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"Howdy" from 12 to Midnight

From all of us here at **12 to Midnight**, welcome to *Modern Dispatch*. In case you are not familiar with us, we are a Texas-based RPG publisher specializing in modern horror. You might not normally think "Texas" and "horror" go together, but we are pretty sure you will change your mind after spending some time in Pinebox.

That's Pinebox, Texas. It is a nice little rural community smack-dab in east Texas. There is a university nearby, a Pine forest called the Big Thicket, and a mess of beautiful wildflowers every Spring. Unfortunately, it is also the epicenter of a whole lot of bad mojo. We're talking dark magic, serial killers, haunted buildings—the whole ball of wax.

If you want to learn more about Pinebox, just visit our website at 12tomidnight.com. You can start using the free campaign setting on our site right now, then watch it continue to grow right here in the pages of *Modern Dispatch*. Of course, Pinebox is *our* setting but all the material in these pages can just as easily be dropped into *yours*.

This issue is the final installment in the adventure arc begun in issue #26. These serial encounters have been fun to write, but building an ongoing story arc month after month while still designing each adventure to run independently would eventually have become too cumbersome. We also saw that it was unfair to expect you to have purchased all the previous issues in order to appreciate the most recent one. Issue 38 will mark a new run of completely independent adventures.

If you have any ideas for future issues or want to comment on what you read here, please feel free to drop by our forums at 12tomidnight.com.

Pinebox Profile

Texas National Militia

The Texas National Militia (TNM) is an underground group pursuing the dual purposes of white supremacy and secession from the United States. They seek a day in which the "South shall rise again," and have stockpiled a substantial arsenal for securing the "homeland." The group focuses on recruitment and propaganda aimed at growing its membership. The members meet to plan their strategy of reasserting "southern freedom," procuring additional arms and munitions for their stockpiles, and dealing with individuals who do not believe or belong in their idea of the "New South."

Currently, the TNM is facing a schism in the ranks. The newer and younger members want to strike for independence now. They argue that now is a perfect time to act, with the military and national law enforcement occupied with Middle Eastern threats. They believe it is time for those who do not hold dear the same American values as they to be removed from the "homeland" and let "true Americans" live as they imagine the founding fathers wanted. Their version of the "South" would remove all minorities, foreigners, and "Yankees".

The other side of the rift seeks the same ends, but through more subtle means. These men would rather instill change through political structure and lessen the blood shed among their "Southern" brothers. Because these men hold the purse strings, they have been able to manipulate their more violence-prone brothers. By allowing the vicious faction to vent their anger on outspoken minority leaders, the TNM leaders have averted a violent uprising.

The group is headquartered in Pinebox, Texas, and they hold meetings at various members' homes and offices. Their arsenal is hidden in a variety of places

across Golan County and in the Big Thicket. Rumor has it that they even own a large bunker facility deep in the woods, although no one has stepped forward with evidence to support this rumor.

The TNM functions with a great deal of impunity in the area. Having the mayor of Pinebox, Red McCoy, as their leader helps keep the police off the trail.

TNM Statistics

HP: 120

Force: 12 (+1)

Response: 16 (+3)

Resources: 14 (+2)

Information: 12 (+1)

Occult: 6 (-2)

Influence: 8 (-1)

Skills: Computer Use +3, Craft +3, Decipher Code +5, Demolitions +7, Forgery +3, Gather Information +5 Intimidate +5, Knowledge (Civics) +3, Knowledge (History) +1, Knowledge (Tactics) +5, Knowledge (Technology) +3, Repair +3, Research +5, Search +5, Treat Injury +5.

Feats: Arsenal, Covert, Secure Base.





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Arsenal

This organization has a large stockpile of weaponry.

Benefit: The organization has a +5 bonus to Force checks for acquiring weaponry and has access to military-grade or illegal gear.

Covert

This organization's very existence is concealed.

Benefit: The organization gives no Reputation increase (or decrease), but its members are 'off the grid' in terms of fingerprints, police records and so on, which gives the characters considerably more latitude when it comes to avoiding the attention of the authorities.

Secure Base

The organization's headquarters is protected by state-of-the-art security system.

Benefit: The organization receives +20 hit points, and the headquarters is well defended.

Special: The organization may take this feat more than once.

