



SAVAGE EXPLORER WORLDS

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SAVAGE WORLDS: A FAMILIAR PROBLEM
DEADLANDS: THE WEIRD WEST: COWBOY KILLER
SAVAGE WORLDS: TWO BIRDS, ONE STONE
RIPPERS RESURRECTED: FOXED!

SAVAGE EXPLORER WORLDS

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SAVAGE WORLDS EXPLORER

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TWO BIRDS, ONE STONE

Everything starts with a crime. It's the cops' job to figure out whodunit. Today's taste of criminal intent involves a member of law enforcement who's gone bad. Your group has to chase down the clues, question the witnesses, and build an airtight case for the district attorney to prosecute. But sometimes evil won't go down without a fight. They've got that covered too.

THE CRIME

It looked like a foolproof plan for easy money. One of the Croatian mob's heavies, Andrija Horvat, got a job at Central Bank and Trust as a janitor. His part of the heist was simple...keep his nose clean, don't get fired, and plug a USB drive into any computer the day before the heist. It contains a special piece of software that makes a bank robber's life as easy as their first smash and grab. The software shuts down all security on the network for three minutes. With the electronics offline the job involves simple crowd control and walking away with \$39 million in new bills.

Andrija turned out to be the wrong mook for the job. A drunk driving stop led to a police chase and ended in jail for Andrija. The cops took everything on his person, including the USB drive. So the mob asked Carol Newland, crime scene tech with the 31st Precinct, to liberate their property from the evidence room. They also asked for Andrija's cellblock number, and sent him a message — 37 times, with a shiv.

Carol wanted money and the mob needed a moron who worked at the bank. If Carol could find someone to do the job, it would be her inside track to mob middle management. Facebook is a fire sale of victims for the

modern criminal. It only took a quick search of Carol's friends list to find her golden goose.

Sarah Williams' feed was constant complaints about being broke, pictures of studio space that she couldn't really afford, and snapshots from Central Bank and Trust's Christmas party. Sarah was serendipity in a sundress.

Anatoli Kovač was impressed with Carol's proactive criminal streak and made her an offer: Get the thumb drive where it needed to be and she would get a cut of the score. He also presented an opportunity in the family's Croatian evidence minimization department. They needed a pro to manage the clean-up crew after unfortunately messy confrontations, making sure that there wasn't enough left behind for the cops to build a case on. She would be living the dream in Kupari, Croatia.

Sarah never dreamed she would be the inside "man" in a bank heist, but Carol made it all seem so easy. Put the thumb drive in a computer and walk away. No one gets hurt. Everyone gets paid. Sarah put the thumb drive into a computer as promised. It was after the deed was done that her inner good-girl talked her into backing out of the heist. But Carol's inner problem solver wasn't going to let Sarah screw up her retirement plans. Sarah needed to die.

That's when Carol started her double-cross to clean up the loose ends Sarah created. She couldn't take a chance that pillow talk would be her downfall, so she invited Sarah's husband Hunter to the party too. Bullets are cheap and the 12th Street Kings are easy patsies. No one questions gang violence.

But simple plans break the hardest when something goes wrong. The pistol that she had stolen from police lockup jammed after one missed shot. Carol finished the job with her personal sidearm and staged the crime scene to cover her mistake. She turned the bodies into a bonfire. It was flashy, but worth the risk to cover any evidence she may have missed. The owner of a nearby bodega, Clayton Mathers, took out the trash just as Carol left. His fire extinguisher proved good plans don't trump bum luck.

Dispatch called Carol to investigate the scene of her own crime. She is friendly and seemingly helpful to her fellow investigators. And Carol knows the crime game well enough that she doesn't expect to get away with murder forever. This payday will set her up for years. One day the law will figure out what she did, but they'll need more than good luck to pull her off of Croatia's beautiful nonextraditing beaches when they do.

THE VICTIMS

Desperation doomed Sarah and Hunter Williams, artists with big dreams who lived beyond their means. Despite their good intentions, they are two peas in a rotten pod of debt. They owe big bucks to the credit card corporations that cover their shortages every month. Food, utilities, rent, art supplies, and studio space aren't paid for with plucky Midwest charm.

Sarah's day job at Central Bank and Trust couldn't keep up with the slow crush of debt. She had no idea that listing her employer on her Facebook page would lead her former classmate to reach out with a chance at quick money.

THE PERP

Carol Newland is a dirty cop. Fifteen years with the 31st Precinct as a crime scene tech has shown Carol that criminals and police captains aren't that original. The Croatian mob is always looking for morally flexible contractors and they found a real winner in Carol. The last 10 years of doing favors for the mob have taught her that crime pays well, and in cash. She can be the worst thing that happens to a DA's case. When criminals want evidence lost, Carol works her magic. The Kovač crime family has been paying her for years to pull off that trick. If the brass isn't going to appreciate her talents it's time to get paid, big. If the right score comes along she is willing to pay in blood, as long as it isn't hers.

Carol is setting up the 12th Street Kings to take the fall for the murder of Sarah and Hunter Williams. The Kings are a cornerstone of crime and violence in the city. Carol knows that the DA won't dig too deep if there is an easy win handed to her. Carol does not go with the players to any locations after she finishes collecting evidence at the alley.



THE COPS

The player characters are homicide detectives from the 31st Precinct. A suggested team would be: the hardboiled lead detective, the tech specialist, the negotiator, the sniper, the medic, and the rookie with something to prove. They have been working together for a while and have built trust in the team. Carol and Sven, the crime scene techs, work with the entire department and are not close to the heroes.

SCENE OF THE CRIME

At 12:27 a.m. this morning, someone gunned down Sarah and Hunter Williams in cold blood. Sarah was an aspiring sculptor but paid the bills with her job as a bank teller. Hunter was a painter who spent his days building websites for other artists. The players arrive at the crime scene at 2:04 a.m. and get to work. Crime scene techs Carol Newland and Sven Taylor are photographing everything. They collect, bag, and catalog the evidence. Uniformed officers keep the press and looky-loos from contaminating the scene.

Victim Sarah Williams' body is lying on top of her husband Hunter's corpse. Brick buildings flank the alley. Dumpsters, cardboard, graffiti, and loose trash fill the alley. The first-floor businesses include a 24hour bodega and a real estate broker.

- **Carol Newland:** See page 7.
- **Sven Taylor:** See below.

Sven Taylor

Sven is a recent hire at 31st Precinct. Carol is his immediate supervisor.

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

Skills: Knowledge (Crime Scene Investigation) d8

Cha: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: —

Edges: —

Gear: Evidence collection kit.

CLUES IN THE ALLEY

Criminal Activity: The alley is inside 12th Street Kings' territory.

The Weapon: Carol digs out one 9mm bullet jammed in the asphalt under Hunter's body. One bullet killing two people is weird even in the big city. With a successful Notice roll, the detectives find the matching pistol under a nearby dumpster. The

gun smells of cordite, bleach, and criminal hygiene. There is no serial number.

The Hair: Sven Taylor recovers one fire-damaged strand of human hair from under Sarah's burnt fingernail on her right hand. The hair belongs to Carol. In her haste to exit the alley she missed the evidence. Sven has control of the hair and checks it into evidence as soon as he returns to the station.

The Bag: Sven recovers a small plastic bag with trace amounts of MDMA in Hunter's front pocket; Carol had planted it earlier. It's marked with the symbol for the 12th Street Kings and has Quip's fingerprint on it. Carol stole it from evidence lockup as part of her plan to frame the Kings. Sarah's body covering Hunter's chest protected the bag from melting.

Video Camera: There is a camera visible through the back door of Supara Investment Group from the alley. Players must contact the owner, Prin Supara, or break in to access the footage. The door is alarmed and goes off in the event of a break-in.

CRIME SCENE INTERVIEWS

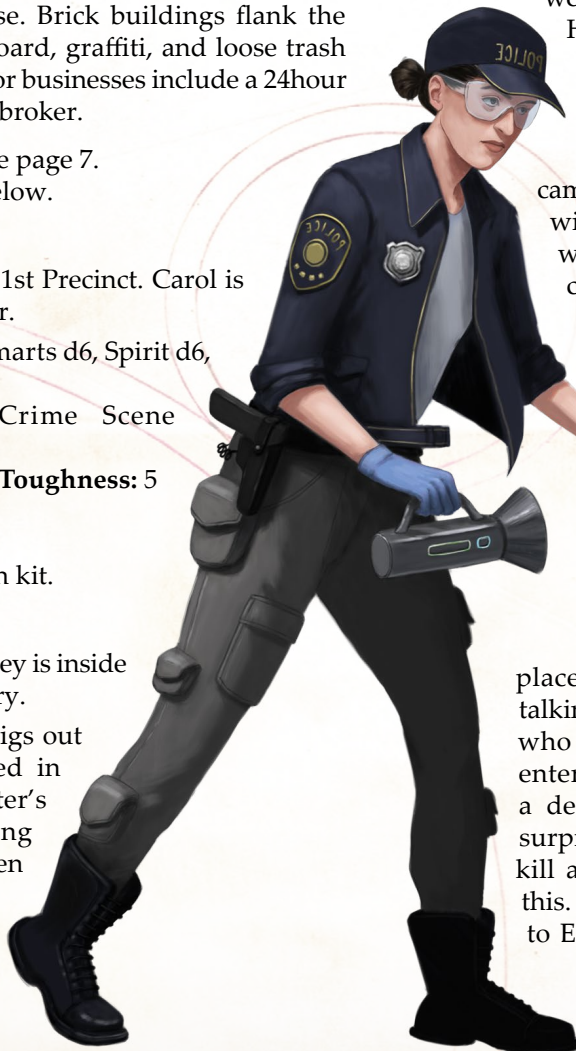
Edgar Winston: Edgar lives on the streets and is a well-known fixture in the neighborhood.

He currently appears to be intoxicated.

He wants to help the police and claims that a "gangbanger" tried to run him over. He describes a white van with a woman driving. If checked, traffic cameras show a 2012 white Ford panel van, without license plates, driving toward the warehouse district before it leaves the coverage area. There are 297 vans matching the description registered in the city.

Clayton Mathers: Clayton owns the Quick Bite Bodega that backs onto the alley. He was the one who reported the bodies to the police. Clayton doesn't need any persuasion to answer questions; he genuinely wants to help make the neighborhood a safer place. If threatened by the police he stops talking and calls his brother, Ashton Mathers, who is a lawyer. He didn't see anyone enter or leave the alley. He has noticed a decrease in gang activity lately and is surprised that the 12th Street Kings would kill a couple in the middle of the city like this. Clayton also suggests that the cops talk to Edgar Winston in case he saw anything.

Prin Supara: Prin is not in his office, Supara Investment Group, due to the late hour. Dispatch provides his home



number if the players ask. Despite the time, he answers the phone. Prin knows nothing about what happened in the alley and is hesitant to allow the police to access his video camera footage without a court order. He has some very wealthy clients who value their privacy. He only gives the video over with a court order or a successful Persuasion check. Unsuccessful players need to contact a judge to get the files, which come through in the second act of this scenario. Footage shows the back of an unidentified female walking through the camera's field of view. A perp named "Quip" from the 12th Street Kings fits the general description of the unknown woman. The woman in the video is actually Carol Newland. A careful investigation of the tape shows that the woman in the tape is wearing work boots that do not match Quip's shoes.

TWELFTH STREET KINGS

The Kings hang out at a bar on 12th Street called Shifty's Pool Hall. Their leader, Dread, rules through fear and by being just a little smarter than the rest of his crew. His lieutenant, Quip, is hungry for power but knows not to cross Dread. There is a four-inch scar on her right cheek as a reminder of that lesson.

The gang doesn't want to talk things through, but it is possible to negotiate for information with a combination of both the carrot and the stick.

INTERVIEWS AT SHIFTY'S

Kevin "Dread" Stevens: Violence was Dread's first language. He learned early on that the world respected his natural talent for inflicting pain. He built himself up on the suffering of others. Dread knows that killing cops makes business more complicated. Killing cops for asking questions about a murder that he didn't even commit is just plain stupid. If the players try to intimidate or threaten Dread he escalates the situation to violence. Better to be stupid than lose face in front of his crew.

