi.

Chi Tho was a Third Level Adept who recognized both Sam's Gift and her potential. She took to the teachings well and has risen to the rank of Second Level Adept in the Storm Dragons. She feels protective of her family and her neighborhood, as well as Mundanes in general. There are many supernatural threats in the world today, and she has kicked the ass of representatives of most of them.

STR	3	INT	3
DEX	5	PER	4
CON	4	WIL	3

Life Points: 47

Endurance Points: 35

Speed: 18

Essence: 22

Qualities: Attractiveness 2, Fast Reaction Time, The Gift, Nerves of Steel, Hard to Kill +3

Drawbacks: Resources (Hurting) -2, Minority (Asian-American), Honorable 2

Skills: Acrobatics 3, Language (French) 2, Language (Vietnamese) 3, Martial Arts (Shadowfist) 4, Occult Knowledge (Tao Chi) 3, Philosophy (Storm Dragon) 3, Stealth 3, Surveillance 2, Streetwise 2,

Combat Moves: Armlock 4, Punch 4, Kick 4, Disarm 3, Headbutt 3, Roll with Blow 3, Spin Kick 3

Metaphysics: Chi Mastery 2, Chi Healing 2, Chi Strike 2, Speed of the Tiger 2

Possessions: A small apartment in Chinatown near the New York Storm Dragon School, the dark wardrobe, some martial arts equipment, some weights, a small altar, a few books of Storm Dragon philosophy, and a few movie posters of Disney films.



Tamora Black

Goth Necromancer
Gifted Weird One Twilight Order

Tamora is short woman in her early twenties who is cute in a pale and skinny kind of way. She wears black hair, black nails, black lipstick, and black clothing. Though she is a member of both the Twilight Order and the Thanatoi, she only gets the benefits of being a member of the Twilight Order. That is the Covenant she to which she is more devoted, since she only really belongs to the Thanatoi to attend the wild Syberite parties.

She has always had a fascination with death, even when she was a child living on an old farm in Northern Virginia. Her conservative, and definitely mundane, parents bought the farm in the early Eighties. When Tamora's Gift awakened on her thirteenth birthday, it took the form of Necromancy. Her childhood friend was the ghost of a teenage girl who had killed herself on that farm in 1983. The dead girl taught Tamora about Anne Rice, Bauhaus, and all things dark and gothy. Tamora helped the dead girl finally move on. When Tamora was old enough, she left the farm and moved to New York where she quickly found others like her. Tamora meet members of the Twilight Order and the House of Thanatos. She became a member of both Associations.

She is currently dating a mundane named Duncan Fitch who lives near Washington Square. She meet him when his body had been taken over by the spirit of a Confederate Captain named Romeyn Lee Miller. Duncan has been showing Tamora his gratitude ever since. She really likes Duncan, even if he doesn't own a single black piece of clothing and has no idea who Bauhaus was.

STR	1	INT	3
DEX	2	PER	4
CON	1	WIL	4

Life Points: 18

Endurance Points: 23

Speed: 6

Essence: 42

Qualities: Artistic Talent, Attractiveness +1, Charisma +1, the Gift

Drawbacks: Cruel (1 level), Covetous (Lecherous) 1, Emotional Problem (Fear of Commitment) 1, Reckless

Skills: Acting 2, Cheating 1, Craft (Seamstress) 2, Dancing (Modern) 3, Beautician 2, Escapism 2, Hagglng 2, Gun (Handgun) 1, Language (French) 2, Language (Latin) 2, Lockpick 1, Occult Knowledge (the Dead) 2, Singing 6*, Streetwise 2, Seduction 2

*Skill Level reflects bonus from Artistic Talent

Metaphysics: Necromancy 3, Death Speech 2, Death Lordship 3, Death Mastery 4, Increased Essence +15

Possessions: A small apartment in Greenwich Village filled with candles, books, black and white cemetery photos, black velvet drapes, a closet full of the entire range of goth wear, the complete discography of Bauhaus, assorted other music, and a mundane boyfriend in brightly colored Gap clothing who you wouldn't think belonged there but actually does.



Zuzu Petals

Homeless Street Girl
Gifted Survivor Pariah

Zuzu Petals is an attractive young girl of sixteen with gray eyes and long tangled hair dyed that shade of neon green that only a couple of packets of Lemon Lime Kool-Aid can create. She is dressed in a haphazard collection of thrift store castoffs, all covered up by a large army jacket. Zuzu will never be accused of being tall. Still, the jacket makes her look like a little kid.

To say that Zuzu had a troubled childhood is a bit of an understatement. She was raped by her father at an early age. She was beaten by her mother (Who blamed little Zuzu for the rapes). Her mother shot her father and then turned the gun on herself. Her last words to her daughter were, "It's all your fault. You ruined everything." The fact that she was locked in the basement by her foster family the next year seems mild in comparison.

All of that trauma shaped the Gift inside her, and at the age of thirteen Zuzu changed. She left her foster family as a monster warped by the Disciplines of the Flesh. She would spend the next six months hitchhiking and living on the streets until she came to the attention of the Beggar King of New York. He took her in and Zuzu's became one of the Pariahs. She is still homeless, she still has nightmares about the abuse she suffered, but at least she has a real family now.

STR	1	INT	3
DEX	2	PER	3
CON	2	WIL	4

Life Points: 22

Endurance Points: 26

Speed: 8

Essence: 47

Qualities: Artistic Talent (Singing), Attractiveness +1, Essence Channeling 3, the Gift

Drawbacks: Cruel (1 Level), Emotional Problem (fear of Rejection), Reckless, Recurring Nightmare, Resources (Miserable) -4

Skills: Brawling 3, Cheating 2, Climbing 2, Dodge 3, Notice 3, Pickpocket 3, Running (Dash) 2, Stealth 3, Streetwise 4, Singing 4*

*Skill Level reflects bonus from Artistic Talent

Metaphysics: Anguish 4, Beast Skin, Fury, Flesh Chitin, Reshape, Salvage, Sorrow Skin

Possessions: A large army jacket, some thrift store cast offs, and whatever she can scrounge from the street.



Fletcher Davis

Monster Hunter
Gifted Rosicrucian Reluctant Hero

Fletcher is a thin young man in his mid twenties. He has short red hair and brown eyes. He dresses in fairly nice suits. People meeting him for the first time assume he is a Stock Broker or someone in Corporate Management. Definitely a yuppie of some kind.

So it is a bit surprising that Fletcher is actually a member of the Marchers, the troubleshooters of the Brotherhood. He joined up along with his best friend Silas after the two of them managed to expose and defeat a Qliphoth operating in New York. They were both nineteen at the time and beat the Agent of Hell through luck more than anything else, but they ended up with a reputation as capable monster hunters and have been at it ever since.

The last mission that Fletcher and Silas went on together involved tracking down a Seer criminal in Los Angeles. They never found the Seer, and the two got side tracked by an encounter with an Angelic Ethereal. Embarrassingly enough, Fletcher tried to use the Elemental Fire Invocation and managed to botch it. When he failed to dismiss the Essence properly, he ended up setting himself on fire with his own spell. That's something you would expect from the lowliest Page, not an experienced Marcher like Fletcher.

He took some time off to recover from the experience. The Los Angeles Shrine had no problem finding someone to use healing Invocations on Fletcher before he returned to New York, but the Marcher has some mental trauma to deal with as well. He is still dealing with it.

STR	2	INT	3
DEX	3	PER	2
CON	2	WIL	3

Life Points: 26

Endurance Points: 26

Speed: 10

Essence: 35

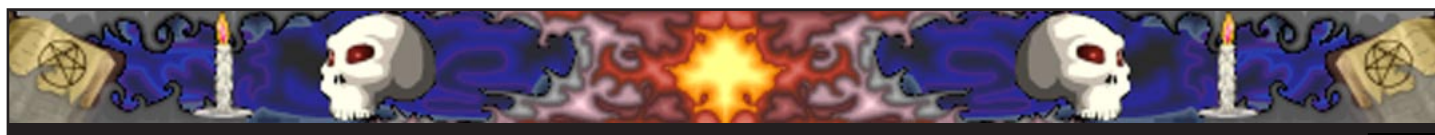
Qualities and Drawbacks: The Gift, Essence Channeling 2, Attractive +1, Resources (Well-Off) +2, Covetous (Ambitious) 1, Reckless

Skills: Brawling 1, Bureaucracy 2, Computers 2, Driving (Car) 2, Gun (Handgun) 2, Language (Latin) 2, Occult Knowledge (Spirits) 1, Research/Investigation 2, Rituals (Rosicrucian) 3, Smooth Talking 3, Stealth 2, Surveillance 2

Metaphysics: Increased Essence Pool +20, Consecration 2, Elemental Fire 3, Insight 2, Locate 3, Spirit Mastery (Elementals) 3

Possessions: Some very nice suits, some nice casual clothing, a nice Manhattan apartment, a nice sports car, a nice computer, a nice collection of occult books, and a nice 10mm handgun. All pretty ironic, because Fletcher isn't necessarily nice.





The Adversaries

Renee Le Chateau

Lead Singer of Blue Mary

Lesser Gifted Weird One of the Infernal Legion

Renee is an attractive young woman of nineteen with short black hair and clear blue eyes. She dresses in jeans, boots, and a ratty old sweater. There is a symbol similar to the Seal of Solomon tattooed on the small of her back. Sometimes she has the haunted look of someone who is carrying the weight of the world on her shoulders, which isn't really that far from the truth.

She knew that she was special ever since she was first approached by a Chevalier of the Priory on her thirteenth birthday. He told her that she was one of the chosen ones who carry the holy blood. She didn't believe him at first, and tried to have as normal a life as possible. She sung for a few bands, and when she got a little older started performing in clubs. Sometimes she would notice men following her around, but it didn't take long to realize that they were there to keep her safe.

It wasn't until she turned eighteen that she really started to take all of this seriously. She was visited by an Angel of Light who told her that she was blessed above all others and would give birth to the reborn Messiah. The Angel visited on and off over the next year, until two months ago when he said that the time had come. The Lord Himself came to her and she was pregnant. The experience was a lot different from what she had expected, but who was she to question these things? The Angel of Light was really a demon named Belphegor and the one that came to her that night was Belial and not the Lord. Renee doesn't know this, she believes that she is part of something holy. She has no idea that she is meant to give birth to an abomination.

