



DEGREES OF HORROR



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Ed's Dedication: To Tracey, who lets me play.

Preston's Dedication: To my parents, whose love and unconditional support still lift me.

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Cause of Forest Fire Still Unknown



*The Department of Agriculture has not announced the results of an investigation into the cause of last week's fire southwest of Pinebox. No logging companies reported being active in the area.
Photo credit: U.S. Department of Agriculture*

PINEBOX, TX - Officials with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Land Management say their investigation into last week's fire southwest of Pinebox is inconclusive. The fire was extinguished before its discovery last Thursday. Only ash and badly burned timber remain in an area roughly one mile in diameter.

"This coulda been a real bad one," said Martin Phelps, General Manager at Loblolly Timber. "This drought has been hard enough on the trees. All those dried pine needles are tinder waiting for the right spark. I'm less surprised that we had a fire than I am that it stopped when it did."

When county officials arrived on site Friday morning for an investigation, they found several officials from two federal offices already on hand. The federal agencies informed county fire investigators that they would be taking the lead in the investigation.

don't understand why nobody smelled smoke. The smoke from a fire that size should have carried for miles and miles," said Golan County Judge Quinn.

Judge Quinn flatly denied rumors of military vehicles from the Base 10 wilderness training camp coming or going from the fire zone. "I know folks like to speculate, but let's not turn this into some circus like the flying saucer in New Mexico. It's just a bunch of ole' burned up pine trees."

The burned area is owned by Loblolly Timber which has announced the intent to sell the affected area. According to Mr. Phelps, the company's loss comes to well over one million dollars.

"No timber company wants to replant now, not with the drought," said Judge Quinn. The judge would not comment on rumors that the federal government might buy the ruined area from

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The *Degrees of Horror* Plot Point Campaign draws the heroes into strange and dangerous mysteries at East Texas University, beginning when they are Freshmen and continuing all the way through their Senior year. These adventures should occur in order as the heroes advance through the Ranks, interspersed with *Savage Tales* and your own adventures. You shouldn't feel any need to rush them—let the heroes control the pace as long as they're moving forward and having a good time.

When used with the *Savage Tales*, randomly generated missions, and other stand-alone 12 to Midnight adventures, your campaign will take on a unique life of its own.

Degrees of Horror is broken into four sections which correspond to character Rank:

FRESHMAN YEAR

1: Sweat Lodge: The students are thrown together during mandatory Freshman orientation, where they soon find out there is more to college life than parties and co-eds. The Freshmen get their first taste of the supernatural. In the aftermath, Dr. Maclanahan and his protégé Jackson Green vouch for the young students and take them under their wings.

2: Return to Roost: Plagued by recurring nightmares of their Sweat Lodge encounter with the female ghost, the heroes return to the Roost

for resolution. Following clues from their dreams, they learn the ghost's name—Nina—and the treasure she entrusts to their safekeeping. Unfortunately the item is cursed, bringing trouble of both the supernatural and campus security variety.

3: The Needler: It's final exam week, a time to study and a time to party! The heroes receive a panicked call from Jackson Green that is interrupted by gunfire. They find their friend's rental house trashed and Jackson missing. A trail of blood leads the heroes to the nest of a gravely wounded monster but no trace of Jackson. In the aftermath, the mail delivers a 60 year old photograph of Nina.

SOPHOMORE YEAR

4: The Big Haunt: Although the creature's threat is gone, so is field researcher Jackson Green. Professor Maclanahan asks the heroes to carry on his work, beginning with investigating sudden reports of paranormal activity in the Engineering building. The students encounter several frightening supernatural signs, and at the epicenter a strange device protected by several possessed professors and a grad student. In the aftermath the heroes recover *Crayton's Compendium*, part journal and part encyclopedia of occult activity in and around Pinebox.

5: Sanctuary: *Crayton's Compendium* offers clues to the location of a ritualist's sanctuary.



After piecing together the clues, sneaking through a bookstore, and discovering the hidden doorway, the students find an imprisoned demon disguised as a young woman. While the sanctuary makes an ideal secret headquarters, it also raises new questions such as the meaning of the giant map of Golan County crisscrossed with colored string.

6: The Burn: An overnight field trip to the Burn offers few clues to the meaning of the map hanging in the Sanctuary. Instead, they return home with even more questions—not to mention a few injuries—when their professor transforms into a killing machine gibbering about an apocalyptic “convergence.”

JUNIOR YEAR

7: On the Grid: An acquaintance from the Burn goes missing after a terrible accident, leading the heroes to follow in his footsteps by mapping the invisible lines of supernatural power crisscrossing campus.

8: Fishing Trip: At Professor Maclanahan’s behest, the heroes set off on an expedition to Lake Greystone to find a lost artifact.

The Lantern of the Deep is protected by a powerful guardian revenant, which the heroes must destroy or outwit. Either course requires a dive into the lake’s murky depths.

9: Sweet Heart 243: GlenMac asks the students to recover a drug that gives users werewolf-like strength and speed while retaining human intellect. When the researcher is cornered, he claims to be trying to get it away from the Sweet Heart Foundation because they plan on using it to create their own army.

SENIOR YEAR

10: Reunion: The heroes are contacted by a very-much-alive Jackson Green, who has learned that Sweet Heart is growing a genetically modified chupacabra army. He enlists the heroes in destroying the monsters before they reach maturity. While there, they find a simulation showing the Convergence occurring only three days after graduation.

11. Graduation Day: The heroes learn that the Convergence will take place over the Raven’s Nest stadium on graduation day. Professor Maclanahan reveals that Sweet Heart is trying to stop the Convergence rather



than bring it about. He gives his students the secret to descending into secret tunnels below the stadium, where the friends fight their way into the control room. Sweet Heart's leader, Helen LaCroix, traps them and says a mass sacrifice is the only way to stop a greater apocalypse.

12. Convergence: Helen sends the heroes through a portal into the spirit world to stop the Convergence from the other side. There they battle their way through demons and corrupted spirits to stop the Convergence. Success means racing through a gauntlet of monsters back to their portal before it—and any chance at home—vanishes forever.

WHAT HAS COME BEFORE

In the Spring of 1947 a wave of unexplained deaths shocked and horrified the students and faculty of South East Texas Institute. Most tried to ignore the threat and go on with their lives, but not all. Those with a special defiant spark found strength in unity against the darkness. When they applied as a university "club" to access campus resources, the Pinebox Protection Society was officially founded.

"The Protectors" included Professor Daniels and students Jack Little, Crayton White, Helen LaCroix, Judith Fowler, and Nina Castle. The amateur investigators threw themselves into the study of the supernatural and its weaknesses, including fighting magic with magic.

THE FIRST CONVERGENCE

Despite their best efforts, more supernatural oddities and occult crackpots threatened Pinebox than when they had started three years earlier. Months of research led the investigators to conclude that the Earth's network of ley lines—invisible lines of supernatural power—were bending out of position into an overlapping grid only a few miles from Pinebox. At every point the lines crossed, the nexus burned like a beacon to supernatural creatures and psychic humans alike. If unchecked, the shifting lines would eventually overlap in a single point of focused energy with the intensity to burn away the barrier between our world and the supernatural.

Although the Convergence's cause remained a mystery, rumor of a fantastic powerful occult artifact offered hope. The Lantern of the Deep was reputed to be able to focus a ritualist's power to great effect and had last been seen in Golan County only a few generations earlier.

With the coming Convergence causing more and more havoc in Pinebox, finding the Lantern of the Deep became Helen LaCroix's overriding obsession. This single-mindedness of purpose blinded her to the way in which her boyfriend Jack Little and Nina Castle became close...and more than friends.

When the inevitable realization finally struck, Helen tried to put her mission first and pretend she didn't know her lover and friend had betrayed her. The young woman's resolve crumbled weeks later when she was paired with Nina on an undertaking to recover a talisman sought by cultists. In a moment of heartache and weakness, she let her repressed fury spill out in a white-hot supernatural fire that consumed her friend on the spot.

Although Helen blamed the murder on the cultists, the Protectors' first loss cast a heavy shadow on the remaining members. Meanwhile, guilt poisoned and ground down Helen such that outwardly she appeared distraught like her friends. Inside, her sanity slowly dissolved.

THE FINAL RITUAL

With the Convergence only a day away, supernatural chaos in Pinebox rose to a fever pitch. Fortunately, not all who felt the silent call were crazy or evil. Soldiers and scientists from nearby Base X and a secret troop of Texas Rangers called the Texas 13 set up a last line of defense at ground zero.

Meanwhile, the Protectors tried one last gamble and captured a demon that had been terrorizing campus. Once imprisoned within their sanctuary, the private room where they conducted their more elaborate rituals, they bargained with the demon for the location of the Lantern of the Deep. Expecting trickery, the heroes left the demon entrapped while they raced to the talisman.

The investigators found the lantern on Dale Island in Lake Greystone, cleared a space on the beach, and began the most dangerous ritual they had ever attempted. By merging



12 TO MIDNIGHT ADVENTURES

Did you know that the world of Pinebox extends beyond *Degrees of Horror*? Check out this list of 12 to Midnight's Pinebox adventures and how we recommend using them in the campaign. All can be found through the Pinnacle Entertainment Group website, www.peginc.com.

Last Rites of the Black Guard: Your characters find themselves the only ones willing to help a single mother deal with the terrifying hauntings tormenting her family. But before you can put them to an end, you'll have to investigate their origins by spending an evening in the house yourselves. If you dare.

This full-length adventure makes a great Sophomore year tale. This adventure leads to **Curse of the Black Guard** and **Resurrection of the Black Guard** in the Savage Tales section of this book.

Bloodlines: Join the Apollo Geocaching Challenge to race against other teams in search of a time capsule buried 100 years ago. Do you think you can succeed in 24 hours where two generations of treasure hunters failed? The race is on and the competition fierce. But be warned: there's much more to Pinebox (and the competition) than meets the eye. Some secrets are best left buried.

This is a great Sophomore or Junior year adventure, though it can be dangerous as well. It makes an excellent prequel to **Fishing Trip**. The Sweet Heart Foundation

wants certain artifacts and Glen Maclanahan manipulates the students to get them. Due to its length, *Bloodlines* may take much of a full semester; though it can be woven into existing plot lines as well.

Brainwashed: Brainwashed takes the heroes inside a cult's rural compound to find a new recruit whom his father believes has been brainwashed. Can the cult be infiltrated without detection? Will the so-called victim come quietly? Only the heroes can find out.

This adventure is best run for Sophomore or Junior Rank students and can be very dangerous. It may also be a good lesson in the value of running away sometimes.

Skinwalker: Skinwalker takes the heroes on an investigation into the strange, supernatural murders in and around Pinebox, Texas. Can the heroes track down a murderer who can look like anyone, or will they be his next victims... and his next set of identities? Buy it today and find out!

This Big Thicket adventure is a killer and should only be played by Junior or Senior level students.

Chickens in the Mist: Patrons of the illegal O'Conner brothers cockfights have grown bored with their standard bloodsport and seek out more "exotic" matches. Soon our students find themselves in a running fight along the back roads of Golan County with angry locals and giant mutated chickens!

This is a great stand-alone adventure.



and channeling the collective power of each investigator through the blue lens of the lantern, they pushed apart the warping ley lines.

At the ritual's crescendo, the wild magic linked the friends together in heart, mind, and soul. In that moment, Helen's guilt and madness were finally laid bare for all. The ritual faltered, then failed. In the stunned silence that followed, Helen lashed out in shame and anger, killing her stupefied friends before they could recover. The last to die was her former lover, who had retreated to their boat with the talisman.

Jack was a dozen yards from the island's shore when his former girlfriend's wrath caught up to him. In his final moments, Jack focused his will through the blue lens of the Lantern of the Deep and made himself a revenant—an undead guardian of the lantern immune to Helen's magic—and sank beneath the lake's surface.

THE BURN

Just as dawn began touching the treetops, exhausted, crying, and only partially aware of her surroundings, Helen pushed through

the last thicket of heavy brush into ground zero of the Convergence. A zone of death lay hundreds of yards in front of her. Although no heat radiated from the ground, all plant and animal life appeared heavily charred.

At the Convergence's epicenter on the crest of a small hill, Helen found the remains of a bitter battle between inhuman creatures and the Base X and Texas 13 allies. As with the plant life, nothing survived the wave of death that had washed outward from her spell.

Although it appeared that the ritual had stopped the invasion, Helen prepared a scrying ritual to be certain. While she was casting, two survivors climbed the small hill and joined her. The pair from Base X, Thomas Brownell and Dr. Jenson, had been just beyond the edge of the wave of destruction. Wild magic unlocked psychic ability in one and genius in the other...in exchange for a lifetime of nightmares. When the ritual completed, the trio saw the ley lines had indeed been pushed apart, but not to their natural courses. The Protectors had only delayed the Convergence, not stopped it. Each traumatized in their own way by the previous night, the survivors vowed to stop



such a catastrophe from happening again, at any cost.

THERE IS ANOTHER

Unknown to the trio, one other witness to the Battle of the Burn survived the night. While the struggle raged all around, the Texas 13's youngest member was struck in the back by a stray bullet. Nelson Baer lay bleeding and in agony when the wave of death silenced the battle. Hours later when he dragged himself to an abandoned Jeep, he vowed that he would change his name and start a new life. Although he left the Burn behind, he could never leave the guilt.

SUPER HUMAN

With allies, if not a plan, Helen found a new cornerstone with which to rebuild her sanity. The trio determined that the Convergence would not form again for decades, giving them time to find a solution. Unlike her old friends, the new trinity vowed that morality was a luxury. What was the value of individual human life when all humanity could be extinguished in a supernatural apocalypse?

Yet even freed from most moral constraints, time marched forward without bringing them any closer to a solution. After a decade of failure, the allies recruited others to their cause. While Helen focused on improving her ritual to reverse the Convergence, the others focused on building an army to fight what might come through. They called it their Super Human project, which became the genesis for a wave of valuable biotech patents under the guise of the Sweet Heart Foundation. Although only core, trusted members were revealed the full truth, the Foundation and its for-profit subsidiaries grew into a powerful, wealthy asset.

HELEN LACROIX

Of the original trinity, only Helen remains. An unintended consequence of slaughtering her friends during the unification ritual was the infusion of their magical abilities and life force. Although 60 years have passed, the sole remaining Protector is relatively untouched by age. Although she still directs her inner circle within Sweet Heart, she prefers to operate from the shadows and has changed her identity several times. Few living people know her past, and none know her secret shame.

Today she calls herself Helen Lane and poses as a Cultural Studies professor at ETU, where she can monitor the Convergence and Sweet Heart. Although no less ruthless on matters of the Convergence, the years have mellowed the sorceress in other ways. She casually dates a colleague by the name of Dr. Glen MacLanahan, whom she also recruited into her inner circle due to his extensive knowledge of folklore and local legend.

THE SUPER HUMAN PROJECT

Today, Sweet Heart Foundation is a holding company that owns hundreds of bioengineering and pharmaceutical patents thanks to early Super Human project breakthroughs by Helen's genius partner Tom Jenson. Even after Jenson's death, Sweet Heart continues funding research and development into all manner of ways to create the ultimate soldier. Some of these same methods have led to new treatments for degenerative diseases—medical patents that earn the company billions.

Within the company, only a dozen "inner circle" members know about the Convergence and Sweet Heart's true mission. These trusted members are recruited for their extraordinary talent, such as being a master of the occult, a powerful psychic, or a biotech genius. Others—including corporate leadership—are only given enough information to perform their roles. Helen is satisfied calling the shots from the shadows, her *puppeteer* Talisman putting a swift end to dissent.

Sweet Heart's vast operational budget easily allows the inner circle to buy the loyalty, or at least the silence, of anyone who stumbles upon secrets best left forgotten. When evidence of "weird stuff" reaches the Pinebox Police Department, Golan County Sheriff's Department, or even campus administration, there are those within who earn a tidy fortune by making it disappear. When in doubt about what Sweet Heart can or can't do, just remember: they have psychics, magic, and billions of dollars.

Although the Protectors' botched ritual bought the world a sixty-year reprieve, the ley lines are once again converging. This time, the epicenter is forming over the ETU campus rather than an isolated forest. Nexus points are themselves converging and merging, causing ever greater paranormal activity.

While the Super Human project has made some recent successes pairing a genetically enhanced chupacabra with a psychic handler as a potential weapon against a demonic invasion, Helen's own long range plan is also nearing fruition. Using secret tunnels far beneath The Raven's Nest football stadium, she and her cabal of ritualists hope to release a burst of magic that will restore the ley lines to their natural paths. Yet the Convergence creeps ever closer and she still needs certain talismans and rare components to ensure success.

In the meantime, the first cloned chupacabra creature is being tested and has been used on occasion to eliminate security leaks. In fact, brief sightings have already generated a campus urban legend of a spiny humanoid they call "the Needler."

Finally, the university prepares for the traditional orientation session for incoming Freshmen. Circumventing her more tepid Sweet Heart collaborators, "Helen Lane" sees an opportunity to head off the apocalypse even without the missing ritual components. All it needs is a mass sacrifice...

CRIB NOTES

Characters in *Degrees of Horror* have a few notations in their stat blocks which are different from a normal Savage Worlds character. Here they are so you don't have to pull an all-nighter figuring it out yourself.

