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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.



Goblin Friend



Introduction

Goblin Friend is a mini-adventure designed for four 4th-level heroes, but may easily be scaled for lower or higher levels of play.

It rarely snows in east Texas, and when it does the snow quickly melts shortly after sunrise. However ice storms are much more common, and when such a storm strikes, it generally shuts down all city services, roads, and power lines.

This winter, just outside of Pinebox, several experiments have escaped from a top secret military lab located in an underground base in north-eastern Golan County, Texas. Taking advantage of the ice storm, one of these unfortunate creatures has evaded pursuit by military and other forces. Unfortunately for the heroes, they are the first to encounter the creature.

Background

This adventure begins with an arctic storm blowing through East Texas. Generally Texas temperatures in February average lows of about 40 degrees and highs of about 55 degrees Fahrenheit. When an arctic storm drops into Texas, the low pressure draws warmer air from the gulf and causes frequent rainstorms. As the temperature drops, the water from the rain turns to ice. Arctic storms often lower the temperature into the low teens with even lower wind-chills. While this is normal winter-like conditions in much of the United States, Texans are not well acclimated to such living.

Since Texans are not able to adapt quickly to winter-like conditions, at the first sign of ice many places shut down and grocery store shelves are cleaned out.

Schools, restaurants, and stores close, roads covered in ice become dangerous to drive, and power and sometimes water go out. Accidents are frequent on the roads (and off), trees are bent double under the weight of the ice, broken tree limbs litter the roads, old roofs cave in, and fires caused by faulty use of space heaters are commonplace. Sidewalks, stairs, and porches become treacherous places to traverse, and most Texans are thoroughly miserable throughout the duration of the storm.

It is under these conditions that the heroes must face the goblin-like creature. This adventure takes place wherever the heroes happen to stay. It could be in their home, in an apartment, or in a hotel room, and does require some flexibility and preparation on the GM's part. Other hooks could include the heroes driving through town and having to stop to wait out the storm, visiting a family member or friend, or having come to Pinebox for a meeting at East Texas University.

Begin by explaining how the weather is turning nasty and just what that means in East Texas. Allow the heroes to make plans before night falls and the



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temperature drops into the low teens with a twenty mile per hour wind. Begin the introduction after all their arrangements have been made.

Introduction

When ready to begin, read or paraphrase the following:

It's definitely getting bad outside. Sleet is coming down in little thundering waves, mixed with some snow. Ice has been forming throughout the day, and with the sleet, driving conditions are terrible. You're lucky though, you don't have to go out in it.

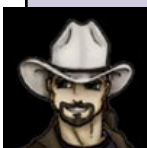
Suddenly the back door [or an unattended window if there is no back door] slams shut. There is that second of panic, as you realize that shouldn't have happened.

The "goblin" (See *Cast of Characters and Creatures* on page 4) has made his entrance into the premises. He is invisible at this time, but the door or window was obviously opened, and slammed shut. Small amounts of ice, sleet, and snow are melting in the home from when the door or window was opened. A *Spot* check (DC 10) reveals small tracks of mud mixed with ice on the floor for a few steps. The tracks resemble a child's but with hooked claws rather than toenails. Apparently, the thing cleaned its feet before moving on.

The goblin is actually standing in the room, still and scared. If everyone gets very quiet and actively *Listens* (DC 19), they hear the creature's faint breathing. The

goblin attempts to *Hide* and *Move Silently*, preferring to watch the people in the house or apartment to determine if they might be trustworthy. He is also very hungry and attempts to take food from the refrigerator or a pantry when the opportunity arises.

Play this up, as it can freak out the heroes. If the goblin drinks any amount of alcohol, he gets immediately drunk (think ET), and may begin to act in



Suggestions for Using Icy Conditions

All normal movement is halved when moving across ice laden streets, sidewalks, etc. If combat takes place in icy conditions, all ranged attacks suffer a -1, all melee attacks suffer a -2 and the attacker must make a **Reflex** save DC 10 or fall prone. Any character that falls prone loses his next round of action unless he has one of the following feats: Acrobatics, Combat Reflexes, or Heroic Surge. (These are suggested new uses for these feats.)

