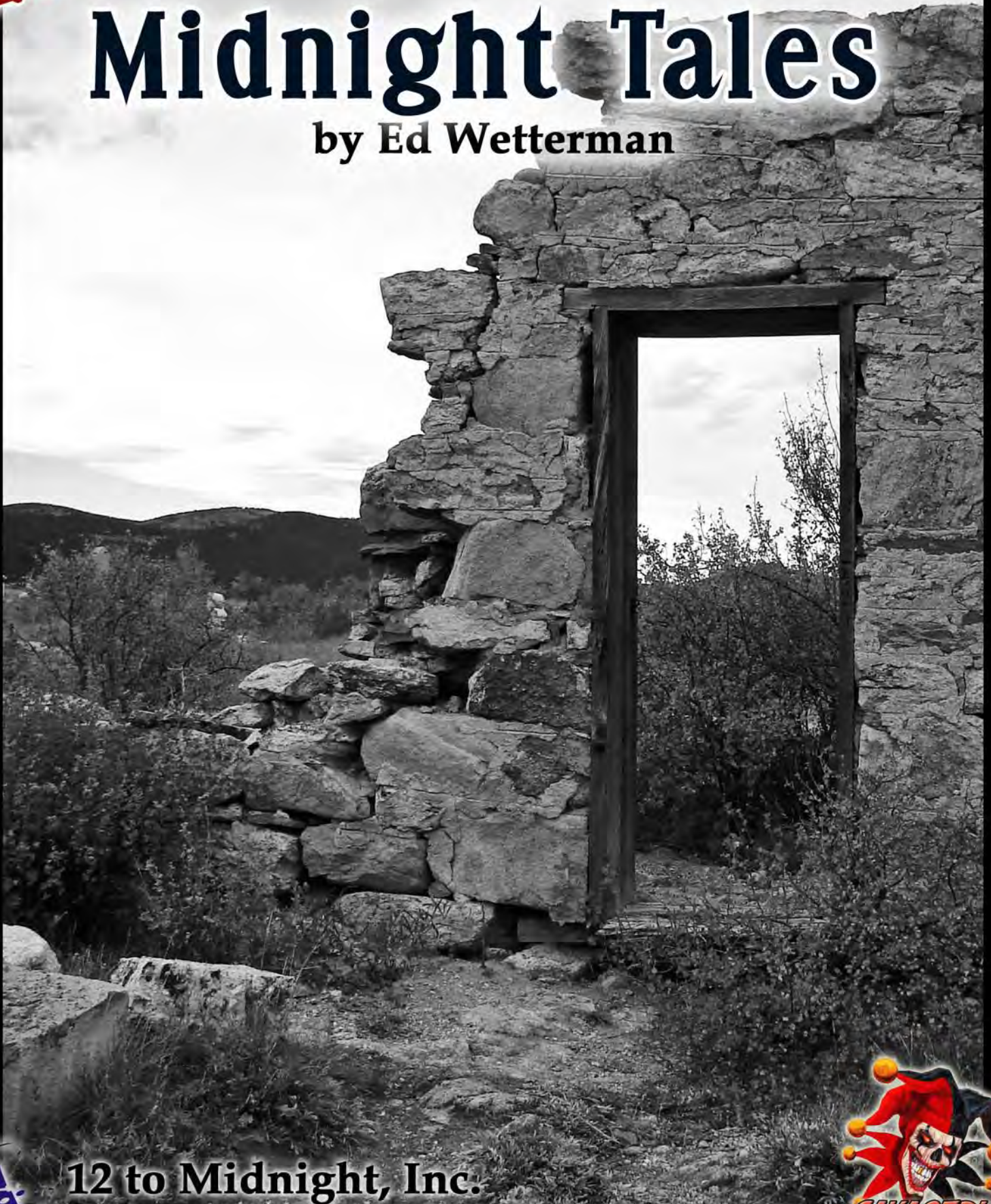


Ed's

Midnight Tales

by Ed Wettermann



12 to Midnight, Inc.
tell yourself it's just a game



Ed's Midnight Tales

By Ed Wettermann

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Introduction

Welcome to Pinebox and thanks for purchasing our second *Midnight Tales*. These are a few of my own horrific tales and include over 40 plot hooks and adventure ideas, 13 new creatures for your *Savage* games, and more Pinebox Personalities to make your Pinebox campaign come to life. Of course we also included Pinebox News stories and other goodies.

Big Thicket Adventures is a tale I wanted to tell for some time. See I grew up in the Big Thicket and I truly love that forest. I remember my grandfather telling me of hunting those woods in the early 20th century. Once as a little boy he had been hidden in the hollow of a tree by his father, when a man who had murdered one of his cousins had come onto our families' land, and my great grandfather had gone out with a rifle to speak to him. Another time he had a run-in with a black panther. He said he was walking through the thicket and heard what sounded like a woman's scream above him. Upon looking up he saw a black panther hanging on a limb over his head. He shot the big cat several times, finally killing it. He hunted his entire life and I believe him when he said it was a panther. Many zoologists have stated that there are no panthers in East Texas. My grandfather would disagree.

As to the chupacabra, well....I believe! Something is killing goats, dogs, and chickens and sucking the blood from them. A bizarre animal was killed in East Texas a couple of years ago, just miles from where I grew up. Pictures of this creature may easily be found on the internet. Legends of Big Foot are also found in East Texas. One of my best friends growing up in East Texas swears one day in the woods he came upon a small monkey. And of course there is always legends of lost Confederate gold, pirate's treasures, and more throughout East Texas. One legend states that Jean Lafitte ran from pursuit up the Sabine River and hid his treasure somewhere therein.

Beer, Chicks, an Ouija Board and a Demon was just fun. My players love the chance to mess with the other players and this allowed their imagination to go crazy and do whatever they wanted. This is a great one-nighter and I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.

The Soul Gazer is my own creation following a conversation with Thomas Driver, the bassist for A Jury of Robots. I'd really love to see the Soul Gazer

idea catch on and how other folks grow the idea. The Christmas tales are also good fun, but I really love Goblin Friend. We will reveal more about the secret military base and the government labs in future adventures. These *Midnight Tales* are a great way for you to introduce Pinebox to your players and will be an awesome bag of tricks for those of you looking forward to running our ETU campaign due sometime in 2008.

So sit back and plan some horrific gaming!
Thanks,

Ed Wettermann



"Howdy" from 12 to Midnight

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

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

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

Chapter 1: *Big Thicket* Adventures

Setting

The Big Thicket of East Texas is one of the last remaining jungle-like regions of North America. Its dense undergrowth is so thick in places that it cannot be penetrated without a sharp machete or hatchet. Every deer season, many hunters find themselves lost within its confines. In East Texas it is often said, “Stay within 20 feet of the road or you’ll get lost—and you may never be found again!”

The Thicket is primarily made up of tall pines, ancient oaks, and a few beech trees. The understory is a tangle of vines, small bushes, and thorns. This forest is home to coyotes, black bears, many species of birds, and the legendary panther. Native American tribes, such as the Caddo, once made their homes deep in the Thicket. Though two hundred years ago the forest covered a majority of East Texas, today it only covers a few counties, including the southern reaches of Golan County.

In the 1800s, many bushwhackers, outlaws, and renegade Native Americans made the Thicket their home and sanctuary. During the 1920s, bootleggers hid their alcohol stills deep in the reaches of the Thicket along its natural creek beds. Today, murders are commonplace and human remains are found by hunters on a fairly regular basis, though these remains are generally half eaten by wild animals and rarely identifiable. Ancient Native American burial mounds, rotting cabins, and old barns are found

deep within the forest, overgrown with the weeds and thorn bushes of a hundred years’ growth.

Today, biking and hiking trails have been cut through many parts of the Big Thicket, which is now protected by both state and federal governments. The fall and winter see many hunters enter its dark interior seeking deer, ducks, squirrels, geese, turkeys, and wild razorback hogs. Several large camping areas are available for those who wish to keep the amenities of civilization close at hand, but others prefer to hike into the forest and create their own campground.

Many legends involving the Thicket persist even today: bigfoot and panther sightings, rumors of chupacabra attacks, reports of ghostly Spanish soldiers, fierce Native American spirits, and tales of buried Confederate Hope Gold. Some even say that pirates from Galveston ventured up the Sabine River to hide their loot in the deep woods. Other phenomena are also common, ranging from unexplained lights in the night sky to strange disappearances, bizarre and dangerous weather patterns, and the mysterious Flames of Kirby Smith. In a Pinebox Campaign all of these legends are true, and they make for great side treks or short adventure tales. Three such side treks are presented in this section of *Ed’s Midnight Tales: The Beasts of the Thicket, Little Lost Child, and Last Chance Gold*.

Plot Hooks

- The heroes are part of a GPS geocaching team that seeks clues to a treasure deep within the forest.
- The characters are stranded in the Big Thicket on a lonely, rarely-used stretch of road, which they thought was a “shortcut,” when their vehicle runs out of gas, has a double-blowout, hits a large deer, or the like, and they have to hike back to civilization..
- The heroes volunteer to search for a lost child who wandered from his father’s camp into the brush.
- The characters track an adversary who attempts to elude them in the Thicket. Perhaps he maintains a secret hideout there.
- The heroes are here for recreation, such as camping, hiking, bike riding, or hunting.
- The characters are meeting someone: an informant, a black-market dealer of weapons or equipment, or some other person who would have reason to shy away from public view.
- The heroes are searching for lost the Confederate Hope Gold—old chests, buried after the surrender at Appomattox, that are rumored to be full of gold and jewelry.

1.1: Beasts of the Thicket

This encounter can involve a bigfoot, panther, or chupacabra. These legendary creatures are masters of hiding and moving silently. They only attack humans if provoked. Choose one of these three creatures or select the beast randomly. Once the plot hook has been established and the heroes are deep in the woods, read or paraphrase the following:

As you make your way deeper into the beautiful, dark Thicket, you suddenly notice a strange stillness. The forest has become eerily silent.

Have the heroes make *Notice* rolls against the creature’s *Stealth* roll in order to notice it a mere fifteen feet away, hidden in the underbrush, watching their every move. If they see the creature, what happens next depends on them. If the heroes choose to

provoke the creature, it fights them. Fleeing is also an option, though the action of running away provokes the panther or chupacabra to attack.

If the heroes choose to remain calm and still, the creature eventually turns and makes its way deeper into the forest. It may be tracked, by someone with the *Tracking* skill, to its lair. The creature’s home is a dry creek bed with five-foot-high banks on either side.

The panther makes its home in an ancient oak tree overlooking the creek bed, while the chupacabra lives within the tree’s hollow trunk. The bigfoot creature has created a bed of flora in the creek bed. If the lair is discovered, the creature fights or flees, depending on the actions of the heroes. If the creature survives an attack, it hunts the heroes until they escape the bounds of the forest.

Panther

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: *Climbing* d6, *Fighting* d8, *Guts* d6, *Notice* d6, *Stealth* d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

Bite or Claws: Str+d6

Camouflage: A panther’s dark coloration makes them difficult to spot in the deep woods. Add a +2 to *Stealth* when hiding in thick woods.

Improved Frenzy: Panthers may make two *Fighting* attacks each action at no penalty.

Pounce: Panther’s often hide and pounce on their prey for a quick kill. It can leap 1d6" to gain a +4 to its attack and damage. Its *Parry* is reduced by –2 until it performs its next action.

Size +1: Panthers can weigh over 300+ pounds.

The legendary black panther of East Texas is an elusive hunter that haunts the deepest recesses of the Big Thicket. Some believe these are a type of jaguar or cougar, but little evidence has ever been collected. Many tales are told of a bone-chilling scream that sounds like a woman or a small child. In reality, it is the call of this large cat.



Chupacabra

Chupacabras come in two subspecies, known as Lesser Chupacabras and Greater Chupacabras. Common special abilities are listed first, followed by information specific to the subspecies.

Special Abilities:

Claws: Str+d6

Chameleon Skin: The chupacabra's skin can change color and texture to adapt to its surroundings. This provides a natural bonus of +4 to all *Stealth* rolls, and causes all *Shooting* and *Throwing* attacks against it to suffer a -2.

Fleet Footed: This creature rolls d10s instead of d6s while running.

Go For the Throat: This creature instinctively goes for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll it hits the target's most weakly-armored location and automatically begins its **Vampiric Bite** (see below).

Improved Frenzy: Chupacabras may make two *Fighting* attacks each action at no penalty.

Infravision: Chupacabras can see heat and halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets.

Musk: This creature may exude a powerful musk three times a day, which forces every creature within a 5" radius (Lesser) / Large Burst Template (Greater) to make a Vigor roll. If failed, the victim is paralyzed in a sleeplike state for three rounds.

Quick: Whenever dealt a 5 or lower for initiative, the creature receives another card until one higher than 5 is drawn.

Vampiric Bite: When a chupacabra gets a raise on an attack roll, it latches onto a victim's soft area and begins a Vampiric Bite attack. The initial bite does 1d8 (Lesser) / 2d6 (Greater) points of damage, and if the target is wounded the victim must make a Vigor roll or lose consciousness. If the victim does not suffer a wound level or a shaken status, then the chupacabra loses its hold and falls away from the victim. Otherwise it remains attached and does the same range of damage on its next action. Each additional Vigor roll incurs an additional -1 to the roll. If an attached chupacabra suffers a Shaken result, it immediately loses its hold on its victim.

