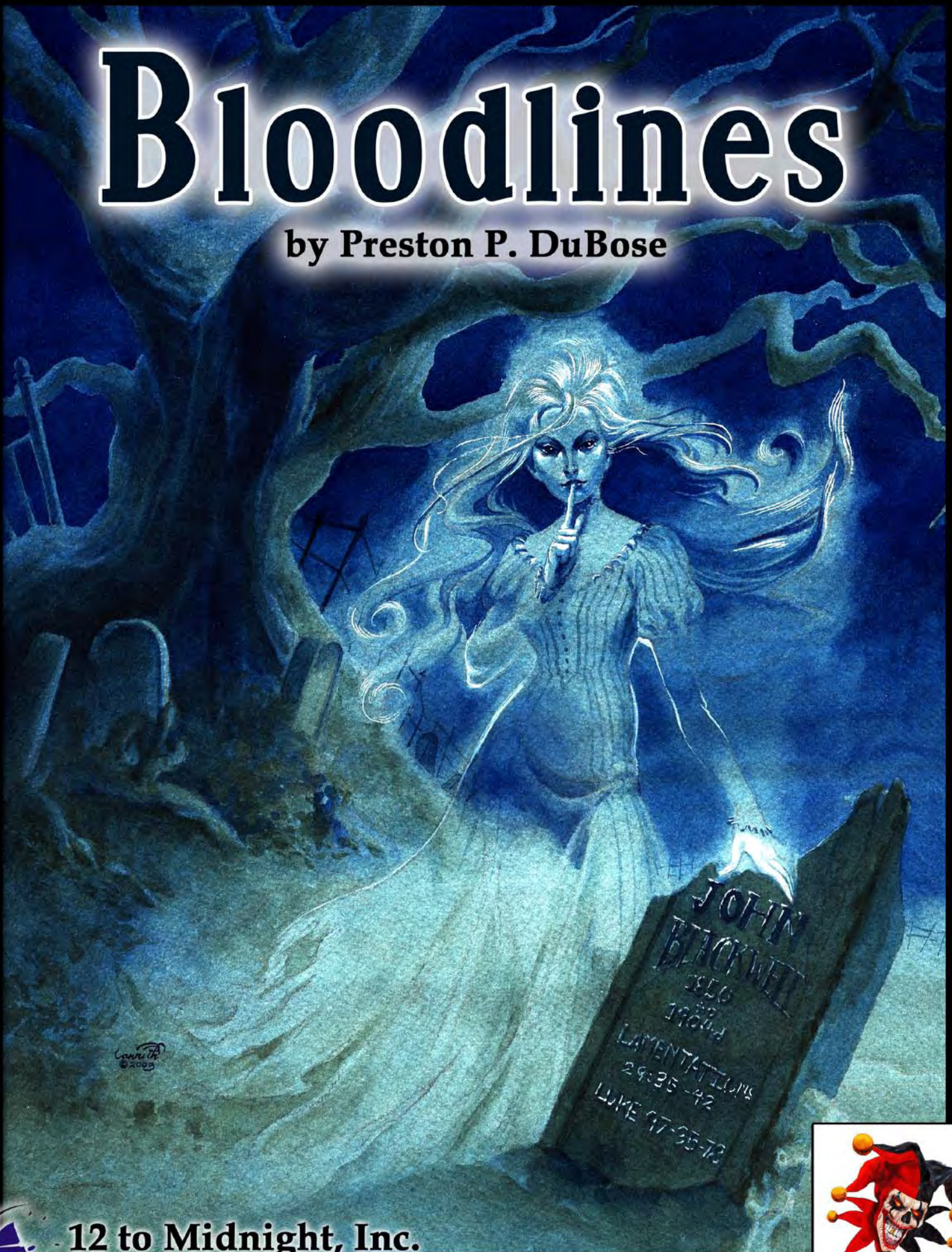


Bloodlines

by Preston P. DuBose



Conrad
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tell yourself it's just a game





Bloodlines

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Author Intro

This adventure came about because I got burned out on fantasy gaming and was looking for something new. After much coaxing, a few friends agreed to try d20 Call of Cthulhu if I would GM. Up to that point I'd only played a handful of horror games before (none of them CoC), and our crew tended to treat them more like comedy-horror adventures.

I knew practically nothing about the setting, which was both good and bad. While I had little experience to draw from, it gave me the chance to create the kind of game I like most—complex, multi-layered adventures with lots of unexpected twists and opportunities for roleplay. The best GMs I've played under (Robbie T. and Martin D.) delivered just that kind of fun, and they did it with little more than a vague idea for a beginning and ending. Everything else was made up on the fly.

On the other hand, I know my limitations. I'm the kind of guy who thinks up a comeback 30 minutes after the insult. Clearly, I'd have to plan as much as possible in advance. Ideas for the adventure came together in strange ways. I knew early on I wanted an encounter at abandoned well. Some parts of the setting are inspired by my home town, which is even smaller than Pinebox and doesn't have the benefit of a state university next door. The ghost storyline, being the last section, was the least pre-planned and mostly made up as we went along. Thus, it got the heaviest re-write before publication.

In a parking lot I found a battered photo, which became the kidnapped Blackwell cousins. As soon as I picked it up, I knew I had to find a place for it in the adventure. Even so, I had no idea how much Molly would become the heart of game. In the first campaign and in every subsequent playtest, the characters developed a genuine fondness for her. It's strange to think that a make-believe character (and an NPC at that) could become so real to players. And yes, I mean *players*, not their characters. I'm sure there's a psychologist's journal article in there somewhere. Whatever the reason, the important thing is that this connection further underscores the impact of the climax. No pun intended.

One of the coolest things about publishing an adventure is getting to see your creations brought to life. Our

cover artist, Anneth Lagamo, created a better Nicole Blackwell than I could have dreamed. Meanwhile, I've come to believe that our interior artist, Obsidian, has telepathic powers. That's the only explanation for the way he consistently rendered on paper *exactly* what I'd pictured. It may sound trite, but I genuinely consider it a privilege to have gotten to see my imagination turned to reality by such talented artists.

Bloodlines is a very linear, highly scripted adventure, for which I make no apologies. It's also a really cool mystery with lots of opportunity for roleplay, and if you stay on your toes the players will never realize how much they're being led. To make up for the complexity, I've included several extra aids to help keep you on track. Read the game summary near the beginning to understand the intended progression. Use the GM checklists at the end of each section to remember to drop important clues. Use the bonus maps and initiative cards found on our website. Running this game is a lot of work, but when you see your players' expressions as they read the final handout, it will all be worth it. It was for me and mine.

PS: Generally speaking, I dislike playing in pre-written adventures. Ironic, isn't it? There's one very simple reason—"boxed text". Nothing breaks the game's mood for me like having a GM switch from his normal voice to speaking like James Earl Jones reading Shakespeare. Consequently, the first draft of this adventure had no read-aloud text except for John Blackwell's message to his son. My colleagues convinced me otherwise and I like the result, but as a player I implore you: unless you're James Earl Jones, leave the voice-work to the professionals. Switching back and forth from casual language to formal prose is a dead giveaway to players that they've encountered a scripted event and are being led by the nose. Which, admittedly, they *are*—but that's supposed to be *our* little secret.

Preston P. DeRose



Section 0: GM Preparation

0.1: Introduction

Welcome to Pinebox, Texas. You have 24 hours to prove you can succeed where a generation of treasure hunters has failed. Be sure to watch your step, because some secrets are better left buried and some family trees are best left unshaken.

0.2: Levels

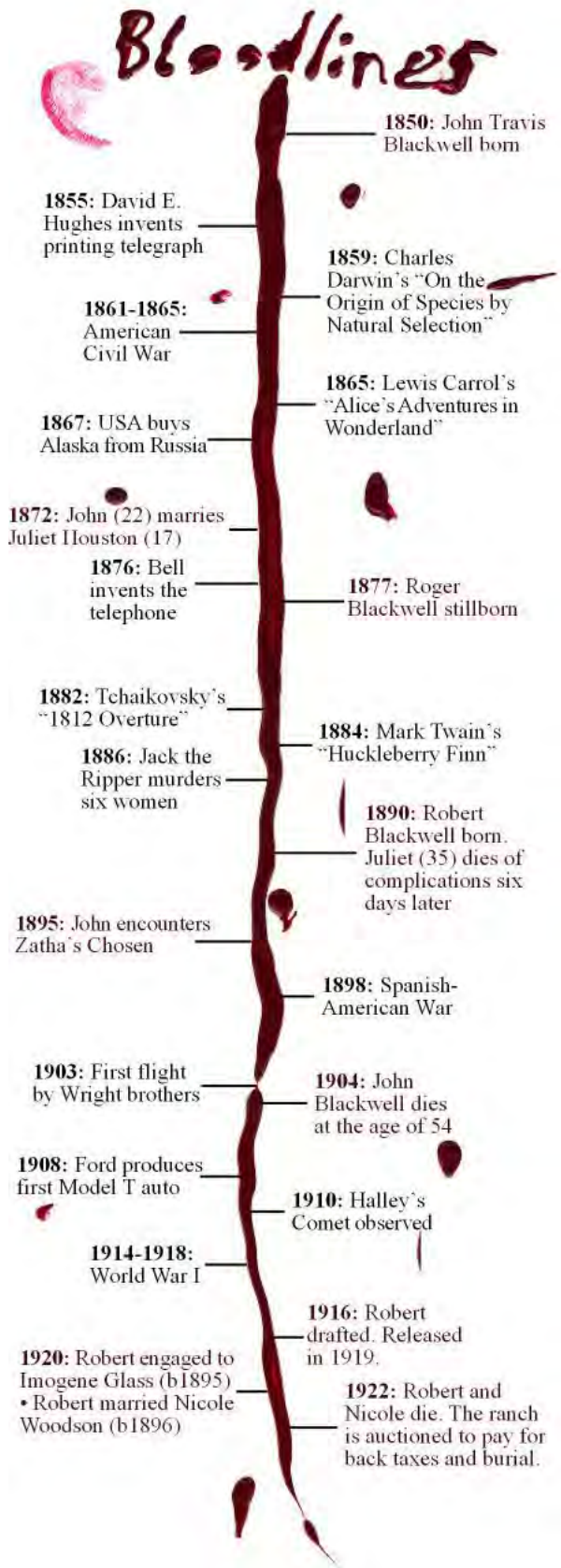
This adventure is written for four Seasoned characters. Because combat is secondary to the unfolding mystery, game masters should find it easy to scale the adventure for any party. This adventure is written for a mature audience and includes sexual situations and graphic violence.

Because this adventure relies heavily on mystery and conspiracy, characters with mind-reading abilities should be considered game-breakers! Some measures have been taken to mitigate this problem (such as a warding brand described in Appendix 3), but the GM always best knows how to balance player fun with the needs of the adventure.

0.3: Play Notes

To get started, make copies of all player handouts and become familiar with the contents of this adventure. We also recommend that you visit our website, www.12toMidnight.com, for bonus support material such as extra maps, pre-filled initiative cards, and more. Time plays an important role in this adventure. Assign one of the players to be the timekeeper and make sure he keeps a running track of the time of day. At the end of each encounter, give the players the time. Each part (**The Cache**, **The Cult**, **The Haunting**) should end roughly around midnight.

At the beginning of the adventure, make a note of which characters possess cell phones and other high tech equipment. An opportunity arises later in the game for a character to receive a phone call from a stranger. If a character carries a camera or recorder (either audio or video), make sure he tells you when it is in use. It may be useful as evidence later (See 2.1: *County Jail*). It is a good idea for the players to establish a standard operating procedure regarding the use of this equipment and inform you whenever they break this routine.



0.4: GM Background

John Blackwell led a quiet but contented life on his Texas ranch. He buried his wife shortly after the birth of their son in 1890, and for a while it seemed God had decided to spare him further heartache. For John Blackwell, heartache returned five years later with the frantic knocking on his door one night. His neighbor's teenage son stood pale and out of breath on his porch. The boy's little sister had been abducted from her bed and his neighbor implored John to help find her. Taking advantage of his Freemason connections, he sent the boy to further spread the word and organized a rescue party. Soon Blackwell led a vengeful posse, bolstered by trained hunting dogs, in pursuit of the missing girl.

Shortly before dawn the dogs led their weary masters to a remote building. To their horror, they arrived too late to save the girl from a bloody ritual at the hands of a bizarre cult. Like wrath personified, the posse destroyed the cult, set fire to the building, and salted the earth. In the confusion, Blackwell collected the only remaining evidence of the cult— a mysterious tome and a red-tinted lantern.

In the weeks and months that followed, Blackwell and his fellow posse members suffered from depression and horrible flashbacks to that night of madness. Perhaps from curiosity, desperation, or inspired by the dark whisperings within his dreams, Blackwell pried into the arcane tome. With careful study, he learned how the cult had been set on summoning a being called Zatha the Devourer. According to the book, this god-like creature would answer the summons from the lantern's red-tinted lens and bring about Armageddon.

John Blackwell's horror multiplied as he learned that both the book and red lens were impervious to destruction. He tried simply hiding them, but paranoia over the possibility of discovery eventually consumed him. He retrieved the book and lens for safekeeping, all the while cursing his fate.

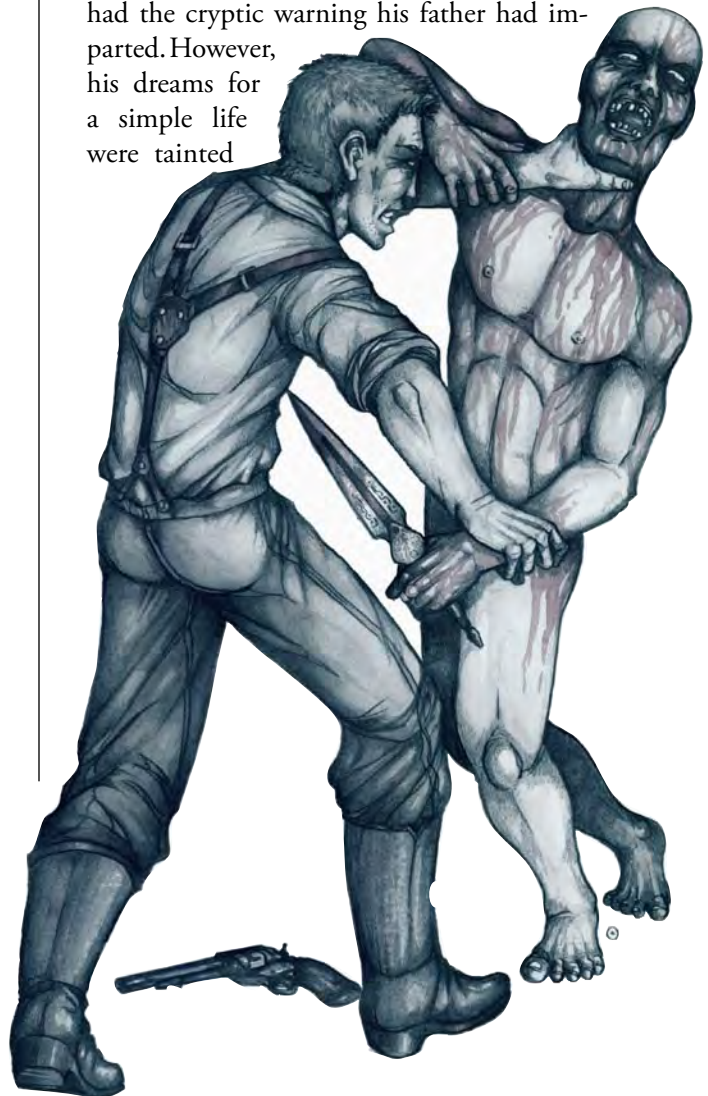
Eventually, the Book of Endless Sorrow (as it was called) itself offered a solution. Seeing a chance to help his friends and protect the artifacts at the same time, Blackwell used a spell from the tome to steal the memories of that living nightmare from the other posse members. The price for such tampering was that Blackwell's own memories magnified for every memory stolen.

Afterward, he hid the book and lens in the water well adjoining his home and cast a series of spells to protect them from all but the Blackwell bloodline. Fearing the forces of darkness, he left an arcane "message" intended for his son at the Pinebox Masonic lodge to which he

belonged. In 1904, John Blackwell passed away. Few mourned the loss of the man who had inexplicably grown bitter and paranoid in his twilight years.

Sadly, the taint of the book and lantern lens did not end with John Blackwell's death. On his deathbed, John Blackwell entrusted the secret of the artifacts' existence and the charge for their safekeeping to his fourteen year-old son, Robert. A preacher, Jacob Townes, gave comfort to Blackwell on his deathbed and overheard the warning to Robert. Townes later shared a muddled tale of buried treasure to a few friends and loved ones, who in turn shared it with others. Soon the legend of the Blackwell Gold earned a place in Pinebox lore.

As the legend of the Blackwell Gold matured, so too did Robert Blackwell. A few months after returning from World War I, the younger Blackwell became engaged to his sweetheart, Imogene Glass. While the tales of buried treasure had never held sway over him, neither had the cryptic warning his father had imparted. However, his dreams for a simple life were tainted



that same year with the arrival of schoolteacher Nicole Woodson. She charmed Blackwell like no other woman he had met—outspoken, intelligent, self-confident, and utterly enchanting. Within a matter of weeks, he broke off his engagement and married Nicole—thus he became ensnared in the vengeful plot of the daughter of a cultist killed by his father.

Safely isolated on the Blackwell homestead, Nicole quickly enacted the plan she had fantasized of since childhood. At the mercy of dark rituals, exotic herbs, and iron chains, Nicole's loving husband became her unwilling slave. Nicole spread rumors that her husband had become obsessed with finding his father's treasure and would shoot trespassers without warning. She kept Robert in shackles at night and burdened him with a ball and chain during the day. Month after month, Nicole forced Robert Blackwell to dig in search of his father's buried secrets.

A year passed and Nicole grew nervous. How much longer before someone learned she kept her husband in chains? How much longer until Robert died in the field? How would she find the book and lens—her birthright? Finally, she struck upon an idea. If one Blackwell blood heir would not reveal what she needed, perhaps another one might. More than a year after their wedding, Nicole consummated their marriage and grew pregnant with Robert's son.

The months marched onward until autumn. Nicole abruptly called a halt to the day's work and led Robert back to his hovel. There, she locked his chain to a cement anchor block, as she had every night. But that afternoon she paused at the door. Turning slowly, she ran her hands across her distended belly and taunted the father of her child. Nicole revealed to him that she felt contractions and his child would be born that night. She then revealed that she would sacrifice the baby in a ritual that would reveal once and for all the location of John Blackwell's secret cache. With mocking laughter, she left the tattered shell of her husband to stew in his own misery.

Instead, Robert found strength where he thought none remained. Stretching to his utmost, he grasped his trusty pickax knocked within reach by Nicole's careless departure. As the afternoon wore on, he quietly worked at the chain binding him. Shortly after nightfall, the

screams of birth pains grew to a climax from within the house. Throwing caution and silence aside, Robert struck at the chain with his remaining strength and snapped a single, weakened link.

Shambling to the house, he found himself too late for his son's birth. Fortunately, Nicole had not completed her deadly ritual. The couple struggled, and even in his weakened condition Robert felt himself slowly overpowering her—until she slammed an oil lantern against his head. Nicole snatched their infant son and fled the resultant inferno, still breathlessly chanting her ritual.

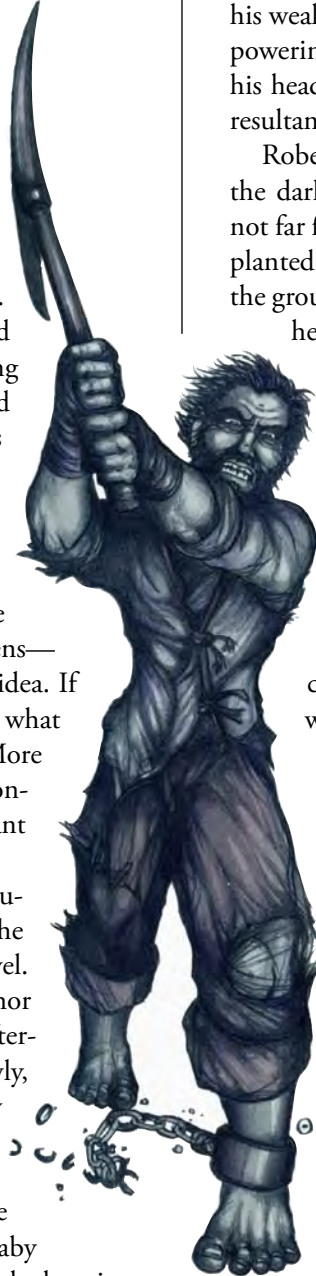
Robert marshaled his senses and pursued his wife into the darkness. He caught up with the panicked cultist not far from his burning home. With a mighty heave he planted the pickax in her back, sending her tumbling to the ground with their baby still clutched in her arms. As he bent to retrieve his wailing son, Nicole gasped the last few words of the ritual and died.

Out of the house's flames, a huge bat-like beast emerged. The ritual called for it to spill the blood of a Blackwell and point the way to the hidden artifacts. Robert was caught completely unaware, and never got to hold his son. The monster snatched Robert into the air and snapped him in half with a loud pop. The demonic creature marked the treasure's location by depositing his bloody remains into the well.

The Blackwell bloodline might have ended there, had it not been for the intervention of neighbors drawn to the fire. One neighbor, the preacher who had sat at John Blackwell's deathbed so many years before, found the body of Robert Blackwell's son cradled protectively in Nicole's arms. In the confusion, he smuggled the infant home. The preacher raised the child as his own son. No one knew of Nicole's pregnancy, and the preacher thought it best that the child never know of his troubled bloodline.

This child, named Christopher Townes, grew into a fine young man who served his country during WWII. During the war, he met a young Russian nurse and fell in love. When

her duties called for her return to her homeland, she convinced him to follow. In the confusion, the U.S. military listed him as killed in action. The pair fled the Soviet Union in the mid 1950's accompanied by their baby boy. Fearing the atmosphere of McCarthyism and blacklists, Christopher could not return to an uncertain reception in Pinebox. Instead, he and his family settled elsewhere in the U.S. with false identities.



Christopher's son grew up never knowing of his father's origins in Pinebox, just as his father had no knowledge of his true Blackwell heritage. Thus, even after the family tree became obscured, the bloodline continued unabated... until the day Christopher's grandchild returned to Pinebox, Texas.

More than 100 years have passed since John Blackwell cast the spells of obscuring, and their gradual decay has left the artifacts vulnerable. The only question now is who might find them first?

0.5: Plot Synopsis

Bloodlines is a long adventure with multiple, interwoven plots. To assist you in understanding the "big picture", the following synopsis describes all the encounters in Bloodlines as experienced by a group of heroes. By understanding the recommended progression, you can keep the adventure from meandering too far off track. Sidebars are also provided throughout the adventure to assist you with a variety of situations and wayward teams.

This synopsis assumes the GM uses the recommended plot hook—the geocaching contest. See 0.8: *Alternate Plot Hooks* for other ideas.

0.5a: Part 1—The Cache

Short Version

The heroes seek artifacts on the pretext of a competitive treasure hunt. They encounter signs of other teams along the way, but primarily rely on their investigative skills to locate the "time capsule".

Detailed Version

The heroes are invited to participate in a geocaching contest (a kind of treasure hunt using GPSs—see sidebar *Geocaching 101*) by a major GPS manufacturer. The game begins the morning after the team has traveled to Pinebox, Texas and stayed the night in a motel. Early Saturday morning the team arrives at their contest starting point. There they are greeted by a representative from the GPS company—Tom Williamson. He explains two other teams are meeting at other equidistant locations to keep the groups from interfering with each another. He describes the contest's target as a time capsule buried 100 years ago by a local county surveyor and explains that the capsule must be returned to Williamson undamaged within 24 hours for the team to earn the prize.

The team is given a set of coordinates, which leads them to a series of mundane places before leading the group to a city cemetery. At the cemetery, the coordinates place them in an older section at a family plot. Only one tombstone falls within the date range mentioned by Williamson, but the heroes can find no obvious clues to their next destination.

The group is helped by the nosy arrival of a local senior citizen performing volunteer cleanup at the cemetery. Vera Bock asks the team if they are part of the same contest as an earlier group and helpfully reveals that the Bible verses on the tombstone actually stand for the latitude and longitude of a parcel of land outside of town. She also tells the team that there is nothing of value on the land and that their time would be better spent investigating the local legend of buried treasure at the library.

Your 12 to Midnight Guides:

Jackson Green



Jackson is a true believer in the paranormal, and has done extensive investigations of hauntings and ghostly activities. He will offer advice and background information.

"Wait a sec, guys. I just want to check the recorder I left in Lance's room last night."

Professor Glen McClanahan



The professor is an expert researcher and investigator. He will offer aid regarding the use of skills and mechanics of the game.

"I carry a prism around with me for ten years, and the one time I need it it's in the truck!"

Lance Carson



Lance is a skeptic, but open to the possibility of a world beyond the one we see. He will offer advice on dealing with players who go "off the map".

"We're facing murder charges, and you guys are worried about pizza?"

Ignoring Bock's advice, the team travels to the coordinates seven miles outside of town. This leads to a vacant lot at the end of a gravel road. The lot appears to be a make-out spot for high school kids but otherwise appears devoid of clues. After a few minutes, a sheriff's deputy—Buddy Wallis—arrives to inform them that they are on private property and must leave. He suggests that they read about all the treasure-hunters before them at the local library.

An elderly volunteer, Norma Wallis, greets the heroes upon their arrival at the library. She confides that they just missed another team who were exceedingly rude to her. Consequently, she says she'll help the team find the information they need. Pinebox has a longstanding legend about gold buried by the surveyor, John Blackwell. The team learns that John Blackwell's bloodline died out with the death of his son, Robert, in 1923. Robert had been engaged to Imogene Glass before breaking the engagement to suddenly marry Nicole Woodson instead. Robert had no children before his death. A separate newspaper story mentions the recent 101st birthday of nursing home resident Imogene Glass.

The legend of the hidden gold is vague—with some sources claiming it belonged to a cache of Spanish Conquistador gold and others arguing that Blackwell found Confederate gold hidden since the end of the Civil War. The legend generally agrees that John Blackwell found the hidden gold during his duties as county surveyor. The fake Bible verses on Blackwell's tombstone are a well-known part of the legend, but the location has been searched countless times with no result. Nobody can definitely state the significance of those coordinates.

Over the last 20 years, one name keeps cropping up in newspaper articles as an authority on Blackwell Gold lore—Tony Hernandez. Hernandez served as president of the Pinebox Historical Society for several years and currently owns a hardware and tractor supply store.

Upon leaving the library, the heroes find their vehicle has been sabotaged, presumably by another team! As the team changes the tire, one character notices the oc-

cupant of a distant green compact car observing them from binoculars. The heroes attempt to confront the car's occupant, but he drives away. The team pursues the green car, which takes them outside Pinebox and down a country road. Here the heroes get another surprise. They notice they are being followed in turn! A jacked-up, four-wheel drive pickup truck barrels after them, bumping the team's car into a spin and off the road. The

green compact car escapes, but the team has more immediate trouble.

As the heroes recover from their wreck, a teen-age boy leaps from the driver's seat of the pickup truck and brandishes a baseball bat. He threatens to beat them unless they tell him where to find the treasure. Fortunately, further violence is avoided by the arrival of Deputy Buddy Wallis. Wallis recognizes the heroes from the vacant lot earlier in the day. He quickly takes control of the situation, handcuffing the teen and taking the team's statement. Wallis leaves the team to their treasure hunt and promises that this is a day the teen will long regret.

Setting aside the mystery of the green compact car, the characters decide to visit Imogene Glass. At the nursing home, the heroes find this ancient woman

watching a game show from a wheelchair. She is easily distracted by the TV, and her sense of time shifts without warning. However, she enjoys the company and answers their questions as best she can. Imogene does not recall any other visitors this day, and the nursing home sign-in sheet bears this out. She tells the team that Robert Blackwell had doted on her and showed no sign of interest in his father's supposed treasure until that "manstealer" Nicole Woodson moved to town. Within two weeks Robert broke off their engagement and married Woodson instead.

Peppered throughout the conversation, Glass remarks that somebody salted the Blackwell water well. At first she says John Blackwell did it, then Robert, then back to John. She seems to have a hard time keeping time and people straight in her mind.

Hoping to have better luck, the team visits Tony Hernandez at his hardware store. Fortunately, Hernan-



What's in this One-horse town?

In the last census, Pinebox, Texas was home to 11,977 permanent residents. Records from nearby East Texas University (ETU) indicate an enrollment of an additional 10,051 students. Approximately one third of the student body commutes from the surrounding area.

Your heroes can find a dozen chain fast food joints and an equal number of small locally owned restaurants. The cuisine ranges from steak houses to Cajun, and BBQ to Tex-Mex fare. The best of these include the Pizza Barn, Mom's Diner, Hamburger City, and Suzie's Catfish Emporium. Characters needing supplies can shop at one of two grocery stores, a small Wal-Mart, a hardware store, two lumber companies, a gun and hunting supply store, and four pawn shops.

The town's only movie theater closed after the establishment of a new student-only theater in the ETU student union. Three bars along "the strip" cater to students, while two other establishments in Pinebox are frequented by the locals.

For more information on Pinebox (including a detailed map) visit www.12tomidnight.com.

dez clearly enjoys talking about the Blackwell treasure. Hernandez tells them that Blackwell's son, Robert, thought the treasure was buried on his property. Robert spent the last year of his life digging holes all over the farm, leaving his wife to perform just enough work for them to subsist. The county sold the land for back taxes after the couple's death in a house fire. The current owners refuse to allow treasure hunters on their property, but Hernandez offers to call and get permission for the team.

With some prodding, Hernandez reveals that he no longer believes in the buried gold but doesn't want Pinebox to lose the tourism and notoriety associated with the legend. He confides that a few years ago he bought a box of books at an estate sale and found a diary from a Baptist preacher who sat at John Blackwell's deathbed. The diary reveals the origins of the legend while exposing the "gold" portion of the legend as myth. Incidentally, it also revealed that the treasure had been buried so deeply that the sky looked no bigger than a dinner plate. With the realization that the gold did not exist, Hernandez retired from treasure hunting. As a final word of advice, Hernandez tells the heroes that his rival for presidency of the historical society, Vera Bock, purchased another box at the same estate sale and he suspects she too knows more about the legend than she lets on.

The team decides to visit Vera Bock, who lives a few miles outside of town. Unfortunately they find nobody home.

With no further leads, the heroes take advantage of Hernandez's offer to gain permission to search the old Blackwell homestead. An old gravel county road leads them to a modern, brick, ranch house, where owner Rhonda Chahovic greets them. She agrees to allow the team to investigate the site of the old Blackwell home, but only after securing a signed agreement not to sue if they are injured while on the property. She gives them directions to the site, and then withdraws inside the house. As the team returns to their vehicle, they spot a crumpled photo of three young adults.

The team drives across several pastures before arriving at the site of the old Blackwell homestead. The only signs of the old house are a few worn stacks of brick from the original pier and beam foundation, and the heroes become frustrated after a fruitless search. As the sun approaches the horizon one character notices an odd noise. The team chops their way through a thicket toward the noise, where they find the stone lip of an old well and an anchored chain dangling into the darkness below. With daylight rapidly failing, one of the characters climbs down into the well.

As the climber slowly makes his way down the chain, he notices strange crystals growing along the stone sides. At the bottom, he finds a pool of water. Carefully testing its depth, he discovers that the water is a foot deep but his boots sink almost another foot in the silt below. A terrible stench settles fills the bottom of the well. His flashlight reveals a floating animal carcass. Along the wall, he notices an off-colored stone among the others. Etched into the stone is the symbol of the Freemasons.



Working carefully, the hero wiggles the stone from the wall. As he does so, he feels a momentary sense of vertigo. Behind the stone is a box hidden in the cavity. As the sun sets, the character removes the box and prepares to climb back up. He does not notice a scorpion emerging from the hollow space, followed seconds later by another. High above him, his teammates prepare to pull the chain up when one of them notices a scorpion in the adjacent briars. Before they can react, dozens—then hundreds—and thousands of scorpions cover the chain, the well, and the surrounding briars. Each of the heroes is stung and falls unconscious.

The entire team—even the teammate who had been in the well—awakens standing beside the vehicle. The box lies on the ground at their feet. Judging by the night sky, several hours have passed. Where did the time go? How did they come to be standing next to the vehicle?

Were the scorpions real or a hallucination? While the box remains in their possession, all of their electronics are dead.

Safe inside their vehicle, the team heads back to town. The group opens the box, despite it voiding the contest. Inside they find an old book and a red-tinted magnifying glass—certainly not gold. The outside of the box is adorned by a Freemason square and compasses. On the inside of the lid is etched the words “When the light burns red, the shadow consumes.”

Back in Pinebox, the team debates whether or not to hand over the box and win the contest. In the end, they agree to return to their motel rooms and sleep on the matter. Upon arrival, they spot the green compact car they chased earlier parked in front of the motel. They can see nobody in the passenger compartment, but they hear thumping coming from the trunk. One of the team members jimmies the driver’s door open and pushes the trunk switch. Inside, the team finds a

...the local police like easy answers...

badly bruised man—the same one who had spied on them earlier. His severely beaten body showcases a colorful pallet of bruises and one eye socket gapes painfully empty. He croaks “Don’t give them...” before passing out. Moments later, a police cruiser pulls up behind them with lights flashing. The Golan County Sheriff deputies arrive with warrants, and arrest the team for the murder of Rhonda and Travis Chahovic.

0.5b: Part 2—The Cult

Short Version

The characters are questioned by the authorities for murder and kidnapping. The team discovers they were hoodwinked by a cult into retrieving the artifacts for them. The heroes race to find the kidnapping victims before the cultists can finish the sacrifice begun more than 100 years earlier.

Detailed Version

Deputy Buddy Wallis is not surprised to find a body in the trunk of the green compact car, but is shocked when one of his partners determines that the man lives. The team is taken to the county jail, where they are processed and taken to lockup. Just when the adrenaline wears off and the teammates drift to sleep, they are plagued by

strange dreams of running from a burning building and a woman’s brutal murder.

While the team ponders the dream’s potential meaning the next morning, guards arrive to lead them away for questioning. To their surprise, a Texas Ranger—James Rodriguez—awaits them in the interrogation room. The group is surprised to learn that not only are they linked to the murder of the Blackwell homestead owners (by virtue of their signed release forms), but also the kidnapping of three young adults—the trio who were pictured in the crumpled photo found along the Chahovics’ driveway. Even more ominous—the victims’ last names are all Blackwell!

After questioning, the characters are returned to their cells. Before long, Deputy Wallis visits and taunts them with the punishment they’ll see as the Chahovics’ “killers”. He swaggers from the cellblock chanting, “When the light burns red, the shadow consumes.”

Very soon thereafter, a local lawyer visits the team. An unlikely hero, Steven Fuller—disheveled and reeking of alcohol—nevertheless manages to strike a deal for the heroes. Although he is a blatant alcoholic and an ambulance chaser, his local connections prove invaluable and he quickly secures their release from jail. Not surprisingly, the evidence room has no record of a box, book, or lens among their possessions—and Deputy Wallis cannot be found.

Fuller warns the heroes that the local police like easy answers and to forget about any further investigation that could cast a doubt on the team’s guilt. He arranges to meet with them the next day to plan their defense, and encourages them to do what they can to prove their innocence.

By the time the entire team has been released, the sun has long since risen and news of the murder has spread. Outside jail, a reporter from the Austin Post meets the team. He wants to interview them, and in trade offers to share what he has learned. The heroes agree and learn that three cousins—Molly, Jessica, and Ronny Blackwell—went missing the previous night. Jessica’s older sister and cousin picked her up when she finished baby-sitting for Vera Bock. Their vehicle was found abandoned and bloodied on the side of the road. Ronny’s mother, distrustful of the local police’s effectiveness, called the Texas Rangers for help. In return for his information, the team tells Daniels what they know. Attempting to understand how the mysterious stranger in the green car fits into the team’s predicament, the heroes pay a visit to the local hospital. There, they learn that the unidentified man slipped out during the morning shift change.

Wanting to clear their names, the team drives back to the last person to see the cousins alive—Vera Bock. She seems surprised to see them, but invites them in and offers them sandwiches. She explains that Jessica had been babysitting one of her grandchildren while she and her husband were at a historical society meeting. Shortly after she returned at 9 PM, Jessica's cousin and older sister picked her up. That is the only information Bock provides.

Lacking further clues, the team visits the local Masonic lodge to determine any connections to the hidden box. Inside, the heroes find an old man sweeping the floor after bingo night. The man assumes the heroes are visiting Masons there to help clean up, and he puts them to work stacking folding chairs and tables. One of

Their waiting is brought to an end when a ghostly woman appears directly behind Sergeant Rodriguez.

the team members asks about John Blackwell, and the old man leads them to the line of photos on the wall and points to a very old picture.

However, when they ask for more information the man gets suspicious and demands a Masonic pass phrase. One of the team members replies, "When the light burns red, the shadow consumes". This sets off a spell left by John Blackwell. The old man appears to become possessed and recites a message as if he were the elder Blackwell. In the message, the team learns how Blackwell and his posse failed to rescue a young girl, and massacred the responsible cultists. In the aftermath, they retrieved a book and lens (see 0.4 GM Background). After the message is recited, the old man feels lightheaded and has no recollection of what just occurred.

Before the heroes can leave the building, one of them receives a cell phone call from the mysterious stranger, Hadji. He thanks them for rescuing him and tells the hero that he must warn them. Furthermore, he relates that it was Deputy Wallis who administered his beating and left him for dead in the trunk of his car. He identifies himself as a graduate student researching cult activity. Hadji warns the team that a local cult wants the book and lens to complete a bloody death ritual. Unfortunately for the team, this is old news.

The team attempts to contact Ranger Rodriguez but settles for leaving a message on his cell phone instead. With no other choice, the heroes rush to the suspected cultist site. On the way, something supernatural inter-

venes. The air temperature inside their vehicle drops and the windshield fogs up. As they watch, the word "family" appears as if drawn with a finger on the glass. Moments later, the driver feels a sharp tug on the steering wheel and the vehicle flips off the road to land on its roof.

Shaken, the heroes crawl from the wreck. They use a county map to cut cross-country on foot the rest of way to their destination. At the site—the coordinates of the "empty lot" marked on John Blackwell' tombstone—the heroes find Sgt. Rodriguez and a state highway patrol officer waiting. Unfortunately, Deputy Wallis waits there as well. Wallis surprises the others when he kills the patrol officer. In the resulting gun battle, Wallis is killed. Suddenly Sgt. Rodriguez becomes much more receptive to the team's story of cultists. Strangely, the team discovers that their cell phones and radios do not operate in the area.

Rodriguez begrudgingly agrees to hide nearby with the rest of the team and wait for the cultists to arrive. An hour after nightfall, one such person does arrive—Tom Williamson, the supposed contest organizer. With no sign of the kidnapped teens, Rodriguez holds the team back. They watch as Williamson chants from a book and slowly fades away. Shortly thereafter, headlights appear on the road approaching the lot, only to fade away in the same manner as Williamson. Perplexed, the team can do little more than wait.

Their waiting is brought to an end when a ghostly woman appears directly behind Sgt. Rodriguez. She gently reaches out and places her hands on the sides of his head. She seems to grow brighter even as Rodriguez slumps to the ground. The ghost approaches the spot where Williamson had stood and mimes striking at an invisible wall. As the ghost fades away, cracks appear in the air before them and an illusion falls away to reveal the cult in the middle of a gruesome sacrifice. As the heroes watch in horror, a cultist fatally stabs one of the three cousins. Leaping into action, they kill all but one of cultists and save one of the remaining cousins. They extinguish the light from the lantern, closing a portal before a tentacled creature can fully emerge from its shadowy realm.

0.5c: Part 3—The Haunting

Short Version

The team seeks to deduce the meaning of their strange dreams while also protecting the only surviving cult victim from ghostly attacks.

Detailed Version

In the aftermath of the battle with the cultists, the team comforts the lone surviving victim, Molly Blackwell. Shocked, she refuses to leave the side of the person who rescued her from the cultists. Meanwhile, Rodriguez dazedly stumbles around, clearly out of his depth. The one surviving cultist—the teen who had run the heroes off the road—is loaded into a vehicle and everyone returns to the relative safety of Pinebox. A few miles from the site, all the cell phones and radios function again. Rodriguez receives a call from someone identifying himself as a fellow Ranger. The caller directs them to an alternate base of operations.

Back in town, the heroes discover they have been diverted to an abandoned movie theater. Standing guard out front is a pair of men wearing Texas Ranger badges. They approach the parked cars and direct everyone inside with promises of medical attention. Inside the theater lobby more than a dozen Texas Rangers work quietly in the background. Some wear SWAT-style body armor, and several huddle around a table in quiet discussion. Oddly enough, their accents place them from New England. The Ranger in charge introduces himself as Captain Felix Horn and assures the group their questions can be answered as soon as their medical needs are met. Rodriguez is led away for debriefing and the surviving cult member is taken into confinement. Molly flies into hysterics when a medic attempts to separate her from her rescuer, so she is allowed to remain with the heroes.

Captain Horn escorts the heroes to an upstairs office, where a second individual quietly waits. Although the team is treated politely, they cannot help but notice the armed guards outside the office. A medic enters the room, analyzes the team, and treats their wounds. Upon examining Molly, the medic appears momentarily confused but quickly finishes his business and quietly reports to his captain.

Captain Horn questions the team about the events leading up to the cult ritual, warning them that he knows when they lie. The second, silent individual watches the proceedings and makes notes, which he passes to Horn when they are done. Horn also asks regarding Rodriguez's performance, but seems disappointed by the

team's poor assessment. In return, he offers a superficial explanation to the Texas Rangers' role in local events.

Upon completion, Horn eyes the heroes speculatively for a few moments before telling them that they are not finished in Pinebox. He explains that when the team found the book and lens they dug up even more than they bargained for, and now they must deal with the consequences. He warns them that he will be monitoring their progress. As Horn ushers them out of the office and into the hands of a guard, he tells them that he hopes they perform better than Rodriguez.

To the team's surprise, as they leave they are told that Molly is their mess and therefore their responsibility. She is escorted out along with the team. Although the guards do not answer any questions, the silent Ranger from the office slips the team a torn piece of paper before closing and locking the door. A portion of the Blackwell family tree is drawn on one side, and a hastily handwritten note—"Follow the blood"—is written on the other.

Because of the late hour and Molly's inability to tell the team where she lives or provide a phone number, the team agrees to take her back to the motel. Upon arrival they separate to their respective rooms—Molly still insistent on remaining with her rescuer. Once in the safety of the room, she seems to recover enough clean herself up in the shower. However, shortly after the shower stops she lets out a piercing scream! When the team rushes to her rescue, she appears unhurt but insists that she saw a strange man holding a pickax behind her in the mirror.

After calming Molly down, the team again separates to salvage what sleep they can. Her rescuer sleeps in one bed, while Molly takes the other. Upon going to sleep, the team is plagued with strange dreams of a burning building and a woman being murdered by a man with a pickax. Molly's rescuer's dreams are interrupted when

However, shortly after the shower stops she lets out a piercing scream!

he awakens to find Molly crawling into bed with him. She easily seduces him, but their night of frolicking is interrupted by another ghostly attack. This time, the attack injures Molly and she bleeds for several minutes.

The next morning, the mysterious stranger Hadji appears on their doorstep with a copy of the morning Austin Post. The newspaper reports an end to the kidnapping saga, but one that is radically different from

reality. It reports that Molly died along with her sister and cousin. Hadji explains how the lens can be used to find two other similar items which, when combined, would unleash hell on earth. When the team tells him about the ghostly attacks, he advises them to research as much as they can about the ghost. He offers to hold a séance if they can find a personal item of Robert's to use as a focus.

However, the first business of the morning for the heroes is the reunion of Molly with her family. Unfortunately, when the team takes Molly home, her parents fail to recognize their own daughter and threaten to call the police. Devastated, Molly has little choice but to remain with the heroes.

With few leads to follow, the team returns to the recently deceased Vera Bock's house in search of more clues. Inside, the team finds an electronic detonator and the stove spewing gas into the house. They also discover Mr. Bock's corpse. A trail of blood flows into a secret underground room. Inside the room is a box with several effects that belonged to the preacher who had been present at John Blackwell's deathbed. From the journal, the heroes learn that Townes found a hitherto unknown infant son on the night Robert and Nicole Blackwell died. The heroes are shocked to learn that Townes adopted the infant, who grew to adulthood in Pinebox only to die in World War II.

The heroes next visit Imogene Glass in hope of finding a personal item belonging to Robert. In the short time since their last visit, her health has deteriorated. She eventually recalls the cross on a necklace given to her by Robert as an engagement gift. Although it holds great sentimental value, she loans it to the heroes.

As the heroes regroup to plan their next action, Robert again attacks Molly. Although he does not actually appear, he strikes out at her until she falls unconscious.

When she eventually awakens, Molly says that a beautiful woman—Nicole Blackwell—appeared in her dreams to protect her. She informs the team that Robert went insane obsessing over his father's hidden treasure. Eventually, his paranoia drove him to kill Nicole and then himself. Now, with the treasure found, Robert has returned to claim it for his own. Only, Nicole has also returned to protect the last of the Blackwell bloodline and seeks peace for both spirits. She tells the team that a spell from the arcane tome can return the spirits to rest and can provide the knowledge needed to instruct them on casting the spell.

Before tampering with unknown powers, the heroes make an effort to communicate with Robert's ghost.

Hadji helps the heroes conduct a séance, but they glean only superficial information from the ghost. However, Robert uses the opportunity to possess a character and attacks Molly. Fortunately, his friends stop him before Molly is seriously injured. Molly insists that with her life in jeopardy, the spell must be cast to protect her from further harm.

The team consults with Hadji, who agrees to help the team. That night, they return to the scene of Robert and Nicole's death—the old homestead. One hero reads the spell, while the (presumed) last of the Blackwell bloodline—Molly—stands at the focal point. Meanwhile,

another member of the team falls into a trance and sees events from Robert's point of view (see 0.4: GM Background). Unfortunately, he exits his trance too late. The spell completes—permanently installing Nicole's spirit into Molly's body!

During the struggle that follows, one hero manages to knock Molly unconscious. Nicole flees her inert host, but Robert appears and uses his pickax to destroy Nicole once and for all. Unfortunately Molly's spirit is gone, leaving nothing but an empty shell.

With the threat of Nicole Blackwell removed, Captain Horn and his Texas Rangers arrive on the scene to clean up. They treat the wounded and take away Molly's body to an uncertain fate.

The following morning, the newspaper reports how the captured cultist committed suicide shortly after confessing to kidnapping of all three victims and the murder of the Chahovics. The article also says Rodriguez has been removed from the case pending an investigation.

When the characters return to the nursing home to return the borrowed necklace, they learn Imogene Glass died during the night. Her roommate insists Imogene left in the middle of the night with a "farmer".

Two days later, national newspapers report that Texas Ranger Sergeant Rodriguez committed suicide amid an investigation into his botched rescue of the Blackwell cousins. No mention is made of Captain Horn or his "Rangers".