What Carol didn't realize when she set up the 12th Street Kings is that Dread has been preparing to make a move on the Kovač crime family's territory. They have been collecting information on Kovač operations and have a photo of Carol meeting with Anatoli Kovač. If the players make a successful Persuasion check with Dread he allows them safe passage to leave the bar. With a raise he negotiates with the police for information about a dirty cop and offers proof, in the form of timestamped video that they have been at Shifty's all night. In exchange for the information he wants the release of his cousin Walter Nkrumah from lockup. Walter was picked up the previous day for possession of a controlled substance (OxyContin).

Susan "Quip" Baker: Quip stays in the background if fighting starts. She is too pragmatic to go down with a sinking ship. She surrenders if the rest of the gang is

killed or subdued. With a successful Intimidation check, Quip offers to exchange information about a corrupt cop in exchange for a lighter sentence.

Kelly "Colt" Rodriguez: If the players grab a gang member and question them it is Colt. She hates cops and does her best to get their hopes up that she knows who killed Susan and Hunter Williams. She asks for a piece of paper and writes, "Your mama killed them. Kiss my ass, pigs." She never turns her back on the Kings.

🔪 **"Dread" Stevens:** Use the Gang Member profile below, but Dread has Smarts d6 and Intimidation d8.

🔪 **"Quip" Baker:** Use the Gang Member profile below, but Quip has Smarts d6 and Intimidation d8.

• **Twelfth Street Kings (1 per hero):** Use the Gang member profile below.

Gang Member

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6

Cha: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Greedy, Loyal (To 12th Street Kings)

Edges: —

Gear: Glock (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, AP 1, Shots 15), knife (Str+d4).

SHIFTY'S POOL HALL CLUES

Cell Phone: Dread's phone contains a picture of Carol meeting with Anatoli Kovač. A successful Knowledge (Hacking) roll is required to gain access to his phone without his cooperation. If all phones from the gang are legally collected, unlocked, and investigated there is evidence enough for the DA to open an arms trafficking case against the 12th Street Kings.

Video Cameras: There are cameras hidden inside the bar. A successful Notice check uncovers the monitors and drives hidden behind the bar. Recorded footage from cameras inside of the bar proves that Quip and Dread were both inside Shifty's during the murders.

SECOND ACT

Your group has started to chase down the clues, confront suspects, and maybe they even know whodunit. Now comes the tough job of proving it and bringing the criminals to justice. The valiant cops need to keep working the case and watching their backs.

This is the time where warrants, early DNA evidence, and requests to other law enforcement agencies arrive. It is a great opportunity to have the players review all of the information they've collected so far before moving on.

SECOND ACT CLUES

Medical Examiner: The medical examiner reveals the fatal shots came from two 10mm bullets. Ballistics show that the 9mm pistol found at the scene was stolen from police evidence lockup. A successful Investigation roll reveals a one-week window in which the weapon went missing. It could have been any of the 11 officers with access to the evidence room. Carol and Sven are both on the list.

DNA evidence from the root ball on the hair found under Sarah's nail indicates it came from a woman with an AB — blood type. Less than 1 percent of the population has that blood type.

Jimmy "Rat" Coppelia: Jimmy works as a confidential informant for the 31st Precinct and offers his services to the players. He reveals that there has been something big going down at a mob safe house. The building is an abandoned tire factory, Wilson Tire Unlimited.

Carol Newland: A successful Investigation roll shows that Carol and Sarah Williams attended high school together. Carol's cell phone records and location history show that she has been to the old Wilson Tire factory several times in the last week. She ditched her phone today. Her personal email account is completely empty and Carol has erased the hard drive in her laptop. The data has been scrubbed using military grade software. Carol has AB — blood type.

Sarah and Hunter Williams: A successful Investigation roll shows Carol Newland and Sarah Williams attended Kennedy High School at the same time. It also uncovers that Sarah and Hunter owe \$43,024.89 in credit card debt.

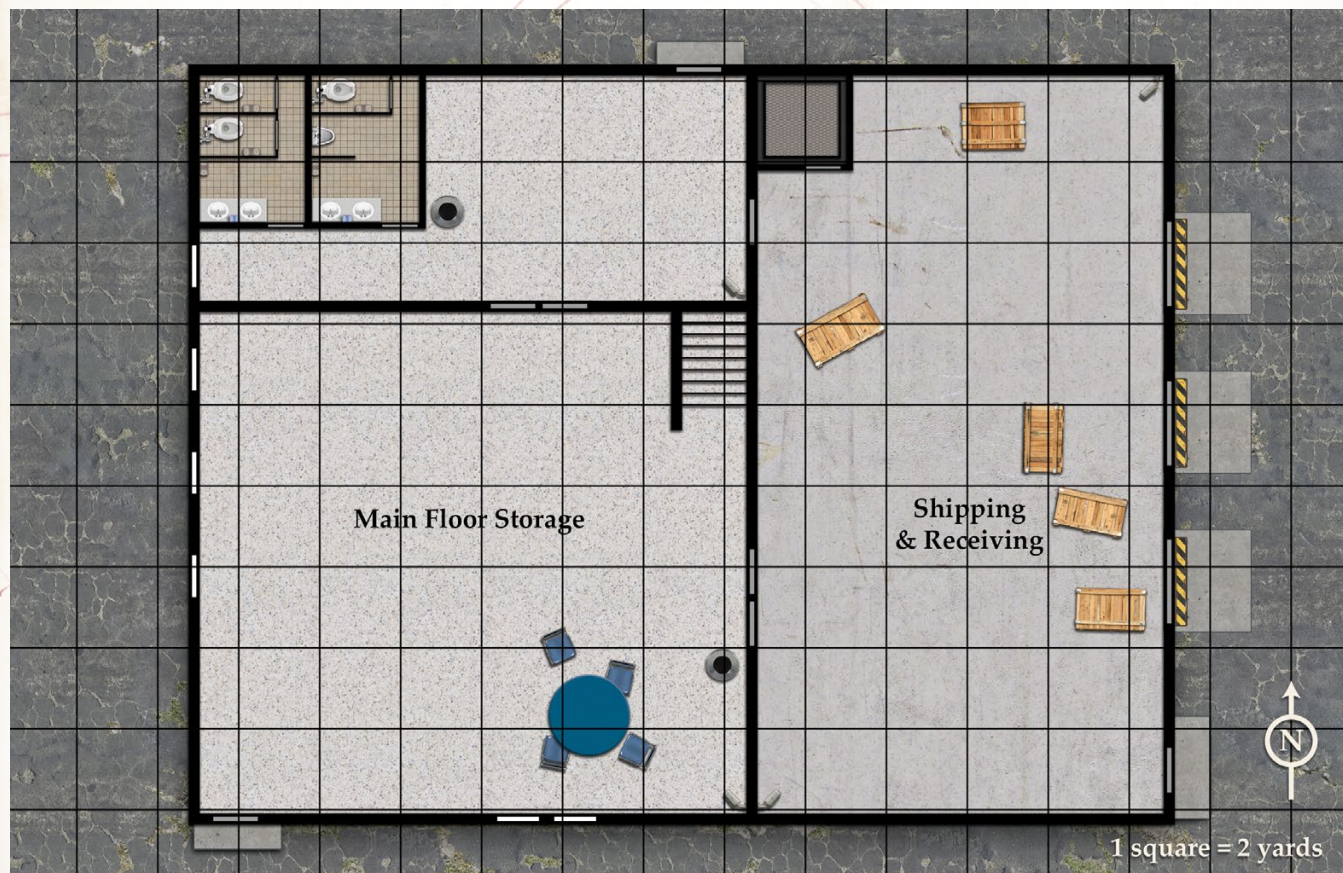
THE WAREHOUSE

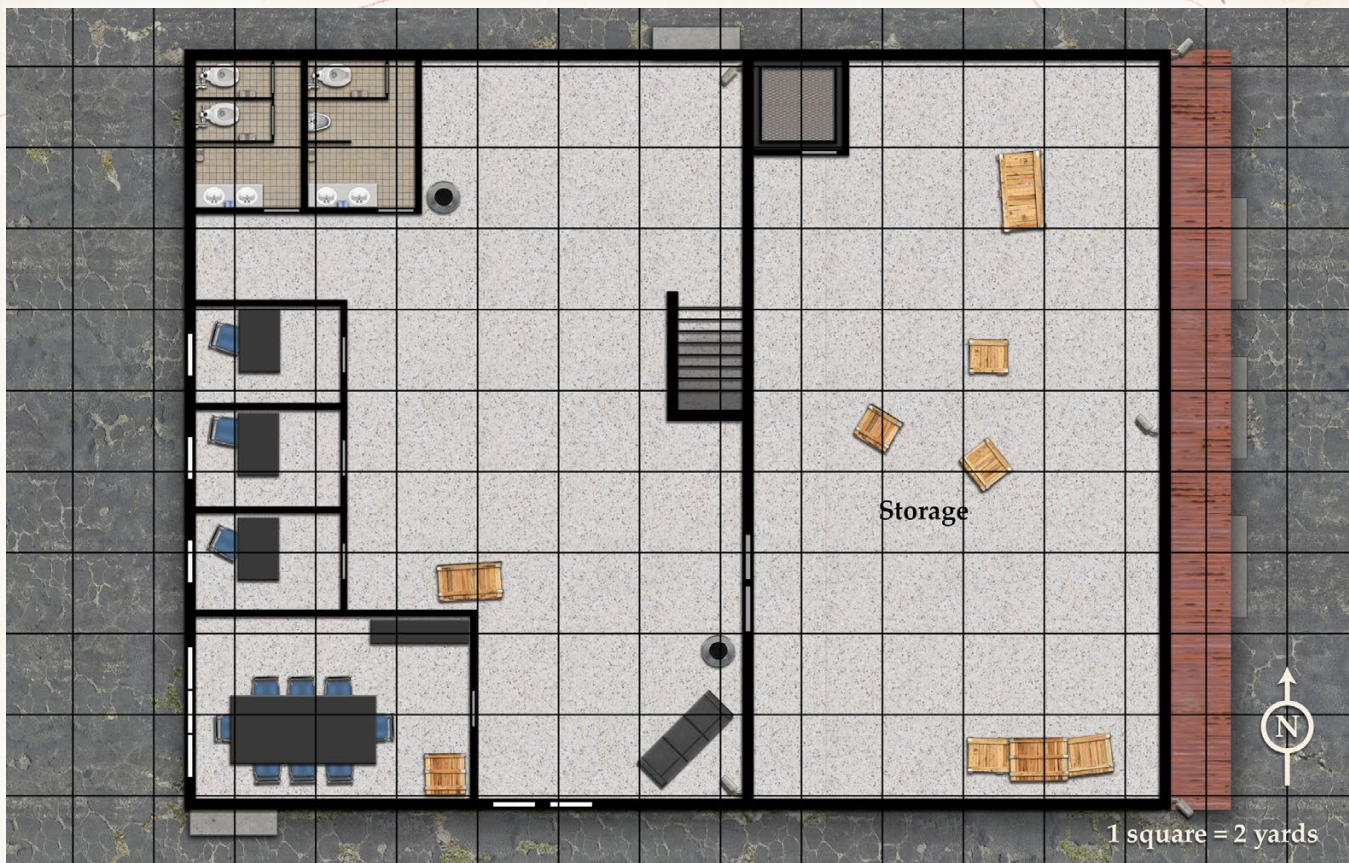
Broken, boarded-up windows cover all sides of the old tire warehouse. Graffiti from kids and gangs covers the exterior. Weeds have conquered the loading docks. A 2012 white Ford panel van is on the west side of the building waiting to be loaded up.

Carol and the heist crew are at the factory, armed and getting ready to rob the bank. Carol is coming along to lay low with the money. If the police wait longer than two or three hours, the crew heads to the bank in search of their payday. The security at the bank is going down on schedule no matter what. For a chance at an easy \$39 million the entire crew has agreed that the risk of the police closing in doesn't matter. Carol has come to one personal conclusion: When you've got nothing to lose you might as well go out in a blaze of glory.

There are wireless cameras on each corner of the building. Locked doors ring the ground floor. There is an unlocked door on the roof of the warehouse.