Lesser Chupacabra

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: *Climbing* d8, *Fighting* d8, *Guts* d6, *Notice* d6, *Stealth* d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities:

Glide: Batlike wings allow this creature to glide through the air from great heights. The chupacabra has a flying pace of 12, but no climb rate as it always moves from a higher level to a lower one.

Size -1: Lesser Chupacabras are the size of a large dog.

Greater Chupacabra

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: *Climbing* d8, *Fighting* d10, *Guts* d8, *Notice* d6, *Stealth* d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

Size +1: Greater Chupacabras can weigh over 300+ pounds.

The chupacabra is a savage and stealthy carnivore. It has the face of a wolf, but with gray or scaly facial skin. Course body hair and skin provides chameleon-like camouflage, with a row of quills that runs down the length of the beast's back. The creature has bat-like wings, powerful kangaroo-like legs, and two short forearms ending in three-fingered claws. Two sharp fangs extend several inches from the creature's snout. Its eyes are reported to be black, orange, or red.

These twisted creatures range throughout the Caribbean, Central and South America, and the southern United States. They generally prey on small fowl and animals, such as chickens, geese, ducks, goats, dogs, and cats. Greater chupacabras have been known to attack cattle and, occasionally, human beings. Chupacabras are masterful predators and are very difficult to track, hunt, or kill. Typically they attack at night and leave the bodies of their prey ravaged and bloodless. Investigators claim that the creature gives off a hissing noise and secretes a natural musk that lulls prey into a sleep-like paralysis. It then attacks the victim with two straw-like fangs, which allow the beast to suck the blood from its prey.

Many South Americans blame US scientists for creating these aberrations and loosing them upon an unsuspecting and unbelieving world. Many have reported that American soldiers come to claim any chupacabra carcass harvested by hunters. These bodies are secreted away in hidden bases deep in the Amazon jungle. Officially, the US government disavows any knowledge of these creatures.

Bigfoot

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+1, Vigor d12

Skills: *Climbing* d6, *Fighting* d8, *Guts* d6, *Notice* d4, *Stealth* d8, *Tracking* d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11

Gear: Club (Str+d4)

Special Abilities:

Bite: Str+d6

Scent: This creature uses its olfactory senses to know its environment, giving a +2 to all *Notice* and *Tracking* rolls.

Size +2: Most of these creatures are over seven feet tall with massive arms and legs.

Stealthy Hunter: Bigfoot receives a +2 on all *Stealth* rolls in its natural environment.

Sweep: May attack all adjacent foes at -2.

Thick Hide: Long thick hair provides an extra +1 Toughness modifier.

East Texas has many legends regarding these great ape-like creatures. Some believe they are a missing link in the evolution of man. Others believe they are aliens who have come to earth as observers or as advance scouts for an invasion. Whatever they are, reports of them can be found around the world. Proof of the Bigfoots' existence would set much of the scientific community abuzz and bring great fame to whoever provided conclusive evidence. However, there are those in secret organizations, including the US government, who want to keep knowledge of these mysterious beings from the public.

1.2: Little Lost Child

In this scenario, the heroes search for a little lost boy named Ray Williams. He wandered away from his father's camp and became lost in the Thicket. While the child wandered lost, a rabid werewolf abducted him. This poor creature is suffering from advanced dementia and has lost much of his humanity. Once the party successfully tracks the creature, he attacks them. The werewolf has not harmed the boy, but the boy is terrified and in shock.

The search has lasted for several hours and has drawn you ever deeper into the Thicket. You were excited by your discovery of the boy's left tennis shoe, but that find came more than thirty minutes ago and you fear you may have lost the trail.

Have the heroes make *Notice* rolls at -1. Success allows them to hear the distant whimperings of the child. Ray sits next to a large pine tree, his head in his hands, crying from fright. The creature is hidden 7" away in the underbrush. He may be seen if a character succeeds at a *Notice* (-4) roll. If he is not seen, he gets a surprise round to attack the heroes. Being rabid, he attacks until killed. In his fevered mind, the child is his cub and he intends to protect him. Anyone attempting to save the child may become his target. The werewolf does not attack anyone who carries the boy for fear of hurting his "cub," but tracks the heroes back to camp and attacks at the first opportunity.

Once the heroes spy the werewolf read or paraphrase the following:

Before you stands a vision that causes you to doubt reality. A man-like creature standing on two legs, but with the claws and snout of a great wolf snarls at you, his yellow lupine eyes gleaming in the dimness of the forest. A white froth foams along his sharp canine teeth as he moves to attack.

A Note on Werewolves

Lycanthropy is a quasi-genetic disease with both dominant and regressive traits. This inherited affliction leads to painful transformations from the human shape into a hulking creature resembling a

shambling, upright wolf. These shifts in form are triggered by intense emotions, and people with this disease tend to have great difficulty controlling such emotions. These changes can last anywhere from minutes to hours, or even (rarely) days. While the sufferer is in creature form, only a slight vestige of the human intellect remains. Typically such creatures only remember their most basic identity and the identity of very close loved ones.

While transformed, the werewolf's saliva contains a viral agent with traces of the lycanthropic disease. This virus is transferred to a victim's bloodstream through any open wound. Anyone slain by a werewolf normally has a 50% chance of rising as a werewolf themselves.

On nights of the full moon, the virus fully activates, transforming the victim into a pale imitation of his attacker. This "wolf-man" is a man-sized wolf creature with much more human characteristics. Typically, new wolf-men retain more of their intellect and are able to control their actions to a degree.

However, these transformations are much more painful than those of lycanthropes and the disease itself is degenerative. That is, the virus constantly attacks the victim's genetic code and replaces it with modified code. These changes to the body chemistry and brain lead to a gradual descent into paranoia, delusion, and eventually outright madness. This descent usually takes between six months and a year, depending on the initial health of the victim.

This particular werewolf is caught in a hybrid-half transformed state, so that he stands and moves like a man, but has the facial and claw like features of the werewolf. In this state he cannot transfer the lycanthropic disease, but can transfer the rabies virus.

The werewolf in this adventure is in the later stages of Rabies, but he retains sufficient humanity to know that killing a child would be wrong. At least for now. As such he suffers a -2 on all Smarts and Smarts-related skill rolls.



What is Fear Effects?

Fear Effects is 12 to Midnight's own set of add-on horror rules. These rules do not require the use of a sanity score. Instead, they rely on a saving throw called a Horror check. You will see references to three different kinds of Horror checks mentioned in this adventure: minor spooks, medium shocks, and great frights. If you aren't using Fear Effects, be sure to check it out. It makes any mediocre game great, and any great game (such as those by 12 to Midnight) even better. However, if you still are not convinced to run this adventure using the Fear Effects rules, then just ignore comments in the adventure about minor spooks, medium shocks, or great frights.

Werewolf in Hybrid Form

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (-2 Rabies), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: *Climbing* d8, *Fighting* d10, *Guts* d6, *Intimidation* d6, *Notice* d6 (-2), *Stealth* d8, *Swimming* d8, *Tracking* d6 (-2)

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

Bite and Claws: Str+d8

Fear -2: The very sight of this creature of legend chill the blood of all who see them.

Hardy: This creature does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.

Infections: As this werewolf is stuck in hybrid form, he does not transfer lycanthropy to his victims.

Infection (Rabies): Should the rabies-infected creature bite a hero, that character must make an immediate Vigor rolls. If the roll is unsuccessful, the rabies virus infects him, though the hero may not know of the infection until symptoms occur.

In 1d10 days, the hero suffers muscle spasms and seizures, followed by a high fever—1d3 days later, the sight of water or any type of drink causes the throat muscles to spasm. This is followed by a period of 1d10 days of delirium, followed by death. If caught before the onset of symptoms, the rabies virus may be treated effectively with medication and a successful Vigor roll. Once delirium sets in, the Vigor roll to survive is made at -6. The hero may react violently, in an almost feral manner, towards anyone he contacts during this time.

Immunity: Being stuck in hybrid form, any non-silver weapons does half damage.

Improved Frenzy: In his dementia, the werewolf may make two attacks

per round without penalty.

Infravision: These creatures see heat and only suffers halve penalties when attacking living targets in bad lighting.

Weakness: All werewolves suffer normal damage from silver weapons.

GM Ideas

If the heroes defeat the werewolf without killing him, they must decide what to do with him. He reverts to human form when unconscious, but if he awakens, he immediately transforms back to his hybrid form due to the rabid dementia.

The heroes discover the defeated werewolf was actually a scientist named Justin Farbes who worked for ProtoGen Laboratories and assisted in several university experiments at East Texas University. He became a victim of secret experiments taking place at ProtoGen, and has been listed as a Missing Person for the past two months.

Two Men in Black arrive a few days after the encounter to “discuss” the situation with the heroes. They warn the team not to scare the general populace by spreading scary rumors. They take no overt action against the heroes, but the team becomes the target of surveillance by the Agents and begins suffering small troubles if they continue to investigate or speak out about what has occurred. They may become targeted for a tax-audit, victims of identity theft, etc.

Should the heroes escape the encounter with the werewolf-hybrid, without defeating him, the beast grows even more dangerous and begins savagely attacking anyone it catches in the forest.

1.3: Last Chance Gold

For generations, treasure hunters have sought a fortune that was reportedly hidden deep within the Thicket in May of 1865. Rumors say it is stored in three great artillery crates that have come to be known as the “Hope Gold” chests of the Confederacy.

Heroes who spend a day or longer using their *Investigation* skill can uncover the following:

Table 1-1: Investigating the Hope Gold

Roll	Result
Basic Success	Research at the East Texas University Library uncovers the name <i>Mercury Smith</i> in connection with the hiding of the gold.
Success With One Raise:	Research of the county records shows that Mercury Smith owned forty acres of land just southeast of Highway 96 on the southern Golan County line. A survey shows that the forest covers Smith's farmstead, with only the remains of a barn and a brick fireplace still standing. The property also contains five large Native American burial mounds and is known for excellent hunting during deer season.
Success With Two or More Raises	The heroes uncover a book of military records entitled <i>Men of Golan County</i> . This book reveals that Smith was a sergeant in Company A of the First Texas Infantry Division. It also reveals that he never surrendered or took the Oath of Allegiance to the United States. The record indicates that he died one year after the war during a yellow fever epidemic.

Most treasure hunters never realized that the name Mercury Smith belonged to this Civil War sergeant. They thought it referred to a local gunsmith who was reputed to use mercury in making rifle cartridges. The heroes are on the right path to discovering the gold.

The old Smith Homeplace is now in the National Forest, so access is easy to gain. It is, however, illegal to dig into the burial mounds.

A *Notice* roll (-1) of the old farmstead reveals a hollowed brick in the fireplace. Within the brick is a beaded cord of leather. There are five beads, and all but one is red. The middle bead is black, and has a small X scratched on it.

Looking at a map, the heroes can see that the five burial mounds run almost in a line from the old homestead, west towards Red Creek Bridge. The brush is extremely heavy, requiring machetes to clear a path to the burial mounds. The “treasure” is buried in the third mound to the west. If characters dig in the third mound, read the following:

As you dig into the earth, you quickly clear away the brush and grasses from over a hundred years of growth. Once you have broken through the natural coverings, the earthen mound gives way quickly and you soon spot the edge of a cracked piece of pottery. A wind blows from the west; its gusts shake the forest's leaves, which rustle in a cacophony of sound.

If the heroes dig deeper, describe the clouds of a thunderstorm rolling in from the west. Eventually, the occasional boom of thunder resounds in the distance, with bright flashes of lightning. If the heroes have ghost-hunting equipment, such as video recording devices, or if they take photographs, they see a heavy, white ectoplasm settling over the area. Nothing further happens (except for an intense downpour of rain) unless the heroes speak one of the following words: gold, Mercury, Confederacy, or Confederate. If they do so, the mound suddenly shakes and dirt falls away as the body of Mercury Smith rises from the earth, intent on protecting his treasure. If none of the key words are spoken, they eventually unearth the body of the old confederate. If disturbed, he rises and fights to protect his treasure. If the mummy is defeated, the heroes recover three chests from just beneath where he arose. Each chest contains two bars of impure gold and several bags of Confederate money. The gold is mixed with other metals, lowering its value considerably. The treasure cannot legally be sold, as it was found on National Park lands in a protected Native American burial mound. (Possession of the treasure is punishable by up to two years in jail and a fine of up to \$10,000).

Dedicated Revenant

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d12

Skills: *Fighting* d10, *Notice* d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 12

Special Abilities:

Claws: Str+d6

Earth Sleep: The revenant may enter the earth once per day to sleep. On its movement, it may enter the earth and may take its full movement down into the earth at no extra movement cost. If disturbed, it may awaken normally. It may heal any damage taken at the rate of one wound level

per day of sleep. The revenant may endure for centuries in such a state.

Fear -2: The very sight of this creature of legend chill the blood of all who see them.

Fearless: He is immune to Fear and Intimidation.

Improved Undead: +4 Toughness, +2 to recover from being Shaken. Called shots do no extra damage (except to the head).