STR 1	INT 3
DEX 2	PER 3
CON 2	WIL 4

Life Points: 22/37*

Endurance Points: 26

Speed: 8

Essence: 57/72*

*The second number is the total with the bonus from her demonic spirit patron

Qualities: The Gift, Attractive +1, Artistic Talent (Singing), Increased Essence Pool +30

Drawbacks: Covetous (Conspicuous) -1, Delusion of Grandeur (I am the Mother of the reborn Messiah, prepare for the Second Coming) -3

Skills: Acting 2, Beautician 1, Brawling 1, Dancing (Modern) 3, Driving (Motorcycle) 2, Escapism 2, Humanities (Theology) 1, Language (French) 3, Singing 7**, Stealth 3, Streetwise 3

**This includes the bonus from Artistic Talent

Metaphysics: Spirit Patron (Demonic, though Renee believes them to be angels)

Immortality (Regeneration), Immortality (Hard to Kill +5), Life Touch, Essence Channeling 5, Power +15, Sheiding Invocation 3, Soulfire Invocation 2, Oath of Servitude (Once a month, mostly concerns the baby she has been carrying for two months)

Possessions: A small apartment in Brooklyn full of casual clothes appropriate to the lead singer of a small indie rock band, pages and pages of lyrics, posters from old Blue Mary shows, an old motorcycle, and her virginity up until two months ago when Belial paid a visit..

Roland Martel

Chevalier of the Priory

Lesser Gifted Warrior of the Infernal Legion

Roland is an athletic man with wavy blond hair, blue eyes, and tanned skin. He stands about 6 feet tall and is about 220 pounds of pure muscle. He looks about twenty-five but is really in his eighties. Roland dresses in white suits. He has the word "maran" tattooed across the knuckles of his right hand, and "atha" across the knuckles of his left. The Lord is coming, the Lord is come.

Roland is the one who first approached Renee and told her about her lineage. He himself was raised as a member of the Priory and has never known anything else. Because of his Spirit Patrons, he has served the Priory for fifty-five years without ever aging. He feels honored to be given the duty of protecting She Who Will Be The Mother Of Our Lord, such that it consumes his every waking thought.

Nothing must happen to Her or Her Child. That is the only thing that matters. Everything else, even his own life, is of no significance.

STR	3/9*	INT	3
DEX	4/7*	PER	3
CON	3/8*	WIL	4

Life Points: 34/93*

Endurance Points: 35/74*

Speed: 14/30*

Essence: 20/64*

*The second number is the total with the bonus from her demonic spirit patron

Qualities: The Gift, Attractive +2, Charisma +2, Fast Reaction Time, Nerves of Steel, Resources (Wealthy) +3, Situational Awareness

Drawbacks: Obsession (Protecting the Mother and Child), Paranoid, Weird Delusion (That he is guarding the Sang Real, the Holy Bloodline which is the True Grail).

Skills: Acrobatics 2, Climbing 2, Computers 1, Demolitions 3, Dodge 4, Electronic Surveillance 2, Escapism 2, First Aid 3, Guns (Handgun) 3, Hand Weapon (Club) 3, Hand Weapon (Knife) 3, Language (French) 3, Language (Latin) 1, Lockpick (Electronic) 2, Martial Arts (Karate) 3, Stealth 2, Surveillance 3

Combat Moves: Punch 3, Kick 3, Back Kick 3, Counterpunch 3, Jump Kick 3, Spin Kick 3

Metaphysics: Spirit Patron (Demonic, though he believes them to be angels)

Immortality (Forever Young), Immortality (Regeneration), Immortality (Hard to Kill +5), Life Touch, Essence Channel 10, Power +30, Vigor (Strength +6, Dexterity +3, Constitution +5)

Possessions: White suit, a Police Baton, a large knife, three throwing knives, a 10mm Handgun with Hollow Point Bullets, and the Self-Righteous attitude of a Dupe of Hell who believes himself to be a servant of God.



Shane O'Faolain

Bass Player for Blue Mary

Mundane possessed by the Fiend Pod

Shane is a young punker in his mid-twenties with a shaved head, brown eyes, and various tattoos of religious icons scattered across his body. He wears a crucifix earring in his right ear, a white tank top, black jeans, and heavy black boots. He has been playing music with Renee for the past three years.

Shane had been going from one band to the next for a couple of years until he met Renee. There was something about her voice that hooked him, and he has been a member of her band ever since. Shane's admiration for Renee's voice soon lead to Shane's desire for Renee. Renee had managed to retain her virginity throughout her early years of being a budding rock star. She felt that the time was right to change that.

Belial did not.

A Fiend of Hell called Pod was sent to possess Shane and prevent him from deflowering the singer. The Fiend managed to feed Renee some line about celibacy preserving her creative talent (Pod had been coached by the demon Belphegor on what to say) and then went on to take his Host Body and perform all sorts of acts of debauchery with women who were not of the Merovingian bloodline. The Fiend has been possessing Shane on and off ever since.

Shane has no clear memory of what happens during these times. He thinks that he is just blacking out from partying a little too much.

STR 5/6*	INT	2
DEX 4	PER	3
CON 4	WIL	2

Life Points: 55/80*

Endurance Points: 38

Speed: 16

Essence: 32

* The higher number is the attribute while Shane is possessed

Qualities: Acute Hearing, Artistic Talent (Bass), Contacts (Criminal) 3, Contacts (Music) 2, Fast Reaction Time, hard to Kill = 3

Drawbacks: Addictions (Heavy drink, light use of marijuana and LSD), reckless, Showoff

Skills: Brawling 4, Dodge 3, Driving (Motorcycle) 3, Driving (Car) 2, Lockpick (Mechanical) 2, Mechanic 1, Notice 2, Pickpocket 3, Play Instrument (Bass) 5**, Smooth Talking 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 3, Writing (Creative) 3

**This includes the bonus from Artistic Talent.

Pod the Imp

Minor Fiend who is possessing Shane O'Faolain

To those who can see him, Pod appears as a small Fiend. He looks like a blue scaled cross between a chimpanzee, a bulldog, and an iguana. Only uglier. He is a simple foot soldier in one of the armies of the Infernal Legion of Hell. He is ultimately commanded by the Hierophant Belial, a Fallen Archangel who is one of the most powerful demon lords of Hell.

As a Fiend, Pod would like nothing more than to just go on a killing spree and feed on the Essence of tortured humans, but Belial has power over him and Fiends are very conscious of the difference between those with power and those without. Belial has power, so if the Dark Archangel says that no harm must come to this woman and that she must remain pure, then that is how it shall be. Shane has no power, so he exists for the simple purpose of being a host body to possess.

STR 3	INT	4
DEX 3	PER	4
CON 3	WIL	4

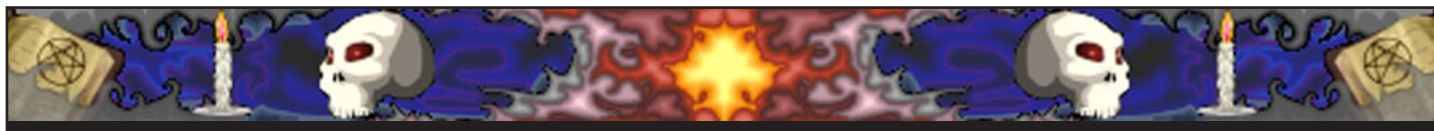
Vital Essence: 50

Energy Essence: 30

Speed: 12

Spiritus: 4





Tanith Kerwin

Guitar Player for Blue Mary
Innocent Normal Mundane

Tanith is an attractive woman in her early twenties with long black hair and green eyes. She dresses in torn jeans and a Mao jacket which she wears over a Japanese tee shirt. She met Renee two years ago at a Coffee Shop in the Williamsburg part of Brooklyn and they have been friends ever since.

Tanith always wanted to be a musician and learned to play guitar at an early age. When she was seventeen, she left her childhood home of Baltimore and made her way to New York. She got a job at a small record store and managed to make some extra money performing in Washington Square.

Things have been going great for her lately. Tanith feels that Blue Mary has a real chance of making it and that it is only a matter of time before they get some kind of record deal. She knows nothing about Belial, the Priory, demonically possessed Bass players, or the secret political struggles of Occult Covenants. She is an innocent.

STR	2	INT	3
DEX	3	PER	1
CON	2	WIL	3

Life Points: 26

Endurance Points: 26

Speed:10

Essence: 14

Qualities: Artistic
Talent (Music), Attractive +2,

Drawbacks: Lazy, Reckless

Skills: Acting 2, Beau-
tician 2, Dancing (Modern)
3, Electronics 1, Fine Arts (Painting) 2, Humanities (Litera-
ture) 2, Play Instrument (Guitar) 6*, Seduction 3, Smooth
Talking 3, Sport (Skateboard) 3, Singing 2, Stealth 3, Story-
telling 2, Streetwise 3, Swimming 2, Writing (Creative) 3

*Includes bonus from Artistic Talent

Possessions: A tiny Brooklyn apartment full of books and
CDs, two acoustic guitars, an electric guitar, a skateboard,
some cloths, some candles, and some plans for the future of
the band



Gordan Mulameroovic

Drummer for Blue Mary
Innocent (More or less) Normal Mundane

Gordan is a good-looking blond kid with spiky hair and blue eyes. He wears a tee shirt that sports the Croatian Flag (Red, white and blue bars with a red and white checkered shield), a pair of torn jeans, thick boots, and a few select piercings. His family came to America from the former Yugoslavia long before the genocide and ethnic cleansing really got going.

He grew up in Los Angeles and only really cared about drumming and surfing. He engaged in the usual teenage pas-
times of sex, drugs, and rock & roll; but they were never
really the driving force in his life. When he was seventeen,
his family moved to New York . The only surfing he could
get was down in Cape Hatteras which was a day's drive away.
He crewed for some Sailboats in Long Island Sound, but that
wasn't really the same thing. The only thing he really had left
was the drumming.

That is what got him into Blue Mary. Tanith and Renee
saw him with another band that was on the verge of breaking
up, and they asked him to drum for Blue Mary. This was a
year and a half ago, and he has no plans on leaving. He does
hope that they get a record deal and move to the West Coast.
He still misses the waves.