A week later, one of the heroes receives an unmarked package in the mail. It includes the other half of the torn portion of the Blackwell family tree, indicating that HE is a descendent of the Blackwell thought killed in World War II. The package also contains a photo of Molly standing in front of a mountain cabin. She smiles happily, holding up yesterday's newspaper for the camera.

Molly insists that with her life in jeopardy, the spell must be cast to protect her from further harm.

0.6: Setting the Mood

Bloodlines is both a mystery and horror adventure. Using props or controlling the gaming environment may enhance the mood in parts of this adventure. You have been provided with several player handouts to help give your players “clues” they can hold and read—you may want to suggest they keep these handouts in a binder or photo album. Many players also enjoy lowering the lights or playing by candlelight. Others enjoy listening to surreal music played softly in the background. When experimenting with these ideas, make sure to get input from the players—after all, they’re your “audience”. We hope you have fun playing.

0.7: Recommended Plot Hook

The Contest

The following plot hook is recommended because it instills a sense of urgency from very early on. It works particularly well for low-level or new characters because it also establishes a common interest among characters even with radically different backgrounds.

The heroes are drawn into this roller-coaster ride as team members in a competitive geocaching team. See sidebar *Geocaching 101*. Geocaching is a hobby in which people bury waterproof containers holding items ranging from the mundane to the one-of-a-kind. The latitude and longitude of these containers are posted on Geocaching websites, where enthusiasts can search for coordinates in their area and try to find the hidden cache with the help of a hand-held GPS (Global Positioning Satellite) unit. Perhaps due to an earlier team victory, the heroes receive a personalized invitation to participate in a special geocaching competition in order to win sponsorship and a hefty cash prize (the amount of which is up to the GM, depending on how much it takes to entice your characters) from a major GPS manufacturer. One stipulation is that all team members must travel in a single vehicle, thus limiting the size of the team to six members or fewer. Give players **Handout 1: Apollo Contest Flyer**.

If characters carry cameras or other recording equipment, you may want to set some ground rules for knowing when they are in use. Part two includes an opportunity for such recorded material to be used as evidence.

The heroes should arrive the evening before and check into a motel, taking as many rooms as they wish, with reservations for at least one more night. When they arrive at the contest address the next morning (or

case it out the evening before), they find a strip-mall containing miscellaneous businesses such as an insurance agency, donut shop, real estate office, and a pair of empty spaces for rent. Read or summarize the following:

Since you were instructed to arrive by 8:30 AM on a Saturday morning, the parking lot is mostly empty except near the donut shop. You find the exact address two-thirds of the way down the strip-mall. Only one other car is parked in front of the office—a very new-looking BMW. No sign adorns the outside of the business, and vertical blinds block the floor-to-ceiling front windows. The glass front door is unlocked and light pours from inside.

Upon entering the office, you see a bare area in what was obviously meant to be a waiting room. The only furniture consists of half a dozen folding chairs and a five foot long folding table draped with an Apollo GPS banner. A lone man dressed in business-casual clothing sits at the table with a stack of paperwork and a donut box.

The man introduces himself as Tom Williamson, an Apollo regional marketing manager. He compliments the team on their performance in previous geocaching competitions and offers everyone a donut from the box. He apologizes for the lack of furniture, but explains that their company has rented the space only for this weekend, specifically for the competition.

Williamson glances at his watch and explains the rules for the competition. He asks that they hold off on questions until the end, then reads a prepared statement:

Three teams have been invited to compete in the “Apollo Challenge”. Although technically the team can be any size, standard competitive geocaching rules apply—meaning you can only use one vehicle. Each team starts from a different part of the town so you don’t follow one another, but you each are starting an equal distance from the first destination. Each team is provided a set of coordinates leading to the first clue. That clue takes you to other clues, and eventually to a time capsule hidden more than 100 years ago. The challenge rating for this cache is 10—the maximum difficulty rating. You have 24 hours to find and return the time capsule.

Assuming you recover the time capsule, the contents must be returned to the starting point—me. I will then take the time capsule to the Texas Historical

Commission in Austin. Once the contents are verified, you will be required to attend a press conference at the Texas Historical Commission, where the prize money will be awarded.

Give the players **Handout 2: Golan County Map**. Tom assures the team that he intends on spending the next 24 hours in the rented office, and that they may return the time capsule at any time of night. He requires the team to fill out waivers indemnifying Apollo from lawsuits if the team gets hurt or arrested during the competition. He also requires them to sign a tax form in case they win the prize because the company is required to report the award to the IRS.

Tom makes small talk with the group until his clock reaches 9 a.m., and then he gives them a slip of paper with the first GPS coordinates. Under no circumstances does he reveal additional details about the competition.

As they leave the parking lot, give the heroes a Notice check at –2 to spot someone in a four year old green compact car observing their activities. This is Hadji, who appears to be in his early-to-mid 20s. He wears a traditional turban and has a scar running across his face from his right eyebrow, through his eye, and two inches down his cheek. Hadji avoids confrontation with the group. If cornered he claims that he is following his girlfriend, who he thinks is cheating on him. Whether or not the characters believe his story, it is the only one he offers. Investigators who spend at least one minute in close contact may Notice (on a successful check at +2) that Hadji wears a glass eye.

Hadji shadows the characters until the *1.4: Road Rage* encounter found later in Part I. Give each team member one Notice check at –2 per “scene” to notice Hadji following them. Give the them a +2 bonus once the team spots Hadji’s car the first time. When the characters decide to chase Hadji, go to the *1.4: Road Rage* encounter.

0.7a: Rat Race

You may want to start with a few mundane clues before leading the characters to the *real* clue at the cemetery.

Here are a few ideas:

- **Smoky’s**—This dimly lit bar is a local favorite. The patrons, weary of rowdy ETU students, actively discourage outsiders. The walls are covered from floor to ceiling with license plates. However, only one license plate is from in-state, and affixed to it is a small sticker with hand written latitude and longitude.

- **Lone Star Bank and Trust**—As one of only four banks in Pinebox, the characters may want to note the location of the handy ATM machine in the event they run low on cash. Even more important, the bank’s outdoor LED sign flashes time, temperature, and a set of coordinates in latitude and longitude!

- **Jack & Jill**—This private kindergarten is closed on Saturday, but characters who peek through the windows won’t have a hard time noticing the latitude and longitude written in big block letters on the chalk board!

Behind the Scenes

Tom Williamson is a member of a cult that has tracked down one of your characters and developed this elaborate charade specifically to get him or her to retrieve the book and lens from the well. There are no other teams in this “competition”, although the cult works to make it appear that such is the case.

The team is being shadowed by four cult members. Each member uses a cell phone to keep in contact and has a huge advantage in knowing the area by heart. Characters must make a Notice check at –6 to notice a cultist following them in town, and even then all the hero sees

is a very unsuspicious late-middle-aged person.

GM Checklist: Did you...

- Give the players the Apollo flyer?
- Establish that characters have motel rooms reserved through at least Saturday night?
- Explain the contest and rules (including nixing the expectation that they’ll win a briefcase of cash right away)?
- Give the heroes an opportunity to Notice Hadji?

Geocaching 101

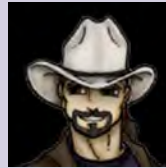
Geocaching is basically treasure-hunting with a GPS (global positioning satellite) system. Over time, enthusiasts have hidden “caches” of materials—disposable cameras, toys, matchbooks, etc.—in waterproof containers. The location, noted in latitude and longitude, is posted on geocaching websites for others to find. Sounds easy, right? Knowing where something is located isn’t the same thing as knowing how to get there!

Once a geocacher does locate the container, from that point the rules (as noted on the website **geocaching.com**) are simple:

1. Take something from the cache;
2. Leave something in the cache;
3. Write about it in the logbook.

Some items have even “hitchhiked” from one cache to another, all the way across continents!

As far as I know there is no national geocaching association, nor are there organized “eco-challenge” type contests. But wouldn’t it be cool if there were?



0.8: Alternate Plot Hooks

Alternate 1: Consulting for Fun and Profit

East Texas University professor Tom Williamson invites the heroes to Pinebox to consult on a research project. Williamson explains over the phone that he won a large government grant to study local folklore, but he met unexpected resistance. He says he learned through word of mouth that the team has experience in ...whatever is appropriate for your campaign. This could be experience in studying paranormal phenomena, or “overcoming unexpected resistance.” The point is to offer the characters a logical reason for being called upon. He offers to use his grant money to pay the heroes a hefty consulting fee and promises to cover their travel expenses.

The heroes arrive in Pinebox and check into their motel. The next morning, they meet Tom Williamson at a small donut shop. Williamson explains that his project, documenting a local legend of buried gold, has encountered problems at every turn. Research material has been stolen from the ETU library. His two graduate students were frightened off—one by anonymous threats and the other by an alleged ghost. Williamson says he himself experienced both, as well. He tells the heroes that someone trashed his office and stole his notes. He reported these incidents to the campus police and they treated it like a problem with a disgruntled student. Then, while conducting field research, a ghost attacked him. He is convinced that a group of treasure-hunters are the cause of his troubles—including the so-called haunting—and that he needs the team to root them out.

He believes the treasure-hunters must think he is close to finding the buried gold to act so threateningly. Williamson fears if they beat him to the site they could destroy its historical value. He also mentions that his multi-million dollar government grant is almost certainly worth more than the buried gold and that his main concern is for its historical value.

Williamson answers one or two questions, then looks at his watch and tells the team he is late for a faculty meeting. He suggests they visit the local library, which as far as he knows has not been spoiled like the ETU collection. He gives the team his cell-phone number and tells them to call him if they identify the culprits.

Alternate 2: The Package

The heroes each receive a letter in the mail with a photo of a tombstone. Additional letters arrive for several days in a row. Each letter shows different views of the same tombstone, but no indication of where the letter may have originated. In each case, the postmark is smudged to the point of illegibility. Finally, one arrives postmarked from Pinebox, TX and the heroes decide to investigate. They arrive on a Friday evening and check into a motel with the intention of beginning their investigation in the morning.

Section I: The Cache

1.1: Old Pinebox Cemetery

The heroes investigate the Blackwell family plot at the Old Pinebox Cemetery and meet a helpful local. They learn of other clues at an empty lot and the local library.

Your clue leads you to a small, very old cemetery with tightly packed headstones. Steel posts block the graveyard's driveway. The drive is flanked by an arched sign, which labels the site as the Old Pinebox Cemetery. A dozen senior citizens with plastic bags slowly wind their way among the stone markers picking up trash. Beyond them a pair of sheriff's deputies stand watch over a half-dozen prisoners in white jumpsuits running lawnmowers, weedeaters, and leaf-blowers. Even the buzzing sound of the small gasoline engines does little but underscore the heavy feeling of solitude and neglect.

The guards eye the investigators as they enter the cemetery, but otherwise make no move to approach. At the front of the cemetery, the dates on the tombstones are as recent as the 1950s, but the coordinates (or appropriate clue from the alternate plot hooks) lead to the rear of the cemetery where the dates on the tombstones are older.

Your GPS unit is accurate within 20 square feet—enough to narrow the location down to a series of graves all from the same family—the Blackwells. A couple of the tombstones appear to have been vandalized, for the engravings are roughly chipped away. Rebecca Blackwell died in 1890, and her husband John died in 1902. There is also a William Blackwell (d1877), Geoffrey Blackwell (d1860), Stanley Blackwell (d1862), and two more tombstones with the names and dates defaced altogether.

Based on Tom Williamson's description of a "100 year old" buried treasure, the heroes should consider John Blackwell's tombstone as the most likely clue. Give players **Handout 3: Tombstone**.

A successful Knowledge (Religion) check or Common Knowledge check at -4 reveals that the Bible verses carved into John Blackwell's tombstone do not exist. With a successful Notice check at -2 , the heroes notice a defaced symbol at the top edge of the broken tombstone.

1.1a: Enter Vera

After a few minutes, the team is approached by one of the senior citizens—Vera Bock. Read or summarize the following:



As you examine the family gravesite, you notice one of the senior citizens bustle over. She appraises you as she removes leather work gloves from her hands. "Good morning. I noticed y'all over here checking out the Blackwell graves. Are you in that contest too?"

Whether the characters answer yes or no, she replies:

"Nobody except treasure-hunters visit the old Blackwells. You just missed a group by about 15 minutes. They got all excited and ran off, so I'll bet they found the clue on the tombstone. They're probably already on their way to look for the buried gold. They must think we're a bunch of idiots. That place has been dug up more times than my flowerbed.

If you're looking for that gold too, you'd be better off going to the public library. Why run all over creation to learn what some fella' already figured out 50 years ago?

Bock introduces herself by name only if the characters do the same. Her actions assume the group knows about the buried treasure legend associated with the grave. If the characters press her for more information, she grumbles about how people today expect to have everything handed to them. Both Vera Bock and the deputies (1.1b: Corroborating Testimony) can give the characters directions to the library.

The additional information below may be gathered through roleplaying.

What buried gold?

The legend of buried treasure is local folklore. To sum up the legend, county surveyor John Blackwell confessed on his deathbed to having buried a treasure of gold, but he died without revealing the location. Bock directs them to the city library for detailed information about the treasure legend, since she has only lived in the area since retirement.

What do you mean, "clue on the tombstone"?

The Bible verses on John Blackwell's tombstone are widely believed to represent latitude and longitude. These coordinates lead to an empty lot several miles outside of town. The locals call it Blackwell's Lot, but no gold has been found there. Bock suggests the team visit the Pinebox library to pick up a free map (**Hand-out 4: Pinebox Tourist Map**) if they intend to visit the coordinates.

Why are the tombstones so badly chipped?

The tombstones were vandalized back in the mid 1980s and again two years ago. During the last vandalism, the hooligans dug up the grave. Locals seem split on whether the culprits were gold hunters or "Satanists". The police said none of the evidence led them to believe anything had been removed from the coffin.

1.1b: Corroborating Testimony

The deputies frown if characters approach them. A successful Persuasion check is required to convince one of them to answer any questions. One remains guarding the prisoners while the other listens to the character's questions. The following information is available through roleplaying:

Did you notice other people visiting this part of the cemetery earlier?

Other visitors? My job isn't to watch the cemetery, it's watching these ass—uh, prisoners. There's been these old folks, but I don't remember anyone else off hand.

Do you know about the Blackwell legend?

The what? Oh, so that's what this is about! Sure, I wrote a paper on the gold in 6th grade Texas History class. This old guy confessed on his deathbed that he'd buried a bunch of gold, but before he could say where it was, he croaked. Folks have been looking for it ever since. That's about all I remember. It's been a long time since 6th grade!

1.1c: Shadow

A successful Notice check at -2 allows the characters to detect Hadji parked in a green compact car a block away. He is observing them through binoculars. If the team tries to approach Hadji, he flees. If the characters give chase, go to the encounter 1.4: Road Rage.

Behind the Scenes

Vera Bock is a cult member. She observes the team while they are in the cemetery and reinforces their belief in the contest and other geocaching teams. Vera attempts to keep them on track and provide clues to steer the characters to find relics—but without making it too easy. The cult has prepared and practiced for this day for more than a year, so Vera's performance is flawless and under no circumstances does she slip regarding her true motivation.

GM Checklist. Did you...

- Introduce John Blackwell as a key figure?
- Introduce the Blackwell treasure legend?
- Introduce Vera Bock?
- Point the characters to the Pinebox library?
- Give the team a chance to Notice Hadji as they leave?

1.2: Blackwell's Lot

The coordinates on John Blackwell's tombstone lead 13 miles outside Pinebox, down a dirt road, to an empty lot.

Dust from the gravel county road flies in a rooster-tail behind your vehicle as you approach the coordinates indicated on John Blackwell's tombstone. When you turn off the pavement, a sign reads "Dead End", which is exactly where the coordinates lead. The road ends at a metal gate leading to an open pasture. The gate is locked with a chain and padlock, but the area that interests you is on this side of the gate. Bordered by pastureland and a barbed wire fence, the area covers roughly fifty square yards. Almost no grass grows in the lot, despite the plethora of weeds and grass ringing the site. Instead, tire ruts, beer cans, and even a few used condoms litter the lot.

Refer to **GM Figure 3: Blackwell's Lot**. Other than some badly rusted pieces of iron, nothing noteworthy can be found.

While the investigators conduct their search, sheriff's deputy Buddy Wallis arrives and questions the characters. Characters that make a successful Notice check at -4 hear the vehicle approaching down the gravel road before it becomes visible. Since the lot is at the end of a county road, the characters have nowhere to hide their vehicle and less than thirty seconds to act. The deputy parks his car behind the team's vehicle, blocking it in. Read or summarize the following:

The door opens and a large man wearing cowboy boots, a sheriff's uniform, and reflective sunglasses steps out. He spits tobacco juice onto the ground as he sizes you up. "Howdy folks. Can I help you with something?"

Deputy Wallis listens to the team and after a short conversation reveals that he knows about the Apollo contest and has already chased off another team of geocachers from the private property. He gives the heroes a stern warning about trespassing and suggests they visit the Pinebox library if they're interested in finding the time capsule. Wallis does not leave the lot until the team departs.

1.2a: Shadow, again

Although Hadji follows the team out of town, he realizes he is too conspicuous and turns around when they

hit the open road. He returns to town and watches the public library, where he knows one of the cultists works.

Behind the Scenes

Deputy Wallis is also a cult member. His job is to keep the team on track and to smooth over any legal problems they may encounter while investigating the treasure legend. If cornered, he admits to having an "understanding" with the GPS company sponsoring the competition. Because the cult has prepared and practiced for this day for more than a year, under no circumstances does he let slip his true motivation—yet!



Where are the Other Teams?

The characters may almost certainly be on the lookout for the other teams—especially after the friendly "present" at the library! You can describe all sorts of people coming and going, but none who obviously look like geocachers. Remind the heroes that unless they encounter a vehicle with a "Geocachers R Us" bumper sticker or meet others investigating the same clue, the likelihood of identifying another team is slim. As you know from reading the adventure, there are no other teams. Only Hadji and the cultists shadow the heroes until the Road Rage encounter.

GM Checklist. Did you...

- Describe Blackwell's Lot to the characters?
- Introduce Deputy Buddy Wallis?
- Point the team to the Pinebox public library?

1.3: Pinebox Public Library

A visit to the Pinebox public library turns up a wealth of information for the heroes, but ends on a sour note.

The Cecil Greystone Memorial Library is a small white stucco building, located a few blocks from the town square and directly across the street from a busy grocery store. The cornerstone dedicating the library to the citizens of Pinebox dates the building from 1966. Four other vehicles occupy the parking lot. The front desk serves to divide the children's books and large meeting room on the left from the fiction, nonfiction, and archives on the right. Free city maps (Handout 4: Pinebox Tourist Map) sit in a display holder on the front desk. Two families are selecting books in the children's section while a librarian reshelves books.

The library archives are supervised by Norma Wallis, a very plain, serious-looking, woman in her early 60s. When the team begins their search, she approaches.

Good morning. May I help you find something? Oh...let me take a wild guess. You're here for the treasure hunt, aren't you? We don't usually get groups of strangers, and certainly not two in the same morning. ...At least you don't look as rude as those other people. What goes around comes around, I always say. Now what can I do for you?

If the characters ask about the other team, she confides that she sent them to the courthouse archives on a wild goose chase. She chuckles as she informs them that the courthouse is closed on the weekend.

Unless the team insults her or is excessively rude, Norma Wallis is cordial and assists them any way she can (+2 to Investigation checks). It may not be glamorous, but sometimes treasure-hunting comes down to old-fashioned research. While the heroes may conduct research online, older material is only available in print or microfilm. The same Investigation check encompasses all media, and takes 1d4 hours—even with characters aiding one another.

- Failure (not critical failure): **Handout 5: Lure of Gold, History Still Draw Interest**
- Success: Give the players **Handout 6: Gold Holds Sway Even Over the Dead**. They also discern that over the last 20 years, one name keeps cropping up in news articles as a local expert in the Blackwell treasure legend—Tony Hidalgo. Hidalgo was the chairman of the historical society at the time of the 1st vandalism in the 1980s.

- Raise: A genealogy search was performed after the first vandalism, and no children were found beyond John Blackwell's son (Robert Blackwell), who died in 1922. In the 1960s, the landowners and researchers from East Texas University used metal detectors to sift through "Blackwell's Lot". Nothing of value was found, although metal scraps were recovered from the ruins of an old building. Nobody can identify what kind of building it may have been—a school, a house, or a church.
- Two Raises: A newspaper clipping announced the engagement of Imogene Glass to Robert Blackwell, however records state that Robert Blackwell married Nicole Woodson. An online search of Imogene's name turns up a recent Pinebox newspaper. There is an article about the county's oldest resident, Imogene Glass, turning 109. She currently lives in a local nursing home.

If the characters ask, Norma Wallis can provide directions to the Blackwell homestead. For game play purposes it is better if the team investigates Tony Hidalgo and/or Imogene Glass first. Wallis tells the team that the ranch owners have had previous trespassers arrested, but offers to call them to gain permission for the team to visit.

This delay gives the team time to conduct other investigations before returning to the library to find out if they have been extended permission to visit the homestead. At that time, Norma provides directions to the new owner's home. She explains that when the owners meet the team in person, they will provide instructions on how to find the remnants of the Blackwell house.



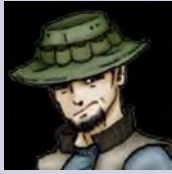
Research Takes Time

Living in the "Information Age" gives us huge advantages in terms of research. Today, the material in our excellent libraries and archives are more accessible than ever before. In fact, every one of the teams in Bloodlines playtest possessed a laptop with a cellular modem to conduct research "on the road". However, research does not begin and end with the Internet.

For starters, the information most needed by the heroes in Bloodlines is the least likely to be found online. So far, no substitute for hands-on research exists. Second, the Internet represents a huge information glut. Conducting research on the Internet means sorting through 300,000 "hits" for a topic and reading dozens of pages to determine relevancy. Finally, most sources offer partial or conflicting accounts of

the same material. Only by comparing and consolidating the information from several sources can a researcher obtain an accurate picture.

For these reasons, conducting research remains a very time-consuming task that is thankfully distilled down to a simple Investigation check in-game. However, your characters should still deeply feel the loss of 1d4 hours (at minimum) in the race to be the first team to find the treasure. You can encourage their roleplay by describing the growl of empty stomachs or small changes in weather. You can even provide the team with a Red Herring. Sit back and watch them run off in the wrong direction. Only do this if you are feeling exceptionally cruel and the players will not be put out by the experience.



Other Lines of Investigation (AKA-Dead Ends)

East Texas University

Depending on how much they take the time to learn about Pinebox, your characters may think to use some of East Texas University's (ETU) resources for research, interviews with experts, etc. Unfortunately for the heroes, the university library's collection of material pertaining to the Blackwell Gold legend was recently vandalized. What wasn't vandalized is simply missing. None of the faculty familiar with the legend are accessible during the weekend.

Blackwells in the Phone Book

Another line of investigation might be for the heroes to look in the phonebook for any living relations of John Blackwell. While that particular branch of the family tree purportedly ended with Robert, the family name Blackwell is quite common in Pinebox. The Blackwell family was among the earliest settlers to the area, and several distinct branches of the family remain to this day. If the heroes check the phone book, they find 27 listings for the name Blackwell, and none of them are descended from John Blackwell.

1.3a: Sabotage!

Upon leaving the library, the team discovers that one of their tires has been slashed.

Upon leaving the library, you find that the left front tire of your vehicle has been slashed. Scanning the area, you see a steady stream of people coming and going from the grocery store across the street.

If desired, the team may repair the tire at a small gas station two blocks away, or they can change the tire and use the spare (–1 to Driving rolls while riding on the spare). If someone stays with the vehicle while others conduct research in the library, you may implement this sabotage during one of the later encounters found in Section I. The goal is to give the heroes the feeling that they are in a race against time and the competition is a step ahead of them.

A successful Notice check at –2 allows the characters to detect Hadji parked in a green compact car a block away. He observes them through binoculars. If the team tries to approach Hadji, he flees. If the characters give chase, go to the encounter 1.4: Road Rage.

Behind the Scenes

Norma Wallis is yet another member of the cult, which masquerades as the Pinebox Historical Society. While the team researches inside, Norma slips outside to slash their tires. If you decide to employ this encounter elsewhere, then another cult member slips in to do the deed. The story about having to call for permission is a delaying tactic while the cultists move in and replace the owners of the Blackwell homestead.

GM Checklist. Did you...

- Give the players the city map (**Handouts 4**)?
- If appropriate, give the players the newspaper articles (**Handouts 5** and **6**)?
- Subtly direct the characters to visit either Tony Hidalgo or Imogene Glass?
- Describe the slashed tire on the team's vehicle?
- Provide the team an opportunity to Notice Hadji?

1.4: Road Rage

The heroes follow the suspicious green compact car, but encounter a surprise of their own when the tables are turned by someone in a monster truck.

Whether the heroes overtly or covertly attempt to follow, Hadji notices the team and attempts to evade them. The chase begins in earnest when Hadji finds a road leading out of town and pours on the speed. The chase uses the standard Range Increment for cars of 5". Hadji attempts to Flee each round. Before dealing the second round, give the characters a Notice check at –2 to notice *they* are being followed in turn. If they succeed, read or summarize the following:

You notice in your rearview window that a large 4-wheel drive pickup truck is tailgating you. The young male driver has a wicked grin on his face as he accelerates, ramming his bumper into the rear of your vehicle. You fight to maintain control, and manage to stay on the road. The teenage driver howls in triumph. The truck engine roars as it accelerates again.

If no one succeeds at the Notice check, then read the following:

Without warning, a "monster" truck rams into the rear of your vehicle. You fight for control, and manage to steady your vehicle. In your rearview mirror, you see that the truck is driven by a teenage male, who lets out a howl of triumph. The truck engine roars as it accelerates.

The driver of the monster truck attempts to Force the heroes' car off the road. The truck is much larger than any car, giving it +2 to all such Force attempts.

While the characters are under attack, Hadji's green compact car escapes. If the truck successfully forces the team off the road, read or summarize the following:

As your vehicle comes to a stop, the truck roars up behind you and sends dust in every direction. The teenage boy jumps from the cabin of the truck. He brandishes a large, wooden baseball bat, and yells, "Stay away from my treasure!"

After a few other threats, the teenager returns to his truck and drives away if the characters do not initiate combat. If they choose to roll initiative, Deputy Wallis arrives on the scene to stop the fight. He seems incredibly upset at what happened. The team learns that the kid's name is Louis Connelly, an 18-year-old trouble maker. At least the team may make that deduction as Deputy Wallis seems to know the boy and treats Connelly roughly as he cuffs him. The deputy does not allow the characters to question the teenager about the attack. After taking statements from the team, Wallis drives away with Connelly handcuffed in the back seat. If you think the team is out of ideas on how to proceed, you can allow them a Notice check at -2 to find a scrap of paper in Connelly's pickup referring to Imogene Glass.

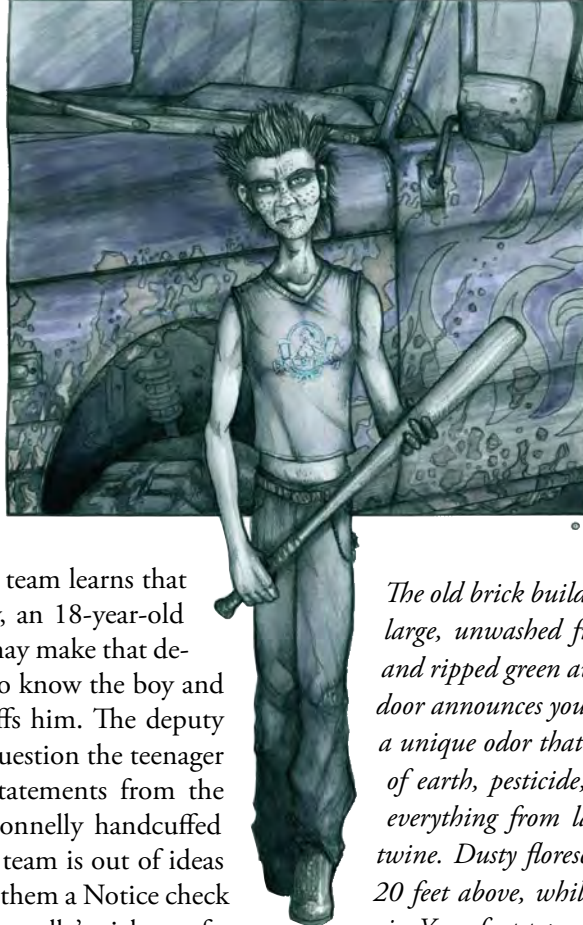
Behind the Scenes

Louis Connelly is the youngest recruit for the cult of Zatha's Chosen. He has convinced himself that he can get the "treasure" on his own and gain the respect of the other cultists. Knowing in advance that the team would be directed to the library, he waited across the street in the grocery store parking lot, completely blending in with the other locals. Fearing that the team might be rushing away from the library to retrieve the book and lens, he gathered his courage to attack. However, when he came face to face with the characters his courage dissolved. Fellow cultist Wallis arrives just in time to salvage the situation, and afterwards gives Connelly a thorough beating.

GM Checklist. Did you...

- Allow the team to chase the green compact car?
- Interrupt the chase with a vehicular attack by Connelly?
- Save Connelly from combat by Deputy Buddy Wallis?

- Use the "crime scene" to drop a hint to the characters if they need help figuring out where to go next?



1.5: Tony Hidalgo

The heroes visit the former president of the Pinebox Historical Society and local authority on the Blackwell treasure legend.

The former president of the Pinebox Historical Society spends his days at Hidalgo Hardware and Tractor Supply.

The old brick building has seen better days, from the large, unwashed front glass windows to the faded and ripped green awning overhead. A bell above the door announces your entry, and you are greeted with a unique odor that might be described as a mixture of earth, pesticide, and oil. Rows of shelving hold everything from lawnmower parts to hay baling twine. Dusty florescent lights hang from the ceiling 20 feet above, while four ceiling fans lazily stir the air. Your footsteps echo on the dry, aged, hardwood floor and a man in his 20's with "Chuck" stitched on his shirt waves a greeting from behind a 15 foot long counter. A doorway behind the counter appears to lead to a dimly lit area littered with boxes.

Tony Hidalgo runs an old, independent hardware and tractor supply store. His employee, Chuck, calls Hidalgo up from the back area. He leads the group behind the counter and through an inventory room to his office at the building's rear. When questioned about the legend, he admits to being a treasure hunter himself, but now believes the legend is a myth. He seems somewhat bitter about treasure-hunting these days.

The information below may be gathered through roleplaying. Additionally, if the appropriate questions are asked, Tony Hidalgo may reply with information from the 1.3: Pinebox Public Library.

Where's the gold?

John Blackwell's son, Robert, was convinced that the treasure was buried on his property. Robert Blackwell spent the last year of his life digging up the land, forcing his wife to perform just enough work to subsist. After Robert and Nicole Blackwell died in a fire, the land was repossessed by the county and auctioned away to pay "back taxes and burial expenses".

The diary includes the earliest recorded version of the treasure story.

How do we find where John Blackwell lived?

John Blackwell owned land in the Pear Creek land grant, which his son Robert inherited in 1902. Hidalgo searched the homestead back in 1995 when his heart trouble began. Although the location of the Blackwell homestead is no great secret to anyone with the patience to search the county courthouse records, the property changed hands in the 1980s and the new owners refuse to allow strangers on the property for fear of accident lawsuits—especially after Hidalgo's near heart-attack while treasure-hunting there.

Getting answers to the following two questions require a single Persuasion check to shift Tony Hidalgo's attitude from Neutral to Friendly.

What makes you think there is no treasure?

In 1996, Hidalgo bought a box of books at an estate sale. The contents included the diary of a Baptist preacher who was present when John Blackwell died. (Give players Handout 7: Townes Diary, which he retrieves from a safe in his office.) He grumbles about being outbid on "the other box".

The diary includes the earliest recorded version of the treasure story. It clearly indicates that John Blackwell was not delirious when confessing about the "treasure", nor does he specifically call it gold. This revelation was the real reason Hidalgo gave up treasure hunting, although he kept the story to himself for fear of being ridiculed after having devoted so many years to tracing the legend.

What "other box"?

Vera Bock, current president of the Pinebox Historical Society, purchased another box of books from the same estate sale. He suspects that Bock possesses more information regarding the treasure. However, she is his nemesis, and he will have nothing to do with her. Hidalgo claims she enlisted her own cronies to join the historical society specifically to stage an "election-day coup" that removed him from office. Now he refuses to

even be in the same room as her, so asking his asking her about the contents of her estate-sale box is out of the question.

At the end of the conversation, unless the heroes insult Hidalgo, the former treasure-hunter offers up the location of the old Blackwell homestead. However, he sternly warns them ask permission of the current owner or risk arrest or being shot as trespassers.

If 1.4: Road Rage has not occurred, the characters may Notice, at -2, Hadji parked in a green compact car a block away as they leave Hidalgo Hardware and Tractor Supply. When the team approaches Hadji, he flees. If the characters give chase, go to the encounter 1.4: Road Rage.

GM Checklist. Did you...

- Introduce Tony Hidalgo?
- Give the heroes the location of the Blackwell homestead?
- If appropriate, give team **Handout 7: Townes Diary**?
- If appropriate, reveal Vera Bock's possession of additional journals?

1.6: Vera Bock home

If investigators wish to follow up on what Vera Bock found in the box from the estate sale (as mentioned in the 1.5: *Tony Hidalgo*), they can find her listed in the phone book. However, nobody answers the phone. If the team persists in finding her home, it is seven miles outside of town. Nobody answers the door. If the team breaks in, they find a typical old-lady house filled with shelves upon shelves of old books and knick-knacks, including a collection of antique oil lanterns. Make the heroes understand that searching the house thoroughly could take much longer than the house is likely to remain empty. A cursory examination reveals nothing pertaining to their goal. Refer to 3.7: *Bock House Revisited* for house specifics.

1.7: Nursing Home

The heroes visit with the only living person who knew Robert Blackwell personally.

Almost anyone in town can direct you to the Travis Nursing Home. Although the brick building appears well maintained, the architectural style betrays its origins in the 1960s. Three elderly people are parked in their wheelchairs under the front patio's awning. Inside, the nursing home smells strongly of disinfectant and other more pungent odors. More elderly people in wheelchairs are clustered around the nurse's station.

A nurse directs the team to Imogene Glass's room, which is empty. Upon returning for more help, she keeps the team waiting for more than 10 minutes while the staff searches for the elderly lady.

Finally you are led to a communal TV room where Imogene Glass sits in a wheelchair watching a game show. She wears house shoes, a set of loose-fitting sweats, and a crude wooden cross on a simple necklace. Thankfully, she seems more alert than some of the other patients at the home and is only too glad for company.

However, Glass had a stroke two years earlier and this affects her short-term memory. Consequently, she has a tendency to forget having already said something and repeats herself often. She also keeps one eye on the TV set and occasionally answers a word or phrase from the game show.

The information below may be gathered through roleplaying.

So...you were engaged to Robert Blackwell?

"Robert and I went to church when we were younger, but we didn't get engaged until he came back to live in his daddy's old house after the Great War. You know, the first one. Mmmmm, he was so good looking in his uniform. He was what we called a 'firecracker!'" Yes, he was handsome.

Where was that house, exactly?

"He had such a nice home. So well cared for—except for the well. Tell me, why would someone salt their own well? I never understood why Robert's daddy did that. I mean, it was totally ruined. You would

have gotten sick if you'd tried to drink it. Why would Robert do that? If his daddy had still been alive he would have pitched a fit, I'm sure."

[This is an example of Imogene's memory problems. She can't quite remember who was responsible for some actions, thus her story changes from time to time.]

Wasn't there some story about gold?

"He didn't care about no gold. He didn't even tell anyone else about it but me, and he only mentioned it once. He said he didn't think it was real, but I promised to keep it a secret anyway. Then that tramp showed up, and he broke off the wedding. I asked him, 'Why, Robert?'" He said I only wanted him for the gold. Can you imagine that? I didn't care about no treasure. I loved him....I really did. Well, I was just devastated. It was years before I was ready to marry again."

What tramp? His Wife?

"It's that hussy's fault. That Nicole stole my man. She moved to Pinebox to teach school only a month before Robert broke off our engagement. That witch told Robert all sorts of lies about me. I think she just wanted him for herself, and she got him. I don't wish to speak ill of the dead, but she got hers. She did."

What do you mean? What happened to his wife?

"Well, he shot her! I saw the whole thing! Robert pulled out that pistol and shot her in cold blood. No...wait. That isn't right. It was Robert's daddy that did it. Robert's daddy John shot that man. Shot him in cold blood! I remember watching it. It made the news and everything. It was some oilman. What was his name? Oh, it'll come to me. I remember he was rich—richer than anyone around here. His name was short. Something really short. Bubba? Ed? JW? ...noooo. Oh! I know! It was JR! It was in the news! Nobody knew who shot JR! But I knew! It was Robert!"

[For our international GMs, the above is a reference to a television show from the 1980s called Dallas. One big cliffhanger on the show was a mystery over who shot a main character named “JR”. Clearly, Imogene Glass sometimes confuses television with reality.]

Enough with the funny stuff! Where’s the treasure?

“The treasure? Robert told me...it’s somewhere on his ranch. He never did say where. I don’t think he knew.”

GM Checklist. Did you...

- Reveal the clue about salting the well?

1.8: Pear Creek Ranch

The heroes visit the former Blackwell homestead in search of the hidden treasure.

The ranch once owned by John and Robert Blackwell has since fallen into other hands. Tony Hidalgo or Norma Wallis can tell the team where the ranch is located. Arrival at the ranch should be timed to coincide roughly one hour before sunset.

Based on your handwritten directions, the Pear Creek Ranch is roughly 20 miles from Pinebox down several winding, dirt country roads. You see a mailbox held up by the metal silhouette of a cowboy, just as it was described, and you know you have found the driveway. Your vehicle thrums over a metal cattle guard and onto a gravel driveway that runs for six hundred yards through the pasture. The drive leads to a modern, two-story brick house shaded by a pair of large live-oak trees.

The heroes may be tempted to avoid meeting with the ranch owners and sneak to the site on their own. You can easily discourage this by explaining the lack of detailed information on exactly how to find the old Blackwell homestead. There is only a 5% chance the heroes could find the site on their own in the limited daylight they have available. The heroes need to speak with the landowners to get directions to the old Blackwell homestead.

Give the team a Notice check at –2 to notice a crumpled photo lying on the front porch (**Handout 8: Blackwell** cousins). A woman in her late 20s or early 30s, Rhonda Chahovic, answers the door. She is polite but under no circumstances lets the heroes enter the

house. If the characters show her the photo, she attempts to snatch it away and insists it belongs to her.

She allows the team to search her property, but only after they sign a written waiver of liability. She requires each member to sign the waiver and provide a drivers license number. Otherwise, she refuses to give them permission and closes the door.

She is polite but under no circumstances lets the heroes enter the house.

If the investigators fail to get permission from Rhonda, her husband Travis arrives in his pickup truck just as the heroes are leaving. Travis suggests he might allow them on the property with the written waivers mentioned above.

Behind the Scenes

The real Chahovics are unconscious and being held captive in an underground hurricane shelter behind the house. “Rhonda” and “Travis” are cultist replacements Janice Trent and Bob Campbell (see **Appendix 1: Cast of Characters**). Their purpose is to direct the team to the Blackwell homestead and gather evidence (the signed “waivers”) as circumstantial evidence in an imminent murder investigation.

GM Checklist. Did you...

- Give the heroes an opportunity to find the photo (**Handout 8**) in the driveway?
- Get written names, signatures, and driver’s license numbers from each of the heroes?

1.8a Blackwell Homestead

The site of the old Blackwell homestead is roughly three quarters of a mile from the Chahovic ranch house. The Chahovic home cannot be seen from that location. If the team drives a car or other low-riding vehicle such as a mini-van, the ranch owners insist the team leave their vehicle behind for fear of starting a grass fire with the hot undercarriage. If the characters are in a truck or SUV they may drive to the pasture where the old homestead is located. No cattle are in the pasture at this time.

Very little remains of the Blackwell homestead. (GM Figure 4: Blackwell Homestead) Without directions, the team only has a 5% chance of finding the site unguided. The only signs of the old house are a few worn remnants

of the pier and beam foundation. A Notice check at -4 allows the team to discover a partial Masonic symbol (**Handout 9: Symbol at Homestead**) etched into a foundation brick.

The heroes' search of the area is hampered by failing sunlight and tall, thickly clumped briars. Although the rest of the pasture is well grazed, this corner seems to be avoided by man and animal alike. The well is covered by roughly 20' x 20' waist-high briars and remains hidden unless the team makes a successful Notice check at -4.

You're shaken from your frustration by a light touch on your shoulder and a whisper like a soft kiss in your ear.

More importantly, the well is hidden by the weakening protection spell cast by John Davis a century earlier. Each character that enters the spell's area of effect (as noted on the map) must make a Spirit roll at -2 or find himself distracted by an imaginary clue noticed outside the spell's area. Such "clues" could be the ruined pier and beam house foundation, an old rusted can, or an interesting bug. The Spirit roll is unmodified if there is at least one additional person standing within the spell's area of effect. Success means the hero is not distracted and may remain in the area thereafter. After three failures, the hero may make a Smarts check at -2 to notice his strange behavior.

If it appears the heroes can not find the well on their own, Nicole Blackwell's spirit (see **Appendix 1: Cast of Characters**) takes matters into her own hands (figuratively speaking). Read or summarize the following to a single character:

The sun sinks low over the western horizon, painting the area in purple and red hues. You realize you've just searched the same area for the third time in a row. This is getting you nowhere! You're shaken from your frustration by a light touch on your shoulder and a whisper like a soft kiss in your ear.

"This way," she says.

You turn around, but no one is there.

A hero of your choosing hears a woman whisper from nearby, directing him toward the well with a steady stream of commands such as "This way... just a little farther... over here... please... over here". This hero gets a +2 to his Spirit checks because of the constant commands preventing the spell from distracting him.

The old water well is located in roughly the center of the briars, where the vines have grown over the top of the well itself. The stone lip of the well rises less than one foot from the ground and a successful Notice check at -4 reveals the worn, faint impression of the recurring symbol (**Handout 10: Symbol at the Well**). Once the well has been discovered, the other characters gain a +2 bonus to their Spirit checks to overcome the protective spell.

GM Checklist. Did you...

- Give heroes the opportunity to find the symbol on the foundation pier (**Handout 9**)?
- Give the heroes an opportunity to find the symbol on the lip of the well (**Handout 10**)?
- Use Nicole's ghost to help the heroes find the location of the well, if necessary?

1.8b: The Well

After clearing the top of the well, you see that it is stone-lined and roughly four feet in diameter. There is sufficient room for one person to climb down at a time. Much of the mortar lining the stones appears to have crumbled away, and the bottom is not visible from the lip. You see one end of a heavily rusted chain, anchored to a large cement block buried next to the well. The other end leads down into the well and drops away into darkness.

Characters hear a splash upon dropping something down the well. Heroes may choose to climb down the well using the chain or their own rope.

GM Note: In a way, the player who decides to go down the well becomes the focus of the remainder of the adventure. (See *Behind the Scenes*, below 1.8d: *The Box*.) Since one character may be better suited to take on this role than the others, you may want to subtly nudge him to "volunteer". However, be prepared for any of the characters to take on this task. Although the story is written as a paternal bloodline, you can easily adjust the family tree (**Handouts 14 & 22**) to incorporate female descendants.

If you have made a point of tracking time throughout the adventure, you can have your players go down the well just as the sun sets. This may underscore their sense of urgency and set the mood for the upcoming result of the 1.8c: *Scorpion Attack*, below.

Read or summarize the following to the hero who goes down the well:

A few feet down the well, you realize you must move cautiously to avoid dislodging stones from the wall and causing a collapse. As you inch down the well, you notice abundant mineral deposits along the walls. The mineral is milky white, and when you accidentally brush some from the wall and get it in your mouth, you find it tastes unmistakably salty.

The well is 55 feet deep, with many loose stones lining the walls. This means the character must pass three successive Climbing checks to safely reach the bottom. The stated difficulty assumes the character uses the chain to descend (+2), is climbing in poor lighting (handheld flashlight, -1), and against the loose masonry (-1). Be sure to take into account any circumstantial modifiers such as being lowered at the end of a rope, using a winch, etc.

By the time he touches bottom, the character is in near-darkness and must have a light source to make out any details. At the base, roughly two feet of water and another foot of silt await the hero brave enough to test the stagnant waters. Otherwise, the character must dangle above the water and is penalized -2 to Agility and all related skills.

When the character reaches the bottom, have him make a Notice check:

Failure or Success (not a critical failure): The character notices a stone of a different color and type than the others a few feet above the water line. Etched into the surface is a more complete version of the symbol (Handout 11: Symbol on Stone) the hero may have noticed earlier. No mortar seals the stone in place. If the character chooses to remove the stone, read or summarize the following:

Working carefully, you wiggle the stone from the wall. As you do so, you feel a momentary tingling and hear a buzzing in your ears. The brick pulls free, and the strange feeling passes. You see the rotted remains of a burlap sack in the cavity.

Inside the sack is a locked metal box (see 1.9a: *The Box* for a description).

Raise: the character finds a few brittle human bones and a badly rusted 2-inch wide metal cuff amidst the silt layering the bottom of the well. Nothing else remains to identify the bones.

GM Checklist. Did you...

- Give adventurer who went down the well the opportunity to find the treasure?
- Give the adventurer who went down the well the

opportunity to find human bones buried in the muck at the bottom of the well?

1.8c: Scorpion Attack

You may want to pull aside the character at the bottom of the well for the remainder of this encounter.



With the box safely in hand, you are ready to get out of this hole. As you crane your head upward, a flash of movement catches your attention. A scorpion crawls out of the hole in the wall. As you congratulate yourself on not getting stung while pulling out the box, a second later another scorpion joins the first. Then two more. Four more. Dozens more.

Scorpions swarm out from the hole, over the rock walls, and eventually onto the character. Scorpions appear on the chain (or rope) above the character, so even standing in the middle of the water offers only temporary relief. Due to the number of scorpions, making Vigor rolls against the poison is an exercise in futility.

While you can drag it out and build suspense, the hero cannot avoid all of their stings and he loses consciousness. Right before falling unconscious, the hero sees a man with a pick-ax in one hand reaching out to him with the other.

Simultaneously, a scorpion swarm (see **Appendix 2: Cast of Creatures & Cults**) attacks the characters above ground. These scorpions appear to come out of the briars, or if the characters did something crazy like burn their way through the briars to get to the well—from the ground surrounding the well. Characters at the homestead who are more than 100 yards from the well do not experience the scorpion attack. Instead they experience a blinding flash of light, experience a moment of paralysis, and awaken just as the other characters described below.

Upon regaining consciousness, the heroes discover several hours have passed. It is now well into night, and the stars wink overhead in the black sky above. Each character regains consciousness standing outside the ring of briars, including the person who had been at the bottom of the well. That person finds the box laying beside him. Any and all Fatigue suffered from the scorpion stings has dissipated.