Weakness: Head shots do an extra +2 damage. Also, the revenant suffers from fire vulnerability and suffers double damage from fire based attacks.

Dedicated revenants are a type of mummy created when some great devotion in life cannot be let go, even in death. It is a curse and a form of hellish punishment that the revenant must endure for eternity, or until destroyed.

Chapter 2:

Beer, Chicks, an Ouija Board, Pretzels, and a Demon

While at a party, the heroes and several GM characters play with an Ouija board. The sinister device reveals a cryptic message, “Bloody Mary.” This is a clue suggesting heroes go to the restroom and try the old legend of Bloody Mary (Repeat the name while looking in a mirror three times, before a lit candle, and while alone). If a hero makes the attempt, horror is definitely in his future. If no hero takes the bait, James Jones, a friend at the party does.

The ritual releases a demon that attempts to possess the hero (or James), and uses that person against others. Once released, the creature must be appeased or defeated.

This tale is written for 4 characters of Novice levels, but may be scaled up depending on the makeup of the team. ***This is a roleplay-intensive mini-adventure. Be sure the players can pull it off before attempting to run it. The GM must be ready to create stats for illusional creatures or use creatures from the Savage Worlds rulebook on the fly! This adventure works well for GMs and players that like lots of free-form roleplaying.***

2.1: Introduction and Background

James Jones has great parties in his two-room, 2nd story apartment. The heroes have attended this one, as well as Lana Fowler. Fowlers’ hair is dyed a purplish maroon and is spiked and short. Her lipstick and fingernails are painted black, and her eye shadow is heavy and dark. Despite her carefree appearance, Lana is actually a shy girl who enjoys watching oth-

ers. She usually wears a sly smile upon her lips, as if amused by the actions of others. The truth is that Lana is a witch, taught by her mother, and she has never quite fit in.

Late in the morning hours, most of the partiers have gone home, except for James, Lana and the heroes. James pulls out a Ouija board and asks if anyone would like to play.

This Ouija board is special. James found it left in the apartment when he moved in six months before. The previous owner of the apartment, Joe Breen, had committed suicide; at least that was what the police had determined. Actually, Breen had been communing with several dangerous spirits and one night inadvertently summoned Sudalak, a demon of night terrors. Sudalak had played with his victim for several days before bleeding his wrists and allowing Breen to die. Sudalak waits for a calling from the physical world. Once released, his powers are great enough to create Hell on Earth in this little apartment.

There are two ways for the heroes to defeat Sudalak. One way is to kill the possessed person’s body. The second way is to play along with Sudalak’s horrific games until Lana can cast a spell of protection. However, this is a time-consuming process and the heroes must keep Sudalak’s attention from her.

This is truly a horror adventure, and character deaths are possible. Sudalak, being a demon of night terrors, can control and change the environment as he wishes—making him a very dangerous opponent. He feeds off fear, so he wants to torture and terrify his victims for as long as possible before killing them and taking possession of their souls.

2.2: Let's Get this Party Started...

The party has gone late into the early morning hours. Most of the partiers have gone home, except for just a few friends, a girl named Lana, and you. Your friend, James Jones, whose apartment hosted the party, has pulled out an old 1970s Ouija board. "Who wants to try?" He asks with a smile. Lana, who has been very quiet and shy most of the night suddenly perks up. "I do!" and she moves to sit opposite James.

The apartment itself is on the second floor of the AJ Smith Apartments. It consists of two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a small kitchen, a combined dining room and living room, and a small balcony accessed through a sliding glass door. The front door opens onto a railed porch and stairs descend to the first floor and parking lot beyond. There are neighboring apartments, but due to the supernatural effects of the Sudalak, no one outside the apartment can hear what is happening.

There is room for two more players at the board. The game is played with everyone lightly touching the planchette (pointer) and moving it in small circles about the board. The board has the alphabet, 0 to 9, and Yes and No written upon it. Allow any heroes who wish to join in the fun.

James and Lana begin by welcoming any spirits who wish to communicate, though Lana takes the Ouija ceremony much more seriously than James, who is really only doing it for a laugh. James asks the first question, "Do you think I'm sexy?" He then causes the pointer to move to the Yes. He laughs and plays on this way for a few minutes.

Things get more serious when Lana asks, "Is there anyone here who wishes to speak to us?" The planchette seems to leap from the fingers of the players and hovers in small circles around the Yes. Have heroes who are playing make *Notice* rolls. If successful, they perceive that the planchette moved on its own. If the heroes remove their hands and have Lana and James do the same, the pointer obviously moves of its own accord.

Allow the heroes to ask questions and answer them, remembering that the Sudalak wants to fool them into believing he is a playful, harmless spirit, and that

he needs them to perform the ritual to allow him access to this dimension. Eventually have the pointer spell out "Bloody Mary", and then "Sudalak".

Allow *Knowledge (Occult or similar skill)* rolls at +2, or *Common Knowledge* rolls at -1. If successful the hero remembers the old ritual-game of Bloody Mary. You stand before a mirror, with one candle lit in a darkened room and chant Bloody Mary three times. The purpose of this was to see "Bloody Mary's" ghost. Obviously the spirit of Sudalak wants the heroes to do this for him to "cross over." Sudalak does his best to communicate that he needs their help to "cross over." He attempts to tell them that he is "trapped" here and wishes only to move on in the afterlife. He needs the ritual to find peace. If the heroes do not follow this line of reasoning, have Lana agree to do so.

If a hero is willing to perform the ritual, have him do so in the bathroom in front of the large mirror over the washbasin. If no hero is willing to make the attempt, James does so. Of course if the heroes "metagame" this and refuse to allow anyone to do so, then the party ends normally. Unfortunately, James attempts the ritual on his own later and is found dead in his apartment. The subsequent investigation states that James was the victim of a brutal murder. The police are baffled, however, as the apartment was locked up tight, including the flip lock on the main door.

2.3: The Ritual: Sudalak's Return

Should a hero attempt the ritual, he should be alone in the darkened bathroom. The character must stand before the mirror with the door closed and a single candle lit. To successfully perform the ritual, the hero must chant, "Sudalak, Sudalak, Sudalak." Once this occurs, the candle extinguishes and the Demon's spirit is released.

His first action is to attempt to possess the summoner during a surprise round. (See **Possession** in the description of the Sudalak.) If possession attempt fails then the character may act on his initiative but first suffers a *great fright* (if you are using *Fear Effects*) from the supernatural "attack". If the possession is successful, then a horror check is irrelevant.

If Sudalak successfully possesses one of the heroes, give him the player handout "Note to Dream Weaver

Hero. "Take time to explain that he is playing the demon against his friends!

If the summoner successfully resists the possession, the demon moves to other rooms in the apartment and tries to possess other heroes until either he succeeds or everyone has fled the apartment.

If no hero performs the ritual, allow James to make the attempt. James is automatically possessed for purposes of the furthering the adventure.

Once the possessed character reenters the common area of the apartment, he smiles and says, "The fun is about to begin." The Sudalak uses his powers to bolt and lock all the doors and windows, shutting everyone in. Then the real horror begins.

Here is where the adventure gets quirky and is perfect for the roleplaying-intensive group. The GM and the Dream Weaver Hero get to use their imaginations to scare and terrorize the other heroes. Sudalak is the master of illusion, combining the dream state and reality into one ever changing horrifying vision.

2.4: Pocket Dimensions of Terror

There are several rules for the game that Sudalak is about to play with the heroes. These rules were set up by the Creator, and must be adhered to. Furthermore, he does not want to actually kill the heroes...yet. He feeds on fear and terror, so by creating scenes that frighten and terrorize them, he accomplishes this goal.

Rule 1: The Sudalak can transform reality, but only within the constraints of the apartment. The physical dimension of the apartment does not change, and the heroes may move from room to room within it. However, the contents of the apartment may change at Sudalak's whim (See Sudalak description for how this is accomplished)

Rule 2: Sudalak desires to prolong the terror and fear of those in the apartment, so he does not kill any of them outright, though he may have them experience dying in the dream state. For instance, he creates a room covered in spiders that leap onto the heroes in a great stinging, biting, swarm. A hero "dies" due to the bites, but awakens moments later in the same room of the apartment and Sudalak starts another wave of terror.

Any hero who dies in this manner must make a *great fright* check. Such heroes also suffer a special Fa-

tigue level. Each such Fatigue level lost requires one week of rest to recover. Any hero who dies from Fatigue loss becomes a Lost Soul (as described in *Green's Guide to Ghosts*). A scene ends when the heroes either overcome the horror (defeating the spiders, etc) or by a hero's "death."

Rule 3: Sudalak must provide the heroes with some way to combat or fight back against whatever nightmares he creates relative to the threat. So in the case of the example spiders, there should be a torch or bug spray. If fighting zombies, there should be knives or guns. The weapons are placed within 3" of the heroes at the beginning of each nightmare. Note, these weapons operate normally in the Dreamscape and can affect Sudalak! Sudalak's creations should be roughly equal or just better than what the heroes are reasonably ready to take on. He may not directly attack the heroes, though his creations can.

Rule 4: Two exits exist—the front door and the balcony. The front door may be disguised by Sudalak's nightmare, but it does exist. Any hero who successfully *Notices* (-2) the door by spending time searching for it, must then overcome a *Guts* roll (-2) to open it, as the demon projects all sorts of fearful horrors beyond the door. Once exiting through the door, the hero is free of the Sudalak. The door cannot be opened from the outside, and the hero may not reenter the apartment until Sudalak is finished.

Characters may also exit by the balcony, although it may appear otherwise. They may perceive a fiery hell, or it may appear as if the hero is a hundred stories above the parking lot below. To jump from the balcony, a hero must succeed in a *Guts* roll (-2). If successful, he leaps over the banister and lands one story below, suffering 2d6+10 damage (20 yard fall). He is now free of the nightmare, but cannot reenter the apartment, nor can he hear what is transpiring inside.

Ideas for Nightmarish Dreamscapes:

A. The Dark Forest- each room becomes part of a small clearing surrounded by ancient woods. The woods are dark, it is night, and something prowls at the edge, preparing to make a meal of the heroes.

B. The Adventurer- Apparently the person possessed plays roleplaying games, and the rooms of the apartment become a dungeon crawl. The modern

heroes becoming their favorite archetype fantasy characters!

C. Aliens- A xenomorphic alien is alive somewhere in the apartment. It is coming for dinner.

D. The Undead come for Breakfast- Straight up zombie brawl. Night of the Undead.

E. Reliving Past Events- If the heroes faced some horror in an earlier adventure, bring it back for this one.

F. Vampires- You are in an ancient castle. A coffin rests upon a marble platform in front of you. When the heroes look inside the coffin, it is empty. Off in the distance a wolf howls. Now you can make out some etchings upon the platform. Two words are spelled out. Vlad Dracula.

2.5: Ending the Tale...

Sudalak may be defeated when the heroes defeat the Dream Weaver Hero by rendering him unconscious, or killing him. He also loses if all the heroes escape the apartment. If this occurs, the Sudalak urges the possessed person to commit suicide. To resist, the character must succeed in a Spirit roll. Sudalak returns to his own dimension after this final attack. If the possessed person makes his Spirit roll, he experiences a *great fright* horror check to deal with the repercussions of being possessed by a demon.

It is also possible for one or more heroes to distract Sudalak by effective roleplay, *Intimidation*, or other means. Lana is a witch and knows a ritual for exorcism. The heroes must distract the Sudalak while Lana performs the ritual. See *Ritual of Exorcism*



Sudalak Demon of Illusions

Creature Statistics

Attributes: Smarts d12, Spirit d12

Skills: *Guts* d12, *Intimidation* d10, *Notice* d12, *Psionics* d10 (And knowledge of all the heroes' skills)

Pace: 6; **Parry:** -; **Toughness:** +2

Special Abilities:

Angelic/Demonic Being: +2 Toughness, +2 recover from Shaken, suffers no wound penalties, immune to disease and poison. Angels/Demons cannot be killed on the Earthly plane, though any attack that causes a roll on the Knockout

Blow chart instantly sends the demon back to its home plane of existence. These modifiers are simply added to the victim of the possession's base stats. The demon may increase or decrease the possessed Charisma statistic as he desires.

Infravision: The demon sees heat, but has normal sight as well.

Demonic Possession: The demonic spirit may attempt to possess any living person in the apartment, but has a +4 bonus against whoever "called" him in the mirror. The possession invokes an opposed Spirit roll. If the demon fails the possession check, he may not attempt to possess that person again and moves on to someone else in the apartment, as he has been "awakened" by the ritual. Once possessed the victim is no longer in control of his body, but horrifically sees everything that happens to his friends. The player whose character has been possessed gets to play the demon and create the illusions.

Feeds on Fear: This demon gains a +1 cumulative bonus to his Toughness for every failed Fear Check made by his victims.

Invulnerability: Immune to all fire-based attacks.