Wild Cards in ETU are noted with a star beside their name. A large star is used if full stats are given, like this:



LANCE CARSON

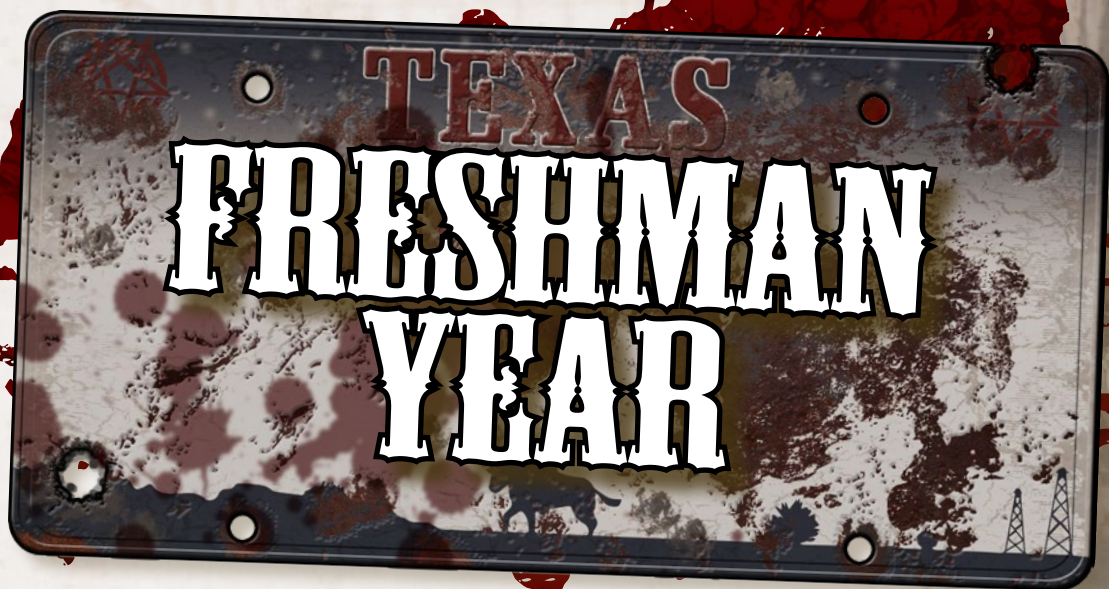
A small one is placed beside the name if the stats are referenced from another location, like this:

★ **Crazy Lisa:** Use Graduate Student from *East Texas University*, as a Wild Card.

If a character has access to a ritual, it is listed under Powers with memorized rituals specifically noted as such.

Powers: *bind entity*, *dispel (memorized)*, *familiar*, *grave speak (memorized)*, *spirit shield*.





SWEAT LODGE

With the Convergence only four years away and critical pieces of their plan still missing, Helen Lane (aka Helen LaCroix) hopes to bypass the Sweet Heart Foundation's Super Human project and use a mass sacrifice to fuel another attempt at reversing the Convergence.

Her pawn in this scheme is ETU security guard Tyson August, a novice ritualist with high aspirations. Tyson thinks he discovered the black magic ritual on his own and mistakenly believes invoking a fire sacrifice of the entire Freshman class will funnel the victims' life energy to him, making him unimaginably powerful. Tyson has completed the first part of the ritual, which activated a series of fire runes he drew on the walls of the arena amid ETU slogans. All that remains is for those runes to set the building ablaze at midnight. Even if Tyson is Incapacitated or killed, the ritual has already been set in motion. The characters must find a way to remove the runes or evacuate the building before midnight.

Further complicating matters, psychics in the Sweet Heart Foundation's inner circle believe that something momentous is going to happen but are unaware of Helen's "Hail Mary" play. A psychic roams the party trying to get a sense of what is to come while the genetically improved chupacabra under her

control watches restlessly from the shadows. At any dramatically appropriate time during the night it can be briefly spotted with a Notice -2 before using its natural camouflage to slip away.

FREE FOOD

Begin by handing out the ETU welcome letter found on the first page of *East Texas University*. Characters don't need to know one another prior to the beginning of this adventure. Major non-player characters such as Annoying Roommates may be included as well.

The adventure begins as the new students file into the arena and take their seats.

Welcome to East Texas University. Now that you've settled into your dorm, it's time to get your bearings. At ETU they call Freshman orientation the Sweat Lodge. Your dorm Resident Assistant spouted some stuff about how the Native American sweat lodges were considered places of rebirth that provided important revelations. At least the letter said there'd be food and music.

You'd say this building has seen better days, but in this case probably not. The Ravens Roost Multi-use Indoor Arena—the basketball arena—is an ugly, gray, windowless, round building, like a giant WWII pillbox without the firing slits. Despite some creative decorating inside the arena, the building still shows its age. From peeling paint to vacant fire extinguisher racks to struggling air conditioning, it's no wonder the campus tour guide skipped this building.



Inside, an atrium hallway circles the ground floor, which opens onto the top row of seating. From the basketball floor, visitors can find entrances to an area under the seats that includes locker rooms, a loading dock, offices, conference rooms, and so on. Cell phones work on the ground level, get intermittent signal from the basketball court, and zero signal in the underground complex.

President Nelson drones on about campus safety, parking in designated areas, campus traditions, and the like. Meanwhile, with a Notice roll, a character's wandering eye catches an administrator having a tantrum with a pair of janitors. They can't hear what she's saying, but she keeps pointing to the arena walls, where school slogans, the ETU mascot, and various other symbols—or graffiti—have been painted.

Finally, Nelson seems to be wrapping up.

"In conclusion, your time here at ETU has the potential to be among the best days of your life. Don't just survive college, but make the most of your opportunities here. Now, before we break into our Senior-led groups, let's all practice the ETU Ravens fight song!"

The fight song words are flashed on a giant video screen behind the president, and slowly the crowd picks up the tune.

*Ravens Fiiiiiight
Ravens Fiiiiiight
Put on the black and whiiiiite
Ravens Fiiiiiight
Ravens Fiiiiiight
Our team will own the niiiiight.
Fear the Fightin' Ravens,
Our mighty team does sooooooar.
Fear the Fightin' Ravens,
When we make another scoooooore.*

With the conclusion of the fight song, President Nelson announces:

Go Ravens! Now, for the part you've been waiting for. While the band and food folks set up here on the gym floor, you'll break up into groups for a final, time-honored Sweat Lodge tradition. You'll be meeting away from the eyes and ears of faculty with a Senior who will pass along the best advice from four years of life here at ETU. Or in some cases five or six years. Now, on the bottom of each of your chairs is taped a location here in the building where you'll meet with your Senior. By the time you're done we'll have food and music ready to go, so let's get moving!

BE A ZEBRA

The characters each have "12" taped to the bottom of their chairs. Room 12 is one of the basement meeting rooms under the bleachers. In the dim hallway leading to room 12, the Freshmen can see a security guard (Tyson August) unlocking a door marked "Physical Engineering Control. Private." On a successful Notice roll, they note a stack of fire extinguishers inside the dimly lit room. The guard jumps at the sound of their approach, quickly enters the room, and re-locks the door behind him.

Inside room 12, the characters have a few moments to get to know one another. A tall, skinny Senior named Robby Niles enters the room, makes some small talk, then announces that he's ready to share his most important piece of upperclassman wisdom:

Be a zebra.

Haven't you watched the animal shows on TV? Zebras survive because they blend in and don't draw attention to themselves. They stick close together, because the lions pick off the ones who stray too far from the herd. Individuality is over-rated! If you want to survive at ETU, you'd better learn to think like a zebra.

Robby is resistant to offering up much more information for fear of sounding crazy or getting someone's attention. With a successful Persuasion roll, he admits to persistent rumors of a campus bogeyman they call the Needler. During the conversation, characters who make a Notice roll hear a crashing sound coming from the hallway. If anyone rises to investigate, Robby chides her on ignoring his advice. Outside, curious Freshmen can see security guard Tyson August examining a smashed video recorder. The guard asks the students if they saw anything, but readily accepts their alibi. (In fact, it was he who destroyed the camera.) After a few minutes the Sweat Lodge party officially kicks off with the sound of a rock band penetrating all the way to their meeting room.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Outside the meeting room, the Freshmen are stopped by a middle-aged man who asks if they know anything about the broken equipment. He introduces himself as Professor Glen Maclanahan ("call me GlenMac") and explains that the equipment was for capturing video of a ghost. He

clarifies that he does not suspect the students of mischief, but rather wonders if a ghost did it. The professor's assistant, Jackson Green, also introduces himself and flirts with any Freshmen women in the group. The unusual pair can't tell the students much more about the ghost other than that it's a young woman said to haunt the old building and is most frequently seen in the basement.

While standing in the hall talking to the professor and Jackson, a pair of janitors carrying buckets of water and sponges pass them back out toward the arena. The custodians grouse about having to clean up graffiti right away instead of in the morning.

THE PARTY

ETU Security Officers are stationed at the two main Roost entrances. The officers inform students that re-entry is not permitted once they leave. The administration does not want students slipping out to the parking lot, getting drunk, and returning to the Roost. Many administrators—including President Nelson—leave once the band, A Jury of Robots, at the end of the basketball court starts up, but some remain to make sure the party doesn't get out of control. The lights are dimmed. Boxes upon boxes of pizza are brought out. Danger looms.

GHOSTLY WARNING

Any time during the evening, the male character with the highest Spirit die type sees an attractive young woman watching him intently. She smiles and makes eye contact with him, then motions for him to follow her. If the lover-boy doesn't take the bait, she tries again with other characters throughout the night.

If the hero follows, she leads the way into a darkened room off the basement hallway. A Notice roll reveals she smells heavily of smoke. She says her name is Nina and that she could tell he was special. Different. She nuzzles his neck and whispers, "You're all going to burn."

With the warning delivered, she releases the student and steps back. A heartbeat later Nina bursts into flames, then the entire room quickly follows suit. The illusory flames last briefly before being interrupted by Dr. Maclanahan's arrival. When the vision ends, the character is left with an oddly shaped first degree burn on his arm. This does not count

as a Wound. The burn is a type of talisman that activates near Tyson August's fire runes. The bearer then makes a Spirit roll at -1. If successful he can *detect arcana* with fire trappings for the three rounds.

The talisman effect fades after three days (when the wound heals).

Dr. Maclanahan explains that he saw the heat spike on his infrared camera and came to investigate. He is extremely excited about the student's encounter and pleads the Freshman to relate every detail. He even offers to pay the student to come to his office the next day for a formal interview. Any time after this encounter, *any* of the characters may experience "High Strangeness" (see **Adventure Generator** chapter in *East Texas University*).

★ Nina Castle: See page 92.

SACRIFICE

The key component of Tyson August's ritual is a series of runes marked on the walls above the top row of bleachers. Tyson has carefully planned several measures to prevent anyone from stopping the sacrifice or leaving the building. In fact, when the aforementioned custodial workers scrub off some of the markings, August lures them back down to the basement where he incapacitates them with his stun gun and locks them in the sprinkler control room. After the party is in swing he spikes the drinks of his two fellow security officers, leaving them extremely sick but on duty. He has already shut off the water leading to the fire sprinkler system and padlocked the valve closed for good measure. He has also hidden all the fire extinguishers.

Unless the heroes intervene, at 10 pm the villain locks out-of-the-way doors such as the loading dock, followed by chaining and padlocking secondary entrances at 11 pm. At 11:45, Tyson relieves the officer guarding the main doors, who offers a quick thanks and rushes to the nearest men's room. August chains and padlocks the main doors and returns to the arena to observe his ritual's completion.

If Tyson notices anyone tampering with his fire runes then he abuses his authority as an ETU Security Officer to bluff and bully the overly curious. If that doesn't work then he has no qualms about resorting to violence, as



he did with the custodians. Should school administrators be alerted to worrying details like missing fire extinguishers, they shrug it off as just another upperclassman prank. They assume that the chains on the secondary entrances are there to prevent students from sneaking alcohol into the Sweat Lodge party. They may take the danger more seriously once the main doors are locked, but by then the ritual is almost complete.

- ★ **Tyson August:** Use the Ritualist from *East Texas University* as a Wild Card and with the addition of Fighting d6, a Stun Gun, and handcuffs.
- **Security Officer (2):** Use the Campus Security Officer Extra from *East Texas University*, with a level of Fatigue for the poisoned drinks.

FIRE RUNES

The runes wash off easily, once identified, but number in the dozens and are spaced all around the arena walls. Depending on the time of night, when the students touch a rune the markings feel anything from slightly warm to almost painful.

At 11:48 pm the runes begin

smoldering and at midnight they burst into flame.

The building sprinkler system is the most efficient way to wash away the runes enough to disrupt the spell—even if the runes have burst into flame. Obviously, setting off the sprinkler system without evidence of a fire could lead to big trouble.

The students passed the Physical Engineering Control room on the way to their meeting with Robby Niles. Inside the 10×20 room, a tangle of pipes leads into and out of the walls and a giant wheel is marked “Sprinkler System Maintenance Cutoff.” This wheel has been chained into a closed position. After 9 pm, a pair of unconscious custodial workers can also be found in the room handcuffed to one of the larger pipes.

THE DRAMATIC CLIMAX

One way or another, Tyson tries to stop the heroes—either from washing off the runes or escaping the fire. Once a fight ensues, the psychic (forgot about her, didn’tcha?) realizes what is happening, and why. At a suitably dramatic moment near the end of combat, the Needler uses its camouflage to move in

close, incapacitates Tyson with its venom if necessary, and flees with its limp prey back into the shadows where its Sweet Heart handler covers its tracks. In this adventure the creature is focused on fleeing with Tyson rather than fighting the Freshmen. The creature only attacks the students if completely cornered.

The ubiquity of cell phones means the police and fire departments are alerted and on the scene quickly, but it could take precious minutes for them to realize why the doors are not opening and take appropriate measures. If the characters fail to save the day it does not have to mean their death—emergency responders can always make a dramatic last-minute rescue—but it would be a bad omen for things to come.

★ **Needler (1):** Use the Improved Chupacabra (page 94) as a Wild Card.

AFTERMATH

The next morning, the survivors are brought in front of President Nelson. A tall African-American police detective (refer to Detective Blaine Bishop in the Residents section of *East Texas University*) stands silently in a corner, his arms crossed and his face set in a scowl. Depending on their actions and the number of witnesses, they may be under suspicion for causing the fire, ruining the gym floor by turning on the sprinklers before anyone realized there was a fire, or even fighting a campus security officer. Alternately, they might be seen as heroes. Either way, Nelson listens patiently to their side of the story and shakes his head in a grandfatherly way.

He tells them he has heard wildly different stories from dozens of witnesses and he does not know what to believe about that night. Fortunately, Dr. Maclanahan vouches for them. Nelson, in turn, asks that the professor be their mentor for a few semesters in light of their rocky introduction to college life. He tells the students to expect an email from the professor in the coming weeks.

Refer to the **Plot Point Interlude** sidebar.

RETURN TO ROOST

Nina's spirit has chosen to give the heroes a cursed talisman she has been protecting since before her death. The heroes are driven by terrible nightmares to return to the Roost, where Nina guides them to a cursed talisman. This adventure can occur any time during the Freshman year, however, it plays best if the dreams in the interlude are sprinkled throughout other adventures until the gang is ready to return to the Roost.

BACKGROUND

In the weeks following Sweat Lodge, the Freshmen experience disturbing, recurring dreams about being chased through the Roost (see **Plot Point Interlude**). In particular, the student with Nina's burn mark dreams of fleeing with something precious down the Roost's basement hallway. Eventually, the dreamer is caught by his pursuer. He pleads for mercy and forgiveness but bursts into flames.

PLOT POINT INTERLUDE

Dr. Maclanahan and Jackson play a role in the remaining plot points and should become trusted resources. In the meantime, feel free to have them direct the students to ghost hunts and other supernatural mysteries, serving as an easy GM hook for *Savage Tales* or your own adventures. Also, the Needler makes a good recurring antagonist for Freshman sleuths, although it avoids direct confrontation.

Following their experience at Sweat Lodge, the heroes are plagued with recurring nightmares. At first these dreams are vague and the details vary. Some common threads are personal danger, betrayal, and fire. These dreams are especially powerful for the heroic student who encountered the ghost Nina and received her burn mark.

The longer the nightmares repeat, the more details the students remember. The dreams frequently start peacefully but later turn frightening when the dreamer is chased by an unseen but menacing predator. Sometimes the dreams include hiding something very valuable.

JACKSON'S "FAVOR"

Once the heroes have been suitably prepared by the dreams, they are contacted by Jackson Green. He's learned that workmen doing restoration work at the Roost keep reporting ghost sightings, leading many to quit or transfer to other jobs. Dr. Maclanahan's request for permission to conduct a ghost hunt was declined, but Jackson just can't stand the idea of missing such a good opportunity to record paranormal activity. Since the ghost appeared to the underclassmen and even marked one of them, Jackson thinks they have a good shot at a repeat appearance. If they're willing, he provides them with ghost hunting equipment (one piece of equipment each) and a small stipend to return to the Roost. He also gives them the *grave speak* power as séance ritual instructions (generate ritual items normally—see **Rituals** in *East Texas University*) to use if they think a spirit wishes to communicate with them.

Finally, Jackson even offers to stand lookout outside.

If the students refuse to return, the nightmares continue until they cause Fatigue from lost sleep.