Behind the scenes

Once the box was removed from its hiding spot, the decaying protective spell collapsed entirely. This allowed the lingering effects of the scorpions spell to fully discharge. The intense magical activity acts like a beacon to the cult's sorcerers, who immediately become aware of the box's release. Once the team leaves the ranch, Janice Trent and Bob Campbell return the Chahovic family to their home and murder them. With the circumstantial evidence collected by the cultists earlier, the team members are implicated in the murders.

1.9: Wrap-up

Your heroes can open the box themselves rather than turn it in sight-unseen. The question becomes, what do they do afterward?

1.9a: The Box

The box retrieved from the well is adorned with a faded but legible emblem of Freemasonry (**Handout 12: Freemason Symbol**). Characters may make a Common

Knowledge check to identify the symbol. They may also make a Smarts check at –2 to remember seeing the symbol on the Pinebox public library's cornerstone earlier in the day.

When attempting to open the box, any investigator other than the one who retrieved the box from the well must pass an Agility check at –2 or suffer 1d6 electrical

damage from a weak protection spell. The inside of the box lid is etched with the words, "When the light burns red, the shadow consumes". The box contains a magnifying lens and a leather-bound journal (**Handout 13: Book of Endless Sorrow** sample. This sample isn't a "clue" so much as an example of why it is so difficult for characters to translate the book.).

To read the book, the investigators must translate old Latin (Knowledge (Latin) d6 or better). The journal is

filled with ranting about the awesome power of those who will rule in the next age as soon as the key to the "greater world" is returned. The lens appears to be a magnifying glass made of impure, red-tinged glass. Using the lens to read the book reveals another set of writing under the first. The character spends one hour per page in translation because of the extremely difficult circumstances of reading one set of writing under another. This set of writing is even less legible and much of it defies translation (see *Book of Endless Sorrow*, in **Appendix 3: Magic & Artifacts**).

Behind the scenes

Whoever retrieved the box from the well has now become the center of the adventure. Only a blood descendant of John Blackwell could retrieve and open the box, so for gaming purposes whoever went down the well IS that descendant. The cult tracked down the heir and concocted the treasure hunt specifically to maneuver him into retrieving the box for them. Now, as the team returns to Pinebox, the cult is poised to take the box and have the team members incarcerated.

1.9b: Branching Endings

No matter the plot hook, the characters now face a simple choice—keep the artifacts for themselves or return them to the person who involved them in the hunt at the beginning. Almost certainly your heroes will choose the first option, but methods for dealing with both options are described below.

Ending #1: Keep the “treasure”, don’t go back to Tom Williamson

If the investigators keep the treasure, Deputy Wallis “finds” the murder victims and has a warrant issued for the team’s arrest in the investigation of the double-homicide of Rhonda and Travis Chahovic.

Encourage the team to return to their motel room in Pinebox—at least to pick up their belongings. While crossing the parking lot, give them a Notice check to see Hadji’s green compact car or to hear Hadji banging from inside his car trunk. The car is locked and a Lockpicking check at –4 is required to open it. If they notice the car and choose to open the trunk, read or summarize the following:

The trunk lid finally clicks open, and the tiny dome light reveals the battered occupant. An olive-skinned man wearing a bloody t-shirt and khaki pants is bound and gagged in car’s trunk. Despite the poor lighting, you can tell that he was badly beaten and is even missing one eye. He turns his head and stares weakly up at his rescuers through his remaining eye. He cranes and twists his neck as he tries to spit out the gag.

Assuming a hero removes the gag, Hadji warns them not to give up the lens and falls unconscious.

Whether or not the heroes notice Hadji’s car or open the trunk, Deputy Buddy Wallis arrives almost simultaneously with reinforcements to arrest the team.

Behind the Scenes

Wallis caught Hadji spying earlier in the afternoon and thought he beat him to death. He planned on pinning yet another murder on the team and arranged to catch them “red handed”. To his surprise, Hadji lives.

The investigators are arrested for the other murders and Hadji is rushed to the hospital. Remind players with law enforcement backgrounds of the common adage, “You may beat the rap, but not the ride.”

Ideally, the GM should arrest the heroes before they have time to hide the artifacts or study them in detail. The more time the heroes have to plan, the more difficult it is to keep the adventure on track. However, if the characters hide the artifacts or make other contingency plans, do not sweat it. Zatha’s Chosen planned this charade for a long time and have contingency plans of their own, as described in **Section II: The Cult**.

Ending #2: Return to Tom Williamson for the prize/reward

It does not matter if the team gives Tom the real contents of the box or junk they pick up at an antique shop. If the team returns something to Tom, he greedily takes it from them and reminds them he must have the box verified by the state historical commission on Monday

morning. He says that once the contents are certified, then a press conference and award ceremony can be held in the lobby of the historical commission

Tom locks the front door after the team leaves. As the weary heroes cross the parking lot to their vehicle, give them a Notice check to see Hadji’s green compact car or to hear Hadji banging from inside the trunk of the car. The car is locked and a Lockpicking check at –4 is required to open it. If they notice and choose to open the trunk, read or summarize the following:

***You may beat the rap,
but not the ride.***

The trunk lid finally clicks open, and tiny dome light reveals the battered occupant. An olive-skinned man wearing a bloody t-shirt and khaki pants is bound and gagged in car’s trunk. Even in the poor light, you can tell he was badly beaten and is even missing one eye. He turns his head and stares weakly up at his rescuers through his single eye. He cranes and twists his neck as he tries to spit out the gag.

Meanwhile, Tom exits the rear of the building and drives away. Although the front door is locked, Tom left the rear door open. Nothing remains inside except a folding table and an empty donut box.

If the team calls for an ambulance or police, the police arrive and question the team. The police quickly make the connection to the APB posted by Deputy Buddy Wallis. The team’s vehicle is impounded and they are transferred to the Golan County Jail for questioning (see **Section II: The Cult**). While the team is held for questioning related to the double-homicide of the Chahovics, Hadji is rushed away to a hospital.

If the team takes Hadji to the hospital themselves, the hospital staff delays them until the police arrive. The officers want to collect more information about the beating. If they drop off Hadji at the curb or avoid being delayed at the hospital, the net effect is the same as #1:

- Police issue an APB.
- Warrants are issued.
- The team is arrested before the morning—even should they leave town.

Section II: The Cult

2.1: County Jail

Section II begins with the investigators incarcerated in the Golan County Jail. The arrest, transporting, and booking can be roleplayed or you can “fast forward” to the County Jail, below.

The heroes learn they are the center of an investigation for murder and kidnappings, and get a glimmer of who may be behind it.

The ride to the Golan County Jail is thankfully short. The torn upholstery in the back seat of the deputies' cars reeks of smoke, sweat, and puke. The deputies have made a science of roughly treating their prisoners without doing anything severe enough to draw a lawsuit. You're told any phone calls must wait until you've been processed, but the sleepy-eyed deputy takes his time with your photos, fingerprints, and paperwork.

As noted at the end of Part I, any legal maneuvering (lawyers, police “favors”, professional courtesy, etc.) must wait until the team has been booked into the Golan County Jail. Characters in law enforcement may be treated as a potential witness rather than a suspect, but the net result is that they are held overnight until they can be questioned. The heroes are booked and paired off into adjoining cells to spend the remainder of the night. Other than a drunken teen from East Texas University, the heroes have the cellblock to themselves.

2.1a: Dreamland

The characters have been awake for many hours, and it is now the early hours of the morning. If any hero tries to sleep, he or she is plagued by strange dreams. All the heroes except the one who went down the well have similar dreams. The hero who went down the well (designated as the Blackwell descendant) has a different dream. If you have the time, separate the players and describe their dreams one at a time.

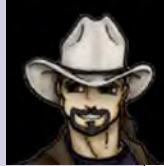
Texas Criminal Law in a Nutshell

Believe it or not, a person can be arrested for any—or no—reason at all. However, the suspect can only be held for a “reasonable amount of time” without charges being brought against him. Otherwise, a lawyer can file a writ of habeas corpus (Latin for “produce the body”) to get the suspect removed.

The writ is heard at an arraignment, which must happen within 24 hours of the request and is presided over by a judge. At this time charges are formally brought against the suspect and the authorities must prove they have enough evidence to justify the arrest. Bail is also set at the arraignment. If the judge decides the evidence is insufficient, the suspect goes free.

Alternately, the authorities may come to the same conclusion before the arraignment and release the suspect themselves.

In the case of the heroes in Bloodlines, the evidence is entirely circumstantial in nature and based solely on their signed permission forms. Although the Golan County Sheriff's Department may think they have a case, Sgt. Rodriguez of the Texas Rangers may believe otherwise. When all else fails, just remember: this is Pinebox (and an RPG), so sometimes you can play fast and loose with the rules.



Read or summarize the following to all heroes who choose to sleep, except the Blackwell descendant:

As the night advances and you fall asleep, your body relaxes and your rough surroundings drift away. Although your body rests, your mind does not. In your dreams, you're running. Something... someone is after you. You run out into the night away from the flickering flames that are the only sources of light. Behind you, the sound of a clinking chain and pounding footsteps signals pursuit. Your breath comes in tattered gasps and your pulse roars in your ears in time with the hammering in your chest. You think maybe you can escape, but then your steps falter in the darkness. At that moment, pain lances through your back, pushing aside all other concerns. It burns like a hot poker in your chest. It tears at your flesh and sucks away at your life. You tumble to your hands and knees, but the pain follows. You try to gulp air for a scream, but your lungs fail. You claw at the dirt and grass helplessly...and awaken.

Read the following to the Blackwell descendant, should he fall asleep:

The night grows old, and your rough surroundings drift away as you relax into sleep. Although your body rests, your mind does not. In your dreams, you stumble forward into the night. An inferno licks at your back and its flickering light paints the person ahead in colors of flame. Hatred fuels you forward into the darkness despite your exhaustion. She has betrayed you—taken something very

precious—and no punishment could be too harsh. Each step feels like lifting blocks of lead, but you force yourself onward until she stumbles and falls almost at your feet. You lift your arms over your head in triumph and drive a pick-ax into her back. Your face feels like it could split from grinning as you watch her writhe in agony, gasping for air. You laugh as she suffers... and are still laughing when you awaken.

2.1b: Morning Interrogation

Before sunrise the next morning, a trio of deputies enters the cellblock and removes the team for questioning. If feasible, take the players aside one at a time. This may slow down the game but is more realistic and allows for more individualized roleplaying. Whether together or individually, read the heroes the following:

This morning the deputies treat you with none of the rough behavior displayed just a few hours earlier. As you're led to a plain room outside the cellblock, you suddenly understand why. The room contains little more than a plain table and a few chairs. A mirror covers one wall—undoubtedly two-way—and a tall, meticulously groomed Hispanic man examines you. He wears a felt cowboy hat and a conspicuously-placed badge consisting of a five-pointed star set inside a circle. The man introduces himself as Sergeant James Rodriguez with the Texas Rangers, and he asks you to take a seat. A deputy guards the door and another enters to sit at the table with Rodriguez, but the Texas Ranger is clearly in charge.

The murders and potential kidnapping case earned the attention of state law enforcement, in the form of the Texas Rangers. If the heroes absolutely refuse to be questioned without a lawyer, introduce Steven Fuller from 2.1d: *The Cavalry Arrives* further below.

Sergeant Rodriguez questions each hero about the murders of Rhonda and Travis Chahovic and shows them the signed note with their names and drivers-license numbers on it (from 1.8: *Pear Creek Ranch*). He wants to know their reason for being in Pinebox and their connection to the Chahovics. Sergeant Rodriguez sits patiently throughout the character's story. He then tries to catch the hero off-guard by suddenly asking about the disappearance of Ronny, Jessica, and Molly Blackwell—three cousins—who are currently missing.

Point to **Handout 8: Blackwell cousins** as an example of what the missing Blackwells look like. If the characters found the photo in the Chahovic driveway

and possessed it when arrested, so much the better! This makes the heroes look even guiltier! Sergeant Rodriguez may admit that the evidence against the heroes is so far circumstantial, but the locals seem to feel like they have both cases solved.

Heroes in formal law enforcement benefit from the Texas Ranger's willingness to keep an open

mind—his attitude toward such individuals is indifferent. For teams lacking a character in law enforcement, Sgt. Rodriguez's initial attitude is unfriendly. With this attitude, he refuses to answer questions about the investigation. Characters who roleplay appropriately may take a Persuasion check to shift Sgt. Rodriguez's attitude to Neutral on a Success or Friendly with a Raise, after which the information below may be gathered through roleplaying:

The man introduces himself as Sergeant James Rodriguez with the Texas Rangers...

Who are these missing Blackwells we're accused of kidnapping?

Jessica and Molly are sisters. Ronny is a cousin. They all share the last name of Blackwell. Molly and Ronny are sophomores at East Texas University. Jessica is a high school senior. Sergeant Rodriguez does not know about the Blackwell Gold legend, and certainly does not know their genealogy well enough to know if they are descended from John Blackwell.

Where were they last seen?

Jessica babysat for someone before being picked up at 9 pm by Molly and Ronny. No one has seen them since. A high school friend found the vehicle abandoned off a country road around 11:30 pm. (Behind the Scenes: The "high school friend" was actually cultist Louis Connelly and the county road was near Blackwell's Lot.)

Who hired Jessica? Who actually last saw her?

Vera Bock hired Jessica to baby-sit her grandchildren while Vera and her husband attended a Historical Society meeting. She is the last person to see the Blackwell cousins before they were reported missing. She is not a suspect.

Once the questioning is complete, the heroes are returned to their cells.

2.1c: Wolf in Pig's Clothing

Immediately before the flavor text below, secretly inform the Blackwell descendant that the air temperature around him suddenly becomes much colder.

Behind the Scenes

Robert wants to warn his descendant of impending danger. These warnings occur several times over the next two parts of the adventure. Currently, his spirit commands less power than Nicole and he does little more than cause cold spots for twenty seconds at a time. This is a localized, short-term phenomenon, that other characters may not feel it themselves.

After passing the note, read or summarize the following:

Shortly after being returned to your jail cells, Deputy Buddy Wallis swaggers down the corridor and stops in front of you. A grin splits his face, and in a low voice he says, "Bet ya' don't feel so tough now, huh? Oh, you'll be popular with the boys in prison all right. Yeah, I got those killings pinned on you, reeeeeeal good. Who's the big shot now, huh? Just you wait. You ain't seen nothing yet." He ignores your calls as he strolls back out the cellblock, but pauses at the doorway to say, "When the light burns red, the shadow consumes."

If the team tries to tell Sgt. Rodriguez what happened, he remains obviously skeptical and is unable to find Deputy Wallis for confirmation.

2.1d: The Cavalry Arrives...sort-of

Thirty minutes later, the team gets another visitor—local lawyer Steven Fuller. Fuller appears disheveled and up close smells of alcohol. He tells the team he has “connections” that informed him of their imprisonment, and he offers his services. If the team remains skeptical, he demonstrates his “connections” by calling a guard by name and getting him to provide food for the prisoners. If the heroes accept his offer, Fuller has the team out on bail within 30 minutes.

If the team remains intransigent, Fuller walks away—but warns them that the Golan County Sheriff's Department likes easy answers and won't go out of their

way to find evidence to clear them. If the team wants proof to exonerate their names, they'll have to find it from the other side of the bars.

If the team refuses Fuller's offer, you may use any appropriate justification to release them. Some examples are:

- Their own lawyer arranges for their release on bail;
- One of the characters uses his law enforcement ties to pull some strings
- If your heroes filmed the encounter with “Rhonda” or “Travis” Chahovic and the camera was taken as evidence, Sgt. Rodriguez determines

that the people posing as Rhonda and Travis are imposters. They do not match the murder victims.

- The county's case looks weak when

Rodriguez uncovers the fact that the GPS company was not holding a contest, despite an official Geocaching map and flyer to the contrary found in the team's vehicle.

- Hadji regained consciousness in the hospital during the night confirmed their story.

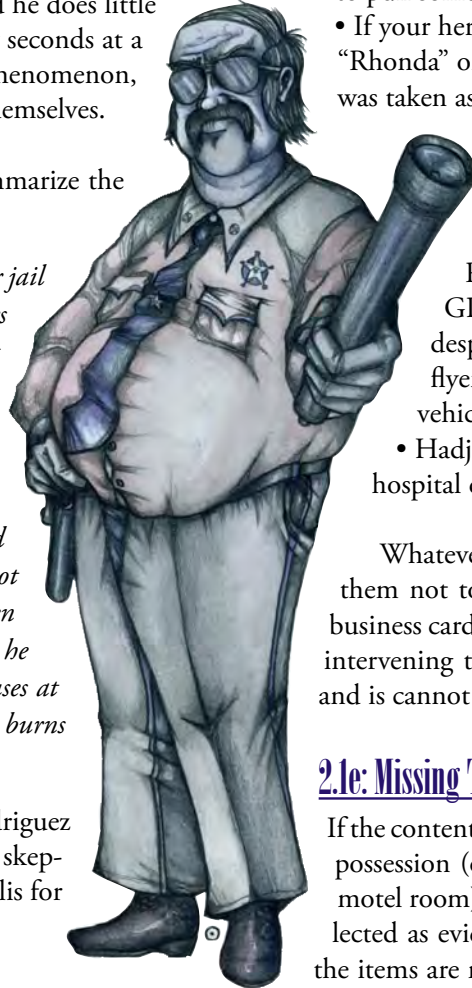
Whatever the scenario, Sgt. Rodriguez warns them not to leave the county and gives them his business card with his cellular phone number. In the intervening time, Deputy Wallis has gone off duty and is cannot be located.

2.1e: Missing Treasure

If the contents of the “treasure” box were in the team's possession (or nearby, such as in their vehicle or a motel room), Deputy Wallis ensured they were collected as evidence. However, the group now learns the items are missing from the police evidence room (or from their previously impounded vehicle).

If they successfully hid the book and lens before being captured, they still find the items missing. Without the protection of John Blackwell's original spell, the tome and lens are vulnerable to the cult's magic. Norma Wallis tracks and retrieves the items while the heroes are behind bars.

If one or more characters remained with the book and lens while the others were arrested, then they suffer a magical attack from Vera Bock and Norma Wallis. Use any of the non-lethal spells described under their names in **Appendix 1: Cast of Characters**.



GM Checklist: Did you...

- Read the dreams to the heroes who slept?
- Question the team about the missing cousins?
- Describe the cold spot to the Blackwell descendant?
- Reveal that Deputy Buddy Wallis framed the team for the murders and knows the phrase “When the light burns red, the shadow consumes”?
- Tell the heroes (through lawyer Steven Fuller) to find evidence to clear their names because the Golan County Sheriff’s department may not?
- Eventually release the heroes from jail?

2.2: Meet the Press

The heroes meet a reporter who can provide them with information about the kidnap victims, in exchange for “a scoop”.

As you dejectedly leave the county jail, you notice a short, middle-aged man smoking nearby. His worn khaki slacks and white button-down shirt appear as if they were slept in. When he spots you leaving the building, he quickly crushes out his cigarette and approaches. He introduces himself as Jerry Daniels, a reporter with the Austin Post.

An informant told him the murders were the result of a game, which makes this a particularly juicy story. He is also covering the kidnapping angle, and trades information he has learned about the missing cousins in exchange for information about the investigators and the murders. He cooperates with the team and answers their questions as long as they answer his own questions about the case. (Quid pro quo, Clarice!)

Daniels asks for information regarding the game they were playing and their relationship to the Chahovics. Then he follows up with questions based on the characters’ answers.

When prompted with an appropriate question, Daniels reveals the following:

Who are these Blackwell cousins we’re accused of kidnapping?

Jessica and Molly are sisters. Ronny is a cousin. They all share the last name of Blackwell. He does not know anything about the Blackwell Gold legend, and certainly does not know their genealogy enough to know if they are descended from John Blackwell. The three cousins were good friends. Molly and Ronny are sophomores at nearby East Texas University, although Molly still

lives at home with her parents. Jessica is a high school senior.

Where were they last seen?

Jessica babysat for someone before being picked up by Molly and Ronny at 9 pm, and no one has seen them since. A high school friend found their vehicle abandoned off a county road around 11:30 pm. His source tells him a sheriff’s investigator found a small amount of blood on the seat.

Who last saw them?

Vera Bock hired Molly to baby-sit her grandchildren. She is the last person to see them before they turned up missing.

*...a sheriff’s investigator found
a small amount of blood
on the seat.*

If the team mentions that they plan on doing their own investigation, Daniels asks to tag along.

2.3: What now?

It should be clear to the characters that it is up to them to investigate the kidnapping and follow up on any other leads. However, for those who did not sleep in jail it has been more than 24 hours since they last slept. At some point during the day they may return to the motel to rest and clean up. If any of the characters sleep, he dreams similar to the ones describe in 2.1a: *Dreamland*. Remember to keep track of the time, since the heroes are racing the clock!

2.4: Vera Bock

If the heroes learn the last person to see the kidnapping victims is Vera Bock, they may want to question her. What occurs depends on when they try to approach her.

2.4a: Before visiting the Masonic Lodge

When the characters arrive at Vera Bock’s house, Robert attempts another warning to the Blackwell descendant by creating a cold spot around him. It dissipates less than 20 seconds later.

Vera Bock lives with her husband in a small but relatively new home on five wooded acres located just a few of miles outside of town. She seems very surprised to see the characters, but invites them in and confirms the babysitting story. The investigators see a typical grandmotherly home—shelves full of pictures and knickknacks and a shelf holding antique lanterns.

When questioned about the kidnapping, Bock says she was at a Historical Society meeting last night. This is why she needed a babysitter for her grandchildren. She had planned on having the children visit for the entire weekend, but her daughter picked them up early and returned to Houston (roughly three hours away). Characters may sense Bock is hiding something with a successful Notice check; however there are no clues as to what her secret might be.

If the investigators tell her that they have been accused of abducting the cousins, she acts worried and demands that they leave.

2.4b: After visiting the Masonic Lodge

Vera Bock's house is a small but relatively new brick home located on five wooded acres just a couple of miles outside of town. When the team arrives, the driveway is empty and nobody answers the door. Since the Bocks live in the country, nobody notices if the team breaks in. Inside, they find the same scene as in 3.7: *Bock House Revisited* (including dead body and blood) with the exception of the natural gas and detonator.

2.5: A Trip to the Hospital

The heroes investigate the stranger whom they rescued prior to their arrest.

The parking lot of the Golan County Community Medical Center is less than one third full. The medical center is a single building with several wings added over the years. Even now, a sign is posted in front of new construction announcing the imminent addition of a new wing that will double the number of patient rooms to 24.

Hadji left the hospital before the heroes were released from jail. The heroes may stealthily peek into each room or simply ask the information desk. If a hero asks at the desk, the senior citizen volunteering there provides the following:

Are you talking about that "John Doe" they brought in last night? I wasn't here when he came in, but I hear he was wearing a turban! We sure don't get many folks like that here in Pinebox, other than maybe a few out at the school. Anyway, he's not here any more. He snuck out. Must not have been able to pay his bill. But I was here when that big deputy came here lookin' for him. When he found out the other deputy was asleep and that Arab had escaped, he was hollerin' so loud I could hear him from here! After Doctor Lasko shushed him up, the two deputies left together. I'll bet that one is in some real hot water for sleeping on the job!

"Persuasion" vs. "Notice"



If nothing else, Bloodlines should build a healthy amount of paranoia in your characters. Depending on your chosen plot hook and the team's earlier experiences, they may even start the adventure feeling paranoid. Sooner or later, your characters may question the motives of the various Pinebox natives they encounter—and with good reason!

Keep in mind that Zatha's Chosen have planned and rehearsed this charade for more than a year. Some cultists (and Nicole Blackwell) have naturally high Persuasion skills, while others only know their personal part in this deceit. However, should a perceptive hero sense something is amiss, it does not necessarily mean the game is up.

There are many ways to allow the hero his rightful reward for a good roll without giving up the farm. For instance, you could describe how it seems like the character is holding something back, acts distracted, or seems worried. If the hero decides to follow up on his intuition, the character may deny the allegation or admit to a lesser, inconsequential offense.

2.6: Masonic Lodge

The heroes investigate the significance of the Masonic symbol found in the well and on the box containing the book and lens.

The location of the Pinebox Masonic lodge is well known. The address is listed in the phone book, and a sign hangs above the street-level entrance. The building itself is a historic two-story structure with a furniture store occupying the street-level storefront. Read or summarize the text below:

The Masonic lodge is located in the upper floor of one of the old downtown buildings. The unlocked glass door at street level leads up a well-worn staircase to an open door on the second floor.

Refer to **GM Figure 5: Masonic lodge**. If someone wishes to flip through the book, they find a few dozen names with dates ranging over the past four months. None of the names belong to people they have met.

When the characters enter the Lodge, read or summarize the text below.

Peering through the doorway, you see an old room with a worn linoleum floor. Although the walls appear to have been repainted in the not-too-distant-past, a few large cracks mar the plaster surface. Rows of folding tables and chairs line the room. Two other doors leading deeper into the building are closed. Against the opposite wall, four tall windows over-



Freemasonry—the “Secret” Society Everyone Knows

Modern Freemasonry traditionally traces its origins back to the period beginning 800 years ago when hundreds of Gothic cathedrals were constructed across Europe. The story goes that as constructions wound to an end in the 16th century, the stonemason guilds found their membership diminishing. To bolster their numbers, they accepted members who were not practicing masons, but wanted to share in the fraternal aspect of the guilds. Over time, the non-practicing (“free”) masons outnumbered the practitioners, thus the modern term Freemason.

Today, Freemasonry is a fraternal organization open to men of good moral character without regard to race or occupation. While it is not a religion (like at any polite dinner party, members are discouraged from discussing religion or politics), a consequence of its historical roots is that applying members must profess faith in a monotheistic God. Beyond that statement, members each practice their faith (outside the lodge) as their consciences dictate.

Although detractors label it a “secret” society, Freemasonry hides neither its existence nor its purpose. You can usually find a Masonic lodge listed in your local phone book, meeting times posted in your local newspaper, and meeting places clearly marked with the Masonic emblem. Freemasonry gained its reputation for being “secretive” because the meetings are closed to non-members, and—like some college fraternities—Freemasons have secret signals used for recognizing other members.

According to popular conspiracy theories, the world is run by a shadowy group referred to as the “Illuminati”. This so-called “secret” group is said to consist partially or totally of high-ranking Freemasons. While dozens of books have debunked the myth, the urban legend survives in the popular consciousness because it is impossible to prove a negative. How does one definitely prove the non-existence of something?

For more information on Freemasonry, visit www.masonicinfo.com/sitemap.htm

look the street below. More than a dozen photos line one wall, each appearing to be portraits of men. One end appears to be older photos, while the last picture appears fairly recent. As you peer inside, you see an elderly man sweeping up popcorn.

The old man is Kevin Martin, the lodge Worshipful Master (fancy title for President). He is friendly and assumes the heroes are visiting Masons. The old man puts them to work helping him break down tables left out from Bingo Night the previous evening.

If the team asks about John or Robert Blackwell, Martin leads them to the line of photos on the wall and points to a very old picture of Past Worshipful Master John Blackwell. The long-bearded old man in the picture appears dour. If the heroes ask for more info, Martin becomes suspicious about their motivations. He demands the Masonic pass-phrase, which the characters almost certainly do not know.

However, they might think instead to speak another phrase: “When the light burns red, the shadow consumes.” If not, they do not trigger the spell (below) and Martin demands they leave. He is too frail to back up any threats, but is very insistent. If a character speaks the trigger phrase at any time while in the lodge, everyone in the room feels a sudden change. Read or summarize the text below:

You feel a moment of vertigo as if gravity swirls and tugs from several directions at once. The air feels charged with potential energy, like a lightning strike waiting to happen. The hair on your arms and neck stand on end.

Give the heroes an opportunity to react. If anyone attempts to harm Mr. Martin, he has just gained a temporary bonus of +7 to his Toughness as he is now a magical vessel.

When Mr. Martin’s turn arrives, read or summarize the following:

You feel the energy in the room coalesce around the old man. His eyes roll back into his head, and he seems to stand straighter than before. As he continues to gain height, you realize he is not just standing taller—he is floating off the floor! Mr. Martin pantomimes holding a book in front of him and appears completely unaware of his surroundings. He says, “Robert, please do not be alarmed. It’s me, your father.”

Regardless of what the players do, the possessed Mr. Martin speaks on his initiative, oblivious to his surroundings. You may want to warn the players to listen carefully, since this is a long message and should not be repeated. Read the following aloud:

This reeks of witchcraft, but please believe me when I swear my soul still belongs to Almighty God.

If you are hearing this message, then my mortal flesh has expired and my soul has moved on to the Kingdom of Heaven. I regret leaving you with this burden, but since you have found your way to this lodge and spoken the words to release this message, I know you have grown into a man of decency.

Let me tell you how this came to pass so you may understand the trials still before you.

In 1895, three years ago, Marie Kunchek was stolen from her bed. You were only five at the time and probably don't remember little Marie. She was close to your age and would have gone to school with you—if only we had been faster.

As it was, Marie's father heard her screams and found her bed empty and the window broken. He spent an hour tearing through the brush by himself before he finally collected his senses. He sent his son to our house to borrow our hunting dogs.

Of course I wasn't about to let Paul Kunchek hunt down the villains by himself. Right away I sent a message with his boy calling on the Lodge to help. Every able-bodied Brother within more than 15 miles answered the call, and we set off to catch up with Marie. Round about 3 am our dogs led 24 of us to a little building about 12 miles outside of Pinebox.

It looked like it could have been a church or a schoolhouse, but it was neither. Someone had built it squatter-style out away from town in a fallow cotton field.

When Paul Kunchek kicked open that door, we all boiled in there with the righteous wrath of the Lord Almighty, but what we saw curdled our blood and stopped us flat.

Little Marie was dead. They'd... skinned and gutted her like a rabbit. The only light came from the fiend's lantern, tinted red from a lens attached to the front, but even in the weak light we could see more than a dozen filthy heathens.



We fought like men possessed, and the light from the lantern turned an even darker, bloodier red. When I caught a glimpse of a hole in the floor where there hadn't been one before, I realized we'd stumbled upon an unholy ceremony to release Satan and allow him to walk the earth. Even in that glimpse, I saw something dark reach out, seeking souls to carry back into the pits of brimstone and fire.

I grabbed the first thing at hand—a heavy book—and threw it at the lantern. The lantern tipped, the flame went out, and just that quick, it was over. A pair of witches escaped alive, but we found one not far away the next morning, having bled to death.

We all were sickened by what had happened, and in the aftermath some of us were not in our right

Little Marie was dead. They'd... skinned and gutted her like a rabbit.

minds. We put a torch to the pile of bodies in the middle of the room, and for some reason on my way out I scooped up the broken lantern and the book I'd thrown at it. We stood watching the building burn, and the next morning we scattered the ashes and salted the earth. Only a few pieces of foundation were left. I was amazed when I realized none of us had so much as taken a serious injury, but it turned out later I was wrong.

All of us were shaken to the bone by the evil we had witnessed. It was even more difficult because of our vow that we would speak to nobody of what we had seen and done. The only memorial for that wicked night is the coordinates of the building, which I have requested in my will to be placed upon my tombstone.

It was nearly a week before I realized I still had the broken lantern and unholy book. Damn Satan for filling me with curiosity! I learned that while the lantern itself was worthless, the lens was another matter. It cannot be marred by any mallet, nor melted in the hottest furnace. And when held over the pages of the likewise indestructible book, I found hidden writing.

I began a study of the book, and like Adam and the fruit from the tree of knowledge, I am forever cast out from mundane life. I see the world in a horrible new light, and only two things keep me anchored firmly in this life. The first is my love and affection for you, my son. The second is my sacred duty to safeguard these artifacts and ensure they do not come into the possession of evil men such as those whom we destroyed.

As I was saying, many of us became distraught or worse after that night. I found within the pages of this book a method for helping my brother Masons. I was able to remove those painful memories, thereby restoring a more reasonable frame of mind. Employing those rituals, one by one I blotted the memories of that night from my fellows, but at a cost. For every memory I steal, my own grows sharper. Last week I healed the last of my companions, but now every waking moment I am consumed by the memory of how close we came to Armageddon.

So attuned am I to this lens and tome that I hear their beckoning whispers, even now. They call out to be used, to subjugate mankind, to open the gates of hell and let demon-kind spill forth. Only I stand between Earth and Armageddon, and I fear that I am sorely unsuited for the task. That is why I have used a variation of the tome's witchery to plant this message for you here in the Lodge. Tomorrow, while you are in church, I will bury these works of evil in the deepest place I can think of. I will also employ one last spell—one to cloak and mute the artifacts from the attention of evil men. Only you will be able to retrieve it, though I pray that you will never have cause to do so.

Protect that box with your life, my son. Protect it from evil, and may God have mercy on your soul.

I hope one day you can forgive me for the burden I've placed on your shoulders. I know all too well its weight. Protect that box with your life, my son. Protect it from evil, and may God have mercy on your soul.

After the message ends, Mr. Martin settles slowly to the ground and regains consciousness. He feels very lightheaded and off balance. Mr. Martin has no

memory of what just occurred. As long as the heroes did not harm him, he remains none the wiser. If the team asks him about what just transpired, he thinks they are playing some sort of joke he does not understand. If the team presses the issue, they must make a Persuasion check at -4 or Mr. Martin becomes angry and asks them to leave. While the conversation is still in progress, hit one of the players with the 2.6a: *Call from Hadji*.

2.6a: Call from Hadji

(For use if one of the characters is carrying a cellular phone.)

Scenario 1: The team found Hadji in the trunk and got him medical attention.

A man who calls himself Hadji introduces himself on the phone. He says he is the one whom the team rescued from the trunk of the car, and thanks them. He informs them that he is still in bad condition, but he has fled the hospital. He says he acquired their contact info from the police. If the cellular number is unlisted, etc., Hadji tells them he has a friend with a credit agency who pulled up their phone number—and by the way, their phone bill is overdue. Now skip to *Hadji's Warning*, below.

Scenario 2: The team never encountered Hadji

A man who calls himself Hadji introduces himself on the phone. He says he observed the team Saturday morning meeting with a man who calls himself Tom Williamson. He says he debated contacting them, but delayed the meeting until Deputy Wallis attacked him. Because of this assault, Hadji felt it was critical that he reach them. He says he traced their contact information from their license plate. Hadji tells them he has a friend with a credit agency who pulled up their information—and by the way, their phone bill is overdue. Proceed to *Hadji's Warning*, below.

Hadji's Warning

Please listen carefully. I am a doctoral student of folklore at the University of Texas. My dissertation is on common elements among modern-day cults. During my research, I learned about two cults located on either side of the Atlantic too similar for it to be a coincidence. Five years ago the European cult kidnapped half a dozen kids for a ritual and skinned them alive. Afterward, they turned on one another until they were all dead. On this side of the pond it barely made the news, but it embarrassed the German government and the details were quickly hushed up.

The group operating in Texas calls itself Zatha's Chosen and follows the same belief—namely, if they can kill enough innocent children then a demon will grant them immortality and limitless power. It's pretty much the usual loony nonsense. However, the OTHER group must have snapped when the demon didn't appear, and there's no reason to think this one won't either. Now that you found the book and magnifying glass that Zatha's Chosen believe are essential to their ritual, it will only be a matter of time. You MUST be on the lookout for any word of a kidnapping because that will be a sure sign the cult is about to perform their ceremony.

Hadji answers any questions he can, and is horrified when told of the kidnappings. He promises to contact the authorities, but in the meantime the team should seek out and stop the ceremony. He says if the cult already has their victims, then the ceremony will most likely occur this very night. He has no idea where they may hold the ceremony, other than some place holding religious importance to them.

Between the message at the Lodge and Hadji's phone call, the team should strongly suspect that the ritual will take place at the coordinates on John Blackwell's headstone. Since they want to stop the cult and clear their names, you might hint that they should call the Texas Ranger (using the cellular number on the business card he gave them) for backup. Rodriguez answers and is highly skeptical, but agrees to meet them at the site.

2.7: A Pair of Messages

If the team solved the mystery of where to find the cult early in the day and they may arrive at the ritual site before 6 pm, you should slow them down with this optional encounter. Read or summarize the following:

Your vehicle speeds down the narrow country road, hurtling by a patchwork of second-growth pine forests and farming pastures. As you stare out the window, the air around you suddenly grows so cold that your breath steams in the air and you shiver uncontrollably. In a matter of seconds all the windows fog up, leaving you blind to the road beyond. In the chaos that follows, you catch a glimpse of a word written as

if with an invisible finger upon the front windshield. It says, "Family"

In desperation, the spirit of Robert attempts to warn his descendant. When the team is four miles from their destination, the temperature in the car plummets to freezing. The characters may shiver uncontrollably and the driver must make a Driving check to avoid going off the road as the windows completely fog up. On the front windshield, the word "family" appears. This simple, enigmatic warning expends all of Robert's energy for the moment, and even as the last letter appears the temperature rises back to normal.

Aware of Robert's meddling, Nicole delivers a message of her own—albeit one more deadly. Waiting until

the car is going at least 40 mph, the spirit of Nicole attempts to possess the driver and crash the car. Read about the possession ability under *Lost Soul: Dominating Spirit* in **Appendix 2: Cast of Creatures & Cults**.

If the driver is possessed she wrenches the wheel to the side and sends the vehicle careening off the road during a surprise round. The passengers have one round to stop the driver (or bail out) as the vehicle barrels through a barbed wire fence, over a fallow pasture toward a tree. To do so, at least one character must achieve a Raise on an opposed Agility check against the driver. Characters in the back seat suffer -2 to their rolls. If the other teammates fail to stop the car, it crashes at a speed of 20". After the wreck, Nicole releases control of the driver, who can clearly remember his actions but not the cause behind them.

If the vehicle survives the crash and you need to delay the party, you can always say it is "stuck" in the soft grass of the pasture.

The vehicle now rests 1/3 of the way up a gently sloping hill. The first 1/3 is fallow pasture, while the remaining 300 yards up to the top is lightly wooded. Characters can see roughly 40 feet into the trees.

Outside the car, have the team make a Notice check -2 to spot the form of a woman (Nicole) at the edge of some woods adjoining the pasture. If they approach, she fades back into the woods, leading them on foot toward the cult's ritual location. Other random ghostly encounters between the forest and the cult are at your discretion. If the team follows the road, several vehicles pass them but none stop voluntarily. The team may follow the road or cut cross-country (saving roughly one mile).

Behind the Scenes:

Nicole's spirit craves the same thing in death as she did in life—the book and lens. While she instinctively fears and hates the Blackwell descendant, she considers the others her personal pawns. Consequently, she does not really seek to kill the team—at least, not yet. On the other hand, Robert's weak meddling infuriates her. Possessing the driver was not part of her plan, and her inability to drive wrecked the vehicle. Realizing the need to make up for her tantrum, she leads the heroes cross-country to the ritual site.

GM Checklist: Did you...

- Describe the temperature drop, fogged windows, and the enigmatic message “family” written on the windshield?
- Create a traffic accident by having the driver swerve the car suddenly off the road?

2.8: The Ritual Site

(aka “Blackwell's Lot”)

The heroes arrive at Blackwell's Lot to find Texas Ranger Sgt. Rodriguez and Deputy Wallis waiting for them.

As you approach, you see a Texas highway patrol car parked at the edge of the lot. Sergeant Rodriguez stands leaning against the car door, watching the road from across the roof. You see the heads of two more people inside the car facing away from you.

Give Rodriguez Notice checks to spot the heroes once they are within view. If the characters did not call the Texas Ranger to tell him where they were going, he later reveals that Deputy Wallis led him out here because the kidnapping victims' car was found on this lot.

Two other people sit inside the highway patrol car. Unless one of the characters is carrying binoculars, the figures are indistinguishable until they are within 60 feet. At that point, the characters can make a Notice check to identify a state trooper uniform worn by the person in the front seat. The other figure is purposefully slouched in the back and not recognizable as Deputy Buddy Wallis until the characters are within 30 feet.

Once Sgt. Rodriguez spots the team, read or summarize the following:

From the way he stares in your direction, there's little doubt Sgt. Rodriguez has spotted you. You see the Texas Ranger signal to the passengers, and a highway patrol trooper joins Rodriguez outside the

car. He makes no attempt to hide the way he rests his hand comfortably on his holstered pistol. The rear-seat passenger momentarily shifts but otherwise remains slouched in the car. Rodriguez waves you forward expectantly.

Sergeant Rodriguez acts cautiously after having listened to more than an hour of poison against the team by Deputy Wallis. Rodriguez orders the team to line up against the car for a frisking. At this point, Robert tries to warn the Blackwell descendent of impending danger with another cold spot. The heroes might protest a search once they recognize Deputy Wallis. In response Rodriguez promises to get to the bottom of everything, but only after the team has been searched. If they resist, the trooper “pulls leather” and covers them with his weapon.

Deputy Wallis exits the vehicle as the team lines up against the car, pulling his weapon ostensibly to cover the characters as the state trooper frisks them. Rodriguez stands on the other side of the car, facing the team. Wallis saunters around behind the investigators gets The Drop on the state trooper. He shoots the trooper in the back of the head at point blank range!

After everyone is dealt in, Deputy Wallis attempts to kill the Texas Ranger and the heroes. He does not flee unless he is at 3 Wounds. The Texas Ranger chooses discretion over valor when he takes any Wounds whatsoever. If possible, the Deputy should die in this encounter while the Ranger lives.

***He shoots the trooper
in the back of the head
at point blank range!***

Assuming Sgt. Rodriguez survives, the characters must convince him not to haul them all back to town. Strangely, none of the radios or cell phones work, but the vehicle's ignition still cranks. In light of the battle, Rodriguez is more likely to believe the team's story, and his first concern is still the safety of the kidnapping victims. He is agreeable to staking out the site from a brush-line to the East of the lot, although he stresses that nobody makes a move until the teens are in sight and he gives the word.

He also suggests hiding the trooper's car, which is stocked with the following: notebook computer, digital camera, portable radio, cellular phone & charger, video camera, binoculars, flashlight, hand spotlight, Reming-

ton 12 ga. shotgun, fingerprint kit, first aid kit, tool box, evidence kit, handcuffs, and bolt cutters.

GM Checklist: Did you...

- Draw the heroes into a fight with the Deputy?
- Kill the state trooper and Deputy Wallis?
- Keep the Texas Ranger alive?
- Have Sgt. Rodriguez command the team not to act until the kidnapping victims are in sight and he gives the word?

2.9: Norma Prepares the Way

A cultist arrives to set the stage for the looming ritual.

At 10:21 p.m., a single car drives up the lane and parks at the edge of Blackwell's Lot. The door shuts, and you see the silhouette of a person emerge and walk to the middle of the lot. Rodriguez signals for you to wait. Weak moonlight glints from a knife held in the figure's left hand, and her voice breaks the quiet country night with chanting.

Characters may roll a Notice check at -4 to recognize Norma Wallis (the librarian) by the car's dome light when she opens the door. Nobody else is in the car. Characters with the Knowledge (Middle Egyptian) skill recognize the words as prayer for shelter and concealment. If the characters attack her, shorten the "drama" of the description below and end it with the spell casting on his first round of the fight.

Robert stubbornly attempts to warn the Blackwell descendant with another short-lived cold spot. Read or summarize the following:

As the chanting draws to a crescendo, the figure holds up his right hand and ruthlessly slashes the blade across her index finger. The chanting falters momentarily as she involuntarily gasps, then slashes again at her finger. After a stomach-turning minute, you see something small drop to the ground. The figure's chant rises triumphantly—then abruptly fades away as the figure and all evidence of her presence disappears.

This is the spell *conceal arcana*, cast at a cost of 4 Power Points, allowing it to conceal an area encompassing the ritual site and the cultists' nearby vehicles. Characters may freely enter the spell ef-

fect area marked on the map. Should they investigate, a Notice roll at -2 reveals tire tracks that enter the area simply end.

Fifteen minutes later, a pair of cars drive up the lane. As before, Sgt. Rodriguez insists the team remain hidden until the kidnapping victims are identified. As the vehicles arrive at the edge of the lot, they fade away into nothingness as they enter the spell's protective area. The last evidence of their presence is the faint sound of a door slamming. Afterward, there's little to do but wait.

GM Checklist: Did you...

- Describe another series of cold spots forming around the Blackwell descendant?
- Keep Norma Wallis alive long enough to complete the *conceal arcana* spell?
- Describe the arrival of two more vehicles?



2.10 Ritual Interrupted

With the help of some ghostly intervention, the cultists are revealed. The heroes wage battle, but only one of the kidnapping victims survives.

Heroes near Sgt. Rodriguez's position may make a Notice check at -2 to notice Nicole Blackwell's spirit. Read or summarize the following to those who pass the check:

At 11:48 p.m., a faint shimmering light coalesces into the semi-transparent form of a beautiful woman behind Sgt. Rodriguez. Her expression turns from sad to determined as she silently reaches out with both hands to seize his head. Rodriguez's surprised expression would be comical under other circumstances, but as you watch he almost seems to age in front of your eyes.

The characters may attempt to intervene, but Nicole's **Leeching Touch** attack (see *Lost Soul: Dominating Spirit* in **Appendix 2: Cast of Creatures and Artifacts**) happens so quickly that it is over before they can roll initiative. Sergeant Rodriguez collapses in a daze.

Behind the Scenes

At 11:48 the cult's bloody ritual is in full swing while the heroes remain clueless only a few yards away. Sensing the nexus of magical energy that forms on the site, Nicole sees an opportunity to regain flesh and blood AND acquire the book and lens. However, to achieve her goals Nicole needs the team to distract the cult while she possesses one of the kidnapping victims.

On Nicole's turn, read or summarize the following:

The ghost silently glides from the Texas Ranger's dazed form across Blackwell's Lot. She beckons to you imploringly, then raises her hand and slaps it against an invisible wall. From that point, a brilliant red bolt of lightning appears frozen in mid-air. Moments later, a pair of cracks in the air branch off from the main one. In seconds a dozen more appear, interlacing throughout the lot. A high-pitched whine pierces your brain and shards of earth and sky fall

away like a broken mirror. Where before you saw tranquility, now you see insanity.

The cult has raised a 15' x 5' altar and arranged the bodies of the three kidnapping victims upon it. Six cultists are spaced evenly around the profane altar. They wear simple robes splattered in blood. A lit bull's-eye lantern rests on one corner of the altar, its red lens illuminates the grizzly scene. One of the teens has already been gruesomely murdered, and one cultist uses a hatchet to further disfigure the corpse. As you watch in horror, Vera Bock raises a dagger in both hands high over the writhing chest of the teenage girl.

All the remaining cultists are present at the ritual: Vera Bock, Norma Wallis, Bob Campbell, Janice Trent, Tom Williamson, and Louis Connelly. On the third and forth round of combat, be sure to refer to 2.10a: *Possession* below.

Vera Bock kills the boy on card (Finishing Move). Norma Wallis defends Vera by casting any of the several spells under her listing in **Appendix 1: Cast of Characters**. Remember that she has already cast *conceal arcana* and adjust her stats accordingly. The other cultists attack the heroes with ritualistic knives (except for Bob Campbell, who uses the hatchet). If Vera Bock dies, another

cultist attempts to finish the ritual murders while the other cultists defend against the incursion.