When driving in icy conditions in an unmodified vehicle (this is Texas, no one has tire chains, etc.), only alley speed is safe. Any advanced maneuvers (other than simple maneuvers such as turns, etc.) require a **driving** check DC 10+5 per speed category increase and for any facing change of greater than 45 degrees (at increasing intervals of 90, 135, or 180). If the **driving** check is failed consult the losing control rules in the **d20 Modern** rulebook.

such a way. The heroes may befriend him, attack him, hunt for him, or just be spooked as they occasionally hear him moving about their home. Play this up and have fun with it.

The Hounds

After approximately thirty minutes of game time

passes, allow any hero who is outside, next to a window, or in a place where they may see outside, to make a *Spot* check (DC 16). If successful, read or paraphrase the following:

Just outside you think you see something large and furry move quickly from nearby shadows towards your building. It moves like a large dog, but its face is somewhat elongated and its teeth are much too large for a canine. The fur is long, and seems to blend in with the background, making you doubt for a moment what you're seeing. Suddenly it tilts its head back and brays long and loudly, a shrill shrieking sound that does not sound like any animal you have ever heard before. It then turns and runs back into the shadows.

If the heroes did not *Spot* the creature, allow everyone a *Listen* check (DC 10) to hear the strange shrieking. If using 12 to Midnight's *Fear Effects* system, this is a *Minor Spook*. The goblin freaks out when he hears the shrieking of the hound, causing him to become visible for a few seconds as he runs about the place in panic, searching for a safe place to hide or a weapon with which to fight. He is especially interested in knives, swords, pistols, or rifles, though he has had no experience with any firearms, having only seen soldiers carry them. If the heroes manage to befriend him, or corner and capture him, he whines in fear and speaks in a very rough voice that draws out any "r" sounds, and "s" sounds are spoken with an "sh" sound to them. He has a limited spoken vocabulary, but can understand most human speech. He is desperate and seeks to befriend the heroes if possible, or use them to help him escape. He only knows that "they" are coming for him. Who are "they?" He simply says "my creator, and his army."

The Men in Black

Shortly thereafter, the building's electricity goes out, as do the phone lines. It seems as if the ice storm is causing havoc, though in reality the men in black have cut the lines of communication and the electricity in preparation for an assault on the house if necessary.

Once you think the heroes are ready and have done whatever they wished with the goblin in their refuge, a man in black arrives.

There is a quick resolute knock at the front door. Standing outside is a tall man, wearing a black trench coat, boots and gloves. He is clean shaven and his hair is cut short in a paramilitary style.

He introduces himself as Agent Nam with Animal Control and produces a badge with card id. A *Knowledge (Government)* check (DC 12) allows the heroes to realize there is no Animal Control agency in Golan County. If confronted on this issue, he simply answers "I work for the state," and moves on with his questioning.

Agent Nam is backed up by a second agent who remains inside a black suburban truck with government plates and dark tinted windows, parked outside. Nam speaks in very short sentences and is deadly serious. If he believes the heroes are hiding the goblin, he is authorized to act in any manner he believes necessary to secure the creature. He asks the heroes if he may come in, then asks them if they have seen or heard anything unusual this afternoon. The heroes may attempt to *Bluff* him, but he knows the hound tracked the goblin

into this home, and he does everything in his power to find out if the heroes have seen him, are helping him, or at the very least search their home for it. He claims that a dangerous, rabies-laden chimpanzee escaped a local veterinarian's clinic, and that he had tracked the animal to the hero's home.

If the heroes have killed the goblin, he collects the body and states that he will see to it that they receive a reward for their help. A day later they are informed by an unlisted telephone caller that they should check their bank records. Their accounts have an extra thousand dollars, although the bank has no official record of such a transfer.