STR	3	INT	1
DEX	3	PER	2
CON	3	WIL	2

Life Points: 34

Endurance Points: 29

Speed:12

Essence: 14

Qualities: Contacts
(Street) 2, Attractive +3,

Drawbacks: Cowardly,
Cruel -1, Showoff

Skills: Acting 3, Brawling 1, Dancing (Rave) 2, Dodge 3,
Haggling 3, Language (Croatian) 1, Pilot (Sailboat) 2, Play
Instrument (Drums) 4, Seduction 2, Smooth Talking 2, Sport
(Surfing) 4, Stealth 2, Streetwise 4, Swimming 4, Trance 1

Possessions: A drum kit, a surfboard, surf gear, street
wear, some incense which he lights when he tries to meditate
(The guy did grow up surfing in California), an old TV and
VCR, and a box of videos (Mostly anime and porn).



Club Security

They are great big muscle-bound guys whose job is to make sure things don't get out of hand at the club. After dealing with drunken idiots night after night, they have developed a real Us Versus Them mentality. They have no patience with the club patrons and are certainly not going to listen to any stories about Singers Who Are Going To Give Birth To The Antichrist.

Rashid Washington is the bald black guy, Darren Caxton is the pale guy with the shaved head and all the tattoos, Jack Moorehouse is the older guy with the black crewcut, and Donny Gruber is the tan guy with the long blond hair tied back in a ponytail.

STR 4	INT	1
DEX 3	PER	2
CON 3	WIL	2

Life Points: 38

Endurance Points: 32

Speed: 12

Essence: 14

Qualities: Fast Reaction Time, Resistance (Pain) 1, Situational Awareness

Drawbacks: Cruel -1, Humorless, Talentless

Skills: Brawling 5, Dodge 2, Driving (Car) 2, Escapism 1, First Aid 3, Guns (Handgun) 2, Guns (Rifle) 1, Guns (Shotgun) 1, Hand Weapon (Club) 3, Intimidation 5, Seduction 1, Smooth Talking 3, Sport (Either Football, Basketball, or Baseball) 3, Streetwise 2, Weightlifting 4

Possessions: Jeans, a black tee shirt that says Staff in bold white letters, baseball bats hidden in the back, a 12 gauge shotgun under the bar, a roomful of broken bottles as soon as someone breaks them.

The Kids At The Club

The usual crowd of twenty-something conforming to socially accepted non-conformity. Some of them are there for love of music, some of them are there to have fun and be seen, most of them would not look out of place standing behind Carson Daley. Some of them may be a little pretentious, but they are all innocent bystanders and none of them deserve to be injured in a metaphysical shooting match.

STR 2	INT	3
DEX 3	PER	2
CON 2	WIL	2

Life Points: 26

Endurance Points: 23

Speed: 10

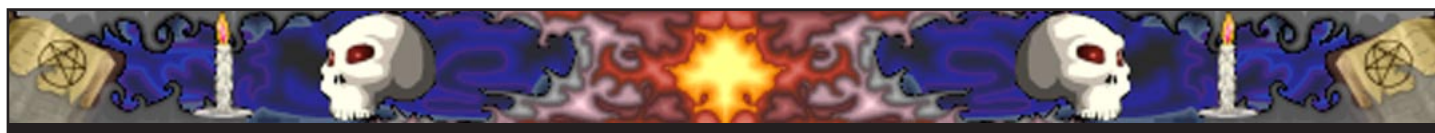
Essence: 14

Qualities: Attractive 1 or Charisma 1, Contacts (The Young and the Hip) 2, 2 more points of Qualities

Drawbacks: Addiction (varies) 1, Delusion (Prejudice-the Uncool) 1, Emotional Problem (Fear of Rejection), 1 more Drawback

Skills: Acting 2, Beautician 2, Dancing (Rave) 3, Seduction 2, Smooth Talking 2, Streetwise 2, and up to 25 more points of skills that will probably not come up during this adventure





THE WEAVE

by Norm Fenlason

A Non-Mythos Adventure for Beginning Characters inspired by an article from the Fortean Times. NPC Stats from the Byakhee CoC CharGen Program.

Introduction

This CoC adventure leads the PCs to a woman and her son being terrorized by a deadly sorcerer from the past. As the adventure unfolds, the party discovers the story of two souls intertwined through history. The PCs must use this knowledge to save the life of the woman and her young child.

The Call for Help

One of the PC's wealthy friends in Chicago contacts them on behalf of a friend of his. His friend, Alexander Altgeld, has a bizarre story of a haunting that he wants to keep out of the society pages. Altgeld fears for his wife Aribelle and his son, Jacob, who are being threatened by a ghostly apparition. He will pay travel expenses, whatever consumables the PCs need (not to exceed \$500) and a lump sum of \$2000. The party is welcome to stay at Altgeld's house in Chicago.

The Incident

When the PCs arrive at their house, Altgeld and his wife tell of the ghostly haunting. For the past several weeks, Belle – as Aribelle prefers to be called – has been having nightmares where a dark, menacing figure appears and tries to kidnap

her. The dark figure demands that she accompany him. In the dreams, she has refused, sending the figure into a rage where he threatened Jacob.

However, in the last couple of nights, the apparition appeared to manifest in the real world and last night Altgeld fired a shot at the figure. Altgeld will show the PCs the bullet hole in the wall of their bedroom. He was sure that he had hit it in the chest and close inspection of the carpets will show flecks of blood. Altgeld and Belle had not seen the blood before.

When questioned about the encounter, Belle recalls that the figure was dressed in purple robes, trimmed in gold, with symbols around the sleeves and hems though it was too dark identify them. He spoke in a very strange language that she had never heard before. She remembers understanding him though and that he called himself J'Alamon – Altgeld will confirm the name. She also vividly remembers the ghost's threats.

Belle tells the PCs that the figure demanded that she go with him, as it was his due. When she refused, J'Alamon said that he would take her son instead. She screamed at this point, breaking the spell that held her. Altgeld, roused from his sleep, spotted the dim figure and quickly drew his weapon from the nightstand drawer. He fired at the figure and thought he had knocked it down. But when he turned on the light, there was no one to be seen; only the bullet hole and now the blood were left to indicate it wasn't all a dream.

The Journal

Altgeld believes Belle is the subject of a curse and will show them Belle's journal. (See Exhibit 1, *Belle's Journal*.)

Belle's heirloom journal is a complete fabrication. If the PCs have the volume reviewed by a book specialist, he tells them that while the covers are fairly old, perhaps more than 500 years, the pages are new – the yellowing of the pages being obtained through artificial means, probably by soaking in boric acid. Belle has written all the passages herself and while the ancient Sumerian is authentic, the content is fictitious. However, the spell described is quite real. Belle intends the book to persuade unsuspecting dupes to protect her from J'Alamon long enough for her to complete her transference. (See *The Thing*.)

Encounter with J'Alamon

The first night the PCs are at the Altgeld house, J'Alamon returns to confront Belle. J'Alamon appears in whatever room Belle is in. His appearance starts with a slight stirring of the air and J'Alamon appears quickly as the dimension through which he passes closes behind him in a brief flash of light. J'Alamon is armed with a long staff and is surprised that the PCs are there. If the PCs are not there initially, Belle or Altgeld call out to them.

J'Alamon roars with anger at the PCs and at Belle. Although the words he speaks have no meaning (unless a PC knows Farsi), the PCs still understand him. J'Alamon rages at them, calling them fools and dupes. At this point, he starts uttering an incantation. Any movement by the PCs, Altgeld, or Belle results in J'Alamon leveling his staff and firing off an energy bolt. He targets the PCs first, never stopping his incantation. Should Altgeld or the PCs fire weapons or physically attack him, J'Alamon curses them and opens his dimension to leave. If he is hit, he appears not to be affected, but blood traces are left, indicating he is probably mortal.

After the first night, there are three days left until Jacob's 12th birthday. Each night J'Alamon becomes even more irate at interference and uses his energy blasts more liberally. Each night he will attempt to complete a lengthy incantation. No actions that the PCs or Altgeld take seem to hurt J'Alamon – he rages at the PCs about the evil they are helping and then just vanishes after firing off a string of curses.

Myth or History

There are three main libraries in Chicago that the PCs can go to do some research: the Chicago Public Library, the John Crerar Library and the Walter Loomis Newberry Library. The Public Library contains current periodicals from the US and Europe, the Crerar contains mostly science and technical collections (although not for circulation), while the Newberry is also a non-circulating collection containing music, humanities and historical works from Europe and the Americas.

At the Public Library, the PCs find out about the mysterious deaths that have escalated of late (see *Background Kill-*

ings).

The Crerar yields little useful information, but a staff member there speaks Polish and may help translating the journal should the PCs be unable to (see *Journal*).

Successful searches at the Newberry yields notes and searches for J'Alamon uncovers the information in Exhibit 2.

If the PCs cannot translate the Sumerian, someone who can be found at the University of Chicago. For a price, Professor E. Phineas Michelson will orally translate all of the Aramaic and most of the Sumerian passages from the journal. He will omit the spell description as a little wacky and not mention Mythos at all. A written translation he will not do, as he doesn't feel well after doing the quick oral translation. The next day Professor Michelson will send a copy of Exhibit 2 to the PCs at the Altgeld home. It is an abstract from a paper that a colleague of his wrote and that he is reviewing for publication. (See Exhibit 2, if not already discovered in a Library Search.)

As each language is translated, the respective portion of Exhibit 1 should be related to the players.

Background Killings

As the PCs start into the background research on the evil that is tormenting the Altgeld's, they come across a rash of killings that has picked up in recent days. For each of the past several days, a brutally mutilated body has been found. The bodies have been completely drained of blood and appeared more desiccated than nature could have done given the time the person was missing. The authorities have no clues.

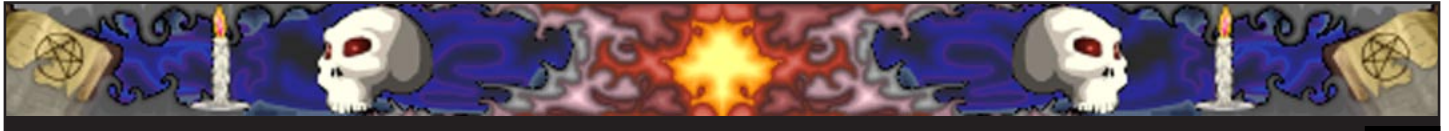
There have been occasional killings of a similar nature for the past 20 years. Only recently the killings have picked up. This year there have been a total of 12 deaths so far with no discernable pattern to the victims. Particularly observant characters that have read the journal may pick up that the killings started about the same time that Belle moved to Chicago approximately 20 years ago. Give Exhibit 4 to the players.