Sergeant Rodriguez rouses himself to help in the fight after spending the first two rounds in a daze. Overall, the Texas Ranger performs poorly under the strain of the bizarre situation. Although he makes an effort to fight the cult, he empties his stomach at the sight of the murdered teens and at the end of combat appears shell-shocked.

Of the three kidnapping victims, only the last—Molly Blackwell—should survive the encounter (see 2.10a: *Possession*, below). For the sake of game play, a cultist should convincingly threaten her life (even inflicting non-lethal wounds) but the girl should be saved by the heroes. If the group has a tough time during the battle,



a “shadowy” pit opens near the lantern and a dark tentacle lashes out to “consume” a cultist. In a pinch this could take out any cultists who pose a serious threat to Molly. *Zatha the Devourer cannot fully enter our world until the ritual is completed, which means the investigators must only extinguish the light from the lantern to close the portal and end the threat.*

One of the six cultists, the *1.4: Road Rage* teen Louis Connelly, surrenders if directly threatened by a character. His face is a mass of bruises received at the hands of Deputy Wallis as punishment for his unapproved attack on the team. With nothing left to lose, the other cultists fight to the death. If at all possible, Sgt. Rodriguez does not allow the characters to kill an unarmed prisoner.

Keep track of who rescues Molly from the altar at the end of combat. This becomes important in the next part.

2.10a: Possession

At some point after three rounds of combat (or sooner if Molly is critically injured), Nicole Blackwell’s spirit appears beside Molly. Give nearby heroes a Notice check at –2 to notice the ghost lovingly caress Molly’s cheek before fading away. If Molly suffered damage she immediately heals 1 Wound.

This seemingly kind act is the moment Nicole possesses Molly’s body. Because of the ritual in progress, Molly is more susceptible to possession than the others. Molly’s frail spiritual state allows Nicole to sustain her control for an extended period of time (see *Molly Blackwell* in **Appendix 1: Cast of Characters**). Nicole controls Molly’s body and heals 1 Wound per hour using the **Gift of Life** ability described in the *Lost Soul: poltergeist* listing in **Appendix 2: Cast of Creatures & Cults**.

In the round following Molly’s possession, Robert’s spirit also manifests. Give nearby characters a Notice check at –2 to notice the following:

A menacing male ghost fades into sight beside the bloody remains of the teens on the altar. The phantom reaches out as two bright, ethereal forms rise from the ruined bodies. The ghost grins in triumph as the spirits are drawn into his own vaporous form, which grows momentarily brighter before fading away.

GM Checklist: Did you...

- Kill the second kidnapping victim (Ronny Blackwell)?
- Describe Ranger Rodriguez’s disappointing performance in the face of the gruesome magic being performed?
- Describe Louis Connelly’s surrender?
- Describe Nicole’s “healing” of Molly?
- Describe Robert’s spirit drawing in the souls of Jessica and Ronny?
- Keep track of which character physically rescued Molly from the cultists’ altar?

2.10b: Aftermath

You can end the adventure here. One of the three Blackwell cousins has been rescued and the cult has been stopped, which is a pretty decent day’s work. However, there are a lot of unanswered questions. Section III, The Haunting answers those questions for teams that choose to pursue this mystery.

Section III: The Haunting

3.1: At the Crime Scene

The heroes pick up the pieces after their showdown with the cult. The sole kidnapping survivor finds a protector, and the Texas Ranger unsuccessfully tries to cope with the grim brutality of the cultists' ritual.

If Sgt. Rodriguez survived the encounter with the cultists, read the following:

After the horror of the last few minutes, Rodriguez stares blankly at the grisly remains of the cult and their victims. Abruptly, he stumbles away and vomits. Repeatedly. Your questions and offers for help are waved off. Clearly, he does not want company right now.

Sergeant Rodriguez has not dealt with this situation well and is near his breaking point. On the bright side, this offers the heroes an opportunity to take the arcane tome and lens. Searching the cult's vehicle, a large SUV previously hidden by the cult's spell, turns up (on a successful Notice check) identification and the cultists' clothing.

Molly Blackwell becomes fixated on the person she believes rescued her from the cultists' attack. This could also be the team member that unties her, unless that person is female or the Blackwell descendant (see *Behind the Scenes*, below). In this case she gravitates to someone else she would see as a benefactor. Molly Blackwell clings to this person as her protector and becomes hysterical if separated from this individual.

Read or summarize the following to Molly's protector and anyone else caring for the young woman.

The surviving kidnapping victim, Molly Blackwell, stares blankly into space. As you help her move someplace more comfortable, you notice she seems to have trouble making her limbs operate correctly. She shivers uncontrollably, although whether from shock or from being near-naked is anyone's guess. Although clearly exhausted, her grip upon your arm is desperately strong. The only time she does not seem oblivious to the world around

her is when you try to draw away. Although her expression remains unchanged, Molly cries and tightens her grip until you relent.

Behind the Scenes:

Nicole's spirit harnessed some of the dark energy from the cult's ritual to help possess Molly. This power has allowed Nicole a deeper level of possession than normal. Although Molly's spirit remains inside her body, Nicole has roughly shoved her to "the back". Nicole has complete control of Molly, and intends on making it permanent.

However, this return to mortality has shocked the ghost and she requires a few hours to adjust to her new body. While she does so, her movements are uncertain. When she is able, Nicole plans to manipulate the heroes into using the book and lens to secure Molly's body permanently. Once accomplished, she intends to eliminate the team and claim the arcane artifacts for herself.

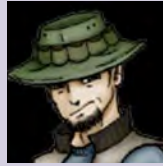
To that end, she falls back on the tried and true—playing 'the damsel in distress' and seduction. She "attaches" herself to one of the characters in hopes of winning him over just as she did with Robert. She believes that with one character in her pocket, she can manipulate the rest of the team. However, she also recognizes the Blackwell bloodline and avoids tangling with her husband's descendant—for the moment.

If teenage cultist Louis Connelly remains alive and is conscious, he tells them "the blood of three shall be as one"

and that "his family" had been opening the way for "Zatha the All-Seeing". With his plans for achieving near godlike power wrecked, Connelly is thoroughly crushed. When the full import of his new future hits home, he is reduced to sobbing in fear.

Gamebuster Alert

If the team secretly (or openly, for that matter) plans on ditching Sgt. Rodriguez and Molly Blackwell, or if Rodriguez is unconscious, you will have to pull out the "big guns". Describe a number of silent, black helicopters quickly descending upon the site and spilling forth heavily armed, SWAT-clad soldiers. Feel free to use as great a show of force as necessary to intimidate the characters into cooperating.



One of the soldiers introduces himself to Rodriguez as part of a special Texas Ranger taskforce and insists that all survivors return with them to the field office in Pinebox. Rodriguez is obviously relieved at the news and gladly follows their instructions. The taskforce knows how many characters to expect and thoroughly searches the area with thermal imaging gear until everyone has been rounded up. They promise medical treatment at their field office. Proceed to **3.2: The Theater**.

In five minutes, Rodriguez recovers enough to insist on returning to town with Molly Blackwell. If the team wants to leave in their own vehicle, Rodriguez requires at least one team member to remain with him as a corroborating witness for the night's events.

As the heroes leave the scene, they discover their electronics (including phones and radios) work again. Rodriguez calls in for backup as they leave the site. Just as he reaches for the police band radio, his cellular phone rings. After answering the phone, his expression goes from panicked to confused. However, he agrees with whatever the caller says and hangs up. If someone asks him about the phone call, he answers, "Backup is here. Everything is going to be all right."

GM Checklist: Did you...

- Establish that Rodriguez is near his breaking point?
- Establish Molly's attachment to one of the heroes?
- Ensure at least one (if not all) of the heroes ride with Rodriguez?
- Establish that someone else contacted Rodriguez as they left the scene?

3.2: The Theater

The heroes wearily return to Pinebox, only to learn they have stepped into a much larger web of trouble and deceit than they imagined.

Pinebox is eerily empty as you drive through the dark, early morning streets. The stoplights have switched from normal operation to flashing, allowing you even quicker access to the center of town. Surprisingly, Rodriguez bypasses the Golan County Jail and instead rolls to a stop in front of a movie theater on the town square. The theater marquee reads "For Sale" and the ticket window is boarded over. Your headlights briefly illuminate a pair Texas Rangers waiting in the shadows near the plywood-covered doors. Before the engine has even stopped, the Rangers stand ready at your doors.

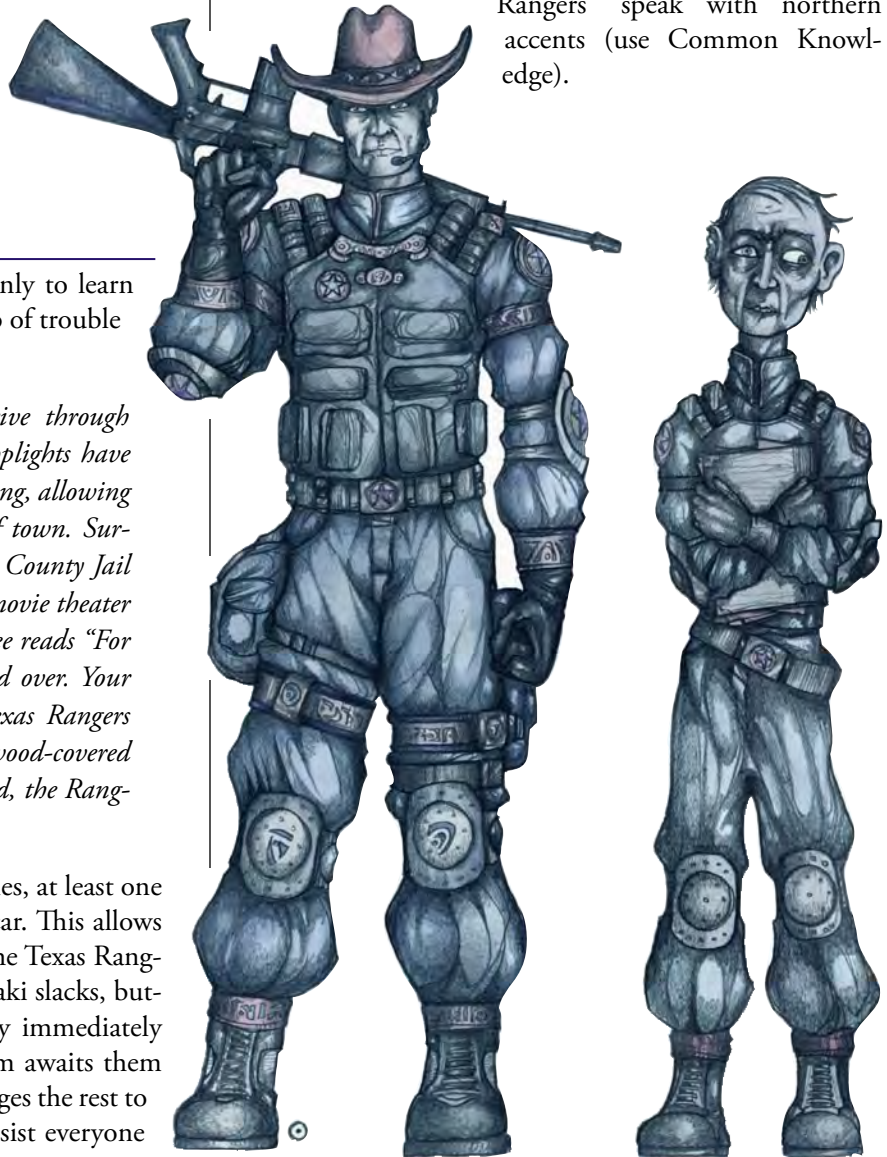
Even if the heroes split into two vehicles, at least one character should be in Sgt. Rodriguez's car. This allows some form of this encounter to occur. The Texas Rangers are dressed much like Rodriguez in kaki slacks, button-down shirts, and cowboy hats. They immediately assure the passengers that a medical team awaits them inside. Rodriguez accepts their aid and urges the rest to follow. The Rangers, while courteous, insist everyone

enter the building for medical attention and "a debriefing". At the door, each person is thoroughly searched by hand and with metal detectors and divested of weapons "for safety" before anyone is allowed to enter.

Upon entering the theater, read or summarize the following:

Once in the theater lobby, you see several men and women dressed in SWAT uniforms consulting a laptop. Beside them, a map covers the dusty refreshment counter. From the layer of dust and stale smell, it's clear this building has been vacant for a while. All lawmen respectfully defer to an extremely ordinary looking man dressed like the Rangers who met you outside.

The heroes may Notice, on a check at -2, strange runes etched upon the Rangers' body armor. If they listen closely, they may notice that some of the "SWAT Rangers" speak with northern accents (use Common Knowledge).



The Texas Ranger in charge introduces himself as Captain Felix Crow (See **Appendix 1: Cast of Characters**) and promises to answer their questions once their medical needs are tended to. Sergeant Rodriguez is led to a separate room for debriefing, but Molly becomes hysterical when a field medic attempts to separate her from “her rescuer”. She is allowed to remain with the team. Any surviving cult members are taken into custody. If the reporter Jerry Daniels remains with the team, he is led to the “press office” ostensibly so he can contact his editor. Actually, Sgt. Rodriguez, the cultists, and Daniels are quickly and quietly sedated.

3.2a: Under the Microscope

Read or summarize the following:

Captain Crow leads you through a door off the lobby and up a flight of narrow, squeaky stairs. You cannot help but notice a pair of SWAT Rangers following, insuring that no one lags behind. At the top, a short hall leads to doors marked “projection room,” “restroom,” and “theater manager.” As you enter the manager’s office, the trailing Rangers wait outside.

Stepping into this room, you could almost believe you entered a different building. Clean and well lit, the smell of lemons does little to mask the underlying twang of industrial-strength cleaners. The 10×15 room is decorated with framed movie posters from the 1970s and 80s. The scratched wooden desk looks newly polished. New white sheets are testament that only so much can be done to help an old couch, but the adjacent folding exam table appears perfectly sterile. As promised, a pair of medics stands by to treat the wounded.

Captain Crow silently sits at the desk. Behind him you notice another individual hunkered down quietly on a folding chair. Although the stranger wears the SWAT uniform of the Texas Rangers downstairs, it clearly was not designed to fit someone so ex-



What’s So Special About the Texas Rangers?

What is so special about the Texas Rangers? Perhaps a better question would be, what isn’t special about them? The Texas Rangers have a reputation as being one part Scotland Yard, one part Canadian Mounties, and one part Cowboy.

The Rangers have been a fixture in Texas since before it was even a Republic, let alone a member of the United States. Over the years they have maintained law and order, protected its border, and investigated thousands of serious crimes. Wherever there’s a job too tough for an ordinary lawman, you’ll find a Texas Ranger.

To illustrate the Texas Ranger approach, consider the following anecdote from the turn of the 20th century. Texas Ranger Captain W.J. McDonald was sent to Dallas to prevent a scheduled prizefight. The city’s apprehensive mayor met McDonald at the train station and asked “Where are the others?”

“Hell! Ain’t I enough?” McDonald is quoted as saying. “There’s only one prize-fight!”

From that remark came the oft-repeated Texas Rangers maxim—“One Riot, One Ranger.”

For more information on Texas Rangers from yesterday and today, visit: www.texasranger.org.

traordinarily thin. You suspect a strong breeze could blow him away. His gaunt, sallow skin, and thinning hair only underscore the wild look in his eyes. He inspects you with interest and peeks under the lid of a cardboard box in his lap.

The sickly man holding the box is Charlie Lester (see **Appendix 1: Cast of Characters**). Crow reiterates that the team’s questions can be addressed once their health has been cared for. The medics have Healing d6 and a medical kit (+1 to Healing rolls) and they thoroughly treat each character. One medic carefully examines Molly while the other cares for the heroes. The one examining Molly takes much longer, and the heroes may Notice the medic’s look of confusion. Molly’s superficial wounds are rapidly healing thanks to Nicole’s influence. Finally, the medic crosses to Crow’s desk and whispers (Notice at –6 to overhear) that Molly is healing at a supernatural rate.

Crow frowns for a moment, but in a friendly tone asks if everyone is okay. He then asks for an explanation of how they became involved in “all this”. Almost as an afterthought, he warns them that he will know if they lie. As the team tells their story, Lester makes a notation on a small pad every time they lie. At the end he passes the sheet of paper to Crow, who uses it to re-question the team.

Behind the Scenes

Shielded from the investigators, the cardboard box in Lester’s lap contains a large specimen jar with a starfish-like creature floating in it. In the center of the “starfish” is a large yellow eye. This is a Ley’naf—a creature that literally feeds off deceit (see **Appendix 2: Cast of Creatures & Cults**). In brief, it reacts if anyone knowingly tells a lie. Lester goes to great lengths to shield the specimen jar from view and wouldn’t hesitate to use his full power if he thought one of the characters might attempt to wrestle the box away from him.

When their story is done, Crow questions the team on how Rodriguez performed when caught off guard by the deputy and how he reacted when

the cult became visible. Lester again corrects them if they try to gloss over Rodriguez's fumbles. Crow tells the team that his people have been monitoring Rodriguez for some time, but "maybe we were watching the wrong one."

Crow now answers the team's questions. The following info is the only story Crow gives:

My colleagues and I are part of a special taskforce within the Texas Rangers. We were created to quickly respond to high-threat situations and prevent another Branch Davidian showdown. We had reason to believe Sgt. Rodriguez might make a good addition to our team and have been discreetly monitoring his progress on this case. Had he, and you, failed to rescue the hostages, we were prepared to intervene and stop the cult.

On the other side of the paper is a hastily handwritten note—"Follow the blood."

3.2b: A New Mission

After answering their questions (or pretending to do so) Crow states the following:

I know you still have questions--that's because you're not finished in Pinebox. When you found that book and lens, you dug up more than you bargained for. Have you been having strange dreams? Experienced things you can't explain? You attracted the attention of something not very nice, and now you have to deal with it. Pinebox is where you draw a line in the sand, because otherwise it'll follow you to the end of your days. Don't even think about leaving the county until you end what you started. [pause] Now, you've learned more here tonight than anyone else alive because you impressed me with your resourcefulness...but then so did Sgt. Rodriguez. I hope you perform better than he did. We'll know. We'll be watching.

With that, he raps his knuckles on the desk and a guard opens the door. Crow ushers the heroes out of the room and refuses to answer any more of their questions, other than that Molly is "Your mess, your responsibility." The guards lead the heroes downstairs, where confiscated weapons are returned. They are then escorted

out the building. The Texas Rangers refuse to answer further questions.

Optional—if the reporter did NOT accompany the team to the "showdown"

As the team is led outside the building by a guard, they can make a Notice check at -4 to hear the reporter Jerry Daniels being questioned in another part of the theater. A Raise on a Smarts check reveals his identity, while on a Success the hero realizes he has heard the voice recently.

3.2c: Lester's Hint

Although the guards do not answer the heroes' questions, Lester silently follows the group to the door. As the team exits, he slips a torn piece of paper (**Handout 14: Blackwell Family Tree part 1 / Lester's Hint**) to a hero before closing and locking the door.

The paper is a hand-drawn Blackwell family tree. This document indicates that Robert's son survived. The boy was adopted. Unfortunately, the bottom portion of the page documenting the son's adopted name is missing. Another branch of the family tree shows the three cousins—Molly, Jessica, and Ronny—with their names circled. On the other side of the paper is a hastily handwritten note—"Follow the blood."

As the team stands on the sidewalk in front of the theater, remind the characters of Molly's near-catatonic state. She stares blankly into space, only responding if her rescuer moves away. Although physically sound, she is clearly dead on her feet and unable to tell the team where she lives or provide her phone number.

Gently steer the team into realizing they are saddled with her, at least for the remainder of the night. With Crow's instructions to stay in the county and little else to do, the heroes should be encouraged to return to their motel for some well-deserved sleep. If the characters go to extraordinary lengths to reunite Molly with her family that night, go to 3.5: *Molly's Parents*.

GM Checklist: Did you...

- Remove the heroes' weaponry before allowing them to enter the theater?
- Split off GM characters such as Sgt. Rodriguez or Jerry Daniels (but not Molly) upon arrival at the theater?
- Give the heroes an opportunity to detect the Rangers' northern accents?
- Give the heroes an opportunity to detect the rune-like markings on the Rangers' body armor?
- Treat the team's injuries?

- Tell the heroes the mystery isn't over?
- Describe Lester's attempt to give the party a clue (Handout 14)?
- Convince the group to keep Molly for the night?

3.3: The Motel

The heroes recover at their motel, where they experience strange dreams, a haunting, and surprising behavior from Molly.

Upon reaching the motel, Molly makes small signs of recovering from her shock. Unless each team member has his or her own room, gently suggest that Molly should get her own room. Although she insists that her rescuer (or whomever she is "attached" to) remain with her, for the first time she parts from him long enough to take a shower in the privacy of the bathroom. Shortly



after the water stops, any character in her room or an adjacent room hears her screaming. The bathroom door is unlocked and Molly appears unhurt although clearly upset. She tells her rescuer she saw a strange man holding a pickaxe behind her in the mirror.

An hour passes before Molly is calm enough to go to bed. This requires reassurance that her protector will remain for the night to protect her. Try to arrange it so they are in the room alone.

3.3a: Dreaming

Upon going to sleep, the team members dream about the horrific events they experienced earlier. Then the dreams shift. Like before in the county jail, all the heroes share a dream. The only exception is the Blackwell descendant, who has a different dream. If you have the time, separate the players and describe their dreams individually.

Read or summarize the following to all heroes who choose to sleep **except** the Blackwell descendant:

Although the rush from the night's events is long gone, the memories remain. You lay in bed replaying over and over that first horrible moment when you helplessly watched the murder of Molly's sister. Is there something you could have done differently? Over and over you wrestle with your guilt, until your body shuts down for some long overdue rest.

If only your mind would do the same. In your dreams, you are running. Something... someone chases you. You flee into the night, away from the flames that light your path. Behind you the sounds of a clinking chain and pounding footsteps close in. You run and run, your heart near bursting in your chest and your pulse roaring in your ears. You stumble in the darkness. You look down and see a baby in your arms. Holding the infant makes it harder to keep your balance, and you stumble to your knees. He wants your baby! He won't have it! You won't let him! Then pain lances through your back, pushing all other pain aside. It burns like an icy hot poker in your chest. It tears at your flesh and sucks away your life. You try to gulp air for a scream, but your lungs fail. You claw at the dirt and grass helplessly...and wake up.

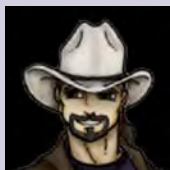
Read or summarize the following to the Blackwell descendant:

Although the adrenaline rush from the night's events has passed, the memories remain. You cannot help but replay over and over that first horrible moment when you watched helplessly the murder of Molly's sister. Is there something you could have done differently? Slowly, the stress of the last few days wears down the last of your defenses and you drift asleep.

Although your body rests, your mind does not. In your dreams, you stumble forward into the night. An inferno licks at your back and the flickering light paints the woman ahead in colors of flame. Hate fuels your tired limbs, but you ignore the weariness and follow her into the darkness. She stole your son—just like she wants to rob you of everything else—and no punishment could be too harsh. Each step feels like lifting blocks of lead, but you force yourself onward until she stumbles and falls at your feet. You lift your arms over your head in triumph and drive a pickax into her back. As you watch her writhe in agony, the inferno behind you turns to ice. Heat spills from your body like water and your bones ache from the cold. You're still shivering uncontrollably as you awaken.

3.3b: Seduction

After no more than an hour of fitful sleep, Molly's protector awakens from his nightmare to find Molly's naked form pressing against him. Nicole exerts every influence to seduce the hero, while Robert attempts to warn his descendent of trouble (using cold spots) in the next room. If her rescuer questions her abrupt change in behavior, she explains that she "just needs to feel alive".



What kind of game is this?

Although this section is not *critical* to the story, it does add another layer of complexity for the characters and more firmly establishes Molly Blackwell's strange behavior. We should stress that Molly is a 20 year-old adult.

If your players are uncomfortable mixing sexual situations with gaming, just break it down to a Spirit check at -4 if he wishes to resist Molly's seduction. Should the hero fail, you can inform him the seduction succeeded and skip to next section. Note that Molly attempts the seduction even if other characters are in the room at the time as long as they appear asleep.

If she fails to seduce him, she may play on his sympathy or try another means of establishing an emotional bond. Ultimately, Nicole's goal is to exploit this relationship with her protector. The Seduction event leads directly into *Robert's Attack*, below.

3.3c: Robert's Attack

Either during the seduction or shortly thereafter, Robert's ghost intervenes on the hero's behalf. (If Molly's attempts at seduction are unsuccessful, the ghost appears when Molly makes one last attempt.)

Caught up in the moment, you almost do not notice the shadowy figure standing behind Molly. Your surprised look is Molly's only warning before the figure buries his pickax between her shoulder blades. You have a horrible flashback to your recent dream as Molly's back arches in agony. Even as you react, the attacker fades away. Molly's wails of pain do not.

Robert's spirit also benefited from the cult's ritual, in a roundabout way. Previously, he could do little more than create cold spots. Now he can manifest long enough to attack Nicole.

The attack leaves Molly unconscious. Blood stains the back of her shirt where the spectral pickax struck. A summary examination reveals no physical wound. The blood seeps directly on her flesh. After five minutes the bleeding stops and Molly rests more peacefully. Hopefully, the characters found towels to soak up all the blood!

The next morning Molly acts distant and initially resists displays of intimacy with her rescuer. In wake of the attack, Nicole's control over Molly slowly slips. Nicole must rest, allowing Molly's spirit to temporarily assert itself. The young woman is now more communicative than last night, but she is not ready to discuss her ordeal. She may confide to her rescuer that sometimes it seems as if she is watching herself do things from a distance.

Although her kidnapping is hazy, Molly remembers everything from the ritual to the present. She does not realize that Nicole has possessed her. With the temporary return of the real Molly, she can tell the team how to find her home. She begs to go home. If the characters ignore her, she makes regular pleas throughout the day. However, she takes no action on her own. See 3.5: *Molly's Parents*.

3.4: Hadji Brings News

The mysterious turban-wearing stranger, Hadji, arrives with answers about the troublesome book and red lens. After all they experienced, can the heroes trust him?

Early the next morning, Hadji knocks on the characters' door. Read or summarize the following:

Peering through the peephole, you see an anxious-looking Indian man. When you saw him a little more than 24 hours ago he was a barely-conscious wreck released from the trunk of his car. He looks marginally better this morning. The clean t-shirt and turban does little to improve on the bruises, eye-patch, and bandaged arm. As you watch, he knocks upon the door and holds up a newspaper to the peephole. The headline reads, "Tragic End to Rural Kidnapping".

Hadji looks in pitiful condition. The heroes may take some convincing that Hadji is not dangerous, but argues that his treatment by the cult and phone warning about the ritual should at least earn him a hearing. If the characters frisk him, they find the newspaper (**Handout 15: *Tragic End to Rural Kidnapping***), a worn wallet with identification, cell phone, Swiss Army knife, set of keys, and inside a backpack they find an 8-pack of crayons, large cork, and various modern textbooks on folklore.

He asks for the teams' version of what happened and ponders the cover up. In return, he reiterates his involvement as told in *2.6a: Call from Hadji*. Depending on what the characters consider most important, you may jump to *3.4a: The Lens Revealed* or *3.4b: Ghost Story*. He has no knowledge regarding the "Texas Rangers", but he finds their involvement suspicious and warns the heroes to avoid them if possible.

Behind the Scenes

The Rangers performed a "scorched earth" cover-up. All of the cult members have been killed and all evi-

dence removed - including the team's jail time. Neither the lawyer, Steven Fuller, nor the reporter Jerry Daniels recognizes the characters. Sergeant Rodriguez did not live up to their expectations, but the Rangers think the heroes may perform better in this new, impromptu field test. However, the Rangers' missed Hadji and he retains the memory of his cult investigation.

3.4a: The Lens Revealed

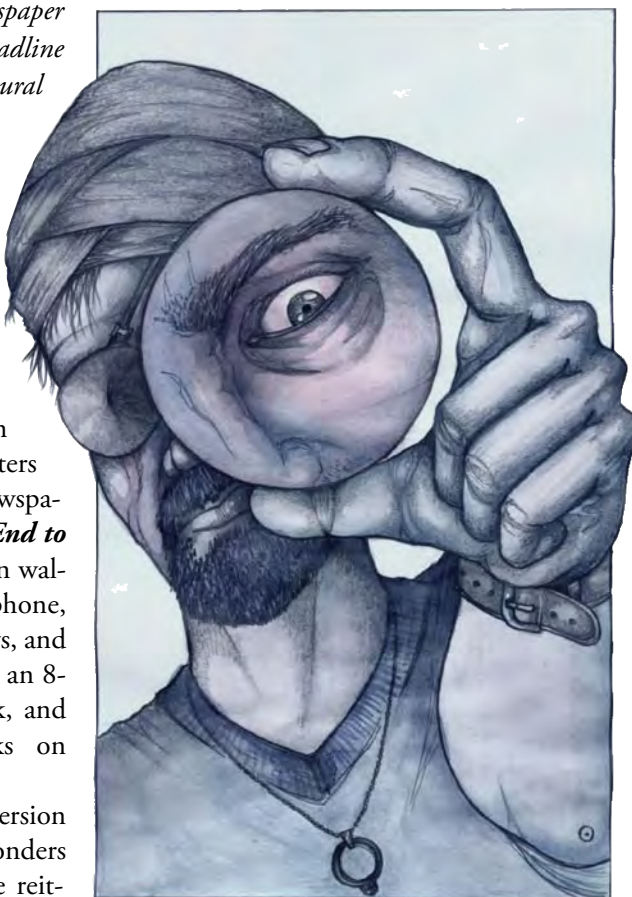
This section lays the groundwork for follow-up adventures from 12 to Midnight. If you do not plan on following up on these events or have your own ideas, then skip or modify this section as needed.

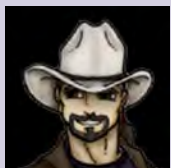
When their stories are completed, Hadji asks if he can see the book and lens. In return, he promises to tell them everything he knows regarding the artifacts.

By this time the heroes might be extremely paranoid and may not trust Hadji or any other outsider for that matter. If they comply, read the following.

Hadji stares in wonder at the items. In a preoccupied tone, he asks "Have you noticed how the smallest things are often the source of the greatest sorrow? I wonder why that is so? ... Here, let me show you something. Do not be alarmed." From his backpack he produces a box of crayons and a

large cork. Using a green crayon, Hadji draws an arrow on the lens surface while softly chanting in a foreign tongue. Almost gingerly, he carries the items to the motel bathroom. There he fills the sink with tap water and gently floats the lens on top of the cork. The lens spins in the water for a few moments, and then it stops with the arrow pointing to the Northeast. "Try it," he offers.





So...What's With the Turban?

The use of turbans can be traced back thousands of years. Ancient Egyptians, Muslims, and Hebrews wore turbans for centuries. Christians ignored or forgot the practice of wearing this head covering. Throughout history, the turban has been a symbol for piety, dignity, self-respect, purity, justice, and charity. That is a lot of meaning wrapped up into a simple headgear!

Since the 19th century, the only religious group in North America that carries on the tradition of wearing the turban is the Sikhs (pronounced seh-Ek). To Sikhs, wearing the turban is a sacred duty. Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) instructed the Sikhs to wear their hair unshorn under a turban, and practicing Sikhs have followed those instructions ever since—even in the face of intense societal pressure.

The practice of wearing the turban has become a rarity in most religions. Unfortunately, the wearing of a turban is acquiring a bad reputation, as this is associated with radical, militant terrorists groups such as the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. In North America since 9/11, Sikhs are being mistaken as representing the Taliban.

For more on Sikhism, visit: www.religioustolerance.org/sikhism.htm. For more on turbans, visit: www.sikhcoalition.org/Sikhism11.asp

Hadji employs a form of “sympathetic magic” on the lens. By drawing on the lens with a green crayon, his spell is empowered to point toward the green lens (described below). If he had used a blue crayon the lens would point toward its blue mate. Characters may spin the lens, hold it pointing in other directions, etc., but as soon as they release it, the lens swings unerringly back to the same direction. When the characters ask what it means, Hadji explains:

“Throughout history, this lens has gone by many names—Blood Glass, Fire Eye, Zatha’s Flame. It has poisoned the lives of many people and caused countless deaths. Used as a focus, it magnifies energy you may or may not believe even exists. At its most powerful, it opens doors that should remain shut. And it is not unique.

“I told you another cult in Germany had attempted this same ritual, but I didn’t tell you that they had their own lens—a blue one.

Red, Green, Blue—the primary colors of light. If one lens causes this much trouble, what do you think would happen if all three were combined? Personally I don’t want to find out.

“Now for the really bad news. You’ve probably figured out that the book and lens are pretty much indestructible. They’re the focal point for a lot of power, and that power protects them. If what I’ve read is

true, the only way to destroy the lens is by exploiting its flaw. But the flaw only shows up when all three lenses are aligned. So in other words, the only way to get rid of this thing for good is to do the one thing that could also bring about the apocalypse.

“Sucks, huh?”

Hadji is not interested in taking the book and lens from the characters, but warns them against losing the items. The other lenses can be used as locators, the same as theirs. One dropped in the ocean or locked in a safety deposit box would be found. Hadji is only interested in learning how John Blackwell hid the items for almost 100 years, and informs the team that he plans on researching the matter.

3.4b: Ghost Story

If the characters confess to experiencing ghostly attacks, dreams, or even cold spots, Hadji says the following:

“Yes, it certainly sounds like you’ve attracted a ghost. I’ve encountered one or two in my research. It either wants the book and lens for itself or it wants revenge for being disturbed. Tell me everything you know about this ghost. There’s almost always a clue in the person’s history to putting the spirit to rest.”

Hopefully by this point the characters have identified the ghost as that of Robert Blackwell. When they finish telling Hadji what they know about Robert, he asks them who else would have information on Robert. He suggests that if they can find a personal item that belonged to Robert Blackwell, Hadji can use it as a focus to conduct a séance with the angry spirit.

Useful leads:

- Imogene Glass (3.8)—Robert Blackwell’s fiancé and one of Travis Nursing Home’s oldest residents. Although her memory is spotty, she’s the only living person who knew Robert Blackwell personally. She might know what became of his personal belongings.
- Vera Bock (3.7)—According to Tony Hidalgo (see 1.5: *Tony Hidalgo*), Vera Bock bought some items from an estate sale that may shed further light on the Blackwell family.

Dead ends:

- East Texas University—their library archives, including microfilm, was recently vandalized. All that is left is the same mundane information found at the Pinebox Public Library.

- Pinebox Public Library (1.3)—the heroes (should) have already investigated all the information here. The only relevant info is Tony Hidalgo's name as a local expert and Imogene's name as Robert's fiancée.
- Tony Hidalgo (1.5)—Tony has also probably shared everything relevant (depending on a Persuasion roll). The only relevant hint he can give points the heroes to Vera Bock's estate sale purchase.
- Pinebox Masonic Lodge (2.6)—Unlike his father, Robert Blackwell never joined the Freemasons. They have no information on Robert.

Hadji offers to accompany the team and help them deal with their ghostly problem. However, considering their recent experiences they may not trust him. He takes their distrust in stride and does not press the issue. He offers to conduct a séance if the team is interested. If they accept, he provides them his cell phone number and promises to return in the evening.

GM Checklist: Did you...

- Give the players **Handout 15**?
- Reveal that the lens is one of three which are able to point to one another and when brought together could bring about an Armageddon?
- Use Hadji to suggest lines of investigation (Imogene and Vera) for the heroes?
- Have Hadji suggest conducting a séance after finding a personal item belonging to Robert Blackwell?
- Give the characters Hadji's cell phone number?

3.5: Molly's Parents

Molly learns there is no going back when she tries contacting her family, who no longer recognize her.

Molly now remembers her phone number and address. If she attempts to call home, read or summarize the following:

Molly's knuckles turn white from tightly holding the phone, and she nervously bites her lip as she waits for someone to answer. Her eyes widen momentarily, and she cries, "Mommy? ... It's me—Molly! ... Yes I am! I'm okay! ... How could you say that? Mom, it's me! Don't you know me? ... Hello? Mom? Mom? Hello?" Staring into space, she drops the phone and sobs.

Further phone attempts are answered by a machine.

If the characters take her home, read or summarize the text below. Depending on the characters' proximity to Molly, you may decide they do not overhear all of the conversation.

Molly's father slams the door, leaving his daughter sobbing on the front steps.

Molly pauses nervously at the front door before trying the handle. It is locked. She raps on the door and yells out "Mom, Dad, it's me!" The seconds tick by and Molly knocks again, then rings the doorbell for good measure. Finally, a man in his 50s peeks through the side window. He unlocks the door, and his red-rimmed eyes stare blankly at Molly.

"Please go away. This is a very bad time for us," he says.

"Daddy! I'm okay. Tell Mom I'm okay," Molly answers, trying to push into the house.

The man blocks the door and his face sets in anger. "I don't know who you are or what college prank you think you're playing, but it isn't funny. We lost both our daughters last night! Now get the hell out of here before I call the cops!"

Molly's father slams the door, leaving his daughter sobbing on the front steps.

Molly's parents refuse to believe anything other than what the police told them. Their memory agrees with the article printed in the morning newspaper. They do not recognize Molly's voice on the telephone, and attempting to visit them in person ends with a similar result. Even staring straight at her, they do not recognize her as their daughter. The same is true of everyone in Pinebox. Nobody recognizes Molly Blackwell. If questioned, a person may describe Molly down to the freckles, but when looking directly at her claim she looks nothing like the Molly he just described.

If the heroes are dead set on ditching Molly, you can always have her turn up at the motel later in the afternoon in time for 3.9: *Gathering Storm*.

Behind the Scenes

Nicole recognizes that she could lose contact with those who possess the book and lens. To prevent from being separated, Nicole marshals her energy and masks Molly's identity with her own. This prevents anyone who knew Molly before the kidnapping from recognizing her.

GM Checklist: Did you...

- Establish that nobody in town recognizes Molly?
- Keep the heroes from abandoning Molly?

3.6: Divine Intervention

Once the characters understand they are being haunted, they may try to call on the assistance of a man of God. Pinebox is home to no fewer than 23 churches, so with a little persistence they should be able to find a priest or minister. Considering the campaign setting, there is a decent chance any priest the heroes contact has experience with ghosts. You can play it one of two ways depending on how much extra roleplaying you want in the game—either the priest turns pale at the mention of a haunting and refuses to discuss the matter further, or he readily agrees but is knocked unconscious during 3.9: *Gathering Storm*.

3.7: Bock House Revisited

The team searches Vera Bock's house for clues explaining the reason for the ghostly attacks.

Vera Bock lived only a few miles outside of Pinebox on a five-acre tract. Although her house is set well beyond the road, you can tell no vehicles are in the driveway.

Vera Bock's death is not common knowledge, so the team has no need to fear attention from the road. They can park their vehicle openly in the driveway, park it in the empty garage, or hide it in the unfenced back yard. Nobody answers the door, and all is quiet. The front door and windows are locked (see **Appendix 4: Everything Else** for information on breaking and entering), but the team can easily tell that the back door leading to the garage has been forced open. The door from the garage to the kitchen is unlocked and slightly ajar.

When the characters enter the house, read or summarize the following:

Your nose tells you something is wrong almost as soon as you cross the threshold. You are thankful for the open door [or window] and the slight breeze it offers, because the smell of rotten eggs is overwhelming.

Refer to **GM Figure 6: Vera Bock's House**. The three-bedroom brick house is less than ten years old and remains in good condition. The gas appliances have been left on and the house is one spark away from ex-

ploding. The heroes must turn off the appliances and ventilate the house or risk causing an explosion large enough to destroy most of house. The characters may Notice an electronic device roughly the size of a pager resting on the stovetop, but the LED display is dead. If they check the device, they quickly determine that the power source is dead.

...the large collection of antique lanterns lining the walls might have been a big hint.

With the house safely ventilated, you detect another smell underlying the natural gas. If anything, the new smell is even more disgusting. Although part of you wants to gag, another part of you tries to identify where you've encountered that smell before. You know you smelled it recently.

You look around, but see nothing out of the ordinary. Certainly nothing that would account for the fetid smell. It's all incredibly mundane—the knickknacks, the ticking wall clock, the wall calendar with mountain scenery. Where are the pentagrams? The eye of newt? Of course in retrospect, the large collection of antique lanterns lining the walls might have been a big hint.

And just like that—it hits you. It's the smell of psychotic, dying cultists and one teenager you were too late to save. It's the smell of death.

One bedroom is used as an office/study. Custom-built bookcases line the walls from floor to ceiling. The titles range from the mundane (*Texas Gardening, 8th edition*) to the esoteric (*The Inquisition's Righteous Work, by Fr. Carlos Gonzalez*). Many titles are in Latin, as befitting a retired Latin teacher. The heroes may search this room and most others, but find nothing of consequence.

The foul odor is strongest in the master bedroom. Characters that enter this room must pass a Vigor check or become ill from the smell. Lying in the closet doorway is the body of an older man. The heroes may make an Smarts check to recognize him from photos hanging on the wall in the hallway. He is Vera Bock's husband, Leonard Bock. The body is lying on its side, and anyone with the stomach to investigate can easily see the back of his skull is crushed.

The carpet around the body is saturated with blood and makes a horrible wet, squishing sound if anyone steps in it. Anyone going inside the closet has an opportunity to Notice the peculiar way in which the blood flows inside the closet. Three feet inside the closet the blood flow abruptly stops. This is because it trickled into the seam of a hidden trap door under the carpet.

This is the double-entendre from Lester's handwritten message "Follow the blood." Heroes who search the closet (Notice at -4 if they failed the previous check, unmodified if they succeeded) may pull up the carpet and discover a simple plywood door.

This 2' x 2' piece of plywood is more aptly described as a lid. There are no hinges, handles, or locks. It is merely a piece of wood covering a hole. Below the lid, the foundation has been crudely chipped away in a 2' x 2' hole. A ladder descends into an unlit room. Blood has dripped down the edge of the hole into the room below.

Down the ladder:

At the bottom of the ladder, you find a light switch. A single bulb illuminates a 10' x 10' shelter. The ceiling, walls, and floor are reinforced with cement and decorated with strange runes. The air is stale with the smell of sweat, blood, and incense. Doubtless, it permeates the very walls. Wax droppings dot the floor, but the candles themselves are long gone. In fact, the entire room seems cleaned out with the exception of two items too large to take up the ladder. The first, an empty bookcase, appears to have recently held a large number of books based on the dust patterns. The second item is a large wooden frame from which empty chains and cuffs dangle.

A Notice check at -4 reveals a few items carefully hidden behind the bookcase. These are personal effects from "Michael Towns" and his adoptive father—**Handout 16: Bro. Town's journal part 2; Handout 17: Letter home; and Handout 18: Dept. of Defense letter.** These are the only remaining clues in the Bock home.

Behind the Scenes:

Leonard Bock had no place in his wife's vision of post-apocalyptic godhood and she killed him before leaving to perform the ritual. The Rangers later "cleaned" the Bock home of most traces of arcane activity. The Rangers would insure that any investigation into the explosion would be minimal. A new buyer would have to raze the old foundation if they chose to

build on the site. However, the Ranger Charlie Lester disabled the ignition device to give the characters an opportunity to "Follow the blood".

GM Checklist: Did you...

- Describe the danger of the natural gas explosion and the dead ignition device?
- Describe the way the blood from Leonard Bock's body forms a line around the lid of the secret room?
- Give the heroes a Notice check to discover the hidden personal effects belonging to Michael Towns/Blackwell?

3.8: Revisiting the Past

The heroes visit Imogene Glass in hope of finding a personal item belonging to Robert Blackwell.

If this is the characters' first trip to visit Imogene Glass, refer to *1.7: Nursing Home* to introduce them to the nursing home.

Returning to the Travis Nursing Home is like stepping back in time 48 hours. The same sad patients are arrayed along the walls in the same positions; the same aged souls wander the halls in search of the doors to their old familiar homes. This is the land that time forgot. Only the TV schedule and the arrival and departure of patients mark one day from the next. Sadly, Imogene Glass is caught inside this limbo along with everyone else. As before, you find her in front of the communal television, but this time her eyes have a faraway look that tells you she's years away.



Imogene Glass is less lucid this time. Since the heroes' first visit, her heartbeat became irregular and her medication has left her in a fog. It takes slow, careful questioning to help Mrs. Glass remember a personal item given to her by Robert—a simple necklace. It is a small, wooden

cross he personally carved while in the trenches during World War I. It held great personal value to him and Imogene accepted it as the equivalent of an engagement ring many years ago. When Robert broke off the engagement, he told her to keep it.

Mrs. Glass is confused when she realizes she is not wearing the cross at the moment. The heroes can find the cross at the bottom of her sock drawer by searching (a simple Notice check) her room. While Mrs. Glass refuses to give away the cross, she does loan it to the heroes on the stipulation that they return it “when you’re done praying”.

GM Checklist: Did you...

- Reveal to the characters that Imogene owns a cross given to her by Robert Blackwell in lieu of an engagement ring?

3.9: Gathering Storm

Robert grows more desperate and attacks Nicole, who turns the situation to her advantage.

As the team finishes their investigations (researching Robert’s past and/or finding a personal item for a séance), Robert attacks Nicole—though the team regards it as an attack on Molly. This may occur at any time and place you choose. Timing the attack to occur as the group leaves their last encounter underscores the urgency of the situation, but this event should spook the team no matter when or where.

The attack consists of levitating objects striking Molly. (See the **Cluster Attack** ability under *Lost Souls* in **Appendix 2: Cast of Creatures & Cults**.) These could range from a table lamp to a rock depending on where you stage this encounter. The items innocently dance and whirl around Molly at shoulder height one round before the attack. Molly freezes in surprise during the assault. As noted, the area affected by the attack covers a Large Burst Template. This Template is centered on Molly.

After the first round of attacks, Molly screams in terror. Although the attack is centered on Molly, heroes (other than the Blackwell descendant) who enter the Template are also struck by the objects. At the end of the fifth round, Robert tires and the objects fall back to the ground.

When Robert’s attack ends, Molly falls to her knees. Her eyes remain open, but they stare glassily into space. Her breathing is fast and shallow. Heroes may attempt to use Healing to regulate her breathing, but she remains catatonic for as long as you choose. Ideally, Molly

should recover around sunset, but if the heroes take her to the hospital she quickly (and conveniently) recovers during the trip.

3.9a: Nicole’s story

Although awake, Molly seems weak and frail. She tells the characters that she had a dream in which the spirit of Nicole Blackwell visited her. The ghost told her how to bring peace to her husband’s spirit. (In fact, Nicole is in control and spins them her version of events.) Read or summarize the following:

“It was love at first sight when Nicole and Robert first met. It’s like they were soul mates. Nicole always felt bad about Robert breaking off his engagement to be with her, but they just couldn’t deny what they felt for one another.