Psionic Illusions: The dream weaver can change the interior of the apartment into any dreamscape he desires, though it must retain its original dimensions (Size, height, rooms, etc.) He may also bring into being any nightmarish creature he wishes that fits into the space available. It takes one round for the dreamscape to change. The possessed may create up to following number of creatures based on Sizes of the creatures to be created:

- 10 Size -2
- 6 Size -1
- 4 Size 0
- 3 Size 1
- 2 Size 2
- 1 Size 3

He may not take any other action the round he creates the illusion. The creatures should not be too powerful for the heroes to fight, and the demon must provide methods for the heroes to fight the illusions (a fairness doctrine of the Angelic/Demonic realm). The dreamscape may involve gases, acid, fire or anything else the pos-

sessed desires, but the heroes must have some way of overcoming the environment, and some way of fighting off the creatures created. Once created the illusion lasts 3 rounds plus 1 extra round per raise achieved on the Sudalak's *Psionics* roll. The demon feeds on fear and terror, so the death of the heroes is not necessary. Once the illusion ends, the demon may create another and every illusion faced by the heroes results in a new Fear check, though any heroes who become *hardened* are immune to any further checks (as per Fear Effects rules).

If the dream weaver suffers two or more wounds, the dreamscape and all its creatures end immediately, though he may create a new weave should he remain conscious the following round. A hero may "die" in a nightscape. Any hero who dies in this manner suffers a *Great Fright* horror check and suffers a temporary Vigor die loss. Recovery requires one week of rest to regain the die. Any hero that suffers a Vigor die loss and drops to 0 die levels, dies for real and becomes a Lesser Manifestation as defined in *Green's Guide to Ghosts*. A scene ends when the heroes overcome the horror, or the horror overcomes them (a hero's "death"). The dream weaver may only attack with illusions. Physical attacks by the dream weaver against his antagonists are strictly prohibited and he must use illusions to protect his possessed body.

Telepathy: The demon can communicate telepathically with any persons within 30 yards (15") and knows all languages.

Weakness: The demon must provide a way for the heroes to fight against any illusionary creations and provide possible exits for the heroes.

Lana Fowler

Character Statistics

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: *Driving* d6, *Investigation* d6, *Knowledge (Rituals)* d6, *Knowledge (Psychology)* d6, *Notice* d6, *Persuasion* d6, *Spellcasting* d6, *Swimming* d4

Hindrances: None

Edges: AB: *Magic (Witchcraft)*

Derived Statistics: Charisma: 0; Pace: 6; Parry: 2; Toughness: 5

Starting Power Points: 5 (Scaled down for modern horror setting)

Powers: *armor, boost/lower trait, smite*

Rituals known: *spirit expulsion* (see below)

Gear: Basic clothing;

Character Profile

(March 2, 1986 to present)

Lana is a Freshman at East Texas University and is majoring in psychology. Her mother was a witch who owned a bookstore in the Village of Rice, Texas. Lana was raised reading occult books and learning various spells of her mother's devotion. She has always felt like an outsider and is basically very shy. Her hair is dyed a purplish maroon and cut spiky and short. Her lipstick and fingernails are painted black and she wears lots of eye shadow.

Character Description

She is 5'5" with purplish maroon hair in a gothic style (spiky and short). Her lipstick and fingernails are painted black, she wears lots of eye shadow, and her skin is very pale. She wears an ETU Ravens t-shirt and black jeans with leather boots. She has a large orange purse laden with lots of stuff.

Character Speak

"I don't like the looks of this."

"There is more to the universe than we can sense with our eyes, touch or smell."

"Spirits are not inherently evil. They are just souls bound to the sins of this world."

"If a spirit needs help to cross over, we should do everything we can."

"My momma was on crack! Let's get the hell out of here!"

Ritual of Spirit Expulsion

This ritual drives out demons or evil spirits possessing a victim or inhabiting a building.

Ritualists: The ritual calls for at least one caster or similarly qualified primary ritualist (must have *Knowledge (Rituals)*, or *Knowledge (Occult)* or similar skill) is acceptable.

Primary: The primary ritualist must succeed in at least two of three opposed Spirit rolls against the demon. The caster may add +1 for every person assisting in the ritual that makes a *Knowledge (Rituals, Occult, or similar skill)* roll or a *Common Knowledge* roll at -2.

Requirements: The primary gets a +1 bonus if she uses the demon's true name or if he has some other hold over the spirit..

Components: Bell, book, and candle, as well as something symbolizing purity (salt is commonly used and the heroes will need to get to the kitchen to find it, though Lana has the bell, book and candle in her purse).

Costs: Once the third Spirit roll is made (requires one round per roll), the primary takes temporary Spirit die loss equal to the number of failed Spirit rolls. (This requires one day of full rest to recover one die of Spirit loss). If reduced to 0 die of Spirit the primary goes comatose and may die without further assistance by another ritualist.

Casting Time: 3 uninterrupted rounds of chanting and preparation, followed by the clash of Spirits between the entity and primary ritualist. Each clash (opposed Spirit rolls) takes one round.

Effect: If the primary ritualist wins the majority of the three opposed Spirit rolls, the demon is banished.

Failure: If the primary ritualist fails two or more of the Spirit rolls (i.e. The entity won by a margin of 2-1 or 3-0), the entity may choose to possess her instead. The two must make another opposed Spirit roll (and remember that the primary ritualist has now suffered temporary Spirit die loss). If the primary ritualist fails this roll, she is possessed.

Derived Statistics: Charisma: 2; Pace: 6; Parry: 5; Toughness: 5

Possessions: Owns the apartment. Possesses a .45 auto (2d6+1) he keeps in top of his closet, 1 extra clip, and various personal possessions.

Character Profile

(November 1, 1985 to present)

James is a Sophomore at ETU, but his true major is spending his parent's money and having lots of parties. He is basically a nice guy, but he is an alcoholic and is mainly concerned with having a good time. He is currently flunking out of the university.

Character Description

James is of average height and weight and is fairly handsome. He wears blue jeans, a t-shirt and a cowboy hat in the presence of ladies. He has a small goatee and his hair is cut short. He has blue eyes and a quick smile.

Character Speak

"Hey, look what I found."

"This...ain't right!"

"Well, hell, I ain't afraid of anything. Bring it!"

"You gotta problem?"

"You better sit down, before I sit you down!"

James Jones

Character Statistics

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

Skills: *Boating* d4, *Driving* d6, *Fighting* d6, *Investigation* d4, *Knowledge (English)* d6, *Notice* d6, *Persuasion* d6, *Shooting* d6, *Swimming* d4

Hindrances: Major Habit (Alcoholic)

Edges: *Attractive*

Note to Dream Weaver Hero

Congratulations. You are now possessed by a demon of nightmares. As such you gain the following abilities and may create special dreamscapes and creatures to throw at your friends! You get to be Freddy! Enjoy!

Attributes: Smarts d12, Spirit d12. (All other attributes stay the same as before possession)

Skills: *Guts* d12, *Intimidation* d10, *Notice* d12, *Psionics* d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** -; **Toughness:** +2

Special Abilities:

Angelic/Demonic Being: +2 Toughness, +2 recover from Shaken, suffers no wound penalties, immune to disease and poison. Angels/Demons cannot be killed on the Earthly plane, though any attack that causes a roll on the Knockout Blow chart instantly sends the demon back to its home plane of existence. These modifiers are simply added to the victim of the possession's base stats. The demon may increase or decrease the possessed Charisma statistic as he desires.

Demonic Possession: The demonic spirit may attempt to possess any living person in the apartment, but has a +4 bonus against whoever "called" him in the mirror. The possession invokes an opposed Spirit roll. If the demon fails the possession check, he may not attempt to possess that person again and moves on to someone else in the apartment, as he has been "awakened" by the ritual. Once possessed the victim is no longer in control of his body, but horrifically sees everything that happens to his friends. The player whose character has been possessed gets to play the demon and create the illusions.

Feeds on Fear: This demon gains a +1 cumulative bonus to his Toughness for every failed Fear Check made by his victims.

Infravision: The demon sees heat, but has normal sight as well.

Invulnerability: Immune to all fire-based attacks.

Psionic Illusions: The dream weaver can change the interior of the apartment into any dreamscape he desires, though it must retain its original dimensions (Size, height, rooms, etc.) He may also bring into being any nightmarish creature he wishes that fits into the space available. It takes one round for the

dreamscape to change. The possessed may create up to following number of creatures based on Size:

Ten size -2; Six size -1; Four size 0; Three size 1; Two size 2; or One size 3

He may not take any other action the round he creates the illusion. The creatures should not be too powerful for the heroes to fight, and the demon must provide methods for the heroes to fight the illusions (a fairness doctrine of the Angelic/Demonic realm). The dreamscape may involve gases, acid, fire or anything else the possessed desires, but the heroes must have some way of overcoming the environment, and some way of fighting off the creatures created. Once created the illusion lasts 3 rounds plus 1 extra round per raise achieved on the Sudalak's *Psionics* roll. The demon feeds on fear and terror, so the death of the heroes is not necessary. Once the illusion ends, the demon may create another and every illusion faced by the heroes results in a new Fear roll, though any heroes who become *hardened* are immune to any further rolls (as per Fear Effects rules).

If the dream weaver suffers two or more wounds, the dreamscape and all its creatures end immediately, though he may create a new weave should he remain conscious the following round. A hero may "die" in a nightscene. Any hero who dies in this manner suffers a *Great Fright* horror check and suffers a temporary Vigor die loss. Recovery requires one week of rest to regain the die. Any hero that suffers a Vigor die loss and drops to 0 die levels, dies for real and becomes a Lesser Manifestation as defined in *Green's Guide to Ghosts*. A scene ends when the heroes overcome the horror, or the horror overcomes them (a hero's "death").

The dream weaver may only attack with illusions. Physical attacks by the dream weaver against his antagonists are strictly prohibited and he must use illusions to protect his possessed body.

Telepathy: The demon can communicate telepathically with any persons within 30 yards (15") and knows all languages.

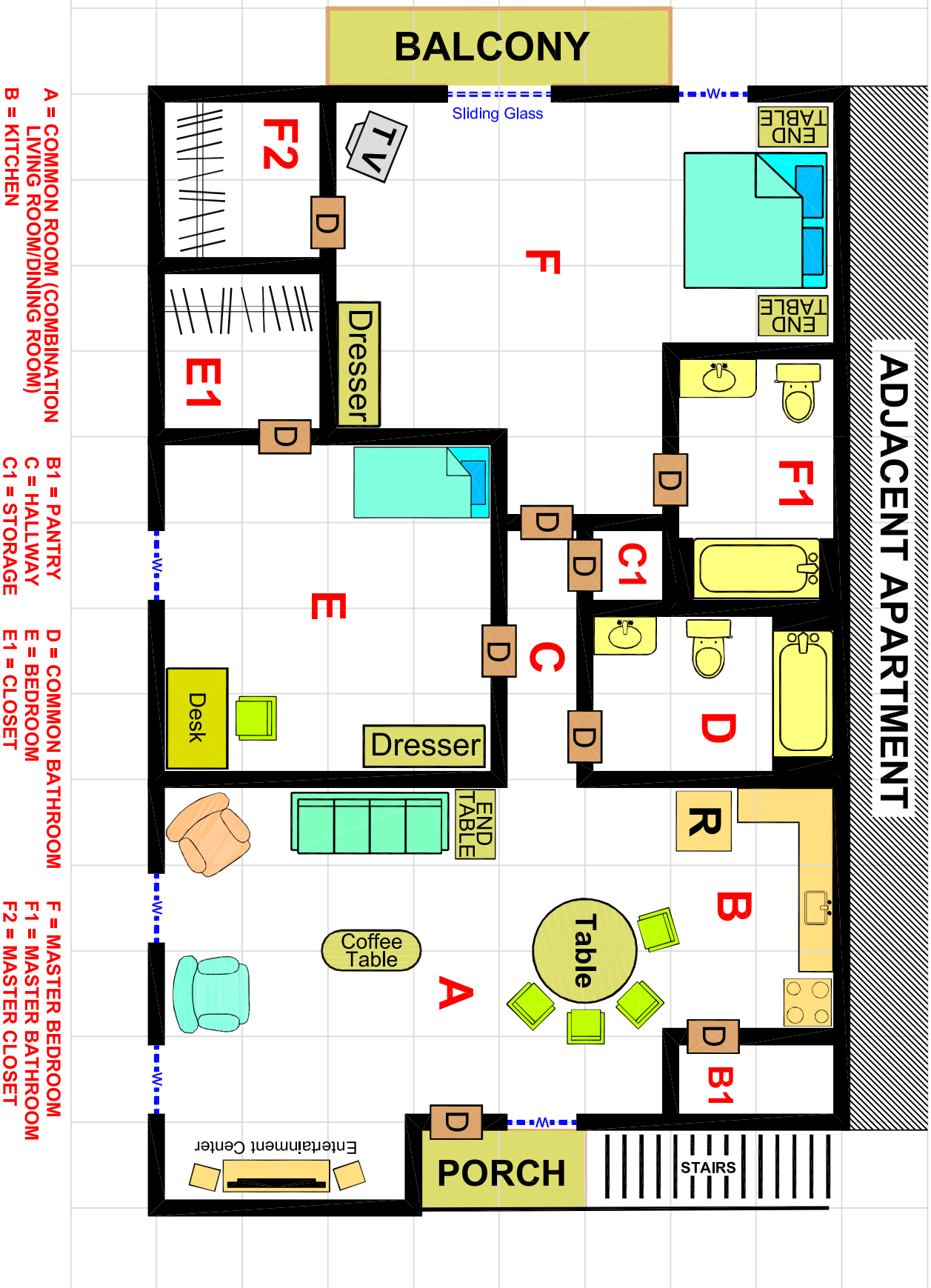
Weakness: The demon must provide a way for the heroes to fight against any illusionary creations and provide possible exits for the heroes.