THE ROOST

The Roost has been closed to the public for a number of weeks (or months) in light of the **Sweat Lodge** investigation. If the characters failed to prevent the fire, it likely suffered extensive damage. Although it isn't officially open to the public, the doors were left unlocked so that fire investigators and construction crews could come and go as needed. A simple Stealth roll allows unnoticed entry.

Inside, cell phones work on the ground level, get intermittent signals from the basketball court, and zero signal in the underground complex. Flashlights are a necessity since the work crews are taking the opportunity to replace old wiring and electric panels.

The court echoes like a black, forgotten cavern. If the students plan a séance, let it proceed. Otherwise, Nina manifests once the students descend to the basketball court. The students nearest mid-court feel localized cold spots and may even catch a glimpse of her out of the corner of their eyes. Whispers originate from the darkness beyond the reach of their

lights, urging them toward the spot where she was immolated by her friend. When they reach the giant Raven logo painted on the center court, she materializes among them and implores "Guard it." (Fear roll!)

Everyone within 6" of center court experiences a powerful vision caused by the ghost's Imprint Special Ability. Nina shows them a clear version of the dream that brought them here, each experiencing it as if they were her. They feel her panic as she ducks into a darkened doorway, hurriedly hiding an unusual-looking cross inside a clamshell case. At the sound of footsteps echoing in the darkened hallway, she darts from her hiding spot and hurriedly shoves the clamshell case into a glass trophy case. The footsteps sound closer and she flees down the hallway until she turns a corner and emerges onto the empty basketball court. She stumbles at the Raven's logo—right where the heroes are standing—and turns to face her attacker with her hands out in supplication. Before she can even finish turning she is consumed by a fire so intense that the pain turns to ice, freezing the words on her lips. "I'm sor—."

This stressful situation is a perfect opportunity for the Psychically Sensitive Edge to manifest in a character who wishes to take it.

Students who experienced this ghostly Imprint should have enough information to venture back into the hallway under the arena seats and find the trophy case.

★ **Nina Castle:** See page 92.

COMPLICATIONS

When at least one character enters the basement complex, a pair of campus security officers stops at the Roost for regular rounds. Jackson moves in to intercept them, but one officer enters the building while the other stays behind to chat with the grad student. Jackson attempts to send a text message and warn the characters, but depending on their location the signal may not go through. The officer does not enter the basement, but is present at the arena or concourse level when the characters return from the basement.

- **Security Officer (1):** Use the Campus Security Officer Extra in *East Texas University*.

THE TROPHY CASE

The neglected trophy display is further down the same basement hallway the characters traversed during **Sweat Lodge**. Inside, several open clamshell cases show off medals from old days of glory. One such medal from 1950 evokes a strong sense of *déjà vu*. Opening the glass display requires Lockpicking or breaking the glass.

A name, Nina Castle, is printed in golden inlay on the case's leather cover. Within, a crucifix necklace lies hidden beneath the purple felt padding. This crucifix, De La Garza's Cross, is a powerful talisman that Nina bequeaths to the novice heroes.

Unfortunately, it is also cursed. (See sidebar **De La Garza's Cross**.) The curse manifests itself differently each day, but the manifestation in this Plot Point is specific.

Once a hero takes possession of the talisman, all light sources dim to nothingness in two rounds (giving them just enough time to panic before being lost in darkness) and the ghost hunters are surrounded by the sounds of a Central American jungle. The students must feel their way back down the hallway and through the arena. All the while, jungle noises—especially the sound of a jaguar stalking them—echo all around. Fortunately, the only physical danger while in the basement comes from heroes who panic and hurt themselves or one another.

Unfortunately, the campus security officer is also caught in this effect at the arena level and is extremely jumpy. If he hears the characters, he calls out and attempts to catch them. Once the students safely make it outside the arena, the illusion fades and any light sources that had gone dead are restored.

Unless they are particularly persuasive, characters caught by the campus security officer are issued a citation for trespassing before being released. They must appear before a student court and pay a \$50 fine.

AFTERMATH

The name Nina Castle can be found in South East Texas Institute school yearbooks, although nothing in the yearbooks ties her to the Protectors. The student newspaper carries a short article about her burned body being found in the new basketball arena. Officials ruled her death an accident, although they are vague on the details.

DE LA GARZA'S CROSS

De La Garza's Cross is a four inch tall gold crucifix ending in a sharp point at the bottom. A gold chain has been somewhat crudely attached at the top so that it may be worn as a necklace. The crucifix is intricately etched with patterns within patterns that defy the eye. The cross originated as a gold Aztec spearhead.

After capture by the conquistadors, an Aztec priest cursed all who owned it ever after. Friar De La Garza unsuccessfully attempted to cleanse the talisman of its curse by adding a crosspiece to the spear point, transforming it into a crucifix.

The curse manifests itself as High Strangeness, which the cross's owner experiences once a day. Effects lasting more than one day stack.

This talisman was created by the Aztecs to guard their empire against demons. It is imbued with the *banish* power against demons. One only need touch a demon or demonically possessed person to activate the power. See "Possession" in the **Characters and Critters** chapter of *East Texas University*.

The talisman requires research to be identified and its secrets unlocked. As the curse takes effect, the heroes may come to realize the talisman is more trouble than it's worth. Ideally they should turn it over to Jackson, who turns it over to Dr. Maclanahan, who in turn passes it along to Helen Lane.

THE NEEDLER

The amateur ghost hunters learn that Jackson Green has been attacked in his own home, and the clues point to the mysterious Needler. Following the trail, the friends find the creature's lair and battle it. Ideally this adventure should occur at the end of the heroes' Freshman year, just prior to their second final exam.

BACKGROUND

Although Dr. Maclanahan has been a member of Helen Lane's secret inner circle for more than a year, his protégé Jackson Green was



unaware of the Sweet Heart Foundation's real purpose. The professor had hoped to recruit his friend but those plans went off the rails tonight at a dinner party hosted by GlenMac's girlfriend. As he exited the upstairs guest bathroom, Jackson's curiosity about his mentor's girlfriend got the better of him. Some casual snooping uncovered a 60 year-old picture of Helen—looking remarkably the same—and the other Protectors. Jackson swiped the photo under the assumption that he could copy it and return it before his mentor's girlfriend would notice its removal. He was wrong.

Before Jackson had even left the party, Helen ordered the Needler creature's handler to kill him and recover the photo. Jackson, paranoid over the mystery he'd stumbled upon, noticed that he was followed back to his rental home. Once inside, he retrieved a shotgun and called his Freshmen friends. The Needler attacks while Jackson is in mid-conversation (as detailed below). The grad student is wounded but shoots the creature and drives it off. Afraid and unsure who to trust, Jackson drops the photo in a mailbox and flees to President Nelson. The grandfatherly, beloved campus figure admits to knowing about the supernatural and conspires to keep Jackson in hiding while they dig into Helen's secret.

DEAD WEEK

It's Dead Week at ETU—that precious time between the last day of class and the first final exam. Depending on how one's semester has gone, it's either a time for last-minute cramming or a time to blow off steam and relax. The gang's plans are changed when one of them receives a frantic call from Jackson on the night before the first exam. He says:

Shut up and listen. I'm in trouble. I've found something big—maybe HUGE—and now I've been followed home. Just in case something happens to me—

Their friend is interrupted by a crash of the Needler breaking in followed by Jackson's surprised yelp and a shotgun blast. The student hears the phone drop, followed by banging and scuffling noises.

CRIME SCENE

When the heroes arrive at Jackson's house, they find the Pinebox Police Department already on the scene. The neighbors called the police

after hearing the shotgun blast. The police found signs of forced entry. If the students tell the police about the phone call, the officer on scene shifts from Neutral to Friendly on the Reaction Table. The officer tells Jackson's friends there is blood on the scene, but no body. He has alerted the local hospital to be on the lookout.

Should the amateur sleuths call GlenMac, the professor is genuinely surprised and worried. He knows nothing about Jackson's discovery or his girlfriend's kill order. He rushes to the scene and talks to the officers but gets no additional information.

A successful Persuasion roll convinces the police into allowing the gang inside. The living room is in shambles. Buckshot and blood pepper one wall. Characters who search the crime scene (Notice -1) find a few chupacabra quills overlooked by police.

If GlenMac is on the scene and sees the quills, all the blood drains from their mentor's face as he realizes what—and who—is responsible. If they don't already recognize the quills for what they are, GlenMac identifies them as belonging to the Needler. He takes the quills “for analysis” and urges them to find Jackson.

THE CALL

While still at Jackson's house, the heroes overhear a call come in to the officers.

Dispatch to Unit 3.

Unit 3, check.

Unit 3, we've had another boogeyman sighting on campus. Can you do a wellness check on a witness at the library?

Dispatch, we have another 45 minutes here then we can head over.

Unit 3, roger that. Dispatch clear.

After the exchange, the officers grouse about prank calls right before finals. They seem unconcerned.

THE LIBRARY

The brightly-lit grounds of the Sam Rayburn Library shine like a jewel against a velvet backdrop. The Freshman sleuths have little to fear walking from the nearby parking lot to the grand building's front entrance.

Unless the gang delayed until daylight, once inside the library there is little doubt who had a frightening encounter. Pick a memorable character from an encounter earlier in the school year or use a character from a Savage Tale such as Veronica Nails from **Darkness**



Falling (page 64) or Missy Jordan from **Bugs** (page 57) to set the stage for those adventures.

Only a dozen steps inside the library, the pale and shaken co-ed sits on a bench talking to one of the ROTC students who often escort young women across campus after dark. The character begins as Uncooperative on the Reaction Table, requiring Persuasion to tell her story.

She says she left the library on the way back to her dorm to catch a few hours of sleep before her first exam. Exhausted and wanting to save time, she cut through campus between buildings rather than staying on the well-lit paths. Near the Horticulture building, she heard a terrible sound like a deep, rhythmic buzzing like the rumble of a jungle cat. She shrank against the wall and tried to hide in the shadows as a human-shaped figure passed by on the way to the adjacent greenhouses, dragging another stumbling figure with it. (She actually saw the chupacabra's psychic handler helping the creature back to its lair.) Between fear and poor lighting, she couldn't make out the details of either figure beyond

vague outlines, but she swears that nothing human could make a noise like the one she heard.

Although the ROTC student is skeptical of the story's detail, he offers to tag along with the sleuths if they indicate an intention to investigate. Use a Student Extra (found in the **Characters & Critters** chapter of *East Texas University*) with a Fighting d4.

THE HORTICULTURE LABS

Once the gang reaches the Horticulture building area, the next task is finding the Needler's hideout. Observant students find a light trail of blood with a successful Tracking roll or a Notice -1 roll, both modified by lighting conditions. The trail leads from a parking lot past three modern greenhouses to a 40 foot long ramshackle fourth.

As the students approach, allow a Notice roll to hear a weak cry for help coming from the Sweet Heart psychic. The woman had barely dragged her charge back to its lair when, mad with pain, it lashed out and gutted her. Her wound is lethal without medical attention,

but it takes all her concentration just to keep the frenzied creature from finishing her off.

The unlocked entrance to “Hort. Lab D” is located at one end of the building. Although appearing abandoned from the outside, the interior contains a carefully maintained rain forest habitat ideal for the Needler’s lair. The extremely humid interior is packed with tropical plants—many reaching more than six feet high—leaving only a pair of narrow aisles down the length of the building.

The psychic continues begging for help, urging the characters onward toward the clearing roughly 2/3 of the way down the building. There, the Needler looms over the woman’s body, pushing against her waning psychic control. It shifts its focus to attack the would-be rescuers’ upon their arrival. Seeing the Needler up close should call for a Fear roll.

The creature already suffers from two visibly bloody wounds as a result of Jackson’s shotgun. The pain prevents the Needler from using its camouflage and it fights with wild abandon rather than its usual stealth. If somehow captured alive, the creature slowly succumbs to its earlier wounds and dies.

★ **Needler (1):** Use the Improved Chupacabra (page 94) as a Wild Card, beginning the encounter with two Wounds but not Shaken.

AFTERMATH

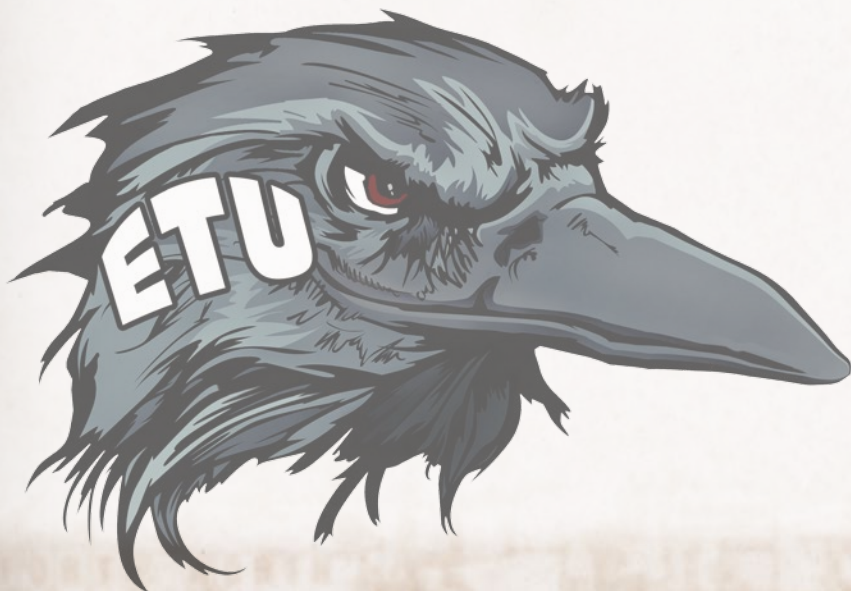
After the fight, sleuths who search the building find remains of other victims—some fairly recent. Although none belong to Jackson, it would take DNA testing to be sure. However, the Sweet Heart Foundation

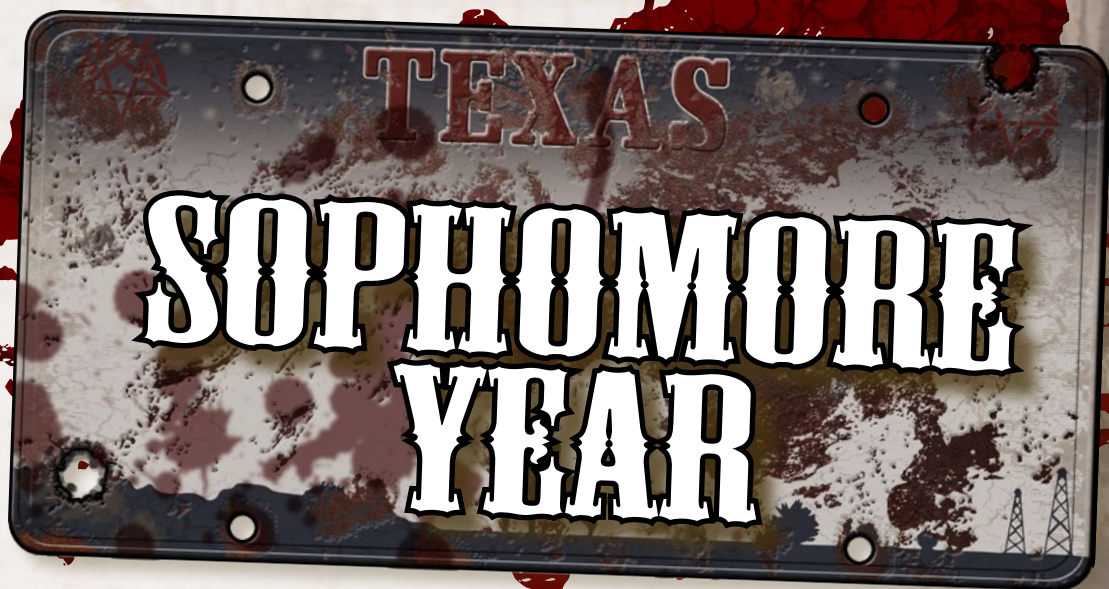
insures that nothing is left to test. Their members begin covering their tracks within minutes of any call to the police or EMS. Physical evidence disappears from custody and the greenhouse is destroyed in a fire.

Other than Dr. Maclanahan, no one in authority believes the authenticity of Needler photos, should the students think to snap a shot. Whether or not the psychic survived, she carried nothing to indicate she was anything more than an unlucky victim.

The following day, Jackson’s disappearance becomes a front page headline on the Raven’s Report. The student paper reports on the facts surrounding the rental house ransacking and that the police suspect foul play because of blood found at the crime scene. Still, the Needler’s death seems to lift a cloud from the campus. The characters should feel a sense of accomplishment. They have made the campus a safer place, even if it meant pulling an all-nighter before finals.

A few days later, a package arrives in the mail postmarked the day after Jackson’s disappearance, no return address. Within is a black and white group portrait (of the Protectors) from the 1950s. One of the figures is Nina, the young woman who appeared as a ghost in the Roost. The accompanying note says “Keep it safe. Keep it secret.”





THE BIG HAUNT

This adventure can take place any time in the Sophomore year, but ideally in the Fall semester. Dr. Maclanahan mournfully asks the underclassmen to carry on Jackson's research into the supernatural, beginning with a report of ghostly activity in a campus building. There, the students find a situation rapidly spiraling out of control. At the epicenter, a machine helps spirits pass from their world to our own.

