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"Howdy" from 12 to Midnight

In case you are not familiar with us, 12 to Midnight is 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.

Pinebox, Texas, that 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 Web site 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.

If you have any ideas for future issues, or if you want to comment on what you read here, please drop by the forums on our website



Revenants



Revenants are a type of *lost soul* that combines corporeal and incorporeal elements. It is essentially a corpse animated by its own spirit. Revenants possess many of the powers of lost souls, but also have some of the physical strength of a zombie. However, revenants are limited by these physical ties and can be destroyed in the same manner as a zombie.

So. what's a Lost Soul?

Lost souls are the spirits of those who die, but are unable or unwilling to leave our plane of existence—usually because of some unfinished business, but in rare instances because of outside intervention. The lost soul template may be found in *Green's Guide to Ghosts*, and includes more detailed information regarding lesser manifestations, poltergeists, ABEs, phantoms, and dominating spirits.

Revenants are sometimes created when people die while in situations of prolonged physical danger, such as soldiers in battle or inmates in violent prisons. Revenants are also created when a person who desired that they be interred as a complete, undisturbed body has their wishes disregarded. Still other revenants have a devotion to a place or object and act as a guardian, even after death. This location may be the revenant's own tomb, but it can also be a location or object important to it in life.

When a revenant is not active, its body returns to its grave via magical transport. The body often has evidence on it that it has been "out and about," such as grass or dirt on its feet, or blood on its hands.

When active, revenants can transport their bodies through an otherworldly dimension and cause them to appear at the approximate location (within 1 mile) of where they desire. Revenant spirits have the same general appearance as the bodies they inhabit, and any damage to the corpse is done to the *lost soul* as well. However, revenant bodies decay unnaturally slowly, taking centuries to decompose. If a revenant's corporeal body sustains physical damage, that damage is permanent.

Because of their innate connection to their bodies, revenants can be damaged just as a zombie can. Destroying a revenant's body (reducing it to –10 Hit Points) while it is animate also destroys the revenant spirit. A revenant that is cut off from, or can no longer animate, its body is just a spirit and becomes a weak *lesser manifestation*. If the body is destroyed while the revenant does not possess it, the revenant spirit cannot possess another body and it remains a *lesser manifestation* forever.



Creature Templates

Revenant

Revenants have the same Dexterity, Intelligence, Wisdom, memories, and skills they possessed in life.

Template Traits

"Revenant" is a template that can be added to any corporeal creature other than undead (referred to hereafter as the base creature). It uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Challenge Rating: base creature +1.

Type: Undead. Hit Dice: d12.

Speed: As base creature

Defense: Natural armor bonus to Defense increases to a value based on size (use the base creature's natural armor bonus, if it's higher): Tiny +0, Small +1, Medium-size +2, Large +3, Huge +4, Gargantuan +7, Colossal +11

Attacks: As base creature. Slam.

Damage: Slam damage depends on the revenant's size (use the base creature's slam damage, if it is greater): Fine 1, Diminutive 1d2, Tiny 1d3, Small 1d4, Medium-size 1d6, Large 1d8, Huge 2d6, Gargantuan 2d8, Colossal 4d6. For purposes of Strength bonuses to damage, a slam attack is considered a two-handed attack.

Special Qualities: A revenant loses all of the base creature's supernatural and spell-like abilities, except for immunity/resistance to specific energy types and SR. A revenant may retain any or all of the base creature's extraordinary abilities, at the GM's discretion.

Animate Own Body: Revenants can animate their own bodies.

Transport Own Body: Revenants may transport their own bodies through an otherworldly dimension and cause it to appear within 1 mile of a location in the mortal world.

Allegiances: A revenant retains its previous allegiances, and develops a fanatical devotion to them.

Saves: A revenant's saving throw modifiers are based on Hit Dice and given in Table 8–2: Creature Saves and Base Attack Bonuses of the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*.

Action Points: none **Reputation Bonus:** +0

Ability Scores: Str 18, Dex – as base creature, Con -, Int – as base creature, Wis –as base creature, Cha 3

Skills: As base creature

Feats: As base creature, Toughness, Frightful Presence.