Map Scale: 1 square = 5 feet

THE APARTMENT OF JAMES JONES

ADJACENT APARTMENT



CHAPTER 3

SOUL GAZER

Blackburn. The armpit of Texas. In seventy some-odd years, nothing had changed. The same old wood-framed houses stood near the shores of Lake Greystone. Although the homes had aged poorly, with more than a little flaking paint and rotten wood, the sullen setting was still powerfully reminiscent of his childhood. Memories rolled and lapped at him at him like a noxious wave.

He remembered his mother, lying in a pool of slowly spreading blood. The face of her killer loomed over him. The ghost of Leanne Jones beckoned him to hide under Blackburn Dock. The alligators, the Indian, the horror that never left him. Now, he had returned. He sighed, and took a long drag on his cigarette.

The yards of the homes looked as if they were garbage dumps. Broken toys, tools, and pieces of cars littered the landscape. A toddler, diaper drooping, bare-chested, and listing from his right to his left, moved to play with a shiny piece of an old chrome bumper. His mother ran out of the home, allowing the screen-door to slam behind her, calling to the boy, "Randy, stop. Come here!" As she reached the boy, her eyes met the stranger's.

He wore faded jeans, boots, a sweat-stained white crew-cut t-shirt, and a black cowboy hat, its frontal brim bent low to shade his face. He knew what she was seeing. He looked tough, with a few days growth of bristles over his face. A cigarette lay clamped between his lips. He was not bad-looking, and she probably took him to be in his early forties. Seeing an opportunity, she smiled.

"Hello, there."

He reached up and tipped his hat to her. "Ma'am."

"Haven't seen you around here before." She picked up her son and sat him on her cocked hip in the practiced way of all mothers. She was cute—a true redneck woman from the looks of her. She wore cut-off blue jean shorts and a dark t-shirt with the name of some rock band emblazoned across it. Her blond hair was pulled back in a tail some six inches down her back. She had pretty blue eyes. "There was a time..." he thought, and took another long drag from his smoke.

He shook his head, "I ain't been here in a long time." He glanced towards her home. In the driveway sat an old, red Silverado pickup with several bumper stickers on the back windshield. One read, "Yankees 1, Rebels 0. Halftime." Another read, "Women, Use 'em or lose 'em!" So, she had a man. She was just looking for something better. He sighed. He had not come here for this. Truth was, he was not sure why he had returned home after all these years.

"Well, I'm Amy. Amy Lopez." She approached him, holding Randy with her right arm and offering him her left hand. He took it into his and with the contact and the shake he knew everything there was to know about her.

She had attended Pinebox High, where she'd had dreams of going to college and escaping East Texas, but instead had gotten pregnant at sixteen. The boy was older and a football player. He abandoned her and the baby and went on to play at the college level. She dropped out of school, had the baby, and eventually ran away from home with her child. Her father, an abusive alcoholic, had made it clear to her that he was not raising a "bastard kid".

Amy had met Augustine Lopez at a bar, and had married him a few months later. She had simply traded one alcoholic abuser for another. Every Friday and Saturday night, Augustine would come home late from some bar with a dull, sullen look in his bloodshot eyes. Any excuse, and sometimes none at all, was enough to spark a beating. Her greatest fear was for Randy. How long until he received a beating of his own? She dreamed and prayed every night for something better. Someone better. Well, he was not it. If she knew him, she would run.

He could walk away, but that would not be right. It was his duty to seek out those who deserved punishment and to see that vengeance was done. Vengeance is mine, sayith the Lord. He was the Hand of God. He was the Soul Gazer—judge, jury and executioner. He needed to meet Augustine.

He smiled. "Hello Amy. I'm Isaiah. I was raised here in Blackburn, but this is the first time I've been back in years."

She cocked an eyebrow considering him. "Well, welcome home then."

He nodded towards her home. "Nice place."

She adjusted Randy on her hip once more. "Thanks, it needs some work, but it's home."

"I hate to ask, but could you spare something to drink. My throat is awful parched." He smiled at her. Would she take the bait? Of course. She needed a friend.

"Hey, no problem. Just a sec." She turned and moved to her front door and quickly entered the house, the screen door screeching and slamming shut behind her. He moved closer to the front porch. He noted the slight movement of the curtain behind the window, and knew that Augustine was sizing him up. A moment later he appeared behind the screen door.

Augustine stood over six feet tall and easily weighed three-hundred pounds. Big for a Hispanic male. He wore some shiny silver shorts, and his chest and belly

were bare. Much like Randy had been. A big fat baby in a man's skin. Isaiah smiled. "Howdy."

Sensing something was wrong, Augustine sneered and scratched his ass. He elbowed the door open and moved towards Isaiah.

Isaiah offered his hand for a shake, and Augustine took it. At once, Isaiah knew all he needed to know. Augustine had done many bad things. Rape, beatings, and robbery capped by a single murder two years ago, when he stabbed a man in the back outside a club in

Nacogdoches. Enough. Isaiah knew all he needed to. Vengeance is mine.

The air was flush with static electricity, and every hair of Augustine's body stood on end. His eyes widened crazily and he attempted to yank his hand away from Isaiah's. He failed, the bones of his hand crushed in the mighty grip of his assailant. Isaiah's left hand shot into Augustine's chest, just below his ribs, and emerged a second later holding Augustine's still beating heart.

"Vengeance is mine," Isaiah whispered, his eyes locked onto Augustine's. The windows to the soul. Augustine had glimpsed his fated eternity. Hell claimed its own. He collapsed.

Amy stood at the door, a glass of water slipping from her hand and crashing down, sending glass and water in every direction. A pregnant pause of anticipation, then she screamed.

Isaiah dropped the heart and turned. So much for his visit home. He walked toward the lake to clean up. Then he would return to his wanderings. Others awaited the vengeance only he could give.

Putting Tales to Use



How are you supposed to use these tales in your home game? These tales are written for use in a Pinebox campaign, but truly may be dropped into any modern campaign and some may be modified to fit other genres as well. *Midnight Tales* are designed to compliment an on-going horror campaign and may be used in any order the GM sees fit, following no true campaign timeline.

We are producing another great series of adventures named *12 Hours to Midnight*, as well as *House on Dale Island* (the Mount Everest of haunted houses). Jerry's *Midnight Tales* is already available, and you can look forward to another set of *Midnight Tales* in the near future.

Our biggest endeavor to bring the world of Pinebox alive is the *ETU: Degrees of Horror* plot point book. Look for it in 2008, and happy hunting.

Soul Gazer Character Modifications

Soul Gazers are said to be "touched" by the divine, but the few who know of their existence have differing interpretations over whether the divine power

at work is good or evil. However, most soul gazers believe they are doing God's work. Usually they, or someone close to them, have suffered an injustice, prompting the soul gazer to swear true vengeance upon his enemies.

This intervention in a moment of crises invokes a spiritual change. These instruments of "justice" receive certain powers, enabling them to overcome adversity and complete their quests. They are forever linked to their vow of justice and spend the rest of their time on earth seeking out others who deserve punishment.

Although some soul gazers believe that punishment must be administered by their own bare hands, in fact they are not limited to unarmed attacks. As long as justice is meted out, the means is not important.

The Soul Gazer gains the following additions to his character:

- **Armor:** His body is blessed and he gains +2 Toughness.
- **Attributes Increase:** Strength, Agility, and Vigor increase by 2 die types. Spirit is raised to d12.
- **Compulsion:** The soul gazer is bound to fight evil. In achieving this goal, he may join forces with a group that fights evil or serves good.
- **Drain Evil:** The soul gazer may grapple an opponent and if successful, he may make an opposed Spirit roll. If successful he causes a wound to his victim and he heals a wound he has suffered previously.
- **Infra-vision:** Sees heat as well as normal vision.
- **Limited Immortality:** As the soul gazer punishes deserving souls, he does not age. The soul gazer must punish at least one evil person per month, to forestall aging. The process is not reversible, so once a soul gazer ages, he remains at that age.
- **Natural Skills:** Gains a die of Stealth, two die of Intimidate and two die of Taunt (due to mystical aura).
- **New Edges:** Gains the following edges: Brawny, Block, Combat Reflexes, First Strike, Fleet-Footed, Harder to Kill, Level Headed, Quick, and Strong Willed
- **Razor Nails:** Str +d4. May make two attacks per round with no penalty.

- **Sanctity of the Holy:** Soul gazers cannot soul gaze upon anyone of true faith, such as clergy. If an innocent is killed, even accidentally, by a soul gazer, he suffers an immediate 4d6 damage. The soul gazer cannot soak this and he may die given enough damage. After the passing of seven nights, the former soul gazer rises as a Revenant of Justice.
- **Soul Touch (Soul Gaze Power):** Through a successful skin on skin contact, the soul gazer seemingly knows all the sins and evils a person has ever committed and whether certain actions deserve punishment.
- **Track Evil:** Once a target is marked for justice by a soul gazer, he can track the person by smell giving him a Tracking skill die of d8 when he tracks that target.

GM Ideas:

- Isaiah meets the heroes in a club. Do they have any great sins? If so, he waits until the heroes are alone and attacks.
- The heroes witness Isaiah killing someone inside a car. Do they get involved?
- A hero takes a vow of vengeance against someone. Upon completing his vengeance he becomes a soul gazer.
- Two soul gazers meet and each believes he sees the other as an evildoer with great sin upon his soul. Their fight rages across the city, sometimes openly, sometimes subtly. Can the heroes stop the war before an innocent is killed?
- Heroes who investigate a strange murder learn that the profile is identical to a string of serial murders going back as far as twenty years. The killer is a soul gazer, and his work is not yet done.
- Isaiah has come to visit his brother in a local hospice. The heroes are also there visiting an elderly relative or a friend. A male nurse in the hospice is slowly poisoning the patients and getting away with the murder of those fated to die anyway. The soul gazer discovers this and attacks the nurse right in the hospice.
- A federal agent has come to town and is searching for someone fitting Isaiah's description. The heroes spot Isaiah on the streets of Pinebox.

- The strain of living for almost two centuries has snapped a soul gazer's mind. Now on a murder spree for crimes no more severe than jaywalking, one of the heroes is now the next victim.
- After accidentally killing an innocent child, a soul gazer has decided to stop killing and allow himself to die of old age. However, his Soul Touch ability remains. Now serving as a priest in a local church, he also acts as an anonymous informant for one of the heroes.



Isaiah Roberts

Character Statistics

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d6, Spirit d12, Strength d10, Vigor d12

Skills: *Boating* d6, *Driving* d8, *Fighting* d8, *Guts* d6, *Healing* d6, *Intimidation* d10, *Notice* d6, *Persuasion* d6, *Repair* d6-2, *Shooting* d6, *Stealth* d10, *Streetwise* d6, *Survival* d6, *Swimming* d4, *Taunt* d6, *Throwing* d6

Hindrances: Vengeful (major), Enemy (minor), All Thumbs

Edges: First Strike, Brawny, Block, Combat Reflexes, Fleet-Footed, Harder to Kill, Level Headed, Quick, and Strong Willed

Derived Statistics: Charisma: 0; Pace: 8; Parry: 5; Toughness: 11

Possessions: Just his clothes, boots, and hat. Two packs of cigarretes and a 1930s lighter.

Powers: All soul gazer abilities (see above).

Character Profile

(January 13, 1921 – Present)

Isaiah was born and raised in the Blackburn community of Golan County, Texas. He has a younger brother named Timothy, who is currently in the Pinebox Hospice dying of age and cancer. Isaiah was a strong and independent child, spending much of his early years combing the piney woods of his home and fishing and swimming along the banks of Lake Greystone.

Isaiah's memories of his childhood are warm ones, full of love and peace. His father died when he was very young, and his mother, Mary, raised her two boys as best as she could. It was not easy raising the

boys, and when the Great Depression hit, she could not find any work to pay for their home. She took up with the local Sheriff, Andrew Tate. Andrew had a thing for Mary, and now he seemed to bring her some peace of mind in the knowledge that her boys would be taken care of.

Unfortunately, Andrew was a true beast of a man, and many episodes of family violence followed her moving in with him. Then, one stormy summer night, as lightning flashed and thunder groaned across the sky, Mary had enough. She fought back.

Andrew, in a drunken rage, had struck Timothy. Mary grabbed a wooden baseball bat and swung with all her might at Andrew. He fell, his ribs broken and screaming in pain. He yelled that he would kill her and her boys. Timothy fled into the night, while Isaiah watched Andrew pull his service revolver and shoot his mother. Her back seemed to explode in a burst of red as she fell to the floor before her son. Andrew, gripped in his fury and rage, raised the pistol to fire at Isaiah, but something happened and Isaiah fled into the night.

Secrets

As young Isaiah stood before his mother's killer, the spirit of Leanne Jones appeared between them. Leanne had been a beautiful young teenage girl who had disappeared several years before, the victim of Andrew's rage and lust. He had tied the girl's body beneath the Blackburn boat docks and sliced her open to attract the alligators. The body was consumed and shortly thereafter the Sheriff closed the case. He claimed that the Leanne had become smitten and followed a boy to the city of Beaumont. Her parents never accepted that explanation, but murder was never proven. This night she would protect the boy from the fate she suffered. Startled, Andrew shot wildly and Isaiah ran from the house toward the lake.