“But then after the wedding, Robert changed. Before, he had joked about the story of his father’s buried treasure, but after the wedding he got more and more obsessed with finding it. He was sure that all his neighbors and friends were after the gold. Six months after their wedding, Robert had practically become a hermit. He wouldn’t leave their ranch or see anyone other than Nicole, and he wouldn’t let Nicole leave either. He drove off his concerned friends and neighbors, and even fired warning shots at some. It didn’t take long before everyone got the message. Then, one night Robert snapped and decided that Nicole was after the gold too. He killed her with a pickaxe and then burned himself alive in their house.

She just wants both of them to finally rest in peace.

“Nicole says the treasure killed them as much as any pickaxe or fire. It’s kept them from leaving this world and finding peace. When you found the box, they felt it too. Robert never stopped wanting it for himself. Nicole says that if he gets it they’ll both be damned as ghosts forever. She’s been trying to protect me, but she isn’t as strong as Robert. She just wants both of them to finally rest in peace.

“Nicole said that the book is the key. She said there’s a ritual in there that will help them both cross over. She said right now, the...path from our world is all dark, but the spell will light the way. Once the path is clear, she says they’ll feel compelled to leave.

Otherwise, as long as Robert is lost in this world he's going to keep trying to kill off his family and anyone who has the treasure."

Molly is able to flip to the exact page of the book, and seems well versed in how to use the lens to read the hidden text. She even reveals the secret of why the text was untranslatable—although parts of the book are written in old Latin, the spells themselves are Latin phonetics for another, long forgotten language. The description (written in old Latin) refers to the “flight of the spirit”, and the spell components include a circle of salt and a living member of the bloodline (presumably Molly). The lens is necessary to read from the book while conducting the ritual.

Molly says Nicole told her the ritual would best be performed where Nicole died and at roughly the same time of night. She warns them that Robert might interfere with the ritual. On the other hand, she scoffs at plans for a séance and insists that talking won't stop the attacks—only action.

GM Checklist: Did you...

- Initiate another ghostly attack on Molly?
- Have Molly fall into a coma and awaken with a message from Nicole Blackwell?
- Explain to the characters how a ritual from the book will allow both spirits to “cross over”?
- Warn the characters that Robert might interfere with the spell?

3.10: The Séance

The heroes hold a séance hoping to communicate with Robert's ghost. Instead the ghost possesses his descendant and attempts to kill Molly.

The heroes may have not acquired a personal item belonging to Robert Blackwell. Whether or not the séance works without Imogene's cross is up to you.

Hadji has extensive knowledge regarding séances. When the characters are ready to conduct the séance and ask for Hadji's assistance, he gives the following instructions:

- The séance should occur in the motel room where Robert was last encountered. This is a location they know he can visit yet affords the team privacy.
- The séance should occur at night and with the room dimly lit (preferably with candles) because darkness opens the human mind to otherworldly possibilities.
- The group must include Molly because she clearly

draws the ghost's attention.

- The group should arrange themselves in a circle and hold hands, with Robert Blackwell's personal item near the “medium”—Hadji. If the room does not have a table large enough for everyone, clear a space on the floor.
- Someone should write the words “yes” and “no” on pieces of paper and tape them to the floor 12 inches apart. Then place a soda straw or some other lightweight object for the ghost to use as a pointer.

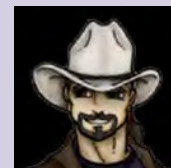
If the group decides to conduct a séance without Hadji, try to follow the spirit of the section (pun intended) and be sure to cover the major points mentioned in the GM Checklist at the end.

When the group is ready, read or summarize the following:

The flickering candlelight softly illuminates the faces of your friends. The sounds of motel life seem muted tonight, and the dim light softens the impersonal room into a place of comfort. Hadji's bruises

Green's Guide to Ghosts

Ask ten different people about ghosts and you're likely to get 11 different opinions. In general, there are two different classes—Echoes and Lost Souls.



Some people who claim to have witnessed a haunting describe an apparition that is visible in select places, doing the same thing over and over. One theory is that these locations absorbed the psychic impressions of a person; in the same way a room absorbs strong odors such as a cigarette smoke. Those impressions are replayed long after the person has passed away, but are nothing more than an echo of a strong emotional imprint. These echoes are not self-aware and do not interact with the present day.

These are NOT the ghosts of Bloodlines.

In Bloodlines, the Pinebox area is haunted by the other type of ghost—lost souls. Lost souls are spirits whose mortal remains have expired but whose immortal souls have not passed on to the “undiscovered country” or “next life”. This is often because of unfinished business. Lost souls may take several forms, from atmospheric balls of energy (ABEs), to poltergeists, to full apparitions. For full details on lost souls in Bloodlines, see Appendix 2: Cast of Creatures and Artifacts.

For information on real-world paranormal investigations, check out: <http://hauntings.com/>

seem less prominent tonight, and his fatigue barely noticeable. In fact, he seems to fairly crackle with nervous excitement. Molly's mood has also improved, although her smirk says it is from amusement at the séance. Hadji holds Robert's belongings in his left hand and reminds you to remain quiet until otherwise instructed, hold hands, and focus on Robert Blackwell. With that said he sits on floor and completes the circle.

Hadji calls out to Robert Blackwell and asks him to join the group. After several minutes, the circle grows colder. Hadji asks that if a spirit is present to respond by pointing to the sign on the floor. The straw quivers and swings to point to the "yes" taped to the floor. Hadji next asks if he speaks with the spirit of Robert Blackwell. The straw rises and then drops upon the "yes".

At this point, Hadji allows the other characters to ask questions. Below are some sample questions and responses. Robert answers all questions truthfully, although not all questions have a straightforward answer.

- Do you have unfinished business keeping you here in our world?—yes
- Do you want the book and lens?—no
- Do you want to kill Molly?—waver between yes and no
- Do you want to kill us?—no
- Is Molly actually possessed by the spirit of your evil wife?—yes

Robert ignores all efforts by the other characters to stop him and focuses solely on attacking Molly

3.10a: Conduit

After Robert answers several questions, he becomes agitated. The room grows colder, and the straw moves erratically. Pass a note to the Blackwell descendant asking for a Spirit check at -4. If he passes the save, Robert leaves the séance. If the character fails his save, Robert possesses his descendant for six rounds.

Give the other characters an opportunity to Notice (at -4) the Blackwell descendant briefly tense up, eyelids fluttering. In the next round, he abruptly lunges at Molly and attempts to strangle her. Knowing he only has a matter of seconds to succeed, Robert ignores all efforts by the other characters to stop him and focuses solely on attacking Molly. These attacks are unarmed

attacks, which do Strength damage. After six rounds, or sooner if the host is rendered unconscious, Robert runs out of energy and vacates his host's body. Like Molly, the Blackwell descendant remembers what he did but has no logical explanation.

If it did not occur earlier, this is an ideal transition for *3.9a: Nicole's Story*. Otherwise proceed to *3.11: Full Circle*.

If Molly's wounds are life threatening Nicole surreptitiously restores her host's health using the **Gift of Life** ability. At the end of combat or if the séance fails, Molly insists that with her life in jeopardy, the spell must be cast to protect her from further harm.

GM Checklist: Did you...

- Allow the heroes to ask Robert a few questions?
- Attempt to possess the Blackwell descendant and use him to attack Molly?
- Use Molly to convince the heroes to perform the ritual?

3.11: Full Circle

The heroes use the book and lens to exorcise Robert's ghost but end up harming Molly instead. Nicole drops her charade, and the final struggle ensues.

With the assistance of her earlier "vision", Molly helps the heroes prepare for the ritual. The characters must select from amongst themselves an individual to lead the ritual. Although Hadji agrees to observe the proceedings and help if necessary, he absolutely refuses to act as primary spellcaster.

Molly shows the characters which passage in the book to read. Those with Knowledge (Latin) may decipher the spell description (**Handout 13**). Alternately, characters may use Investigation at -2 if they have access to the Internet or other language translation tools. Such an attempt requires four hours (only three with a Raise on the Investigation roll).

Molly insists that the spell be cast at night, and close to the time and place Nicole Blackwell died. The characters should have no trouble returning to the site of the Blackwell homestead, as Rhonda and Travis Chahovic's house sits empty and the nearest neighbor is three miles away. From a practical standpoint, the spellcaster must hold the book and use the lens to read the hidden words while an assistant holds a light source and turns the pages. The only material component is enough table salt to draw a circle around Molly.

During the drive to the homestead Robert uses another cold spot to warn his descendant of danger, but otherwise holds his strength in reserve. If the characters select the Blackwell descendant to perform the spell, once the group is on the site you can explain that he is freezing cold. The resultant shivering is so intense that this character cannot pronounce the spell correctly.

Once the heroes arrive at the homestead, read or summarize the following:

The night air is surprisingly cool as you exit your vehicle, and a ground mist hangs over the pasture. The briars hiding the well are little more than a black blob against a dark backdrop. The only sound you hear is the ticking of the hot engine as it cools and the gradually returning sound of crickets. Inexplicably, (Blackwell descendant's name)'s shivering intensifies and his breath fogs the night air. Molly seems oblivious to the spooky surroundings and impatiently begins her part in the ritual's preparations. Perhaps she has the right idea—the sooner this is done, the better.

Molly uses a container of table salt to draw a circle around herself. This is the epicenter of the spell, and she explains that her relationship to Robert Blackwell helps channel the spell against him. She warns the spellcaster that once he speaks the first word, it must be finished. She says that stopping the ritual is “bad”—as in “destroy your soul” bad. (Actually, this is just a scare tactic. Read the **Flight of the Spirit** ritual description in **Appendix 3: Magic & Artifacts**.) The characters may make whatever preparations they feel necessary. When ready, proceed to Goodbye Molly below.

*Perhaps she has the right idea.
The sooner this is done,
the better.*

3.11a: Goodbye Molly

Have the players draw cards for the ritual. Also deal in Robert Blackwell and Nicole. On the Blackwell descendant's card, refer to Visions below. On the caster's card, read or summarize each of the descriptions below for each round that the incantation is attempted.

1st Round

As (spellcaster's name) slowly reads from the book, you each experience a moment of vertigo. There's energy in the air—magic. It tingles the skin and causes the hair on everyone's arms to stand. Caught up in the excitement, Molly seems to have forgotten about the danger and gives a dazzling smile.

Do not forget to hand the Blackwell descendant his Vision handout. Nothing else noteworthy happens this round.

2nd Round

At first (spellcaster's name) seemed hesitant and uncertain, but with the ritual underway his voice grows more confident. The clammy night air is replaced by a warm breeze that gently ruffles everyone's hair. The crickets have stopped, and only (spellcaster's name)'s voice cuts through the silence.

Give the Blackwell descendant his Vision handout.

This round, a Type II Atmospheric Ball of Energy (ABE) appears on Robert's card. Read or summarize the following description:

As (spellcaster's name) chants, a small ball of light forms several feet away at shoulder height. The six-inch diameter ball colorfully swirls, while gracefully weaving its way toward Molly. As it approaches, its hues turn red and dark. At the last moment it stops, wobbling back and forth as if bouncing away from the young woman.

Characters may make an Smarts check and those who succeed realize the circle of salt blocks the orb. The ABE is the spirit of Molly's slain sister, called upon by Robert in this time of need. Unable to reach Molly, the ABE strikes out with its **Terrifying Slam** at the other heroes for the next four rounds. It ignores the Blackwell descendant. If any character suggests stopping the ritual, Molly vehemently protests.

The ABE seeks to disrupt the ritual by attacking either the caster or assistant, but also attacks any other character that interferes—including Hadji. If the caster fails his Guts check, he is overcome with fear and the ritual grinds to a halt. The following round the caster may attempt a new Test to renew the ritual with no ill effect (see **Appendix 3: Magic & Artifacts**). If the ritual fails altogether, Nicole flies into a rage and attacks the group, as described in 3.11b: *The Mask Drops*, below.

3rd Round

Ignoring the ABE, (spellcaster's name)'s voice grows stronger by the moment. The words come faster, the pronunciations become more precise. The breeze grows stronger and a strange new smell fills the air. A stifling pressure surrounds you, like the force of a dammed river.

Hand the Blackwell descendant his Vision handout. The ABE attacks proceed.

4th Round

The words, the meaningless sounds, drift like fallen leaves in a river current. Chaos surrounds you, but the power (spellcaster's name) channels is a force unto itself. It swells, stirring your surroundings with a hot, acrid wind.

Hand the Blackwell descendant his Vision handout. The ABE attacks continue.

5th Round

The wind tugs insistently at your clothing and the pages of the old tome. Although it swirls around Molly like a dust devil, the circle of salt remains unblemished and her calm composure is unchanged. The unsettling feeling of pressure builds as (spellcaster's name) all but shouts the ritual.

Hand the Blackwell descendant his Vision handout. The ABE attacks once more.

6th Round

(Spellcaster's name) reaches the end of the ritual, the words tumbling out in an impossible rush. The syllables chime like a bell even above the roar of the wind. As the last sound fades, the wind abruptly dies to nothingness. You feel that great pressure build a moment more before the dam bursts. A brief dash of nausea passes as if a brackish river flows around the team. Molly's scream cuts through the night for a bare moment before she silently collapses.

When the ritual ends, the ABE turns invisible. Give appropriate characters a chance to Notice what happened to Molly and describe the results using the table below.

Failure: You catch a glimpse of Molly out of the corner of your eye as she collapses as if struck.
Success: Molly's hair and clothes billow behind her as if a wind funnel suddenly lanced directly through her. As the wind flows through Molly, you catch a glimpse of smoke blowing away.
One Raise: You could have sworn you saw an apparition blow away from Molly as the wind poured through her.
Two Raises: You were looking directly at Molly at the incantation's end and you saw a female ghost pushed away from Molly and dissolve in the wind.

Three Raises: When the wind poured through Molly, it blew her spirit out from her body.

Continue to 3.11b: *The Mask Drops*.

Visions

At the ritual's beginning, Robert's spirit bombards the Blackwell descendant with **Channel** attempts until successful. Robert then shows him a series of visions (**Handouts 19a-e: Visions**). These visions run in reverse order, starting with Robert's death and ending with Nicole's original enchantment that ensnared him.

Hand the player one "vision" handout upon his initiative, while coordinating the events during *Goodbye Molly*. While possessed and in the grip of his visions, the Blackwell descendant is completely immobilized. After the last vision, Robert releases his descendant.

3.11b: The Mask Drops

At the ritual's successful completion, Molly's soul is torn from her body and sent spiraling into limbo. With Molly's body vacant, Nicole's spirit assumes permanent control. Now that she possesses a permanent corporeal body, Nicole is finally ready to take the treasure for her own. After scheming for almost a century, she can wait no longer. On the round following the ritual's ending, read or summarize the following:



Molly takes a deep breath and stands up. “Thank you,” she says. “You probably saved my life. It’s almost over. Just let me see that book and lens a moment, and I’ll be safe forever.”

Whether or not the heroes comply, Nicole drops the Molly façade. She attacks either because the heroes stand in her way, or because she has the treasure and wants to eliminate any loose ends. As a mortal, Nicole loses access to all supernatural abilities but regains access to several offensive and defensive spells she knew in her previous life (See **Appendix 1: Cast of Characters**). Nicole relies heavily on magic to stop the heroes, although she is just as happy to see them incapacitated in pain as actually dead.

*With a mighty swing,
he plunges his pickax
into her chest and
rids the world of Nicole
once and for all.*

If the ritual is unsuccessful, Nicole flies into a rage and drops the Molly façade. In this instance, she must rely on her supernatural abilities—especially **Leeching Touch**—to subdue the heroes.

During either combat situation, Nicole gloats over duping the characters and rages against her husband’s intrusion. Nicole herself is unused to experiencing pain and may overreact to injuries. However, she absolutely refuses to flee without the artifacts, which could make for some very interesting roleplay!

Nicole is a very powerful foe. If the characters cannot figure out how to stop Nicole or are in serious danger of being killed, Robert and the ABE reappear to lend a hand.

One way of stopping Nicole is by repeating the ritual and casting her soul into limbo just like Molly’s. Alternatively, the heroes may physically subdue Nicole by knocking her unconscious (or with Hadji’s *puppet* spell). If Molly’s body is killed, Nicole’s spirit reappears nearby as a floating apparition. In fact, if Nicole’s host is at 3 Wounds, Nicole may commit suicide in order to return to spirit form!

Once Nicole reappears as a floating apparition or Molly’s body is restrained, Robert steps in to finish the job. With a mighty swing, he plunges his pickax into her chest and rids the world of Nicole once and for all.

If the Blackwell descendant is alive and conscious, Robert approaches him and extends his arm as if to shake hands. If the descendant is unconscious, Robert uses his **Gift of Life** ability to restore his health. Meanwhile, the ABE briefly flickers and resolves into the faint form of Molly’s sister. Both spirits smile at the descendant and fade away.

GM Checklist: Did you...

- Arrange for the ritual to be cast at night, at the old Blackwell homestead?
- Describe the intense cold spot focused on the Descendant, preventing him from casting the ritual?
- Make clear to the heroes that once the chanting starts, the ritual must be finished?
- Draw action cards at the beginning of the ritual and begin the Blackwell descendant’s **Channeling**/visions?
- Initiate combat using the ABE’s **Terrifying Slam**?
- Give the characters an opportunity to Notice the results of the ritual?
- Initiate combat with Nicole, using Hadji, the ABE, and Robert as necessary?
- End the threat with Robert’s attack on Nicole?
- Allow Robert and Jessica Blackwell to say goodbye to the descendant?

3.12: Wrapup

The heroes finally reach the end of the adventure... for now. Follow the description most closely fitting your situation:

3.12a: Molly is killed or subdued during combat

In playtest, most heroes took no chances and kept fighting until Molly died. After the last 36 hours, can you really blame them? Dead or alive, a bright column of light stabs straight down from the sky to illuminate the spot where Molly lay. Moments later a black helicopter drops soundlessly from the sky to land nearby. Three others quickly and quietly follow it. The column of light is a bright spotlight mounted beneath the sleek, noiseless aircraft. A blue-tinted interior light turns on, and the characters may Notice (at –2) an exhausted Charlie Lester in the copilot seat. Captain Felix Crow and a half-dozen armed “Rangers” exit the helicopter. Although distracted, the characters may Notice (at –4) Hadji fade away into the shadows.

Captain Crow congratulates the heroes for stopping Nicole’s ghost and “passing the test”, although not ex-

actly with flying colors. He answers any questions they may have, excepting those that involve the role of he and his subordinates. His medic aids injured characters by means of the Healing skill. If Hadji is unconscious or dead (unable to slip away as described in the previous paragraph), Captain Crow orders one of his people to snap a photo of the student.

If the characters killed Molly, Crow and his team take her body for burial, since her family and friends believe she is dead. If she was knocked unconscious or otherwise subdued, Crow explains to the heroes that Molly's body remains an empty husk. It breathes on its own, but without a soul she is dying. "His people" are the only ones with a chance of restoring Molly's soul, and to do that they must take the body with them. If a character insists on going with Molly to watch over her, Crow tells him he has earned the right but warns that leaving with them means leaving his old life behind. There is no going back.

Proceed to 3.12c: *Loose Ends* below.

3.12b: Nicole defeats the heroes and escapes with the book and lens

After the last 36 hours, can you really blame the heroes for coming up short? Seeing her enemies scattered around her, Nicole scoops up the artifacts and steals the heroes' vehicle. A few minutes later, a bright column of light pierces the night. Moments later a black helicopter drops soundlessly from the sky to land nearby. Three others quickly and quietly follow it. The column of light is actually a bright spotlight mounted beneath the sleek, noiseless aircraft. A blue-tinted interior light turns on, and the characters may Notice (at -2) a tired Charlie Lester in the copilot seat. Captain Felix Crow and a half-dozen armed "Rangers" exit the helicopter. Although distracted, the characters may Notice (at -4) Hadji fade away into the shadows.

Captain Crow quickly surveys the scene and shakes his head in disdain. He mutters something about "losers", and his subordinates grumble about the "fishing trip" being a waste of time.

Although he answers any questions they may have regarding what transpired, his tone makes it clear he thinks the characters should already know the answers. He refuses to discuss the role of he and his subordinates. He informs the heroes that "team 2" is preparing to capture Nicole, and within the next ten minutes the threat

will be neutralized. What happens next is none of their business.

Captain Crow's medic restores treats gravely injured characters as described in the Healing skill. If Hadji is unconscious or dead (unable to slip away as described in the previous paragraph), Captain Crow takes extra interest in this wild card and orders one of his people to snap a photo.

Captain Crow says that he considered "fixing" the characters memories, but finds it more fitting that they all remember how badly they screwed up. If they try to talk about this weekend with outsiders, corrective "steps" can be expected.

Proceed to 3.12c: *Loose Ends*.

Captain Crow quickly surveys the scene and shakes his head in disdain.

3.12c: Loose Ends

Hadji reappears after the Rangers leave, but parts company when the group returns to town. He does not want the responsibility of safeguarding the artifacts, and warns the characters that other forces may covet them. He promises to continue researching a means of permanently hiding or destroying Zatha's Flame.

The following morning, the newspaper reports (**Handout 20: Kidnapper Ends Life**) on the suicide of a captured cultist in his jail cell. The article reports that Louis Connelly confessed to kidnapping the three Blackwell cousins and murdering the Chahovics. The article also says that Sgt. Rodriguez has been removed from the case pending an internal investigation.

If the characters return to the nursing home, they learn Imogene Glass died during the night. Her roommate insists that Imogene got up in the middle of the night and walked away with a "farmer".

Two days later, national newspapers report (**Handout 21: Texas Ranger Commits Suicide**) that Sgt. Rodriguez committed suicide. A state investigation into his botched rescue of the missing Blackwell cousins pushed him over the edge. There is no mention of Texas Ranger Crow or his associates.

A week later, the Blackwell descendant receives an unmarked package in the mail. It includes a torn portion of the Blackwell family tree (**Handout 22: Blackwell family tree II**). If the characters subdued Molly without killing her, the package also includes a photo of her standing in front of a mountain cabin. She smiles happily, holding up yesterday's newspaper for the camera.

Appendix 1: Cast of Characters

Jessica Blackwell

(July 15, 1987 - Present)

Younger sister of Molly Blackwell and cousin of Ronny Blackwell. Jessica is a high school senior.

John Blackwell

(1850 – 1904)



Turn-of-the-century county surveyor and member of local Masonic lodge. John married Juliet Blackwell and their only son is Robert Blackwell. John led the rescue party that defeated Zatha's Chosen and recovered the red lens (known as Zatha's Flame) and the *Book of Endless Sorrow*. He later performed spells from the book that erased the memories of the rescue from his companions and protected the artifacts from those who would abuse them. See the *GM Background* in Section 0 for more information. John died from injuries received in a ranch accident.

Juliet Houston Blackwell

(1955 – 1890)

Wife of John Blackwell. Early in their marriage, Juliet became pregnant with John's son. Unfortunately, the pregnancy was difficult and the infant, named Roger, died at birth. It was several years before Juliet was ready to try again.

Finally the time was right and Juliet again became pregnant. Again she suffered health problems throughout the pregnancy, but this time through prayer and will-power she gave birth to a healthy boy--Robert. Unfortunately, Juliet was not so fortunate. The labor the second time was even more difficult than the first, and six days later she passed away during the night.



Molly Blackwell

Non-Possessed Molly Statistics

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d4, Persuasion d6, Shooting d4, Street-wise d6

Hindrances: Small

Edges: Attractive, Quick

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Occupation: Student--sophomore at East Texas University. Enjoys singing and competing in cross-country running.

Possessions: None.

Possessed Molly Statistics:

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d10, Knowledge (Classical Languages) d6, Knowledge (French) d6, Knowledge (History) d8, Knowledge (Religion) d10, Knowledge (Spanish) d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Shooting d6, Spellcasting d12, Throwing d6

Hindrances: Small, Vow (major: recover artifacts and complete the ritual)

Edges: Alertness, Attractive, Arcane Background (Magic), Charismatic, Extra Power Points (x2), Level Headed, Quick, Scholar (History and Religion)

Powers: *armor, bolt, puppet*

Power Points: 20

Charisma: +4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Possessions: None.

Character Profile

(April 1, 1984 - Present)



Molly Blackwell is the older sister of Jessica Blackwell and Ronny Blackwell's cousin. Molly earned an athletic scholarship for cross-country running at East Texas University. She is currently a sophomore (undecided major). After a bad roommate experience she moved back home with her parents and sister.

Throughout most of the adventure the spirit of Nicole Blackwell possesses Molly. In this state, the charac-

ter named “Molly” uses Nicole’s Smarts and Spirit and all similar skills and edges.

Character Speak

“Make me feel like I’m alive!”

“I just want to go home.”

“Sometime it feels like I’m watching myself from a distance.”

“Why me?”

“Daddy... don’t you know me?”



Nicole Woodson Blackwell

Character Statistics

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength –, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d10, Knowledge (Classical Languages) d6, Knowledge (French) d6, Knowledge (History) d8, Knowledge (Religion) d10, Knowledge (Spanish) d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Shooting d6, Spellcasting d12, Throwing d6

Hindrances: Vow (major: recover artifacts and complete the ritual)

Edges: Alertness, Arcane Background (Magic), Charismatic, Extra Power Points (x2), Level Headed, Scholar (History and Religion)

Powers: armor, bolt, puppet

Power Points: 20

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities (See *lost soul* template)

**Note: Lost souls lose access to all physical and magic-related skills and edges while in immaterial form.*

Character Profile



(1896 – 1922)

Nicole is the wife of Robert Blackwell and daughter of a Chosen cult member killed by John Blackwell’s posse four months before her birth. She followed in her

parents’ footsteps in the area of occult studies. Nicole also sought to mete out revenge against the Blackwell bloodline, while seeking the dark artifacts hidden by John Blackwell. See *GM Background* in Section 0 for detailed info.

Nicole is initially encountered as a lost soul (see **Appendix 2** for description) capable of manifesting as a *dominating spirit* and using the supernatural “dream weaving” ability to trick the heroes into accepting her story. At the end of Section II, she possesses Molly Blackwell. Nicole plays the role of damsel in distress so she may stay close to the arcane artifacts found by the heroes. Her goal is to permanently possess Molly’s body and possess the two Blackwell artifacts. Then she can complete the unfinished ritual begun by her father. Opposing her is the lost soul of Robert Blackwell.



Robert Blackwell

Character Statistics

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength –, Vigor d6

Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d8, Knowledge (Spanish) d6, Persuasion d6, Repair d4, Riding d8, Stealth d6, Throwing d8

Hindrances: –

Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Marksman

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5

Gear: *Pickax* (Spirit Weapon, Spi+2).

Special Abilities (See *lost soul* template)

**Note: Lost souls lose access to all physical and magic-related skills and edges while in immaterial form.*



Character Profile

(1890 – 1922)

Robert is the son of John and Juliet Blackwell. He came back from World War I intent on marrying Imogene Glass. Instead he

married Nicole Blackwell, and together the couple had a son, Michael Blackwell. Robert’s marriage to Nicole is better defined as imprisonment. Nicole bewitched him and then forced him to search for his father’s treasure. The *GM Background* in Section 0 provides a detailed history of Robert’s life. After his death, Robert’s spirit lingered in our world. He seeks to protect his bloodline and foil Nicole’s schemes.

Robert’s spirit first shows itself as an ABE, but by the end of Section 2 he accepts the *gift of life* from the sacrificed Blackwell cousins and manifests as a full phantom after that encounter.

Ronny Blackwell

(June 2, 1983 - Present)

Male cousin to the sisters Molly and Jessica Blackwell. Ronny is a sophomore at East Texas University.



Vera Bock

Character Statistics

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Healing d4, Intimidation d6, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d10, Knowledge (Classical Languages) d6, Knowledge (History) d8, Knowledge (German) d6, Knowledge (Mandarin) d6, Knowledge (Navaho) d6, Knowledge (Religion) d8, Knowledge (Russian) d6, Notice d4, Persuasion d8, Shooting d4, Spellcasting d10, Taunt d6

Hindrances: –

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Charismatic, Extra Power Points (x3), Level Headed, Scholar (Arcana and Religion), Strong Willed

Powers: *barrier, blast, fear, puppet*

Power Points: 25

Occupation: Retired Teacher (White Collar) Skill Emphasis Knowledge (Arcane Lore)

Possessions: Mark of Zatha (see **Appendix 3**), home in Pinebox, Lincoln Town car (Luxury Car), Various Personal Items. Knife (Str+1).

Character Profile



(September 1, 1938 – Present)

Vera Bock is an intelligent and strong willed lady who inserted herself among Pinebox's many social circles. She stands 5 feet, 7 inches tall and weighs approximately 142 pounds. Her hair is fully gray.

Mr. and Mrs. Bock moved to Pinebox in 1996. The Bocks explained to their neighbors how they had always dreamed of living in a small town. When Vera retired from teaching high school Latin in the big city they decided to make their dream come true. Oddly, Vera's records are missing from the big city school district and nobody can remember a Latin teacher by that name.

While Vera's brusque manner turned off many locals, she seemed to find something in common with a few residents...although not necessarily the people one would expect a retired Latin teacher to befriend. She and her new friends developed a passion for local history and joined the Pinebox Historical Society. This new "clique" used their voting power to influence the club, which led to the resignation of many longtime members. Vera Bock has served four consecutive terms as President.

Secretly, Vera leads the latest incarnation of "Zatha's Chosen" (See **Appendix 2**). Although little is known for certain regarding her past, she clearly spent the last few decades mastering the mystic power required to wield Zatha's Flame. As with all the Chosen before her, she seeks to open the Void and allow Zatha the Devourer to return to our plane of existence. Having tracked Zatha's Flame to Pinebox, she settled in the area under the pretense of being a retiree. For the past decade she has carefully rebuilt the Chosen from locals with mundane or mystical power. Her own knowledge of previous Chosen history is based upon fragmented dreams and arcane writings.

Character Speak

"Welcome to Pinebox. How can I help you?"

"The treasure? Goodness, lots of folks have come around looking for that. No one ever found it though."

"Keep looking, you never know what you might find."

Leonard Bock

(June 23, 1940 – Present)

Leonard Bock dearly loves his wife Vera. He found himself drawn to her intense personality when they met four decades ago. Although he did not believe much of the magic mumbo-jumbo she spouted, he readily went along with her plans. Even later, when she demonstrated the dark powers that required sacrifices to fuel them, he went along. He does not know exactly when he lost his soul to her cause, but he has long since accepted his fate. He knows she does not love him—that she sees him only as a convenient tool—but the thought of losing her still terrifies him and there is *nothing* he would not try to prevent her from leaving.

Character Speak

"Ain't she wonderful!"

"You look like nice fellas. Why don't you forget about all this stuff and just go home?"

Bob Campbell

Character Statistics

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d4, Knowledge (Latin) d6, Notice d4, Persuasion d4, Repair d4, Shooting d6, Streetwise d4

Hindrances: –

Edges: Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Quick

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Occupation: Entrepreneur

Possessions: Mark of Zatha (see **Appendix 3**). Owns three Pinebox Pawn stores and a new pickup truck (Large Pickup). Rents an apartment in town. Hatchet (Str+1).

Character Profile

(June 12, 1968 – Present)

Bob Campbell owns the 4-Kit-Over Pawn. He grew his business from a single cramped, dirty building into three dirty, cramped locations by driving a hard bargain. Over the years, Campbell developed a keen sense of character judgment and can spot weakness in an instant. He loves the feeling of power when someone enters his stores with a look of hunger and a handful of electronics to hock. Inevitably, that person leaves with 1/3 of what he had hoped to earn and the sinking suspicion that he has been fleeced. Campbell saw no such look of desperation when Vera Bock walked through his door, but she saw something in him—a gnawing hunger for power. After a few small demonstrations of the power she could offer and the promise of more to come, Campbell eagerly joined Vera's followers.

Bob Campbell's first loyalty is to himself. He tells himself that the things he does at Vera Bock's instruction are an investment to ensure his future rise to power. Although, initially squeamish over the more bloody aspects of Bock's cult, his concerns were based on his fear of imprisonment rather than moral trepidation. Once he became accustomed to the idea of legal protection (thanks to fellow cultist Deputy "Buddy" Wallis), he found himself enjoying and even anticipating these gruesome rituals and the dark power they bestowed.

Bob Campbell, along with Janice Trent, poses as Mr. & Mrs. Chahovic in the plot to set up the heroes for their murder.

Character Speak

"Welcome to Pinebox Pawn. What can I interest you in today?"

"Well, there is a five day waiting period, if ya wanna buy a gun."

"I got lotsa stereo equipment and exercise equipment. You look as if you could use some of that!"

Rhonda & Travis Chahovic

(1964, 1963 - Present)

The Chahovics currently own the property that incorporates the Blackwell homestead. After a growing problem with treasure hunters in the mid 1990s, the couple decided to deny access altogether. Both are very protective of their property and are concerned about frivolous lawsuits from treasure hunters who hurt themselves while trespassing.

The "Chahovics" met by the heroes are cult members—Janice Trent and Bob Campbell. The real Chahovics are bound in a storm shelter behind the house. Both are murdered by Janice and Bob after the artifacts are recovered from the well by the heroes.

Louis Connelly

Character Statistics

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Driving d8, Fighting d4, Knowledge (Arcana) d4, Knowledge (Latin) d6, Persuasion d6, Repair d4, Shooting d4

Hindrances: –

Edges: Dodge

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6

Occupation: High school student

Possessions: Mark of Zatha (see **Appendix 3**). 4-wheel drive pickup truck (Large Pickup). Baseball bat (Str+1), knife (Str+1).



Character Profile

(1986 - Present)

Louis Connelly is Vera Bock's youngest recruit for Zatha's Chosen. Picked on and despised at school, he craves the power to earn

respect. Bock used him in planning the kidnapping of the Blackwell cousins. Nobody could suspect his role in spying on the cousins and luring them to the other cultists. If only Jessica had not been nice to him, it might not have bothered him so much when the time came to hold the chloroform-soaked rag over her mouth. By then, it was too late—the others counted on him and he couldn't back out. He could only hope that after he became a god, he wouldn't feel like such a tool.

Character Speak

"Stay away from my treasure!"

"Don't make me open up a can of whoop-ass on you!"

"When the light burns red, the shadow consumes!"

"If you know what's good for ya', you'll git out of town right now!"



Felix Crow

Character Statistics

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d10, Knowledge (Arcana) d6, Knowledge (History) d4, Notice d4, Persuasion d8, Shooting d10, Stealth d4, Streetwise d6, Survival d4

Hindrances: –

Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Dead Shot, Improved Trademark Weapon (Glock), Level Headed, Marksman

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Occupation: Military

Possessions: Carries a Glock 17, tactical vest (+2, torso only), stun gun and knife (Str+1). Anything he needs, he can get.

Character Profile

(1964 - present)

Felix Crow stands 5'10" and weighs approximately 150 lbs. He has dark brown hair and grey eyes. He wears the same SWAT-style uniforms as his colleagues, with no rank insignia. He never seems surprised and remains even-tempered at all times—even when issuing threats. Although he and his people claim to work for the Texas Rangers, he offers nothing in the way of proof. No information is available about who this well equipped and seemingly omniscient unit really are. If the GM plans

on running the Bloodlines sequel scheduled for 2005, it would be wise to refrain from extemporizing very much on Crow or his group.

Character Speak

"You may not think I'll believe you, but tell me your story anyway."

"Believe me—I'll know when you're lying."

"What do you think is happening here?"

"We're here to protect the public."

"Do you have any idea how deep you've stepped in it?"

"You released forces best left buried, and now you better deal with it."

Jerry Daniels

Character Statistics

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Investigation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Streetwise d8

Hindrances: –

Edges: Charismatic, Investigator

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5

Occupation: Reporter (Investigative)

Possessions: Apartment in Austin, Dodge Ram Truck (1994) (Large Pickup), various personal items, keeps a PDA and computer notebook in his truck.

Character Profile

(April 23, 1958 - Present)

Jerry Daniels is a string reporter for the Austin Post. He covers regional news, and his boss is the biggest jerk you can imagine. With his experience Jerry should have his choice of assignments, but his boss makes sure any story with "meat" gets directed to other reporters. Jerry figures if he lands a big story, he may have sufficient leverage to go over his boss's head. He can be expected to take risks to get a prize-winning story. Despite this, his ethics dictate that he keep any promises he makes to the heroes.

Jerry stands a tad short of 6 feet tall and weighs approximately 192 lbs. His hair is cut short where it is not receding. He often wears a Houston Astros Baseball cap to hide his bald spot. He has a quick, disarming smile and is easy to talk to. He shows proper skepticism re-

garding the paranormal, but is open to writing any story that might be of interest to his readers and career.

Character Speak

"Mind if I record this?"

"Not that I think you did it, but, uh...do you mind meeting somewhere public?"

"So what do you know about the kidnapping?"

"Don't you want people to know your side of the story?"

"Quid pro quo—I'll show you mine if you show me yours!"

"Think I could tag along? A witness might help your case!"

Steven Fuller

Character Statistics

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Investigation d8, Notice d4, Persuasion d6

Hindrances: —

Edges: Attractive

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Occupation: Lawyer (White Collar)

Possessions: Ford F150 (1987) (Large Pickup); various personal items; small law office in downtown Pinebox. Baretta 92F

Character Profile

(Feb. 5, 1955 - present)

Fuller is a down-on-his-luck-drunk. He is also a defense lawyer in Pinebox. His wife left because of his addiction, and he currently sleeps in his office. He is heavysset and short, but surprisingly strong. He is also a pretty good lawyer when he does not have a beer buzz—which is not often. Unfortunately, his connections in the Pinebox justice system were not much help when a DWI led to the revocation of his driver's license. Now he is reduced to begging rides from clients, neither of which he can afford to be too selective over. However, no matter how down on his luck, 20 years of experience practicing law in Pinebox could be a big break for the characters.

Character Speak

"Why don't we discuss this over drinks?"

"So tell me again why you're innocent of these charges."

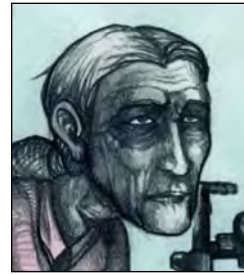
"Don't count on those folks to clear your name. They like easy answers. You're gonna have to get your own proof."

"Did you suffer that injury while on the job? Cause if ya did, I can help you!"

"Uh... can you give me a lift back to my office? I sort-a lost my license because of a little misunderstanding. It's under appeal!"

Imogene Glass

Character Profile



(March 3, 1895 - present)

Imogene is Pinebox's oldest resident and the former fiancée to Robert Blackwell. She and Robert grew up together, having attended the same church in Pinebox. As they matured, Imogene found her fondness for Robert had grown. Fearing that her feelings might not be reciprocated she did not reveal them until Robert received his draft notice for World War I. For the next few years they wrote one another, and six months after his return in 1919, they became engaged.

Then, with little warning Robert broke off the engagement. Imogene was devastated. Eventually Imogene married and spent 12 years happily married to Evan Smith. Her new husband had also served as an Army officer during the first war. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Army recalled him. He died in a training accident six weeks later while still on American soil. Childless, Imogene reverted back to her maiden name and swore she'd never marry again.

Partially paralyzed by a stroke four years ago, Glass has outlived all her relatives with the exception of one nephew (Kevin Martin). She now lives in the Travis Nursing Home in Pinebox. Considering her advanced age, her mind is not in bad shape. However, the stroke has left her with a problem distinguishing time and processing short-term memory. Consequently, it is easier for her to remember events from her childhood than a conversation five minutes ago. Imogene spends her twilight days in a wheel chair watching game shows. Her skin is wrinkled from old age, but her eyes sparkle as she speaks of the past—especially Robert.

Character Speak

"Robert was my first fiancée. He was a looker all right. In my day what we called a firecracker."

"Are you cousin Dale's boy?"

"Why would someone salt their own well?"

"I knew that—I could have won a trip to Hawaii!"

Tony Hidalgo

Character Statistics

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d4, Investigation d4, Knowledge (History) d6, Knowledge (Spanish) d6, Repair d6

Hindrances: —

Edges: Attractive

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7

Occupation: Business owner (Entrepreneur)

Possessions: Owns a brick home in Pinebox and the Hidalgo Hardware and Tractor Supply. Also owns a collection of books on Texas history. Ruger Service-Six.

Character Profile

(November 7, 1948 – present)

Hidalgo is a friendly local with a family tree dating back to the founding of Pinebox. He is proud of his down-home, Texan heritage and served many years as the President of the Pinebox Historical Society. That is, before he lost his position to Vera Bock. He has since become bitter in regards to the society. He is an expert on the Blackwell Gold legend and used to search for the treasure in his spare time. He quit treasure hunting after learning from an old diary that there was no gold.

Hidalgo is a heavyset Hispanic male, with a ready smile. He generally wears blue jeans and button-down shirts with his business name stitched over the pocket. He is the second-generation owner of the Hidalgo Hardware and Tractor Supply, which has earned his family a respectable income and allowed him to pay cash for his children's college education.

Character Speak

"What makes you think your gonna find the gold?"

"Yeah, I know about the Blackwell Gold. Hell, I used to look for it myself."



Charlie Lester

Character Statistics

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Healing d6, Investigation d10, Knowledge (Arcana) d12, Knowledge (History) d10, Knowledge (Latin) d6, Knowledge (French) d6, Knowledge (German) d6, Knowledge (Religion) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Shooting d10, Spellcasting d12

Hindrances: Enemy

Edges: Alertness, Arcane Background (Magic), Danger Sense, Dead Shot, Extra Power Points (x4), Healer, Improved Nerves of Steel, Scholar (Arcana and Religion)

Powers: armor, bolt, barrier, boost/lower trait, detect/conceal arcana, healing, light, obscure, puppet, telekinesis

Power Points: 30

Occupation: Military

Possessions: Tactical vest (+1, torso only). Carries a stun gun and a PDA spellbook. Anything he needs, he can get...except freedom.



Character Profile

(1961 - Present)

Charlie Lester does not exist. You did not see anyone matching his description. You are mistaken. Do not press the matter.

Character Speak

"Watch your step."

"Heeheehee. That's interesting!...What? Oh...um...nevermind."

Kevin Martin

Character Statistics

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d4

Skills: Persuasion d6, Knowledge (History) d6, Knowledge (Religion) d6, Notice d6, Shooting d4

Hindrances: Elderly

Edges: –

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 0; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 4 (11 while in the grips of the spell)

Occupation: Retired (White Collar)

Possessions: large brick home; many personal possessions.

Character Profile



(October 31, 1938 - present)

Martin is a tall, thin man with bushy, dark eyebrows and short, neatly combed hair. Earlier in life he worked as vice-president of the East Texas National Bank and Trust, but retirement has left him with little to

do. In spite of the common maladies of age, he remains active. The one responsibility he enjoys is that of “Worshipful Master” (fancy title for President) of Pinebox’s Masonic Lodge. He and the other present-day members are completely ignorant of the events surrounding one of their late predecessors, John Blackwell.

Character Speak

“Come on in, fellas. I was starting to think I was gonna have to clean up bingo night on my own.”

“Well, of course I’ve heard of the Blackwell Gold, but I don’t believe those stories. If it really existed, someone would have found it by now.”

“Wait a minute. You folks aren’t really Masons, are you?”



James Rodriguez

Character Statistics

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d4, Healing d6, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d4, Knowledge (Spanish) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Streetwise d8

Hindrances: –

Edges: Alertness, Charismatic, Inspire, Leader

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 8/10 vs. bullets (+2/+4)

Possessions: carries various personal items and drives a highway patrol vehicle (Luxury Car) stocked with the following: Notebook Computer, Digital Camera, Portable Radio, Cellular Phone & Charger, Video Camera, Binoculars, Flashlight, Hand Spotlight, Sig Sauer P226, Remington 12 ga. Shotgun, Metal Baton (Str+1), concealable vest (+2/+4 vs. bullets), Fingerprint Kit, First Aid Kit, Tool Box, Evidence Kit, Handcuffs, Webb Gear, and Bolt Cutters.

Character Profile



(June 12, 1962 - present)

Rodriguez is a broad-shouldered, well-muscled member of the Texas Rangers. Throughout his six years as a Texas Ranger, he has proven himself many times to be a tenacious law enforcement officer. He has a dark-complexion, wears boot-

cut khaki slacks, western boots and white button-down shirts. His ensemble is complete with a grey felt cowboy hat with a small insignia of the Texas Rangers on the brim.

Rodriguez is investigating a missing person’s case involving the three Blackwell cousins. He is a smart, levelheaded investigator promoted to his current position after several years working as a state highway patrol officer. Although highly trained with firearms, he is also trained to use them only as a last resort.

Character Speak

“All right, boys. Slow down. Take a deep breath, and tell me again what you know about the missing Blackwell kids.”

“I’ll tell ya’--this whole thing smells like the south end of a northbound cow to me.”

“Just because I think the locals are short on evidence doesn’t mean you’re not involved.”

“You can go for now, but consider yourselves on a short leash. If I catch you leaving the county I’ll haul you in again and lose the key.”



Hadji Sattu

Character Statistics

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d6, Healing d8, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d12, Knowledge (English) d8, Knowledge (History) d8, Knowledge (Latin) d6, Knowledge (Religion) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Shooting d6, Spellcasting d10

Hindrances: Curious, Ugly

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Quick, Rich, Scholar (Arcana and History)

Power: *healing, puppet*

Power Points: 10

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Occupation: Phenomenologist (Adventurer)

Possessions: Leather jacket (+1, Arms and Torso), taser (target rolls Vigor at -4 or is Incapacitated from Fatigue, which recovers at a rate of 1 level per hour). Drives a green Honda (Mid-Sized Car) with a taser in the glove compartment. Carries a backpack with a notebook computer. His family is wealthy and he can gain access to most of whatever he needs.

Character Profile



(May 1, 1972 - present)

Hadji Sattu is a mysterious, one-eyed, turbaned Indian who shadows the characters during the early portion of the adventure. He generally wears collared, long-sleeve shirts in solid colors, and dark slacks. His face is scarred and he wears a patch over his destroyed left eye--badges

of previous encounters with the paranormal.

Born in India, Hadji's family moved to America and became naturalized citizens when he was young. While he attended an Ivy League college for his undergraduate work, his masters and doctoral work in folklore led him to the American South. Although his formal education has been a benefit, much of his knowledge about the paranormal actually comes from "field experience".

Early encounters with the paranormal led Hadji to the Global Knowledge Foundation, a loose confederation of phenomenologists similar in form and function

to the famed Explorers Society. Through the backing of this unique group, Hadji has access to a surprising amount of resources (financial, material, and magical) when researching the paranormal. However, the existence of the Foundation is a closely guarded secret and he finds he gets better cooperation when introducing himself as a simple graduate student.

Character Speak

"You don't understand the powers arrayed against you."

"Where is the Flame? Do you have it? May I see it?"

"What do you know of the cult called Zatha's Chosen?"

"Oh yes, I can see how well you're doing on your own. You look like I feel."

"...or, uh, that's what I read somewhere anyway."

Standard "Ranger"

Character Statistics



Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Healing d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d6, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d4, Survival d6

Hindrances: Quirk (never speaks in more than monosyllables)

Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Frenzy, Marksman

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9/11 vs. bullets (2/4)

Occupation: classified

Gear: M16A2, Glock 17, Stun gun, *magic tactical vest* (3/5 vs. bullets, torso only).