BACKGROUND

Desperate for ideas for her lab project, engineering graduate student Lilly Boatwright used plans from an old journal she picked up at a rummage sale. The journal, *Crayton's Compendium*, said that the device could allow users to see ghosts, but all she expected was an entertaining light show. Using modern materials, Lilly inadvertently created a machine that allows free roaming spirits to "cross over" and possess human hosts. The unfortunate grad student was the very first victim, and now the controlling spirit uses the machine to free more of its kind. The possessed Lilly continues to fine tune the device on the R.E. Lee Engineering and Applied Sciences Building's second floor, making it more powerful and drawing more and more power. Ghosts are drawn to the building like moths to a flame, creating numerous supernatural events.

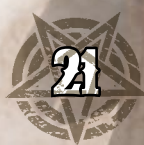
PASSING THE TORCH

Late one afternoon, Dr. Maclanahan summons the underclassmen to his office. After making small talk, he gets to the point. He explains that he held off officially replacing Jackson in the hope that the student would somehow reappear, but as the months continue with no word he is finding it more and more difficult to continue his research without help. GlenMac asks the underclassmen if they would be willing to carry on their friend's work. If the students act reluctant, he promises a small stipend or academic credit (+1 Academics until after the next Exam) as compensation.

Once they agree, GlenMac gives them their very first assignment. He has been contacted about "weird stuff" happening in the Engineering building but is already committed to a field investigation hours away in Houston. He loans his new protégés ghost hunting equipment from the lab, admits that he's already secured permission for them to spend the evening in the building, then hustles out the door.

GROUND FLOOR

Although the last class has finished for the day, several windows in the three story Engineering building remain lit. It's not uncommon for students to pull all-nighters working on their projects in the labs. Inside, the building is quiet and still. Allow



IT'S A COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP

Wait, GlenMac is a bad guy, right? Won't he just screw over the heroes? Well...it's complicated. Even though he believes the good of the many outweigh the needs of the few, the professor still feels terrible guilt over Jackson's death. Further, he genuinely likes the students and doesn't want to see them meet his first protégé's fate. Consequently, he tries not to mention the heroes to his scary girlfriend and he downplays their capabilities when questioned by anyone in her inner circle.

If the heroes show GlenMac the old photo of Helen and the Protectors, he is naturally curious but also instinctively understands that this is what drove his girlfriend from zero to murder in one evening. He recommends they keep it secret just as the note implored. Since Maclanahan is unaware of Helen's history with the Protectors, he sees no need to mention the photo's discovery nor the journal or sanctuary found later in the adventures.

the characters time to use their loaned equipment or explore the ground level. Due to the concentration of spirits, the devices easily capture evidence such as EVPs and blurry spots on images. Further, those with the Psychically Sensitive Edge feel frequent, fleeting brushes of contact.

After a few minutes of investigation, the lights flicker. This continues at irregular intervals as the power fluctuates with the use of Lilly's device. The energy fluctuations also cause interference with cell phones and radios, and even the ghost hunting equipment acts erratically.

The longer the students remain inside, the more the excited spirits wear on their subconscious. Every hero who succeeds at a Notice roll hears the barely perceptible whispers of the dead, which in turn invokes a Fear roll. Follow up with phantom sounds of doors opening and closing, footsteps, or crying.

If the students explore any of the ground floor classrooms, they find one student curled into a ball, covering his ears and reciting prime numbers. He tells them that he was on the second floor earlier in the afternoon when he noticed the whispering. His friends didn't notice it and wouldn't believe him, but it grew steadily worse until he moved downstairs. He was going to leave the building, but hid in the classroom when the whispers began following him again.

The students can ascend the building using either the elevator or the stairs. If the ghost hunters stop on the second floor, skip the following section.

THIRD FLOOR

Students trained by a lifetime of video games that the "boss villain" is always on the topmost "level" may think to skip the second floor and go straight to the third. Faculty offices span the top floor, whereas Lilly and her machine are in a lab on the second floor. However, the spirits grow increasingly agitated over time, resulting in even more supernatural activity by the time they reach this floor.

Two poltergeists roam the building's long hallways, terrorizing the few remaining faculty members and secretaries—and now the ghost hunters who have ventured into their domain. Once the group steps out into the third floor hallway, the door (either fire exit or elevator) shuts behind them and refuses to budge. Their only choice for escape is breaking a window and climbing down three stories or attempting the method opposite of the one used for ascension. To do so, they must pass through a gauntlet of attacks by the poltergeists, possibly rescuing the faculty members in the process.

If they speak with a professor, one of them describes a pair of their colleagues searching the offices and dragging away another of their members. The frightened professor hid under his desk and did not see where the men went.

- **Poltergeist (2):** Use the Poltergeist from *East Texas University*.

SECOND FLOOR

Once on the building's second floor, the ghost hunters easily see that they have found the trouble's epicenter. Fifty feet down the hallway, bright, kaleidoscopic light pours

from open double doors. At the threshold, two men drag a struggling third into the room.

The people on this floor have already been possessed by the spirits crossing over using Lilly's device. The two men are dragging a new "vessel" to the machine. The trio's backs are to the underclassmen, giving them the option of remaining unnoticed.

Inside the engineering lab, the investigators see that they are closely matched in numbers. Lilly leans over a table, intent upon a book. The others stand near Lilly's dimensional visualizer, which is a pair of Nikola Tesla-inspired towers framing a prismatic, constantly shifting gateway. Phantasms flicker in and out of view within the portal's depths (Fear roll). As ghost hunters first catch glimpse of the room, the wildly struggling captive is being forced to touch the gossamer film separating our world from the spirits.

Unless the would-be heroes intervene, the captive loses his struggle and is forced to touch the portal, at which point he is possessed and joins his former captors. If the good guys win initiative, they may choose to interrupt the possession.

Once the possessed adults notice the presence of interlopers, they attempt to grapple and drag them to the portal. Lilly allows the others to do the fighting and clutches the book protectively to her chest. Lilly's machine anchors the spirits in their human hosts, so its destruction is the most effective way to free the possessed people. See **Breaking Things** in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook. The dimensional portal has a Toughness of 8 and breaks under blunt or piercing damage. If the device is threatened, Lilly shrieks in rage and attacks as well. None of the possessed individuals use weapons.

- **Possessed Professors:** Use the Professor Extra from *East Texas University*, with the addition of Fighting d6.
- ★ **Lilly Boatwright:** Use a Graduate Student Extra from *East Texas University*, with the addition of Fighting d4.

AFTERMATH

The authorities blame the building occupants' strange behavior on unidentified chemical compounds released during an unapproved experiment. The remains of Lilly's project are confiscated then "lost."

Maclanahan's protégés should end the adventure with *Crayton's Compendium*. Its pages are a mixture of reference guide and diary, authored by Crayton White, a member of the Protectors. Its pages contain rumors of the supernatural, anecdotes of encounters with cultists and cursed objects, references to rituals, and a set of hand-copied plans of an insane scientist's "ghost viewer."

Crayton's Compendium takes an important role in the next adventure. However, deciphering the scrawling handwriting is a slow process, allowing you to set the pace of the next Plot Point.

SANCTUARY

Crayton's Compendium offers a clue to a place filled with artifacts and valuable ritual components, a secret meeting room called the sanctuary. Although finding the sanctuary is no easy task, the imprisoned demon disguised as a young woman offers a far greater danger.

LEGWORK

After sufficient study of *Crayton's Compendium* (at GlenMac's urging if need be), the researcher notices recurring references to a place called the sanctuary. Crayton mentions the room obliquely when documenting some of the Protectors' encounters. In various passages he mentions that the sanctuary is hidden behind a secret door, that it is soundproofed and heavily warded against the supernatural, and that someone named Judith keeps their supply of ritual components well stocked. Finally a passage drops a usable clue to the sanctuary's location: *Helen warned that the ritual would take a long time, so Ralph closed the bookstore early and joined us upstairs to get started.*

Since Pinebox is a small town, it only takes a few hours (and an Investigation or Streetwise roll) to identify the only multi-story bookstore operating in the 1950s. In fact, it is still in operation today under the name Mary Lynn's Used Books and Emporium. This bookstore/café might even be a familiar stop for the underclassmen, considering its reputation for carrying hard-to-find books and friendly studying atmosphere. The building that now houses the bookstore was once owned by one of the Protectors, although it has changed hands many times since.



HELP WANTED

Mary Lynn's bookstore operates in a 100 year old, two story brick building in downtown Pinebox. The store's entry is dominated by a cash register and serving counter for coffee and pastries, as well as several reading chairs and coffee tables. The store's tall ceilings and old pine flooring give it an open, welcoming feel despite the slightly cramped maze of bookshelves beyond the counter.

When the characters arrive, the eponymous Mary Lynn herself (use a White Collar Worker Extra from *East Texas University*) is at work behind the counter. A "Help Wanted" sign is taped below the cash register. She looks more than a little tired and is ready to hire someone on the spot. Taking a job here counts as an Extracurricular Activity (easy Part Time Job) and can be done mid-semester if the student does not already have an activity.

BREAKING & ENTERING

The stairs leading to the second floor begin at the rear of the store behind a locked, antique door. A printed sign on the door reads, "No admittance." Below that a hand-written sign

reads, "This is not a motel. If you want somewhere private, get a room. This area is being monitored." A surveillance camera is mounted high in one corner to overlook the rear portion of the store.

If a student takes a job at the bookstore, then opening the door is as simple as waiting for Mary Lynn to leave and using the provided key. Otherwise, opening the door requires successful rolls in both Lockpicking and Stealth. Modify the latter by circumstance. If Mary Lynn catches students trying to sneak upstairs, she kicks them out and they cannot return for a week. Once upstairs, explorers need only pass occasional Stealth rolls to avoid notice. Like many previous owners, Mary Lynn gets "bad vibes" upstairs and only uses it for occasional storage.

The second floor consists of a cramped landing leading to two large, dusty rooms. The front room contains broken furniture and boxes of old paperback romances. Natural light filters in from a trio of tall, narrow windows facing the street. The back room holds empty bookcases and dusty junk, but its only light bulb burnt out in the 1980s.

Both rooms stink of the rats that skitter in the shadows.

Crayton's Compendium mentions a secret door, but not its location. The door is hidden in the unlit room behind an empty bookcase set firmly against the back wall. Those with the Psychically Sensitive Edge feel their stomach flop when they pass near. Finding the hidden door is a Notice roll modified by light conditions or 30 minutes of systematic searching. The heroes may also deduce the room's general location by measuring the upper floor compared to the lower floor.

The bookcase door is latched but not locked. Upon pressing the disguised latch, the bookcase door swings open on melodramatically creaky hinges and disturbs decades of dust. See the sidebar **Home Away From Home** on page 25 for a complete description of the sanctuary's interior.

THE PRISONER

No windows offer light to the sanctuary and the light bulb has long since burnt out. Once a character crosses the threshold, he hears a frightened woman tentatively calling out. The voice belongs to a Streilberk demon imprisoned by the Protectors shortly before their death on Dale Island. Since wards on the sanctuary prevent noise from traveling beyond its walls, the creature has waited more than 50 years for release.

The demon's isolation means that its knowledge of the "modern" world ends in 1953. It uses its shape-shifting ability to mimic one of the old Protectors. To the heroes, she appears like a lightly disheveled young woman wearing out of fashion clothes and hairstyle. The demon, who introduces herself as Judith, cannot pass beyond the boundaries of a large pentagram and she begs someone to break the chalk outline and free her.

The creature blends the perfect mixture of truth and fiction to appear plausible. For instance, if questioned about her imprisonment she claims that a group of witches trapped her and left her. If asked how long she has been trapped, she says it feels like forever. Yet, the demon is impatient for release. Each time its freedom is delayed with another question, it becomes more and more agitated. After five questions its disguise briefly wavers (Notice -2) after each subsequent delay.

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

The sanctuary is a 3"×4" single room protected by a pair of powerful rituals. The first prevents sound from passing beyond the room, whereas the other prevents supernatural creatures from crossing the threshold without permission.

A small shelf holds several tomes of rituals, although many are in poor condition, foreign languages, or more-or-less indecipherable. Use these books to dole out rituals as appropriate.

The old group's store of ritual components has largely gone bad, but pick five Common and two Exotic items that would not spoil. For example: a human tooth, chalk, hair from the elderly, arsenic, unpolished jade, and a bear claw. A special brass circle nailed to the floor negates one point of casting modifier when a ritual is conducted wholly within it.

Prominently hung upon another wall is a large county map. Intersecting lines of different colored string cross the county. All the lines converge on an area outside of town, which quick research reveals as within the present-day Burn.

Finally, a framed photo rests upon another small table. Characters who pass a Notice roll recognize the same people in this picture as the one mailed them by their unknown benefactor (Jackson Green).

Although the sanctuary is a secret even to the bookstore's current owner, Helen Lane naturally knows of its existence and location. However, the room's painful association with her past means that as long as the new group does nothing to draw attention to its renewed use, they may use it as a base of operations without her knowledge.

If the charade ends while the demon is still trapped, it attempts to bargain for its freedom. Although it doesn't know anything about what has happened after its imprisonment, it can answer questions about the original owners of the sanctuary. Should "Judith" be freed, the demon immediately returns to its true form and launches an attack. After 10 rounds or upon taking two wounds, the demon issues a last taunt and vanishes in a swirl of brimstone. It says "You can't stop what's coming."

★ **Streilberk Demon (1):** See Streilberk Demon in *East Texas University*.

AFTERMATH

The old sanctuary offers a treasure trove for those interested in Ritualism, but introduces new questions about the meaning of the map and the fate of the Protectors. The heroes can either raid the room and take as much as they can sneak out, or someone can take a job to get after-hours access for the entire group at will.

THE BURN

The students follow the clues from the sanctuary map on a field trip to the ashy hills of the Burn. Although answers are in short supply, a possessed professor creates all new, chilling questions for those who survive.

BACKGROUND

One night in 1953 converging ley lines created a crack between worlds. Only the Texas 13 and a pitifully small military force delayed the demonic vanguard pushing through until Helen LaCroix's thunderclap of energy shoved apart the ley lines. Her actions delayed the apocalypse but killed every living thing in the process.

The area known as the Burn never recovered, thanks to the demonic shades that infuse the blanket of ash. These shadows leech the life from the Burn's forest fringes, creating even more ash and spreading their poisonous influence.

RESEARCH

Inside the confines of the sanctuary, a 5-foot wide map of Golan County dominates one wall. The map is dotted with push-pins from which are strung a grid-work of colored thread. The

threads all converge on a point several miles from Pinebox.

When the students decide to research the significance of the lines' epicenter, they quickly learn that they converge on a place called the Burn. A successful Investigation or Streetwise roll reveals the Burn's public history. The area was once a thriving part of the Big Thicket, but on February 29, 1953 something happened that forever changed the landscape of Golan County. Overnight, a circular area roughly 1 mile in diameter turned to ash. Although investigators found no hot spots or other signs of actual fire, there was no denying that all life had been reduced to burned husks and powdery ash.

Rumors of the cause ranged from secret government projects to a crashed alien ship. These rumors gained even more popularity in the years that followed when it became clear that life was not returning to the Burn. Even a state Forest Service replanting project ended with 500 dead saplings. Today most people accept the theory that the Burn was caused by illegal chemical dumping in the late 1940s. Consequently, the area is designated as off limits without Forest Service permission.

One ETU agricultural scientist has such permission, and Dr. Rick Barton's research clearly shows the dead area's expansion over time. Today the Burn, no longer circular, covers approximately two square miles and its growth is accelerating.

Most importantly for the students, Dr. Barton leads a ecological field trip to the

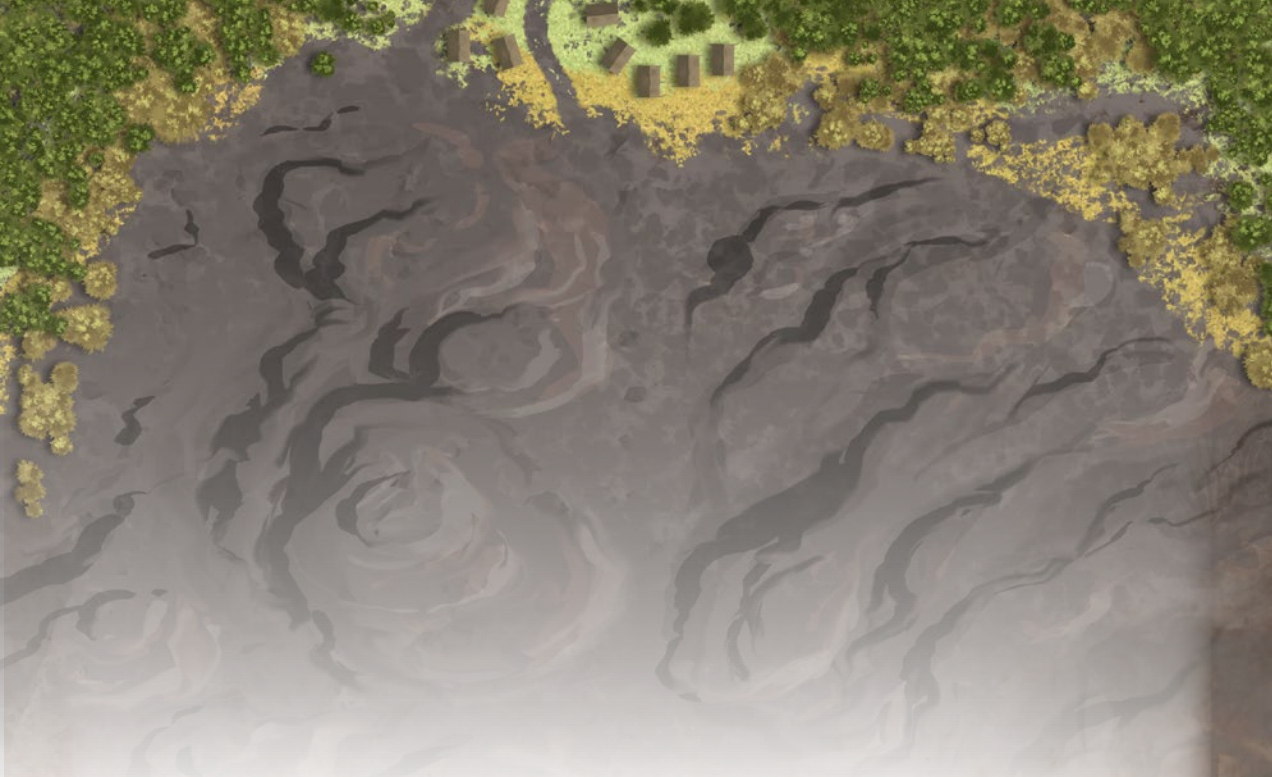
GETTING TO KNOW YOU

These characters recur in the next Plot Point, so make sure that 1) the characters notice them and 2) they survive.