His mother's dead face stood vivid in his mind, and Isaiah could not stop picturing her precious blood spreading upon the wooden floors of their little home. He could hear Sheriff Andrew calling for him in the rain and giving chase. Somewhere, deep within the boy's soul, he cried out for revenge. "I'll kill you! I'll kill you!" He chanted as he ran toward the Wayne home on the lake.

Suddenly a Native American stepped from a tree. The warrior was covered in tattoos and his eyes were

eerily white. The figure calmly pointed to a nice-sized rock, brown and sharp edged, approximately the size of a softball.

Andrew was approaching quickly from behind. Isaiah grabbed the rock and turned on his mother's killer, whose face was consumed in madness and bloodlust. The rock struck the Sheriff across the bridge of his nose with a thud, followed by a crack, and he fell forward.

Andrew was not dead, but unconscious, and the Native American was gone. Isaiah stood in the rain, the lightning flashes outlining his frame in the night. What to do? Would he go to prison now? The Sheriff moaned, and Isaiah's heart leaped into his throat. He had to kill the man. He had to.

Then a strange calm came over the boy. Leanne appeared, smiled at him, and gestured toward the nearby boat dock. Isaiah understood. He dragged the Sheriff to the docks, and used the old tie ropes to strap the man underneath. Sheriff Andrew's head remained just above the water.

Isaiah surfaced before Andrew, holding the Sheriff's own pocketknife mere inches from his face as the drunk murderer awoke. "This is for killing my mother" He sank beneath the dark water and moments later the water around the Sheriff turned a pinkish tint. Isaiah surfaced and stood above the dock, pausing to watch as the alligators glided silently toward their prey.

Later, when Isaiah fled into the night, he was unaware that he had become a Soul Gazer.

Character Description

Isaiah appears to be in his late thirties to early forties. His frame is well defined and slender. He wears faded jeans, a sweat-stained white crew-cut t-shirt, and well-worn, dusty cowboy boots. His head is covered by a black cowboy hat; its frontal brim is bent low to shade a face that sports a five-o'clock shadow. A cigarette is constantly clamped between his lips and his skin is drawn taut like old leather.

Character Speak

"Mister, you better turn away now. You don't wanna see what's coming."

"If you do the crime, you must...die."

"The right hand of Justice. The hand of God. Vengeance is mine."

"Prison? Oh yeah, I could do prison!"

Chapter 4: Holiday Horror

In this adventure, the joyful season is upon us. Despite being a time of joy and giving, many people feel lost, lonely, angry, and suicidal. *Holiday Horror* provides you with three quick holiday adventure starters. In this tale we endeavor to provide scenarios for small encounters that you may place in your games as you see fit, and hopefully give you some tools and options to help you introduce some seasonal oddities into your game. We give you some details and background to kick off the action and the rest is up to you.

4.1: Home Invasion

Background

Leroy Franks is bad news. He has been in and out of juvenile courts since he was seven years of age, served time in the state juvenile correctional facility, and spent numerous days in county jail since turning seventeen years of age. Franks runs a local gang of toughs calling themselves the Molitovs, ranging in age from 16 to 19. They have been running drugs for the Gonzales Cartel the past two years, and have been gaining a growing reputation as hardcore “gangstas”.

Unfortunately their reputation caught up with them the week before Christmas. A rival gang hit them hard, taking out two of Molitovs and stealing \$15,000 that belonged to the Gonzales Cartel. Leroy, as the face man for the gang, is in serious trouble. In fact, he knows the Gonzales crew will kill him if he does not come up with the missing cash and fast. With utter desperation, he and the remainder of his gang have developed a plan. They plan to score several home invasions on Christmas Eve. They figure there should be plenty of high dollar items for the taking. They should be able to fence them relatively easily, and maybe even make a profit for their efforts.

Introduction

It's been a great Christmas Eve! You and your friends have eaten and snacked on many wonderful delectables and have just begun exchanging gifts. Suddenly with a load BAM, the front door flies open and several men wearing dark ski masks and wielding guns burst into the party. One yells, “Nobody move! Nobody!”

If you're feeling generous due to the holiday season, allow the heroes a *Notice* roll (-2) to hear something outside the door. Remember, the gang is being quiet sneaking up to the home or apartment, and there is probably music and loud conversation inside during the party.

The attackers consist of two gang members per hero in the home. Each carries a 9mm pistol, except for Franks, who carries a pump action 12 gauge shotgun. The gang is not interested in killing or harming anyone they don't have to, but are looking to steal all high priced items they can. However, they are desperate and if anyone decides to be a hero (and they probably will!) gunshots ring out.

What happens next is pretty much up to the heroes. If any shots are fired, the police arrive in 4 minutes (they are bored on Christmas Eve, so about 4 or 5 cars show up). This could easily turn into a hostage situation, and the Molitovs are capable of desperate actions when facing either jail time or certain death from the Cartel. If the heroes are law enforcement personnel or private investigators, they could use their contacts (*Streetwise*) to track down the gang or to learn that they owe money to a major drug cartel. The gang is planning on hitting as many Christmas Eve parties as necessary to score enough merchandise to pay off their debt.

4.2: Bad Santa

Background

Jerry Bender was a ne'er do well if there ever was one. He suffered from alcoholism and drug abuse, and was often on the wrong side of the law. In fact, he spent a third of his short life in the Texas Prison system. Even Jerry's childhood was horrible, and he grew to resent and despise children. He hated their innocence, and was guilty of several violent crimes against them.

Three years ago on Christmas Eve, consumed with self-loathing, hatred, and alcohol, he dressed up in a Santa Claus suit, assaulted three neighborhood children, and committed suicide by shooting himself in the head as the police arrived to arrest him.

Unfortunately, the darkness of his soul combined with his suicide to manifest even after death. Now, his spirit returns at sundown every Christmas Eve and is free to wreak evil havoc until sunrise of Christmas Day. He is a powerful lost soul, and the heroes may have a difficult time stopping him.

Fortunately, he is bound to haunt only the street block upon which he committed suicide. This night, he has appeared to a single mother and her two children as they were passing Bender's old apartment building on their way to spend the evening with the heroes. The mother arrives in terror and tears and describes what happened. The rest is up to the heroes. Do they investigate and take on the Bad Santa?

Introduction

Patsy and her kids have finally arrived for the party. It's not unusual for her to be late, but tonight she arrived in tears, shaking in fear. She spins an unbelievable tale of a haunting just blocks away.

"We were walking past the Horizon apartment buildings, just twenty minutes ago. There was... a...a...Santa there. He seemed to appear out of nowhere in front of us. I couldn't see his face too well, but he laughed and his belly jiggled like a bowl full of jelly, and he merrily asked to say hi to Janie and Sam. Of course the kids stepped forward to see him, but when they did they disappeared! It was complete darkness; I couldn't see them or Santa. [Here she pauses and cries hysterically, before con-

tinuing.] I called for the kids, and I could hear them screaming. Oh God, I was so scared. I could hear him laughing, and then there was a gunshot. He was gone, and the kids were back standing in front of me screaming. He just...vanished. I thought about calling the police but no one would believe me. Whatever he was, he was evil. I felt it in my soul. My poor babies."

Janie and Sam are seven and five years old respectively, and are constantly crying since the encounter. They repeatedly ask, "Why Santa? Why did he do it?" If the heroes take time to calm the kids down through roleplay, they may answer a few more questions. They tell of Santa Claus roughly taking the kids in his arms and shaking them violently. His face was covered in blood and he told them he was going to take some children with him to Hell. Janie managed to wiggle out of his grasp and pulled her brother away from him. He took out a pistol and with a big smile on his face put it to his temple and pulled the trigger. Then he was gone.

The big clue here is that he is planning on taking some children to Hell with him when he returns. This is a warning of imminent danger for the night, and hopefully the heroes will take note. If not, the next morning's newscast tells of three children from the Horizon Apartments who had gone to see Santa on the street, but were abducted. The police have issued an Amber Alert, but there has been no sign of the kids since. Of course next year, Bad Santa will be back and this time he has three elves with him!

How the heroes investigate and what happens next is up to you. We recommend having them wait until a family happens by to see the Bad Santa manifest. Anyone with the resources to do research (*Investigation* roll) may discover the story of Jerry Bender and his suicide the year before. If the heroes have lived in the area for over a year, allow them a *Common Knowledge* roll to remember someone talking about a suicide during a previous Christmas Eve in front of the Horizon Apartments.

4.3: Payback

Background

This scenario is for teams who have done some paranormal investigations and have fought against the Shadow. The premise of this adventure is that some true evil adversary is angry with the heroes for their interference and has decided to attack them on the most holy of nights, Christmas Eve.

This requires some work on the GM's part to decide the nature of the evil manifestation. It could be a demonic intelligence, an alien entity, or even a cult that calls upon "that which man was not meant to know". It is also easily possible to modify this adventure idea to take place at any time of the year.

Simply put, the evil wants revenge on the heroes. Therefore it summons six Streilberk demons and four Jimmlyn to attack the heroes wherever they may be this night. The Jimmlyn materialize first, outside of the home, apartment, or wherever the heroes can be found shortly after midnight on the night in question. These diminutive creatures stealthily take out the phone lines, rewire electrical appliances and inside wiring, and do anything else they can to keep the heroes disoriented and cut off from escape or aid.

Twenty minutes later, the Streilberk demons appear and attack the heroes. The demons may take on most any human-sized creature's form, but on Christmas they make themselves look like Santa's elves, wearing red and white suits, pointed ears, and sharpened, fanglike teeth. These demons are powerful and very dangerous. Luckily, they may only manifest on this plane of existence for a total of ten combat rounds. So if the heroes survive their attacks, the demons simply disappear at the end of the combat.

The Jimmlyn may attack, but prefer to create dangerous situations and trick the heroes into suffering from their improvised traps. They turn on the water and rewire the electricity to electrocute any heroes entering the bathrooms. They destroy light switches and connect the hot wires to the flip switches with small wound pieces of wiring to electrocute anyone attempting to turn on the lights. They have the powers to spoil any food or drink and each may use their *sicken* power once per day. They may run trip wires across door frames to trip unwary heroes, or manifest their *chaos* attack once per day.

The following are the new peoples and creatures presented in this Xmas Midnight Tale.



Leroy Franks

Character Statistics

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

Skills: *Driving* d6, *Fighting* d6, *Gambling* d6, *Guts* d4, *Intimidation* d6, *Notice* d6, *Persuasion* d6, *Shooting* d6, *Streetwise* d6

Hindrances: Enemy (varied), Major Habit (drug addiction), Wanted (police)

Edges: Command, First Strike

Derived Statistics: Charisma: 0 Pace: 6; Parry: 5; Toughness: 6

Possessions: Pump Action .12 gauge shotgun (1-3d6; six shots), Brass Knuckles (Str+d4).

Character Profile

(April 10, 1981 to present)

Leroy is a life-long loser, gangbanger, and drug addict. However, he has a survival instinct and is willing to do anything to protect himself.

Character Description

Leroy is black male standing 6'1", weighing 207 pounds and is very muscular. He wears a dark leather coat, a white t-shirt, jeans, and tennis shoes, and hefts a .12 gauge shotgun. He has a gold grill across his top teeth with a playboy bunny image on his left front tooth.

Character Speak

"Give us what we want and nobody gets kilt!"

"Waste this cracker!"

"You think I'm screwing with you? Do what I say or I'll blow your #%@ing head off!"*

"We gotta get outa here!"

"Ain't you a pretty ho!"

Molotov Gangmember

Character Statistics

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

Skills: *Driving* d4, *Fighting* d6, *Gambling* d4, *Guts* d4, *Intimidation* d6, *Investigation* d4, *Notice* d6, *Shooting* d4, *Stealth* d4, *Streetwise* d6

Hindrances: none

Edges: Brawny

Derived Statistics: Charisma: 0; Pace: 6; Parry: 5; Toughness: 6

Possessions: 9mm pistol (2d6) with one clip each.

Character Description

Typical gang members ranging in age from older teen to young adult.

Character Speak

"Hey Leroy, check this out!"

"You better respect!"

"No, do something, I dare ya!"

"Merry Christmas ya'll."

"You don't mind if we take this do you?"



Bad Santa (Bender's Revenant)

Phantom

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

Skills: *Fighting* d8, *Guts* d6, *Notice* d6, *Shooting* d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities:

Cold Spot: Jerry may reduce the temperature within a Large Burst Template by 20 degrees with a Spirit roll. The effect lasts 3 rounds + 2 extra rounds per raise attained on the roll. The normal temperature at night is 32 degrees and the sudden shift causes all effected to suffer a -1 on all physical trait tests.

Cluster Attack: Jerry's spirit may telekinetically "throw" any objects weighing less than 5 pounds total within a Medium Bust Template. This includes litter, bottles, cans, sticks, etc. Any characters within the area take 1d10 damage per round in the effected area. The effect lasts up to 10 rounds and Jerry may only use this attack once, but may move the template up to 10" per round in any direction. When Jerry uses this attack he is left with one level of Fatigue.