Jacob Townes

Character Profile

(1882 - 1940)

Jacob Townes was a turn of the century Baptist preacher in Pinebox, Texas. He and John Blackwell were more than casual friends, and he was present at John's deathbed when John revealed the secret of the buried artifacts. Although a good man at heart, Jacob misunderstood John and was responsible for spreading rumors of buried

gold. However, these rumors also made the Blackwell ranch an appealing piece of property for anyone with an idea for treasure-hunting, and John Blackwell's son was able to lease the land until he was old enough to work it himself.

Jacob was also present the night Robert and Nicole Blackwell died. While others were distracted with the burning house, he discovered the Nicole's newborn infant. Considering the strange circumstances of its parents deaths, Jacob and his wife decided to give the infant a clean start and adopted it as their own. Those who knew of the adoption assumed the infant came from a young unwed mother.

Janice Trent

Character Statistics

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Healing d4, Knowledge (Arcana) d6, Knowledge (Latin) d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d6

Hindrances: –

Edges: Acrobat, Block, Dodge, Very Attractive

Charisma: +4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Possessions: Mark of Zatha (see **Appendix 3**). A large plantation-style home and several sports cars. Ceremonial knife (Str+1).

Character Profile

(June 18, 1966 - present)

Janice is a 37 year old, petite, lovely socialite living in Pinebox. Her dark, curly hair and sparkling green eyes accent her beautiful face and fine figure. She is a well-paid administrator at East Texas University and is known for her uncompromising attention to detail. Every Spring she holds an exclusive party at her lake-house, where she exhibits the artwork she has painted over the previous year. For the grand finale, Janice throws all her creations into a pile on her brick patio and sets them ablaze.

Trent's attractive exterior belies her true sociopathic nature, which made her the perfect recruit for Vera Bock's new gathering of Zatha's Chosen. Trent has no qualms about spilling blood, and her own perverse enjoyment now has a purpose in Zatha's Chosen.

Character Speak

"Sorry folks, the only way I can give you permission to poke around is if you sign a release form. Can't have you slipping on a cow pie and suing us!"

"Oh, there ain't no gold here! Somebody would have found it by now."



Deputy "Buddy" Wallis

Character Statistics

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d4, Persuasion d4, Shooting d8, Streetwise d4

Hindrances: Clueless, Mean

Edges: Brawny, Marksman

Charisma: –2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8/10 vs. bullets (2/4)

Occupation: Law Enforcement

Possessions: Mark of Zatha (see **Appendix 3**). Lives in an apartment in Pinebox. Wears a concealable vest (+2/+4 vs. bullets, torso only). Carries a Colt .45 and a metal baton (Str+1). Drives a Sheriff's Deputy car (Luxury Car).

Character Profile



(November 1, 1949 - present)

Buddy is a large man—standing over six feet tall and weighing more than 290 lbs. After a dazzling high school football career Buddy looked forward to a full athletic college scholarship. Unfortunately, Buddy did not perform as well in class as he did on the field and flunked out at the end of his freshman year. Within months his draft number came up and the service sent him to the Vietnam "police action".

In the jungle, Buddy discovered he had a talent for dealing death at the end of a rifle. In the cauldron of war, Buddy acquired a taste for killing and the sense of power it gave him. Because of his talent for surviving against overwhelming odds, his occasional deadly "mistakes" against noncombatants were conveniently

overlooked. After returning to his hometown, Buddy turned to the only occupation where he could use his talents—the Golan County Sheriff's Department. Despite almost three decades on the force, his propensity for manhandling prisoners has kept him from climbing up the ranks.

Buddy and his half-sister Norma never liked one another, so he felt surprised when she invited him over for dinner one night. He did not learn until he arrived that there would be another dinner guest—Vera Bock. Vera seemed to understand him better than anyone he had ever met, and after giving him a taste of the power she commanded he immediately agreed with her plans.

Buddy Wallis lusts for power to lord over those around him. However, he is basically dimwitted and lazy, and shows no aptitude for the arcane arts. Yet, he does possess a cruel cunning, which explains his influence within the local law enforcement community. He detests Stephen Fuller and goes out of his way to make life difficult for the attorney and his clients.

Character Speak

"Step out of the car. What ya'll doing loitering 'round here?"

"Ya'll need to step right, or get outta my town."

"See, this here's private property. You'd best be leavin'. Now!"



Norma Wallis

Character Statistics

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d8, Investigation d12, Knowledge (Arcana) d12, Knowledge (Classical Languages) d6, Knowledge (History) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d4, Spellcasting d10

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Level Headed, Scholar (Arcana and History)

Powers: *red cloak* + one of the following: *bolt*, *fear*, *puppet*

Power Points: 15

Charisma: 0 (−4 if Bloodthirsty is known); **Parry:** 4;

Pace: 6; **Toughness:** 6

Possessions: Mark of Zatha (see **Appendix 3**). Norma drives a Jeep Renegade (Small SUV). She lives in a

small house on the edge of town and owns two Rottweilers, Daisy and Duke.

Character Profile

(November 19, 1942 - present)

Norma is very smart and driven--the very antithesis of her half-brother Buddy Wallis. The one thing they share in common is the delight in the others suffering and the hunger for power to inflict it. A miserable childhood filled with cruel taunting left her bitter and hateful. A series of abusive boyfriends and then husbands only reinforced her hatred for her fellow humans.

Books offered her the desperately needed refuge from the world, and her reading habits were all but insatiable. Although she had delved into arcane lore before meeting Vera Bock, it wasn't until after Bock brought her into the fold that theory become practice. Wallis has since become a favorite disciple of Vera Bock's due to her natural abilities with the arcane arts—although still nowhere near the aptitude of Vera herself. Using her access to historical data at the local library, Wallis has been instrumental piecing together the location of Zatha's Flame and the Book of Endless Sorrow.

Character Speak

"More treasure hunters? You're the second group today!"

"Let me get you my file on the Blackwell Gold legend. I keep it locked away so the school kids don't tear it up."

"Shhhhh."

Tom Williamson

Character Statistics

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d4, Knowledge (Arcana) d4, Knowledge (Latin) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d10, Shooting d4

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty

Edges: Attractive, Brawny, Charismatic, Quick

Charisma: +4 (0 if Bloodthirsty is known); **Pace:** 6;

Parry: 5; **Toughness:** 7

Occupation: Real Estate Agent

Possessions: Mark of Zatha (see **Appendix 3**). Owns a minivan and a small apartment in Pinebox. He carries a Glock 17 in his van.

Character Profile

(September 10, 1964)

The person who introduces himself as “Tom Williamson” is actually a local realtor by the name of William Flynn. His natural charisma serves him well in real estate, and his six-foot tall frame and well-defined body makes Pinebox’s single ladies stop and stare. Yet Flynn never dates the same women for very long—or rather, they do not date him very long. In private, Flynn’s darker, baser personality inevitably leaks through. The smart ones leave him before being drawn too deeply into his private world. The dumb ones disappear altogether.

Until meeting Janice Trent, he had never met a woman capable of matching his own violent, perverted nature. It was she who introduced him to Zatha’s Chosen

and Vera Bock. Flynn’s knowledge of local real estate has proven useful to the cult, as they need secluded places to bury their misdeeds from time to time. Flynn’s easy-going smile and outward confidence made him the natural choice to pose as a GPS company rep in charge of the geocaching competition.

Character Speak

“Once the contest begins you must travel together in one vehicle.”

“Return the treasure box to me and you will get your reward.”

“Of course, I do not need to remind you that this is a friendly competition.”

Appendix 2: Cast of Creatures & Cults

Lay'naf

A starfish-like parasite that finds nourishment from deceit and blood. In the center of this creature is a large yellow eye. Although its origins are classified, it almost certainly comes from a world beyond ours. Although it lacks self-consciousness, the lay-naf employs extremely low-level telepathic abilities to find highly deceptive creatures. It then attaches itself to the host and sends minute telepathic prompts encouraging further deceit. The most common theory is that this is a defense mechanism that ensures the parasite's survival on the host.

Fortunately, these creatures are exceptionally rare in our world. In *Bloodlines*, Charlie Lester uses a captured lay-naf as a lie-detector. The secretive "Ranger" has learned to interpret the creature's responses in the presence of deceit.

Lost Soul (Template)

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 by others.

Template Traits

"Lost soul" is a profile which can be applied to any recently deceased creature. Lost souls manifest themselves in one of four classifications depending on the amount of their spiritual energy at the time of death. For characters, Rank—or a rough estimate of Rank—may serve as a guideline. Manifestation of the last category, dominating spirit, requires additional circumstances, which are noted in the description.

Manifestation (species)	Rank
Lesser manifestation	Novice
Poltergeist	Seasoned
ABE	Veteran
Phantom	Heroic
Dominating Spirit*	Heroic

This profile applies to each lost spirit except as amended in the individual descriptions of the manifestation types.

Attributes: Agility *, Smarts *, Spirit *, Strength –, Vigor d6

Skills: As in life

Pace: *; **Parry:** *; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities

- **Immunity:** Normal damage.
- **Incorporeal:** A lost soul may pass through objects at will and may not interact with the physical world in any way.
- **Invisibility:** Lost souls are naturally invisible but may be detected by the *detect arcana* power. Some lost souls are capable of revealing themselves willingly, but normally do so only at night.
- **Low Light Vision:** Lost souls can see in the dark and can function with no light at all.
- **Rejuvenation** In most cases, it's difficult to destroy a lost soul through simple combat; the "destroyed" soul often restores itself in 2d4 days. As a rule, the only way to get rid of a lost soul forever is to determine the reason for its existence and set right whatever prevents it from resting in peace. The exact means varies with each lost soul.
- **Suspended AB:** Lost souls who had an Arcane Background in life lose those abilities in death. Such abilities may be restored for the duration that a lost soul possesses a living person.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. Called shots do no extra damage. Arrows, bullets, and other piercing weapons do half damage.

* As in life.

Lesser Manifestation

Lesser manifestations are incorporeal spirits barely able to affect the mundane world. They have the Special Abilities of a lost soul in addition to those detailed below.

Special Abilities

- **Cold Spot:** Lesser manifestations may drop the ambient temperature by 20 degrees in the space of a Small Burst Template centered on the lost soul.
- **Dreamweaving:** Lesser manifestations may communicate with the living through dreams. During sleep, the human mind is less guarded and more open to outside influence. During these periods of susceptibility (especially when the target is exhausted or under stress), lost souls can crudely communicate through dream imagery. Dreamweaving cannot harm the dreamer physically or mentally.

- **Lesser telekinesis:** Lesser manifestations may move a single small object (<=1lb.) short distances. The lesser manifestation must be within 30 feet of the manipulated object. The object cannot strike any other object or being with damaging force.
- **Channel:** Lesser manifestations may communicate with the living when called upon in certain settings (such as a séance). Communication is usually restricted to certain Mediums. These extraordinary individuals are attuned to the spirit world. On rare occasion, the lost soul may briefly (generally less than 30 seconds) possess a host to pass on a personal message. See the Possession ability under Dominating Spirit for information on resolving the attempt and the target's combined character stats.

Poltergeist

Poltergeists are incorporeal spirits with the ability to affect the mundane world. They have the same Special Abilities as a Lesser Manifestation in addition to those detailed below.

Special Abilities

- **Cluster Attack:** A poltergeist can cause a swarm of objects to fly about covering the space of a Large Burst Template. The objects cause 2d6 damage to any character or creature caught in the affected area.
- **Gift of Life:** Although rare, under extreme circumstances lost souls have been known to share spiritual energy with other lost souls or with living creatures on the brink of death. As an action, the poltergeist may heal 1 Wound per hour, though it may only heal a single Wound of another lost soul in any 24-hour period.

Atmospheric Ball of Energy (ABE)

ABEs are often mistaken for lesser manifestations, as they are rarely visible to the naked eye. ABEs are caught on film as inexplicable "lens flares"—hot spots of spiritual energy. Although invisibility is its natural state, ABEs may choose to make themselves visible for short periods of time. ABEs have the same Special Abilities as a Poltergeist in addition to those detailed below.

Special Abilities

- **Fear:** ABEs are frightening to the uninitiated and force Guts checks.
- **Terrifying Slam:** 2d4 electrical shock damage. The recipient of a successful slam attack must also make a Guts check at -2.



Phantom

Phantoms are lost souls with the ability to manifest human forms for short durations. Phantoms often manifest as they appeared (or saw themselves) at the time of their deaths. Phantoms have the same Special Abilities as an ABE in addition to those detailed below.

Special Abilities

- **Fear (-2):** A visible Phantom forces a Guts check at -2.
- **Frightful Moan:** A phantom may moan to Force every creature within 20" to make a check against the Phantom's Fear ability.
- **Spirit Weapon:** A lost soul may manifest part of its spiritual energy in the form of a weapon capable of harming both other spirits and living beings. The weapon does Spirit+x damage, where x is 1, 2, or 3. The soul also suffers -x to its Toughness. The weapon and the Toughness loss are permanent.



Dominating Spirit

A dominating spirit is the lost soul of someone corrupted by great and infernal powers. In life, the person may have wielded forbidden arcane powers or committed vile, evil acts. Dominating spirits commonly possess others and are one of the most difficult manifestations to exorcise. Dominating spirits have access to the same Special Abilities as do Phantoms as well as those below.

Special Abilities

- **Possession:** With an opposed Spirit test, a dominating spirit may attempt to possess a living being. If the spirit wins the contest, it takes control of the person and has access to his memories. If it loses the contest, it fails. The dominating spirit's Smarts, Spirit, skills, and mental edges replace those of the possessed. The possessed person retains his other Attributes and physical edges. (If in doubt, the GM rules on what constitutes a mental or physical edge.) A possessing spirit can choose to leave its host at any time. Any attack that Wounds the host's body allows the host another contested Spirit roll to oust the possessing spirit and regain control of its body.
- **Leeching Touch:** A dominating spirit may leech the energy of living creatures to restore its own spiritual energy. The lost soul must make a successful touch attack, which does 2d6 damage and ignores all non-magical armor if it succeeds. If the target takes one or more Wounds from the attack, the dominating spirit reduces its Wound count by a corresponding amount.

Magical Scorpion Swarm

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Notice d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities

- **Poison (-2):** Anyone Shaken or Wounded by the stings of a scorpion swarm must roll her Vigor at -2 or take two levels of Fatigue from poison. This Fatigue cannot cause death and is dispelled when the character recovers consciousness.
- **Sting:** A magical scorpion swarm deals dozens of stings causing 2d6 damage to anyone caught in the swarm.
- **Swarm:** Parry +2. Cover the area of a Medium Burst Template. Because the swarm is composed of dozens of scorpions, cutting and piercing weapons do no real damage. Area-effect weapons work normally and a character can stomp to inflict Strength damage each round.

Zatha's Chosen

Various cults throughout history have answered the whispered summons from their dreams. Zatha's Chosen seek to complete a ritual that releases the Devourer upon the Earth. The cult hopes to reap limitless power in reward.

Zatha the Devourer

One of a triumvirate of ancient beings long banished from our world. Zatha's god-like power and disregard for all other life make her a threat to human existence. Although her prison in the Void keeps her from directly acting in our world, still she whispers to the hearts of men and women. Her siren song promises limitless reward upon her return, and those strong enough to carry the burden often gain new insight and arcane power for the preparation of Zatha's return.

Appendix 3: Magic & Artifacts

Magic is a dangerous, unpredictable force. It is a force mere mortals are scarcely capable of understanding and only intermittently controlling. More often than not, delving into these forces leads to madness and death—if you're lucky. That's the premise behind magic in most horror settings and *Bloodlines* in particular. It is also something that sets the genre apart from other game settings.

Three types of magic are employed in *Bloodlines*: Spells, Rituals, and Artifacts.

Spells use the Powers rules from *Savage Worlds*. Because of spellcasting's risky nature in this setting, the rules are altered to make it more dangerous for the caster.

Rituals are a form of ceremonial magic, and require only belief and the proper words and gestures from the participants. It is not necessary to comprehend how the magic works any more than it is necessary to understand the circuits in a telephone to make a call. Rituals typically take much longer to perform than spells.

Artifacts are unique objects imbued with magical properties.

Spellcasting

Spellcasting requires the Arcane Background (Magic) edge from *Savage Worlds*, as modified below. The character must have access to a written version of a spell in order to learn it, although this may be in the form of an ancient book, an electronic document, or even mad scribbling on the wall of a padded cell.

Edges

Arcane Background (Magic)

This edge is altered from the version in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook as noted below.

Starting Powers: 1

Backlash: When a spellcaster rolls a 1 on *either* her Spellcasting or Wild Die, she suffers Backlash. This means she is Shaken and takes one level of Fatigue. The spell is cast normally if the total for the roll indicates success. Should both dice (for a Wild Card) roll a 1, the spellcaster takes two levels of Fatigue. This could result in death, if the spellcaster is already Exhausted. Fatigue levels are recovered at a rate of one per two hours.

Powers

The following powers are available in this setting: *armor, bolt, barrier, boost/lower trait, detect/conceal arcana, healing, light, obscure, puppet, telekinesis.*

Rituals

Rituals follow a process similar to Spellcasting, though they need no Arcane Background edge. Any character brave—or foolish—enough to learn and attempt to perform a ritual may do so.

A ritual may include any number of participants, one of whom is the leader. That leader makes a check against the Attribute specified by the **Test** for the ritual, aided by the rolls of the other participants (see *Savage Worlds* for more on cooperative rolls). Any Wild Card assistants make cooperative rolls and each group of four extras makes a cooperative group roll against the same **Test**. There is no limit to the bonus allowed on a Ritual roll. Rituals have four elements: Test, Time, Components, and Effects.

Test: The roll each participant must make, including the modifier, if any.

Time: The length of the ritual.

Requirements: Necessary materials and/or skills.

Effects: Successful completion and failure are explained here.

Flight of the Spirit

This ritual is used to cast a human soul from its body. It is found in the Book of Endless Sorrow.

Test: Spirit (–2).

Time: 6 rounds.

Requirements: The Book of Endless Sorrow and Zatha's Flame. The target must be nearby and inside a circle of salt.

Effects: If successful, the soul of the target is cast from its body. All participants suffer one level of Fatigue (which recovers in 24 hours) and are tainted by the evil act they have committed, suffering –1 to their Charisma. If the ritual fails, the leader's spirit is overrun by misdirected magical forces. The leader is Shaken, may not attempt to recover for three rounds, and permanently loses one Spirit die type. All other participants suffer Fatigue as if the ritual were successful.

Song of Endless Sorrow

This ritual is used to summon Zatha the Devourer to our world. It is found in the Book of Endless Sorrow.

Test: Knowledge (Arcana) (–8).

Time: 40 minutes.

Requirements: The Book of Endless Sorrow and Zatha's Flame. Each ritualist must have the skill Knowledge (Latin) at d4 or greater. The owner of Zatha's Flame must be sacrificed, though a previous owner or blood relative may be substituted.

Effects: If the ritual succeeds, a portal to the Void is opened and Zatha the Devourer enters our world. If the ritual fails, each ritualist loses one die type from her Spirit.

Threshold of Sanctuary

This ritual disables the arcane abilities of people or objects which cross the Threshold.

Test: Knowledge (Arcana) (–2).

Time: 30 minutes.

Requirements: This spell must be cast on a building with at least one entrance. Each entrance to be affected (no larger than ten feet across or tall) requires a separate ritual. A continuous line of salt must be poured across the threshold.

Effects: If the ritual succeeds, the line of salt bursts into blue flames and is consumed. All arcane abilities—whether of a person, artifact, or other entity—cease to function after crossing the enchanted threshold. The abilities return once the person or object crosses back over the threshold in the opposite direction. The spell remains in effect for 24 hours and cannot be dismissed. Each participant in a successful ritual suffers 1 level of Fatigue, which is recovered in 24 hours. If the ritual fails, each participant suffers 2 levels of Fatigue.

Artifacts

Artifacts are physical objects that have been crafted to focus the forces what we call “magic”. These objects may take any form, from books to automobiles. Generally, the ability drain cost for creating such objects is permanent. Thus, these Artifacts are both precious and rare. Each one is unique, and in some cases their original purposes are lost or forgotten.

Book of Endless Sorrow

The book that details the ritual to release Zatha the Devourer from the Void, as well as several arcane “spells” to aid his Chosen. This book is written in multiple

“layers”. The first level is visible to the ordinary human eye. Although the handwriting is somewhat difficult to read, the Latin is generally translatable. Under this layer exists a second set of writing, visible only through *Zatha's Flame*—the red lens found along with the book. This second layer of writing is less legible. This layer of writing describes the book's spells. Each spell begins with a short, vague description in Latin. Following the description is the actual spell, which uses Latin phonetics for an even older, lost language. Thus, the spell is pronounceable but impossible to translate.

The following powers and rituals are found in the book: *barrier*, *detect/conceal arcana*, *Flight of the Spirit*, *obscure*, *puppet*, *Song of Endless Sorrow*.

This artifact is indestructible by all non-magical means.

Brand of Gilded Mind

This brand is a quarter-sized mark burned into the flesh of a person for the purpose of magically aiding in deception (+1 Charisma). A far more powerful byproduct of this mark is its power to shield the mind from mental snooping. The brand allows only vague thoughts and emotions to be read by gifted individuals.

Eye of Iathwa

The Eye is an ancient arcane artifact made of bronze and shaped like an eyeball that is roughly the size of a basketball. Brackets are placed to hold three lenses—one red, green, and blue. The Eye of Iathwa was designed from the fevered dreams of a madman for the purpose of calling to our plane Iathwa, the most powerful of the seven Devourers locked in the Void. Separately, the pieces of the Eye are indestructible. Only when assembled may the Eye be destroyed. Or that is the theory, anyway...

Zatha's Flame

Actually this is the red lens from the Eye of Iathwa. The lens has several magical properties. It allows the reader to peruse the deeper levels of the Book of Endless Sorrow. It points to the two other lenses from the Eye of Iathwa. When used in the proper ritual, it opens a doorway to our world, which allows Zatha the Devourer to return from his imprisonment in the Void. This artifact is indestructible by all non-magical means.

Appendix 4: Everything Else

Breaking and Entering

Object	Toughness	Damage Type	Lockpicking Roll
Locks			
Cheap	6	Blunt, Piercing	0
Average	8	Blunt, Piercing	-2
High quality	10	Blunt, Piercing	-4
High security	12	Blunt, Piercing	-4
Ultrahigh security	12	Blunt, Piercing	-6
Doors			
Simple wooden door	8	Blunt, Cutting	-
Strong wooden door	10	Blunt, Cutting	-
Steel door	12	Blunt, Cutting	-
Chain	10	Blunt, Piercing, Cutting	-
Handcuffs	12	Blunt, Piercing, Cutting	-4
Metal bars	14	Blunt, Cutting	-

New Vehicles

The following classes of vehicles are owned and driven by some of the residents and visitors in Pinebox, TX.

Large Pickup

Pickups are the workhorses of the west. This class of vehicles includes most full-size trucks.

Acc/Top Speed: 15/40; **Toughness:** 14 (3); **Crew:** 1+1; **Cost:** \$25-45,000

Notes: Air Bags, Cargo Area, Four Wheel Drive

Minivan

Minivans are the family-oriented people-movers of the 90s and later.

Acc/Top Speed: 20/40; **Toughness:** 12 (3); **Crew:** 1+6; **Cost:** \$20-35,000

Notes: Air Bags

Small SUV

SUVs come in a variety of sizes. Small SUVs include vehicles such as a Tracker or a Rav4.

Acc/Top Speed: 20/40; **Toughness:** 11 (3); **Crew:** 1+4; **Cost:** \$15-35,000

Notes: Air Bags, Four Wheel Drive

Monster Truck

These impractical vehicles are formidable in an arena... or on the road!

Acc/Top Speed: 20/35; **Toughness:** 16 (3); **Crew:** 1+1; **Cost:** \$60,000+

Notes: Cargo Area, Four Wheel Drive

Languages

For the purposes of this adventure, classical languages include Latin, Ancient Greek, and Middle Egyptian. For simplicity, characters with knowledge of all three languages list Knowledge (Classical Languages) as their relevant skill.

Appendix 5: Player Handouts & GM Maps

Ranger Rodriguez Committs Suicide Amid Controversy

By Jerry Daniels
Austin Post

PINEBOX, TX—The death toll continues to rise from the blundered kidnapping rescue attempt made earlier this week by law enforcement officials. Texas Ranger Robert Rodriguez was found dead in his home yesterday, the victim of an apparent suicide.

Rodriguez was the only surviving officer from the tragedy in Pinebox that claimed the life of three young adults and two law officers. Less than 24 hours ago, alleged kidnapper Louis K. Connelly committed suicide in his jail cell.

Sources in the Department of Public Safety say that in the wake of public outrage, an internal investigation had been launched into the way Rodriguez conducted the kidnapping investigation and rescue attempt. Several critics say that Rodriguez

dismissed standard safety procedures and neglected to call for backup as soon as Connelly had been identified as a threat.

Investigators found a suicide note, which in part expressed Rodriguez's feelings of guilt and remorse over the death of the kidnapping victims and his fellow officers.

According to Rodriguez's wife, Christine, he had become extremely depressed after the tragic deaths.

"It just tore him up," she said. "Then when they suspended him, all he could do was sit at home and obsess over what he could have done differently. They could have at least given him a desk job."

She added that the press had been persistent in trying to contact him since the accident, and that her husband resorted to unplugging their telephone.

Do you have what it takes for the Apollo Challenge?

A **POLLO PRECISION INSTRUMENTS** are known for their dependability and toughness. Are you? APOLLO GPS products have been used by Geocaching enthusiasts for almost 10 years. In celebration of the anniversary of Apollo's role in this growing sport, we're looking for a Geocaching team just as smart, tough, and dependable as Apollo's line of GPS instruments. We think your team just might have what it takes. That's why you are invited to compete in the **APOLLO Challenge.**

The **Apollo Challenge** is a Geocaching challenge like none you've ever experienced. The goal: a time capsule hidden more than 100 years ago! Follow the coordinates, track the clues, retrieve the time capsule, return it within 24 hours, and your team will prove themselves true Apollo champions.

WHEN: The registration deadline is September 21. Qualified teams will be contacted no later than October 1st with details on the challenge's time and location.

FIRST PRIZE: The team that returns with the time capsule will win a \$50,000 cash prize, three Apollo Platinum hand-held GPS systems, and full team sponsorship for six American Geocaching Alliance sanctioned events in the coming year.

SECOND PRIZE: There's no such thing as second-best at APOLLO. To the victors go the spoils, to the losers, NOTHING.

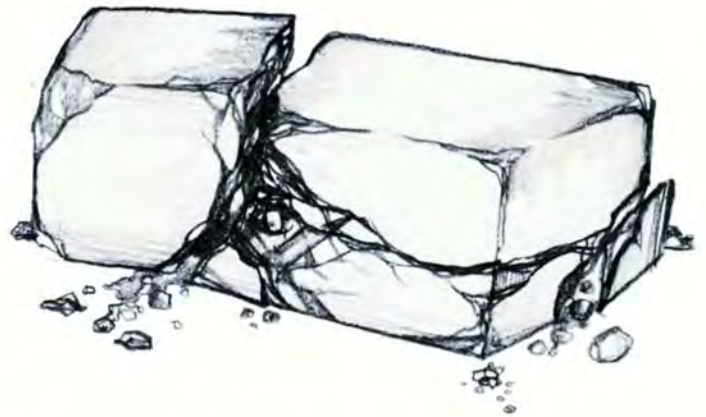
To register: Send your team name, previous competitive Geocaching experience phone number, and a \$25 registration fee to:
The APOLLO Challenge
PO Box 3345623
Austin, TX 78629



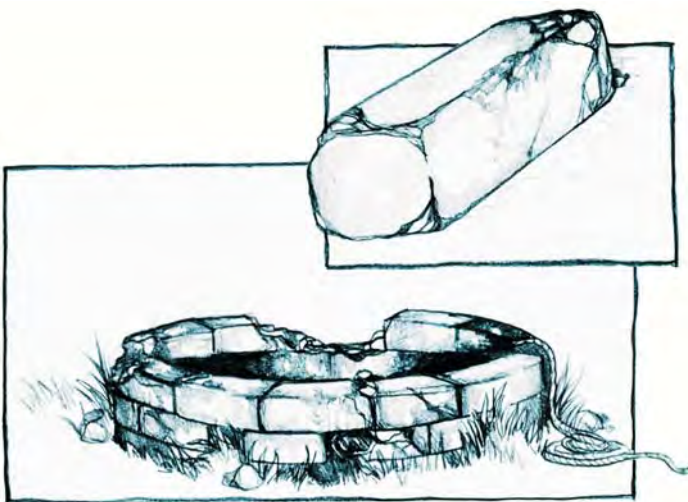
1002 Rocky Way
Ann Arbor, MI 48109
www.apollogps.com



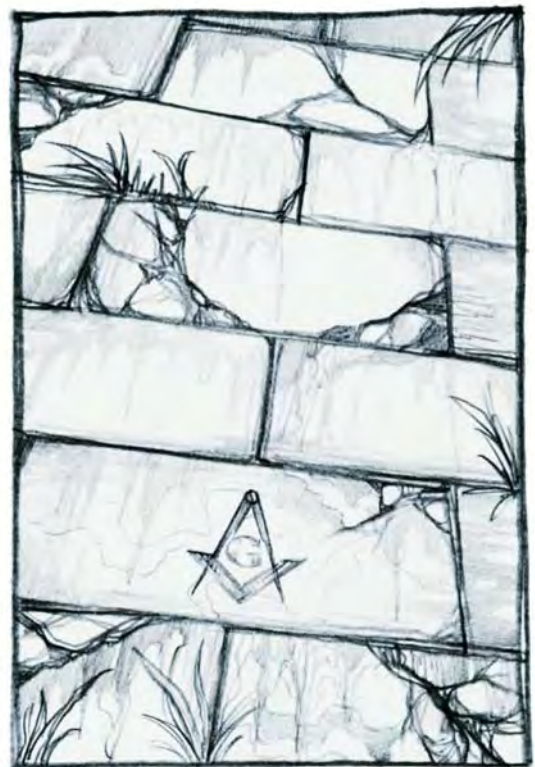
Handout 3: Tombstone



Handout 9: Symbol at homestead



Handout 10: Symbol on well



Handout 11: Symbol on stone

Lure of Gold, History Still Draw Interest

Pinebox, TX—Who can resist a good legend about hidden gold? Certainly not Tony Hidalgo, vice president of the Pinebox Historical Society and local expert on the Blackwell Gold legend.

"I don't think a story like this springs up out of thin air," Hidalgo says. "I've traced this thing all the way back to the source—John Blackwell's own son. He was convinced his father had left him buried gold, and so am I."

The legend of Blackwell's Gold began with the death of John Blackwell. Soon thereafter, a story circulated that Robert Blackwell's father had told him of buried gold. After the tragic deaths of Robert and his wife, it quickly became apparent that Robert had spent much of the rest of his life searching for it.

While that search only intensified after Robert Blackwell's death and the public sale of his ranch, to date treasure hunters and historians alike have been left disappointed. Many now question whether there was

ever any gold, although a few historians such as Hidalgo still believe that there's a kernel of truth in every legend.

Historians like Hidalgo place their faith in two articles—first that the legend is true, and second that if the gold were found it would become public knowledge.

"I would hope that most people realize that the real value in the gold is its historical significance," Hidalgo says. "My worst nightmare is that someone would try to melt it down and resell it, but these days with drug money laundering and stuff I think people are on the lookout for that kind of suspicious behavior."

For those unfamiliar with the legend, below is a summary reprinted with permission from the Pinebox Historical Society's *Complete History of Pinebox* (1979).

"Another legend, second in popularity only to the Curse of the Courthouse Clock (page 237), is that of the Blackwell's Gold. John Travis Blackwell served as County

Surveyor from 1878 until his death in 1904. While details about Blackwell's life are sketchy, his obituary indicated that at one time he had been a deacon in his church, a Freemason, and a strong supporter of public education. Other sources say that in his last years he became reclusive and morose.

Upon his death, John Blackwell's homestead was inherited by his only son Robert, 14, who subsisted by renting the land to sharecroppers until his death in 1922.

A rumor of hidden gold began to circulate the community shortly after John Blackwell's death. Most attribute the rumor to local preacher Jacob Townes, who had been present at Blackwell's deathbed.

The rumor stated that as John Blackwell lay dying he told his son of a buried golden treasure. Unfortunately, Blackwell senior became delirious in his final hour and would only tell his son that everything he needed to know

would be written on his tombstone. Years later, Townes' story was corroborated by Mrs. Imogene Glass (then Imogene Linton), who had been briefly engaged to Robert Blackwell.

The story quickly spread that Blackwell, as county surveyor, had discovered a hidden cache of gold—possibly left by Spanish Conquistadors or a "lost" Confederate shipment—and had been hiding it until he could figure out a way to claim it as his own.

Nor did John Blackwell's tombstone, as dictated in his will, shed any light on the mystery. In fact, just the opposite is true.

It reads, "John Travis Blackwell / 1850b – 1904d / Lamentations 29:35-42 / Luke 97:36-78".

Once the story of the treasure became widely known, amateur treasure hunters deduced that the verses were code for latitude and longitude. However, the coordinates lead to nothing more than an empty lot miles

from the Blackwell ranch.

In the decades since the story of Blackwell's gold first circulated, treasure hunters have dug up every square inch of the small parcel of land dubbed "Blackwell's Lot". Nothing but a few stacks of bricks from the foundation of an old house have ever been found. However, some have reported a fellow treasure hunter keeping them company—the ghostly form of Robert Blackwell forever searching for his father's gold.

"It makes a great story," says Mayor Lauren King. "But I'd say that if there was ever any gold to begin with, it would have been found by now. Either a rancher would have come across it or one of those university teams would have."

"Let's face it—there are no more clues to be found, and every likely spot has been dug up a dozen times or more," King adds. "John Blackwell took the truth about that gold to his grave."

September 17, 1904

The Lord has not seem fit to ease the heavy burden on my soul despite the many hours I have spent in prayer since Tuesday. I sorely need the Lord's comfort today, as I still feel strangely disturbed after Brother Blackwell's passing. I know I should feel joy that he is now in the arms of the Lord, but instead I feel... Mutean.

John Blackwell was a member of my flock since I replaced late Brother Watson 14 years ago. (How it truly been so long?) There's no question that I quickly came to depend on his wisdom and strength, and he seemed to take great comfort in doing the Lord's work.

I am shamed to admit that I can not identify when the change began. Gradually, I became aware of a restlessness in him that I had not noticed before. All my

efforts to offer him counsel were rebuffed, and the more I tried to tend to his spiritual needs the greater the chasm between us grew. I don't know when I realized that I had lost Brother Blackwell's confidence, but by then the other needs of the flock demanded my attention and in the sin of laziness I hoped that Bro. Blackwell would find his own way back.

So it was that over time brother Blackwell removed himself from the community. While it is uncharitable to speak unkindly of the recently departed, in private I must concede that in his final years brother Blackwell had become a such morose, secretive person that I had little care whether or not he returned to the flock.

It was his recent passing that his brings this burden to my heart. When one of Bro. Blackwell's neighbors attored me to his imminent

death, I resolved to be present to ease his passing in memory of the kind person who first welcomed me to Pinebor.

In the two days since being tempted by the bull, bro. Blackwell's health had completely failed him. I think his neighbors would have been glad to tend to the needs of he and his son, but when I arrived I learned that even in his weakened state he had made it clear he wanted to no trespassers on his property---I and his young son Robert being the only exceptions. I have resolved to pray extra hard to relieve Robert's grief in the coming months.

Upon my arrival, Robert confided that Bro. Blackwell had become insensible at times, but at other times regained lucidity. It was during one of these periods that he had asked Robert to send for me. As we stood in the doorway

whispering, Bro. Blackwell seemed to recognize me and called me to his side. I immediately flew to the bed and knelt beside him. I told him that I was there to bear witness to his sins and ease his soul into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Bro. Blackwell seemed glad to see me and managed to weakly clasp my hand. In retrospect I can only conclude that he had already slipped back into one of his moments of tuncery, for he next began a rambling, blasphemous account of dark, twisted, impossible things. He spoke of great evil and limitless power. Of hell and demons clawing at the gate. Of perverted nature and unholy magic. While this blasphemous talk was unsettling enough, as he spoke I realized that a part of me found it strangely familiar--as if he were merely reminding me of things I had merely forgotten. To my growing horror, as he spoke each blasphemous

untruth I pictured them in my mind as clearly as my own reflection. Finally, his delicious confession wound to an end as he warned that we (Robert and I) must guard against the coming Armageddon. Fortunately, as quickly as the Prince of Lies had entered the room to torment us, so did he depart. The horrible images faded from my brain, and in fact I can no longer recall a single thing Bro. Blackwell said. I only remember the stark fear as I knelt by the bedside.

At the end of his delicious ramblings, he seemed much relieved, and I attempted to pray with him for the salvation of his soul. Unfortunately, he soon grew weak and lapsed into a tight sleep.

Brother Blackwell awoke only once more, when he called his son to his side. He seemed much more rational and the far-away look briefly left his eyes as he gazed

upon his offspring. I remained nearby in case he had need of me, and so I heard what passed between them. Brother Blackwell confided that he had buried a great treasure. We told Robert that some people would consider it worth its weight in gold, and the responsibility for its safekeeping now fell to him. We told Robert that he had buried it nearby in the deepest hole he could find.

It was at this point that brother Blackwell began slipping away from us, for his final journey. We said that the hole was so deep that from the bottom the sky looked no bigger than a dinner plate, and that when he was done he had salted the earth. Having unburdened himself about his sin in coveting wealth, his strength betrayed him. Even so, his final words are burned into my memory. "Need the message on my grave. When the tight-burns

red, the shadow consumes."

While I tell myself that it was the ramblings of a dying, feverish man, something about them resonates in a very disturbing way.

After Bro. Blackwell slipped away into the Lord's arms and I had comforted Robert in his time of grief, I instructed him to forget about his father's ravings in his final moments. The Prince of Lies is a powerful foe, and I explained to Robert that even if his father had been lucid and his story true, he had clearly understood that the sin of greed could consume a man's soul. Better by far to focus on attaining the treasure of everlasting life than coveting a treasure of gold in this one.

Today we put poor Bro. John Blackwell in the earth from whence he came. I was both outraged and sickened when I saw his tombstone, and I am ashamed to admit that

I immediately placed blame on the stonemason who chiseled the message. However, he showed me his instructions carefully copied from John Blackwell's own last will and testament. I asked if those blasphemous verses could be removed, but I'm told that it would require an entirely new tombstone. Bro.

Blackwell's assertions of buried gold to the contrary, John Blackwell left his son very little money--- certainly not enough to replace his tombstone.

I will have to compose a sermon on the blessing of charity. Perhaps the congregation will see fit to donate enough money to replace it. While he made few friends in his final years, John Blackwell served this community well and deserves at least a modicum of respect.

You stand rooted to the spot as the color bleeds from your surroundings. The people around you fade away to nothingness, and you gradually become aware that your surroundings are lit by the same burning house that has been plaguing your dreams. Only this is more real than any dream you have ever had. More real even than some waking moments. You can clearly hear the crackle of the fire consuming the house, and you realize that you also hear the cry of an infant.

Handout 19a: Vision

As if you're watching a film run backward, you see a dark shape—part insect, part shadow, part demon—as it swoops from the sky in reverse. Another shape—this one human—lifts from the ground and is clasped in the creature's claws. This abomination continues its arc until it lands near the woman's body, setting down its human prey in front of him. You watch as the ruined body is regenerated as the creature's four claws wrench his flesh back into shape. Immobile, you can only watch as the creature swoops backwards into the burning house and Nicole takes a horrified scream as Robert buries a pickax into her back.

Handout 19b: Vision

The torture continues as you watch a reverse chase scene in which Robert catches up with Nicole after her desperate flight carrying an infant from inside the house. As your point of view follows the pair inside, you see a strange symbol drawn on the floor of the sitting room, with the infant at its center and a ceremonial knife by its side. Flames creep back to an oil lantern, which Nicole uses to defend herself against Robert. As time continues to rewind, you watch in disbelief as Robert backs out of the room and Nicole catches up the dagger and chants.

Handout 19c: Vision

Your point of view continues to follow Robert as he limps backward outside the house. For the first time, you notice that a length of chain trails from a manacle still attached to one of his legs. You silently follow him as he limps into a shed, and watch as he uses a pickax to break the chain attaching his leg to a thick metal ring imbedded in a block of cement. Time compresses, and Nicole enters the building in reverse, dropping the pickax nearby as she does so. While the words come out backward, the knife she brandishes leaves little doubt to the implicit threat.

Handout 19d: Vision

Time again compresses, and you watch the days roll backward as Robert wearily digs hole after hole, always attached to a heavy ball and chain and always under Nicole's armed presence. Periodically, she performs an unholy ritual that saps his willpower for months at a time. Finally, at the genesis, you watch a glazed-eyed Robert take break an engagement with from another young woman. Finally, with this last scene, the vision fades and color returns as you are brought back to the present.

Handout 19e: Vision

Ghosts of Golan County

which is why some local mothers leave “friendly gifts” for the ghost at the lake’s edge, just in case one day it is *their* child in need of a helpful push.

Gold Holds Sway, Even Over the Dead

Not all ghosts are motivated to remain in our world for such a benevolent reason, however. At least one local spirit seems to be motivated by one of the oldest of human sins—greed. Local treasure hunters searching Blackwell’s Lot for hidden gold (see **Legend of Blackwell’s Gold**) report catching glimpses of a ghostly visitor out of the corners of their eyes.

Some describe the ghost as a male, others as a female. Most agree that the spirit is likely that of Robert Blackwell, son of the gold’s owner. Robert and his wife died in a tragic fire in 1922, never having found the treasure his father was rumored to have hidden. Today, the restless spirit haunts Blackwell’s Lot and the old Blackwell ranch, searching for the gold denied him in life.

The ghost is so intent on finding the hidden gold for himself, that some treasure hunters even describe being harassed by the spirit. Small instruments go missing from search sites. Electronics go inexplicably dead. Some treasure hunters even describe nightmares of being attacked.

In recent years, however, reportings of the ghost are less frequent. Did Robert Blackwell finally find the treasure his father denied him in life, or did he finally give up? Or is he simply waiting for a new treasure hunter to come along... one with the right combination of skill and luck to succeed where so many others have failed. And if so... then what?

Golan Mounds Shrieker

The Big Thicket, Texas’ great pine forest, is home to an amazing array of wildlife. Even so, there is one creature inhabiting the woods that defies normal explanation.

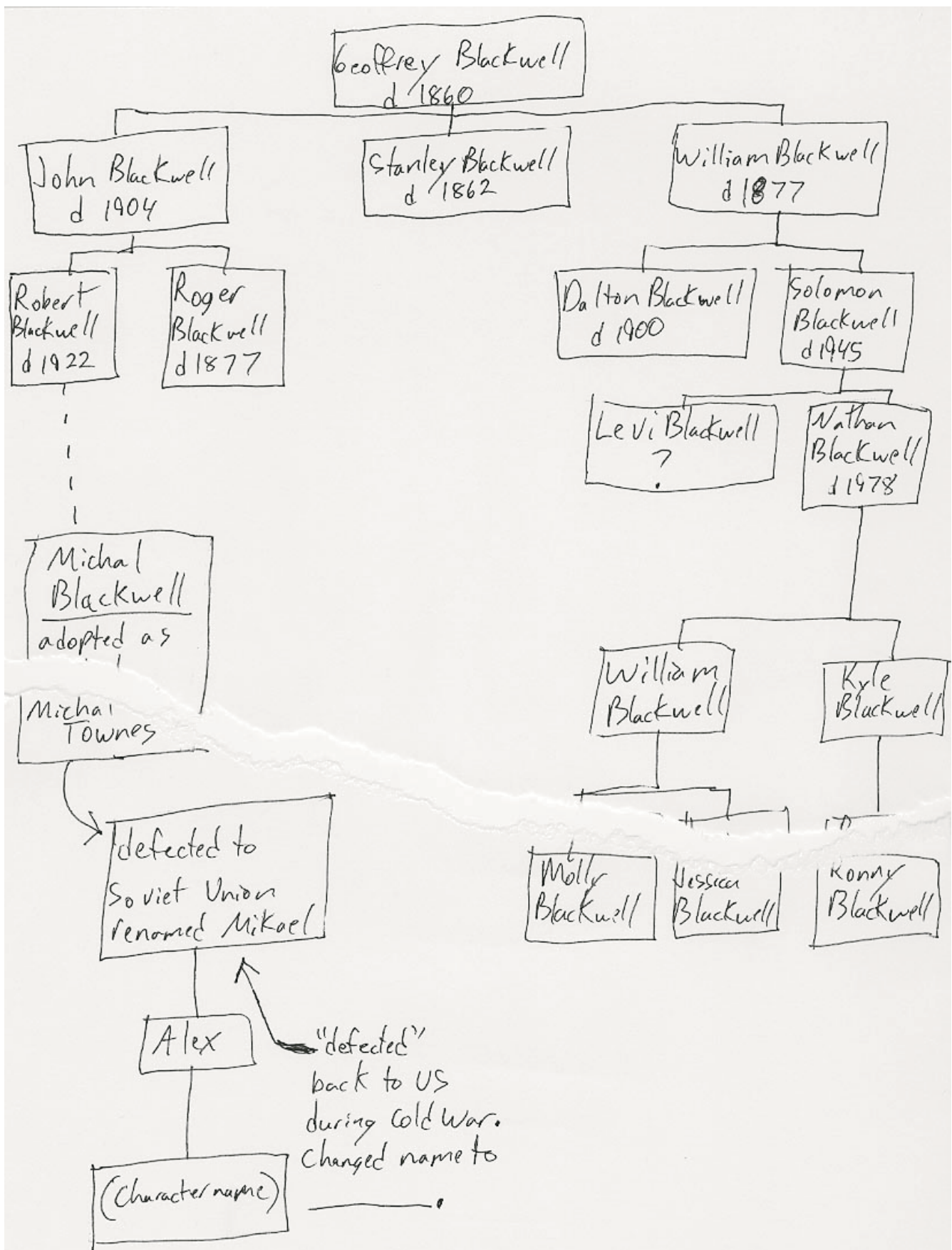


Handout 8: Blackwell cousins photo
(Be sure to trim off this label before giving your players this handout!!!)



**Handout 12:
Freemason symbol**

Handout 6: Gold Holds Sway, Even Over the Dead



Handout 14 (top) and 22 (bottom): Blackwell family tree (and Lester's note on the back!) This is an example only. Draw out your own version at the end of Section 1, after you know which of your characters is the Blackwell descendent.

Tragic End to Rural Kidnapping

By Jerry Daniels
Austin Post

PINEBOX, TX—A kidnapping investigation turned tragic today when three cousins and two law enforcement officers were killed in a foiled rescue attempt. All five were caught in a fire set by the kidnapper.

