



Requires the use of the d20 Modern Roleplaying Game, published by Wizards of the Coast, Inc.



“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.



Aliens Among Us

by Neal Hyde

When it comes to aliens, everyone looks to the stars. But where they should be looking is right behind them. No alien worth his little gray pajamas is going to conquer Earth, abduct isolated hicks for anal probes, or even make friendly contact without doing a little reconnaissance first. Their advanced technology and skill at genetic manipulation makes the task of infiltrating human society easier, but by no means effortless.

Presented here are three alien intelligences that secretly perform missions here on Earth. They move about quietly, lurking on the periphery of our lives, quietly moving forward the alien machinations of their masters. Their ultimate motivations are mysterious; possibly they themselves do not know their ultimate goal. But their creators know, and that’s enough—for now.

Gray Cat

Alien observers quickly recognized humanity’s tolerance, and even desire, for other animals within their living space. They developed gray cats to take advantage of the cat’s natural stealth and near-invisible status in society. With their telepathic link to their masters, gray cats are like biological remote-controlled vehicles.

Gray cats appear similar to normal house cats but have several important advantages. They have enhanced sensory organs and their paws are covered with tiny hooks that allow the creature to cling to almost any surface. They can even hang upside down. A gray cat’s bite delivers a dose of deadly poison that causes symptoms easily confused with a heart attack. Gray cats have an innate psionic link to their masters. This link allows the aliens to perceive what the gray cat perceives and command the creature with ease. Lastly, because they are artificial creations, the lifespan of a gray cat can be predetermined at creation to range from a few hours to several months.

A gray cat’s alien creators often send the creature on surveillance missions, tasks for which it is well adapted. However, because of the creature’s fatal bite, it occasionally serves as a silent assassin.

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Gray Cat

Creature Statistics

Tiny animal (CR 1/2); HD ½ d8

Defense: 14; touch 14; flat-footed 12					
Initiative	+2	BAB	+0	STR	3 (−4)
Hit Points	2	Melee	+4	DEX	15 (+2)
Save Fort	+2	Ranged	–	CON	10 (0)
Save Ref	+4	Grapple	−12	INT	2 (−4)
Save Will	−1	Dmg Threshold	10	WIS	12 (+1)
		Action Points	0	CHA	7 (−2)

Attack: *claw*: Atk +4; Dmg 1d2−4

Full Attack: 2 *claws*: Atk +4; Dmg 1d2−4

bite: Atk −1; Dmg 1d3−4 plus poison (DC 10)

Speed: 30 ft

Facing/Reach: 2½ ft by 2½ ft / 0 ft

Skills: *Balance* +14; *Climb* +6; *Hide* +14 (+18 in tall grass or heavy undergrowth); *Jump* +6; *Listen* +4; *Move Silently* +9; *Search* −2; *Spot* +4

Feats/Talents: *Blind-Fight*; *Weapon Finesse (bite)*; *Weapon Finesse (claw)*

Special Qualities: felineprowess(Ex); hypersensitivity (Ex); limited lifespan (Ex); low-light vision (Ex); mindslave (Ex); venomous bite (Ex); wall crawler (Ex)

Wealth: +0

Reputation & Allegiances: +0; aliens

Special Qualities

Feline prowess (Ex): Gray cats receive a +8 species bonus on *Balance* checks and a +4 species bonus on *Hide* and *Move Silently* checks. In areas of tall grass or heavy undergrowth, the gray cat's *Hide* bonus increases to +8. Gray cats use their Dexterity modifier

for *Climb* checks. A gray cat gains the bonus feats *Weapon Finesse (bite)* and *Weapon Finesse (claw)*.

Hypersensitivity (Ex): +2 to *Listen*, *Search*, and *Spot*. Gray cats automatically receive the *Blind-Fight* feat.

Limited life span (Ex): A gray cat's life span is determined by its creator, who can set it for a period lasting from a few hours to a few months.

Low-light vision (Ex): The gray cat's eyes are so sensitive to light that the creature can see twice as far as normal in dim light. Low-light vision preserves the gray cat's natural, limited color perception. The gray cat can see outdoors on a moonlit night as well as a human can during the day.

Mindslave (Ex): Because the creature's mind is in thrall to another being, it receives a −2 to all Will saves.

Venomous bite (Ex): Any creature bitten by a gray cat must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 10 + ½ gray cat's HD + Constitution modifier) to negate the effects of the venom. Those who fail the saving throw receive 1d4 points of initial Constitution damage as well as 1d4 points of secondary Constitution damage.

Wall crawler (Ex): A gray cat can walk on walls and ceilings with equal ease. The creature receives a +4 bonus to *Climb* and *Balance* checks.

Gray Cat Adventure Outline

Abel Cartwright kept the door barricaded but had no doubt that his life was about to end. It was out there, somewhere on the other side of the thin wood paneling that separated his bedroom from the rest of the house. He had tried to keep it out of his home, but that had been a fool's errand.

Something scratched on the other side of the door. Abel took a shot at it and punched a neat hole in the wood. The scratching stopped and a pathetic yowling began. He doubted if he had

hit the thing. It was just a clumsy trick to try to get him to open the door. They were unnaturally smart, all right, but not that smart.