Personalities of the Dead

There are as many different types of revenants as there are personalities of the dead. Three different types of revenants are discussed in this *Modern Dispatch*.

Retriever Revenants

Many revenants seek a missing part of their bodies, one with which they were not interred. Such revenants attack the living to retrieve their missing parts. The most well-known retriever revenant is the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow, a revenant of a Revolutionary War soldier who was beheaded by a cannonball. The Headless Horseman seeks to acquire a new head and haunts a lonely stretch of backcountry New England road.

The Organ Retriever

New medical technology has extended and improved the lives of millions, but it has also created a new breed of revenant—the organ retriever. At death, some people have their organs harvested for transplant to people in need. The deceased person must have arranged prior to death to donate the organs, or the deceased's legal guardian may donate the organs. In rare cases, the legal guardian donates the organs against the wishes of the deceased.

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Organ retrievers haunt the people responsible for the loss of their organs, such as the doctors, family decision makers, and the organ recipients themselves. Some revenants go so far as to attack the recipients and reclaim the transplanted organs, resulting in gruesome and painful deaths for the new victims. These horrific crimes often perplex law enforcement personnel, because the only evidence they find implicates someone who is already dead.

Organ Retriever Special Abilities

Organ retriever revenants have the following special abilities in addition to those listed in the revenant template.

Organ Location: The revenant can identify the location and condition of any of its missing organs. This operates like the Locate Object spell, with no material requirement.

Scalpel Nails: The revenant grows long, razor-like fingernails, which it uses to remove the "stolen" organs from the recipient's body. Counts as armed attack, 1d6 damage).

Pinebox Adventure Outlines

The Repossession

Jimmy Lee Wilcox was an unlucky criminal from Austin, Texas. During the last of his many stays in the county jail, a fellow inmate crushed

the back of his skull with a rake handle. Wilcox's common-law wife allowed his organs to be harvested as a last spite to the mean man. His corneas went to an aging doctor in Maine, his lungs went to a young woman in Florida, his heart went to a firefighter in Pennsylvania, and his two kidneys went to a set of twins in Pinebox, Texas.

However, Jimmy Lee had been raised in a religious sect that taught that a person had to be buried whole, or the spirit could not enter God's celestial paradise. Although he was not the religious type while alive, Jimmy Lee's spirit was extremely angered by his wife's decision to donate his organs. He appeared to his wife on

the one-month anniversary of his death, chastised her for her decision to donate his organs, and told her that he was going to retrieve his missing parts.

Exactly a month later, the revenant tore his eyes from the aging doctor. The following month, he attacked and killed the firefighter in Pennsylvania.

When Wilcox's wife learned of the deaths in Maine and Pennsylvania, she tried to warn the woman who had received his lungs, but her warnings were ignored and Wilcox claimed another victim.

The adventure starts with the twin girls who received the kidneys getting strange phone calls from Austin. The caller often doesn't say anything (Wilcox's wife doesn't know what to say), but finally she warns the girls that they are in danger. Shortly afterward, they receive an anonymous package containing newspaper clippings detailing the horrific murders in Maine, Pennsylvania, and Florida. With some detective work, the heroes can trace the phone calls back to Wilcox's wife, who admits to making the calls and repeats her warning that Jimmy Lee is coming, and that the month is about up.

Wilcox appears near the twin's home during the night on the monthly anniversary of his death. The revenant makes its way through the wealthy neighborhood where the twins live and enters the house. If the heroes don't stop Wilcox, he kills both girls and retrieves his kidneys. If the heroes do manage to stop Wilcox but do not destroy him, they learn that his wife was murdered the night of their conflict and her kidneys taken.

Hook: The heroes can become involved if the twin's father, a successful criminal lawyer, asks them to investigate the source of strange phone calls coming to his house. He can pay the heroes or offer to assist them in the future when they come into conflict with the law.

Alternative Hook: A doctor from the organ donation organization that handled the Wilcox donation contacts the heroes anonymously. He is aware that recipients of the organs from Jimmy Lee Wilcox are being murdered. He is afraid that it is a bizarre serial killer, and asks the heroes to intervene.