- 🔦 **Carol Newland:** See below.
- 🔦 **Jakov Kovač:** See below.
- **Heist Crew (1 per hero):** See next page.





Jakov Kovač

Jakov is the brains of the operation. Use the Crew Member profile with the following alterations.

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

Edges: Command

Carol Newland

Carol is a civil servant with a gun and a retirement plan.

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

Skills: Knowledge (Crime Scene Investigation) d12

Heist Crew

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8

Cha: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Hindrances: Vengeful, Loyal (To Kovač crime family)

Gear: H&K MP5 (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, RoF 3, AP 1), knife (Str+d4), Kevlar vest (+2).

WAREHOUSE EVIDENCE

Police can discover the following evidence in the warehouse, each item with a successful Notice roll.

The gun: Carol's 10mm pistol, the murder weapon, is on her person. A ballistics test shows that it killed Sarah and Hunter Williams.

The plans: There are security and floor plans to the bank on a table. A stack of the bank's personnel files sit in a box on the floor.

Guns: There are unlicensed and prohibited firearms throughout the warehouse. Carol is the only person who has a permit for her weapon. A crate of C-4 explosives is in the truck because sometimes you need to get creative with your ingress and egress.

The Boots: The boots seen in the video from the Supara Investment Group camera are inside the warehouse. DNA and chemical testing shows the victims' blood splatter, Carol's skin flakes on the laces, and trace amounts of the accelerant used to burn the bodies.

EPILOGUE

Today justice put a mark in the win column and there is reason to celebrate. The DA has enough evidence to bring charges against everyone involved. Word on the street is that Anatoli Kovač, head of the family, wants revenge on the police involved. He'll have to go through every officer of the 31st Precinct to get it.



Critter Feature: The Cowboy Killer

They have a saying about desert-dwelling life: It'll either stick you, prick you, or kick you. *Agave Americana* is a plant native to the arid regions of the American Southwest, as well as large swaths of Mexico. Sometimes called the "Spanish dagger" or century plant, it has gained notoriety in the Southwest for its lethality. The plant has a tough, pointy exterior that can easily break the skin. When improperly handled, its pulp and juices cause intense and painful skin irritation.

In certain areas of Arizona, this family of plant gained a unique moniker. The "cowboy killer" became infamous as the absolute *last* thing a rider wanted to fall onto in the event that his horse threw him from the saddle. The namesake Spanish dagger — made up of the center mass of leaves — could easily penetrate the limbs and even the torsos of unfortunate riders.

TAKIN' A TUMBLE

Cowboy killers in the Weird West look just like mundane century plants before uprooting themselves. However, unlike a normal agave this critter makes sure that cowpokes near it take a spill and land directly on its large, central spike. Prey traveling on foot or remaining in the saddle after an attempted buck prompt the cowboy killer to pull its long, twisted, quadrupedal body of roots out of the dry, crumbly earth — and charge!

These critters burst into the world by means of a tragic birth, when an unfortunate saddletramp falls from the saddle onto a mundane agave plant. The accident is almost never instantly fatal, so the unfortunate soul is left to bleed out in agony. In rare instances, the soul of a desperate cowpoke possesses the agave that felled him. Over the next week, the plant grows into a roughly humanoid mass of roots underground before becoming a fully-fledged cowboy killer.

Its body is a quadrupedal, armless woven bundle of uneven roots that support the fully grown agave plant "head." It uses its exceptional flexibility to twist away from gunfire, contract and thrust its central core like a spear head, and swing its dense head like a flail. These hemophages prefer the blood of humans and horses, but they hunt small game when survival demands it. They often toy with prey to prolong the suffering in a grotesque parody of their own creation.

STORY HOOKS

Here we present several quick and easy story hooks that can bring your posse into confrontation with cowboy killers.

The Big Race

A large horse race through the wilderness is currently accepting entrants. The organizer has placed a large cash prize for the top two jockeys, and skilled riders from all over the area have already gathered. While some of the competitors are incredibly ruthless and cutthroat, the true threat lies on the track.

A posse that wants to participate in the race finds that once the riders get out of sight things take a turn for the deadly. First, a saddled horse without a rider runs past in the opposite direction with a

shallow gash in its flank. Soon they spot a rider's corpse impaled on an agave plant, and other riders actively hinder the heroes' progress. Midway through the race, several cowboy killers ambush the posse members by bursting from the soil to kill their steeds or otherwise dismount them.

For a posse looking to make a quick buck without participating in the race, the organizer is looking for trustworthy folks to inspect the track on foot. The hired hands set out the day before the race and, just as if they were participants, find themselves caught in a deadly game of cat-and-mouse as they weave their way down a stretch of track running adjacent to an agave farm.

Dark Harvest

With Santa Anna's Army of the Dead routed and in shambles (see *Deadlands: The Flood*), traversing the deserts of the American Southwest is...marginally less dangerous than it was previously. Along with that newfound security, there's been an increasingly high demand for Mexicali agave nectar Back East. Soon a fairly large, Black River-affiliated emporium located in Tombstone places a massive per-pound price (left to the Marshal's discretion, but \$5-\$10 is a good start) on agave stalks and leaves. Despite the work being so easy, many of those who light out to collect the thorny plant do not return.



Prime Soil

The Great Flood's aftereffects linger all throughout Mexicali, with new complications arising by the day. Once such difficulty was disposing of the bodies that littered the landscape. Bullet-riddled carcasses, "Angel"-cut corpses, drowned victims, and the bodies of the living dead were scattered with the tides. As a result, many cowboy killers migrated to these freshly bloodsoaked swaths of earth.

Unfortunately, this sudden change in the supernatural landscape has left many settlements unknowingly in the grip of these deadly predators. The posse finds themselves approaching one such settlement. They might find themselves caught in the middle of a rash of disappearances, or perhaps they run the risk of becoming the first victims themselves.

Where Horses Run Free

Negligence has led to the escape of several prize stallions from a local stable. A rusty lock and the booming of a hunter's long rifle was all it took to spook a horse into breaking free of its livery. Now the ranch hand responsible for wrangling the steed has gone missing. The ranch owner believes it was all part of an elaborate ploy on the part of his employee to steal the horse and escape scot-free. The owner wants a posse to track down this hooligan, serve justice, and return the horse to its stable.

However, veterans of the Weird West know that more often than not things aren't so cut, dried, and mundane. In fact, the ranch hand followed the horse into a patch of agave that became his final resting place. The horse is alive and well but it gallops in dangerous, agave-covered territory.

KILLIN' COWBOYS AND SUCH

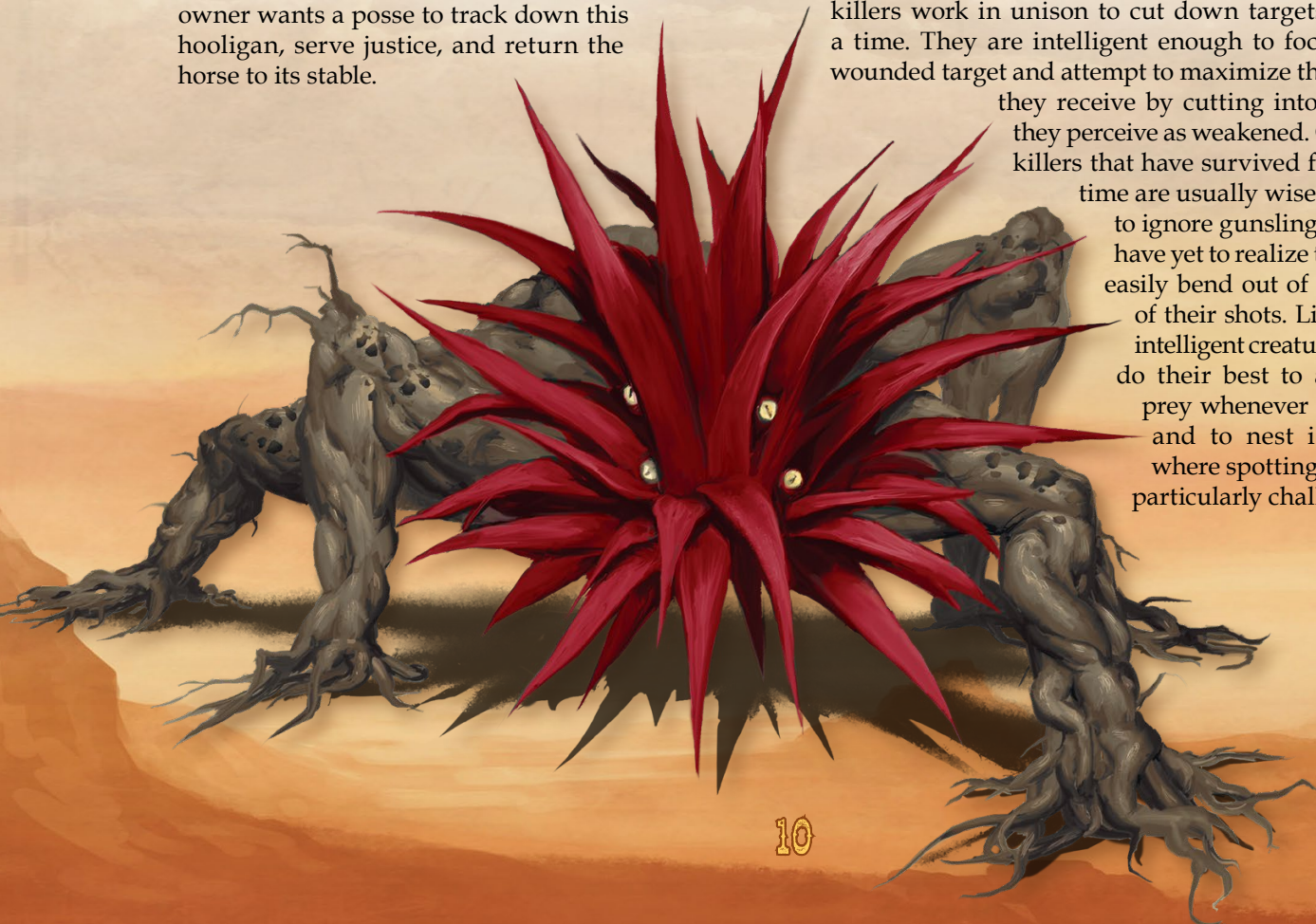
Here we serve up some advice for the Marshal about building an encounter using cowboy killers.

Numbers and Allies

Fighting a group of cowboy killers can cause a posse a whole *heck* of a lot of trouble. Their first encounter might be their last. Although cowboy killers are a rarity, it's not unheard of to spot patches of them out in the badlands. These creatures often share hunting grounds with tumblebleeds or nest in an area with a Southwestern prairie tick colony, where they absorb the gory remains of newly born ticks.

Tactics

While alone or strictly among their own kind, cowboy killers work in unison to cut down targets one at a time. They are intelligent enough to focus on a wounded target and attempt to maximize the bonus they receive by cutting into targets they perceive as weakened. Cowboy killers that have survived for some time are usually wise enough to ignore gunslingers who have yet to realize they can easily bend out of the way of their shots. Like most intelligent creatures, they do their best to ambush prey whenever possible and to nest in areas where spotting them is particularly challenging.



**COWBOY KILLER**

Cowboy killers begin as humble agave plants, animated into terrible creatures by the Reckoning's wicked magic. Ambush predators that overwhelm startled foes and stalk survivors just out of sight, cowboy killers can live for years in a region without anyone discovering them.

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d12, Tracking d6

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

Special Abilities:

- **Ambush:** If a cowboy killer Surprises its prey, it also has The Drop.
- **Blood Feast:** When the cowboy killer inflicts a wound on a foe it gains a +2 bonus to Pace, Fighting, and damage rolls until the end of its next turn.
- **Camouflage:** While its root-body is buried in the ground, a cowboy killer is nearly indistinguishable from a normal *Agave Americana* plant and gains +4 to Stealth rolls.
- **Head Flail:** Str+d8. When the cowboy killer swings its head about as a weapon, it does so with the Improved Sweep Edge.
- **Immunity (Piercing Attacks):** A cowboy killer's extremely flexible form is immune to piercing attacks such as from firearms and spears. Firearms with multiple projectiles, such as full-auto weapons and shotguns, cause half damage. Called Shots to the cowboy killer's head ignore this Special Ability, but an attacker must first succeed on a Notice roll at -2 to discern the abomination's "head" from its weird, ropy body.
- **Spanish Dagger:** Str+d10, Reach 1.
- **Size -1:** Cowboy killers stand about three feet tall.
- **Weakness (Head):** Called Shots to the cowboy killer's head ignore its Immunity Special Ability. If a cowboy killer takes a wound from a Called Shot to the head, a large chunk rips away. All further Spanish dagger Fighting and damage rolls suffer a -2 penalty.