According to the Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Ranger James Rodriguez, accompanied by state DPS trooper Sgt. Howard Burns and Golan County Deputy “Buddy” Wallis had traveled to the remote trailer-house to question Mr. Louis K. Connelly, 19, who had an undisclosed link to the missing cousins. According to Rodriguez, Sgt. Burns heard a muffled cry for help, after which the suspect fled inside the house followed by the three officers.

Rodriguez says that while in the house, Connelly used gasoline to start a fire in the living room. The officers subdued Connelly, and Rodriguez removed him from the premises while the other two officers searched for missing young adults. Investigators speculate that the officers quickly became disoriented in the smoke and were cut off from the exit.

The remains of all five victims were recovered from the ruins of the trailer, which was totally consumed in the blaze. The kidnapping victims were Jessica Blackwell, 17, sister Molly Blackwell, 20, and cousin Ronny Blackwell, 21. Their families have requested donations be made to a local scholarship fund.

Connelly has been charged with five counts of manslaughter and three counts of kidnapping. Prosecutors have given no word on whether they will ask for the death penalty.

Kidnapper Ends Life, Investigation Continues

By Jerry Daniels
Austin Post

PINEBOX, TX—Law enforcement officials in Golan County were at a loss to explain how alleged kidnapper Louis K. Connelly was able to commit suicide in his jail cell late yesterday afternoon.

Connelly, an unemployed high school graduate, was accused of kidnapping of sisters Jessica and Molly Blackwell and their cousin Ronny Blackwell. Law officials say that when Connelly was approached for questioning he set fire to his

mobile home, killing the three kidnapped cousins and two law officers attempting their rescue.

Only one officer, Texas Ranger James Rodriguez, survived the encounter and apprehended Connelly. Rodriguez has been removed from the case pending an investigation.

Hours before Connelly’s apparent suicide, his defense attorney, Kyle Miller, announced in a press conference that Connelly had made a full confession to both the kidnapping and the fire. Miller also announced that his client

had confessed to the double murder of Rhonda and Travis Chahovic of Golan County on Saturday night.

Golan County Sheriff Elliot Brazowski says that Connelly was found dead in his cell yesterday at 7:16 pm. According to Brazowski, Connelly had used a belt to hang himself. Normal jail procedures include the removal of any items that might be used by inmates to commit suicide.

“We take this accident very seriously, and a full investigation is already under way,” Brazowski told reporters.

Handout 20: Kidnapper Ends Life

May 21, 1922

I Failed John Davis' son, but I swear upon my family Bible that I will not fail Robert's infant. From this day forward, I will rear him as my own.

We will never know the horrible way in which his mother was slain, nor of his father's untimely cremation in their home. Tomorrow Emily and I will go to the courthouse and draw up the papers to adopt him as our own. We have already decided on a name- Micheal Towns.

June 11, 1922

Emily has taken to Michael as if she had given birth to him herself. Young Micheal is a well-tempered baby, and his presence has brought new life to our household. His older

brothers and sisters are still unsure of the new family member, but I remind them of our Christian duty and they have remained well behaved. My only reservation has been the extra burden a new child places on our finances. I may be forced to approach the parisheners for a small increase in my stipend.

Jan. 2, 1945

Dear Mom,

Happy New Year. I am sorry it has been so long since my last letter. We've been in the air nonstop. Or at least that's what it feels like. Not much time for letter writing. It's pretty cold here. A lot colder than this Texas boy is used to.

Last week (right after Christmas) I lost my best friend Jack. We were in a jeep on the way to a crash site to see if we could scrounge any spare parts when a unexploded shell went off. I saw the shrapnel spinning toward us, put it like I was froze in place. It sliced right through Jack and in less than a minute he was dead. It's a hard thing, Mom. It's a real hard thing.

One of the other fellows was hurt pretty bad too so I got the jeep turned back over and got her started. Me and Willie got Sam loaded up and we headed a couple miles back to where we'd seen a field hospital.

Come to find out, it was one of our Allies and none of the doctors spoke English. Lucky for us, one of the nurses knew some English and between that and our sign language we got by.

(over)

While we were waiting for the doctors to patch up Sam (he's fine), I sat outside the tent with Anna. That's the nurse. We hit it off right from the first, and we swapped storys about our homes.

Momma, I don't know if this is love, but I can't stop thinking about her. I'm pretty sure she feels the same about me too. But on the other hand I'm still very down about loosing Jack. But if it hadn't been for that shell, I wouldn't have met Anna. I wish daddy was still alive. Maybe he could tell me why God gives us the good and bad all lumped together like this.

This afternoon someone told me we're moving to a base closer to the front. We'll be flying out tomorrow. I'm gonna go meet Anna here in a little while and say goodbye. My stomach hurts when I think I might not ever see her again. I sure would like you to meet her. Maybe when we finish whooping the krauts, she can come visit us in Texas. That would be real good.

P.S. - Pet. lil' Blue for me.

Love,
your son,
Mike



February 17, 1945

Mrs. Townes,

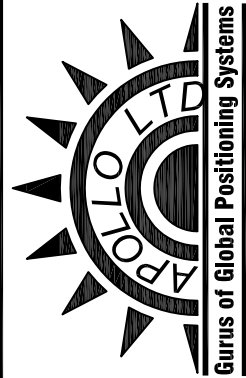
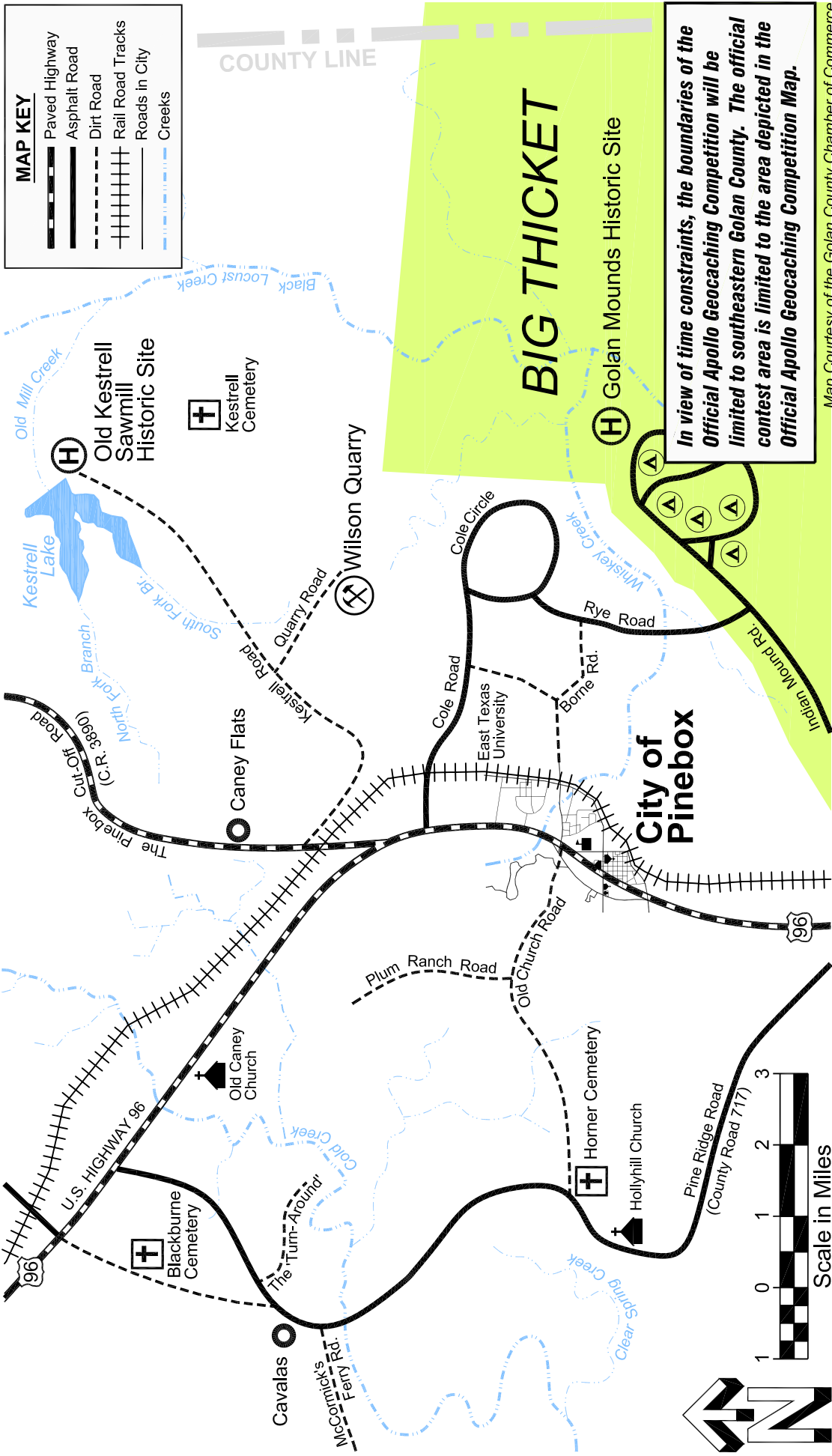
The United States Department of Defense must regretfully inform you that your son, Michael Townes, is missing in action and presumed dead. In your time of grief, please accept our heartfelt prayers and find a measure of consolation that your son died for his country in the service of freedom.

Your son's personal effects will be shipped to you in the coming weeks. Again, please accept our heartfelt condolences for your loss.

Regretfully,

Louis Johnson
Secretary of Defense

* Neither the Apollo Co. LTD nor any of its subsidiaries is liable for injuries or damages that may be incurred as a result of participation in this competition. All participants must comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws during this competition. Participation in the official Apollo Geocaching Competition should in no way be interpreted as a license to trespass on privately owned property.

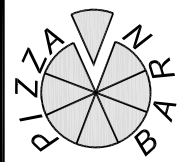


OFFICIAL LAND NAVIGATION MAP FOR THE FIRST ANNUAL APOLLO GEOCACHING COMPETITION

Welcome to the first ever Apollo Challenge! This year's inaugural competition is located in scenic Golan County, Texas. Competition headquarters and team sign-in is located in the historic town of Pinebox. Refer to your registration packet for additional sign-in details. After sign-in, your team will be given the first in a series of clues eventually leading to a time capsule buried 100 years ago. Utilize your precision Apollo GPS equipment to beat the competition to the capsule and return it to headquarters. Are you up to the Apollo Challenge?

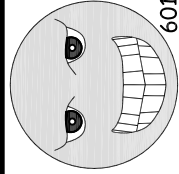
Official rules will be provided during sign-in. However, please note that no division of teams is allowed: all team members must travel together during this competition.*

4-KIT-UP PAWN SHOP
408 MAIN ST.
GUNS, JEWELRY, & MORE



102 PINE AVE.
HORNER'S USED BOOKS
206 HWY 96

BONNER BAIL BONDS & LOANS
401 Main Street



Grinnin' Barrett McFIERSON'S
HI QUALITY USED CAR EMPORIUM
601 San Augustine St.

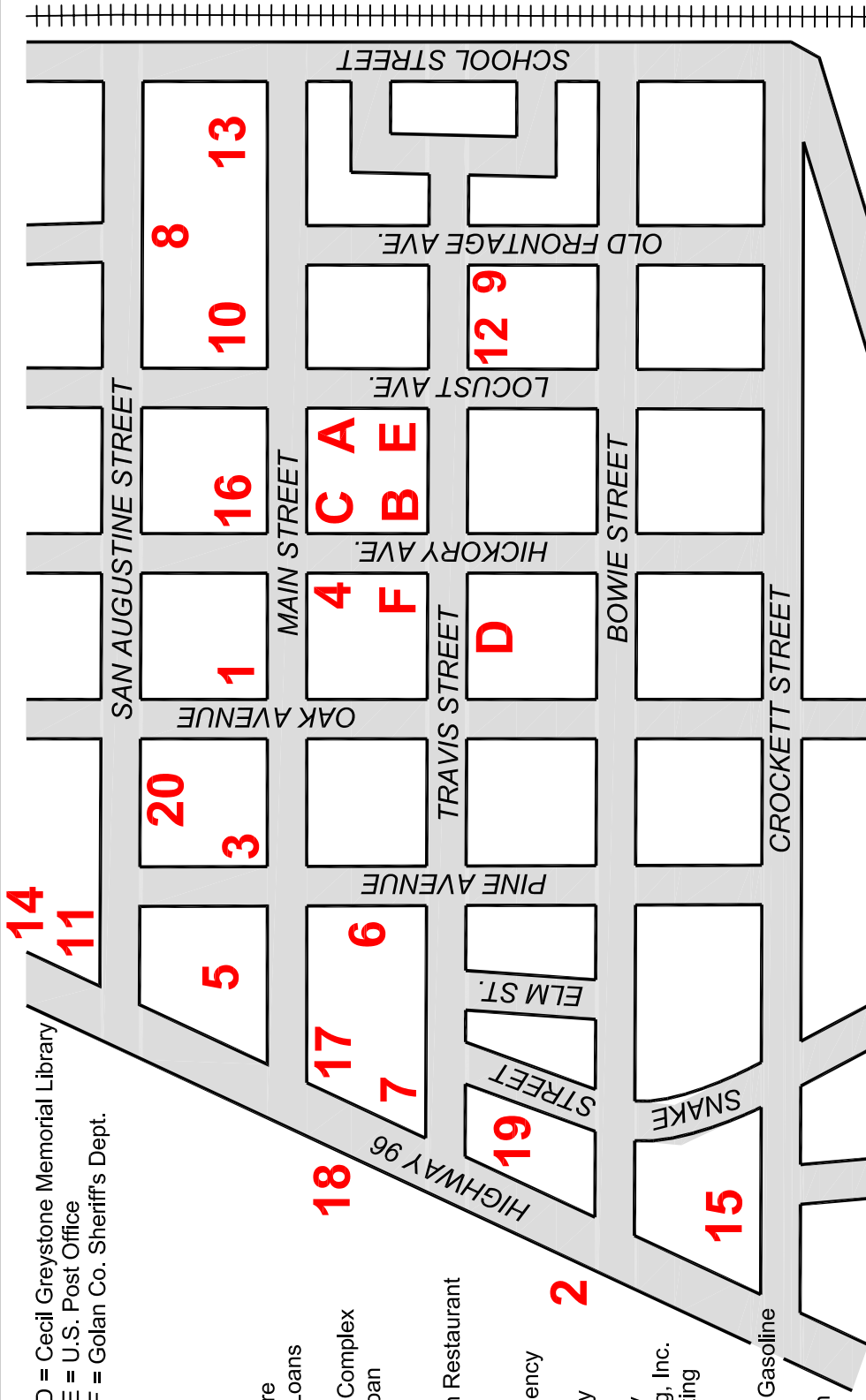
PINEBOX FAMILY MEDICAL COMPLEX
203 Pine Ave.
"for all your health needs"

PUBLIC FACILITIES

- A = Golan Co. Court House D = Cecil Greystone Memorial Library
B = Pinebox City Hall E = U.S. Post Office
C = Pinebox Police Dept. F = Golan Co. Sheriff's Dept.

DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES

- 1 = 4-Kit-Up Pawn Shop
2 = Pizza Barn
3 = Horner's Used Book Store
4 = Bonner Bail Bonds and Loans
5 = McFierson's Used Cars
6 = Pinebox Family Medical Complex
7 = Pinebox State Bank & Loan
8 = McMurry's Garage
9 = Billiam's Gym
10 = Mama Juanita's Mexican Restaurant
11 = Loblolly Realtors
Donut Tzar
Macintosh Insurance Agency
12 = Holumb Legal Services
Torres Insurance Agency
McPherson Drafting
Ferguson Travel Agency
C.R. Danforth Consulting, Inc.
Bleaker & Sons Accounting
Fillimore Furniture
13 = Pine Hotel
14 = Speedy Pete's Discount Gasoline
15 = Hamburger City
16 = Culverhouse Bus Station
17 = Mom's Diner
18 = Husten & Son's Feed Co.
19 = Broomfield Plaza Shopping Center
20 = Sanctuary Comics & Collectables



DOWNTOWN PINEBOX, TEXAS

Map courtesy of the Pinebox Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Business Owners Association

EAST TEXAS UNIVERSITY
GO RAVENS!!!

PINEBOX STATE BANK & TRUST
401 Highway 96 South

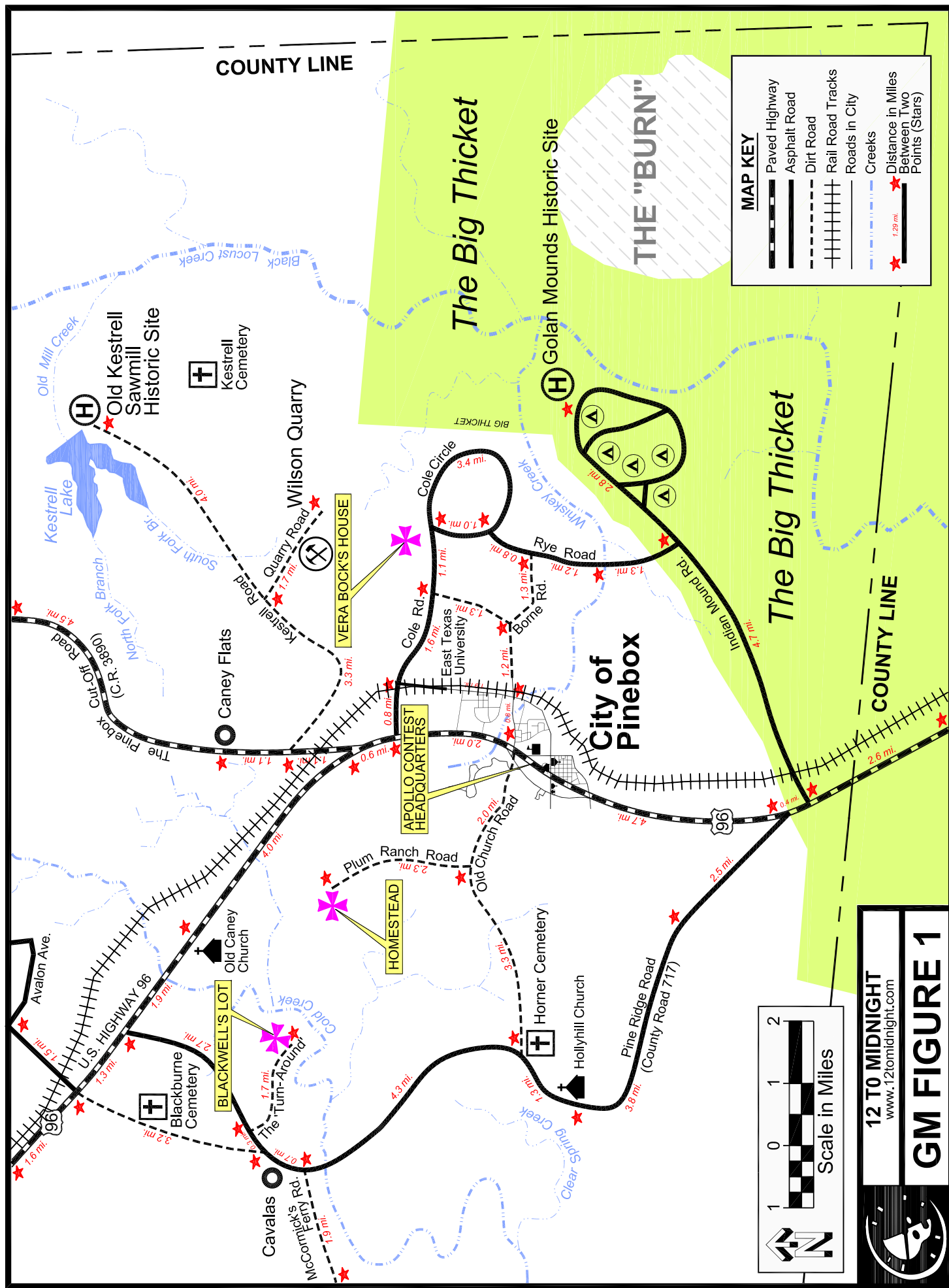
McMURRY'S GARAGE
201 San Augustine Street

BILLIAM'S GYM
201 Travis

Mama Juanita's Mexican Restaurant
208 Main St.

Holumb Legal Services
207 Travis, Suite 14
Travis Holumb, ESQ.

LOBLOLLY REALTORS
Located in the Loblolly Shopping Center
602 San Augustine St.



MAP KEY

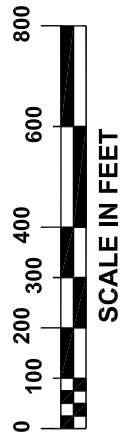
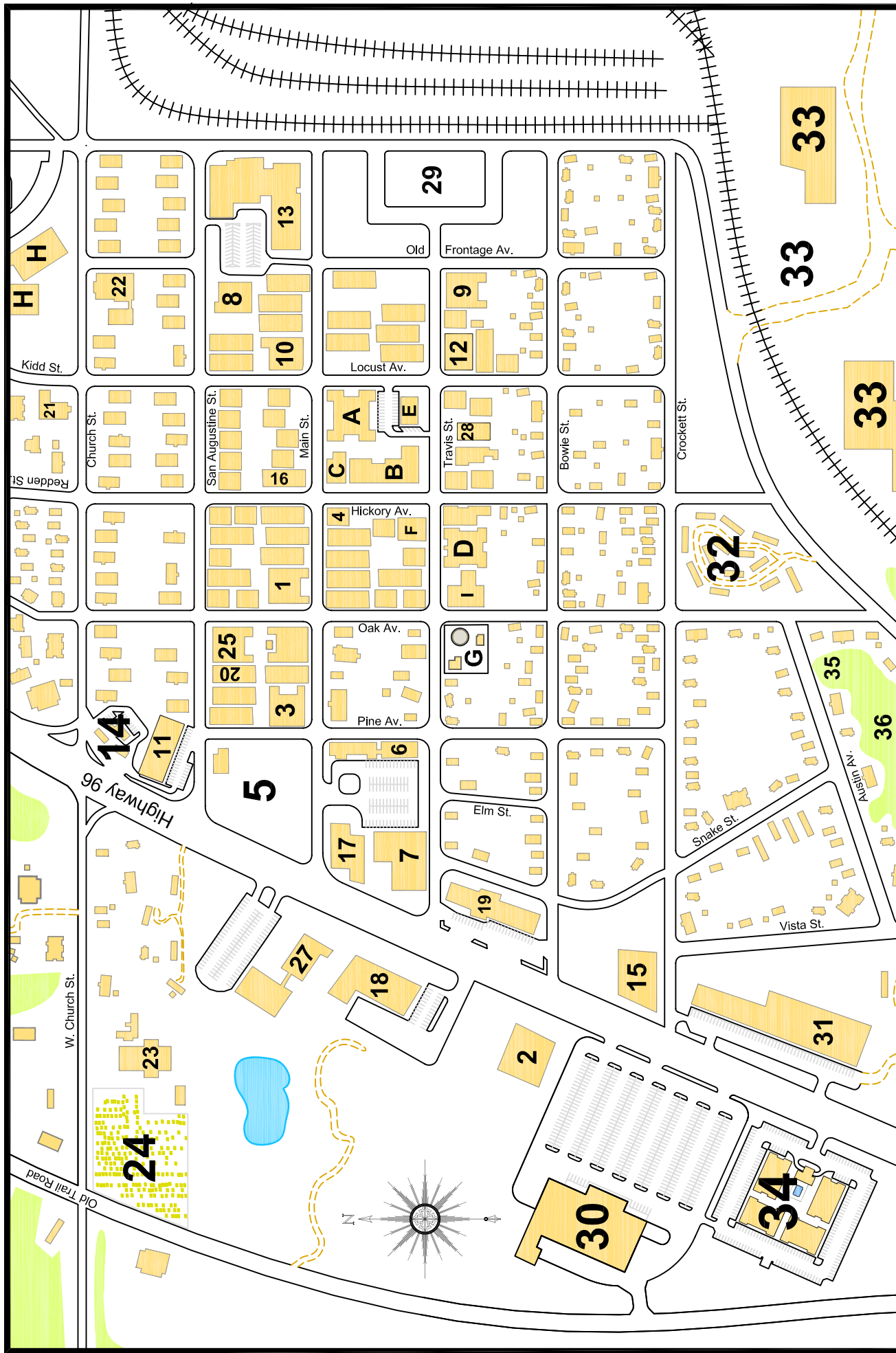
- Paved Highway
- Asphalt Road
- Dirt Road
- Rail Road Tracks
- Roads in City
- Creeks
- Distance in Miles Between Two Points (Stars)

Scale in Miles

1 0 1 2

12 TO MIDNIGHT
www.12tomidnight.com

GM FIGURE 1



GM FIGURE 2A: PINEBOX MAP
(See Figure 2B for the Map Key)



MAP KEY FOR GM FIGURE 2A: MAP OF PINEBOX

PUBLIC/GOVERNMENTAL FACILITIES

- A = Golan County Court House
- B = Pinebox City Hall
- C = Pinebox Police Department
- D = Cecil Greystone Memorial Library
- E = U.S. Post Office
- F = Golan County Sheriff's Office
- G = Pinebox Water Treatment Plant and Elevated Storage Tank
- H = Pinebox Independent School District (Elementary Campus)
- I = Pinebox Fire Department
- 21 = Quiet Rest Pentecostal Church
- 22 = Pinebox Methodist Church
- 23 = Wise Shepherd Baptist Church
- 24 = Shepherd Cemetery ("Old Pinebox Cemetery")
- 25 = Augustine Apartments
- 27 = Veteran's of Foreign Wars (VFW) Hall
- 28 = Abandoned Movie Theatre
- 29 = Old Railroad Station and Loading Docks
- 30 = Charltonnes Supermarket
- 31 = Bamboo Peak Shopping Complex
- 32 = Indian Summer Trailer Park
- 33 = Durgenson Concrete and Gravel Company
- 34 = Timber Ridge Motel
- 35 = "The Old Burned House"
- 36 = Crenshaw's Woods

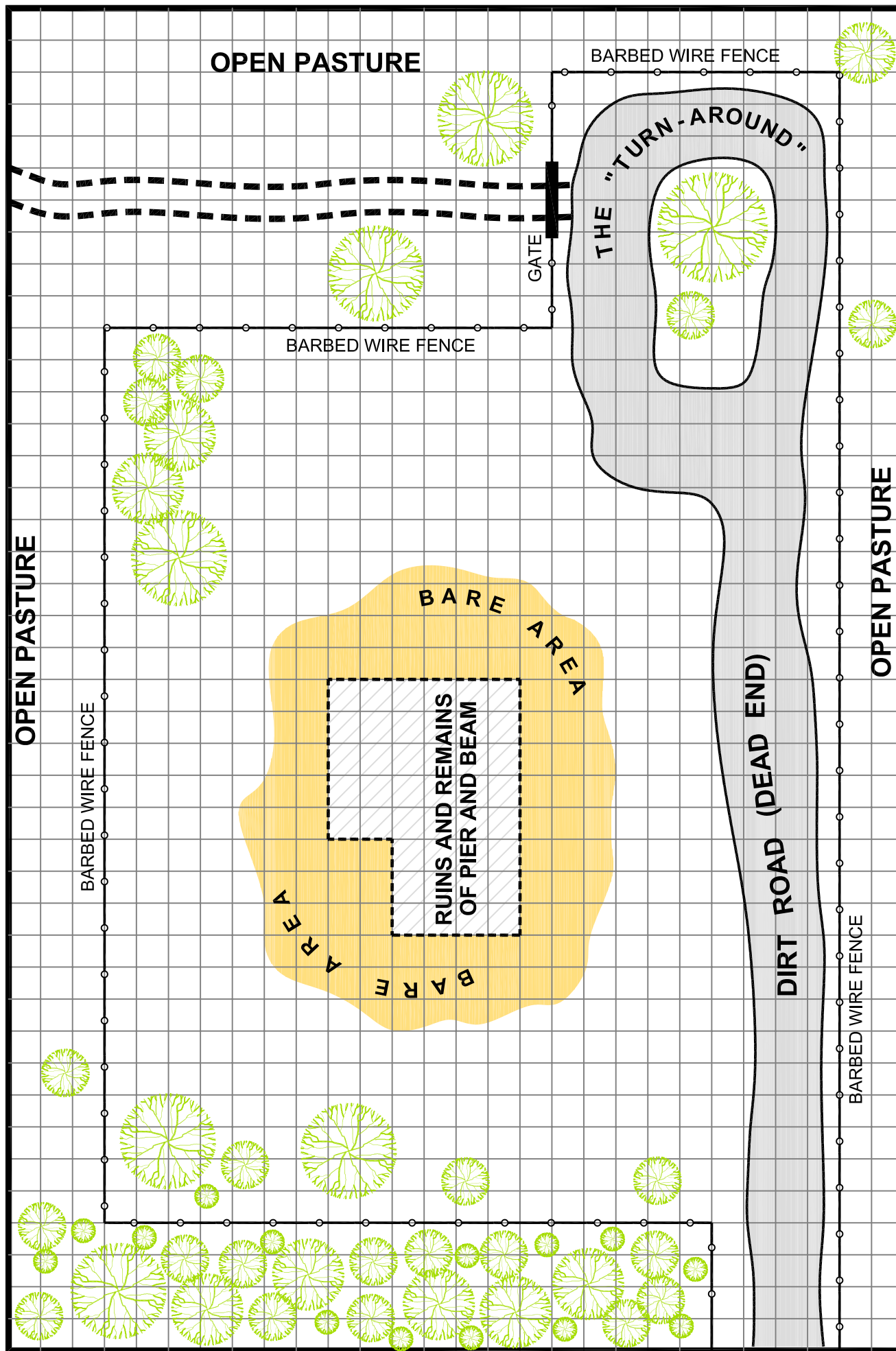
BUSINESSES AND TOWN FEATURES

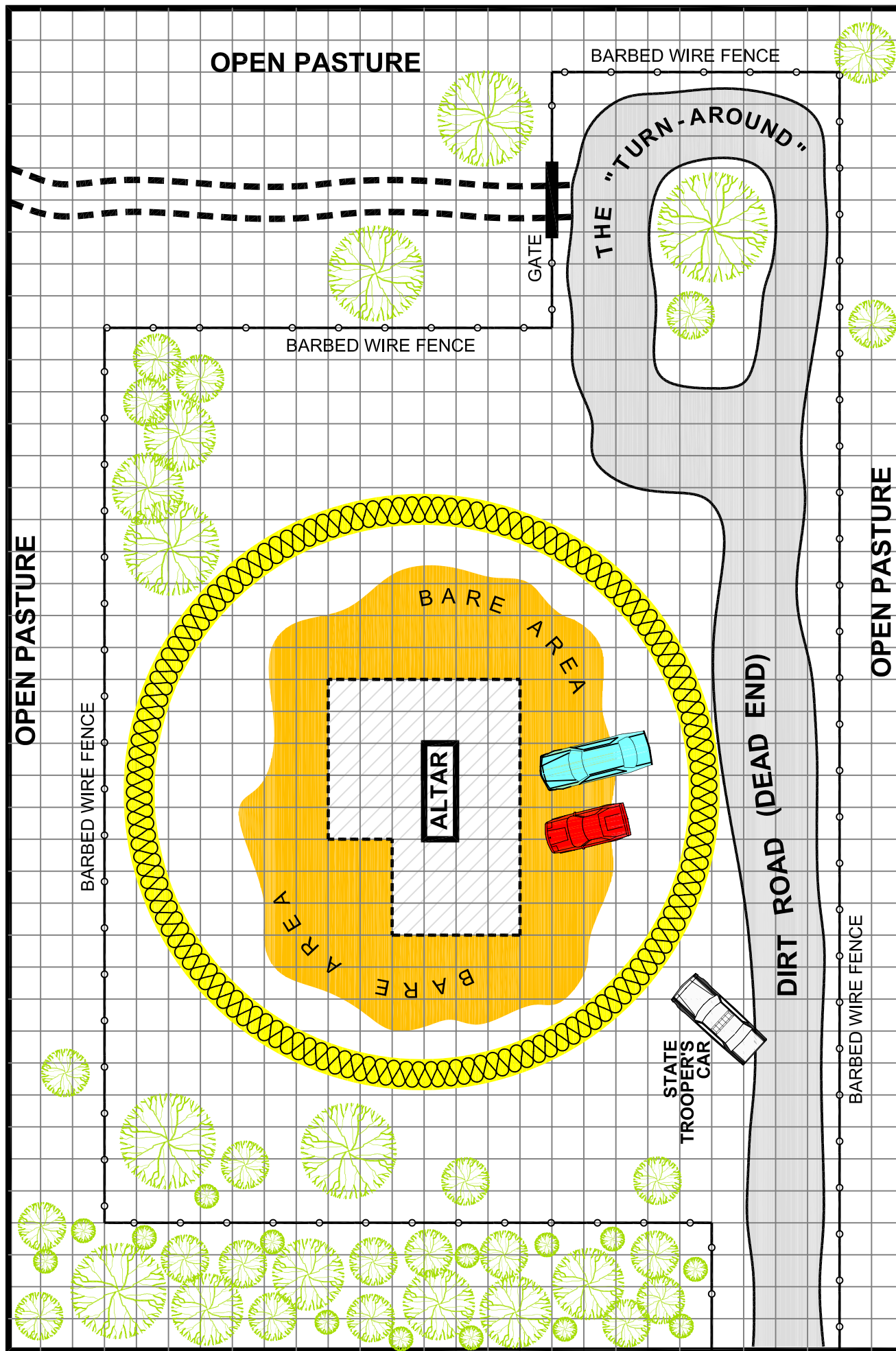
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- 4 = Bonner Bail Bonds and Loans
- 5 = McFierion's Used Cars
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- 8 = McMurry's Garage
- 9 = Billiam's Gym
- 10 = Mama Juanita's Mexican Restaurant
- 11 = Loblolly Shopping Center
- Home of Loblolly Realtors, Donut Tzar, and MacIntosh Insurance
- 12 = Guisborne Office Building
- Home of Holumb Legal Services, Torres Insurance Agency, McPherson Drafting, Ferguson Travel Agency, C.R. Danforth Consulting, Bleaker and Sons Accounting, Fillimore Furniture (First Floor): Masonic Lodge (Second Floor)
- 13 = Pine Hotel
- 14 = Speedy Petes Discount Gasoline Station
- 15 = Hamburger City
- 16 = Culverhouse Bus Station
- 17 = Mom's Diner
- 18 = Husten and Sons Feed Company
- 19 = Broomfield Plaza Shopping Center
- 20 = Sanctuary Comics and Collectibles



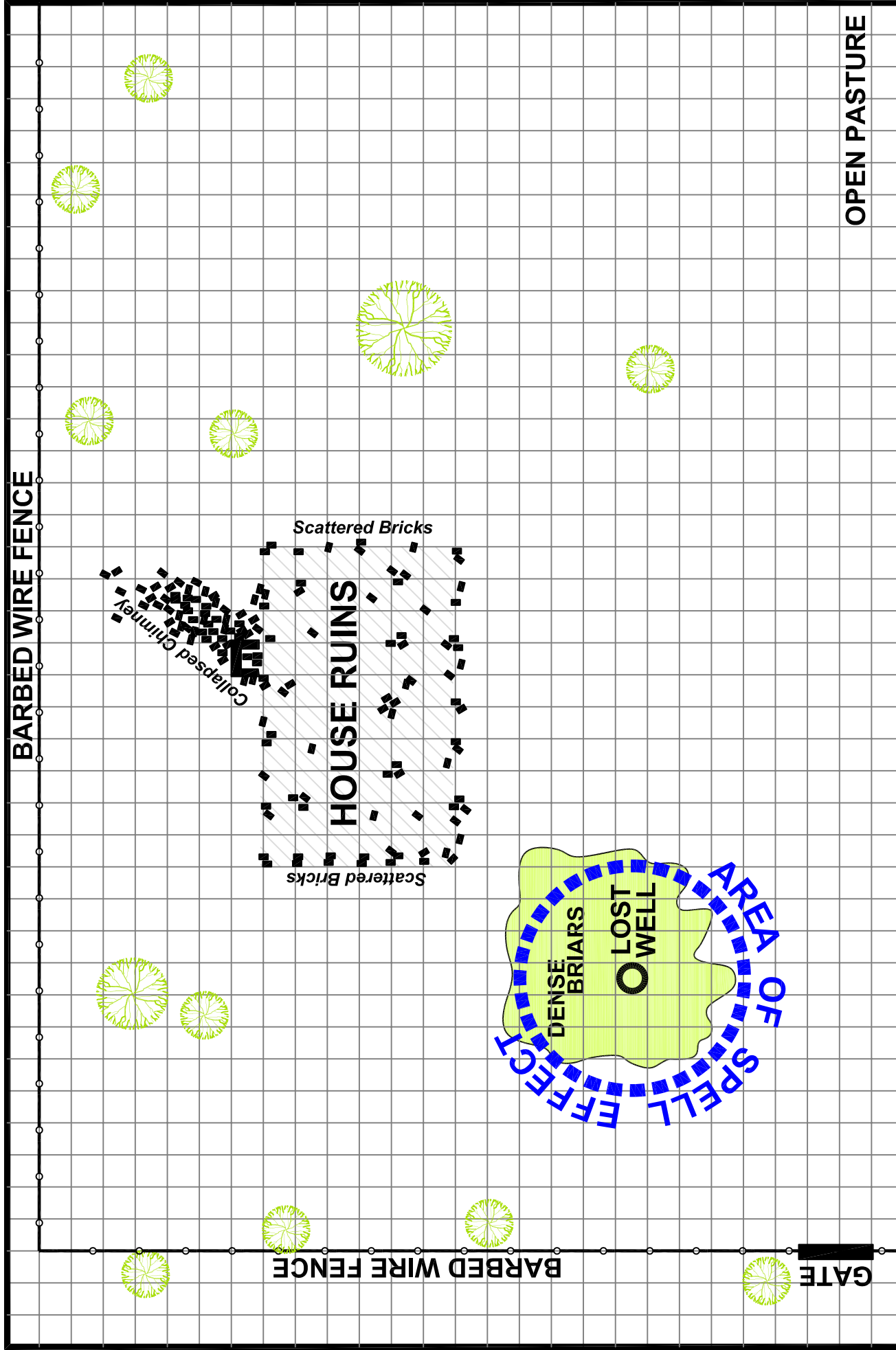
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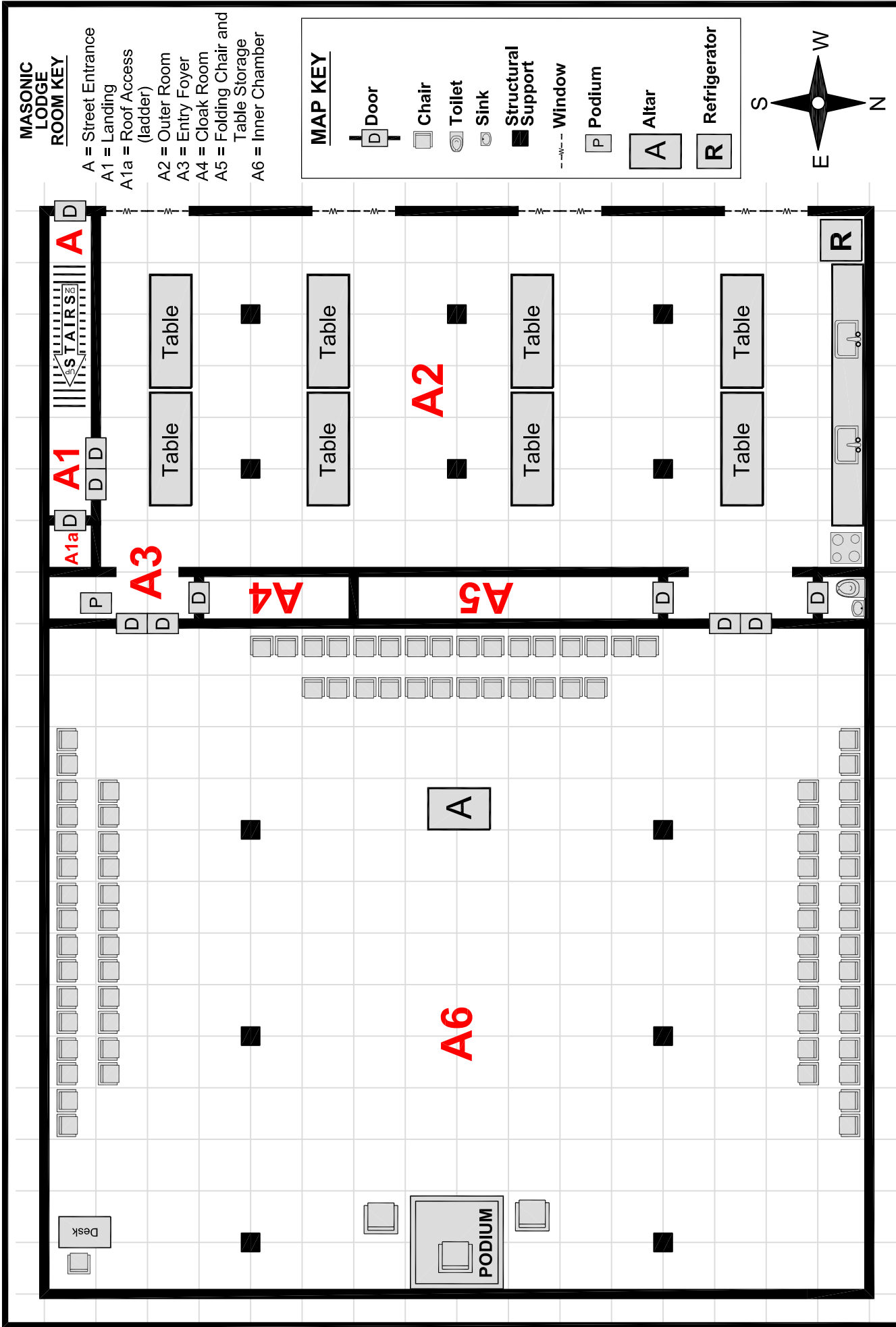
GM FIGURE 2B: PINEBOX MAP KEY





GM FIGURE 3B: BLACKWELL'S LOT
(WITH CULTISTS)

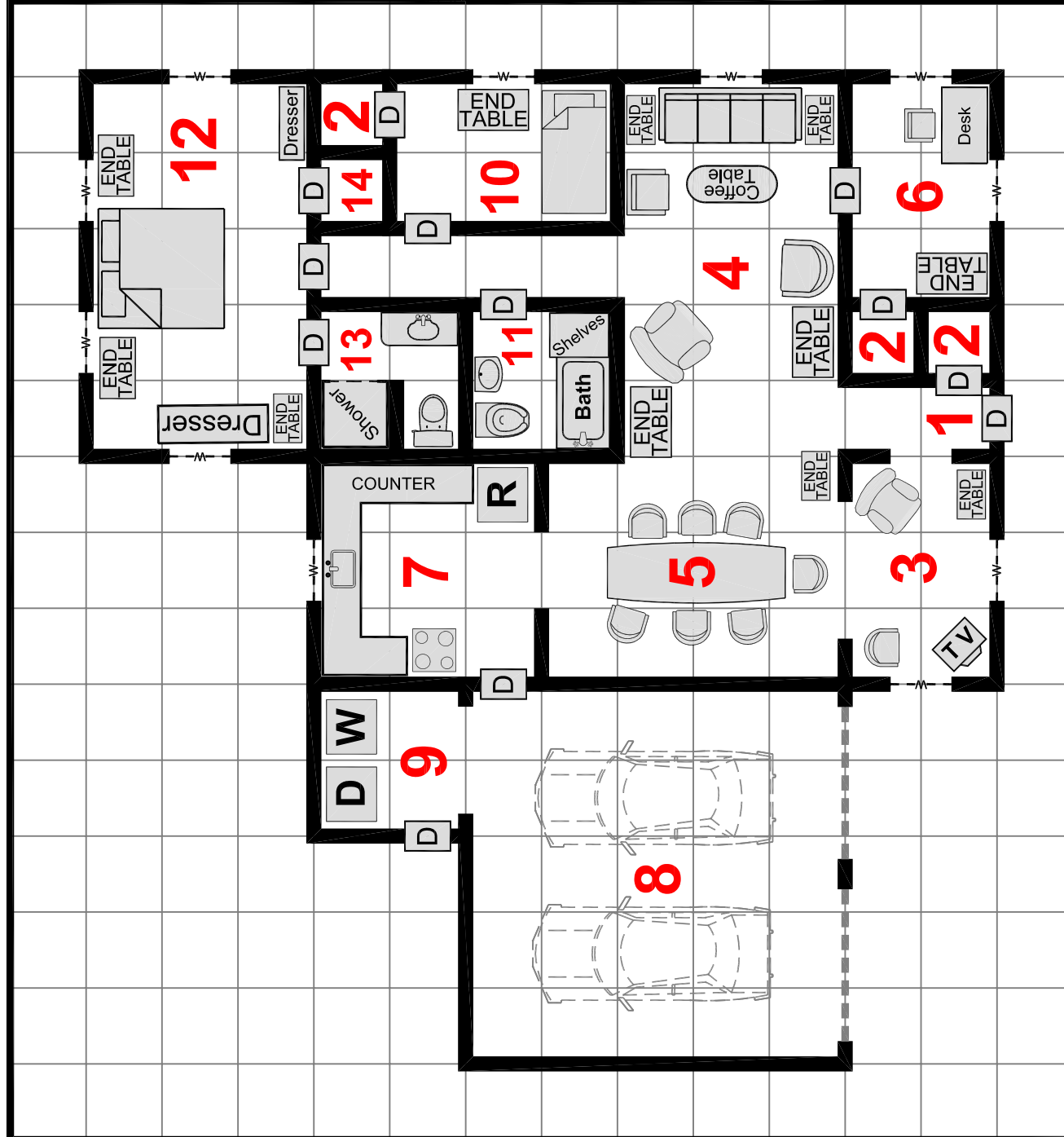




GM FIGURE 5: MASONIC LODGE (GUISBORNE BUILDING - 2nd FLOOR)