A weight fell on to his neck and back, and sharp pain shot through him like electricity. Abel lashed out and managed to grab his attacker by its tail, but even as he pulled it from his body, he knew that it was too late. The creature landed gracefully on his bed and turned to stare at him with its unblinking black eyes—eyes he'd seen before, a long time ago. The pistol fell from his numb fingers, and Abel followed it to the floor as his knees gave out.

In the autumn of 1979, the government obtained four alien bodies for analysis. The men and women who conducted the autopsies and further research never knew how the subjects were obtained, only that they had died of trauma. After concluding their studies, the group was sworn to secrecy and disbanded. Some of them secretly maintained contact and so became aware when other members of the group began to die.

The aliens were actually killed by a rogue intelligence agency, which then had the bodies examined in the hope of finding a weakness to exploit in case of a war between aliens and humans. The aliens only recently uncovered this plot and are in the end stages of exacting revenge and tying up “loose ends.” Abel Cartwright, a biologist who assisted in the research, is one such loose end.

However, the heroes are not the only people interested in Cartwright's mysterious death. The same rogue intelligence agency that hired him to autopsy the alien bodies sent a team to Cartwright's house to remove any incriminating evidence. They have completed their task but may return if the heroes' activities raise too many questions better left unasked.

Also, the daughter of a woman scientist from the alien autopsy group has learned that Cartwright and her mother worked together on the secret project (she doesn't know what it was, only that it was secret).

The woman scientist was killed one month previous to Cartwright's death and now her daughter (use the Low-Level Private Eye from the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*) is in Pinebox looking for answers. When the heroes enter the house, she is in the kitchen and escapes over the back fence.

Plot Hook: Death in the Family

Della Webster, a middle-aged woman (use the low-level politician from the *D20 Modern Roleplaying Game*), asks the heroes to investigate the death of her brother, Abel Cartwright. He was found dead in his home in Pinebox, Texas, one week ago, the apparent victim of a heart attack. However, the retired biologist had barricaded his home, stockpiled firearms, and had been shooting inside the house. The police have dismissed the death as having been the result of natural causes, and they believe that Cartwright was mentally unstable. Webster claims that she had a telephone conversation with her brother just hours before his death, and that he was paranoid but otherwise feeling fine. Although he was never specific, he was clearly frightened of a government agency or some other power that he said wanted to harm him. He also mentioned that others had been harmed in the past, and that he was one of the remaining few people of a select group.

Alternate Plot Hook 1

One of the heroes is a neighbor of Cartwright's and is suspicious of the "detectives" that keep returning to the old man's house after his death. When the heroes investigate, they become the target of the rogue intelligence agency.

Alternate Plot Hook 2

A UFO researcher poses as Della Webster and hires the heroes to investigate Cartwright's death. If caught, she admits her lies, but offers to double the money paid to the heroes if they continue to investigate.

Research

If the heroes conduct *Research* (DC 10), they learn the following:

- Abel Cartwright was a retired biologist who specialized in the anatomies of unusual creatures, such as those living near thermal vents deep in the ocean.
- On the night of Cartwright's death, neighbors heard shots fired from within the house and called police. When sheriff's deputies arrived, they found the house barricaded. Cartwright did not respond to repeated calls. After several hours, they broke through the barricade and found him dead in his bedroom.
- Deputies found a handgun near his body, as well as bullet holes in the walls, ceiling, and floor.
- The coroner who conducted the autopsy listed the cause of death as a heart attack. He also found small scratches and bites on the victim's back and neck, but disregarded these as unrelated to the cause of death.

If the heroes attempt to gain access to Cartwright's telephone records, they find that the records have been lost due to a freak computer glitch.

If the heroes speak to Cartwright's neighbors, they can make a *Gather Information* roll (DC 12) to learn the following:

- The old man had been acting strangely the previous weeks. He had complained about a neighbor's dog getting into his trash and neighborhood kids peeking through his windows at night.
- Detectives from the city have been to the house several times in the week since Cartwright's death. If the heroes contact the sheriff's office, they learn that no detectives have been assigned to the case.

The House

Della Webster, as executor of the estate, arranges for the heroes to have access to Cartwright's home, a bungalow-style house on Pinebox's west side. When

the heroes arrive, they find that the door, which should be locked, is not. When they enter, they hear the back door slam. Heroes who make a successful *Spot* check (DC 20) catch a glimpse of someone climbing over the back fence and disappearing into the neighbor's yard. The mysterious figure races away before the heroes can catch up.

If the heroes successfully *Search* the house (DC 10), they find the following:

- There are bullet holes in the walls and ceiling. Apparently, Cartwright fired a gun inside the house. The bedroom door also has a bullet hole in it, near the bottom, with a corresponding hole in the floor outside the door.
- All of the doors and windows are covered with sheets of 1/2-inch plywood nailed to the walls.
- A desk in what is apparently a home office has been thoroughly searched. Marks on the desk indicate where a computer had been, but it is now missing, as are any disks, CDs, and papers.