If the heroes become hostile or obviously defiant and non-helpful, Agent Nam smiles, nods and thanks them for their time. He then exits the home, returning to the black suburban truck. If the vehicle is approached by one of the heroes, it drives slowly away only to return a few minutes later. Otherwise, it does not leave the scene.

The heroes have approximately ten minutes of game time to decide

what to do or to take any actions. The agents remain outside, awaiting a backup team and monitoring the home. In ten minutes the backup team arrives. It is a strike team composed of four agents who exit their vehicle and advance upon the building. The agents have orders to not kill any innocents, as this leaves evidence and loose ends; however, they are not above using lethal force if necessary.

Two hounds hide in the shadows near the building, and they do not hesitate to attack the goblin if they

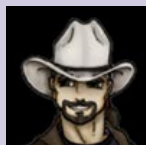
Spot him (vs the goblin's +13 *Hide* due to the hounds' Track by Scent ability) trying to leave. If the hounds are alerted, they bray an alarm and the two agents from the suburban pull their weapons and rush forward to take possession of the goblin. They do not care if it is dead or alive. They only wish to take possession of the evidence and disappear.

What if?

If the heroes managed to escape the building with the goblin, they are chased by the men in black. Even if they lose their pursuers for now, they come back later. Remember, the agency backing these guys is very high tech and have ways of locating the heroes. However, if the team develops a good plan to protect the goblin, allow it to occur. Here are some more plot point ideas to take this game even further:

- Men in black show up while the heroes are in the middle of a totally different adventure. "We've been looking for you. Where is he?" The agents generally work in pairs and this time they have been authorized to use whatever means necessary to find the whereabouts of the escaped goblin. Of course this plot point is dependent on the heroes helping the goblin escape during the original adventure. If the goblin is caught or killed, the men in black have no further need of the heroes and allow them to go unmolested, for now.
- Include a good car chase through the city of Pinebox, remembering the icy conditions. Could be dangerous, but a lot of fun.
- The goblin escapes, but a month later shows back up in one of the hero's homes. He wants to break into the labs and rescue his "friends."
- The Pinebox Police department is busy due to the cold weather and is very slow to respond tonight due to these frigid conditions. So while gunfire draws their attention, allow at least seven minutes of game time before the arrival of any law-enforcement. Their arrival signals the men in black and their hounds to retreat, for now.

What is Fear Effects?



Fear Effects is 12 to Midnight's own set of add-on horror rules. These rules do not require the use of a sanity score. Instead, they rely on a saving throw called a Horror check. You will see references to three different kinds of Horror checks mentioned in this adventure: *minor spooks*, *medium shocks*, and *great frights*.

If you aren't using *Fear Effects*, be sure to check it out. It makes any mediocre game great, and any great game (such as those by 12 to Midnight) even better. However, if you still are not convinced to run this adventure using the *Fear Effects* rules, then just ignore comments in the adventure about *minor spooks*, *medium shocks*, or *great frights*.

Cast of Characters and Creatures

Men in Black (Low Level Agents)

Fast Hero 2 / Smart Hero 3: HD 2d8+3d6+5 (CR5)

Initiative	+3	BAB	+2	STR	10 (+0)
Defense	(17 vs melee)16; touch 13; flat footed 13	Melee	+2	DEX	16 (+3)
Hit Points	22	Ranged	+5	CON	12 (+1)
Save Fort	+2	Grapple	+2	INT	14 (+2)
Save Ref	+5	Dmg Threshold	12	WIS	12 (+1)
Save Will	+2	Action Points	-	CHA	9 (-1)

Attacks *unarmed attack*: Atk +3 (*BAB*, +1 *Combat Martial Arts*); Dmg 1d4
9mm: Atk +5; Dmg 2d6; Crit 20
Combat knife: Atk +2; Dmg 1d4; Crit 19–20