Ariel Summers: An attractive Math major trying hard to impress Kyle Lawless, a zealous nature-lover.

Matt Meranda: A shy, lanky student with glasses who looks like he would be more at ease in front of a game console than on a nature hike.

Derek Ward: A boisterous country boy who jokes with the men and flirts with most of the women within the first 10 minutes of the ride.



Burn every semester. The next trip is only a few days away, so students can use the opportunity to investigate the area and search for a connection to the map on the sanctuary wall. If they fail to learn about Dr. Barton or choose to sneak out on their own, they encounter the researcher and students on their field trip.

THE EXPEDITION

The professor (use Professor from *East Texas University*) welcomes any student with an interest in the Burn, so signing up is simple. He tells them to bring hiking supplies, camping gear, and food for an overnight stay. On the day of the expedition, they meet Dr. Barton and the other nine students in an ETU parking lot. He explains that university vans will ferry the group to a drop-off point at the end of a washed-out logging road. From there, everyone must hike a mile through the Big Thicket to the site. One van holds scientific equipment, which each student is expected to help carry. Finally, he warns them not to expect cell phone coverage.

Some of these characters recur in the next Plot Point (see **Getting to Know You** sidebar on page 26), so give the gang an opportunity meet those and other students. The expedition is made up of the usual

mixture of personalities and motivations. Feel free to use any of the character archetypes from *East Texas University* or ones such as: a bitter complainer, an unprepared city slicker, a junk food addict, a couple in the middle of a slow-burn breakup, a know-it-all, a heavily muscled football athlete, a former Eagle Scout, or a suave international student. For statistics use the Student Extra from *East Texas University* with any relevant modifications.

The Big Thicket is full of natural beauty and wild nature (as well as abundant poison ivy), but as the students approach the Burn the undergrowth and trees first appear sickly yellow, then withered brown, and finally dead and blackened. Eventually only old, dead husks litter the landscape, which is dusted with oily, black soot that should have long since washed away in the rain.

Dr. Barton leads the group to a campsite clearing he has used many times before, although this time he finds it overrun by the outer band of wilting foliage. After setting up camp and having a quick lunch, the professor leads the students on a tour of the Burn, pointing out the markers he has placed to show the dead zone's expansion. Although no one has ever been able to prove the ash's poisonous

properties, he provides everyone with simple dust masks as a precaution.

Unfortunately, Dr. Barton has been in the Burn more often than any other human being. After an hour of his ecology lecture and walking tour, the professor begins to feel ill. He cuts the tour short and encourages them to explore on their own, cautioning them to use the buddy system and be back to camp before the sun touches the horizon. That done, he quickly retreats to his tent for rest.

FREE TIME

The gang may use the free time however they wish, including a trip to the Burn's epicenter. Other students wander the landscape in pairs or trios.

The concentration of so many demonic shades overwhelms most ghost hunting equipment, rendering it useless in the Burn. With a reference or copy of the sanctuary map and a successful Knowledge (Navigation) -1 or Survival roll, the students can find the place where all the lines intersect. Although it looks no worse than the rest of the Burn, a shroud of oppression hangs over the hill. The Texas 13 spirits rest uneasily, surrounded by the shadows of their demonic foes.

The students are far from civilization, cut off from cellular signal, and isolated from their fellow campers. Even noises sound strangely muffled due to the blanket of ash. Use the opportunity to build tension with one or two creepy events. People who spend very long at the site of the first Convergence frequently experience High Strangeness (see the **Adventure Generator** chapter in *East Texas University*).

Although their bodies were turned to ash by sunlight immediately following the Burn, the unique badges of each Ranger in the Texas 13 company were left in memorial. Using a Notice (-4) roll, students who search the hill for clues find a badge. However unlikely, the sleuths can find a total of twelve badges, placed in the ash where the Ranger fell. Each badge is numbered 1 through 13 with the exception of number 7, which is still held by the sole survivor—President Nelson. For each recovered badge, one restless spirit finds peace and the oppressive cloud over the knoll lessens.

Conducting a séance (*grave speak*) anywhere within the Burn is a bad

idea, as it helps the weak demonic shades refocus on the material world and especially the potential hosts who just called them. Should the gang attempt a séance at the ground zero of the Convergence, one of the fallen Texas 13 answer three questions before the séance is overrun by demons. Any answers thereafter come in the form of threats and warnings similar to the ones given by the doctor in the section below.

THE DOCTOR IS OUT

The mood around the camp is subdued that evening. The heroes are not the only ones who experienced High Strangeness and several students are on edge. The professor remains in his tent, sleeping restlessly unless awakened. After dinner around the campfire, students begin retreating to the flimsy security of their tents. Anyone making their Notice rolls (-1) hear Doctor Barton moaning softly in his tent. He is burning up with fever and is suffering from shaking chills.

An hour after bedtime, the professor slips from his tent and begins attacking students. His prolonged exposure to the Burn has led to possession by the Burn's demonic shadows. The spirits poison and twist his body like they have done to the forest. His muscles grow denser, his eyes turn black, and his fingernails grow claw-like.

Although still recognizable as the man they knew, the professor becomes bent on fulfilling the demonic drive to murder every other member of the scientific expedition. As he methodically goes about his task, the professor babbles with the voices of a demonic legion. Even in the middle of combat, he rants about the Convergence.

He says things such as:

"What comes cannot be stopped!"

"You only delayed the Convergence!" and

"We will ravage your world."

Finally, he drops into a pattern of saying *"The ley lines converge; the Convergence returns,"* with varying levels of intensity. These prophetic phrases are the keys to further lines of research and the primary take-away clues from this adventure.

By the time the heroes can react, Barton has killed Kyle Lawless and is threatening other students. The only choice is fight or flight.

Ideally they should try to subdue the crazed professor without resorting to killing him, but the choice—and consequence—is theirs.

AFTERMATH

After the struggle, a fellow student volunteers to hike down the trail until she can get cellular signal. Rescuers then arrive within a couple hours. If Dr. Barton has been subdued alive, he is whisked away for medical treatment. Later that week, his obituary article states that he died as a result of a rare brain tumor that affected his behavior and that his body was cremated at the request of his family.

University officials are extremely apologetic and accommodating, but remind the students of the liability waiver they signed upon being admitted. If the professor was killed during the struggle, plenty of witnesses attest to the need for self-defense and the gang is cleared of charges. Opinion on campus is mixed. Some view them as heroes while others consider them reckless vigilantes.



ASH PUPPET (DR. RICK BARTON)

Dr. Barton's complexion takes on the dark soot of the Burn, his eyes turn solid black, and he grows black claws as the Burn takes control of his body. He becomes a gibbering predator driven to deal chaos and death.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

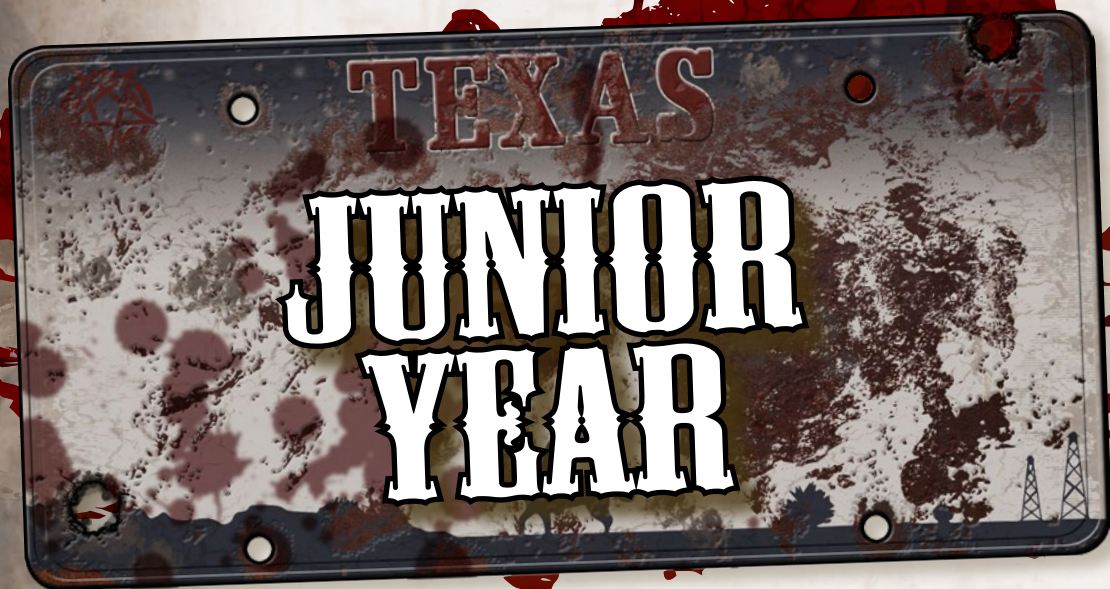
Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6

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

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str +d6.
- **Fast Healing:** The demonic Barton heals one wound level per hour in the Burn.





ON THE GRID

The gang investigates the car accident and disappearance of a fellow survivor of the Burn expedition. The student's obsession with ley lines leads the heroes to a ritual for following the lines themselves. At a nexus of lines, they discover a modern-day Frankenstein's laboratory complete with reanimated corpse.

BACKGROUND

Some Burn expedition survivors had a more difficult time making sense of their experience than others. Subconsciously influenced by the whispers of the Burn's demonic shades, over the summer break Matt Meranda became obsessed with ley lines. He even found an online supplier of an ointment that granted the wearer the ability to see ley lines. Upon returning to Pinebox for the Fall semester, Matt was shocked to see the number of ley lines intersecting over campus. This revelation further fueled his obsession, propelling him to spend all his available time mapping the lines of power over campus.

Fellow survivor Ariel Summers—now Matt's girlfriend—didn't doubt him but feared where the lines would lead him. At a party they both attended, Matt got drunk and morosely told anyone who would listen about the potentially dangerous "magic pipes" running through campus.

Before long, Matt insisted on driving home with Ariel following

close behind in the event of trouble. There was. On a lonely stretch of road, Matt flipped his compact car six times before flying through the window and onto the pavement. Horrified, Ariel stopped her car and ran to the broken remains of her boyfriend.

The grief-stricken young woman loaded Matt's mangled body into the back seat of her car and used his ley line map to find a campus building closest to one such path. With uncanny luck, she found a door to the Rockefeller Psychology Center left unlocked by the night cleaning crew and sneaked her boyfriend's corpse into the off-limits bell tower. Back at their shared apartment, she tore through Matt's occult books until she found the ritual he had mentioned to her in passing—healing—and began preparing.

AN UNEXPECTED CALL

For the gang, this adventure begins with either a phone call or an encounter on campus. Another Burn survivor, Derek Ward, seeks out the gang to ask if they had seen the news. The student e-zine, the Raven's Report, reported that Matt Meranda's vehicle had been found totaled but that no driver had been found and Matt was missing. He explains that Matt, Ariel, and some of the other Burn survivors became close friends after their shared ordeal. He also admits that the other survivors consider the gang responsible for everyone's survival. He urges them to visit Ariel, who is "a wreck"

and would appreciate a concerned visit from her heroes.

WELLNESS VISIT

Ariel is indeed distraught, but madly convinced that her boyfriend's obsession with ley lines was a premonition of how he could be saved. When the gang visits the apartment, the young woman who answers the door is barely recognizable as the one who hiked with them to the Burn. Disheveled and upset, she nonetheless allows the fellow survivors to enter. The apartment is in similar disarray. Dozens of books and an equal number of used tissues litter the living room. Characters who make a successful Notice roll discern that most of the books are about the occult and ley lines in particular.

Due to her regard for the characters, Ariel begins the encounter with an attitude of Friendly and generally unburdens herself as much as she can without revealing the details of Matt's crash or her plan to revive him. For instance, if asked about the books, she admits her boyfriend's obsession with ley lines in the aftermath of the Burn trip. However, she stubbornly refuses to accept that Matt is dead. Instead she insists that he must have been thrown from the car and is probably wandering the woods with a concussion. "Just wait. I promise you he will show up in another day or two alive and well."

Although Ariel describes Matt's behavior at the party, she claims that afterward Matt wanted time to clear his head and they went their separate ways. A successful Notice roll reveals Ariel is hiding something, but if she feels that her plan is threatened she immediately becomes Uncooperative and asks them to leave.

DEAD ENDS

Based on the information provided by Ariel and Derek, the sleuths may try to investigate the scene of the accident in search of clues as to his disappearance. Unfortunately, the authorities have already finished documenting the accident scene (including a thorough search for the driver) and cleared the road of most traces. However, the photo that appeared in the *Raven's Report* makes it hard to believe someone could have walked away.

If the students need prompting to continue the investigation, Derek follows up with

them and asks them to find his friend so that they can have closure. He tells them that Ariel asked for his help in getting dirt from a freshly dug grave and would not explain why. He suspects that Matt's disappearance involves his occult obsession, and fears that Ariel is being drawn into the same sort of "weirdness" that they escaped in the Burn.

PARANORMAL CARTOGRAPHY 101

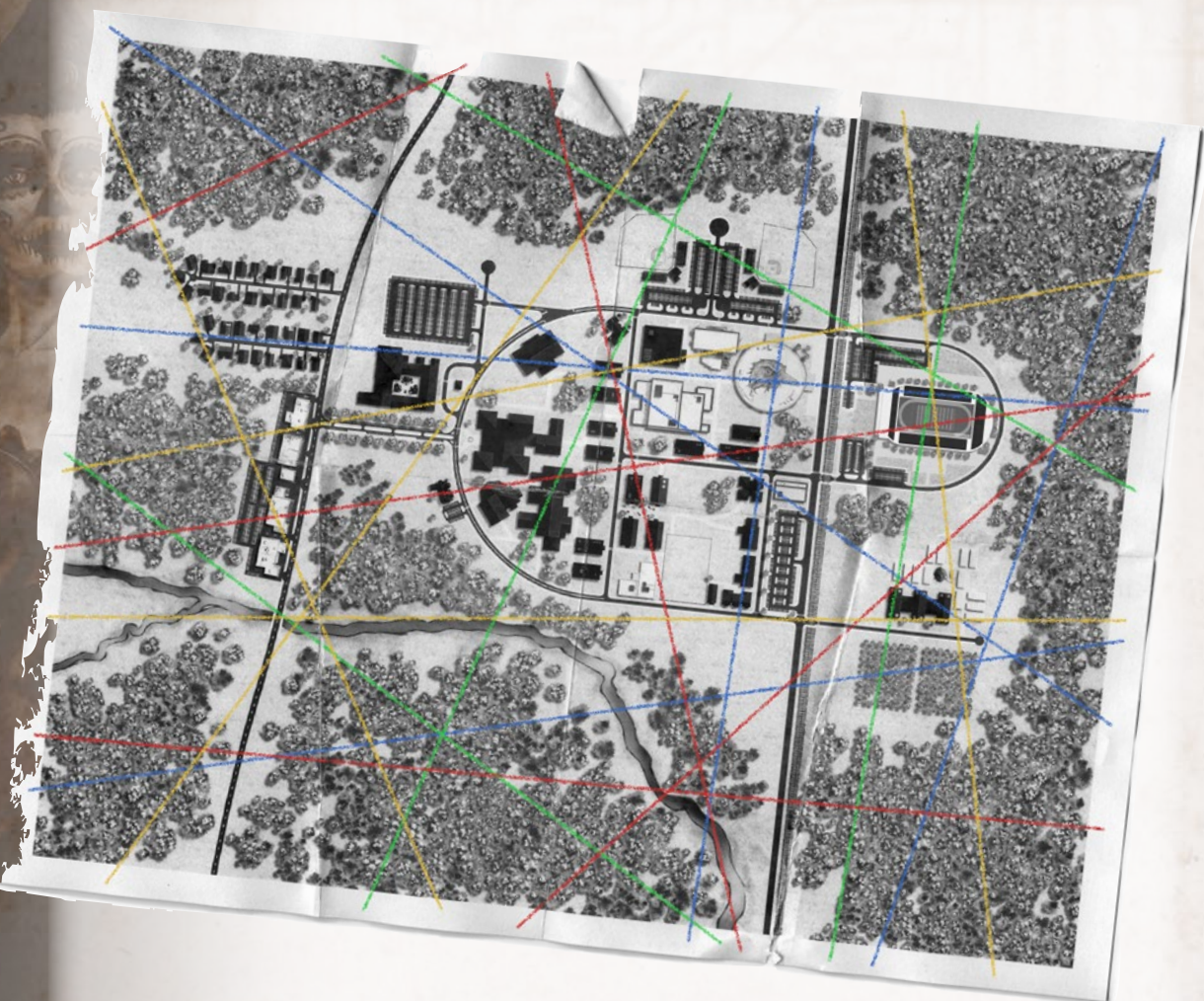
A few minutes of research on the Internet reveals that ley lines are straight lines of travel between geographically significant points. In the 1970s—well after the map in the sanctuary was made—a so-called "New Age" theory emerged that popularized the idea of ley lines following invisible conduits of mystical power.