Alternative Hook 2: The twin girls are cousins or little sisters to one of the heroes, and are creeped out by the person who keeps calling them.

Alternative Hook 3: Any hero who is in law enforcement may become involved in the murder investigations and realize that there are other donor recipients who are now targets of the murderer.

Organ Retriever Revenant, Jimmy Lee Wilcox

Tough Hero 3/Dedicated Hero 2 CR 6; Medium-size undead; HD 5d12+5(+3 for Toughness); HP 43; Mas 12; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; Defense 16, touch 16, flatfooted 16 (+2 size, +0 Dex, +4 class); BAB +3; Grap +4; Atk +4 melee (Razor Nails 1d6+4, Knife 1d4+4), or +3 ranged; FS 5 ft by 5 ft; Reach 5 ft; SQ See below; AL Recovery of his organs; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +4; AP 2; Rep +0; Str 18, Dex 10, Con -, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 3.

Occupation: Criminal (Gamble, Knowledge [Streetwise])

Skills: Climb +3, Drive +3, Intimidate +9, Listen +4, Spot +4, Swim +3

Special Qualities: Animate Own Body, Transport Own Body, Scalpel Nails, Locate Organs at will

Feats: Athletic, Brawl, Confident, Frightful Presence, Improved Brawl, Iron Will, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Toughness

Possessions: Knife

Talents (Tough Hero): Acid Resistance, Fire Resistance

Talents (Dedicated Hero): Empathy
Jimmy Lee appears as a Caucasian
man in his mid-30s. He wears torn
jeans, a ripped, soiled-white "wife
beater" undershirt, and has
a "Y" incision on his body
from the autopsy. Another
sewn incision circles

sewn incision circles his head above the eyebrows (the top of his skull was opened in the autopsy). If the heroes make a Spot (DC 10), they notice that the back of the revenant's head is caved in.

Guardian Revenants

Guardian revenants are tied to a special location that they cherished, protected, or were summoned to guard. This location could be anything from a sacred place, a natural area, a tomb or gravesite, to anywhere that would make a good, scary story. The revenant violently defends its area against any who would disturb the sanctity of the place.

Guardian Revenant Special Ability

Location Teleport – A guardian revenant can freely teleport within the area it protects. This power acts just like *Greater Teleport*, but is limited to an area of 5 miles around the protected area. This is a standard action.

Pinebox Adventure Outlines

Ancient Anger

Hundreds of years ago, a Native American shaman lived in the area now known as the Big Thicket National Forest of Texas. This shaman had been from one of the local tribes, but was exiled for practicing dark magic that healed at the expense of the victim's soul.

The shaman took up residence alone in a clearing of the forest, living without shelter or fire. He offered his services as a healer to the people in the area, but only the most desperate made use of his power because the price was always too high. After an unnaturally long life, the shaman erected his own burial platform and gave up his soul to the evil spirits that had given him so much power. But as he died, the evil that gave him his power twisted his devotion into punishment and forced him to remain in his cursed grove, forever wreaking destruction upon any who disturb it.

The gnarled, twisted grove remained untouched for many years, and over time the place became an animal graveyard. The burial platform and the shaman's body eventually disintegrated, and only four poles, each topped with an animal skull, remain.

The first time the grave was disturbed was in 1933, when a Works Progress Administration (WPA) work crew of twelve men entered the Big Thicket to dig a series of canals through the area. The WPA crew vanished after three months, killed by the shaman for disturbing his grave. By the time a search party found the scattered remains of their camp, another month had passed. No further evidence of what happened to the work crew was ever found.

In the present, five biology grad students from East Texas University had the misfortune of entering the clearing while hiking and disturbing the revenant's gravesite. Four of the students were killed by the revenant, but a fifth managed to escape. She emerged from the forest in a catatonic state. Her body bore savage wounds in addition to starvation and dehydration. She currently remains in the Pinebox hospital in her unexplained catatonia.