Speed 30 ft

Skills *Computer Use* +4; *Decipher Script* +4; *Demolitions* +5; *Drive* +7; *Escape Artist* +5; *Hide* +9; *Investigate* +4; *Knowledge (arcane lore)* +9; *Knowledge (current events)* +4; *Knowledge (culture)* +4; *Knowledge (streetwise)* +6; *Move Silently* +7; *Pilot* +4; *Research* +5; *Ride* +5; *Search* +10; *Sleight of Hand* +6; *Tumble* +7; **Languages** *English[native]* (*speak, read/write*); *Chinese[Mandarin]*(*speak, read/write*);*French (speak, read/write)*; *German (speak, read/write)*; *Russian(speak, read/write)*

Feats/Talents *Combat Expertise* (reduce attack bonus up to -5, increase defense bonus up to +5); *Combat Martial Arts* (+1 *BAB*); *Defensive Martial Arts* (+1 Dodge bonus vs melee attacks); *Educated* (+2 *Knowledge [Arcane Lore, Streetwise]*); *Evasion* (Hero suffers no damage if successful Reflex save instead of half-damage); *Linguist* (Intelligence check to understand new language, or +2 to *Decipher Script* if written); *Personal Firearms Proficiency*; *Savant (Search* +3); *Simple Weapons Proficiency*

Wealth +0

Reputation & Allegiances +1; Unknown (Whoever is in charge of the Men in Black!)

FX Items *Black Shades* (Bestows darkvision upon the wearers).

Possessions .9mm, encrypted PDA, advanced communication equipment

Profile

Men in black are mysterious agents working toward uncertain ends. It is uncertain who they work for, how and where they are trained, or who is paying their bills. What is known is unreliable, as the conspiracy community continually grows the legend. Some believe this is an ancient arcane order that is either protecting humanity from alien/demonic/paranormal influences, or is working for such alien/demonic/paranormal influences.

Character Speak

“I’d like to speak with you a moment.”

“There is no need to be upset. Help me, and you will be rewarded.”

“Sometimes things happen we don’t expect. Sometimes bad things happen to good people. Now,...why don’t you tell me where it is?”

Goblin-Friend

The “goblin” in this adventure is not a creature in the classic fantasy sense. It was created by combining various DNA sequences of several creatures in top secret, military-controlled labs and grown to maturity. It is a Semi-Human, spawned from the same project that created the creature found in *Modern Dispatch #41: Fallen*. The “goblin” is highly intelligent and has some basic language skills, yet is very alien to human understanding.

Small Aberration (CR 3); HD1/2 4d8

Initiative	+3	BAB	+3	STR	8 (-1)
Defense	15; touch 12; flat footed 12	Melee	+2	DEX	17 (+3)
Hit Points	8	Ranged	+6	CON	11 (0)
Save Fort	+0	Grapple	-2	INT	15 (+2)
Save Ref	+7	Dmg Threshold	11	WIS	10 (0)
Save Will	+1	Action Points	-	CHA	6 (-2)

Attacks *Claws*: Atk +7; Dmg 1d4-1/1d4-1; Crit 20
Bite: Atk +2 or 0 (if using multi attack); Dmg d6-1; Crit 20

Attack Options Multiattack gives -2 to Bite.

Speed 20 ft

Skills *Balance* +4; *Climb* +1; *Hide* +33 [4 ranks, +3 *Dex*, +2 *Stealthy*, +4 *natural*, +20 *Chameleon Skin*]; *Move Silently* +7; *Spot* +1 **Languages** *English (speak only)*

Feats/Talents *Multiattack*; *Natural Weapons* (2 Claws and Bite); *Simple Weapon Proficiency*; *Stealthy* (+2 *Hide*, +2 *Move Silently*); *Weapon Finesse* (+3 *Dex* modifier to Claw attack instead of using Strength)

Special Qualities Darkvision; Chameleon Skin

Reputation & Allegiances 0; None

FX Items None

Possessions None

SQ

- Darkvision (Ex)- The goblin has darkvision with a range of 60 feet.
- Chameleon Skin (Ex)- The special skin of the goblin allows him to blend perfectly into his surrounding almost as if invisible. When he chooses to

be invisible, he gains a +20 to *Hide* checks if immobile, +10 if moving, and bestows a 30% miss chance when attacked.