RELIC: PULQUE POTION

A cowboy killer's remains are both edible and magical. Shamans of the Southwest who know the ancient technique seek out the creature's remains to make a potent version of the alcoholic beverage *pulque*. When brewed like normal pulque by a character with an Arcane Background Edge, and infused with 1 Power Point, it becomes a powerful, alcoholic potion with no expiration. Creating a single potion uses up the remains of one cowboy killer's body.

Power: When consumed, the imbibing character *heals* one wound and gains a +1 bonus to Spirit rolls versus Shaken for the remainder of the scene.

Taint: Consumption of a pulque potion can leave a cowpoke with a powerful thirst. If she cannot consume one gallon of water within an hour of imbibing the pulque, the drinker gains a level of Fatigue. This Fatigue remains until the cowpoke rests for 24 hours.

RELIC: SPANISH DAGGER

The core spike of a cowboy killer can be crafted into a deadly weapon, through a delicate harvesting and preparation process known to only a few. When extracted with a successful Survival check at -2, the Spanish dagger must immediately feed (see Taint, below) or it shrivels away over the course of an hour.

Power: A Spanish dagger is a potent weapon about one-and-a-half feet in length. Used as a weapon it deals Str+d6 damage. Each day, the weapon gains a bonus to Fighting and damage rolls equal to the amount of times it has Incapacitated or wounded a living, blood-filled creature during that 24-hour span (to a maximum of +4). Each morning, the Spanish dagger loses its bonus...and regains its thirst.

Taint: These fibrous weapons require upkeep to stay bonded with their user. Once every two weeks, the user must cut themselves with the Spanish dagger, causing a wound that cannot be Soaked. This wound is only removed through Natural Healing.



A FAMILIAR PROBLEM

A KNIGHT ERRANT INVESTIGATION

"A Familiar Problem" is a modern, investigative horror scenario. It's intended for Novice characters, but can be run with those of Seasoned Rank with little alteration. The adventure is ostensibly set in the Appalachian Mountains of western Pennsylvania, but can be easily placed in a number of nearby states.

CASE BACKGROUND

The investigators are retained by Alice and George Dotson to find their 26-year-old son, Lonny. Lonny was recently charged with several counts of heroin possession with intent to distribute. This wasn't their son's first offense by any stretch, so the judge slapped him with a \$150,000 bail. That sum was easily beyond Lonny's questionable means, but he convinced his parents to put their house up as collateral for the bail.

Facing a wide range of drug-related charges and direct evidence of his guilt, Lonny was looking at potentially 20 years or more in prison. Not surprisingly, he skipped bail and dropped out of sight. Alice and George, faced with the loss of their house, have contracted with Knight Errant Investigations to find their son and bring him back in time for his court date.

A LITTLE HISTORY

In the mid-19th century, the area was plagued by Agnes Black, a practitioner of dark magic most locals just called a "witch." She was rumored to curse those who ran afoul of her, steal children from their beds, and consort with demons. Black was so feared her name replaced the boogeyman's as a warning or threat in the region.

Eventually, fear of her grew so great a mob of residents of the nearby hamlet of Jansonville stormed her house one night. They hanged Agnes from the limb of a spreading oak tree in front of her home and left the carcass to rot.

Unfortunately for Jansonville, not only was Agnes exactly what they feared, she was even more powerful than they guessed.

A Serious Pest Problem

Just before she died, Agnes was able to transfer her spirit into her familiar, a large black-furred rat. Her magic not only extended the rat's life, it also slowly began to warp the creature's features to resemble her. She nested in her old home, which quickly gained a reputation for being haunted by her ghost — which was not far from the truth.

Left to her devices, she begat thousands of foul-tempered rat-spawn over the years. Her offspring slowly grew to infest much of the hollow where her house sat. The rat horde dug a vast warren of tunnels under the area, using it to ambush and devour any small animals unlucky enough to venture into their territory. In time, even larger creatures like dogs, deer, and the occasional tramp who made the mistake of camping in the uninhabited, narrow valley became prey.

More than a century and a half has passed since Agnes was hanged, and her spirit persists the rat's hideously warped form. Her horde of offspring has begun to expand its hunting range to areas outside of her hollow, preying on pets and other small animals, at least for now.



Bad Decisions

If there was one thing Lonny was always good at, it was looking out for himself. He knew he was going down for the drug charges, and the amount of drugs in his possession at the time he was caught meant he was looking at a minimum of 10 years. Faced with the choice of losing a sizable chunk of his life or putting his parents on the street, there really was just one choice for Lonny. He packed a small bag and slipped out his bedroom window the very night he got home.

Lonny also knew running pretty much burned his last bridge in Jansonville, and law enforcement would be on his tail soon. He decided to call in the last of his favors to scratch up enough drugs to finance a long-distance relocation and head a couple of time zones to the west. However, he needed a place to hole up until his remaining contacts could come up with the heroin.

Until they did, Lonny figured he knew the perfect place to hide out — the old house up in Black Hollow.

THE HUNT BEGINS

The investigation begins with the characters meeting at the Dotson home in Jansonville to interview the clients, George and Alice, around midday. The two are in their late '50s or possibly even early '60s. Both have worked blue-collar jobs most of their lives and it's taken a toll. After only a few minutes of the conversation beginning, it should be clear George and Alice are good folks with a bad son.

KNIGHT ERRANT INVESTIGATIONS

Knight Errant is a modern horror setting, where the characters are assumed to be detectives working for Knight Errant Investigations, a private investigation agency that takes on all manner of cases, but tends to specialize in missing persons. The agency recruits from all walks of life rather than just former law enforcement or military, believing a diverse array of skills to be an asset in its investigations.

A surprising number of these prove to have ties to the supernatural, so the firm is also open to... unusual theories when the evidence backs them up, but understands most clients aren't, so it encourages its operatives to find plausible alternate explanations to present once the case is closed.

However, *Knight Errant* scenarios don't require you to use the titular firm — or even private detective characters. With little to no alterations, you can often insert other types of characters who have a reason to look into the paranormal, such as a team of amateur ghost hunters, the crew of a reality TV show, a covert government agency, or even a corporate team tasked with cataloging and quantifying the supernatural.

The couple is happy to provide any information they have on Lonny. Their son's been missing for more than two days now, and it's only a matter of time before the court finds out he's jumped bail.

They can give the team photos of Lonny and his car, a white two-door Acura coupe. Not surprisingly, they can also produce nearly any vital statistic the characters might want, birth date, Social Security Number, license tag number, and cell phone number. Should none of the characters ask specifically for these, you can allow them a Common Knowledge roll to remember to do so.

The two know little of Lonny's less savory activities, save that he's had trouble with the law since before he graduated high school. They didn't approve of many of his friends and refused to allow them to visit the house, so they know surprisingly few people toward which to point the team. They do remember one high school friend, Donna Lawson, but don't recall hearing Lonny speak of her for over a year.

Unfortunately, beyond those pieces of information, George and Alice have little other help to offer.

Personal Effects

If asked to see Lonny's room and belongings, the couple takes the investigators to a small, cinderblock-walled bedroom in the basement. It's a disheveled mess of magazines, junk mail, and dirty clothes, but Alice says it looks like he took only a few items of clothing and an old gym bag.

Neither client knows if their son has any firearms, but a Notice roll searching his disheveled basement room turns up a loose 9mm round and a photo of him posing with a chopped-off pump shotgun. There's nothing else of interest in his room.

Digging through papers scattered around the room allows a character to make an Investigation roll. On a success, she finds an old bank statement containing not only Lonny's ATM card number and account number, but also a scrawled note in one corner where he recorded his PIN.

FOLLOW UP

The hard information Lonny's parents provided, not surprisingly, is of little initial help. All of it points straight back to the Dotson address, from his driver's license to car registration and credit checks. It's not that Lonny's a mastermind — there simply hasn't been enough time for any electronic lead to show up.

If they obtained his bank information and think to check that, either by phone or an ATM, they find his account was emptied a little more than a day ago from a machine in Jansonville. Thanks to that withdrawal, Lonny now apparently has the kingly sum of \$76 to fund his next criminal enterprise.

A background check shows their subject has a string of petty arrests, mostly for possession of small amounts of a fairly diverse variety of drugs, ranging from marijuana while still in high school through party drugs like ecstasy to prescription painkillers and finally heroin. The latest charge is by far the worst, but there's a clear progression from stupid teenager to drug dealer, but still stupid.

A successful Investigation roll by the detective performing the background check turns up the name Buddy Strait. Buddy was busted with Lonny on several of the possession charges, but not the latest. A second successful Investigation check uncovers an address in a place named Starlight Estates, west of Jansonville.

Oh, Donna

Assuming the team learned Donna Lawson's name from Lonny's parents, she's easy enough to find with either an Investigation or Streetwise roll. Donna turns out to be a nice young lady who has her own apartment and works full time as a bookkeeper for a local car dealer.

Donna is a little suspicious of strangers showing up asking about Lonny, but a single success on a Persuasion roll is sufficient to get her to open up. Alternatively, a phone call from George or Alice works just as well.

Once she trusts the detectives, Donna tells them she and Lonny dated back in high school and for a couple of years afterward. She hoped he would outgrow his drug habit, but instead he kept trying new and harder ones. Eventually, she broke off the relationship with him when it became obvious that was just who he really was.

She's not had much to do with him for a few years now, but every now and then he'd show up if he'd had too much to drink with Buddy Strait and try to talk her into getting back together. He eventually got the clue, because she's not seen him in over a year.

Donna doesn't know anything about his current whereabouts or activities, and frankly is quite grateful. She remembered he liked to drive the old dirt roads in the hollows around Jansonville, so he might be hiding somewhere back in the boondocks.

Finally, if they didn't catch the hook to Buddy, Donna suggests they track down his old friend. She can point them to Starlight Estates.

Hitting the Streets

Jansonville is home to only about 3,000 residents, so there are only a few streets to actually hit. Given the size of the town, most of the residents are familiar with Lonny Dotson, and no Streetwise roll is necessary to learn the general consensus is the young man was trouble and working on upgrading that to a capital T in the near future.

The average citizen of Jansonville had little to do with him and less idea of where he might be. Learning more requires a successful Streetwise roll. On a failure, the character learns only he's not been seen around town for at least a couple of days. The investigator also learns there are numerous dirt roads leading into countless hollows in the surrounding hills where Lonny could easily hole up.

A successful roll points them to Buddy Strait as the best source for information on Lonny's possible whereabouts (*"If anyone's gonna know where that boy is, it's Buddy."*), as well as identifying his usual stamping grounds as Starlight Estates.

STARLIGHT ESTATES

Starlight Estates turns out to be a low-income trailer park in a river bottom a couple of miles east of Jansonville. There is no white Acura anywhere in sight, and the condition of the "street" leading through Starlight Estates make it doubtful anything other than a high-clearance four-wheel drive could make it through without substantial damage.

The stench of river mud permeates the area, giving everything a musty odor, regardless of the season. In summer, mosquitos hunt in packs, and in winter, the dirt road leading through the park is either pitted by deep, half-solid tire tracks or a frozen glacier of mud.

There are about a dozen trailers in the park, each one vying to be the worst maintained. Regardless of how they obtained the lead to Buddy and Starlight Estates, the investigators were unable to get an exact address, so it takes some time knocking on doors and speaking to the locals to pinpoint his current residence. You can handle this with a Streetwise roll, let the detectives interact with a few of the other occupants of the park, or simply allow any sufficiently clever idea to discover it.