Hook: The heroes are asked to join a search and rescue party sent into the Big Thicket to find the missing grad students. They find the clearing full of animal bones and the four poles, just as a powerful storm whips through the area. If they Search the clearing (DC 15) they find human bones from both the WPA party and the missing grad students. However, they also disturb the revenant, causing it to appear and attack them.

Alternative Hook: The heroes come into possession of an account of a searcher who looked for the missing WPA party in 1938. He describes finding a strange clearing with four poles set into the ground. The remains of animals were all around, and the clearing had a very ominous feeling about it. The account states that if there ever was a place that was haunted, it was that clearing.

Guardian Revenant, Shaman

Strong Hero 7 CR 8; Medium-size undead; HD 7d12+7(+3 Toughness); HP 50; Mas 13; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; Defense 18, touch 18, flatfooted 16 (+2 size, +2 Dex, +4 class); BAB +7; Grap +9; Atk +9 melee (1d6+4, Knife 1d4+4, spear 1d8+4), or +9 ranged (1d6+0, spear 1d8+4); FS 5 ft by 5 ft; Reach 5 ft; SQ see below; AL Burial site; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +2; AP 0; Rep 0; Str 18, Dex 14, Con -, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 3.

Occupation: Rural (Ride, Survival)

Skills: Climb +7, Hide +4, Jump +5, Know (Tactics) +4, Listen +2, Spot +1, Survival +5, Swim +4

Feats: Archaic Weapons Proficiency, Athletic, Attentive, Brawl, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Frightful Presence, Improved Brawl, Power Attack, Toughness

Special Qualities: Animate Own Body, Transport Own Body, Location Teleport; **Talents (Strong Hero):** Extreme Effort, Improved Extreme Effort, Melee Smash, Improved Melee Smash

Possessions: obsidian knife, obsidian spear

The shaman appears as a tall, thin Native American with withered features and an almost mummified body. His eyes are narrow, and glow with a fiery red evil. The shaman wears deteriorated leather breeches, and caries an obsidian knife and obsidian-tipped spear.

Animal Revenants

Animals can become revenants, too. Although rare, these are frightening creatures to come across as they often kill out of perverse instinct. Like formerly human revenants, some animal revenants guard a place that is sacred or special to them, but others simply retain their animal desire to hunt and feed.

Pinebox Adventure Outlines

The Pack

In the late 1990s, feral dogs plagued the Big Thicket National Forest. These were domesticated dogs that had gone wild and joined together in a large pack. They hunted down deer, livestock, pets, and even threatened campers in the campgrounds. Receiving pressure from local ranchers, the National Park Service hired local hunters Bill and Joe Ray Mullins from Pinebox to destroy the pack, and they performed their duty with brutal efficiency. The pack was caught in traps, tortured, and left to rot in the woods.

The evil from the two men caused the animals to seek revenge, and something in the thicket empowered some of the dogs to be returned from the dead as animal revenants. The pack of six undead dogs now haunts and hunts the Big Thicket, looking for the hunters who had a hand in their extermination. They also attack inherently evil people who venture into the Big Thicket, such as poachers, criminals, and those people who kill animals for fun.

Hook: Reports of a pack of wild dogs hunting on the outskirts of Pinebox have locals in a panic. The sheriff has requested help from anyone who can to hunt the dogs down. Of course, this is just what the revenants want, as many of those who volunteer participated in the hunt during the 1990s. The Mullins brothers are some of the first to volunteer.

Alternate Hook: A park ranger who participated in the wild dog hunts of the 1990s swears that she is being haunted by some kind of creature while she's in the Big Thicket. She comes to the heroes looking for help to discover what it is that follows her in the woods and why she feels so threatened by it.

Animal Revenant, Dog

CR 2; Medium-sized undead; HD 2d12+4(+3 Toughness); HP 21; Mas 15; Init +2; Spd 40 ft; Defense 15, touch 14, flat-footed 13 (+2 Dex, +1 Natural, +2 Size), BAB +1, Grap +3, Atk +3 melee (1d6+4, bite); Full Atk +3 melee (1d6 +4, bite); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft, SQ see below AL pack; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 18, Dex 15, Con -, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 3.