If the heroes research *Crayton's Companion* and other arcane sources available in the sanctuary, (Investigation) they find many references to lines and locations of mystical energy—all pre-dating the New Age theory. According to these same sources, ley lines magnify the effects of rituals and psychic abilities. Furthermore, the intersection of two or more ley lines creates a powerful nexus point which attracts spirits and "otherworldly creatures."

Finally, *Crayton's Companion* describes a ritual called True Seeing (based upon *detect arcana*) for "seeing the hidden paths of force." Having been used frequently by the Protectors, the necessary ritual components can be found on the sanctuary shelves. If none of the gang have chosen to learn Ritualism, the same effect can be achieved with an ointment purchased from Matt's online source.

CRAYTON'S COMPANION: TRUE SEEING (DETECT ARCANA)

Targets of the True Seeing ritual can see ley lines with the naked eye. These lines appear as glowing conduits of varying diameter and color. Some float dozens of feet out of reach, while others pass only inches above the ground. This ritual does not allow the user to touch or interact with the energy, only to observe it.



THE GRID

Upon stepping outside, beneficiaries of the True Seeing ritual see roughly two dozen glowing lines crisscrossing the campus. These lines vary in width and color, but each intersection glows with an extra intensity. The ley lines extend from all directions and have no discernible pattern other than seeming to converge over campus.

With a successful Notice roll or by viewing the ley lines at night, characters discern that the colors of one nexus point seem washed out and the glow dimmer than the others. It falls just outside the Rockefeller Psychology Center. As the characters come within 100 yards of the building, it becomes clear to those who can see the lines that tendrils of energy are being drawn toward the bell tower.

The Psychology building is locked on weekends and at night. During

these times the heroes must use Stealth and Lockpicking (-2) to open a door or Persuasion (-1) to convince the cleaning crew to allow them inside. Regardless of the time of day, once inside the building the students find that the door to the tower's single entrance, marked "off limits" in faded paint, is slightly ajar.

NEXUS

In the belfry, Ariel stands watch over her boyfriend's fallen body and waits for her ritual to bring him back to life. The young woman looks haggard and on the brink of losing what remains of her sanity. She idly holds a steak knife in one hand and a crude bandage on the opposite arm is stained with blood. Her boyfriend's body lies within a chalk circle and is surrounded by various ritual materials. Characters who pass a Notice roll realize that Matt's body is strangely

“fresh” for having died at least 24 hours previously.

Upon noticing anyone’s approach, Ariel brandishes her knife and screams at them to stop. As long as the characters don’t immediately start a fight, Ariel unburdens herself with the real story about the accident. She insists that the ritual she found in one of Matt’s books is working and that it just needs more energy, which the ley lines are providing. She even shows them the map Matt was creating and his discovery of the lines’ slow movement. Ariel counts on the nexus of the lines near the building to pass directly overhead, providing the extra boost that will heal Matt and make everything okay again.

In this, Ariel is not entirely incorrect. Matt revives at a dramatically suitable moment as they talk (or fight, if that’s the way things go.) The corpse on the floor arcs its back and takes a large, gasping breath. Moments later, he croaks “Kill me.”

Despite having been resurrected, Matt’s body is still mangled from the wreck. If attacked he offers no resistance but proves difficult to kill. In a weak voice, he warns them that Death won’t be cheated. If it can’t take one life, it will take another.

As if on cue, shadows peel from the corners of the belfry and form as inky wraiths. These creatures (equal to the number of heroes, plus one) all Gang Up on Ariel and continue fighting until they are destroyed or someone dies.

- **Matt Meranda:** Use a Student Extra from *East Texas University*. He only suffers half damage from nonmagical attacks and Finishing Moves don’t work on him due to his link to the nexus.
- **Wraiths (1/hero +1):** See Wraiths in *East Texas University*.

AFTERMATH

Matt’s ley line map lies on the floor, should anyone choose to take it. The Convergence causes the lines to move over time—some only a foot a day, others much more (at the Dean’s discretion). Rituals conducted within 6" of a nexus point generate High Strangeness (see *East Texas University*) as a side effect.

If Ariel survives, Derek and the remaining Burn survivors gratefully take over her care. Characters who take the Contacts Edge might

find this group of students useful eyes and ears on campus.

FISHING TRIP

At GlenMac’s behest, the heroes travel to Lake Greystone in search of a powerful talisman called the Lantern of the Deep. When they find it, they also find its powerful Protector...and how it came to its watery resting place.

BACKGROUND

Helen has been content to let the undead revenant of her former lover guard the Lantern of the Deep for the last 50 years. However, since the talisman plays a key role in the ritual for stopping the Convergence, she has finally decided that it is time to reclaim it. The sorceress has also become suspicious that GlenMac hasn’t been forthcoming about his new protégés capabilities, giving her a chance to kill two birds with one stone. Helen instructs the professor to have his students retrieve the talisman. GlenMac recognizes that his loyalty is being tested and that he is backed into a corner. Regretfully, he calls the gang...

TREASURE HUNT

The adventure begins with a phone call from Dr. Maclanahan. Unlike many of his other calls, this one is not a ghost hunt. Instead, he claims that his research into Irish folklore has uncovered a talisman called the Lantern of the Deep, which was brought to Pinebox by settlers in the late 1860s. He tells them that the lantern has a supernatural curse (just in case they get the idea of keeping it) which might even explain the unusual creatures and events reported around Lake Greystone. Oh, didn’t he mention that it was supposedly lost in the lake?

GlenMac asks them to accompany him on a treasure hunting expedition. He has a general idea of the talisman’s location and will provide a boat and equipment. Since this is so above and beyond the norm, he even promises each of them “directed study” credit (+1 Academics until after next Exam) in field work.

As far as the treasure itself, it is described as a simple bulls-eye lantern with a lens made from blue-tinted glass. Even GlenMac doesn’t know the real story, but he spins a convincing

SHORTCUTS

If the heroes have experienced *Bloodlines* (a published Pinebox adventure), finding the lens is considerably easier since the red lens can lead the heroes to its blue counterpart.

yarn. According to the professor, the lantern's name comes from Irish folklore of a selkie maiden who used the glow of a mystic lantern to lure fishermen to their deaths beneath the waves. A fisherman caught the maiden in his nets and ended her life, but the lantern drove him mad. An Irish mystic removed the lantern far from his homeland to America, but eventually succumbed to the curse and threw himself—and the lantern—into Lake Greystone.

GlenMac assures the gang that the expedition's timing is flexible. Although the lake is shallow enough for snorkeling, he is willing to delay the expedition 6 weeks if anyone wants to become SCUBA certified (represented by increasing a die type in the Swimming skill at the next Advance).

EXPEDITION TO DALE ISLAND

The expedition begins early on a foggy Saturday morning, with GlenMac waiting impatiently at the docks. He has arranged for the use of an ETU pontoon boat and an underwater camera belonging to the Biology department. After loading some last-minute equipment, he takes the boat out into the lake. A chilly 15 minute ride later, the boat slows as it nears an island emerging from the fog.

Maybe it's the heavy underbrush blocking visibility more than five feet inland in places, or the way the old Charbrae Manor looms like a slate gray mountain out of its surroundings, or possibly it's the "No Trespassing" signs nailed to trees every 20 feet around the island, that makes Dale Island so forbidding. To someone Psychically Sensitive, the entire island buzzes with evil and power. To the others, the numerous alligators nesting on the shallow beach are warning enough.

Helen told GlenMac the general area in which the talisman sank, so he has a student drop buoys overboard to mark the boundaries of the 50

yard × 50 yard area they will search. After a lecture on underwater safety and using a grid search pattern, GlenMac takes the boat to the first grid coordinate.

The lake near the island is only 9 feet deep, although the murky water requires an underwater flashlight even at these depths. Near the bottom treat the visibility as the equivalent of Dark. For each grid, allow the characters Swimming and Notice rolls. Also roll a d8 for an alligator encounter and on an eight an alligator attacks from the murk. The Notice rolls are not to find the Lantern, but to detect the alligator before it gets The Drop on a swimming character.

On a failed Swimming roll, the character comes too close to the bottom and kicks up silt, making it dangerously difficult to see (Pitch Darkness). Additionally, if the Skill Die come up 1 on the failed roll then the swimmer begins drowning and must pass the next Swimming roll to immediately rise to the surface.

- **Alligator (1):** Use the Alligator found the *Savage Worlds* rulebook.

BENEATH THE WAVES

The Lantern of the Deep lies buried in silt and muck at the bottom of Lake Greystone, protected by an undead guardian revenant. However, GlenMac unwittingly spoke the truth when he said that the magic being emitted by the lantern has begun tainting lake creatures. Only heroes who are completely resistant to magic fail to feel the sudden, sickening pull of the talisman as they pass over it.

Just as importantly, the revenant detects them as well. As it emerges from its cocoon of mud, it sends up a plume of blinding silt (Pitch Darkness) broken only by the diffuse blue glow of the lantern in the creature's clutches. The revenant attacks interlopers, forcing the characters to find a way to vanquish, ensnare, or trick it into relinquishing the lantern. The guardian revenant is most strong against Helen herself, meaning that others have a fighting chance. Wrestling away the lantern severs the link keeping it animated.

The dispatched revenant slowly turns to mud, leaving only its tattered clothes and a locket (Notice -1). If someone opens the locket, it contains tiny pictures of Helen and Jack, who can be recognized from the

Protectors photo. This locket can play a role in the penultimate adventure, so keep track of it.



GUARDIAN REVENANT (JACK LITTLE)

Jack gave his life to protect the lantern from Helen, becoming an undead revenant at the bottom of Lake Greystone. In appearance he bears resemblance to a wrinkled mummy wearing tattered, waterlogged clothing. Jack's mind is nearly completely gone and what remains is unable to speak or form words.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d6, Swimming d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities:

- **Razor Claws:** Str+d6

- **Hardy:** The revenant does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.

- **Fearless:** He is immune to Fear and Intimidation.

- **Undead:** +2 Toughness, +2 recover from Shaken. Called shots do no extra damage.

The first person who holds the lantern after the revenant is vanquished sees a vision of how it came to be.

Helen furiously stalked off the island's shore and onto the water's surface, wild magical energies sparking around her like fireflies. Jack paled. Although the little boat continued drifting away from the dock, there would be no safety.

"Why? Why are you doing this?" Jack shouted into the storm.

"Doing this? This is YOUR doing! I gave my heart and soul to the Protectors—to you. What do I get in return? You and Nina making a fool of me behind my back. You destroyed my heart. What use is a soul without a heart? Why did I even bother help stop the convergence?"

"Helen, listen to me carefully. You're not yourself. You've been balancing on the edge of black magic trying to find this lens, and it has tainted you—"

"SHUT UP. This is your fault. I didn't mean to kill Nina. I loved her like a sister. I loved YOU.



And then the rest of you found out and it all just got out of control. Just give me the lens. I've lost everything that had any meaning in my life, so I'd damn well better have something to show for it." His ex-lover neared the boat and held out her hand. Blue flames flickered from her fingertips.

Jack grasped the lens tightly in both hands and focused his will. "No. I swear by the blood in my veins and my last breath that I will protect this lens from you for all time. Goodbye."

With that, he flipped over the side of the boat and sank beneath the waves. Helen screamed and reached for him, but the water's surface sparked blue and felt solid to her touch. Bubbles briefly marked the spot of Jack's descent, then there were no more.

After the vision (which takes only a heartbeat in real time), the magical blue light fades from the lantern.

AFTERMATH

With the benefit of the lantern's vision, the characters may suspect that GlenMac's story is not true. Regardless, he insists upon taking the lantern with the claim that the curse is too dangerous to be left unchecked. He tells them that he will lock it away somewhere the curse can't reach until he can find someone to remove the curse itself.

Now the heroes know the final fate of the Protectors.

Helen is pleased with the return of the talisman, but her concern over the students' aptitude only grows.

SWEET HEART 243

The heroes are invited to dinner at a fancy restaurant, where they are sent to recover a dangerous drug purported to give users werewolf strength and speed while retaining human intellect. When cornered, the scientist claims that he is trying to get it away from the Foundation because they plan on using it to create their own army.

BACKGROUND

Dr. Allen Miller, an up-and-coming ETU researcher, accepted a multi-million dollar grant from the Sweet Heart Foundation to create a drug to imbue extra strength and speed without the usual doping side effects. Sweet Heart provided a research partner, one who had previously worked at MasterGene under Dr. Philip Perry. (See the published Pinebox

adventure *The Beast Within*.) His benefactors also provided unique samples from earlier research to use as building blocks. The samples included a curious gray ash (from the Burn), the Fenris Virus, and lycanthrope blood samples. Although not told directly, he inferred that Sweet Heart plans on militarizing the drug.

That was when Dr. Miller started his own secret research to sell to the highest bidder. While directing the official research down dead ends, Dr. Miller struck upon a formula that created an improved wolf-man—a human with the reflexes of a werewolf but human reasoning and self-control. All that had remained was the superficial issue of curbing the full-body hair growth.

Unfortunately, his Sweet Heart Foundation research partner, Aubrey Wright, became suspicious and confronted him. Using a limited supply of his most recent formulation (S.H. 243) upon himself, he attacked her, stole the research data, and staged an escape. However, rather than fleeing across campus as a wolf-man he returned to his hidden lab until the drug wore off.

...Meanwhile, although GlenMac proved his loyalty to Helen, the gang's success on Lake Greystone only confirmed her suspicion that his new protégés deserved closer scrutiny. GlenMac stubbornly shielded them from Jackson's fate but acquiesced to a new test setting them upon recovering Sweet Heart's stolen research.

BRUNCH

The heroes receive a hasty call from Professor Maclanahan to discuss an important new investigation. The meeting is set for brunch at the Faculty Club, a fancy restaurant on campus reserved for faculty members and their guests. At the restaurant GlenMac is joined by another Sweet Heart agent, whom he introduces as biology professor Dr. Wayne LeGrevellec. Professor Maclanahan explains that last night he was alerted to a strange security camera video by a security office student worker who knows he is interested in weird stuff.

Dr. LeGrevellec plays the footage on his phone. A woman in a lab coat is attacked by a creature that somewhat resembles the Needler or a werewolf. The struggle ends with the woman's head slamming into a

SHE'S A TAMALE SHORT OF A FULL DOZEN

Aubrey Wright is a sociopath. The experiments that her mentor Dr. Perry conducted in madness, Aubrey Wright assisted with detachment. Although she does not know about the Convergence and the true purpose of the Sweet Heart Foundation, she is wholly committed to helping them usher in a "New World Order" with an army of her creation. She cooperates with the students only if she becomes convinced they can lead her to Dr. Miller.

counter top. The other figure quickly collects a few vials from a tray and rips out an external hard drive before fleeing the camera's field of vision.

Dr. LeGrevellec says that he thinks the attacker in the lab next door to his was its own researcher, Dr. Allen Miller. The woman, his research partner, survived the attack but is under observation due to a concussion. The attack occurred last night and campus security contacted him after the attack for help identifying the subject in the video. He says he doesn't know what his colleague was researching, but a private foundation has been funding several professors' cutting-edge research into gene therapy using the healing properties from other animals. Presumably Dr. Miller became infected with his own experimental gene therapy and may be undergoing radical mental changes as well as the obvious physical one. Campus security believes the attacker is someone in a gorilla suit, but GlenMac agrees that it's no suit.

Dr. LeGrevellec hands them a slip of paper with the addresses for Dr. Miller's lab and home, and his lab assistant's name. He explains that Dr. Miller is still unaccounted for. No other security cameras caught a man in a gorilla suit leaving the building. He says that as university staff he and GlenMac are too conspicuous to openly investigate, but students are largely overlooked. He asks that they find Dr. Miller before he hurts anyone else and retrieve the hard drive and vials in the hope that they can be used to find a cure.

He theorizes that an abrupt transformation like Dr. Miller's would quickly wear him out and that he is probably sleeping off the effects. If the heroes track him down before nightfall they have a good chance of subduing him without serious conflict.