Lost Pets

As they wander the area, they notice a surprising number of missing pet notices. The pictures of at least four different pets, both cats and dogs, are posted on utility poles and a community bulletin board. Any character who specifically examines the ground in the area can make a Notice roll at -4 to spot an uncomfortable number of large, burrow-like holes in the ground.

Should anyone raise the subject of the missing animals to a resident, she's told,

"Yeah, it's hard on critters here. Between the road and the river, one of the two seems to get 'em before too long. 'Bout the only thing seems to avoid gettin' squished or drownt is river rats. Some of them grow big enough to keep for a cat, that's for sure."

Asking about the numerous burrow holes gets largely the same response without the preamble regarding the missing pets.

BUDDY STRAIT

Knocking on the door of Buddy's trailer brings a woman's yell from inside.

"Buddy, get the damn door!"

After some more yelling back and forth, a slim, white male in his mid -to late-20s does indeed answer the door.

He wears a flat-brimmed Philadelphia Eagles baseball cap turned slightly to the side, a sleeveless t-shirt promoting an energy drink, and loose-fitting jeans that appear to carry the stains of a couple of days — if not weeks — of wear. One of his cheeks is slightly distended by the chewing tobacco it holds.

He answers to Buddy if asked. He then brusquely asks the heroes what they want, adding,

"If you're Jehovah's Witnesses, we don't want none."

Inside Source

Whatever approach the investigators take, Buddy tries to play disinterested and cool, at least until they mention Lonny. At that point, he looks nervously back into the trailer, then steps out onto the porch and shuts the door.

"Who are you — cops? I know my rights. You gotta tell me if you're cops or it don't count."

Buddy gets most of his legal knowledge from decades-old police shows. He initially denies knowing anything about Lonny's whereabouts, saying he and Lonny parted ways last year when his friend started getting into "the hard stuff."

A Social Conflict (see **Social Conflict** in *Savage Worlds*) using either Persuasion or Intimidation where the heroes score at least three successes convinces Buddy to open up. Adding that the Dotsons stand to lose their home if Lonny isn't brought in provides a +2 bonus (Buddy has fond memories of George and Alice from his childhood).

Buddy's also a bit of a mercenary. Bribes add a +2 for every increment of \$50.

Buddy Strait

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

Skills: Driving d4, Fighting d6, Intimidation d4, Lockpicking d4, Shooting d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Clueless, Greedy

Edges: —

Gear: Clothes, pocketknife, prepaid cellphone, \$6.

The Tip Off

Once he's convinced, Buddy rats his former buddy out so fast his hat sits straight.

"Whatever, I'll tell you where you can probably find him. I don't care. He was supposed to cut me in on that score, and he didn't. Now, he comes askin' for help?"

"Lonny said he was gonna hide up Black's Holler down the road tonight. You follow that road up to the end, there's an old house up there. Said he's got some debts to collect or something, and then he's rollin' out of here in the morning for good."

"He figured it be safe, 'cause nobody goes up there 'cause it's supposed to be haunted. Ain't no reason to anyways. You can't even hunt squirrels up in there no more."

He then gives rough directions to Black Hollow, which is an unmarked, unmaintained dirt road leading into the hills less than a quarter mile from Starlight Estates.

If questioned further about the supposed haunting, Buddy tells them:

"There was supposed to be a witch that lived there. Had a black cat – or was it a rat – and everything, just like in the movies. The people round here got fed up with her and hung her one night."

"Now, they say her ghost haunts the holler, ridin' a horse and looking for a head to chop off. We used to dare each other to stay the night up there as kids, but everybody always chickened out."

Buddy talks tough enough. He's never seen any ghost or witch or headless horseman, but if pressed he also admits he's never stayed the night. While he comes up with several reasons to explain why he never chose to test the stories, it's obvious he does put a little stock in them.

He knows little else of importance, other than he wouldn't be surprised if Lonny is armed.

Alternate Routes

It's possible the team misses the leads to Buddy Strait or stumbles during his interview and fails to learn Lonny's whereabouts. That's okay, there are a few ways to get them back on track.

The first is a simple Streetwise roll at -4. If they fail, they do eventually get a lead on his location, but not until nearly midnight and at a cost of $2d8 \times \$20$ in bribes. On a success, it only takes $1d6 \times \$20$ in bribes and 2d6 hours of canvassing the area. With a raise, they learn the same information, but in 1d8 hours and without shelling out any money. In any case, they also get the same basic information about the legends of Black Hollow.

Alternatively, they may visit convenience stores up and down the main road looking for security cameras

showing the road to look for Lonny's Acura, then compare timestamps to determine areas to search. This takes the investigators all day, but by nightfall, they manage to nail down his location as the unmarked dirt road leading into Black Hollow. Whether or not they get any warning about the legends surrounding the hollow is up to you...

ADDITIONAL LEGWORK

The team may look further into the area in which Lonny is supposedly hiding out. Depending on the time of day, they may have hours before nightfall, when Lonny's supposed to head back to the hollow, so time may not be a factor for them yet. There is a courthouse back in Jansonville, barely a five-minute drive from Starlight Estates on the single main road that cuts through the winding valley.

At the courthouse, they can research the property in the hollow. A successful Investigation roll taking about half an hour tells the group the entire valley is held in a trust by the county itself. There have been a handful of previous owners of parcels there over the last half century, but all appeared to simply have let the taxes lapse until the government seized the land. There is no record of the original owner.

Another successful Investigation roll turns up a map of the roads in the area, including those leading into Black Hollow. The topographical map also shows what appears to be a structure about two miles up the hollow road, presumably the house Buddy spoke of. While only one road leads from the main highway near Starlight Estates, there are several back roads providing access to the hollow road, making it virtually impossible to find a single chokepoint where they can apprehend Lonny before he gets to the structure.

The Black Legend

It's also possible the characters may decide to delve into the legend of the hauntings before heading off to apprehend Lonny. A few older residents still remember the stories their parents told them when they were just kids themselves, and at least one enterprising local historian wrote it down in a self-published work, a copy of which the town library (and almost no one else) purchased.

Whether they're digging through newspapers and old local histories at the library with an Investigation roll or talking to locals, it takes 1d4 hours and produces the same information.

"Back around the time of the Civil War, there was a woman went by the name of Agnes Black living up in what we now call Black Hollow. Folks held she was a witch. Claimed she cast curses, couldn't stand the touch of iron or salt, had a black cat or rat or maybe it was a crow the Devil gave her. Stuff like that. Anyway, time came the town had had enough – I don't recall if

some kids went missing, there was a bad year for crops, or hell, maybe they blamed the war on her – but they decided to run her out.

"Things got out of hand the night they went to confront her and some of the men lost control of their tempers. They ended up hanging the poor woman from a tree right outside her house. Right before the noose pulled tight, she looked at the crowd and said, 'You might kill this body, but you'll not kill my spirit. I'll see this debt repaid!'"

"Since then, Black Hollow has sat empty. One or two farmers tried to put a barn there, but something kept killing and eating their livestock. Eventually, folks just gave up and left it be."

THE HOLLOW

Black Hollow is a fairly narrow draw stretching for more than two miles back into the hills west of Jansonville. A small creek occupies a portion of the lower ground, leaving the pair of pot-holed tire ruts serving as a road often wedged against one hillside. Beech, oak, and maple trees clog the hillsides, and a mix of smaller softwood saplings compete for what sunlight filters through.

If the characters specifically ask, allow Notice or Tracking rolls to look for wildlife. On a success, they see that in spite of the lush forest, there is no sign of any animal life beyond the occasional insect.

The dirt road leading into Black Hollow sometimes doubles as an overflow path for the stream that runs alongside the road. Potholes and rocks litter the ruts, and weeds grow heavily in the middle and sides, making spotting those obstacles a challenge. The ruggedness of the route shows Lonny may have missed his calling as an off-road race driver if he was able to maneuver his car up the hollow successfully.

Any investigator attempting to pilot a vehicle up the road must make a total of two Driving rolls. On a failure, the car is stuck and takes 1d4 hours to free. With a critical failure, the car instead bounces into a deep hole, hits a rock, or otherwise takes a serious hit. This results in a damaged axle, bent rim, or hole in the gas tank gas tank, putting the car out of commission until the vehicle can be repaired — which won't happen before Lonny's expected departure.

THE BLACK HOUSE

After nearly two miles of rattling up the hollow, the group arrives at a clearing beside the road. A dilapidated, one-story wood house stands in the



middle, its walls gray with age. Most of the windows have long since been broken, and the front door hangs askew on broken hinges. The boards on the front porch are warped with age and splay out from the entrance, almost like a pair of claws grasping for prey to shove into its maw.

Even the forest seems to withdraw from the house, leaving only knee-high ragged weeds growing in open ground. The one exception is an ancient oak tree off to one side. The tree looks more dead than alive, and a thick branch about eight feet above the ground points toward the house. Any detective examining the branch who makes a Notice roll at -2 spots what looks like an old rope burn in the bark of the limb about halfway down its length.

Anyone peering through the windows can make a Notice roll. On a success, he spots someone wearing a hoodie and jeans crawl quickly past one of the doorways inside. He doesn't get enough of a look to be sure it's Lonny, but the clothing does seem to match the description.

No Parking

Opposite the tree sits Lonny's car. The drive up obviously took a toll on it. Its paint is scratched in numerous areas, and it sports two flat tires. The windows to the car are up, but the doors are unlocked. (Lonny actually arrived last night, but quickly fell victim to Agnes and her children.)

A detective who decides to search the car can make a Notice roll. On a success, he finds a duffle bag with a few days' worth of clothes in the car, as well as a pump shotgun with a pistol grip and a barrel that looks slightly less than legal (Range 5/10/20, Damage 1-3d6, RoF 1, Shots 4). There's also a box holding 16 rounds of 9mm ammunition, but no sign of the pistol.

INSIDE THE RATS' NEST

The characters can enter through any of the house's doors or windows. The front door is jammed, but open enough to allow one detective at a time to slip through, while the back door requires a successful Strength roll to force. Climbing through a window carries some risk thanks to the broken glass, and requires an Agility roll to avoid getting slashed for 1d6 damage.

Inside, the house is bare of any furnishings except for a few pieces of broken wood and two pot-bellied iron stoves, both missing their doors and stovepipes. Leaves, broken glass, and other debris covers the floor near each window, giving any Stealth rolls a -2 penalty. There's surprisingly little dust, but an investigator making a Tracking roll observes a fairly copious amount of small animal droppings, and a raise identifies them as rat or squirrel.

Peeping Toms

Should an investigator have spotted someone through the windows and the team check that area, a Tracking roll does reveal drag marks, as if a person had been crawling there. Following the drag marks quickly turns up the hoodie, then pants, and other articles of clothing. Searching the pants turns up both Lonny's wallet and the keys to his car.

A hero making a Notice roll while examining the clothing finds dozens of tiny tears and rips. A raise on the roll finds blood inside the clothing at nearly every one of the holes.

What the detective actually saw was the last of Lonny's remains being dragged across the floor as a mass of rats picked the flesh from his bones.

BLACK'S BACK

Regardless of how the team gets inside the house, Agnes is laired in one of the last rooms they explore. She rests atop a pile of debris and bones she's assembled as a nest, and sits up to hiss threateningly at the group when they enter the room. A swarm of rats surges from underneath her to defend their mother.

Agnes lets her children engage the heroes first, casting *damage field* first, then using either *confusion* or *entangle* to confound her foes. Her *entangle* has no effect on the rat swarms, so she doesn't hesitate to use it on groups investigators who're already overrun with the biting rodents.

All the while, she tries to utter threats, but her malformed features make it nearly impossible to understand her. Heroes who make Notice rolls at -2 can pick out utterances that might be "...kill...", "...revenge...", or "...again...", but it's impossible to be certain.

Once she's engaged in physical combat, she alternates between her powers and claws as most appropriate. Both she and her offspring fight to the death. Killing Agnes causes the swarms to disperse, as the rats flee back under the house and into the walls.

 **Agnes Black:** See page 19.

- **Rat Swarms (1 per room occupied by heroes):** Use the stats for Swarm in *Savage Worlds*.

Leaving So Soon?