Description

The goblin-friend is a small humanoid, with greenish-gray skin, much like a toad's. Its face is angular with large dark eyes, and the creature is slender with long arms and legs. Interestingly, its hands and feet are webbed and its fingers and toes end with sharp claw-like appendages.

The goblin's skin has a chameleon-like quality allowing it to blend very well with its surroundings, and he has been created with stealth and cunning. This secret experiment combines DNA from human and non-human sources. It is unknown at this time how many such creatures have been manufactured, or by whom.

Altered Hound

Altered Hound (CR 2); HD 2d8+4

Initiative	+2	BAB	+1	STR	15 (+2)
Defense	13; touch 12; flat footed 11	Melee	+3	DEX	15 (+2)
Hit Points	13	Ranged	-	CON	15 (+2)
Save Fort	+5	Grapple	+3	INT	2 (-4)
Save Ref	+5	Dmg Threshold	15	WIS	12 (+1)
Save Will	+1	Action Points	-	CHA	6 (-2)

Attacks *unarmed attack*: Atk +4; Dmg 1d6+2; Bite

Attack Options Trip as a free action on a successful bite attack.

Speed 40 ft

Skills *Jump* +4; *Listen* +2; *Survival* +4; *Swim* +5; **Languages** None

Feats/Talents *Weapon Focus (Bite)*

Special Qualities Darkvision (Ex), Rend (Ex), Trip (Ex), Track by Scent (Ex)

FX Items None

SQ

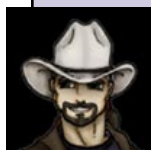
- Darkvision (Ex)- Altered hounds have developed darkvision with a range of 60 feet.
- Rend (Ex)- On a critical hit, the hound's jagged teeth lock onto its prey, causing an additional 1d6 damage per round plus the normal critical hit damage (for the round the critical hit occurred). Thus, on a critical hit the hound does 2d6+6 (critical hit damage), +1d6 for rending, and an additional 1d6 points per round. The altered hound only lets

go if it suffers incapacitating damage or its prey is incapacitated.

- Trip (Ex)- When an altered hound hits with a bite attack, it can attempt to trip the opponent as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the hound.
- Track by Scent (Ex)- An altered hound may use its advanced sense of smell to track creatures. When using the *Survival* skill for tracking purposes or *Spot* opposed against the *Hide* skill, this negates vision-related modifiers such as camouflage, cover, and darkness.

Description

The altered hound is larger than a normal hound and has an extended jaw with sharply jagged teeth. The nose, genetically altered, provides an advanced sense of smell enabling superior tracking abilities. The eyes are large and black, seemingly alien, and the creature's most disturbing aspect. Altered hounds are solidly built, with large chests and powerful muscles.



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Click here to join the Modern d20 Yahoo Group!

PINEBOX NEWS

March 20, 2006**Volume VI, Issue 81**

Ice Storm Warning

While Texas has experienced a very mild winter for 2006, meteorologists are predicting severe winter weather to hit the state this week. State and county officials are warning citizens to stay indoors and limit travel due to possible icy and dangerous driving conditions.

"Late winter storms are not uncommon in Texas and we usually suffer at least one cold snap in the month of March, but this one could be very dangerous," said Dan Roberts, meteorologist for KPNB.

"We have been experiencing temperatures far warmer than normal, but this Canadian blast is the real thing. Wrap your pipes, bring in your pets, and cover your plants, because an ice storm is about to hit us hard," Roberts added.

The last major ice storm to strike Golan county was in January of 2002. It caused more than \$230,000 in damages and is blamed for more than 200 local accidents. State and county authorities are working to sand all major overpasses and have asked work crews to report in for extended shifts.

"We are prepared to get through the storm, but we do ask everyone to stay indoors as much as possible until the ice melts. The city is ready, but the fewer people on the street, the less potential for accidents," said Mayor Flowers.

Unidentified Grey Ford Runs Several Off the Road

The past week has seen three reports of drivers being forced off the road by a raised four-wheel drive 1986 model grey Ford truck. The vehicular attacks have all taken place shortly after sunset on county road 43.