Throughout the briefing, GlenMac lets the other Sweet Heart agent spin his tale. He dislikes further dragging his protégés into Sweet Heart business, but if directly questioned he begrudgingly agrees that there's a passing similarity to the Needler and that the research could be related.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Students who want to question the injured research partner, Aubrey Wright, can find her at different locations depending on the time of day. For the first two hours after the heroes accept the assignment she can be found at the local hospital under observation. Although her employers concocted a cover story for her injuries, the doctors are still concerned about her concussion. Wright has awakened and is terrified that she has contracted lycanthropy from Dr. Miller. She is frantic to return to the lab and check her blood for lycanthropy markers.

For the subsequent two hours she is found back in the lab setting up blood tests. Once assured that she was not infected, her primary goal is to find Dr. Miller's other research or—barring that—take a sample from Miller himself. She is fanatically committed to creating a super-human drug. Consequently, she leaves the lab and goes to Dr. Miller's house in hopes of finding him or a clue to his whereabouts.

Regardless of where the gang encounters Aubrey, she begins as Uncooperative unless the students mention being sent by Dr. LeGrevellec, in which case she shifts to Neutral. Mindful of what could happen to her if she divulges Sweet Heart's secrets, Aubrey evades questions about the purpose of their research unless the students can improve her reaction with a Persuasion roll to Friendly or Helpful. At Friendly she admits that she and Dr. Miller were researching a means of creating a wolf-man drug. At Helpful she agrees to team up with the students (if they wish) and tells them that Dr. Miller's change could not have been triggered by any of the drugs in their lab. Thus, he must

have developed his own drug in a second, secret laboratory.

★ **Aubrey Wright:** Use the Cultist Extra in East Texas University with the addition of the Arrogant and Bloodthirsty hindrances.

DR. MILLER'S HOUSE

No one answers the doorbell at the researcher's modern, brick mansion. A Notice roll -1 reveals a fake rock in which is hidden a spare key. Alternately, if they can distract or make friends with the full size poodle (Uncooperative) in the fenced backyard then a window or set of double French doors overlooking the back patio can be opened with a Lockpicking roll.

If Aubrey Wright is in the house, a Notice roll reveals signs of the house being hastily searched. Nothing on his home computer provides his current whereabouts, but anyone at his home office desk can make a Notice -1 roll to find a pair of printouts from a mass spectrometer. The first is labeled "SH 211." The second one is labeled "SH 211B, Lab #2." The important clue is not the data on the page, but confirmation that Dr. Miller had a second lab.

• **Large Poodle:** Use the Dog from the *Savage Worlds* rulebook.

THE LAB

A printed note taped to the unlocked door to Dr. Miller's lab announces that the room is under lock-down by order of the lab safety office until further notice. The lab shows no trace of the earlier violence. Counter-tops covered with lab equipment line three of the walls, while the fourth wall is lined with cabinets and specimen refrigerators topped with supply boxes.

Dr. Miller's "secret lab" is little more than a side room hidden behind this wall of equipment. The doorway is disguised as a flimsy metal storage cabinet with a closet bar for holding lab coats. Dr. Miller pried off the cabinet's back wall then reattached it using hinges and a strong magnet. The door has no latch and can be pushed open with moderate pressure.

At noon, water pools out from under the cabinet. In Dr. Miller's haste to destroy the evidence of his research, the researcher poured sample after sample down his lab's only sink. Unfortunately, the mixtures congealed in the drain and clogged it. As



Dr. Miller slept off the effects of his drug, condensate from the climate control backed up the pipe until finally overflowing from the catch-pan onto the floor. Characters who enter the main lab and make a Notice -3 roll can spot the puddle of water forming at the base of the disguised door. Every hour after noon decreases the penalty by one as the pool grows across the outer lab.

Meanwhile, Dr. Miller continues to sleep off the effects of his drug. While in the outer lab, use the groups rule for Stealth and treat the researcher as Inactive. Once the students find the hidden entrance, Dr. Miller groggily awakens enough to become Active (in accordance with The Last Step for Stealth).

If Aubrey Wright follows the students and is present at the showdown, she hangs back and stays out of the fight until it is clear who will win.

If the hidden room remains undiscovered by late evening, the doctor awakens to a small flood in his secret lab and makes a break for freedom with his remaining samples and the hard drive.

THE VILLAINOUS MONOLOGUE

The cramped secret lab duplicates some of the equipment in the outer one. Dr. Miller—once again human—sleeps in a chair slumped forward against the compact computer desk. Unless the characters succeed at their Stealth roll, the researcher is awakened by their entry. As soon as he realizes his hiding spot has been discovered, he injects himself with the second sample of his drug (a standard action) and hides the empty syringe. Since the transformation takes time, he stalls for as long as possible by engaging the students in conversation. Once the conversation begins winding down, allow a Notice roll to detect the gradual addition of muscle mass. The transformation concludes with hair growth, at which point he is fully transformed. The drug lasts nearly four hours.

If given the opportunity to stall, the researcher explains how Sweet Heart provided the basis for his research and what

he thinks it is for, figuring that one way or another it soon won't matter.

Regardless of the students' response, at a dramatically appropriate time Dr. Miller completes his transformation. Unless he has already been tied down, he springs to attack. His goal is not necessarily their death, but only to scatter them enough for his own escape.

★ **Werewolf:** Use the Werewolf from the *Savage Worlds* rulebook.

DENOUEMENT

If Aubrey Wright is present, she does not let the heroes leave until she has a copy of her research partner's secret notes—or Dr. Miller's blood and tissue—for her own.

Dr. Miller's lab is not soundproofed. Unless it is after hours, loud, violent combat is likely to attract attention. If called, Dr. LeGrevellec initiates a Sweet Heart cover-up. Otherwise, students who hang around after the fight can expect a long night at the police station. If Dr. Miller dies in the fight his body reverts to human very shortly after his heart stops pumping blood.

If the students return the stolen research to Dr. LeGrevellec or GlenMac, they are thanked and each rewarded with a \$500 check from the Sweet Heart Foundation. Regardless of the outcome, GlenMac flatly refuses to use his students in any more Sweet Heart schemes.

If the heroes investigate Sweet Heart the company launches counter attacks until the students lose interest. The details are at the Dean's discretion, but examples include cheating accusations, an unfavorable news story, anonymous information on a girlfriend or boyfriend being unfaithful, or claims of unpaid tuition, rent, or car payments. Each is accompanied by an anonymous message that the troubles can end by dropping out of school and leaving Pinebox.





REUNION

Although this adventure can occur any time during the senior year, it works best in the final semester. The students reunite with Jackson Green, who fills in some gaps about Sweet Heart's true goal and solicits their help in shutting down project Super Human. Jackson's plan involves a simultaneous sabotage of two vulnerable points, assuring success even if one group fails. While on site, the characters learn the date of the Convergence—three days after graduation.

BACKGROUND

Immediately after escaping the Needler attack in his house, a scared and injured Jackson Green went into hiding and has been quietly probing into Helen's background, her connection to the chupacabra, and the extent of his old mentor GlenMac's involvement.

Over time, he ferreted out Helen's connection to the Sweet Heart Foundation, some of the company's schemes, and the existence of a second Convergence. He surmises that Helen and her cohorts are ushering in this new Convergence in a bid at world conquest. The chupacabra creatures and the various incarnations of the Super Human project—aka "Sweet Heart"—all seem to lead to a goal of creating an unstoppable army.

That belief was firmly reinforced when he discovered that Sweet Heart had brokered a federal grant to research "human combatant enhancement"

and was awarded the use of the old Base X military outpost for private research. Jackson has spent nearly a year camped in the Big Thicket spying upon the base. He even rescued a project Super Human reject—a chupacabra hybrid runt that survived a botched execution. Since being nursed back to health, the intelligent but mute "Paul" has served as Jackson's near-invisible eyes and ears both on campus and off. Now, Sweet Heart appears to be near success and Jackson is ready to make his move. Only, he needs a little help...

THE BIG REVEAL

Early one evening, each student gets a text message from an unrecognized number. "2nite ur ?s will b answered. Meet @ nature trl west side of campus. 10 pm. Don't B seen." A few moments later, a second message follows. "Bring Pizza Barn lrg supreme."

As promised, at 10 pm the silhouette of a stranger appears in the shadows beyond the well-lit head of the nature trail leading into the Big Thicket. The stranger is "Paul," dressed in a t-shirt and baggy pair of sweat pants with a cap pulled low to further hide its face in shadow. The shadow beckons them to follow, and he leads them swiftly and silently down the trail. Eventually they arrive at a clear-cut right-of-way used for power transmission lines. Their guide is nowhere to be seen, but a battered jeep sits idling,

its headlights turned off. A very lean and bedraggled Jackson Green sits at the wheel.

Their old friend wears ripped camouflage clothing, worn boots, and doesn't appear to have shaved in several months. Even his trademark cowboy hat is crumpled. By way of greeting, he asks if the heroes brought the pizza and tears into whatever food they offer.

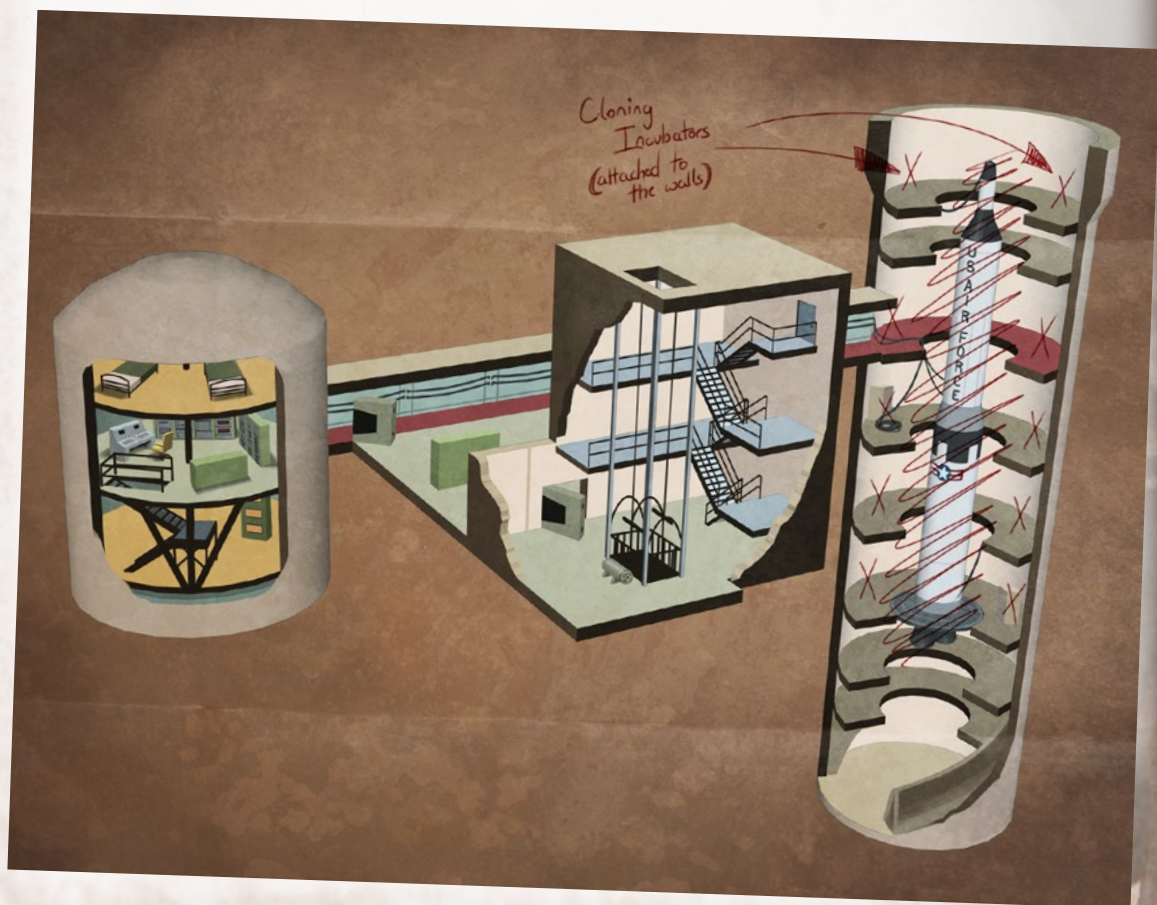
On the reckless drive back to his base camp over logging trails and cleared fence lines, Jackson explains the events leading up to his disappearance, the revelation about GlenMac's betrayal, what he knows about the first Convergence from President Nelson, and the investigation into Sweet Heart. While he refers to "an ally on campus," he refuses to share President Nelson's name, saying "It's not my secret to tell."

THE JOB

Having arrived at a primitive campsite with at least some of their questions answered, Jackson now asks for their help. His spying on Base X revealed a systematic program for creating larger and stronger chupacabras. With that explanation, Jackson introduces "Paul," who drops his camouflage and

appears at the edge of camp. Together they learned that thousands of incubation vats have been installed on Base X and that Sweet Heart has already begun incubating an army of larger, stronger chupacabra hybrids.

Jackson believes that the base—and Sweet Heart—is politically protected. Two separate attempts to publicly expose Sweet Heart were almost instantly and thoroughly squashed. He's not suicidal; he knows that a direct fight is a losing proposition. However, sabotage is a different matter. He and Paul identified ways to disrupt the incubation system before the army can be fully grown. Although it sounds dangerous, the facility is only staffed with a skeleton crew. Because he'll only get one chance, Jackson's plan is for two groups to hit both weak points simultaneously, doubling the odds for success. One group will introduce a poison into the incubator water system while the other group tampers with the temperature regulator. Jackson lets his friends pick which target they want to attack and how the groups will be split. He even provides printed diagrams of a standard Titan 1 missile base layout (easily found online) to use for planning.



BASE X

The abandoned Titan I base serves Sweet Heart's needs perfectly. With the help of Pentagon grant money, the tunnels and silos have been restored and retrofitted with modern technology. Sweet Heart incubators line the walls of each silo, accessed from platforms that spiral from top to bottom. Despite the enormity of the operation, the automated incubation processes only require nine Sweet Heart technicians. These agents live in the original underground Titan crew bunkhouse and work in three 8-hour shifts. One technician works in the Control Center laboratory, one across the hall in the Power House, and the third inspects incubators in the silos while the off-duty technicians rest in the living quarters.

A pack of improved chupacabras live in the tunnel system and keep a watchful eye over the new, growing generation. Although not as smart as Paul, they are cunning and have been taught to distinguish friend from foe.

Although their old friend is open to suggestions on the particulars of the mission, he is adamant about attacking the very next evening. He resists allowing anyone to leave his campsite for fear of Sweet Heart being alerted, but he agrees to send Paul back into Pinebox before sunrise if the gang needs certain supplies or a specific item.

★ **Jackson Green:** see Jackson Green in *East Texas University*

★ **Paul:** Use the Chupacabra Hybrid on page 95, with the addition of being a Wild Card with the *Lame Hindrance* and *Size -1*.

STEALTH TIME

Infiltrators must overcome the recently restored outer fence, skirt an obstacle course Jackson calls the chupacabra proving grounds, and dodge security cameras. Once near the silos, they must sneak into the tunnel network. The main entrance is a concrete stairwell adjacent to the above-ground barracks. A security camera points directly at the door, so their first task is disabling or tricking it. Opening the door requires *Lockpicking -2*. The air handling system offers an alternative route large enough to accommodate a person but is full of spinning propellers. The emergency exits mentioned later in **Plan B** are reinforced and may only be opened from the inside.

SOMEBODY'S POISONED THE WATERHOLE

Jackson provides a canister of poison to the team sabotaging the incubator water supply. The incubators require a constant flow of water, which is enhanced with project Super

Human drugs and sprayed as a fine mist to be absorbed by the chupacabra eggs.

The poison team must sneak into the underground Power House, which controls both power generation and water filtration. The characters encounter a technician inside the noisy Power House performing maintenance. Since only a handful of Sweet Heart insiders are privy to the Base X operation and they all know one another, it requires a *Persuasion -2* roll to bluff past the technician.

Once past the technician, the heroes must identify the filtration system (*Notice*, *Knowledge (Engineering)*, or similar) remove one of the replaceable filters, pour in poison, then return the system to service. The poison takes roughly thirty minutes to kill the growing chupacabras. Unfortunately, just as they complete their task (if not before), an alarm sounds throughout the underground base. Proceed to **Plan B** on page 43.

• **Sweet Heart Technician (1):** Use *Cultist Extra* in *East Texas University*, replacing dagger with a large wrench (*Str+d6*).

IS IT HOT IN HERE, OR IS IT ME?

The incubating chupacabras require a moist, hot environment such as the one in the greenhouse when the students killed their first creature. The group who targets the temperature control system must find an unattended computer or use their own portable computer to access a wired outlet and change the temperature settings. With a *Notice* roll, the team can locate a network jack in a silo (see **Plan B** for silo descriptions),

where they also encounter a Sweet Heart technician. Using their own computer to access the network requires a Knowledge (Computers) roll -2 or Investigation -4.

The Sweet Heart computer with the most direct access is found in the most dangerous location—the former missile base Control Center. The Control Center is a two story bunker with updated living and working quarters. The work area on the upper level includes network servers, a large TV displaying feeds from half a dozen security cameras placed in the silos, and a laboratory. Six off-duty Sweet Heart technicians lounge in the lower level living quarters. The students must fight or bluff their way past a working technician without alerting the rest of the base in order to access the server.