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Pinebox Adventure

Party Crashers

Party Crashers is the third and final encounter in the adventure arc that began with *On the Steps of City Hall* in *Modern Dispatch* #26 and continued with *Just a Few Questions* in *Modern Dispatch* #30. These encounters are presented in a serial format for the Pinebox campaign setting, but with alternate leads and hooks for use in other modern-world campaigns.

Introduction and Background

Depending on what transpired in previous encounters, the heroes should have an interest in Kerry McGovern's attack at City Hall (*issue* #26). This has prompted an investigation of Jerry McGovern. Last issue the investigation started off with two pressing questions: "why?" and "who was the real target of Kerry McGovern's drive-by shooting?" Now a third question can be added to the mix. "Why does Jerry McGovern want to hurt the heroes instead of answer their questions?" (*issue* #30)

They may be more than a little miffed at Jerry McGovern after last month's riot at the Pizza Barn. Your heroes are probably scratching their heads over why those thugs jumped them. The timing must surely point to Jerry, who conveniently disappeared just before the brawl. It may be time for a reckoning, or at least a confrontation.

Should your campaign take place anywhere other than the American South, you can easily change the TNM to conform to another white supremacy group or racist organization. Whatever enemy you choose, by now the heroes are probably tired of being observers and punching bags! This encounter finally gives the heroes a chance to strike back...even if they aren't exactly sure what they are striking at.

Considering Jerry's highly suspicious exit from the Pizza Barn, the investigation should point toward him now more than ever, but where can they find him?

Alternate Hooks

If you plan on running this mini-adventure independently from the previous pair, the heroes might seek Jerry McGovern to question him about a money laundering operation, a loan, or even information related to another case. Jerry McGovern, secretly a member of the TNM, is a man who can pull strings to fund all kinds of organizations. Not all loan money need originate from the bank. Of course, these latter loans do not use a traditional "collection agency" when payments are late.

A more innocuous reason for introducing the heroes is the charity party. The heroes may receive an invitation to the party from McCoy, McGovern, or another city official. It should be fun—music, dancing, and merriment for all! What's wrong with mixing a little business with pleasure?

Seeking Jerry

When confronted by the heroes in the previous encounter, McGovern was obviously embarrassed by his brother's botched assassination attempt at the Pinebox City Hall. But was there more to it than that? Unfortunately it is Friday night, which means there is little point in staking out the banker's place of business.

The good news for the heroes is that McGovern is listed in the phone book. The bad news is that he is not home. After being spooked by the heroes' questions at

the bar, McGovern decides to spend the night at the house of a female “friend”. More good news: there is a note is tacked on his front door. It reads:

Jerry, Red told me to remind you to bring your special BBQ sauce to his party Saturday night. You know how much he likes it. Don't be late or the Mayor will have your hide.

The note is written on the back of a printed invitation to a charity party. The party is to be held today (Saturday) at 8 p.m. The location is listed as the Timberland Village Country Club. Timberland Village is a high-dollar planned community several miles from Pinebox on Lake Greystone.

A further *Search* (DC 20) around the home uncovers some not-so-innocent trash. Jerry had been removing racist pamphlet and flyers that he had kept in the house. Unfortunately for him, he never took the trash to the dump. Each pamphlet appears to be from an organization called the Texas National Militia. Although the propaganda seems to indicate that the organization is located in East Texas, it does not provide membership or contact information.

Pool House

Small town business and politics can be very social. You need to make friends and be one of the “Good Ol’ Boys” to get inside of the best deals. Red McCoy bought a lakefront estate in Timberland Village because the country club’s pool house allows him to entertain in style while keeping his residence private. The pool house is roomy and adjacent to an Olympic size pool, tennis courts, and small garden maze. The maze is a relaxing place to have an intimate conversation.

The maze provides an excellent place to hide. Gaining access should not be difficult, as there is a lot of traffic here during the day. Various contractors are setting up additional lighting and a dance floor. A tent also covers an area that will surely hold refreshments.

With all of this commotion the heroes can even have a quiet discussion while waiting for the night.

Crashing the Party

When you are ready to get on with the party, read:

A few people arrive before twilight. The partygoers arrive dressed in Bermuda shorts and sundresses, but there's not a whole lot of swimming going on. A DJ plays country tunes while couples two-step across the dance floor. Waiters walk through the crowd offering hor's dourves, champagne, and Texas beer.

Should the characters be hidden in the maze, they'll find they have good sightlines to all exterior locations. What they lack is a good view inside the pool house itself. A lot of folks enter and then later depart from the building with plates of barbequed meats and potato salad.