If the heroes exceeded the *Search* DC by 5, they also find the following:

- A dryer vent leading from the basement to the outside has been tampered with. The connecting hose (approximately four inches in diameter) lies on the floor of the basement. Gray hairs protrude from around the edge of the metal vent. If the heroes analyze the hairs by making an *Investigate* roll (DC 20), they find them to be cat hair.
- A bookcase in the living room, containing several photo albums, shows dust streaks from missing albums. The other albums are dated and contain an odd mix of photos of family, friends, and biology specimens. The missing years are 1978 through 1983.

If the heroes exceeded the *Search* DC by 10, they find a hidden compartment beneath a steppingstone in the back yard. In the compartment is a small, handwritten journal wrapped in plastic and containing notes Cartwright kept to himself about the alien

investigation. The journal includes illustrations of small, gray-skinned aliens with large, black eyes, as well as Cartwright's own belief that the aliens were not killed in a crash, but were murdered.

The heroes are not the only ones doing a little investigation. The gray cat responsible for Cartwright's death has remained in the area and takes note of any activity. While the heroes are busy looking over the house, the gray cat remains outside. It attempts to sneak aboard one of the heroes' vehicles, either through an open window or by climbing up under the engine. The heroes may notice the gray cat on a successful *Spot* (DC 20). If seen, the gray cat runs away. If the gray cat cannot get aboard a vehicle, it follows the heroes and shows up at one of their homes later.

Back Home

The night the heroes return home, the gray cat attempts to enter one of their homes and learn whether they have discovered anything unusual. It enters covertly, possibly by ripping through a window screen or sliding in behind a hero entering from outside. The cat attempts to get as close as possible without being noticed.

If the heroes notice the cat inside with them, it attempts to flee. If the heroes corner the animal, it attacks the nearest hero and attempts to inflict a potentially fatal bite. If the heroes observe the gray cat walking on walls or ceilings, inflicting a poisonous bite, or otherwise exhibiting behavior that leads them to believe that it is not a normal animal, they must make a Will save (DC 10) or be panicked for 1d4 rounds. Alternatively, if you are using the *Fear Effects* horror rules (see sidebar), this is a *medium shock*.

If the heroes capture the gray cat, the aliens cause its heart to stop and it dies. A second gray cat, an identical gray cat, arrives in 1d3 days to observe the heroes and possibly deliver a fatal repayment.

How the adventure concludes is up to the GM. The heroes could find themselves facing a small army of

gray cats (a threat they are not likely to get much help with from the local sheriff's office), and possibly the rogue intelligence agents as well. Alternatively, the woman investigating the death of her mother could contact the heroes and offer to help them, sharing what little knowledge she has with them. Lastly, the aliens could intervene directly, abducting the heroes to remove the evidence of their existence and subjecting them to experiments.

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*.

Xenocreeper

The Xenocreeper is amorphous ooze that evolved on another planet and is imported to Earth to spy on human electronics. Its ability to absorb and regurgitate, on command, magnetic and electrical impulses makes the xenocreeper a near-perfect recorder of electronic data and radio signals. Xenocreepers are often placed near a location where they can absorb the many signals generated by a modern facility and are later retrieved for a "data dump."

Xenocreepers are not predatory, nor do they "hunt" living things, because they feed on energy emissions. However, they are capable of defending themselves by draining living organisms of their bioelectrical energies. Victims are found paralyzed and with their hearts stopped. Those who escape death are usually partially paralyzed for long periods of time. Xenocreepers can also defend themselves by emitting a sudden burst of recorded electromagnetic energy that causes damage to living creatures within the immediate area.

Mature xenocreepers weigh between 100 and 125 lbs and resemble a transparent bag of water. No obvious sensory organs or internal structures are apparent, and the "skin" is rubbery and self-sealing. Although it can take nearly any form, when in a relaxed state the xenocreeper usually forms an oval shape with tentacle-like appendages. When moving, the xenocreeper takes the shape best suited to the terrain.

As an ooze, the xenocreeper is immune to critical hits or massive damage. If a xenocreeper is reduced to 0 hit points, it emits a sudden surge of electromagnetic energy and loses cohesion, bursting in a flood of slimy water. Analysis of the residue reveals nothing more than seawater with traces of heavy metals.

Xenocreeper

Creature Statistics

Medium ooze (CR 4); HD 4d10+10

Defense: 10; touch 10; flat-footed 10					
Initiative	+0	BAB	+3	STR	12 (+1)
Hit Points	32	Melee	+4	DEX	11 (0)
Save Fort	+1	Ranged	–	CON	13 (+1)
Save Ref	+1	Grapple	+3	INT	–
Save Will	–2	Dmg Threshold	–	WIS	6 (–2)
		Action Points	0	CHA	1 (–5)

Attack: *slam*: Atk +4 Dmg 1d6+1 plus energy drain (DC 13)

Full Attack: *slam*: Atk +4; Dmg 1d6+1 plus energy drain (DC 13)

Speed: 25 ft

Facing/Reach: 5 ft by 5 ft / 5 ft

Skills: *Hide* +4 (when moving, +8 when motionless)

Feats/Talents: none

Special Qualities: blindsight (Ex); energy absorption (Ex); energy burst (Su); energy drain (Su); immunities; ooze traits, transparent (Ex)

Wealth: +0

Reputation & Allegiances: +0; alien master

Special Qualities

Blindsight (Ex): Xenocreepers have blindsight with a range of 60 feet. However, the creatures detect electromagnetic signals to a range of 180 feet.