The first to be attacked was Janet Mogle. She had just left a friend's home Tuesday night, and was driving west toward Lufkin when "two headlights set on highbeam appeared out of nowhere and rode my bumper," Mogle said.

Mogle reported that she first tried to slow down, hoping the truck would back away or pass, but the truck did neither. Instead, it accelerated and slammed into her car, sending her vehicle into a spin and off the road near mile marker 12. Mogle managed to regain control of her car and it only suffered minor damage.

Nola Jean Richards was not as fortunate on Thursday night. Richards was driving her red Civic when she saw the grey truck in her rearview mirror driving right behind her bumper. She attempted to pull to the right to allow him to pass, but he scared her by following her onto the shoulder lane. He then rammed Richards'

vehicle and sent it sailing across a 6-foot ditch before crashing into a telephone pole near mile marker 2 just outside of Pinebox. Richards remains in the ICU at St. Mary's Hospital in Nacogdoches.

Last Sunday, Lana James and Jimmy Vann were returning to Pinebox from a day trip of shopping in Lufkin. As they approached mile marker 24 heading East, they too were surprised by a large grey truck following closely behind James' Toyota.

"He came out of nowhere," Vann said. "We were alone on the highway, then suddenly he was behind us, driving way too close for comfort."

Ms. James slammed on her brakes and the truck rammed into the back of the Toyota sedan, sending the car into a dangerous spin.

"An eighteen wheeler hauling logs was coming the other way and we crossed in front of it. The driver locked up his brakes trying to keep from hitting us. Then it jack-knifed and lost its load of pine. It's really amazing no one was killed," Vann said.

Thomas Crousse, driver for the Green Mark Corporation, related that he never saw the grey truck, but that he was totally focused on the sedan that had crossed into his lane of traffic.

"I'm just glad no one was seriously hurt," Crousse said.

Ms. James has refused to be interviewed for this story, but was treated at the local hospital and released with only minor

continued on page 2

Community Calendar

March 20

Founder's Day—Events begin at 7 p.m. Music, dancing, food, and fun. Downtown Pinebox

March 21

Meet the Spring—Celebration at Indian Mounds State Park. Sponsored by Sisters of the Sun. Ceremony begins at dawn.

March 23

Pinebox Hospice Pledge Drive—Annual pledge drive begins at noon with Civics Club luncheon.

Ice Storm *(continued from page 1)*

Adventure Ideas

- Three bad guys are planning on breaking into several downtown businesses during the ice storm and stealing everything they can. One of them has rented a small moving truck and has installed chains on the tires so they can drive around town. Should be easy marks, but the heroes witness their first heist of an antique store. Do they get involved?
- This story can work to support the goblin adventure in this issue of Modern Dispatch.
- Use the ice storm as a background for another adventure. The hazardous movement and travel can really effect an adventure and make things more difficult for the heroes.

About the Author

Ed Wettermann started gaming in 1979, and will do so until he's placed in the grave. Since starting 12 to Midnight, he has written *Last Rites of the Black Guard*, *Innana's Kiss*, and several short stories and articles. He lives in central Texas with his wife and two sons who are future gamers.

Road Violence

(continued from page 1)

injuries. Anyone with information concerning these attacks are asked to contact the Golan County Sheriff's department or to call crimestoppers at 555-tips.

Adventure Ideas

- The heroes are contacted by Lana James. She wants to hire someone to investigate the attacks.
- Each of the victims attacked were graduates of Pinebox high in 1988. The attacker is someone from their class.
- The attacker is actually a spectral spirit summoned by a distraught mother whose daughter was killed two weeks ago by a drunk driver. The spirit appears just after sundown, chooses a target and attacks. Each of the three drivers who were attacked had been drinking, but were not considered intoxicated at the time of the accident. A local deputy can tell the heroes that Lana James' vehicle contained several empty beer cans. How can the demon be exorcised? Who will be its next victim?

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