Stately Wayne Manor

On the eve of young Jacob's birthday, Belle will announce that friends, Wayne and Agnes Ashcroft, have offered for her and Jacob to hide out at their mansion north of town. Belle will flatly refuse to stay in her own house that evening. She will pack up young Jacob and force Altgeld to drive her out there, whether or not the PCs come along. As young Jacob's birthday approaches, Belle will get increasingly anxious.

When the party gets to the Ashcroft mansion, they find it empty. Belle claims the Ashcrofts offered it to her because they are out of town (or so it appears).

The Ashcroft mansion, shown in Figure 1, is a two-storied Victorian affair near Lake Michigan with a full basement and turret. (See Figure 2.) If the PCs look around the mansion, they find the basement door locked, as is the attic door. The main suite, where Belle unpacks her things, is located on the second floor near the stairs to the turret.



The Thing

If the PCs force the door to the basement, they find the horribly mutilated bodies of two elderly men, an elderly woman and a young woman. The bodies are entirely drained of blood and appear desiccated, as if they had been there for years, except that there is no dust. The expressions on their faces are ones of extreme horror and pain. There is no sign of struggle, so they must have been moved here. The bodies are Mr. and Mrs. Ashcroft and their two servants.

Aribelle Altgeld is a horrific, reincarnated sorcerer, Gula, that ages ago learned how to perpetuate her abominable existence. Cruel rituals offered up to the ancient gods of Sumer have allowed Belle to transfer her soul into the body of her offspring. The name Gula means Lady Who the Dead Brings Back to Life.

The cost of this terrible ritual is a hunger for souls. Gula consumes the blood, life essence and soul of her victims in a vampire-like draining. In the process of soul transference, she consumes the soul of her child. (See *Deferential Ritual to Ninti, the Lady of Life*.)

The horrible consequence to everlasting life is a hunger for the life energy of the mundanes around her. A spate of background killings has followed Belle wherever she has been. The hunger must be satisfied and gets worse as the date of Transference approaches.

To take the victims to satisfy her hunger, Belle has a small arsenal of magical abilities. She can cast a quick spell that immobilizes a victim keeping them from moving. Belle has to keep her attention focused on her victim to hold them immobile. She is also able to cast an energy bolt similar to that which J'Alamon casts. Hers are not quite so powerful and causes less damage. Finally, Belle can make herself invisible. The ability is limited and she is only invisible in shadows. Belle becomes visible when not in the darkness.

Should all else fail, Belle has a .25 caliber 6 shot automatic tucked under her clothing.

Happy Birthday

Belle insists that she and Altgeld take the Ashcroft Master Bedroom (Room 1 - Upstairs). Young Jacob will sleep with them and the PCs should be in a neighboring room. Belle leaves a candle burning, stating she prefers the natural light, which leaves the room very dimly lit.

Approximately five minutes before midnight, J'Alamon will appear in the master bedroom accompanied by a brilliant flash of light. Belle blows the candle out once the action begins to assist her sneaky exit.

J'Alamon roars with anger at the presence of the PCs. He fires multiple energy bolts at everyone while he starts chanting the ritual that will end Gula's presence on Earth forever. If he is attacked, he strikes back with his staff. This time bullets have no effect against him, only causing him to pause in his movements. He is after Belle and will move straight for her.

Belle's plan is simple – let the PCs take on J'Alamon

while she takes Jacob up to the Turret to perform her ritual. As soon as J'Alamon attacks, Belle snatches up young Jacob as if in protection. She blows out the candle and starts moving towards the upstairs door in the shadows. Jacob whimpers once before Belle fixes him with a stare.

Eye of the Hurricane

If Belle makes it to the turret, she lays Jacob in the center of the Solomon's Triangle and starts a chant of her own. She enters the Triangle with Jacob as her chanting mounts in volume. It is difficult to hear Belle's chanting downstairs above the fight with J'Alamon. However, as Belle's chant continues, J'Alamon begins to emit a golden glow. At this point, touching him causes the PCs 1d6 damage. J'Alamon looks apprehensive and moves relentlessly up the stairs to the turret.

In the turret, J'Alamon fires energy bolts at Belle. His bolts impact an invisible barrier around the Solomon's Triangle and dissipate in a shower of dark blue sparks. Belle fires back at him with a similar effect, only J'Alamon's shield showers golden sparks. J'Alamon roars in impotent rage and urges the PCs to strike her down, as he is unable to strike her in the Triangle.

Should Gula be allowed to finish the ritual, Belle will fall dead to the floor. Young Jacob, who had appeared unconscious, will begin to stir. He will act very innocent and bewildered. J'Alamon will fire one last energy bolt at Jacob, bellow a curse and disappear. Altgeld will move to protect his son and will not let the PCs at him. Altgeld will use his pistol if necessary.

Should Gula be interrupted in the ceremony, she will fire energy blasts at the PCs and break out her gun. If it looks like it will go against her, she will point her pistol at Jacob and threaten to kill him. J'Alamon will laugh and fire one last bolt that strikes Gula in the chest. She will fall down and transform into a desiccated lifeless corpse.



Exhibit 1 - Belle's Journal

Text: *Edubba Ina Gula Mannu Sarrat Palahu* (Writings of Gula Who Is The Queen of Fear)

Multiple languages: Sumerian, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, Polish, Russian, French and English

Sanity Penalty: 1d3

Spell Bonus: 0

Mythos Gained: 1%

Appearance: A large-format, thick leather-bound volume of journal sheets. The source of the leather is no longer identifiable. The pages are yellowed, but surprisingly sturdy. There is no title on the cover and the title page contains Sumerian title above.

Contents: There are several incomplete fragments in Sumerian that do not make a whole lot of sense. However, there is the Deferential Ritual to *Ninti*, the Lady of Life. This spell is the transference spell that Gula uses to continue her existence. The Deferential Ritual is very difficult to translate due to the mingling of Sumerian and some weird form of pre-Sanskrit. Those adept in Sumerian will recognize that Gula means Lady Who the Dead Brings Back to Life.

The Aramaic entries speak of the bargaining of a wealthy Jewish merchant in Jerusalem who gives his daughter to be wed to a sorcerer from Kabul, in return for a favor. The sorcerer cast a spell on the merchant's competition causing him to fall victim to the plague. Unfortunately, the spread of the plague eliminated half the city's population.

The next entry is in Greek and continues the tale of the young woman, Sarah, who fled Jerusalem to what would become Istanbul. There she married one of the Sultan's many sons and bore him a child. In the days leading up to the child's 12th birthday, apparitions of the Sorcerer of Kabul started appearing in the night. These apparitions would request that the lady come away with him. When the lady refused, the Sorcerer threatened to take the child instead. Each night the threats became more fierce and the apparition less ethereal. The last entry states that on the night before Sarah's child's birthday, she will steal away with her child. There is no Greek entry past that.

The story picks up in Latin passages that describe how a 22 year-old Lydia, who must be a descendent of Sarah, is haunted by a dark visage that appears in her townhouse in Rome. This dark figure demands that Lydia is his and that she must accompany him. The journal tells again how the lady refuses each night leading up to her daughter's 12th birthday. Again, there is no entry after the eve of the child's birthday. French written in the margins of the Latin entries annotate how Lydia was slain on that night; how rather than submit to the Sorcerer she took her own life. In retaliation, the Sorcerer tried to kill the daughter and her father, but was driven off by a Patriarch called in to exorcise the apparition.

The entries in Polish are dated in the 1600's and bylined in Warsaw. These entries make up the bulk of the book's writings. Most of them are meaningless and detail the life of a young woman rising through the city's noble ranks; how she has fallen in love with a young noble; and how the wedding is arranged

– a glorious affair. The young couple rises through society in marital bliss, or so the journal states. A son is born to carry on the family name and all goes well until the weeks leading up to the child's 12th birthday. The journal entries speak of the fears of the young noblewoman for her child. She has read the previous entries, knowing the classical languages and is very afraid. The entries then tell of a dark apparition that haunts her nights. Guards are brought in to fight this mysterious intruder, but to no avail. The Cardinal of Warsaw is brought in to perform exorcism rites, again to no avail. The entry tells of fights between the lady's husband and the sorcerer that leave the young noble gravely wounded. Again on the eve of the child's 12th birthday, the Polish entries cease. French writing in the margins, in the same hand as before, tell of the mysterious death of the young lady and the later death of the noble.

The new author has taken to dating her work and the next set of entries, written in Ukrainian, is from 1812. They describe how a young lady who was slow to evacuate the Moscow was seized by French forces and taken hostage. The story tells of how the lady was dragged back across the Russian steppes in the dead of winter and how a Cossack attack nearly killed all in her party. A young brigadier was very taken with her and took the young lady back to Paris – hopes of ransoming this lady destroyed. Sparse entries detail a stormy relationship in Paris and how the lady, with her newborn, ran away to a friend's place in the country where she stays in comfort for some years. Another entry tells of bad dreams where a dark figure demands something from her, but refuses to tell her what. In the months leading up to her daughter's 12th birthday the same scenario repeats itself. Apparitions of the evil sorcerer come to haunt the lady and her child. Events lead up to the eve of the child's birthday and halt abruptly. The French annotations again explain that the mother died mysteriously, but the child was not harmed.

The next entries are in French and apparently have full knowledge of the previous events. She vows never to have a child, but falls for a young farmer. The young man goes to support his country in the Crimea never to return. But, he left the young woman pregnant. The harsh Roman Catholics in the small village forced the young Elise to run away to England. There she is taken into the care of a small abbey near the Hampshire-Surrey border to have her child. A local squire who traded with the abbey was taken with Elise and proposed after a brief courtship. Although expressing misgivings, the young lady accepted. Country life appeared to agree with the young French bride who appears to have researched previous entries in the journal. In the child's 11th year, the couple decided to move the lady and her child into the abbey, hoping that the protection of the Lord would save her from her ghostly tormentor.

A couple of pages from the journal have been ripped out at this point, but the next set of entries is in English and set in the United States. They detail the current owner of the journal's tribulations in coming to the United States as a child and moving to Chicago. Brief entries on this or that lead up to the current fear of the apparition reappearing. Belle's son is approaching his 12th birthday...