Should the detectives decide to flee before defeating Agnes, they discover their vehicle surrounded by a huge swarm of rats chewing through the rubber on their tires. Even if they fight their way through to get inside, the engine won't start thanks to Agnes' Haywire Special Ability.

If the characters try to shelter in their vehicle, once the tires are destroyed (2d6 rounds), the rats move to the other soft parts on the vehicle, such as the seals

holding the windshield in place. Gnawing through this takes another 2d6 rounds, at which point the horde pours into the vehicle.

With the same Special Ability preventing their cellphones or other communication devices from working, there is no escape. The only way out is to kill Agnes.

AFTERMATH

Once Agnes has been defeated, her remains rapidly deteriorate as the decades her magic has held at bay reclaim her body. Soon, all that is left are some small pieces of bone, dust, and a single oversized incisor. A search of the house does eventually turn up most of Lonny's skeleton — and most importantly his largely intact skull.

With the skull, the team can establish the deceased's identity through dental records, which releases the bond and saves the Dotson family home. George and Alice are understandably heartbroken at the loss of their wayward son, but at least they still have a roof over their heads. Of course, exactly *how* the detectives explain Lonny's death and the state of his remains is up to them.

As to Agnes, her soul is now trapped in the hanging tree, unless the investigators destroyed it, as she looks for a new body to inhabit. And it's likely there are still a *lot* of her children crawling around Black Hollow...



AGNES BLACK

Once a powerful witch, Agnes' spirit was trapped in the body of her rat familiar after her death at the hands of the mob in 1857. Her magic suffused the creature, causing it to grow to an unnatural size and take on an unnerving appearance. Most of its fur has fallen out, leaving it covered in wrinkled pink flesh mottled in spots by patches of grayish skin. Its face has slowly morphed over the years to where traces of Agnes's features are vaguely recognizable, and its foreclaws are now distinctly human-like hands at the end of hideously long forelegs.

In spite of her strange form, Agnes still access to some of her black magic. She prefers to work through the hordes of rats she's spawned over the years, and all the Trappings of her powers are related to them. *Damage field* surrounds her in a swarm of rats that bite anyone who gets too close; *entangle* summons piles of the creatures to trip and otherwise hinder anyone inside the area, and *confusion* causes large numbers to crawl over the victim momentarily distracting him. If she's forced to a direct confrontation, she fights like, well, a cornered rat.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Knowledge (Occult) d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d10

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

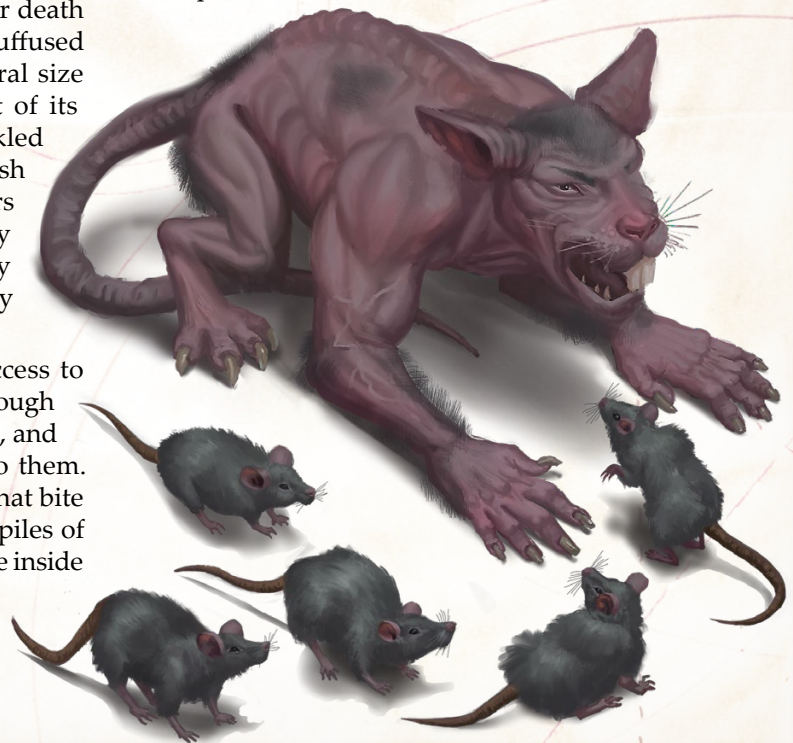
Hindrances: —

Edges: Arcane Background (Black Magic)

Powers: *Confusion, damage field, and entangle.* **Power Points:** 25

Special Abilities:

- **Beast Friend:** Agnes can communicate with and control any of her progeny as a free action.
- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Fear (-2):** Anyone seeing Agnes in her ratform must make a Fear check at -2.
- **Haywire:** Agnes Black's spirit bends the laws of reality within 100 yards of her. Electronic equipment like a cell phone, computer, thermal imaging scope, or other such device is utterly unreliable. Cameras take indistinct pictures, cell phones can't get a signal, and even flashlights flicker unpredictably.
- **Size -2:** Agnes is trapped in the body of an enormous rat.
- **Supernatural Vitality:** +2 to recover from Shaken; immune to poison, disease, and aging; half-damage from non-magical attacks.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Agnes suffers normal damage from weapons made of iron.
- **Weakness (Salt):** Anyone carrying at least a tablespoon or more of salt receives +2 Armor against Agnes's attacks and +2 to resist any of her powers.



Rippers

Resurrected

FOXED

A *Rippers Resurrected* adventure for heroes of at least Seasoned Rank. With thanks to Robin English-Bircher, Tomas Lopez III, and Andrés Duárte.

RETURN OF THE FOX

Passing through Tokyo, the Rippers stop to assist the Tokyo Lodge and unwittingly become drawn into a horrifying scheme of revenge. A kitsune—a fox demon—named Tamamo stalks the Tokyo Rippers for an affront from years ago. It possesses one of their members to trap them and the heroes behind a mystical wall, then begins to pick them off one by one.

ACT ONE: THE TRAP IS LAID

Traveling through Asia on business of their own, the heroes telegraph ahead to the Tokyo lodge for accommodations. Lafcadio Hearn, the famed journalist and folklorist who serves as lodge chairman, warmly welcomes them. This adventure may occur in conjunction with “The Black Death” and “Insidious Mr. King” from the original Rippers Plot Point Campaign, “The Departed” in the *Rippers Resurrected Game Master’s Handbook*, or “Big Trouble in Kowloon” and “Mermaid” in *Frightful Expeditions*.

Read the following to your players as their travelers arrive in Tokyo:

Dark clouds and the threat of rain greet you as your ship pulls into port. Steamships of many nations crowd Yokohama Harbor. An ironclad Japanese destroyer passes your vessel, heading to Korea to take part in the ongoing Sino-Japanese War. Foreigners and Japanese crowd the docks as you disembark. Dockworkers bustle about in happi coats and hakama trousers, looking little

different than they did under the shogun. Most Japanese passengers and merchants wear tailored Western fashions. The nearby train station stands symbolic of Japan’s rapid modernization.

Waiting for the heroes at the station, another symbol of Japan’s growing equality with the West looms before them. Burly, bushy-bearded James Martin Long, an American member of the local Slayers, wears a plain kimono over a collared shirt—an incongruous style the heroes noticed among some Japanese men that looks even more odd on the foreigner. A straw boater tops his ensemble and a long, narrow bundle lies slung across his back. He bows in greeting and joins the heroes for the short train ride into Tokyo proper. If the Rippers ask about his bundle, he replies,

“This? It’s a samurai sword. A katana. Sharpest, most powerful sword in the world. Wearing a sword in public is banned. They did away with the whole samurai caste decades ago. Did you know that they used to test katana by cutting condemned criminals in half? My gracious, Japan once was a land of true warriors. I can’t help but feel they’ve lost some of their edge since they gave up the samurai ways. Get it? Edge?”

SKILL: KNOWLEDGE (YOKAI)

A word used indiscriminately in Japanese to describe any supernatural monster, the term yōkai encompasses demonic oni, sorcerous and lycanthropic kitsune, vampiric kappa, and even bizarre tsukumogami. The Knowledge (Yōkai) skill gives heroes insights into native Japanese creatures, but not related foreign monsters.

Long laughs as he lectures the heroes about samurai. This continues throughout the rest of the trip.

Arriving at the Tokyo station, the travelers find Meiko—a beautiful Japanese woman in a white, flower-motif kimono—waiting for them. She carries an old-fashioned oil-paper umbrella, unfurled against the coming rain. She briefly smiles and bows to the heroes. Then, glowering, she hands Long a note and says,

“Our illustrious leader sends word that a gaggle of yōkai are making trouble not far from here. If you would be so obliging, would you come join us in hunting down the creatures?”

🐾 **James Martin Long:** See page 27.

🐾 **Meiko:** See page 28.

Tsukumogami Amok!

Hopping into waiting rickshaws, the heroes swiftly travel to where the rest of the Tokyo Lodge awaits. Lafcadio Hearn and Hirai Kogoro guard two exits of a narrow urban alley in which a pack of tsukumogami—common household implements turned into mischievous monsters—creates havoc. Meanwhile, Abeno Hiroshi tries to corral the yōkai toward them.

Hearn politely introduces himself and Hirai, angling his face to hide his blind, discolored left eye. He explains that Abeno is using a *barrier* spell to drive the yōkai into the Rippers’ trap. He adds,

LAFCADIO HEARN (1850–1904)

The son of Irish and Greek parents who abandoned him with relatives as a youth, Lafcadio Hearn grew up with a rootless wanderlust that led him to travel the world. He worked the murder beat for Cincinnati newspapers, debunked New Orleans’s famous Voodoo queen Marie Laveau, lived in the West Indies, and eventually settled in Japan.

Becoming a naturalized Japanese citizen and marrying the daughter of a former samurai family, Hearn found lasting fame as one of the earliest Western writers to record Japan’s fascinating ghost stories and folklore. His most famous work, *Kwaidan: Stories and Studies of Strange Things*, eventually inspires an award-winning movie in 1965.

“I know the Rosicrucians fell out of favor with the European lodges, but Japan is different. Before Emperor Meiji dismissed them all as unbefitting an enlightened, modern ruler, Abeno’s family protected the imperial household for 900 years. Magic is part of Japanese life.”

Hearn defers to the heroes in attacking the tsukumogami. His near-blindness makes him ineffective as a combat leader



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and the Tokyo lodge lacks experience in working together. Anyone questioning this irregularity may make a Common Knowledge roll to remember that the Tokyo lodge is over five years old, so this lack of coordination seems odd.

Assign each player control of one or more of the Tokyo Rippers. This not only speeds up the battle but also gives the players insight into the lodge members' hidden strengths and motivations, an important component of the next act.

The tsukumogami attack with suicidal disregard for their safety, but not foolishly. They hide behind corners and trees, scramble over rooftops, and otherwise try to catch foes by surprise. They primarily target visiting heroes, deliberately sparing Abeno (who is already possessed by Tamamo) and Long (whom Tamamo plots to murder back at the lodge).

In the unlikely event the heroes choose to capture a tsukumogami, it happily informs them,

"Tamamo-no-Mae promised us rewards if we helped her. Rendered human fat to light the flames of the chōchin-obake! Strings of human intestines for the koto-furunushi! Soon she will be Empress of the new Japan—and spread strife throughout the world!"

When the battle is done, rain starts pouring down in earnest. Hearn suggests they get to the lodge so the heroes can rest.

TOKYO LODGE

Rank: 3

Location: Hibiya Ward, Tokyo, Japan

Modifier: +2

Facilities: Dining & Meeting Rooms, Gymnasium, Library, Sleeping Quarters

Edges: Mysterious Benefactor, Mystical Location, Purpose Built

Commissioned by powerful political and business leaders close to the Imperial throne, the Rippers lodge in Tokyo struggles to become the world leader its sponsors envisioned. The loss of the experienced initial recruits to Tamamo-no-Mae's machinations set the lodge back a generation.

The storeroom adjacent to the long guest quarters serves as an armory. It contains a full set of samurai armor, three sets of normal katana and matching short swords, a Japanese bow and quiver of arrows, three pistols, and two shotguns. Tamamo-no-Mae locks and bolts it from the inside, then uses *intangibility* to leave the room before she kills Long.