Shock Attack: Jerry's spirit may make an attack with his fists while in visible Santa form. The attack does 1d10 electrical damage. In addition the target must make a Fear check if using Fear Effects, or a normal Guts roll per the Savage Worlds rulebook.

Frightful Moan: Jerry's spirit may make an eerie moan that evokes Fear (-2) to anyone within a Large Burst Template of him.

Spiritual Weapon: Jerry may manifest the .45 auto pistol (2d6) that he used to commit suicide and the weapon has unlimited ammunition for him, though he only shoots at anyone attempting to Exorcise him.

Semi-Corporeal Form: Jerry appears as he did at the time of his suicide. All physical attacks against him are halved. This gives him an additional +2 to Toughness as he is hard to damage.

Description

Jerry Bender is a tormented lost soul. He manifests every Christmas Eve and attempts to take children back to Hell with him. He may only do this by first shocking them them physically to unconsciousness. One minute before sun-up, he can take anyone unconscious within a Medium Burst Template of him to Hell, where they become phantoms as well. His goal is to take three innocent children to Hell with him.

Jerry appears as a man dressed as Santa, but his temple has been blown away due to his suicide. He is trapped to only haunt one city-block. The best way to fight him is by having a priest or witch perform an exorcism (see *Ritual of Spirit Expulsion* in **Section 2.0**) or by simply preventing him from taking anyone to Hell. Luckily once his spirit forms, he may take damage from most normal weapons. Unfortunately, all damage suffered by Jerry is halved.

Normally Phantom spirits are ethereal, but Jerry actually takes a corporeal form to carry out his Hell-ish mission.

Jimmlyn

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

Skills: *Climbing* d8, *Fighting* d6, *Guts* d6, *Knowledge (electrical systems)* d8, *Knowledge (engineering)* d8,

Knowledge (Latin) d8, *Notice* d8, *Repair* d8, *Stealth* d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

Bite: Str +d6

Demonic Bodies: +2 Toughness.

Demonic Powers: Once per day a Jimmlyn may manifest a **chaos** attack by picking up small objects using telekinesis and tossing them about the room in a mini-mailstrom of mayhem. The Jimmlyn chooses a Medium Burst Template sized area to attack. During the attack everything in the area is subjected to that particular attack. Anyone caught in, or passing through, the effected area is subjected to the attack and may make an Agility roll to avoid damage. For five rounds, the Jimmlyn may throw up to:

Eight small items weighing 5 lbs. or less; 1d4 damage.

Four items weighing 10 lbs. or less; 1d6 damage.

One item weighing 20 lbs. or less; 1d8 damage

The Jimmlyn also have a **sicken** power. Once per day a Jimmlyn may cause all food and drink in a Large Burst Template area to spoil and become sewage like in its taste and smell. Such food or drink that is consumed causes one level of Fatigue.

Immunities: Unaffected by electricity or fire based attacks or damage.

Infravision: Can see in the Infrared spectrum as per Savage Worlds rulebook.

Quick: May draw extra card on initiative to replace any card 5 or lower.

Size -1: Jimmlyn are generally smaller than humans and suffer a -1 Toughness.

Telepathy: Jimmlyn may use this ability to speak with any sentient creature within 8" regardless of language.

Weakness: Any contact with direct, natural sunlight destroys a Jimmlyn as they burst into flame and disintegrate into a pile of ash.

Description

The Jimmlyn are a fiendish relation to gremlins. These demonic outsiders are masters of tricks, traps and deception, and love causing as much suffering

and death as they can. Jimmlyn are small creatures, their skin blackish green and covered in small scales. They have large pointed ears, much like a Doberman Pinscher's, and an overly large mouth with sharp razor-like teeth.

Jimmlyn use their great skills with electronic and mechanical devices to create or manipulate items, or create devious and deadly traps to torture and kill their victims.

Jimmlyn must be summoned to this plane of existence, and then only during the night hours. Direct contact with natural sunlight immediately destroys Jimmlyn, sending them back to the Hell from which they came.

Streilberk Demons

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

Skills: *Climbing* d8, *Fighting* d8, *Guts* d8, *Notice* d8, *Repair* d8, *Stealth* d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

Claws (2): Str +d6

Demonic Bodies: +2 Toughness.

Fast Regeneration: May make a Vigor roll if no other action is taken in a round. A success heals one wound and each raise heals an additional wound.

Immunities: Unaffected by fire based and bludgeoning attacks. This demon must be stabbed, sliced, or shot to be defeated.

Improved Frenzy: The demon may make an extra attack per round.

Infravision: Can see in the Infrared spectrum as per Savage Worlds rulebook.

Limited Manifestation: The Streilberk demon may only manifest in this plane of existence for 10 rounds per summoning, but may appear anywhere the summoner wishes.

Shapechanging: The Streilberk demon may manifest as any medium-sized creature when summoned to this plane of existence. However, once its shape is chosen, it may not be changed until a second summoning takes place.

Sweep: The Streilberk demon may attack all adjacent targets at -2.

Telepathy: The Streilberk demon may use this ability to speak with any sentient creature within 8" regardless of language.

Description

The Streilberk Demon has been used by evil cultists and diabolic summoners as assassins for centuries. Occultic lore states that the first to summon one of these assassins was a Prussian named Rolf Streilberk, a member of the Beilgeld Society of Diabolists. Rolf took power of the state of Hass-Kassel (a member-state of the Holy Roman Empire) in the 15th century by using these demonic assassins to take out all who opposed him.

The demons may take any human-sized shape when summoned, but may only manifest for 10 rounds. They typically go into a frenzy of attacks against their targets, moving to melee immediately in a charge.

chapter 5: Goblin Friend

Introduction

Goblin Friend is a mini-adventure designed for four Seasoned heroes, but may easily be scaled for lower or higher ranks of play.

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

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

Background

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

Since East and South Texans are not able to adapt quickly to winter-like conditions, at the first sign of ice many places shut down and grocery store shelves are cleaned out. Schools, restaurants, and stores close, roads covered in ice become dangerous to drive, and

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

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

Begin by explaining how the weather is turning nasty and just what that means in East Texas. Allow the heroes to make plans before night falls and the temperature drops into the low teens with a twenty mile per hour wind. Begin the introduction after all their arrangements have been made.

Cold Beginnings

When ready to begin, read or paraphrase the following:

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

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

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

The goblin is actually standing in the room, still and scared. If everyone gets very quiet and actively listens (*Notice* -2), they hear the creature's faint breathing. The goblin attempts to use his *Stealth* skill to hide and move silently throughout the home, preferring to watch the people in the house or apartment to determine if they might be trustworthy. He is also very hungry and attempts to take food from the refrigerator or a pantry when the opportunity arises.

Play this up, as it can freak out the heroes. If the goblin drinks any amount of alcohol, he gets immediately drunk (think ET), and may begin to act in such a way. The heroes may befriend him, attack him, hunt for him, or just be spooked as they occasionally hear him moving about their home. Play this up and have fun with it.

The Hounds

After approximately thirty minutes of game time passes, allow any hero who is outside, next to a window, or in a place where they may see outside, to make a *Notice* roll. If successful, read or paraphrase the following:

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

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

The Men in Black

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

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

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

He introduces himself as Agent Nam with Animal Control and produces a badge with card id. A *Common Knowledge* roll (-1) allows the heroes to realize there is no Animal Control agency in Golan County. If confronted on this issue, he simply answers “I work for the state,” and moves on with his questioning.

Agent Nam is backed up by a second agent who remains inside a black suburban truck with government plates and dark tinted windows, parked outside. Nam speaks in very short sentences and is deadly

serious. If he believes the heroes are hiding the goblin, he is authorized to act in any manner he believes necessary to secure the creature. He asks the heroes if he may come in, then asks them if they have seen or heard anything unusual this afternoon. The heroes may attempt to lie to him, but he knows the hound tracked the goblin into this home, and he does everything in his power to find out if the heroes have seen him, are helping him, or at the very least search their home for it. He claims that a dangerous, rabies-laden chimpanzee escaped a local veterinarian's clinic, and that he had tracked the animal to the hero's home.

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

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

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

Two hounds hide in the shadows near the building, and they do not hesitate to attack the goblin if they *Notice* him (vs the goblin's *Stealth*) trying to leave. If the hounds are alerted, they bray an alarm and the two agents from the suburban pull their weapons and rush forward to take possession of the goblin. They do not care if it is dead or alive. They only wish to take possession of the evidence and disappear.

What if?

If the heroes managed to escape the building with the goblin, they are chased by the men in black. Even

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

- Men in black show up while the heroes are in the middle of a totally different adventure. "We've been looking for you. Where is it?" The agents generally work in pairs and this time they have been authorized to use whatever means necessary to find the whereabouts of the escaped goblin. Of course this plot point is dependent on the heroes helping the goblin escape during the original adventure. If the goblin is caught or killed, the men in black have no further need of the heroes and allow them to go unmolested, for now.

- Include a good car chase through the city of Pinebox, remembering the icy conditions. Could be dangerous, but a lot of fun.

- The goblin escapes, but a month later shows back up in one of the hero's homes. He wants to break into the labs and rescue his "friends."

- The Pinebox Police department is busy due to the cold weather and is very slow to respond tonight due to these frigid conditions. So while gunfire draws their attention, allow at least seven minutes of game time before the arrival of any law-enforcement. Their arrival signals the men in black and their hounds to retreat, for now.

Men in Black

Character Statistics

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

Skills: *Driving* d6, *Fighting* d10, *Guts* d6, *Healing* d4, *Intimidation* d6, *Notice* d6, *Shooting* d8, *Throwing* d6

Hindrances: *Enemy*; *Outsider*; *Vow to serve the Agency*

Edges: *Quick*, *Fleet Footed*

Derived Statistics: Charisma: -2; Pace: 8; Parry: 7; Toughness: 7 (8/9)

Gear: formal clothing; B 93R (2d6); 2 total clips (40 rounds); Kevlar Light Vest +1/+2 (Chest only, 4lbs); combat knife (Str +d4); Agent glasses (FX

Item: It grants 9" of darkvision for the agents and acts as normal sunglasses during daylight hours. A tiny radio is fitted into each pair of glasses, and a small wire with an earplug is attached for hearing. The glasses may be tracked through a tiny low-frequency emitter, providing the agency with the whereabouts of each of their agents. If the heroes get a pair, they are easily tracked by the agency!)

Character Profile

(Appears approximately 30 years of age)

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

Character Description

He is a tall man, with wiry muscles and a strong chin. He is clean-shaven, hair is cut short, and he wears a dark suit with a white shirt and black tie. A leather shoulder holster can be seen beneath his jacket. He wears a set of dark sunglasses.

Character Speak

"I'd like to speak with you a moment."

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

"Sometimes things happen we don't expect. Sometimes bad things happen to good people. Now... why don't you tell me where it is?"

Goblin-Friend

The "goblin" in this adventure is not a creature in the classic fantasy sense. It was created by combining various DNA sequences of several creatures in top secret, military-controlled labs and grown to maturity. It is Semi-human, but has exceptional abilities.

The "goblin" is highly intelligent and has some basic language skills, yet is very alien to human understanding.

Creature Statistics

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

Skills: *Climbing* d8, *Fighting* d8, *Guts* d6, *Notice* d6, *Stealth* d8+2

Derived Statistics: Pace: 6; Parry: 6; Toughness: 6
Special Abilities

Claws (2): Str + d4.

Naturally Stealthy: The goblin gains a +2 to all *Stealth* rolls.

Infravision: Can see in the Infrared spectrum as per Savage Worlds rulebook.

Chameleon Skin: When the goblin concentrates (makes a Spirit roll), he may use this ability to blend in so well with the surrounding environment that he seems to become invisible, leaving only a vague outline that may only be detected if the character has a reason to look and makes a *Notice* roll (-4). The goblin may remain in this state indefinitely unless distracted, scared, or if he runs, at which time he becomes visible again.

Description

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

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

Altered Hounds

Creature Statistics

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: *Fighting* d8, *Notice* d6+2, *Stealth* d8, *Tracking* d6+2

Derived Statistics: Pace: 10; Parry: 6; Toughness: 7
Special Abilities

Armor: The thick hide of the hound provides an extra +1 Toughness.

Bite: The bite of an altered hound inflicts Str +d6.

Fleet Footed: An altered hound rolls d10s instead of d6s when running.

Go For the Throat: An altered hound instinctively goes for opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly armored area.

Low-Light Vision: An altered hound ignores penalties for Dim or Dark lighting.

Natural Tracker: Using its enhanced sense of smell, an altered hound can detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track anyone who ventures into its domain. They gain a +2 to all Notice and Tracking rolls.

Pack Mentality: Altered hounds attack as a pack and gang up on one victim at a time.

Description

It is the size of a full-grown Labrador and the beast is obviously canine, but the jaw is a bit too extended and it seems to have several rows of sharply ragged teeth. The creature's eyes are large and solid black. The hound is solidly built with a large chest and bulging with powerful muscles.

PINEBOX NEWS

Fall

Special Edition

New Mayor Sworn in on Steps of City Hall

Mayor James Flowers was sworn in on the steps of City Hall today, becoming the 125th Mayor in the history of Pinebox, Texas. Mayor Flowers replaces the recently deceased Mayor Red McCoy, who fell victim to a bear attack a few weeks ago.