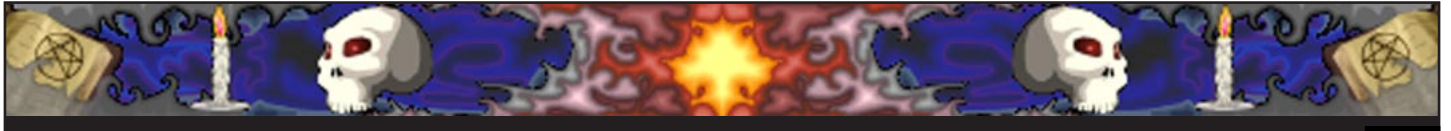


Exhibit 2 – The White Brotherhood

The White Brotherhood

A Repetitive Role in Middle-Eastern Mythology

By Dr. Solomon Issachar Carvalho

Abstract: The role of the white sorcerer is a recurring theme throughout the mythology of the Middle East. This paper intends to show that the recurrence of the white sorcerer across multiple Mideast myth systems was the same persona. Starting in Egypt of the Eleventh Dynasty, Jalamonteri, the High Priest of Ra was the first documented leader of the White brotherhood. Evidence presented shows that Jalamonteri was, in fact, the same person as Jimonta, the famed wizard of Alexandria. The evidence also leads to convergence of personae with Jalamon of Kabul, Ajah Ral of Samarkand and even Sontal of Delhi. The common theme among all these members of the White Brotherhood was their campaign against forces of the dark.

Exhibit 3 – Newspaper Article

CHICAGO - With the discovery of another body in central Chicago, the public outcry about the case increases. This latest body has sent ripples of fear through the community. The killer apparently has no distinction between the wealthy and the working classes, taking what appear to be targets of opportunity. This is the sixth victim in a many days and authorities are no closer to an arrest than before.

The Chief of Police, in a rare public statement, claimed he was "mystified that there were no witnesses" to this, the latest murder.

Leah McGuire left her patron's house at 6 P.M. last night and was never seen alive again. Her bloodless and dehydrated body was found in the warehouse district early this morning. An investigating officer, who declined to be identified, stated that she looked "like one of those bugs a spider had caught." The officer went on to say that the other bodies looked the same.

Earlier today, amid public shouts for justice, the Mayor stated the Federal Bureau of Investigation could be called in to assist in the case. When asked if these were related to other murders in the greater Chicago area, the Mayor stated, "There is no reason to believe so."

A police spokesman has confirmed previous murders have the same "signature" of blood-drained, dried-out bodies. Signature murders such as these date back over twenty years, calling into question, the Mayor's statement about the killings not being linked.

The local FBI tchief declined comment, stating he had not seen the case files and would not speculate.

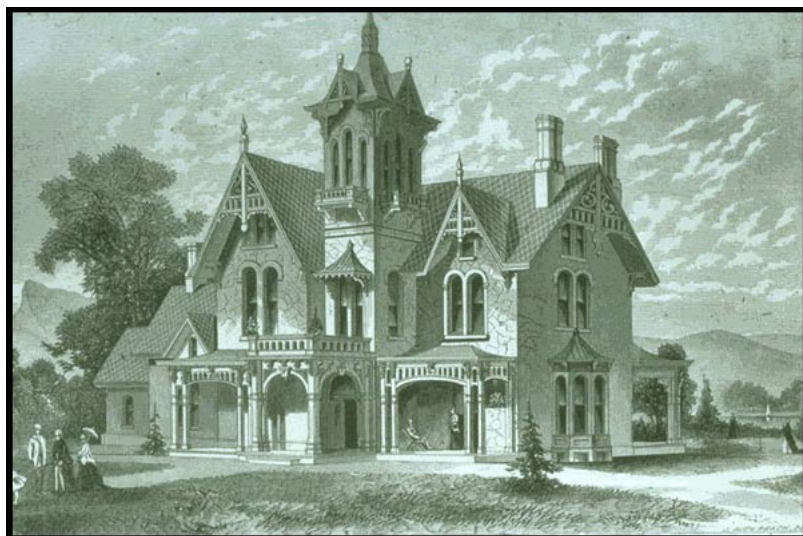
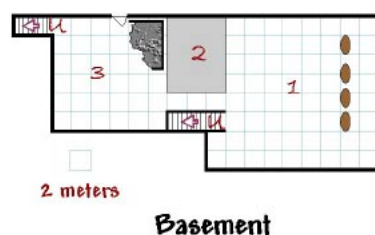
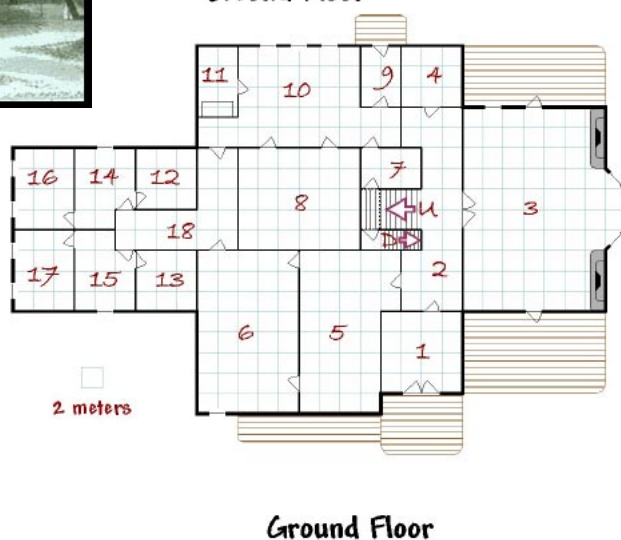
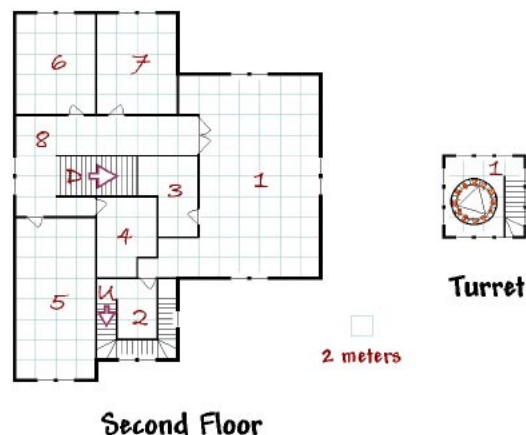


Figure 1 - The Ashcroft Mansion in 1889

Figure 2 - Ashcroft Mansion Floor Plan



Ashcroft Mansion



Ground Floor

1. Foyer

Rich oak paneling and hardwood floors first meet visitors to the Ashcroft House. Rich carpets of intricate design cover the floor. Dwarf trees in large planters are placed in the corners. Overall, the foyer is clean and well maintained. There are several wardrobes containing overcoats and umbrellas. All hangars are used with no missing topcoats that the Ashcroft's would have taken with them.

2. Main Hallway

The hardwood floors of the foyer run the length of the hallway. A long and expensive-looking runner carpet runs the length. Throughout the house, sturdy bookshelves line the walls and the main hallway is no exception. Most of the books in the shelves are about local Chicago history. Close investigation will reveal that there are a lot of first editions by prominent authors.

3. Great Room

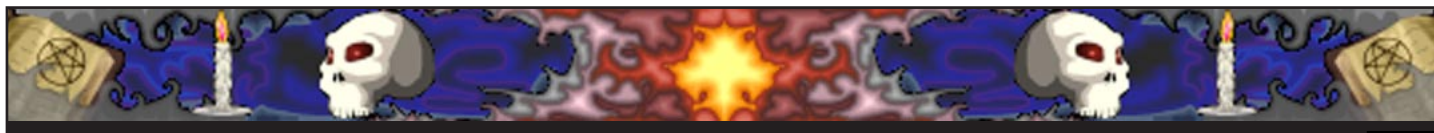
Intricately carved double doors open onto a vast sea of opulence. Doors to the outside flank two large carved marble fireplaces. The fireplaces themselves sit on each side of a large bay window. Massive Persian carpets support fine antique furniture from all across the globe. Thick draperies are pulled back from the windows. Above exotic wood-grained wainscoting, original works of art from the American Romance period are prominently displayed.

4. Restroom

Carved marble counters and sinks and other plumbing sit on plush blue carpeting. Close inspection of the sinks will reveal dried blood. Other than this the room is fastidiously clean.

5. Sitting Room

A large spacious sitting room has a piano near one end



and a set of divans around a low central coffee table. The coffee table is made of three-inch glass. Ashcroft is a financier to a local manufacturing company and often brings his work home. There are many business documents and factory plans on this table. Close inspection of the floor near the heavy coffee table will show impressions indicating that the rather massive table had been moved recently. Casually thrown rugs surround the seating area. Inspection beneath these rugs will show dried bloodstains.

6. Study/Office

Being the home office of Mr. Ashcroft, this room shows a crisp, disciplined elegance. A large desk sits to the rear of the room with two plush-upholstered wing-backed chairs at its front. There is a loaded .32 revolver in the top desk drawer. Original works of art adorn these walls as well, with Ashcroft's diplomas and certificates of association on the wall behind the desk. Potted rubber tree plants complete the professional atmosphere of this room.

7. Store Room

Shelves of household linen and household cleaning tools line the walls. On the wall opposite to the entrance is a door to a short corridor under the main stairway that leads to basement stairs.

8. Dining Room

A heavy, massive carved walnut dining table dominates the dining room. A cut-crystal chandelier hangs over the table, which seats 14. Sconces on the walls provide additional lighting both for occupants and for the artwork that lines the room. A china cabinet to one end has a large amount of silver service and crystal glasses.

9. Mud Room

Several slickers hang on the walls with rubber boots underneath. A door to the outside is locked.

10. Kitchen

This kitchen could feed an army: multiple ovens, large stoves, numerous hanging pots and pans all speak to large affairs. The kitchen, like the rest of the house, is fastidiously clean.

11. Pantry

The pantry is stocked with a large amount of dried goods. In addition to the usual non-perishables, shelves also hold perishables such as potatoes and loaves of bread. However, the potatoes are not quite fresh and starting to rot. A refrigerator unit to one end of the room holds meat and other perishables.

12. Housekeeper's Bathroom

A feminine touch has been added to this bathroom. This room holds a complete bathroom for the rest of the housekeeper's quarters and is not as clean as the rest of the house.

There are undergarments hanging on a line over the bathtub and the sinks could use a good rinsing.

13. Gardener's Bathroom

In almost dualistic opposition to the housekeeper's bathroom, this room is outfit to a man's rather Spartan tastes. This room too is not nearly as fastidious as the house, requiring a good sweeping. There is a straight razor on the counter.