Energy Absorption (Ex): As an attack action the xenocreeper is able to disrupt the workings of all electronic devices within 60 ft. as per the *electromagnetic pulse* spell (see Arcana SRD).

Energy Burst (Su): Xenocreepers can emit a sudden burst of energy, causing damage to nearby

living creatures. Creatures within 20 feet take 1d6 points of damage, and creatures within 5 feet take 2d6 points of damage. A successful Fortitude save (DC 13) reduces damage by ½.

Energy Drain (Su): Xenocreepers can make an energy drain attack on a victim (see “Common Special Qualities,” *D20 Modern Roleplaying Game*).

Immunities: Xenocreepers are immune to mind-affecting effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, gaze attacks, visual effects, illusions, and other attack forms that rely on sight. As oozes, they are not subject to critical hits, flanking, or the effects of massive damage.

Ooze: Xenocreepers can change shape and form at will, but not their basic mass.

Transparent (Ex): Xenocreepers gain a bonus of +8 to *Hide* rolls when motionless and +4 when moving.

Xenocreeper Adventure Outline

Marty Lamont looked up at the telephone pole he was supposed to climb and decided that, for the world to be fair, he'd have to break his back. Here he was busting his hump for East Texas Electrical, and his idiot brother-in-law, Buck, was drawing a check to fish and drink beer. He was on easy street just because he had a goldmine of a back injury, or so he told the insurance sucker. If fat, stupid Buck could pull off a scam like that, Marty was sure he could.

But how to do it? Marty didn't reckon there was much point in getting workman's comp if he really got hurt. But, he'd have to have a real injury to get past the doctors, and getting just a little bit hurt when working on power lines wasn't something that happened very often. It wouldn't be easy, not if he was gonna do it right.

Marty looked around. No matter what he did, he sure wouldn't do it here, out in the middle of

nowhere. With his luck, he'd wind up forgotten by the dispatcher and dead. So, he hiked up his pants, wrapped his safety harness around the pole, and dug in his spikes.

When he reached the top of the pole, he looked up at the transformer. Something above him moved.

“What the—“

It was wet and ropy and it wrapped around his neck. Wherever it touched his skin, his body became numb and heavy. Marty opened his mouth to yell, but he couldn't move the air from his body. His head rolled back and, for a moment, he saw something gelatinous and transparent. And then he saw nothing.

The military discovered and captured a xenocreeper near black-ops installation. While transporting the creature to a research facility using a secret government railroad, the train derailed and the creature escaped. It traveled to a nearby field and drained several cattle before it found a power line. It has since followed the power line toward a substation where it can consume as much power as it wants. Along the way, it encountered the utility lineman, who the heroes find. When the heroes finally encounter the creature, it regurgitates the captured coded radio signals in a burst of electromagnetic energy.

Plot Hook: Cattle Call

After a powerful electrical storm that caused power failures around the county, local rancher Ben Sheridan contacts the heroes and claims that aliens have killed several of his animals in “an episode of cattle mutilation.” He asks the heroes to use their skills to help him prove that the cattle did not die of natural causes. Sheridan agrees to meet the heroes at the field in question, and he provides directions to a pasture deep in a rural area.

If the heroes conduct *Research* (DC 12) on Sheridan, they learn the following:

- Sheridan is the author of several articles in various small UFO-conspiracy magazines.
- Sheridan has several lawsuits on file with his neighbors and is well known to local law-enforcement officers as a nuisance.

Alternate Plot Hook 1

The heroes are camping in the woods near the old railroad tracks and hear the train crash. They investigate and find the site of the derailment, as well as the trail leading to the cattle. They pick up the adventure from there.

Alternate Plot Hook 2

The heroes are workers at the utility and are investigating why the lineman, Marty Lamont, is not responding to radio contact.

Field Work

Sheridan is waiting for the heroes in the field when they arrive at the scene. The field is several acres of low grass dotted with the carcasses of a half-dozen dead beef cattle. All are on their sides and some have begun to bloat with decomposition gasses. Much of the grass in the area is flattened and turning an ugly shade of brown. Heroes that see the dead animals in the field must make a *Will* save (DC 10) or be panicked for 1 round. Alternatively, if you are using the *Fear Effects* horror rules (see sidebar), this is a *minor spook*.

A successful *Investigate* (DC 12) roll shows that the animals have not been “mutilated” in any way. They appear to have simply dropped dead where they stood.

A *Search* (DC 10) of the area reveals that several lightning strikes occurred here, probably from the previous night. Small (1-foot diameter) patches of burned grass and fused, glassy soil dot the field, but not near any of the dead cattle.

A *Spot* (DC 15) reveals a pathway of bent, drying grass outside the field, leading into a heavily wooded area. The pathway has no footprints, but the heroes may see that something has pushed down the grass and possibly killed it. The path leads to a utility pole with power lines overhead.