If the characters are dressed nicely enough, then they can attempt to crash the party. In a small community where everyone knows everyone else, that may be harder than it sounds. Successfully crashing the party may require an effective *Bluff* (DC 15) or a good *Disguise* (DC 15). Failure could result in anything from an embarrassing social scene, to a call to the police, to some roughing up by the Mayor's TNM goons.

Should the heroes enter the pool house, they have access to the buffet line. A few party goers are huddled about the room gossiping about a variety of topics. A Pinebox police officer stands next to a closed door. If heroes make motions of entering the room, he informs them that a private meeting is underway.

Unexpected Guest

Around ten o'clock, City Councilman Manuel Travis (see *Modern Dispatch* 26 for his stats) arrives. Read or summarize the following:

Manuel Travis walks across the patio dressed in blue jeans, a green polo shirt, and snakeskin ropers. Everyone stares. While a few men exchange regards,

none converse with the councilman. Manuel stands like an island surrounded by sharks.

Then with a hustle and a bustle, Mayor McCoy exits the pool house, followed by none other than Jerry McGovern. A uniformed Pinebox Police Officer follows the pair, which moves towards Travis. Partygoers back away, sensing the sudden tension.

“Nice to see you mayor,” Travis speaks in loud voice. “Guess I should have worn my bullet-proof vest.”

“Come on, Manny,” the Mayor replies. “What makes you think you're a target?”

Manuel snorts his derision.

“Y'all be civil now,” McGovern interrupts. “Can I get ya' a beer? Relax a little. This is a party, not a war.”

Manuel glares at the men he towers over. The tension is so evident that even the DJ fails to put on a new song.

Now is good time to see what your heroes are up to. Tensions are high, and the whole scene is about to explode. Your heroes are not the only ones to crash this party! Once you know where they are located and how they are reacting to this argument, have them make a *Spot* (DC 20) check. Then read the following:

From out of the night sky a large crimson creature drops near the trio. Bat-like wings fold upon its back when its hooves touch down upon the ground. A large horn protrudes from its bull shaped head. Saliva drips down its chin and hatred fills its black eyes. Its glare pierces Manuel Travis, and in a guttural, ironic tone it asks, “Whose heart shall I rip out first, master?”

BBQ or Death?

It looks like *this* party is over! Characters who succeeded on their *Spot* check can roll initiative for the surprise round. It is time to fight or die. The attacking creature is a blood demon, and it intends to slaughter everyone at the party except for Manuel Travis. As the person who summoned the creature, Travis is off-

limits. Unfortunately Travis no real control over the creature and wishes for nothing more than it to go back where it came from. However, the heroes probably don't know that!

In the surprise round the demon recognizes the Pinebox policeman as a threat and attacks him unless first attacked by one of the heroes. The demon's standard practice is to kill any who it perceives to be a threat (including heroes who attack it) before settling down to terrorizing its prey. Travis willingly lends a hand to the combat, since he rightfully sees the blood demon's presence as his fault. If the heroes still seem overmatched, the GM may allow a pair of TNM goons to help in the combat.

If you want to use the mob rules from *Modern Dispatch 30*, this party could support four mobs around the poolside. Two more mobs would flee from the pool house.

The Mayor attempts to flee, but is hindered by Jerry McGovern. The heroes may *Spot* (DC 16) McGovern dragging the Mayor back to the pool house. The banker sees the chaos as an opportunity to finally take the reigns of the TNM. He plans on killing McCoy during the confusion and blaming it on the "weird, rabid zoo creature" attacking the other guests. Unless the heroes intervene, McGovern and the Mayor reach the false safety of the pool house in two rounds and McGovern strangles the Mayor to death over the next four rounds.

What Now?

Party Crashers represents the end of this mini-adventure arc. How it goes from here is entirely up to you as GM. Much depends on whether or not the Mayor survived or if a hero spotted McGovern making his move.

At the battle's end, the heroes will certainly have as many questions as answers. Should he survive and the heroes choose to trust him, Manuel Travis could prove a valuable source of information and an ally.

We hope you have enjoyed this short mini-adventure, and that we have provided you with enough ideas to take these characters and situations well beyond the short encounters suggested here. Please visit us at www.12tomidnight.com and let us know where you took the story. We ARE waiting and we DO control the blood demon, so DO NOT hesitate to let us know.