The storeroom adjacent to the small bedroom contains various artifacts and relics from throughout Japan, many of which have not been catalogued. It contains a hermetic chest, lion's tongue, martyr's cross (from the Tokugawa purge of Christians), two scrolls of *dispel* written in Japanese kanji, and one scroll of *speak language* in Chinese.

☞ **Abeno Hiroshi:** See page 28.

☞ **Hirai Kogoro:** See page 28.

☞ **Lafcadio Hearn:** See page 27.

- **Tsukumogami (1 of each type, plus 1 per hero):** See page 26. For the additional yōkai, the Game Master may choose types to best challenge the group.

Introductions All Around

On the way to the Tokyo lodge, Hearn asks in his light Irish brogue what the Rippers know of kitsune. Depending on what the players themselves know of Japanese legend, Hearn may relate that kitsune are foxes who have learned magic, gaining the ability to shapeshift into humans or possess them. They live near-immortal lifespans. Evil kitsune particularly enjoy possessing humans, who wreak havoc by eating their families out of house and home or driving their hosts mad.

If the Rippers ask about Tamamo-no-Mae, or ask Hearn why he speaks of fox demons, he replies,

"Tamamo-no-Mae is a powerful kitsune—a fox-sorceress. For 3,000 years she has plagued the royal courts of Asia, seducing some wise emperor or king and driving him into despotism. She last appeared 800 years ago in Kyoto as a concubine of the Emperor Toba. One of Abeno's ancestors drove her out and she lost much of her power. She spent centuries recovering and is now trying to worm her way into the court of the Meiji emperor."

"Most of the Tokyo lodge died fighting her two years ago. She licked her wounds for a while, but now she's back. I'm trying my best with the current recruits, but I'm an investigator—not a fighter. We've acquired a magical sword called the Kogitsune-Maru that we think might finish her, but she's keeping us busy racing around Tokyo battling lesser yōkai such as kappa, oni, and these dratted tsukumogami."

ACT TWO: THE HUNTERS HUNTED

Refer to the lodge map nearby when the heroes arrive. The Tokyo lodge is a grand building built in the Western style, not uncommon in the capital's developing neighborhoods. A wrought-iron fence surrounds the perimeter. The heroes enter the building through the main foyer, removing their shoes and donning slippers per Japanese custom. Most of the Tokyo Rippers move on to attend to various duties as Hearn conducts a tour for the visiting heroes.

A Breath Before Dying

In the marble-tiled hallway, Hearn stops for a moment to show the heroes memorial photos of his fallen comrades: Abeno's father and mentor Abeno Genzo, aged samurai



Asakura Kenshiro, Prussian army officer and Old Worlder Ernst Stauffel, and Sir Brendan Sommers of Frazer's Fighters. He conducts them through the library and into the double sleeping quarters.

Meiko sleeps in the upper room with the stuffed chair and sofa. Hearn assures the heroes that she will happily share the room with any female members of their party. Hearn, Abeno, and Hirai live offsite while Long sleeps in the bedroom adjacent to the kitchen. Hearn asks the heroes to join the Tokyo Rippers in the formal meeting room once they have settled in.

As they choose beds and stow their belongings, any Rippers who spent Power Points during the battle with the tsukumogami find themselves suddenly refreshed. Success on a Knowledge (Occult) or similar skill roll suggests it may be due to a sudden influx of magical energy, the tapping of a ley line, or something similar—but can discern no concrete answer. It is in fact because Tamamo-no-Mae, possessing Abeno Hiroshi, has just slain James Martin Long and activated a *kekka*, an exceptionally strong *barrier*, all around the building. Anyone attempting to go outside the wrought-iron fence finds themselves blocked by an invisible wall.

Then There Were Four...

When the heroes join the Tokyo Rippers in the meeting room, they find Hearn, Abeno, Hirai, and Meiko waiting for them—but not Long. Meiko is whisking up a bowl of green tea while a pot of normal black tea sits waiting on the table. Hearn invites the heroes to sit down and help him plan how to strike back at Tamamo-no-Mae. He knows the heroes have their own affairs to worry about, but apologetically hopes they might at least advise the Tokyo lodge members on how to proceed. He invites the heroes to speak of their accomplishments, which acts as one or more Dramatic Interludes (see *Savage Worlds*).

The scene continues this way until one of the visiting heroes asks after James Martin Long. If no player questions Long's prolonged absence, Hearn asks if anyone knows what's keeping the American. Abeno picks up the teapot to pour some black tea and the player character with the highest Notice—including bonuses from Edges and Rippertech—spots a slip of white paper that had been sitting under the teapot. Written on the slip in drying, browning blood is a looming Japanese numeral four (四) signed with a fox's pawprint.

The Tokyo Rippers present recoil in fear, except for Hearn, who can barely see the slip and demands to be told of its

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contents. The Tokyo lodge members immediately conclude that Tamamo-no-Mae is inside the building. They also conclude that Long is most likely dead; one pronunciation of the character for *four* is not only a homophone for the word for *death*, but it is also the number of Tokyo Rippers left if Long is dead.

If he's questioned, Abeno denies having seen the slip of paper before. This is a lie, as he is possessed by Tamamo-no-Mae and palmed the paper into place while everyone looked at whoever asked about Long.

👤 **Abeno Hiroshi:** See page 28.

👤 **Hirai Kogoro:** See page 25.

👤 **Lafcadio Hearn:** See page 27.

👤 **Meiko:** See page 28.

Fox Hunt

Tamamo attempts to persuade the heroes into splitting up in order to pick them off one by one, switching hosts and/or running away whenever exposed or outgunned. In this, she relies on the Tokyo Rippers' own dark secrets and shames to manipulate them into making mistakes. The following events inform all possible courses of action.

Long's Corpse

James Martin Long's headless body lies in the kitchen, between the counters and tables on which food sits. Arterial spray from his beheading coats the food. The first heroes to enter the kitchen should make a Fear roll to resist Fear/Nausea from the gruesome sight. When Tamamo-no-Mae and her host enter the kitchen, she cannot help wolfing down the blood-spattered food—the sight of which provokes another Fear roll.

Kogitsune-Maru

Forged by the legendary swordsmith Munechika in partnership with the benevolent fox-kami Inari, Kogitsune-Maru is technically a tachi, a predecessor of the katana with a straighter blade. It functions as a longsword that inflicts +4 damage to kitsune and +2 damage to other yōkai. The sword is missing from the armory adjacent to the guest bedroom where Meiko sleeps.

A dark ritual focused on the sword empowers the kekkai that entraps the heroes in the lodge's grounds. Hidden behind the bullseye in the gymnasium stands the Kogitsune-Maru, speared into the floor with Long's head spitted on its blade. Finding the sword requires a raise on a Notice roll at -4 unless a player specifically states they're searching the straw, or wonders aloud why there's a pile of straw on the floor. Part of the ritual automatically alerts Tamamo-no-Mae if someone tampers with the sword.

The head and the Kogitsune-Maru's hilt are wrapped in ofuda, paper talismans usually used in exorcisms, but here perverted by being written in blood and backwards (anyone who reads Japanese can see the characters are reversed). The ofuda burn slowly, taking about four hours. As they burn, the kekkai collapses. If the heroes make attempts to *dispel* the ritual, it is an opposed roll against Tamamo-no-Mae's Spellcasting. "Disarming" the profane implement is a Dramatic Task. A

catastrophic failure results in the explosion of a fiery 3d6 Large Burst Template blast centered on the sword; this lights the straw in the gymnasium on fire, possibly endangering the entire building.

The Hermetic Barrier

The kekkai is an invisible barrier of unholy energy. As such, it cannot be climbed. The kekkai stands 5" (30 feet) high and surrounds the lodge. It regenerates whenever a section is broken, acting on Tamamo-no-Mae's Action Card. Success on a Knowledge (Occult) roll tips off the hero that Tamamo is also trapped inside while the barrier exists. Rain pours outside, adding +1 to Stealth rolls due to Dim light but also adding +2 to Tracking rolls due to mud.

Plans and Machinations

The players' choices largely dictate how events proceed from here. Below we discuss likely plans and reactions for Tamamo-no-Mae and the Tokyo lodge members.

Tamamo-no-Mae

The kitsune attempts to misdirect the heroes at every chance, preferring flight to fighting. Her ultimate goal is to avenge herself on Lafcadio Hearn by taking away everything he cares about—killing the other members of the Tokyo lodge and destroying the lodge itself—before murdering him.

Assuming none of the players beat her to it, Tamamo (in Abeno Hiroshi) suggests splitting up to search the house more effectively. She attempts to pair Abeno with the perceived weakest visiting hero. If no one falls for splitting the party, she suggests they check each other for signs of *kitsunetsuki*, knowing Meiko and Hirai will object. If Long's corpse has already been discovered, she attempts to implicate Meiko as the murderer, pointing out her skill with the blade and mysterious background.

The kitsune has a tenuous hold on Abeno Hiroshi and abandons him as soon as she's discovered, attempting to possess Meiko when possible. Remember, Tamamo's grudge is against the Tokyo Rippers, not the visiting heroes. She attacks the latter only in order to get them out of the way of her vengeance. She attempts to possess a player character only as a last resort.

Whenever possible, Tamamo-no-Mae uses her Improved Extraction Edge and her elusive fox form to run away, running under tables or smashing through windows to get outside. If cornered, she transforms into a wolf-sized four-tailed fox and fights with tooth, claw, and magic.

Abeno Hiroshi

Once freed of Tamamo, Abeno spends the rest of the night embarrassed and distraught, with a level of Fatigue. His ancestors sometimes married kitsune in ancient times, and he fears this strain of fox blood leaves him vulnerable to further manipulation by the villainess. Constantly second-guessing himself, he offers no advice about magic unless prompted. But Abeno's attitude is Friendly, and he bends over backwards to prove he is no longer possessed.

Laftadio Hearn

The leader of the Tokyo lodge feels overwhelmed by Tamamo's persistent campaign against the Tokyo Rippers. While he tries to be helpful, his poor eyesight makes him a liability in a fight. His attitude is Helpful. He agrees to any suggestions by the heroes that do not violate propriety, and success on a Persuasion roll at +2 convinces him to go along with more radical plans. He pleads with the heroes to save his family no matter what.

If, after two rounds, the visitors have not discovered that the Kogitsune-Maru sword powers the kekkai, Hearn suggests the power and size of the kekkai surrounding the lodge must be linked to a magical item. After Tamamo changes hosts for the second time, Hearn suggests the *dispel* power as a counteragent to her *puppet* power possession. He suddenly remembers the *dispel* scrolls in the storeroom.

Hirai Kogoro

Unknown persons implanted the haunted young aesthete with an oni's organs after a particularly debauched bender, leaving unsightly scars on his torso. Paranoid, he assumes visiting Rippers will execute or imprison him if they discover he received his Rippertech unwillingly, fearing they—like himself—see him as tainted.

Hirai's attitude toward any suggestion to examine each other for signs of kitsunetsuki or other mind-reading is Uncooperative. If the Rippers split up to search the house, he tries to attach himself to someone of similar rank and proclivities—either the hero with the highest Status or the male character with the highest Charisma. He uses his infernal fascia Rippertech with great reluctance.

Meiko

The deadly young woman's history as a former assassin went to the grave with Asakura Kenshiro, one of the fallen members of the Tokyo lodge. Meiko's attitude toward any suggestion to examine each other for signs of kitsunetsuki is Hostile, even if a woman offers to conduct the examination alone. She offers to undergo any other trials that do not reveal her criminal history.

If Tamamo possesses her, she uses the first opportunity offered by winning a Spirit roll to commit suicide, denying the kitsune her swordsmanship but playing straight into Tamamo's plans. She loathed James Martin Long in life and finds it difficult to speak well of him in death.