14. Housekeeper's Quarters

The Ashcroft's have provided a separate space for their hired help to reside in. A small sitting precedes the bedroom and has a door off to the bathroom. There is a couch, a side table and a small bookcase full of romance novels. The housekeeper's lack of neatness is evident here also. Evidence of a meal has been left on the side table, already drawing ants.

15. Gardener's Quarters

The sitting room in front of the gardener's bedroom sports a single overstuffed chair, an ottoman and a liquor cabinet. A carafe of port and a half-filled glass rest on a small table beside the chair. A shuffled tabloid newspaper sits on the ottoman.

16. Housekeeper's Bedroom

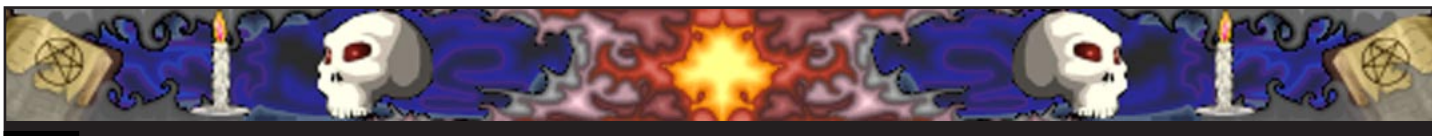
The housekeeper's quarters house a double bed that is unmade at the moment. It is hard to determine if a struggle took place here, as the room is generally unkempt. There is a suitcase under the bed and a good observer will notice that there does not appear to be any missing clothes.

17. Gardener's Bedroom

The Spartan appearance of his bathroom is continued in the gardener's quarters. A functional double bed, a valet, a chest of drawers and a single wardrobe are fit into this small room. There is no sign of struggle. There is a single button on the floor near the wardrobe and slight impressions in the carpet vaguely fitting a human form. Close inspection near the button will reveal more flecks of blood.

18. Back Hallway

Ashcroft has used the back hallway, accessible from his office, as an extended library. Bookshelves line the walls and contain many handwritten volumes. Although not of Mythos nature, there are many other occult books that can be found here. If searched, bookmarks in these occult texts are feminine in nature and speak to the Mrs. Ashcroft's attentions. They are innocuous enough and are general reference only.



Second Floor

1. Ashcroft Master Bedroom

While the downstairs is finished in a rather masculine touch, Mrs. Ashcroft's master bedroom definitely speaks to that of a woman. A motif of heavenly bodies, stars, moons, planets, etc is repeated throughout the room. These complement a rather impressive collection of renaissance paintings depicting angels and angelic scenes. The large bed that dominates the room is a massive carved four-poster with canopy and drapes. The bed has yet to be made up.

2. Stairwell to Turret

This room is a stairwell to the turret above. A winding staircase leads to the upper story. The door to this room is locked.

3. Master Bathroom

An opulently appointed master bathroom holds an Italian stand-alone bathtub on gold-clawed feet, marble counters below wall-to-wall mirrors and bright brass fixtures. Rich double carpets on the floor hide a massive bloodstain in the center of this room. Close inspection of the bathtub will reveal blood flecks.

4. Bathroom

Another bathroom for guests is simply but impressively laid out.

5. Guest Room

The main guest room is well furnished. A thin layer of dust coats this room showing no use for the past week or so.

6. Bedroom

This room is very neat, but also sports a thin layer of dust. The wardrobe contains some summer clothing, but the room appears unoccupied.

7. Bedroom

Similar to room 6, this bedroom also appears unused and unoccupied. In the teak wardrobe, there are several children's toys and some summer clothes for male and female children.

8. Second Floor Hallway

The wide corridor leading from the Guest room (5) to the Master suite (1) is lined with portraits of what can only be former Ashcrofts. The double window at the top of the stairwell contains a detailed stained-glass window of an abstract and colorful, but unexplainably upsetting design.

Turret

1. Observation Room

Normally, an observation room where the occupants once watched Lake Michigan, this room contains no furniture. A telescope on a tripod has been folded and leaned against the wall to make room for the design drawn on the floor. In the shiny lacquered hardwood floor a Solomon's Triangle with a ring of mystic symbols has been roughly scraped into the floor using some kind of ash or charcoal.

Gula has prepared this room for her ritual and merely awaits the right time and, of course, her victim.

Basement

1. Main Basement Room

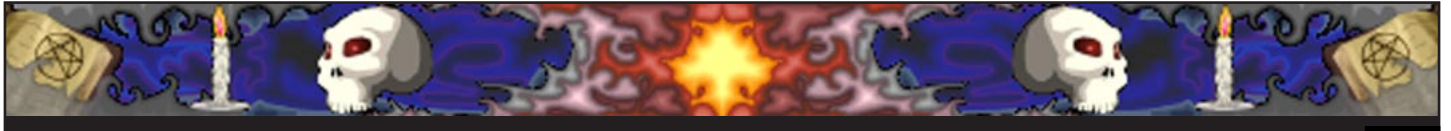
The main basement room serves as storage for the winter storm shutters, leftover entertainment equipment and other Ashcroft mementos. Hanging at the four dots are the exsanguinated bodies of Mr. and Mrs. Ashcroft, their housekeeper and their gardener.

2. Workshop/Coal Storage

This area contains a small wood working shop and other miscellaneous tools. The floor in the corner of the room is still stained black from the coal piles that used to fuel the massive central furnace and steam heater. The boiler has long-since been converted to natural gas, but the soot stains remain. A metal door leading to the disused Chicago coal tunnel system remains. The door allowed coal deliveries underground, but now only serves as passage for the utility pipes. The coal door is not locked, and it swings open to reveal a crumbling brick wall that no longer prevents access to/from the disused coal tunnels. A short stairway leads to a wooden door to the exterior. This door is locked from the inside with a massive padlock.

3. Heating/Plumbing Machinery

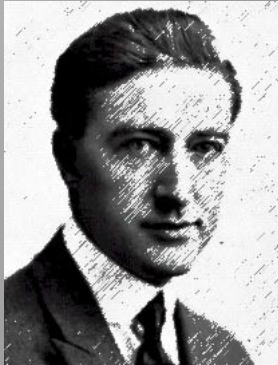
Complicated steam generation equipment fills this area. A gas-fired furnace forms the central component.



NPCs

Alexander Altgeld

Occupation: Lawyer
Colleges, Degrees:
 Princeton University, BA
Birthplace: Chicago, IL



STR	12	DEX	9
INT	13	Idea	65
SIZ	12	APP	10
POW	17	Luck	86
CON	12	SAN	85
EDU	17	Know	86

Fist/Punch	50%	1d3	#att: 1	Hp: -
Head Butt	10%	1d4	#att: 1	Hp: -
Kick	25%	1d4	#att: 1	Hp: -
Grapple	25%	special	#att: 1	Hp: -
Dodge	18%	special		
.32 Revolver	20%	1d8	Malf: 00	Rng: 15
yds	#att: 3			

shots: 6

Hp: 10

Jacob Altgeld

Occupation: Dilettante
Colleges, Degrees: None
Birthplace: Chicago, IL



STR	6	DEX	11
INT	11	Idea	55
SIZ	8	APP	6
POW	6	Luck	30
CON	4	SAN	30
EDU	7	Know	35

Archery: 40%

Fist/Punch	50%	1d3-1d6	#att: 1	Hp: -
Head Butt	10%	1d4-1d6	#att: 1	Hp: -
Kick	25%	1d4-1d6	#att: 1	Hp: -
Grapple	25%	special	#att: 1	Hp: -
Dodge	20%			

Belle Altgeld

Occupation: Dilettante
Colleges, Degrees: None
Birthplace: Farnborough, UK

Belle has been possessed by the long since deceased Gula, an evil sorceress from ancient Sumer.



STR	12	DEX	11
INT	12	Idea	60
SIZ	15	APP	12
POW	25	Luck	85
CON	13	SAN	44
EDU	11	Know	55

Occult: 90%

Fist/Punch	50%	1d3+1d4	#att: 1	Hp: -
Head Butt	10%	2d4	#att: 1	Hp: -
Kick	25%	1d6+1d4	#att: 1	Hp: -
Grapple	25%	Special	#att: 1	Hp: -
Club	25%	1d6+1d4	#att: 1	Hp: 15
Knife	25%	2d4	#att: 1	Hp: 9
Dodge	22%	Special		
.25 Automatic	20%	1d6	Malf: 99	Rng: 15
yds	#att: 3			

shots: 6

Hp: 6

Spells:

Akhkharu's Steady Gaze (Vampire Stare of Immobility)
 Compare current POW – should Belle win, the victim is immobile, unable to act or look away from the caster. Requires concentration. The victim is under the spell for 1d6x10 minutes or until concentration is broken.

Ina Qitrub Tahazi (Battle Onslaught)

Energy bolt form in the front of the caster's body and fly at the target. Each has a 90% chance of hitting their target. Normal modifiers of fire combat apply. Two bolts can be fired at different targets in one turn. Each bolt does 1d6 damage.

Path of Maskim Zul (Path of the Ambusher, the Lier-in-Wait)

The invoking or walking on the Path allows the caster to become invisible in shadows.

Deferential Ritual to Ninti, the Lady of Life

This is the ritual that allows the life-force transferal. It takes several minutes to complete once all the preparations have been made.

J'Alamon**Occupation:**

Occultist (Sorcerer)

Colleges, Degrees: None**Birthplace:** Samarkand

STR 12 DEX 13
 INT 14 Idea 70
 SIZ 7 APP 7
 POW 30 Luck 80
 CON 11 SAN 62
 EDU 19 Know 95



Occult: 100%

History: 95%

Sumerian: 96%

Fist/Punch	50%	1d3	#att: 1	Hp: -
Head Butt	10%	1d4	#att: 1	Hp: -
Kick	25%	1d4	#att: 1	Hp: -
Grapple	25%	special	#att: 1	Hp: -
Dodge	26%			

Spells:***Mahasu Ina Gigim Xul*** (Smite the Evil Spirit)

Energy blasts emit from the caster's fingertips at their targets. Up to two bolts can be fired per turn with a base chance of 65% for each. Each blast does 1d8 damage. The caster can alternately cause stun damage instead of deadly damage.

Edin Na Zu (Go to the Desert! – Ritual of Exorcism)

The Ritual requires 2 minutes to complete and the caster must maintain uninterrupted concentration. This ritual is a general-purpose exorcism spell that normally drives possessive spirits out. Should J'Alamon finish the Ritual, Gula will be trapped in the body of Belle and become mortal. At this point all normal damage will harm Gula/Belle. J'Alamon planned to complete the ritual and then blast away with energy blasts.