12 TO MIDNIGHT
 Map Scale: 1 square = 5 feet

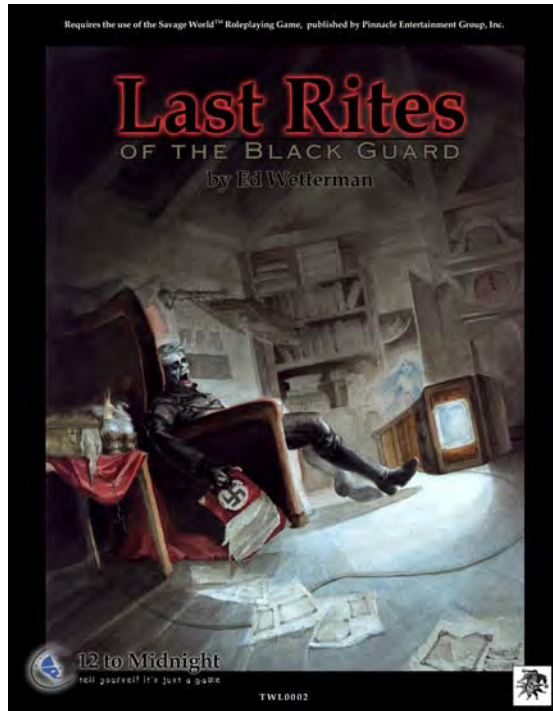




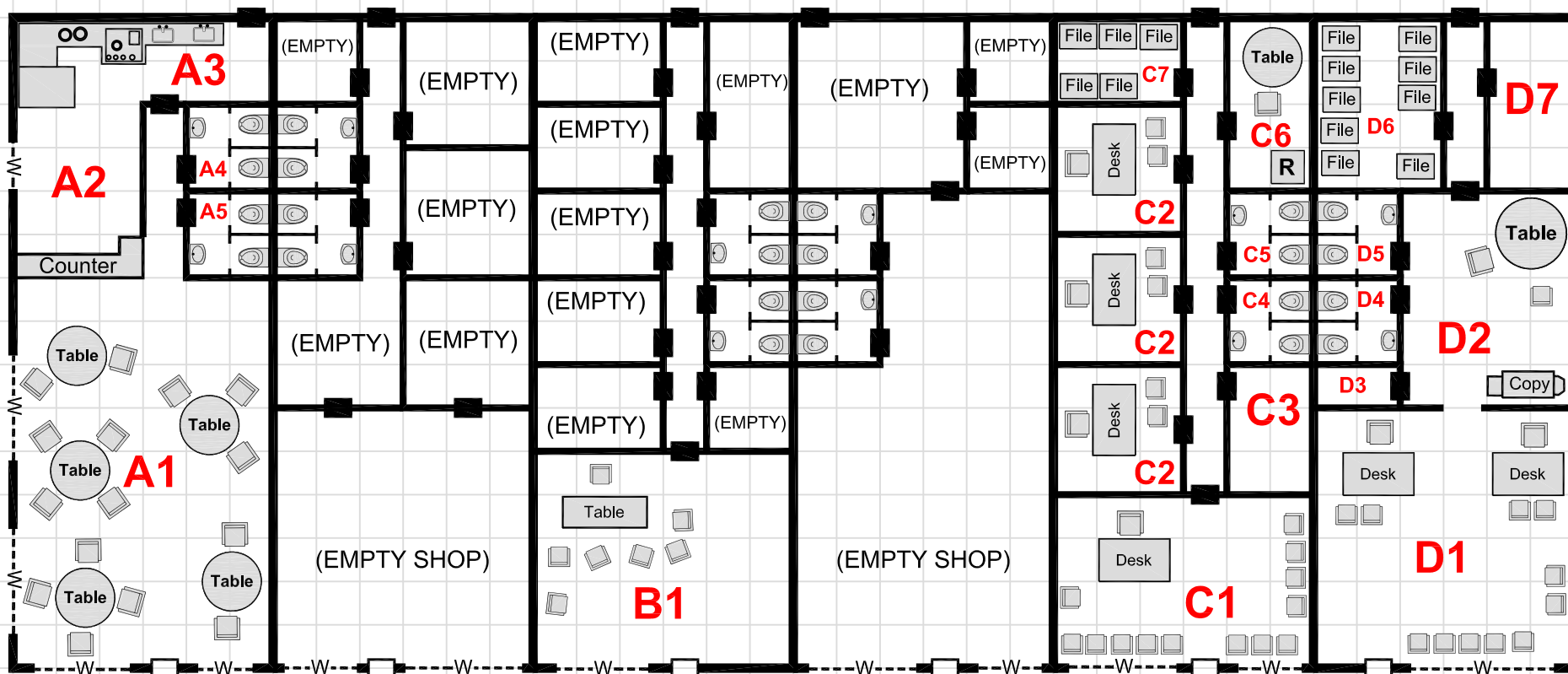
- 1 = Entry
 - 2 = Closet
 - 3 = Day Room
 - 4 = Living Room
 - 5 = Dining Room
 - 6 = Study
 - 7 = Kitchen
 - 8 = Garage
 - 9 = Wash Room
 - 10 = Guest Bedroom
 - 11 = Bathroom
 - 12 = Master Bedroom
 - 13 = Master Bathroom
 - 14 = Master Closet
 - 15 = Secret Chamber
- (With Secret Trap Door)

GM FIGURE 6: VERA BOCK'S HOUSE

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MAP KEY

- W-- Plate Glass Window
- Door (Glass)
- Door (Steel)
- Toilet
- ⦿ Sink
- Copy Machine
- R Refrigerator

A: "DONUT TZAR"

- A1 = Dining Area
- A2 = Counter/Drive Thru Window
- A3 = Kitchen
- A4 = Men's Restroom
- A5 = Women's Restroom

B: APOLLO CONTEST

- B1 = Rented Office (Apollo Contest Sign-In)

C: LOBLOLLY REALTORS

- C1 = Waiting Room/Receptionist
- C2 = Office
- C3 = Closet
- C4 = Men's Restroom
- C5 = Women's Restroom
- C6 = Break Room
- C7 = Files

D: MacINTOSH INSURANCE

AGENCY

- D1 = Shared Office
- D2 = Copy Room/ Lounge
- D3 = Closet
- D4 = Men's Restroom
- D5 = Women's Restroom
- D6 = File Room
- D7 = Storage

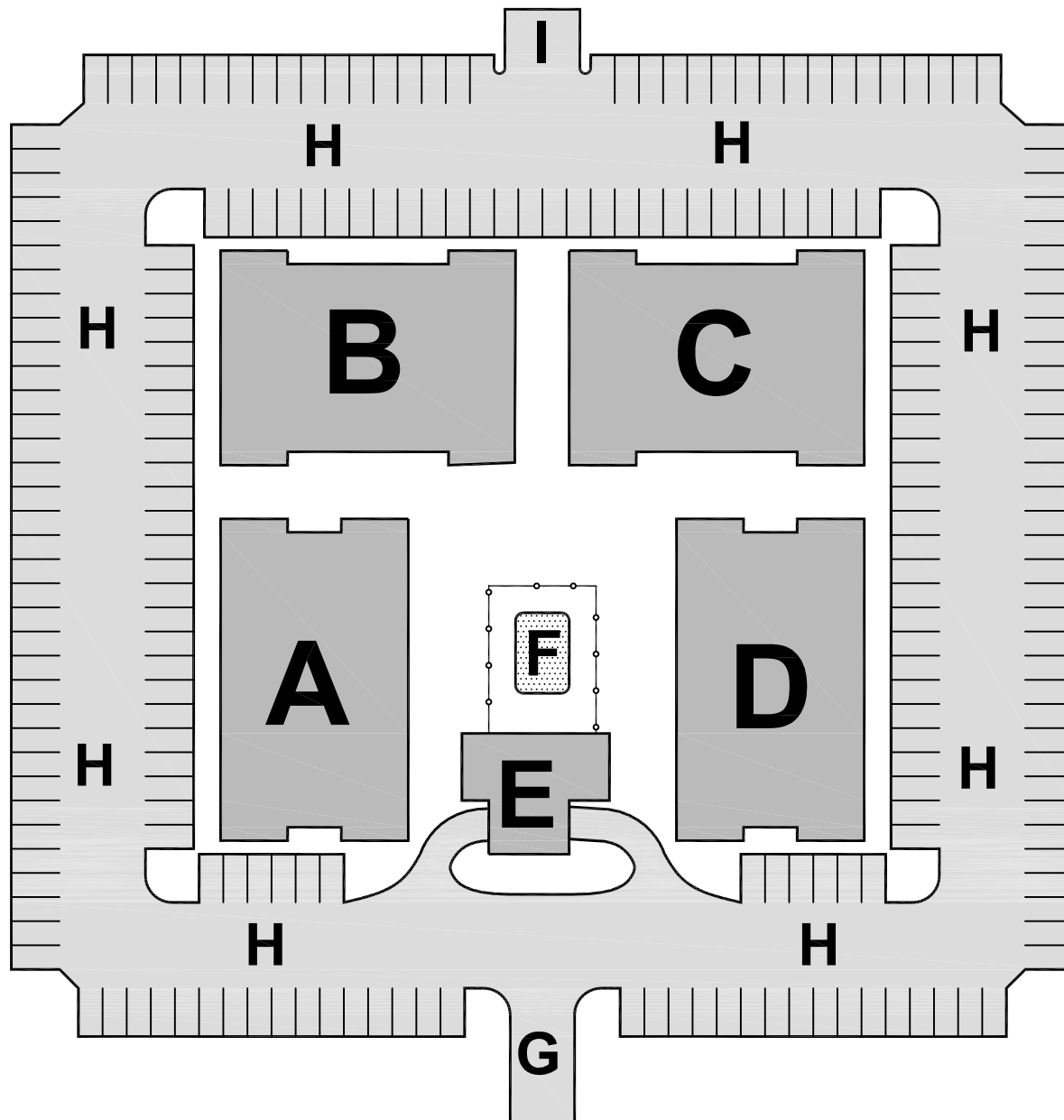


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Map Scale: 1 square = 5 feet

BONUS MAP A: LOBLOLLY STRIP MALL



MAP KEY

A = Building A

B = Building B

C = Building C

D = Building D

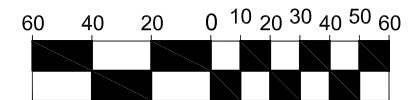
E = Office

F = Pool

G = Main Entrance from
Highway 96

H = Parking Areas

I = Garbage Dumpsters



SCALE IN FEET

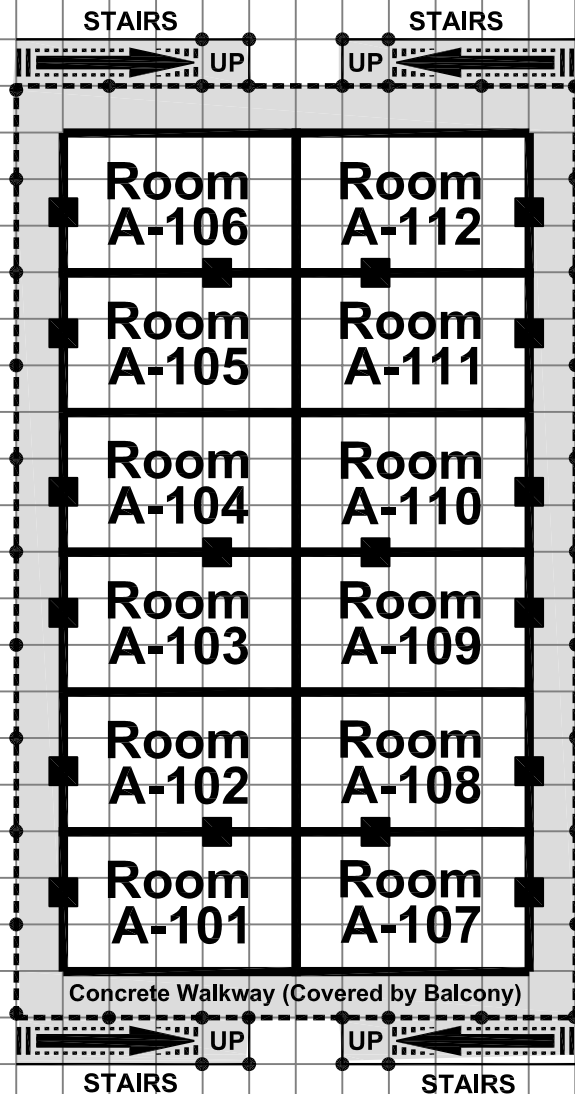


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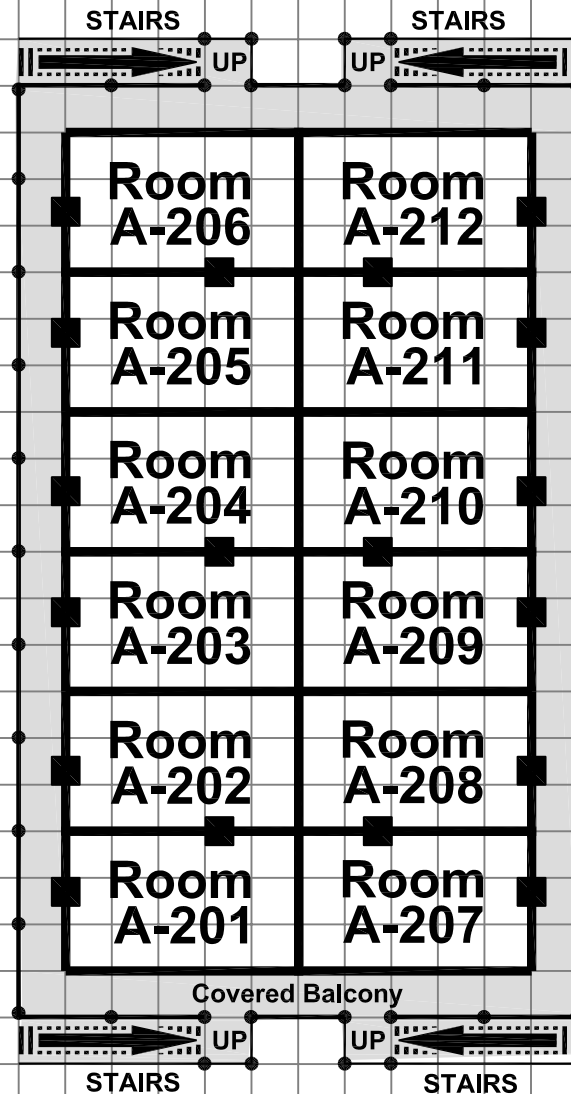
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Map Scale: AS SHOWN

**BONUS MAP B1:
THE TIMBER RIDGE MOTEL**



FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

NOTE: This map represents the general layout of Building A at the Timber Ridge Motel. This motel has three other buildings (labelled B through D) that have an identical layout.

Rooms are identified by an alphanumeric code: The letter identifies the building, the first digit identifies the floor, and the remaining two digits are the room number.

All rooms are equipped with an interior door so that two rooms may be rented as a single suite.

MAP KEY

- Door
- Column
- Edge of Covered Concrete Walkway
- Balcony Railing
- Wall

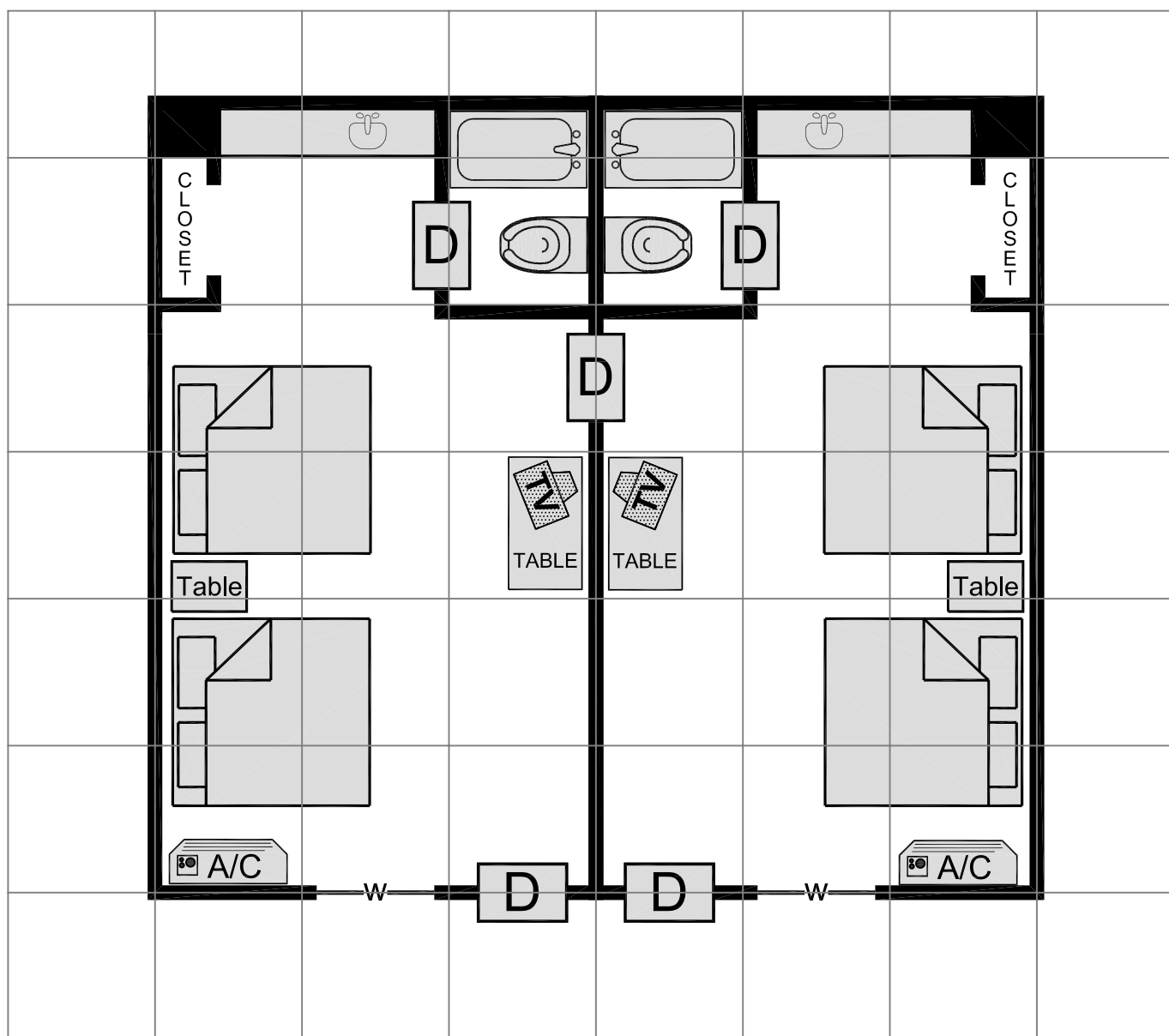


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Map Scale: 1 square = 5 feet

**BONUS MAP B2:
TIMBER RIDGE MOTEL (BUILDING A)**

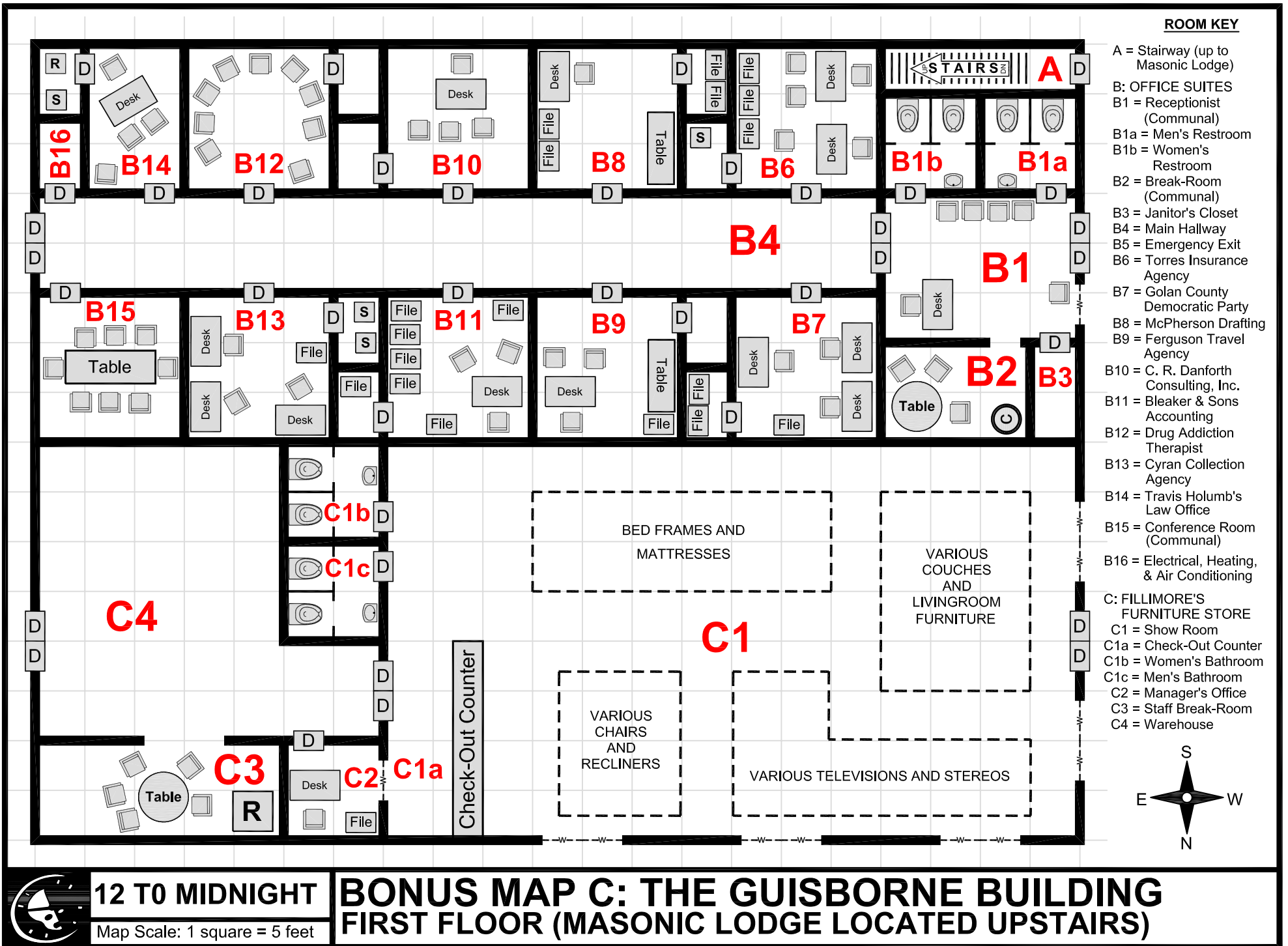


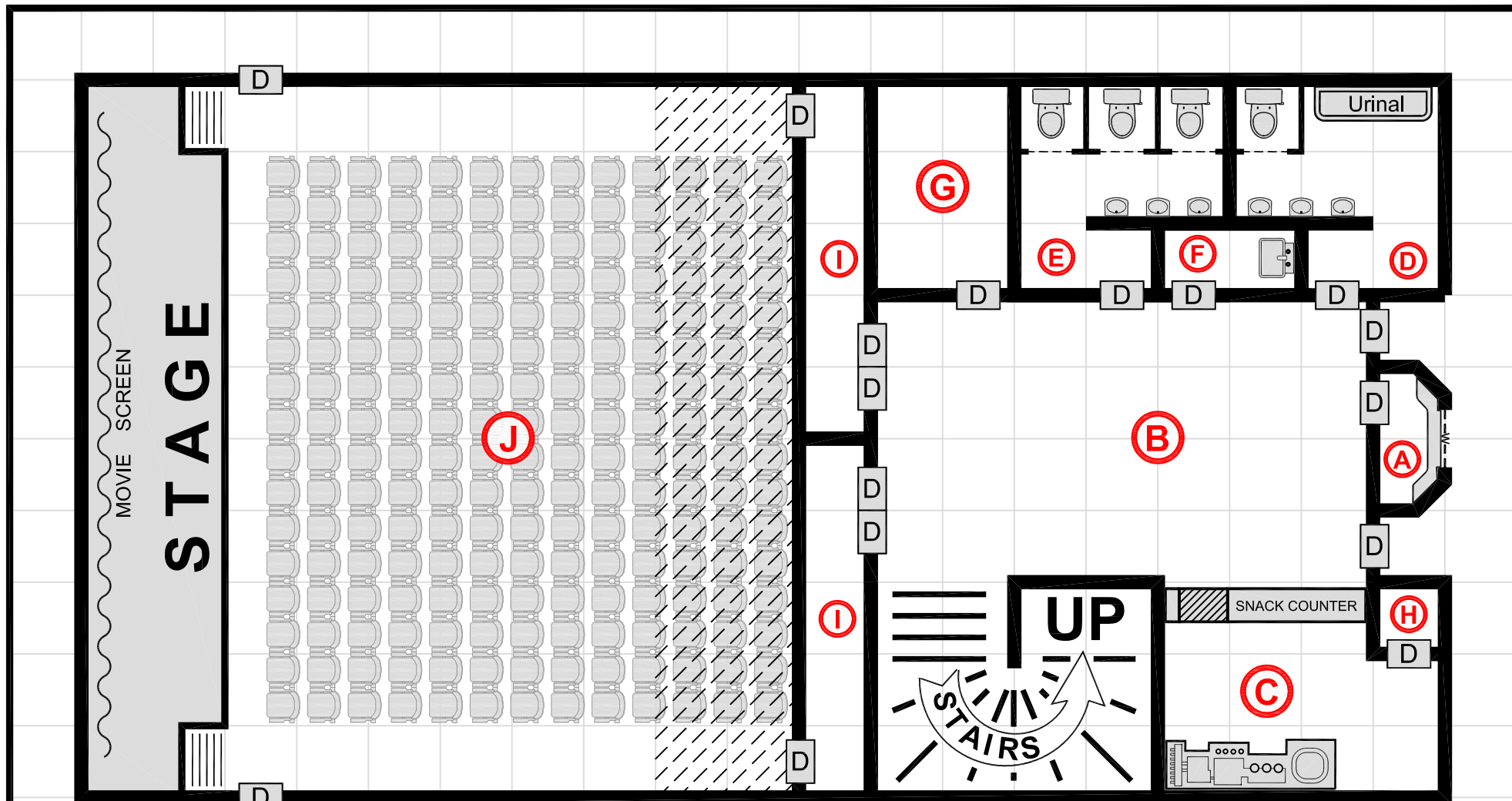
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Map Scale: 1 square = 5 feet

BONUS MAP B3: TIMBER RIDGE MOTEL (SUITE LAYOUT)





NOTE: HATCHED AREA INDICATES
THE MEZZANINE OVERHANG

MAP KEY

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| A = TICKET BOOTH | F = JANITOR'S CLOSET |
| B = DOWNSTAIRS LOBBY | G = STORAGE/ELECTRICAL |
| C = SNACK BAR | H = STORAGE |
| D = MEN'S RESTROOM | I = ENTRY HALL |
| E = WOMEN'S RESTROOM | J = THEATRE |

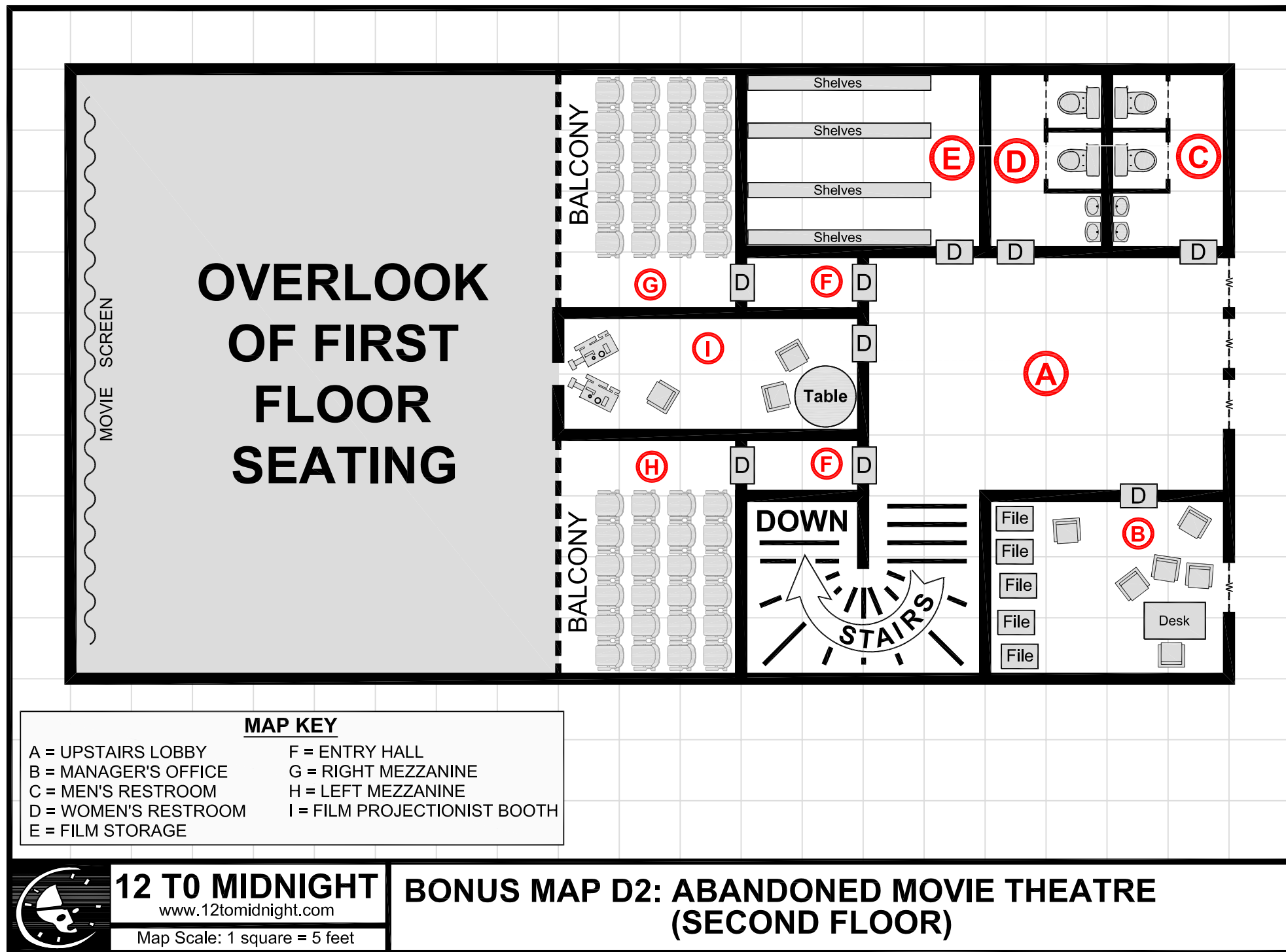


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Map Scale: 1 square = 5 feet

BONUS MAP D1: ABANDONED MOVIE THEATER (GROUND FLOOR)



Character Cards

NAME		ALLEG/RACE		INIT
Molly Blackwell- N. P.		Family		5
DEF	BASE	TCH	FLT	TMP
	11	11	10	
CLASS/LEVEL				
Charismatic 1/Ordinary 1/2				
STR	12	INT	10	FORT
				3
SPD	30 ft.			
DEX	13	WIS	8	REF
				2
VIS	Normal			
CON	14	CHA	15	WILL
				-1
THE GAME MECHANICS				
Skills				
Bluff	+4	Move Silently..	+1	
Diplomacy..	+4	Search.....	0	
Hide	+1	Sense Motive...	-1	
Listen	-1	Spot.....	-1	
Languages				
English				
Special/Notes				

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NAME		ALLEG/RACE		INIT
Molly Blackwell- Possessed		Self		+5
DEF	BASE	TCH	FLT	TMP
	13	13	10	
CLASS/LEVEL				
Smart 4/ Charismatic 3				
STR	12	INT	16	FORT
				3
SPD	30 ft.			
DEX	13	WIS	13	REF
				4
VIS	Normal			
CON	14	CHA	14	WILL
				6
THE GAME MECHANICS				
Skills				
Bluff	+12	Move Silently..	+1	Arcane Lore...+20
Diplomacy..	+8	Search.....	+9	
Hide	+1	Sense Motive...	+3	
Listen	+3	Spot.....	+5	
Languages				
English, Latin, Spanish, French, Ancient Greek				
Special/Notes				
Charm (+3 to Cha skills vs males)				
Magic: Bleeding, Cloud the Mind, Domination, Ward by Will				

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NAME		ALLEG/RACE		INIT
Bob Campbell		Zatha's Chosen		5
DEF	BASE	TCH	FLT	TMP
	14	14	13	
CLASS/LEVEL				
Strong 2/Tough 1				
STR	15	INT	10	FORT
				5
SPD	30 ft.			
DEX	13	WIS	12	REF
				1
VIS	Normal			
CON	14	CHA	8	WILL
				+1
THE GAME MECHANICS				
Skills				
Bluff	+2	Move Silently..	+1	
Diplomacy..	-1	Search.....	0	
Hide	+1	Sense Motive...	+3	
Listen	+1	Spot.....	+1	
Languages				
English, Latin				
Special/Notes				

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NAME		ALLEG/RACE		INIT
Vera Bock		Zatha's Chosen		5
DEF	BASE	TCH	FLT	TMP
	12	12	11	
CLASS/LEVEL				
Smart 4/Charismatic 1				
STR	8	INT	16	FORT
				2
SPD	30 ft.			
DEX	12	WIS	13	REF
				3
VIS	Normal			
CON	10	CHA	14	WILL
				5
THE GAME MECHANICS				
Skills				
Bluff	+10	Move Silently..	+1	Arcane Lore...+18
Diplomacy..	+6	Search.....	+1	Concen...+3
Hide	+1	Sense Motive...	+3	
Listen	+1	Spot.....	+1	
Languages				
English, Ancient Greek, German, Latin, Mandarin, Middle Egyptian, Navaho, Russian				
Special/Notes				
Magic: Devouring Earth, Far Gaze, Legproug Touch, Terror				

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Character Cards

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DELAY or READY	NAME		ALLEG/RACE		INIT	
	Steven Connelly		Zatha's Chosen		2	
	DEF	BASE 15	TCH 15	FLT 13	TMP	CLASS/LEVEL
						Fast 1
	STR 13	INT 10	FORT 2	SPD 30 ft.		
	DEX 15	WIS 8	REF 3	VIS	Normal	
	CON 14	CHA 12	WILL -1	THE GAME MECHANICS		
Skills						
	Bluff	+3	Move Silently..	+2	Tumble	+4
	Diplomacy..	+1	Search.....	0		
	Hide	+2	Sense Motive...	-1		
	Listen	-1	Spot.....	-1		
Languages						
English, Latin						
Special/Notes						
 						
UNCONSCIOUS						

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DELAY or READY	NAME		ALLEG/RACE		INIT	
	Felix Crow		The Rangers		3	
	DEF	BASE 24	TCH 18	FLT 17	TMP	CLASS/LEVEL
						Strong 4/ Soldier 8
	STR 15	INT 12	FORT 6	SPD 30 ft.		
	DEX 13	WIS 10	REF 6	VIS	Normal	
	CON 10	CHA 14	WILL 3	THE GAME MECHANICS		
Skills						
	Bluff	+11	Move Silently..	-3		
	Diplomacy..	+2	Search.....	+2		
	Hide	+1	Sense Motive...	+4		
	Listen	+5	Spot.....	0		
Languages						
English						
Special/Notes						
 						
UNCONSCIOUS						

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DELAY or READY	NAME		ALLEG/RACE		INIT	
	Standard Ranger		The Rangers		2	
	DEF	BASE 27	TCH 21	FLT 19	TMP	CLASS/LEVEL
						Strong 3/Fast 3/Soldier 4
	STR 14	INT 12	FORT 6	SPD 30 ft.		
	DEX 15	WIS 10	REF 7	VIS	Normal	
	CON 13	CHA 10	WILL 3	THE GAME MECHANICS		
Skills						
	Bluff	0	Move Silently..	+1		
	Diplomacy..	0	Search.....	+5		
	Hide	-1	Sense Motive...	0		
	Listen	+9	Spot.....	+7		
Languages						
English						
Special/Notes						
 						
UNCONSCIOUS						

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DELAY or READY	NAME		ALLEG/RACE		INIT	
	Jerry Daniels		The Truth		1	
	DEF	BASE 12	TCH 12	FLT 11	TMP	CLASS/LEVEL
						Ord. Smart 1/Dedicated 1
	STR 10	INT 14	FORT 0	SPD 30 ft.		
	DEX 12	WIS 15	REF 1	VIS	Normal	
	CON 8	CHA 13	WILL 4	THE GAME MECHANICS		
Skills						
	Bluff	+1	Move Silently..	+1		
	Diplomacy..	+3	Search.....	+6		
	Hide	+1	Sense Motive...	+4		
	Listen	+3	Spot.....	+3		
Languages						
English						
Special/Notes						
 						
UNCONSCIOUS						

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Character Cards

DELAY or READY	NAME Tony Hidalgo				ALLEG/RACE				INIT -1
	DEF	BASE 10	TCH 10	FLT 9	TMP	CLASS/LEVEL Ord. Tough 1/Smart 1			
	STR	12	INT	13	FORT	3	SPD	30 ft.	
	DEX	8	WIS	10	REF	-1	VIS	Normal	
	CON	15	CHA	14	WILL	+1			
Skills									
Bluff		+2	Move Silently..		-1				
Diplomacy..		+2	Search.....		0				
Hide		-1	Sense Motive...		0				
Listen		0	Spot.....		0				
Languages									
English, Spanish									
Special/Notes									
 									

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DELAY or READY	NAME Charlie Lester				ALLEG/RACE The Rangers				INIT 1
	DEF	BASE 18	TCH 16	FLT 15	TMP	CLASS/LEVEL Smart 6/Dedicated 4			
	STR	10	INT	15	FORT	4	SPD	30 ft.	
	DEX	13	WIS	14	REF	4	VIS	Normal	
	CON	10	CHA	12	WILL	9			
Skills									
Bluff		+9	Move Silently..		-4	Arcane Lore...		+27	
Diplomacy..		+1	Search.....		+4	Concen.		+5	
Hide		+1	Sense Motive...		+2				
Listen		+2	Spot.....		+2				
Languages									
English, Latin, German, French, Mandarin, Ancient Hebrew									
Special/Notes									
 									

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DELAY or READY	NAME Kevin Martin				ALLEG/RACE The Masons				INIT 1
	DEF	BASE 12	TCH 11	FLT 11	TMP	CLASS/LEVEL Ord. Dedicated 1/Charis. 1			
	STR	10	INT	13	FORT	1	SPD	30 ft.	
	DEX	12	WIS	15	REF	2	VIS	Normal	
	CON	8	CHA	14	WILL	3			
Skills									
Bluff		0	Move Silently..		+1				
Diplomacy..		0	Search.....		+2				
Hide		-1	Sense Motive...		+2				
Listen		+9	Spot.....		+2				
Languages									
English									
Special/Notes									
 									

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DELAY or READY	NAME James Rodriguez				ALLEG/RACE Texas Rangers				INIT 2
	DEF	BASE 17	TCH 12	FLT 14	TMP	CLASS/LEVEL Charismatic 4/Negotiator 1			
	STR	9	INT	13	FORT	4	SPD	30 ft.	
	DEX	15	WIS	10	REF	4	VIS	Normal	
	CON	12	CHA	14	WILL	3			
Skills									
Bluff		+10	Move Silently..		+2				
Diplomacy..		+12	Search.....		+1				
Hide		+2	Sense Motive...		+1				
Listen		0	Spot.....		0				
Languages									
English, Spanish									
Special/Notes									
 									

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Character Cards

DELAY or READY	NAME		ALLEG/RACE		INIT	
	Hadji Sattu		Global Knowledge Foundation		2	
	DEF	BASE 16	TCH 13	FLT 12	TMP	CLASS/LEVEL
	Smart 4/Dedicated 2					
	STR 12	INT 14	FORT 3	SPD 30 ft.		
	DEX 14	WIS 15	REF 5	VIS	Normal	
	CON 10	CHA 8	WILL 6	THE GAME MECHANICS		
Skills						
	Bluff	+1	Move Silently	+2	Arcane Lore	+18
	Diplomacy	+1	Search	+2	Concen.	+3
	Hide	+2	Sense Motive	+2		
	Listen	+6	Spot	+7		
Languages						
English, Latin, Hindi (speak only), Punjabi (speak only), Sanskrit, French, Apache (speak only), Chayenne (speak only)						
Special/Notes						
Magic: Blissful Slumber						
 						
UNCONSCIOUS						

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DELAY or READY	NAME		ALLEG/RACE		INIT	
	Janice Trent		Zatha's Chosen		3	
	DEF	BASE 18	TCH 18	FLT 15	TMP	CLASS/LEVEL
	Fast 4					
	STR 8	INT 13	FORT 3	SPD 30 ft.		
	DEX 16	WIS 10	REF 5	VIS	Normal	
	CON 14	CHA 12	WILL 1	THE GAME MECHANICS		
Skills						
	Bluff	+6	Move Silently	+3		
	Diplomacy	+1	Search	0		
	Hide	+3	Sense Motive	0		
	Listen	0	Spot	0		
Languages						
English, Latin						
Special/Notes						
 						
UNCONSCIOUS						

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DELAY or READY	NAME		ALLEG/RACE		INIT	
	Buddy Wallis		Zatha's Chosen		2	
	DEF	BASE 20	TCH 16	FLT 18	TMP	CLASS/LEVEL
	Tough 2/Strong 2					
	STR 16	INT 8	FORT 5	SPD 30 ft.		
	DEX 14	WIS 10	REF 2	VIS	Normal	
	CON 13	CHA 12	WILL 0	THE GAME MECHANICS		
Skills						
	Bluff	+5	Move Silently	+3	Intimidate	+7
	Diplomacy	+1	Search	0		
	Hide	+3	Sense Motive	0		
	Listen	0	Spot	0		
Languages						
English						
Special/Notes						
 						
UNCONSCIOUS						

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DELAY or READY	NAME		ALLEG/RACE		INIT	
	Norma Wallis		Zatha's Chosen		3	
	DEF	BASE 10	TCH 10	FLT 9	TMP	CLASS/LEVEL
	Smart 4					
	STR 10	INT 15	FORT 3	SPD 30 ft.		
	DEX 8	WIS 14	REF 0	VIS	Normal	
	CON 14	CHA 12	WILL 4	THE GAME MECHANICS		
Skills						
	Bluff	+6	Move Silently	-1	Arcane Lore	+16
	Diplomacy	+1	Search	+6	Concen.	+5
	Hide	-1	Sense Motive	+4		
	Listen	+2	Spot	+2		
Languages						
English, Middle Egyptian, Latin, Ancient Greek						
Special/Notes						
Magic: Red Cloak, Terror, Devouring Earth, Leprous Touch						
 						
UNCONSCIOUS						

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Character Cards

NAME		ALLEG/RACE		INIT
Tom Williamson		Zatha's Chosen		5
DEF		BASE 13	TCH 13	FLT 12
STR 14		INT 10	FORT 4	SPD 30 ft.
DEX 13		WIS 8	REF 3	VIS Normal
CON 12		CHA 15	WILL -1	
CLASS/LEVEL Strong 1/ Charismatic 2				
Skills				
Bluff +12		Move Silently.. +1		
Diplomacy.. +8		Search..... -1		
Hide +1		Sense Motive... -1		
Listen -1		Spot..... -1		
Languages				
English, Latin				
Special/Notes				
 				
UNCONSCIOUS				

NAME		ALLEG/RACE		INIT
Louis Connelly		Zatha's Chosen		2
DEF		BASE 15	TCH 15	FLT 13
STR 13		INT 10	FORT 2	SPD 30 ft.
DEX 15		WIS 8	REF 3	VIS Normal
CON 14		CHA 12	WILL -1	
CLASS/LEVEL Fast 1				
Skills				
Bluff +3		Move Silently.. +2		
Diplomacy.. +1		Search..... -1		
Hide +2		Sense Motive... -1		
Listen -1		Spot..... -1		
Languages				
Special/Notes				
 				
UNCONSCIOUS				

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Helpware cause mentioned on their website.

Monster Cards

DELAY or READY	NAME Nicole Blackwell				ALLEG/RACE 5				INIT 5			
	DEF				CLASS/LEVEL Dominating Spirit CR 8							
	STR				SPD							
	DEX				VIS							
	CON				WILL							
TCH				FLT				TMP				
13				13				12				
INT				FORT				GRAP				
16				-				-				
WIS				REF				GRAP				
16				4				-				
CHA				WILL				VIS				
14				4				D				
Skills				Bluff				Sense Mot.				
+12				+3				Spot				
Arcane Lore				+4				Search				
+9												
Attack (#)				Bonus				Type				
Cluster Attack				+4				BI				
Terrifying Slam				+4				BI				
Ghastly Appearance				60 ft.				AofEf. Fort. Save DC 20				
Frightful Moan				30 ft.				AofEf. Will Save DC 19				
Leaching Touch				+4				Touch 2d6+Possible Lvl				
HP/AP				21				Incorporeal (+1 Magic to hit), Invisibility, Rejuvenation, Darkvision, Cold Spot, Dreamweaving, Lesser Telekinesis, Channel, Gift of Life, Visible Form, Spirit Weapon, Possession				
Special/Notes				Smart 4/Charismatic 3								

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DELAY or READY	NAME ABE				ALLEG/RACE None				INIT 2			
	DEF				CLASS/LEVEL ABE-Manifestation CR5							
	STR				SPD							
	DEX				VIS							
	CON				WILL							
TCH				FLT				TMP				
13				13				11				
INT				FORT				GRAP				
12				-				-				
WIS				REF				GRAP				
10				2				-				
CHA				WILL				VIS				
12				0				D				
Skills				Listen								
+4												
Spot				+4								
Attack (#)				Bonus				Type				
Terrifying Slam				+2				BI				
Cluster Attack				+2				BI				
HP/AP				4				Incorporeal (+1 Magic to hit), Invisibility, Rejuvenation, Darkvision, Cold Spot, Dreamweaving, Lesser Telekinesis, Channel, Gift of Life, Visible Form				
Special/Notes				Ord. Charismatic 1								

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DELAY or READY	NAME Robert Blackwell				ALLEG/RACE None				INIT 2			
	DEF				CLASS/LEVEL Phantom Manifestation							
	STR				SPD							
	DEX				VIS							
	CON				WILL							
TCH				FLT				TMP				
20				20				18				
INT				FORT				GRAP				
10				-				-				
WIS				REF				GRAP				
12				4				-				
CHA				WILL				VIS				
14				1				D				
Skills												
Attack (#)				Bonus				Type				
Spirit Weapon				+5				P				
Cluster Attack				+5				BI				
Terrifying Slam				+5				BI				
Ghastly Appear.				60ft.				AofEf. Fort Save DC 18				
Frightful Moan				30 ft.				AofEf. Will Save DC 18				
HP/AP				20				Incorporeal (+1 Magic to hit), Invisibility, Rejuvenation, Darkvision, Cold Spot, Dreamweaving, Lesser Telekinesis, Channel, Gift of Life, Visible Form, Spirit Weapon				
Special/Notes				Fast 2/Strong 2/ Tough 1								

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UNCONSCIOUS	NAME Robert Blackwell				ALLEG/RACE None				INIT 2			
	DEF				CLASS/LEVEL Phantom Manifestation							
	STR				SPD							
	DEX				VIS							
	CON				WILL							
TCH				FLT				TMP				
20				20				18				
INT				FORT				GRAP				
10				-				-				
WIS				REF				GRAP				
12				4				-				
CHA				WILL				VIS				
14				1				D				
Skills												
Attack (#)				Bonus				Type				
Spirit Weapon				+5				P				
Cluster Attack				+5				BI				
Terrifying Slam				+5				BI				
Ghastly Appear.				60ft.				AofEf. Fort Save DC 18				
Frightful Moan				30 ft.				AofEf. Will Save DC 18				
HP/AP				20				Incorporeal (+1 Magic to hit), Invisibility, Rejuvenation, Darkvision, Cold Spot, Dreamweaving, Lesser Telekinesis, Channel, Gift of Life, Visible Form, Spirit Weapon				
Special/Notes				Fast 2/Strong 2/ Tough 1								

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