In a speech to over a hundred well-wishers, city-councilmen and others, Mayor Flowers promised to see to recent reports of corruption in city government. He also promised to fight for lower property taxes throughout Golan County.

He remembered Mayor Red McCoy as a man of action, and asked for a moment of silence to remember the contributions of Mayor McCoy. He then gave a bouquet of yellow roses to Lalie McCoy, Red's widow.

Mayor Flowers is a lifelong resident of Pinebox and a graduate from Pinebox high in 1985. He started a paint and body shop in 1989 and the business has grown

very successful. Mayor Flowers was elected to the Chairman of the Better Business Consortium of Golan County in 1996, and is an elite member of the Wolf Hunters Club. He was appointed to replace the deceased Mayor by the City Council last Tuesday and will serve out the term of Mayor McCoy.

GM Ideas:

- Mayor Flowers hires the heroes to find out the truth regarding what happened to Red McCoy or to discover his ties to the Texas National Militia.
- A bomb is set off in Flower's Paint and Body Shop. The Texas National Militia is responsible. Mayor Flowers looks to hire someone he can trust to protect him and his family.
- Mayor Flowers decides to go after the Texas National Militia and seeks to hire someone to infiltrate the group.

Sheriff Anderson Closes Case

Golan County Sheriff Butch Anderson announced today that the rampage at the Timberland Country Club that killed Mayor Red McCoy was caused by an enraged, rabies-infested black bear. He went on to blame Louisiana Game Authorities for its release into the wild.

Recently, the Louisiana Game Authority has been releasing black bears into the woodlands of western Louisiana in the hope of restoring the bear to its native habitat. Hunters devastated the black bear population in the mid twentieth century, and many animal rights activists have pushed for rebuilding the population.

While many witnesses to the attack stated that the beast could fly and had literally "ripped" the Mayor to shreds, Sheriff Anderson dismissed such claims, stating that the "late hour and the amount of alcohol consumed could make for wild stories." He emphasized that "science and good investigative techniques" have proven the attacker was a black bear.

While no black bear remains were found, Sheriff Anderson assured the citizens of Pinebox that the bear is most "definitely dead." He went on to state that the bear was obviously in the last, extreme stages of rabies, or it never would have attacked such a large gathering of people.

Continued on next page

Community Calendar

October 4th

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

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

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

October 7th

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

Cont'd.

Anderson

Anderson also laid to rest rumors that Mayor McCoy's body suffered knife wounds instead of claw marks. "No human would do what that bear did. A trained medical professional said that the mayor's wounds were claw marks. Do you think you know more than the coroner?"

GM Ideas

- A wildlife activist named Heather Mays comes to Pinebox seeking the truth about the bear at-

tack. She does not believe it was a black bear, and enlists the support of the heroes to prove it.

- Eco-terrorists, hearing of the bear attack, come to Pinebox and campaign against the city leaders.

- More people are attacked by the "bear", forcing the Sheriff to admit that he was wrong in announcing that the threat had ended. The heroes are asked to protect an accountant who has caught glimpses of a creature at the edge of his wooded property.

Community Calendar

October 9th

Managing Timber Land Near "The Burn"—Pinebox Library, 3 p.m.

Committee for a Safe Halloween—PHS, 7 p.m.

October 10th

Concealed Carry License class—Clay's Shooting Lodge, 5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

PHS Band Car Wash—Supermart parking lot, 3:45 pm - 6:30 p.m.

Cont'd.

Farmer Claims Aliens Took He and His Herd into Outer Space

"There's aliens amongst us!" Dave Blewer proclaims loud and often.

Blewer, a local farmer and rancher, swears that strange lights in the night sky above the national forest are actually "alien spacecraft". He has filed an insurance claim stating that over fifty head of cattle are currently missing from his ranch. He blames the aliens for rustling his herd.

"Yeah, the little gray ones. They been coming to my place for the past three weeks. Took me right out of my bed one night. They did terrible things to me, and I saw my cows there too."

Sheriff Anderson has recently arrested Dave Blewer, and Judge Lindsey has committed him for his own protection for the next thirty days. However, fifty head of cattle are indeed missing from the ranch.

Even more interesting is that Dave has suffered severe sunburn to his face and hands. It is as if "he were exposed to a sunlamp for way too long," according to Blewer's physician, Dr. Jameson.

Many people have reported the strange lights in the night sky over the national forest and out toward the Burn. No proof of the Unidentified Flying Objects has been recorded.

Captain Sean Nelson of the Air Force was contacted and he stated, "there are no UFOs in the Golan county area, and no experimental US planes have flown there either."

GM Ideas

- The heroes go hunting for proof of UFOs. They find some.
- Dave's wife, Jane, hires the heroes to rescue her husband from the institution. She warns "they" are coming back. The mysterious men in black are also spotted on her farm. She asks for help.
- Elements of a special US task force (Department 7) are seen in the area of the Burn. No one is being allowed in.

Do the heroes try to discover what's out there?

- Overnight, all the cattle are returned to Blewer's ranch. Every single cow is pregnant.
- Blewer escapes the institution on his own, killing a doctor and security guard in the process. Since escaping, he has carjacked three different vehicles, killing those who do not get out of his way fast enough. Based on the sightings, Blewer seems to be searching for something. Will the manhunt catch up with him before he finds what he seeks?
- The heroes begin having flashbacks of being strapped to operating tables. In these "dreams", Blewer is also present. Does he have the answers they need to fill in their memories?

Harmony Parties Raise Interest Throughout County

Harmony Farm, best known for its sixties rebels and wheat germ slushies, has entered the twenty-first century with a bang! The owners of Harmony Farm are providing a series of free rock concerts featuring several local bands, including WindDig, Joshua's Heart, and MelonWood. Flyers are being passed around the ETU campus, and several outspoken city leaders are warning the youngsters to stay away from that "commie-cult of peaceniks."

Reverend Michaels of the Risen Church of Pinebox has been very outspoken regarding the effects of such rock concerts. Furthermore, he has asked Sheriff Anderson to supervise these parties. The Sheriff has refused, stating these affairs are taking place on private property. He has said there will be several law enforcement personnel in attendance to stop underage drinking or any drug usage by the partygoers.

Only the first hundred people are to be let in, so arrive early and bring your own drinks. The Harmony Farm folks also request that you be prepared to clean up after yourself, but that all are welcome.

Editor's Note: Melinda Lee-Jones is currently missing. If you have any idea of her whereabouts, please contact the Pinebox Police Department or Golan County Sheriff's Department immediately.

Home Invasions on the Rise

The third in a series of violent home invasions throughout Golan County occurred last Thursday at a home off West Church Street. Sheriff Butch Anderson stated in a news conference on Friday that there has been an "increase in gang activity throughout east Texas." He went on to say that "These home invasions are obviously related and are being done by the same crew. We have a few leads and the robbers will be caught shortly."

The first attack happened November 25th, a day after Thanksgiving—known for being the biggest shopping day of the year. Lana James, an English school teacher at Pinebox High, had returned from a day of shopping when two late model Oldsmobiles followed her into her driveway. Four masked men wielding pistols and one carrying a bowie knife forced her into her house, tied her with telephone wire, and stole her day's shopping as well as several of her personal valuables such as jewelry.

On December 3rd, Kevin Maw-yke of 2107 Redden, reported he was the victim of another home invasion. He stated that seven masked men forced their way into his home, assaulting Mr. Maw-yke and his girlfriend and stealing several thousand dollars worth of personal merchandise including jewelry, computer items, and a gaming system.

In each case the perpetrators have attacked the home suddenly, been very violent, and wear ski masks.

Sheriff Anderson warns that these men are "armed and should be considered very dangerous." Anyone with information are asked to contact the city or county law-enforcement officials or to contact crimestoppers at 555-TIPS.

GM Ideas

- The heroes are friends of one of the victims and have been asked to locate a precious ring that was a family heirloom. The ring can be found at a local pawn store, but there is no legal proof of to whom the ring belongs. The owner of the pawn store refuses to reveal who he purchased the ring from and does not return the ring. Truth is that he is working with the gang to get the merchandise.
- Have the heroes go Christmas shopping, where they get tailed by several gangmembers after making some high-dollar purchases. Allow *Spot* rolls to notice the trailing bad guys. The gang uses cell phones to communicate and attacks the heroes either in the parking lot or outside their homes.

ETU Scores Noted Physicist

East Texas State officials announced the hiring of Dr. Krystal Manning, a specialist in microbiology and chemistry, to the staff of the Chemistry department.

"Dr. Manning is a proven veteran in the field of microbiology and is a boon to our school," said Dean Bennit. "She graduated from NYU, received her masters at Florida State, and her doctorate from Boston. She has spent the past few years teaching at UCLA, and her work has been invaluable in assisting the US government's anti-biological and chemical agents division of the Department of Homeland Security."

Dr. Manning expressed her happiness at being selected to join the ETU staff, "I've wanted to spend more time in lab work and this affords me great opportunities to do so. I am in love with this part of Texas, and look forward to making great progress with the Chemistry department."

Dr. Manning is replacing Dr. Tewes, who disappeared early this year. Despite an extensive investigation, no one has been arrested in the case, and there has been no evidence of what happened to him.

Jackson Green, a reporter for 12 to Midnight, claims Dr. Tewes is another victim in a worldwide conspiracy to kill microbiologists.

"There have been over thirty cases the past three years of scientists being killed, dying in one-car accidents, or simply disappearing never to be heard from again," he said.

Local and federal authorities deny that any such conspiracy is taking place.

GM Ideas

- For more on the possible real-life conspiracy check out the following links:

<http://cobrapost.com/documents/Death%20of%20Microbiologists.htm>

<http://gatorpress.com/badsam/page7.html>

- Dr. Manning is actually coming to Pinebox to work for the government's top secret research facility known as the Quad. She is studying alien tissue cells, though she can only guess as to where the

tissue is actually from. It shows regenerative properties and is very adaptable against viri and bacteria. The closer she gets to the answer, the more danger she is in. Have the characters befriend her and slowly reveal that they are being followed by the men-in-black or otherworldly beings who are sworn to never allow such knowledge among the powers of the earth.

- The characters are hired by the family of Dr. Tewes to investigate what happened to him. Is it a government conspiracy? Terrorists? Alien attacks?

Ice Storm Warning

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

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

"We have been experiencing temperatures far warmer than normal, but this Canadian blast is the real thing. Wrap your pipes, bring in your pets, and cover

your plants, because an ice storm is about to hit us hard," Roberts added.

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

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

Continued on next page

Unidentified Grey Ford Runs Several Off the Road

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

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

Mogle reported that she first tried to slow down, hoping the

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

Nola Jean Richards was not as fortunate on Thursday night. Richards was driving her red Civic when she saw the grey truck in her rearview mirror driving right behind her bumper. She attempted to pull to the right to allow him to pass, but he scared her by following her onto the shoulder lane. He then rammed Richards' vehicle and sent it sailing across a 6-foot ditch before crashing into a telephone pole near mile marker 2 just outside of Pinebox. Richards remains in the ICU at St. Mary's Hospital in Nacogdoches.

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

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

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

"An eighteen wheeler hauling logs was coming the other way and we crossed in front of it. The driver locked up his brakes trying to keep from hitting us. Then it jack-knifed

and lost its load of pine. It's really amazing no one was killed," Vann said.

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

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

Ms. James has refused to be interviewed for this story, but was treated at the local hospital and released with only minor injuries. Anyone with information concerning these attacks are asked to contact the Golan County Sheriff's department or to call crimestoppers at 555-tips.

Ice Storm cont'd.

GM Ideas

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

GM Ideas

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

ETU Archaeology Team Plans Dig at Indian Mounds State Park

Professor James Siri of the East Texas State Archaeology department and expert on Native American cultures has announced a new archeological dig to take place over the next few weeks at the Indian Mounds State Park. “This is a great opportunity to learn about the first inhabitants of Golan County.”

There were many native tribes in this part of East Texas, ranging from the head-hunting Karnkawas to the peaceful, agricultural Caddoan mound builders. “Traditionally we have attributed the local mounds to the Hainais, a subgroup of the Caddoan civilization, however recent finds suggest the mounds could have been built by an Aztec tribe, much earlier and far from their native homeland.” Professor Siri continued, “This is as much a mystery as a search for history. Why would an Aztec tribe travel this far north and make their homes in traditional Caddoan lands? Did they mix with the Caddoans? What happened to these people?”

The last of the local Caddoan tribes were removed to the Indian territories back in the early 1840s by Texas Ranger Captain Edmund Dale, after he destroyed their village on the southern banks of Lake Greystone. Are these Hainais related to the Aztecs? Professor Siri and his dedicated students hope to find out.

GM Ideas

- This article may be used as a precursor to the adventure series *12 Hours to Midnight*, and may be used as a seed to lead the heroes into it.
- The Park may be haunted by the Native American Spirits and the heroes may be contacted by Professor Siri to investigate the strange happenings.
- A modern Hainais Shaman has come to Golan County to stop the dig as he considers it an affront to his heritage. He is willing to do anything to stop what he considers to be a heinous crime.

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