Blood Demon

Blood demons are revolting, otherworldly beings of terrible power. They are viciously evil and chaotic in their manners and deeds. Blood demons kill and maim their victims for the pleasure of causing despair and terror. Such demons are typically summoned to Earth by people seeking vengeance. However, if summoned without the proper magical restraints then blood demon is free to attack all living creatures it encounters.

Blood demons are nocturnal hunters that leave no witnesses to their wanton destruction. The only individual safe from the Blood Demon is the summoning magician. However, once the victim identified in the summoning ritual is murdered, the back-flow of magics sometimes cause weak-willed conjurers to take a swift descent into madness. This is typified by waking nightmares, visions of horror, and the haunting of evil spirits.

Because the demon enjoys hunting and killing, typically it takes its time before seeking out its intended victim. The demon often first attacks animals such as dogs, goats, and cattle. It may even follow with a few random attacks on people before finally fulfilling its obligation against the conjurer's target. Once the target is killed, the demon returns to its home dimension. Many believe it abducts the souls of those it has killed.

Blood demons have no set form. Usually, they appear as large humanoids with dark red skin, fangs, wings, and a large spiraled horn. The touch of a blood demon always leaves a visible blood mark on the flesh or pelt, which takes several weeks to disappear.

Species Traits

Blood Demon: CR 4; Large Outsider; HD 6d8+18; hp 50; MAS 17; Init 0; Spd 40 (Fly 70 [Poor]); Defense 23; Touch 9, Flat footed 23, (+14 natural, -1 size); BAB +6/+1; Grap +15; Atk +10 melee (1d6+5, claw), or +10 melee (1d4+5, gore), Full Attack +10/+5 melee (1d6+5, 2 claws), +5 1d4+2, gore); FS 10ft. X 10 ft.; Reach 10ft.; SQ Acid and Fire Resistance, Darkvision, Damage Reduction, Fear Aura, Telepathy; AL Summoner, Chaos, Evil; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +5; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 21, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 4.

Skills: Bluff +3, Hide +6, Intimidate +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Read Abyssal, Read English, Search +7, Sense Motive +6, Speak Abyssal, Speak English, Spot +6, Survival +6.

Feats: Power Attack, Cleave, Simple Weapons Proficiency.

Advancement: None.

Acid and Fire Resistance 20 (Ex): The blood demon ignores up to 20 points of damage caused by acid or fire each time it is subjected to such an attack.