Professor**E. Phineas Michelson****Occupation:** Professor**Colleges, Degrees:**

New York University, PhD

Birthplace: Worcester, MA

STR 15 DEX 17
 INT 9 Idea 45
 SIZ 12 APP 10
 POW 14 Luck 70
 CON 13 SAN 70
 EDU 19 Know 95



Archaeology: 91%

History: 80%

Library Use: 95%

Occult: 30%

Aramaic: 81%

Sumerian: 76%

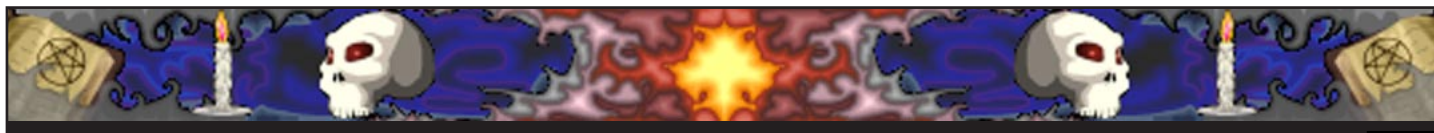
Fist/Punch	50%	1d3	#att: 1	Hp: -
Head Butt	10%	1d4	#att: 1	Hp: -
Kick	25%	1d4	#att: 1	Hp: -
Grapple	25%	special	#att: 1	Hp: -
Dodge	34%			
.22 Short Auto	20%	1d6	Malf: 00	Rng: 10
yds	#att: 3			

shots: 6

Hp: 6

"If you get in the habit of emptying your guns during a firefight, you're going to someday find yourself one bullet short. Save the last one for yourself - some things are worse than death!"

-Zena Marley (Early 21st century mercenary-philosopher)



The Daughters of Freya

A Solitaire Group for Witchcraft

by Paul Schulze

Ingrid Strauss

Lesser Gifted Fanatic

When Adolf Hitler spoke to the masses, they cheered in wild abandon. When he commanded, thousands obeyed without hesitation. But when Ingrid Strauss listened to the words of the little madman, she knew only that the cold fingers of fear gripped her in a rough embrace.

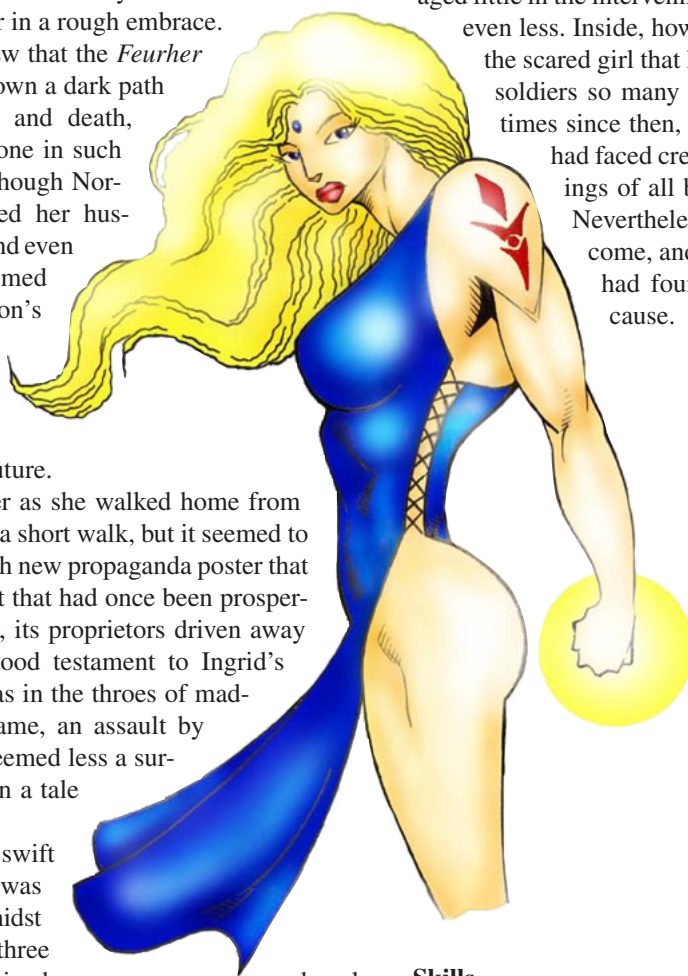
Something inside her knew that the *Feurher* was leading her people down a dark path fraught with destruction and death, but it seemed she was alone in such thoughts. Her mother, although Norwegian, dutifully mirrored her husband's slavish devotion, and even her younger sister seemed enraptured by their nation's leader. At times Ingrid wished she could share in their adoration, but more often she simply feared for her country's future.

Such fears gripped her as she walked home from the library. It was in truth a short walk, but it seemed to get longer each night. Each new propaganda poster that appeared, every storefront that had once been prosperous but now stood empty, its proprietors driven away by threats or by fear, stood testament to Ingrid's belief that her country was in the throes of madness. When the attack came, an assault by soldiers full of drink, it seemed less a surprise than a sad chapter in a tale full of woe.

The encounter was swift and brutal, and when it was over Ingrid stood dazed amidst the broken bodies of the three soldiers. The blood spattering her cheeks and hands was not her own, for she exhibited no wounds. The soldiers' blood ran freely, however, spilling down the street and into the gutters. Exhausted and terrified, Ingrid ran home, where she washed away the blood and burned her stained clothing. She never spoke of the incident to her family, but she dreamed of it often. In the dreams a figure watched over her, a smiling woman in ancient armor who watched Ingrid destroy her three attackers with grim satisfaction.

Six decades later, Ingrid Strauss gazed out upon the skies

of Los Angeles from her penthouse apartment. She had been many things over the past sixty years, and had been many people as well. Hannah Grey, the celebrated romance novelist, had been one of her favorites, as had Pink Kennedy, the screeching singer for the punk rock trio Die Disco Die in the late 1970s. Even her current role as Joanna Sinclair, a self-help guru, was satisfying, due in no small part to the number of Gifted that she had met and aided using this guise. She had aged little in the intervening years; perhaps a decade, possibly even less. Inside, however, she bore little resemblance to the scared girl that had fled from the bodies of the dead soldiers so many years before. She had killed many times since then, in defense of herself or others, and had faced creatures that were beyond the imaginings of all but the least sane among humanity. Nevertheless, Ingrid had persevered and overcome, and prospered as well, and in doing so had found others with whom to share her cause.



STR 3	INT 4
DEX 4	PER 4
CON 4	WIL 6

Life Points: 38
Endurance Points: 41
Speed: 16
Essence: 140

Qualities

The Gift, Divine Inspiration, Attractiveness +3, Charisma +3, Contacts (various), Multiple Identities (3), Nerves of Steel, Resources: Rich

Drawbacks

Cruel -1, Zealot

Skills

Acting 5, Beautician 3, Bureaucracy 2, Disguise 4, Dodge 5, Driving (Car) 3, Escapism 3, Guns (Handgun) 3, Humanities (History) 5, Intimidation 5, Language (English) 6, (French) 4, Martial Arts 3, Notice 6, Occult Knowledge 4, Singing 2, Smooth Talking 5, Stealth 3, Writing (Creative) 3

Metaphysics

The Binding, Divine Sight, Exorcism, Holy Fire, Strength of Ten, The Touch of Healing, Visions

Eva Frentzen

Gifted Weird One

The Strauss family had been decimated by the war. Ingrid's father was killed in a bombing raid in 1944, while her mother survived long enough to die from the bullet of a Russian rifle. Only Gretta, Ingrid's younger sister, survived the conflict, but her young life was cut short when, after prostituting herself on the streets of Berlin for several years, she died while giving birth to a daughter, Inga, in 1952.

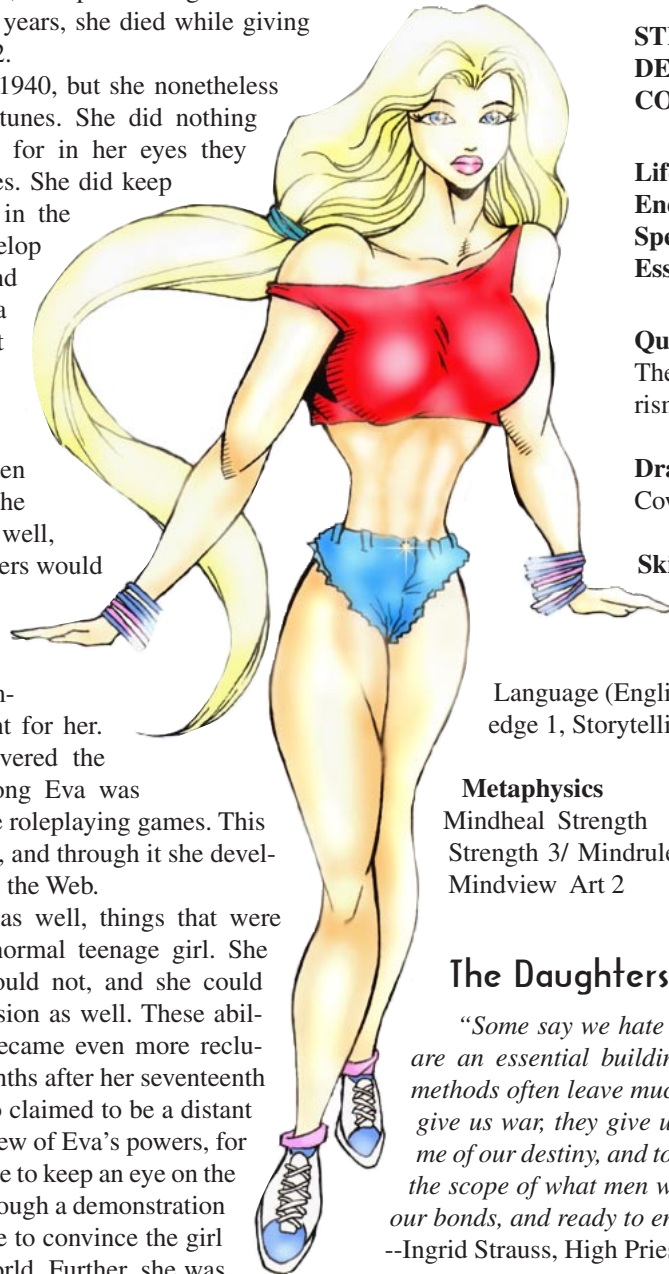
Ingrid had left Germany in 1940, but she nonetheless learned of her family's misfortunes. She did nothing to halt their decline, however, for in her eyes they had chosen their own bleak fates. She did keep abreast of her niece's welfare in the hopes that the girl might develop unusual powers or abilities, and when Inga married and had a daughter of her own, Ingrid kept a watchful eye on her as well.