Into the Woods

If the heroes follow the trail into the woods, a man wearing military-style fatigues and carrying a sidearm confronts them. A *Spot* roll (DC 5) lets the hero see a shoulder patch bearing the name and shield of the Department of Energy. The man refuses to identify himself except as a “federal agent” and tells the heroes that the area is a crime scene and that they must leave. If the heroes refuse to leave, or if they attack the agent, he calls for backup, and agents armed with assault rifles and tasers arrive and attempt to arrest the heroes. If arrested, the heroes are taken to the sheriff’s office, where they are held overnight and then released but never charged with a crime.

If the heroes leave and then sneak back into the area later, by succeeding in a *Move Silently* roll (DC 17), they find a train wreck on a section of supposedly unused tracks. A khaki-painted train engine, a flatbed car, and a passenger car lie on their sides in the mud as men and women in military-style fatigues attempt to get the train upright and clean up the mess.

On a successful *Spot* roll (DC 10), the heroes notice a large, heavily insulated barrel-like object on its side next to the flatbed car. A lid with a complex locking mechanism lies in the mud nearby.

If the heroes attempt to leave, another *Move Silently* roll (DC 17) is required, or the guards find and arrest them. If arrested, the heroes spend the night in the county lockup before being released, just as above.

On the Line

If the heroes successfully leave the train-wreck site, they have the following encounter as they leave the area. If the heroes are captured, they have this encounter

after Sheridan finds more “mutilated” cows in the same approximate area and asks them to investigate.

While driving along the dirt road, the heroes might *Spot* (DC 10) a utility lineman hanging limp in a climbing harness near a transformer at the top of a telephone pole. A utility truck is parked below the pole (if the heroes attempt to use the lineman’s radio, either his portable one or the one in his truck, they find that both are drained of power and useless).

A successful *Climb* check (DC 10) allows the heroes to rescue the man, and a successful *Treat Injury* roll (DC 12) revives him. His heartbeat is erratic and he is in shock. The man is paralyzed, but slowly recovers and can speak to the heroes after a few minutes.

The lineman, Martin Lamont, tells the heroes that he was checking out a malfunctioning transformer when something on top of the pole attacked him. He describes the creature as a transparent squid or octopus, and he says that it immediately paralyzed him and knocked him unconscious.

The Substation

The heroes should be able to make a clear leap of logic that whatever was in the insulated container on the train is responsible for the cattle deaths and the attack on the lineman. They should also recognize that it is now moving about via the power lines. A successful *Knowledge (streetwise)* check (DC 10) reveals that a power substation is located a couple of miles down the road (a *Search* [DC 5] of the lineman reveals a map showing the substation location, as well).

As the heroes move to the power substation, the weather worsens unnaturally quickly. Lightning flashes and thunder booms overhead as a heavy rain falls. Depending on the characters’ speed, the GM may require *Driving* checks. In addition, all electrical devices, such as cell phones, radios, or night-vision goggles, begin to malfunction. Those that produce a sound sputter with static, regardless of whether they are on or off.

At the power substation, the heroes find the gate open and a truck parked inside the fenced lot. Another utility lineman lies unconscious in the mud, the door to his truck still open (the vehicle has been drained of power). If the encounter occurs at night, the lights flicker and dim ominously.

The xenocreeper is nestled between two of the transformers, and the heroes must make a *Spot* check (DC 15) to see it. If the heroes see the xenocreeper, they must make a Will save (DC 10) or be panicked for 1d4 rounds. Alternatively, if you are using the *Fear Effects* horror rules, this is a *medium shock*.

If the heroes come within five feet of the creature, it attacks them. If the creature is wounded, it emits a powerful burst of energy.

How the adventure concludes is up to the GM. Suggested endings include:

- The xenocreeper dissolves into gooey seawater after it sends out its burst of data, leaving the heroes with no proof of its existence.
- The xenocreeper becomes docile after it sends out its burst of data and is easily captured by the heroes.
- The “federal agents” burst onto the scene in a sudden show of helicopters and armed soldiers and recover the xenocreeper. They hold the heroes in an undisclosed facility and eventually release them with a warning not to tell anyone of what happened. Alternatively, they may recruit the heroes into the agency.
- The heroes capture the xenocreeper, but a sudden burst of light overwhelms them. They wake to find that they have “lost” several minutes and the xenocreeper is gone.

Alien Brute

Larger aliens, who are clearly subservient, often accompany the small “gray” aliens encountered by human beings. These larger “grays” are a subspecies bred by the aliens and used as bodyguards, shock troops, and for heavy labor. Alien brutes are generally taller than humans and much more muscular. Their smooth, hairless skin is dark gray-green when not camouflaged. The alien brute’s head is large and bulbous with two large, dark, lidless eyes and only a thin slit for a mouth. These creatures are entirely mute and communicate with each other through rapid and complex changes in skin color. They attack with their powerful arms and claws, as well as with a poisonous breath weapon.