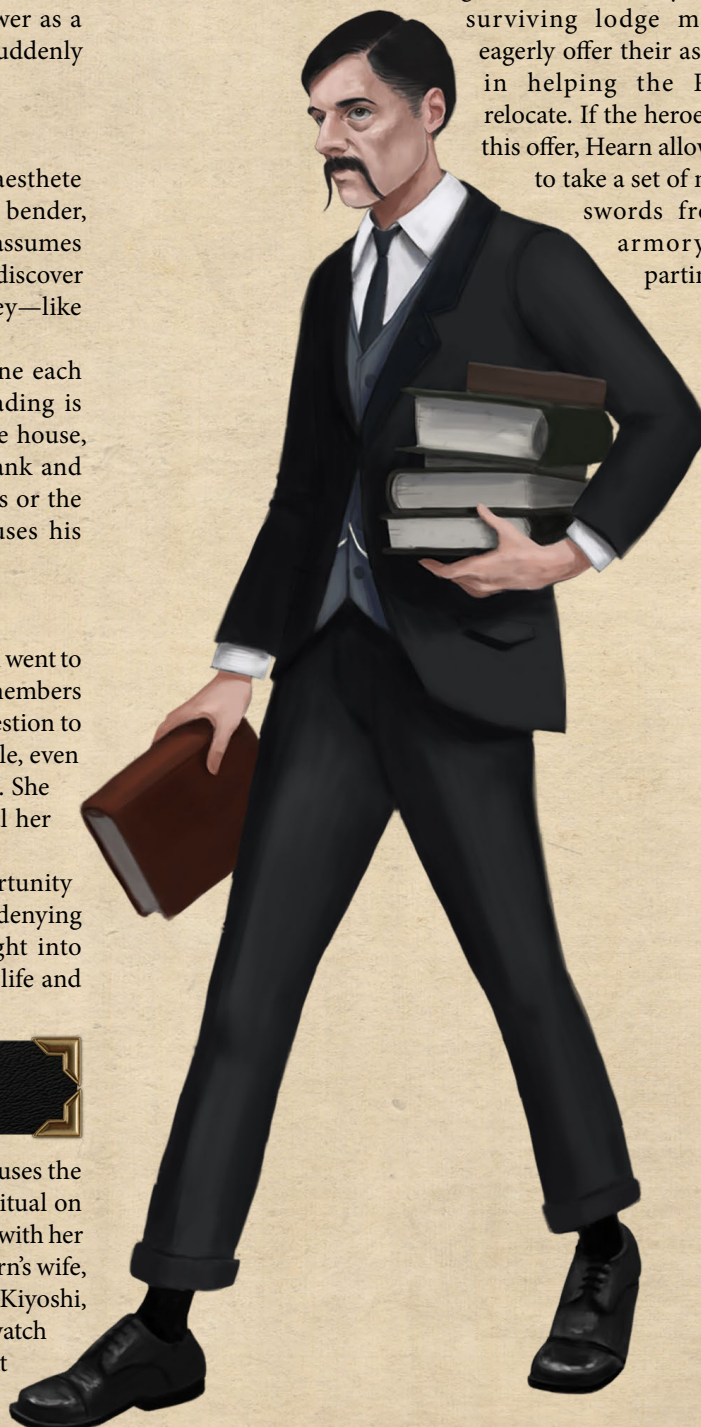
AFTERMATH

In the unlikely case Tamamo-no-Mae successfully causes the deaths of Abeno, Hirai, and Meiko, she dispels the ritual on Kogitsune-Maru and flees the lodge, taking the sword with her if possible. The next step in her plan is to murder Hearn's wife, Koizumi Setsu, and their four children: Kazuo, Iwao, Kiyoshi, and Suzuko. Hearn immediately flees to his home to watch over his family. Tamamo-no-Mae attacks later that night, allowing her enemy to wallow in his agony.

Game Masters may use the Country House map to represent Hearn's home in the Tokyo suburbs (real estate being cheap for foreigners) or have him relocate his family to the lodge to protect them from Tamamo-no-Mae's machinations. She joins forces with a pair of hulking, demonic oni—use the Horned God profile in the *Rippers Resurrected Game Master's Handbook*—to besiege the building, fighting with far more reckless, vicious abandon than she did the first night.

If the Rippers defeat Tamamo-no-Mae before she finishes murdering the Tokyo lodge members, Hearn asks for the heroes' assistance in rebuilding his branch of the organization. He offers to tutor them in Japanese, and even gifts them with

Kogitsune-Maru if they stay. Any surviving lodge members eagerly offer their assistance in helping the Rippers relocate. If the heroes refuse this offer, Hearn allows them to take a set of matched swords from the armory as a parting gift.



Rippers Resurrected

ALLIES & ENEMIES

Finally, we provide all the dramatis personae a Game Master needs for this Savage Tale. The  denotes a Wild Card.

Tsukumogami

Buddhist and Shinto philosophy posits that even inanimate objects can possess souls that may awaken if humans cherish and revere the objects too strongly. True or not, tsukumogami are grotesque—if usually mischievous—monsters born from common implements.

All tsukumogami share the following base statistics, with specific types having additional Special Abilities as listed below.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Taunt d10

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

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from Called Shots; does not suffer wound modifiers; immune to poison and disease.
- **Toughness +2:** Tsukumogami have wooden or woven bodies.
- **Size -1:** Tsukumogami stand no taller than three feet.
- **Small:** Attackers suffer a -2 penalty when attacking a tsukumogami.

Boroboroton (Tattered Futon)

Old, unkempt sleeping mats, boroboroton try to wrap themselves around people and strangle them.

- **Brawler:** Boroboroton add +2 to melee attack damage.
- **Bruiser:** Boroboroton roll a d8 when they get a raise on melee or grappling attacks.

Chōchin-obake (Paper Lantern Ghost)

Floating paper lanterns with gape-mouthed faces on one side, chōchin-obake breathe gout of fire.

- **Fiery Breath:** Chōchin-obake breathe fire using the Cone Template. Every target within the cone may make an Agility roll at -2 (or -4 if in an enclosed space like a narrow alley) to avoid the flames. Those who fail take 2d10 damage and must check to see if they catch fire.
- **Fly:** Pace 8, Climb -2.

Kasa-obake (Umbrella Fiend)

Cyclopean creatures that hop on one leg, kasa-obake attempt to Taunt opponents by licking them with their lolling tongues before grappling their foes, flying up into the air, and dropping them.

- **Fly:** Pace 8, Climb -2.
- **Oil-Paper Wings:** While a called shot to a kasa-obake's oil-paper canopy does no additional damage, a Wound means the yōkai cannot fly.

Koto-furunushi (Old Master Koto)

A zither stumping around upright on two little legs, the koto-furunushi slices and entangles foes with its silk strings.

- **Entangling Strings:** The koto-furunushi gains +2 on its Fighting and Agility rolls to grapple opponents.
- **Slicing Strings:** The koto-furunushi cuts with its strings in melee for Str+d6 damage, and may also do so on subsequent rounds after grappling a foe.

Tamamo-no-Mae

A kitsune's magical power lies in its tails, one of which grows for every hundred years of the kitsune's life until it reaches a maximum of nine. When Emperor Toba discovered Tamamo's treachery, his bravest samurai tracked her down and cut off all but one tail. She waited 800 years to return to her full strength, only to lose four precious tails when the Tokyo Rippers stopped her from marrying the Japanese crown prince.

Tamamo-no-Mae possesses three forms: a beautiful human with a single fox's tail, a wolf-sized fox with five tails, and a normal red fox. She can use *disguise* to hide the tail present in her human form.

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d12, Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Gambling d10, Notice d12, Persuasion d10, Spellcasting d12+2, Stealth d10, Streetwise d10

Cha: +4; **Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Arrogant, Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Alertness, Arcane Background (Magic), Very Attractive, Fleet-Footed, Improved Block, Improved Dodge, Improved Extraction, Improved Level Headed, Quick

Special Abilities:

- **Arcane Background (Magic):** Tamamo-no-Mae has 30 Power Points and knows the *barrier*, *bolt* (foxfire), *deflection* (tails bat away attacks), *detect/conceal arcana*, *disguise*, *intangibility*, *puppet*, and *shape change* powers.
- **Giant Fox Form:** As an action, the kitsune may shift between forms at will. In her wolf-sized fox form, Tamamo may bite for Str+d6 damage. With a raise on her attack roll, she automatically hits her target's most weakly armored location.
- **Natural Fox Form:** As an action, the kitsune may shift between forms at will. As a normal-sized fox, Tamamo may bite for Str+d4 damage. She is Size -2 and attackers subtract 2 from their rolls to hit her.
- **Possession:** Tamamo-no-Mae's possession is a trapping of her *puppet* power. She shifts into her fox form and crawls down the victim's throat, shrinking and going as loose-limbed as a fur boa in order to fit. This grotesque sight calls for a Fear test at -2 when first seen.
- **Weakness (Tails):** Tamamo-no-Mae's magical strength lies in her tails. A successful Called Shot at -2 to a tail severs it, robbing her of 5 Power Points.

TOKYO RIPPERS

Hand out the Tokyo Rippers' stats to the players to control them during the battle against the tsukumogami. The Game Master, however, roleplays them during the murder investigation at the Tokyo lodge, preferably collecting their character sheets back from the players.

Lafcadio Hearn

A world-traveling journalist who settled in Japan five years ago, Hearn also goes by his legal Japanese name of Koizumi Yakumo. Familiar with Japanese folklore and New Orleans Voodoo, Lafcadio Hearn usually serves as the Tokyo lodge's strategist. He recently published the international bestseller *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan*.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Witches) d8, Knowledge (Yōkai) d10, Notice d8

Status: 3; **Reason:** 7

Cha: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Bad Eyes (Major—blind in left eye with bad vision in right), Heroic

Edges: Charms & Wards, Down-to-Earth, Gone Native, Renown, World Traveler

Gear: Magnifying glass and small spyglass (to aid his weak eye), pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, RoF 1, Shots 6), sword cane (Str+d4, Parry +1).

James Martin Long

An American Slayer obsessed with Japanese culture, Long has not been in Japan for enough time to apply for citizenship like Hearn. His fixation on Japan's samurai past at the expense of its present alienates his Japanese allies.

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Knowledge (Vampires) d6, Knowledge (Yōkai) d6, Notice d6

Status: 2; **Reason:** 6

Cha: -1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8

Hindrances: Delusional (Minor, obsessed with feudal Japan), Habit (Minor—can't stop talking about feudal Japan)

Edges: Brawny, Improved Sweep

Gear: Katana (Str+d6+2, AP 2).



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Meiko

Quick and resourceful, the mysterious swordswoman known only as Meiko was recruited into the Tokyo lodge by the fallen former samurai Asakura Kenshiro, to whom she feels a debt beyond his death. Something haunts her, though, keeping her aloof from her allies. Ornate yakuza tattoos cover her upper left arm and torso, obvious signs of her shameful past to anyone familiar with Japan.

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Stealth d8, Streetwise d8, Taunt d6, Throwing d10

Status: 1; **Reason:** 5

Cha: +4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Hindrances: Disowned, Vengeful (Major), Vow (Major—live up to Asakura's example)

Edges: Acrobat, Improved First Strike, Improved Frenzy, Level Headed, Quick Draw, Very Attractive

Gear: Sarashi (under-kimono bindings, Armor +1), shikomizue/sword umbrella (Str+d4+2, Parry +1, AP 2).

Hirai Kogoro

An admirer of the Decadent movement from a wealthy family that owns a conglomerate of diverse businesses, Hirai prefers to shoot his way out of danger and only reluctantly uses his Rippertech.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

Status: 4; **Reason:** 3

Cha: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Notorious, Oversensitive, Screamer

Edges: Filthy Rich, Rippertech, Socialite, Two-Fisted

Gear: 2× pistols (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, RoF 1, Shots 6).

Special Abilities:

- **Rippertech:** Infernal Fascia.

Abeno Hiroshi

A descendant of the Abe clan of onmyōji diviners and exorcists, Abeno Hiroshi chafes at his family's fallen position under Emperor Meiji. He knows too well the power of Japan's yōkai: A kitsune fox-woman married one of his own distant ancestors and her blood still affects his family.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Knowledge (Yōkai) d10, Notice d8, Spellcasting d10

Status: 2; **Reason:** 6

Cha: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Curious, Supernatural Weakness (−2 to rolls to counter fox magic)

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), New Power, Power Points

Powers: *Barrier, bolt, detect/conceal arcana, dispel, divination.* **Power Points:** 15

Gear: Geomantic compass, poppets, other implements of magic.

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