Skills: Jump +4, Listen +5, Spot +5, Survival +1 (+5 when tracking by scent), Swim +5

Special Qualities: Animate Own Body, Transport Own Body, Scent

Feats: Frightful Presence, Toughness

Six dogs are in the undead pack, including a Golden Retriever, Chow, St. Bernard, and three mid-sized dogs of mixed breeds. All have filthy, matted coats, and some have obvious gunshot wounds. The Golden Retriever, whose skull is half blown off, is the alpha male.

PINEBOX NEWS

October 17, 2005 Volume V, Issue 61

"Chewy" Attacks Two Boys in Whiskey Creek

By: Jan Vincent

The decades-old myth of the grey alligator, "Chewy", was revived this past week when two boys, Alex and Eli Mathers, experienced a dangerous encounter with the legendary creature. Alex and Eli, ages 15 and 14, were using their father's flatbottom boat to fish the Pirate's Cove area of Whiskey Creek, just east of Pinebox.

At approximately 2 pm last Saturday, Alex spotted what he thought was a twenty-foot grey log floating slowly down stream toward their boat. The two boys attempted to paddle the boat away from the log, but were surprised when the log suddenly submerged and then resurfaced beneath their boat with enough force to turn the craft over in the water.

The alligator attacked Eli, tearing his right arm off just above the elbow. After hitting the creature with his paddle, Alex was able to wrestle Eli ashore. Authorities were contacted, and Eli was life-flighted to a Lufkin hospital to undergo surgery. He is reported to be in stable condition, despite the loss of his arm.

The Forestry Service and several zoological specialists were contacted, but

were unable to locate the alligator, despite an exhaustive search of the area.

Sheriff Butch Anderson has issued a dangerous animal warning for the southeastern area of Pinebox and the surrounding vicinity of Whiskey Creek.

"Alligator attacks on human beings are very rare, and this one should be

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Community Calendar

October 17

Pinebox Theater Presents Traveller's Tale—A play by Roy Taylor. Tickets \$6.50 at the High School box office.

Golan County Historical Society monthly meeting—First State Bank meeting room, 6 p.m.

Fall Festival Planning Committee—PHS, 6 - 8 p.m.

October 18

School Board Meeting—Travis Elementary cafeteria, 7 - 9 p.m.

Cont'd.

Police Break Blackburn Meth Ring

By Theresa Lee

The Golan county Sheriff's office announced the arrest of Buddy Verner and Kent Downes of the Blackburn community for the creation and distribution of controlled substances. Buddy's residence of 1110 Hope street had been converted into a giant meth lab.

"This sort of lab is very dangerous to the community, as accidents may cause explosions and fires," explained Sheriff Butch Anderson. Several other men are currently being sought in connection with this drug ring, including Jose Escobar, a known leader of the Razor Kings—an Hispanic gang gaining prominence in the Houston area. Escobar escaped the initial police assault on the home and exchanged fire with several deputies before fleeing in a cream-colored, late model, Ford Mustang.

County officials issued the following warning: "Jose Escobar is a wanted fugitive and should be considered armed continued on page 2

Fall Festival Promises Fun and Fright for All

It's that time of year again! Everyone in East Texas loves to come to Pinebox's Annual Swap Meet and Fall Festival, and the schedule of events would indicate a great time for all.

"This year we are planning eating contests involving chili and lemon meringue pie, and several trail rides, including a special midnight hay ride from Pinebox to the Golan Indian Mounds State Park. We will have several live bands

set up across from the City Hall, and the entire downtown area is being closed to allow only pedestrian traffic," said Linda Massey, this year's Event Chairman.

Last year Pinebox set a record attendance of 18,000 people, but more are expected this year.

"We should top out at almost 20,000 this year, and it's sure to be one grand party," said City Councilman Bud Garland. "Best

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"Chewy" Attacks (continued from pg 1)

considered an isolated incident," said Dr. Homer Bell, of the East Texas University Department of Animal Science.