Alien Brute

Creature Statistics

**Medium monstrous humanoid (CR 4);
HD 5d8+15**

Defense: 15; touch 11; flat-footed 14					
Initiative	+5	BAB	+5	STR	15 (+2)
Hit Points	37	Melee	+7	DEX	13 (+1)
Save Fort	+4	Ranged	+6	CON	17 (+3)
Save Ref	+4	Grapple	+7	INT	10 (0)
Save Will	+3	Dmg Threshold	17	WIS	10 (0)
		Action Points	0	CHA	3 (-4)

Attack: *Claw:* Atk +7; Dmg 1d6+2

Full Attack: 2 *claws:* Atk +7; Dmg 1d6+2

Speed: 30 ft

Facing/Reach: 5 ft by 5 ft / 5 ft

Skills: *Climb* +9; *Escape Artist* +2; *Hide* +10 (if moving, +14 if motionless); *Jump* +10; *Listen* +5; *Move Silently* +4; *Search* +3; *Spot* +4

Feats/Talents: *Combat Reflexes*; *Improved Initiative*; *Power Attack*

Special Qualities: breath weapon (Su); chameleon (Ex); darkvision (Ex); fast healing (Ex); jump (Ex); unnatural speed (Ex); weaknesses

Wealth: +0

Reputation & Allegiances: +0; alien master

Special Qualities

Breath weapon (Su): The creature exhales a toxic gas that causes one victim (in an adjacent square) to make a Fortitude save (DC 15). A successful save results in the victim being stunned for 1d4 rounds. A failed save indicates that the victim falls unconscious for 1d6 minutes.

Chameleon (Ex): Chromatophores in the creature’s skin allow it to change colors at will. The changes are instant and can be complex, giving the creature a +6 to its *Hide* skill if moving and +10 if motionless.

Darkvision (Ex): The creature can see in total darkness to 60 feet.

Fast healing (Ex): The creature regains 1 hit point per round.

Jump (Ex): The creature can jump abnormally long distances and heights, giving it a +6 to its *Jump* skill.

Unnatural Speed (Ex): Alien brutes possess Improved Initiative as a bonus feat.

Weaknesses: The creature takes x2 damage from acid, electrical, and fire attacks.

Alien Brute Adventure Outline

Hazel Mead finally had one.

After all these years, all the ridicule, all the time spent chasing phantoms, she finally had one.

It hadn’t been easy. The trap had been elaborate and cost a pretty penny to build. And, since she was the bait, if it had failed there would have been

a different price to pay. Of course, she'd been taken before, so this was payback for her.

Below her feet, chains rattled.

"Shawdup, ya black-eyed monster!" she yelled and stomped on the floor. The clanking stopped.

A heavy thump came from the roof, followed by a scrambling sound of claws on the asphalt shingles. It was too heavy to be a raccoon and it moved too fast. Another thump on the roof coincided with something heavy hitting the door. She grabbed her shotgun, but her fingers were numb and cold on the metal barrel.

Hazel realized too late that two traps had been set that night.

Hazel Mead, a female hermit who lives on the outskirts of Pinebox, has spent a lifetime at the mercy of the aliens, and she's mad as hell and not going to take it anymore. As an abductee, she receives regular alien visits; and she has found alien tracks around her remote farmhouse where they were observing her. After a particularly abusive abduction and probing, she decided that it was time to turn the tables on the little varmints. She carefully crafted an elaborate trap for the aliens and used herself as bait. To her delight, she managed to capture an alien and chain it to the wall of her basement. She made a flurry of phone calls to everyone she could think of, announcing that she had proof of extraterrestrials and, not coincidentally, she was not as crazy as everyone thought she was. One of those calls was to the heroes.

However, Mead was not the only one springing a trap. The aliens allowed her to capture one of their own, to see how the hairless apes would react, and as soon as they had seen the results, they decided to end the experiment and reclaim their lost comrade. A full-scale assault on Mead's home quickly ended her time as a captor. However, the calls have been made and the heroes are coming, so the aliens stick around to see what happens and maybe to collect a few as specimens.

Plot Hook: A Phone Call

The heroes receive a phone call from a self-described farmer and UFO hunter named Hazel Mead. She has heard of the heroes' reputation as hard-nosed investigators (or at least people willing to listen without snickering too loudly). She has decided that they are the ones to help her bring to light her proof of the alien conspiracy. She calls them looking for somebody who can add a little credence to her claims and help her keep the critter locked up. She claims that she's got a real, live alien chained in the basement of her farmhouse, and she needs somebody to come out and take pictures and "help her get the word out." She is excited, speaking quickly and loudly and moving from subject to subject. If a hero speaking to her succeeds at a *Knowledge (behavioral sciences)* check (DC 15), he concludes that she is possibly manic and may be mentally unstable. If a hero speaking to her makes a *Sense Motive* check (DC 12), he realizes that she is trying to avoid telling everything about herself. If pressed, Mead becomes hesitant and again asks the heroes help, citing the heroes' reputation for helping folks out in unusual situations.

Mead proudly states that she captured the alien by building a special trap for the creature, using herself as bait. It is unharmed, except for a bump on its bulbous head, and put up little resistance. It is small, about three and a half feet tall, and gray, except for a pair of dark, unblinking eyes. It has not spoken, but Mead claims that it has tried to communicate with her "in her head."

Mead provides the heroes with directions to her farm, which is located in a remote rural area several miles outside of Pinebox.

Alternate Hook 1

Hazel Mead is one of the heroes' more entertaining (and bizarre) relatives. Because the hero has never treated her like the rest of the family does, she is on

good terms with him, and she wants to bring the hero in on what will surely be fame and fortune.