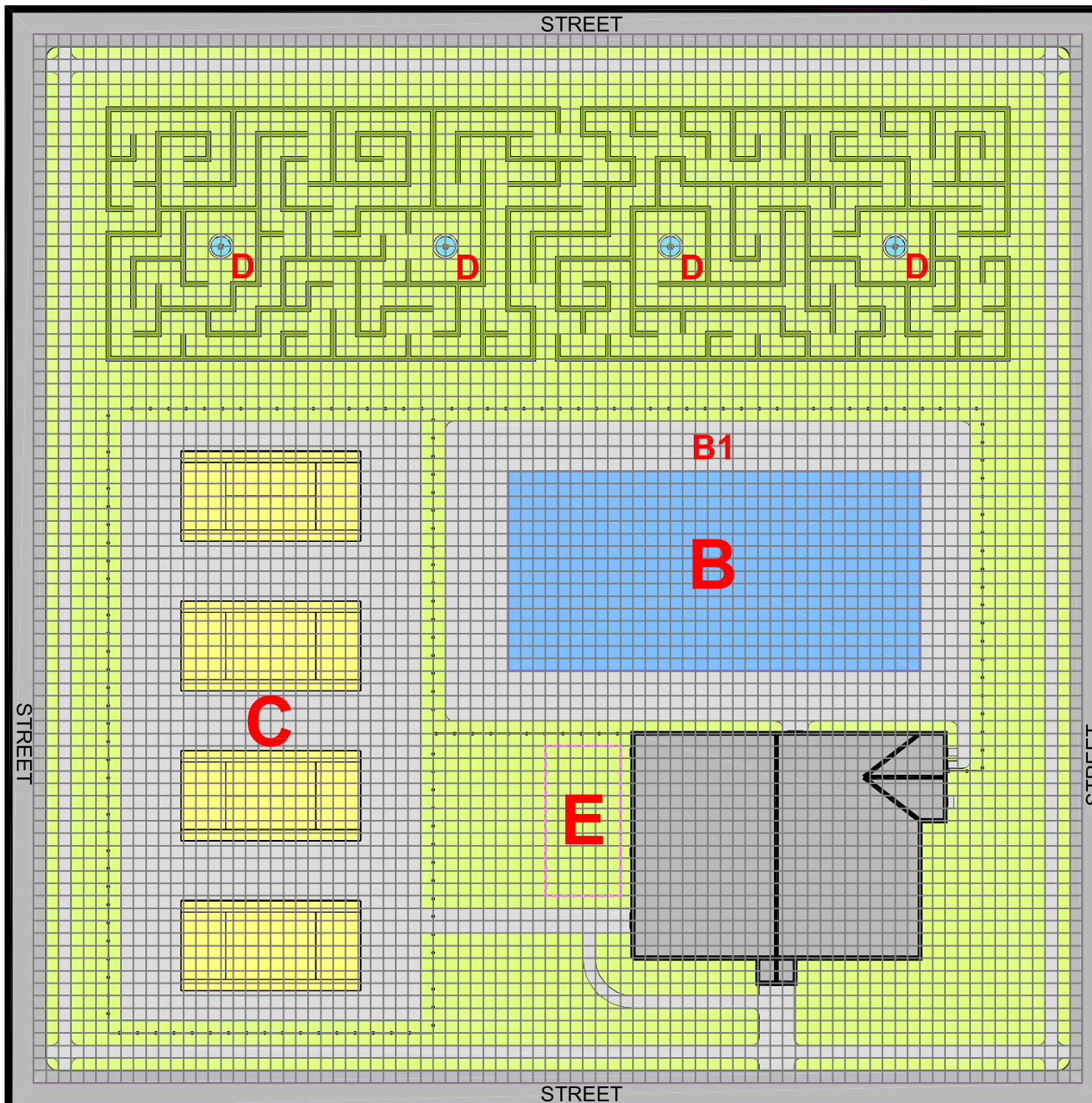
Darkvision (Ex): The blood demon can see in total darkness out to 60 feet.

Damage Reduction (Su) 5/Blessed: The blood demon ignores damage from any weapons or attacks that do 5 or less damage, unless the weapon or attack is under the effects of a Bless spell, covered by Holy Water- or a similar spell, ritual, or FX of this sort.

Fear Aura (Su): The blood demon may use this ability at will to freeze an opponent. The victim is frozen in terror for 1d4 rounds and cannot move or take any other actions. Negating the fear effect requires a successful Will save with a DC 13. The range is 30 ft. and it may be directed at one foe at a time.

Fly (Poor) 70: The blood demon can use its natural wings to fly.

Telepathy (Su): Can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 feet that has a language.



MAP KEY FOR COMPLEX

- A = Community Center Building
- B = Swimming Pool
- B1 = Life Guard Tower
- C = Tennis Court
- D = Fountains (within Maze)
- E = Location of Tent (with Disc Jockey and Sound Equipment)

MAP KEY FOR BUILDING INTERIOR

- 1 = Entry
- 2 = Receptionist/Information Desk
- 3 = Lounge
- 4 = Storage
- 5 = TV Room
- 6 = Manager's Office
- 6A = Secure Storage
- 7 = Small Meeting Room
(Set up for conference)
- 7A = Storage Room (for folding chairs and table)
- 8 = Men's Restroom
- 8A = Men's Locker Room
- 8B = Men's Showers
- 9 = Water Fountains
- 10 = Women's Restroom
- 10A = Women's Locker Room
- 10B = Women's Showers
- 11 = Large Meeting Room
(Set up for buffet dining)
- 11A = Storage Area (for folding chairs and tables)
- 12 = Pool House (Chlorination Equipment)
- 13 = Storage Room
- 14 = Mechanical Room (Water Heaters, Fuse Boxes, etc.)
- 15 = Location of D.J. and Sound Equipment

MAP SYMBOL KEY (INTERIOR)

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| ---W--- Window | WF Water Fountain |
| ---PGW--- Plate Glass Window | ⊗ Shower Head |
| - - - - - Tent (Outline) | □ Door |
| File File Cabinet | Locker |
| S Safe | End Table |



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Map Scale: 1 square = 5 Feet

MAP OF COMMUNITY CENTER COMPLEX -and- MAP KEYS



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Map Scale: 1 square = 5 feet

COMMUNITY CENTER (INTERIOR)

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