Eva Frentzen had always known that she was different from other children. She was often the source of their derision for she was a pale girl, and frail as well, unused to the games that the others would play. By the time she was ten she had become shy and reclusive, but she had also become quite adept in the use of the computer that her father had bought for her. Within a few years she discovered the internet as well, and before long Eva was utilizing her talents to run online roleplaying games. This outlet was her only social venue, and through it she developed a considerable presence on the Web.

She could do other things as well, things that were far beyond the purview of a normal teenage girl. She could see things that others could not, and she could make people do things on occasion as well. These abilities frightened Eva, and she became even more reclusive because of them. A few months after her seventeenth birthday, Eva met a woman who claimed to be a distant cousin, Ingrid Strauss. Ingrid knew of Eva's powers, for she had placed a spy in the village to keep an eye on the girl several years before, and through a demonstration of her own abilities she was able to convince the girl that she was not alone in the world. Further, she was able to persuade Eva's parents into letting her take the girl back to America with her, a move which has allowed Eva a chance to begin her young life anew.

Eva has been happy in Los Angeles, for it seems that in a city full of strange people, she has finally found her home.

Although she knows Ingrid as her cousin rather than her great-aunt, her adoration for the woman knows no bounds. Ingrid has helped her to learn how to use her powers, and has made her a welcome member of the Daughters of Freya as well. Eva has yet to knowingly encounter another supernatural creature, however, for Ingrid is guiding her grand-niece's progress carefully. She has been revealed by Freya to be a key figure in the Daughters' future, and her well-being must be maintained.



STR 2 **INT** 3
DEX 3 **PER** 3
CON 2 **WIL** 3

Life Points: 26
Endurance Points: 26
Speed: 10
Essence: 16

Qualities

The Gift, Attractiveness +4, Charisma +1, Photographic Memory

Drawbacks

Cowardly -1, Honorable -1

Skills

Computers 5, Computer hacking 3, Computer Programming 3, Electronics 3, Language (English) 3, Notice 3, Occult Knowledge 1, Storytelling 4, Writing (Creative) 3

Metaphysics

Mindheal Strength 1/ Mindheal Art 2, Mindrule Strength 3/ Mindrule Art 2, Mindview Strength 2/ Mindview Art 2

The Daughters of Freya

"Some say we hate men, but that is not true. They are an essential building-block in our society. Their methods often leave much to be desired, however. They give us war; they give us crime...the goddess has told me of our destiny, and to achieve it we must rise beyond the scope of what men would allow. We must be free of our bonds, and ready to embrace our future!"

--Ingrid Strauss, High Priestess of the Daughters of Freya

Description

Since World War II Ingrid Strauss has fought the Supernatural, utilizing the gifts and powers given to her by the goddess Freya. Although she encountered other Gifted during the conflict, it was not until the 1960s that Freya deigned to allow



others to join her cause. Due to this, The Daughters of Freya are a small group, with rarely more than a score of members at any one time. They do, however, have an extensive support system due to the fact that Ingrid has been very active in supporting women's shelters and self-defense organizations over the years, and members are thus generally able to find aid in any major North American or Western European city. Membership is offered only to those few deemed worthy by Ingrid herself. She uses her powers to look into the very souls of prospective candidates and, if she sees within them the potential to serve the goddess, she invites them into the association. By Freya's will only females are eligible candidates.

The Daughters of Freya are under the sole guidance of Ingrid, and through her Freya's work is done. None argue this point, for Ingrid has shown herself to be a most remarkable woman over the years, and her visions have given the Daughters their purpose. Many members are outcasts from society or victims of violence, and the association has given them the chance to take their lives into their own hands. Notable is the fact that Ingrid is the only Inspired member of the group, a fact which is ignored if indeed it is ever noticed at all. Several members are Seers or Mundanes, and there is even an Immortal Daughter.

Attributes

Although the physical attributes of the Daughters varies wildly, they all have in common an impressive Willpower.

Qualities and Drawbacks

Daughters of Freya are often Honorable, and some few have exhibited the nature of a Zealot.

Skills

Daughters have a wide variety of skills, although the more physical members often have considerable combat and weapons training.

Metaphysics

The majority of Gifted members are Seers, while the rest are primarily Mundane. It is rare, but not unheard of, for a Magician to be offered membership, but Necromancers and Inspired never are.

Special Abilities

A Daughter of Freya gains a bonus of +1 to her Willpower upon becoming a member. This bonus does allow for a Willpower above the maximum normal.

Common Professions

Whatever a woman did before she was a member is of no consequence. After she becomes a Daughter, however, she is expected to become successful in whatever field she chooses to be in. Ingrid spends a great deal of time and money to ensure that each and every Daughter has the education and

training needed to rise to the top of her field, and thus far her expectations have been fulfilled. There are Daughters in many walks of life, with the most common being law, engineering and computer science.

Roleplaying the Daughters

There may be terrors in the night, but Freya lights the way.

Becoming a Daughter of Freya was the best thing that ever happened to you. Through them you've found strength and friendship, and your life has a purpose. You fight now, whether with weapons or powers or the use of your knowledge, and that feels good. You may have been a victim once, but it will never happen again.

Allies and Enemies

The Daughters of Freya generally relies only upon the merits of its own members to deal with any problems, and has thus had limited contact with other Associations.

The Wicce: Ingrid herself is a proponent of this group, although she feels them to be more idealistic than pragmatic. She will offer them aid if necessary, however, for she has seen in their numbers potential Daughters.

The Sentinels: The Daughters and the Sentinels have met on only a handful of occasions, but the blood between them has always been bad. Neither group cares for the other, and neither is opposed to expressing that animosity in a violent manner. The Daughters see the Sentinels as overbearing males whose worship of an unworthy male god makes them both blind and dangerous.

Other Covenants: The Daughters generally avoid contact with other Covenants, as they view the other groups to be flawed and potentially dangerous. They are aware of the Rosicrucians and the Twilight Order, and have suspicions about the existence of others, but are unaware of some of the smaller and more obscure Associations.

The Daughters of Freya Stories

The Daughters of Freya protect women from forces that would do them harm. Although they primarily deal with supernatural beings that are not easily defended against by earthly means, they will also deal swift and harsh justice to more mundane predators as well. The Reckoning is not in itself a huge concern of theirs, except in how it affects the will of Freya.





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X-LARGE \$15.00 each
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(plus shipping)

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print more shirts!*

*(Note: Larger sizes cost \$1.00
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DG12 Cover Art Poster



ALSO AVAILABLE: 11x17 Posters of the cover art from this issue!

That's a REAL, honest-to-goodness poster. Just the thing for adding a splash of ethereal color to an otherwise dull expanse of wall.

Posters: \$3.00 each (plus shipping)

Check www.demonground.org for more details of how to order your t-shirt and poster!

To celebrate our Origins Award Nomination, we've decided to create a new t-shirt.

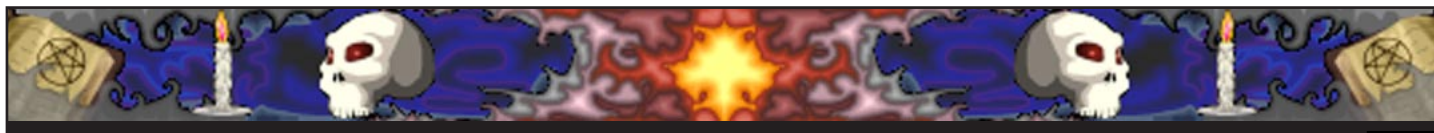
The first run of shirts is in-hand and ready to go. They are black GILDAN ACTIVEWEAR, ULTRA COTTON, Heavyweight, 100% Cotton, Pre-Shrunk shirts.

To create the eye-catching design, we started with our signature DEMONGROUND logo and web address, silkscreened in red and white. Then we looked through our art submissions, picked a kick-ass piece of line-art by Neal Dickinson, and colored it to take advantage of the two color screen. We really like the way the image turned out, and hope you like it too!



And for all you AFMBE fans out there, Look! Zombies!!!!

Show your support! Order your DEMONGROUND t-shirt, today!



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Next Issue

Our Next issue will be coming out in September. This is LUCKY number Thirteen for us! And so, since you've all been so good, we've decided to let the Theme for this issue find itself. We're not going to pick one. It's a free-for-all of mayhem and horror!

The Deadline for DG13 Submissions will be August 1, 2001.

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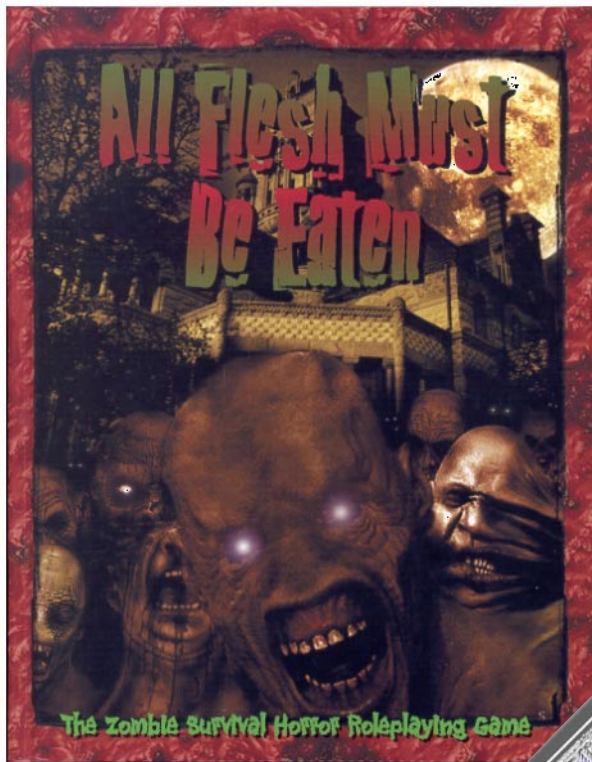
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