Alternate Hook 2

The heroes are volunteers for one of the more respectable UFO investigation groups and receive a request from headquarters to check out Hazel Mead's claim. Headquarters warns that she has an extensive record of unsubstantiated claims, such as abductions, probings, implantations, and even harassment by alien juvenile delinquents. However, since she donates generously to the organization, the heroes should be respectful and file a full report.

Research

If the heroes conduct *Research* (DC 10) on Hazel Mead, they find the following:

- Mead lives alone on a farm several miles outside of Pinebox, Texas.
- Several small magazines for UFO enthusiasts have published Mead's "abduction accounts." She also claims to have found alien tracks on her farm.
- The local sheriff's office knows Mead well. She has made so many calls complaining of "strange-looking men" and "dark shapes" that they no longer dispatch deputies to her farm.

If the heroes exceed the *Research* DC by 5 (DC 15), they find the following:

- Three years ago, Mead attacked a cell-phone tower near her farm with her truck. At the time, she claimed broadcasts from the tower were causing her pain. She was arrested, found guilty, and confined to a mental institution until deemed mentally stable. She was released less than a year ago.
- At about the same time as her arrest, an otherwise unremarkable poetry journal published a grainy photo of a footprint, taken by Mead. The quality of the photo is poor, and the journal was clearly using it only to create an eerie mood in association with an unremarkable poem called "Footprints," but it clearly

shows what appears to be a large, four-toed, human-like track in loose soil. A hero with the Track feat who makes a *Spot* roll (DC 20) can only conclude that the creature that made the track is unknown.

Flat Tire

On the way to the Mead farm, the heroes pass an older man changing a flat tire on a late-1980s-model pickup truck. He wears faded overalls and rubber boots coated with mud, and the bed of the pickup contains a set of plow blades. If the heroes stop to help the man, or just talk, they learn that his name is Mort Lightfoot and that he owns a farm in the area. If asked, he admits that he knows Hazel Mead, and he advises the heroes to avoid her “because she’s crazy.” Heroes who attempt to *Sense Motive* (DC 20) while speaking to Lightfoot come to believe he is hiding something but cannot determine what.

Mort Lightfoot is actually Elliot Donovan, a special agent of the Texas Rangers (use the mid-level police officer Ordinary from the *D20 Modern Roleplaying Game*). His flat tire is actually a ruse to observe the only road leading to the Mead farmstead. Donovan has a tactical radio and a loaded semi-automatic handgun, covered by a newspaper, on the front seat of the pickup truck (Characters must make a *Spot* roll [DC 17] to notice this).

If the heroes help “Lightfoot” change the tire, he thanks them and drives away down the road the heroes drove up on. However, he returns a few minutes after the heroes leave and sets up another flat tire.

Crop Circle

After the heroes make the turnoff onto the Mead farm’s private road, they pass a field of waist-high grain. On a successful *Spot* roll (DC 15), the heroes notice that there is a circular impression in the grain along the edge of the field.

If the heroes stop and investigate, they find a circle roughly forty feet in diameter crushed into the

field. A hero who succeeds in a Knowledge (arcane lore) or Knowledge (popular culture) check (DC 12) remembers that, in most crop circles, the material is bent over in a swirling pattern, not smashed into the ground, as it is here.

If the heroes enter the crop circle, they notice a large, red, angular object near the circle’s edge. On inspection, they realize that it is the flattened remains of a pickup truck. If the heroes find this, they must make a Will save (DC 10) or be panicked for 1 round. Alternatively, if you using the *Fear Effects* horror rules, this is a *minor spook*.

Radio Signals

As the heroes approach the Mead farmhouse, any electronic equipment they have suddenly emits a powerful burst of static, and then fades away. This event causes the heroes to make a Will save (DC 10) or be panicked for 1 round. Alternatively, if you using the *Fear Effects* horror rules, this is a *minor spook*. If the heroes return to the same place on the road, the same event occurs in the same position.

The aliens have established a bubble of electromagnetic energy around the area of the farmhouse that prevents electronic communication outside the area. No radio, cell phone, telephone, or any other signals can penetrate the wall from inside. Stopping and using electronic equipment to identify the size and shape of the bubble requires a *Search* roll (DC 12) and approximately half an hour (the heroes cannot take ten or twenty). If they do this, the heroes discover that the field encompasses the entire area within a radius of several hundred yards of the farmhouse.

The House

When the heroes arrive at the Mead farmhouse, they can park in front of the house or closer to the barn. The farm is very quiet, except for a rasping sound coming from the farmhouse.

The front door of the farmhouse has been torn from its hinges and lies on the ground. The remains of orange, asphalt shingles from the roof litter the lawn around the house. If the heroes *Search* (DC 12) the area around the house and barn, they find many sets of tracks similar to the one in the grainy photo. If the heroes attempt to follow the tracks, they discover that the tracks disappear into the surrounding fields.

The inside of the farmhouse is in chaos. Curtains and blinds are torn from the walls, and furniture is upended or smashed. Some of the walls have damage from shotgun blasts. The windows appear to have been hastily covered with scrap lumber and tall furniture, and some have had glass broken out. In the kitchen, the contents of the pantry, cupboards, and the refrigerator are scattered all over the floor in a gooey, colorful mess.