The Chewy legend dates back to the mid 1950s, with a series of alligator attacks throughout Golan County. Each witness claimed that the alligator was unusually large and grey in color. During the 1950s, former Sheriff's Deputy Bill Wood began referring to the creature as "Chewy," and vowed to hunt it down. He was never successful. Massive hunts for the alligator took place in the summer of 1956, and while many alligators were killed, none matched the description of "Chewy."

"Big leatherbacks the reported size of Chewy are very rare", said Terrance Carter, owner of Alligator Run Farms. Carter continued, "There ain't no monster alligator in Golan County. He was probably a six-to-eight footer, which can be dangerous in the wild. They rarely attack humans, and we should be careful not to start a panic that could result in the destruction of these beautiful creatures."

The Pinebox Humane Society has called for a "non-violent" search for the animal responsible. Society spokesman, Ruth Heller said, "Animals have rights too. We must learn to share this planet with them. Human destruction of nature inevitably leads to accidental conflicts, as animals react territorially to our transgressions."

GM Ideas:

- The heroes are contacted by the boy's mother, who is upset that no one is taking her son's story of the giant grey alligator seriously. She is willing to pay a hefty sum to anyone who can capture the animal.
- Terrance Carter is actually a practitioner of Voodoo magic, as well as the owner-operator of Alligator Run Farm. The county is attempting to force him out of business, as many people in Golan County complain about alligator attacks. He has summoned the spirit of an alligator revenant to attack several selected County officials and their families—not the brightest move he could make, but he is consumed with anger and a desire to see his own skewed sense of justice served.
- A group of poachers in 1948 managed to capture, torture, and kill a huge alligator. Just as they turned to bring the creature in, a rare swamp waterspout whirled around their boat, killing the men and whisking the alligator's body away. The two boys were attacked while killing animals with a .22 rifle, and they were descendants of one of the original poachers. The gator was exacting revenge. Now that it has risen, it continues to track the boys until they are dead—including using its "transport own body" ability to attack in very public places.

Meth Ring

(continued from page 1)

and dangerous. Anyone with information regarding his current whereabouts should contact Pinebox Crime Stoppers or the Golan County Sheriff's Department immediately."

This is the second such arrest and investigation in the past three months. Judge Rountree explained, "We are cleaning up the Blackburn area. There are lots of good people who live there, and their children do not need to live in fear."

GM Ideas:

- Jose Escobar remains in the Pinebox area and has called for help from several of his gang-member friends who have driven from Houston. He has declared a war on all law enforcement officials.
- The heroes are approached by a middleaged businessman named David Martin. Mr. Martin is trying to recruit young men and women to infiltrate the Blackburn community to discover other illegal activities. He promises a good reward for the information. In actuality, he is the leader of six men who call themselves the "Peace Guard." They are a vigilante group who wants to identify those creating and selling drugs in Golan County, and then to kill them.
- The heroes spot a broken-down mustang on a small country road. Jose Escobar attempts to flag them down to help him get to his "uncle's" house. If helped, the heroes soon find themselves in a very awkward position as the police close in.

Fall Festival

(continued from page 1)

of all, the Halloween costume party is growing every year and the Festival has become a great economic boom for our city."

The Fall Festival began in 1892 as a simple swap meet and farmer's market, but has grown every year and become part of Pinebox folklore and culture. This year's bands include the Skinny Lizards, Silverstrike, and local favorite, A Jury of Robots. Several Greek organizations from East Texas University are participating and have arranged for special events, including a strong man contest, a beauty contest, and a fighting championship.

GM Ideas:

The last few years have seen the disappearance of several black cats and dogs throughout Pinebox. The bodies have never been recovered, though there are rumors of some black magic rituals. The heroes are hired by Dr. Don Reeves to investigate the animal disappearances and, if possible, to prevent them this year. Dr. Reeves raises pure black labs and his animals have been victimized in the past. A cult led by an ex-gang member is responsible for stealing the animals and using them in dark rituals. Most of the cultists are teenagers who are fiercely loyal to their leader. On the night of the Fall Festival in a warehouse only blocks away, they plan on performing their next ritual. However, this time animals aren't enough. This time the cult plans on kidnapping a partier from the festival and draining her life.

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