The rasping sound the heroes heard from outside is coming from an old black-and-white television in the destroyed living room. It lies on its side, the screen cracked, and displays nothing but static.

If heroes perform a *Search* (DC 12) of the house, they find spent shotgun shells and a ragged, four-fingered scratch along one wall.

The upstairs is in better shape and contains two rooms. One is messy, but appears to have been Hazel Mead’s bedroom. The other is a storage area filled with unremarkable junk. Neither shows signs of a struggle, though her taste in décor is stunningly bad.

The door to the basement is open, and if heroes venture down into the darkness, they find that the room is empty except for a pair of handcuffs chained to a wall. Heroes who *Investigate* (DC 10) the handcuffs discover a dark, flaky substance on the inside of the cuffs that appears to be dried blood.

Lost Time

At some point during the investigation of Mead’s farmhouse, preferably when all the heroes are in the basement, the heroes experience a lost time event.

A bright flash fills the area, followed by a sudden disorientation. All the heroes are dazed for 1 round and then shaken for 1d6 rounds. Those who make a Fortitude save (DC 20) cut these times in half. Also, any electronic device within the area is permanently disabled and cannot be repaired.

When the heroes emerge from the basement, they find that time has shifted and it is now dusk. This event causes the heroes to make a *Will* save (DC 10) or be panicked for 1d4 rounds. Alternatively, if you using the *Fear Effects* horror rules, this is a *medium shock*.

If the heroes attempt to leave the area in their vehicles, they find that they will not start. If the heroes attempt to *Repair* (DC 10) their vehicles, they can find nothing wrong with them, they just will not start.

The Siege

After dark, the heroes come under attack by a group of alien brutes (one for each hero plus 1d4). The creatures' intent is to push the heroes into the house and then force their way in to engage in melee combat. The aliens are not interested in killing the heroes as much as they are in capturing them and taking them to their spacecraft for tests.

The first attack by the alien brutes causes the heroes to make a *Will* save (DC 10) or be panicked for 2d4 rounds. Alternatively, if you using the *Fear Effects* horror rules, this is a *great fright*. Additional attacks do not require a *Will* save.

As soon as the heroes are forced into the house, the alien brutes launch a series of frontal assaults on the structure. However, this is a diversion to enable one or two alien brutes to enter the house through an upstairs window. Once inside, the creatures attack the heroes from behind.

Despite the fact that aliens have already been breached the house in order to abduct Hazel Mead, the structure is not without some defensive benefits. The windows and rear door are still barricaded and relatively strong. If the heroes *Search* the house (DC

12), they find a hammer and nails, and a successful *Repair* roll (DC 15) allows them to nail the front door securely in place.

The walls of the farmhouse are sturdy and covered with wooden paneling, and the foundation is constructed of cinderblock. The windows and rear door are covered with scrap lumber nailed into the wooden frames and walls.

	Hardness	Hit Points	Breakage
Farmhouse wall	5	20	23
Foundation	8	90	35
Windows & doors	5	10	13

Also in the house are the following items, which the heroes can find if they *Search* (DC 12):

- A pump-action shotgun (use the Berretta M3P from the *D20 Modern Roleplaying Game*), loaded with two rounds. If the heroes continue to *Search* (DC 15), they find a box containing 10 shells.
- A bolt-action hunting rifle (use the Remington 700 from the *D20 Modern Roleplaying Game*) loaded with five rounds. If the heroes continue to *Search* (DC 15), they find 2d6 additional bullets.
- A small revolver (use the Pathfinder from the *D20 Modern Roleplaying Game*) loaded with five rounds. If the heroes continue to *Search* (DC 15), they find a box containing 95 bullets.
- A medium-sized revolver (use the Colt Python from the *D20 Modern Roleplaying Game*) loaded with three rounds. If the heroes continue to *Search* (DC 15) they find 2d4 additional bullets.
- A hatchet.
- Large and small kitchen knives (use the cleaver and knife from the *D20 Modern Roleplaying Game*).
- Gardening tools, including rakes, hoes, pitchforks, and pruning shears.
- A gasoline can with enough gas to make three Molotov cocktails

If the aliens kill the heroes, the heroes' bodies are never recovered. If captured, the heroes vanish for ten days and are found walking in a daze along a rural road. They have no memory of the time they were gone, but they experience nightmares and chronic fatigue. If a hero undergoes x-rays or CAT scans of his head, doctors find a small metal cylinder embedded in his sinus cavity.

A Rescue, Sort Of

At 11:48 (as time is measured outside the area) a bright light appears over the farm and any besieging aliens vanish into the darkness. The bright light is the spotlight on a black helicopter, which lands outside the house. Six heavily armed men emerge (use the mid-level police officer Ordinary from the *D20 Modern Roleplaying Game*), led by Elliot Donovan. They remove the heroes from the farm (by force, if necessary) and take them to an unknown location. After a thorough physical, multiple interviews, and psychological profiling, the characters may return to their lives, but Ranger Donovan tells them to keep the events at the Mead farmstead a secret or risk being institutionalized. At no time do the heroes learn the identity of their rescuers.

If the heroes return to the Mead farmstead, they find the farmhouse and barn burned to the ground and no evidence of any aliens. Hazel Mead is never seen again.

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