No matter how the heroes access the network, once logged in the hacker is presented with a directory of available options. One is a directory tree labeled “project Super Human” files, with subdirectories detailing the chimera experiments, the Fenris virus, Dr. Perry’s genetic experiments, and many more.

Multiple fail-safes prevent the incubators from being shut down, but the characters can change the temperature setting. Although it takes a while for them to completely die, the developmental damage caused in the first hour makes the chupacabras useless for Sweet Heart’s purposes.

As heroes are finishing up, an alert pops up on the screen reading “Convergence simulation 9,361 complete. Play now? Yes / No” Choosing “Yes” plays an animation of ley lines over Golan County warping and converging over Pinebox. The map detail isn’t precise enough to show an exact epicenter but it appears to be somewhere over campus. The running date in the bottom corner ends in May three days after graduation.

- **Sweet Heart Technician (1):** Use Cultist Extra from *East Texas University*, replacing the pistol with a Stun Gun used to keep unruly chupacabras in line.

PLAN B

As the heroes complete their assignment, if not a little before, a general alarm sounds throughout the complex. A Sweet Heart psychic has sensed trouble and alerted the crew to seal the entrance, trapping the students underground. At the sound of the

alarm, the technicians arm themselves from a weapons locker in the living quarters. They then move in teams to secure the Power House and Control Center, dogging the heavy-duty doors behind them. Meanwhile, in one of the former propellant terminals adjacent to a silo, the pack of improved chupacabras (one for each character) stir from slumber in their lair and go on the hunt. Considering the missile base’s shape, they most likely encounter their prey in the long tunnel between the entrance and one of the silos. They fight to the death.

According to Jackson’s map, the only other way out is via an old crew emergency exit adjacent to each silo. These doors are old and firmly sealed from the inside, but usable.

The most direct route to an emergency exit takes the students directly through a silo, where they get a first-hand look at the nascent Sweet Heart army. Rack-mounted incubators completely line the silo walls, stretching into the darkness above and below. A ramp in the silo’s center spirals in both directions, providing access to each three foot tall device. Glass windows within the incubators show a fine mist falling over a bristled, football-sized egg.

- **Sweet Heart Technician (4):** Use Cultist Extra in *East Texas University*, sans dagger.
- ★ **Improved Chupacabra Pack Leader (1):** The creature’s pack leader is especially tough. Use the Improved Chupacabra (page 94) as a Wild Card.
- **Improved Chupacabra (1/Wild Card student):** Although still tough, the remaining Improved Chupacabra pack mates are not Wild Cards.

ESCAPE & AFTERMATH

Once above ground, it only takes steady nerves and a successful Stealth roll for the students to slip away into the night undetected.

If Jackson survives, he is too paranoid to stage his return until after the Convergence. He asks them to map out the ley lines and figure out where the Convergence is likely to take place and notify him through the same number he used to text them. Finally, he makes the heroes promise that they won’t let on that they know GlenMac’s secret. At the moment their old mentor is their best shot at learning more about Sweet Heart.

The haggard former grad student parts ways with his friends, but not before warning them that the worst is yet to come. Helen and the rest of Sweet Heart will be ruthless to complete their conquest.

PLOT POINT INTERLUDE

Paranormal activity dramatically spikes in the area around the Raven's Nest during the final semester and all ghosts gain an extra die type in Spirit.

WHAT IF JACKSON DIED?

Don't worry, it's not the end of the worl—um, maybe that's a bad choice of words. Let's just say that the story goes on. Kindly old President Nelson reveals himself as the other survivor from the original Burn and Jackson's secret ally. Henceforth he guides the heroes with the same information that Jackson would have provided.

GRADUATION DAY

Having discovered the location of the Convergence, the heroes realize they must disrupt Helen's sacrificial ritual under the ETU football stadium during graduation ceremonies. Unfortunately, they must first fight their way through the reawakened demon army destroyed at the Burn. In the underground bunker, Helen makes her case for mass murder and gives the heroes a chance to join them.

BACKGROUND

With the Super Human army crippled, Sweet Heart resorts to fighting the Convergence with magic. The ritual utilizes De La Garza's Cross, the dimensional visualizer, and the blue lens from the Lantern of the Deep to magnify Helen's original ritual that created the Burn. This time, she purposefully intends on sacrificing the thousands of students and families attending ETU's graduation ceremonies to fuel her spell and end the Convergence for good.

The ritual is planned directly beneath the ETU graduation ceremonies in the "abandoned" supercollider tunnels beneath the football

stadium. The sacrificial ritual begins at sunrise the morning of graduation, building throughout the day and climaxing near the end of graduation ceremonies.

MAPPING

At the end of the previous adventure, Jackson asked the heroes to map the ley lines and predict where Helen and Sweet Heart will make them converge. Mapping three separate ley lines should be sufficient to reveal that the lines converge near the Raven's Nest football stadium. Research into the stadium (with prompting by Jackson, if necessary) reveals its genesis over the unfinished constructions of a supercollider project. For more on the supercollider project, see "The Raven's Nest" entry under **ETU Places of Note** in *East Texas University*.

GRADUATION DAY

For those who passed their final exams, it's graduation day. The heroes' families are in town for the big evening ceremony, adding an extra flavor of chaos to festivities. Jackson contacts the heroes mid-morning and admits that he has been unable to find anything new about Sweet Heart's plans for the Convergence. It's time to confront GlenMac directly. To this end, he asks that they join him and plead with his old mentor. This encounter should be timed such that they do not find GlenMac until late afternoon, providing extra urgency for the events that follow.

When the heroes confront him, GlenMac reacts first with anger and denial. He genuinely believes that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few. Even so, with Pinebox's sacrifice at hand he has found his resolution wavering. Unless the heroes skip straight to violence, this encounter becomes a Social Conflict (see *Savage Worlds*). Given the chance, GlenMac tries to justify his duplicity and explains Sweet Heart's true purpose—not to usher in the Convergence but to stop it (+2 Persuasion that round). He explains how Helen designed the supercollider to focus the magic of De La Garza's Cross through the blue lens of the Lantern of the Deep and into Lilly Boatwright's dimensional visualizer. However, even with the artifacts, only a mass human sacrifice can generate sufficient magical energy to restore the converging ley lines to their natural positions. Helen's new

Burn—centered right on the ETU campus—will provide the energy necessary for preventing a far greater apocalypse.

This confrontation has the potential to be a defining moment for the heroes, so roleplay it to the fullest. If the students can redeem GlenMac then not only do they win the battle with their virtues intact, but his renewed alliance gives them a better chance at stopping Helen's ritual and finding another way to stop the Convergence. GlenMac insists on accompanying the heroes, needing to make up for his part in Sweet Heart's schemes.

If instead the heroes cast aside any pretense at virtue and force the information from him, then they learn only the essentials of how to find and use the secret elevator. In this case, they do not benefit from GlenMac's further help.

In either case, when persuaded GlenMac hands over a control key to the elevator serving the enclosed alumni boxes overlooking the stadium. The same elevator also extends down all the way to a bunker adjacent to the supercollider tunnel.

THE BURN IS ALIVE

GlenMac receives a call on his cell phone while in the heroes' presence. Another of Helen's occultists tells him that the Burn has come alive. With the Convergence imminent, the lingering demonic spirits created new material vessels from the Burn's ashes and are marching toward Pinebox. Helen fears that the demons might derail Sweet Heart's ritual by slaughtering the intended victims before they can be properly sacrificed. Most of the primary site's security detail and ritualists are being diverted to fight a delaying action against the ash demons. GlenMac is to immediately return and help Helen with the sacrificial ritual.

Now that they know how to enter the Sweet Heart bunker, the heroes can begin the assault at any time. This would be the ideal time to summon allies and fully equip. By the time the heroes arrive at the stadium, their classmates and families have already begun filing in for graduation. At your discretion, the heroes encounter a few familiar faces along the way, possibly bringing closure to earlier encounters.

The alumni boxes are unused during the graduation ceremonies, leaving this part of the stadium relatively empty. Shortly after the heroes enter a roped-off section of hallway by the elevator, an ash demon stomps around the corner from the opposite direction. This creature broke past Sweet Heart's defenses and seeks the growing magical energies it senses below ground. Ignoring the heroes, it rushes to the elevator where it is met by a suddenly-visible chupacabra hybrid. This creature was the successful experiment Sweet Heart had tried to mass produce at Base X. Now only this ultimate specimen remains, tasked with guarding the elevator entrance. The creatures grasp and claw at one another, sending up puffs of ash from the demon "body." As long as they battle one another, the creatures largely ignore the heroes. This presents an opportunity to slip past to the elevator or to fight the victor after it has been worn down. GlenMac cannot command the chupacabra hybrid, but it obeys "Paul" if the lame creature is present.

★ **Ash Demon (1):** Use überdemon found in *East Texas University* with the addition of Weakness (Water): +d6 damage.

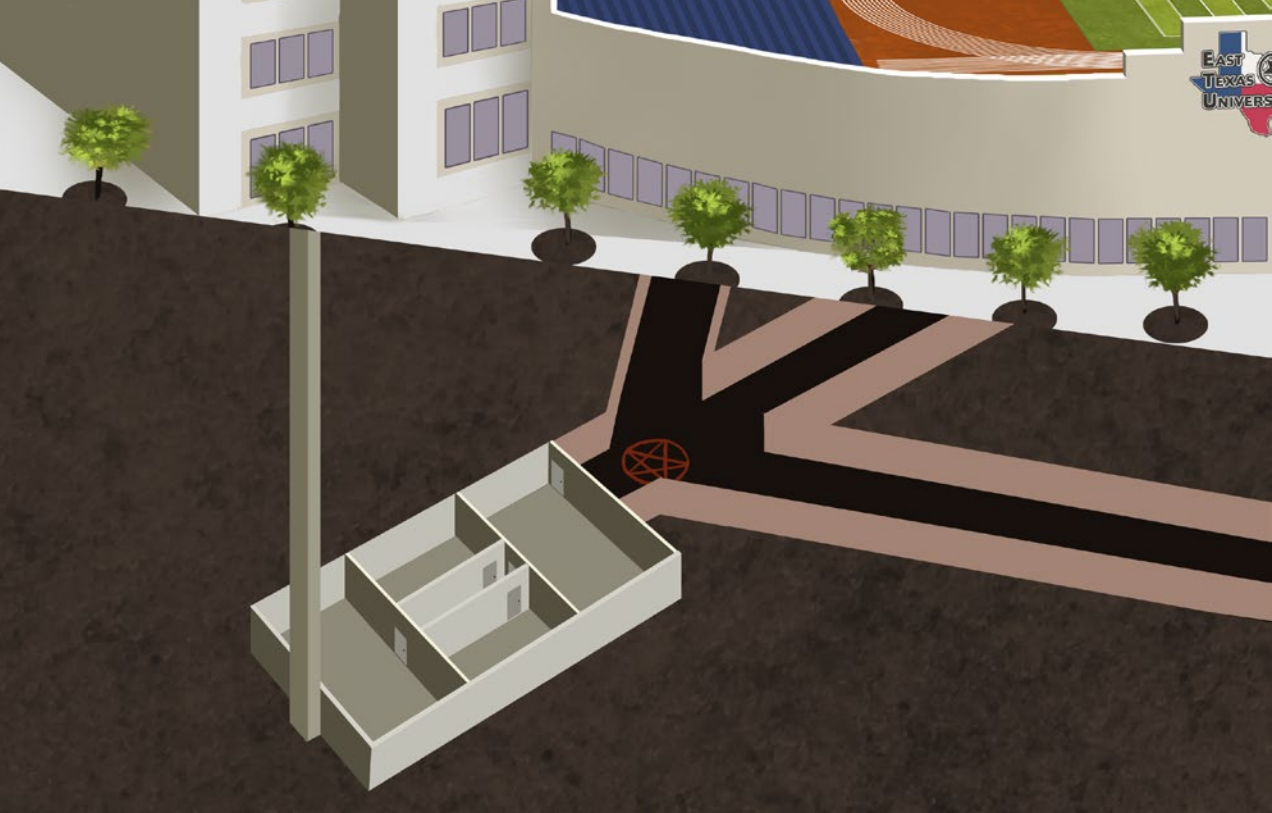
• **Chupacabra Hybrid (1):** See page 95.

SHOWDOWN

GlenMac's key sends the elevator slowly downward. At the bottom, the doors open upon a sparsely appointed waiting room

WHY CAN'T WE JUST EVACUATE THE STADIUM?

Once inside the stadium walls, visitors are treated to the ETU school song playing on the loudspeakers. Each loudspeaker has also been charmed with a powerful ritual that mesmerizes the listener for as long as music plays. The audience—students, staff, and families alike—sit passively throughout the evening, oblivious to the horrors that await them. Should a Wild Card enter the stadium walls then she must make a Spirit roll to resist its hypnotic influence. If the characters convince GlenMac to join them then he warns them of the danger. If not, then they may learn the hard way.



guarded by a cluster of armed Sweet Heart mercenaries. GlenMac's presence allows the group to pass through unmolested; otherwise they attempt to detain the intruders—peacefully if possible but with lethal force if necessary—until they can clear things up with Helen.

A single doorway at the other end of the room leads to the Sweet Heart bunker, a 5"×7" room that serves as the nerve center for Helen's master ritual. Extra-large televisions show security camera footage of the ritual in progress within the supercollider tunnels, while smaller screens show scenes from the stadium, elevator entrance (where the ash demon and chupacabra hybrid may still be fighting), and even the antechamber they just left. A door opposite the entrance opens to the ritual area in the supercollider tunnels (see illustration).

Three of Helen's ritualists wait in the control room. If fighting broke out in the antechamber then they attack at will. Otherwise, they are hostile but hold their attack until attacked in turn.

At a dramatically appropriate moment (preferably near the end of combat), Helen enters the room from the tunnel door. If fighting is in progress, she uses her *Puppeteer*

ring to freeze participants. On the next round, she uses the dominated characters to shield herself from any characters who resist her talisman. Once order has been restored, Helen says "I've been wondering when you would get here. We still have some time. Let's chat."

- **Sweet Heart Mercenary (6):** Use the Mercenary Extra in *East Texas University*.
- **Ritualist (3):** Use the Ritualist Extra in *East Texas University* with one talisman for each: Lightning Pen (*bolt*), Dumb Phone (*confusion*), Kitchen Timer (*slow*).

★ **Helen Lane:** See page 92.

PARLEY

If the heroes are willing to parley, Helen patiently answers the heroes' questions, filling in any gaps about the Protectors, the Convergence, Sweet Heart, Project Super Human, and the Burn. Helen freely admits that Sweet Heart has murdered—and worse—to achieve their aims, but insists that with the fate of the world in the balance the ends most certainly justify the means.

At this point the conversation shifts to Social Conflict (see *Savage Worlds*). Helen's goal is to convince the heroes (and GlenMac if he is present) that her ritual is the only way to prevent a global apocalypse. Presumably the heroes' aim is to dissuade her from the

sacrifice or coming up with another way of stopping the Convergence.

GlenMac's support gives the heroes a +1 to their opposed Persuasion roll. If a character shows Helen the locket recovered from Jack's revenant on Lake Greystone, her emotional turmoil results in a -1 penalty to her Persuasion roll. The social conflict likely ends with one of the following results:

1. Joining Helen and helping finish the work they have spent the last 4 years trying to stop.
2. A stalemate. Proceed to Convergence.
3. Convincing Helen to find a way to perform the ritual without the mass sacrifice or finding another method of stopping the Convergence altogether. Proceed to Convergence.

Once the decision has been reached, a voice rings out over an intercom speaker. "Something is wrong! The Convergence is speeding up. Repeat, Convergence effects have already begun. Estimate one hour until full Convergence." A video feed overlooking the stadium confirms the panicked announcement. The air over the football field ripples like a heat mirage. The Convergence has begun.

CONVERGENCE

Helen sends the heroes into the spirit world. The now-ethereal heroes must climb to the surface and find a way to disrupt the final moments of the Convergence. Then it's just the small matter of escaping with their lives.

THERE MIGHT BE ANOTHER WAY...

If the heroes have survived this far, then only one choice remains. How to stop the Convergence? If Helen convinced them to follow her plan, then allow them to carry it out and the terrible consequences to follow. Otherwise, if they reached a stalemate or convinced Helen that the price was too high, then she has an epiphany and blurts out "Wait! There might be another way!"

Helen explains that with the Convergence having already weakened the barriers between worlds, they might be able to tear a smaller hole of their own and send a group through to find and stop whatever is causing the Convergence from the other side. She warns that if they are successful, they may very well find themselves trapped. She and the other ritualists will stay behind to hold open the gate and guard its use by any of the creatures from beyond. She offers some quick healing for anyone who needs it (one Wound each), weapons, and possibly the help of an Extra if needed.

WHAT IF I DON'T WANT TO SEND THEM TO (A) HELL?

Should the heroes survive their encounter with Helen and her followers, there is still the matter of the Convergence. The last Plot Point adventure sends the heroes to "the other side" by crossing through a dimensional rift and sabotaging the Convergence from within. If dimensional travel doesn't meet your idea of a Pinebox campaign, then ideally the heroes should find another way to stop, delay, or reverse the Convergence. This could involve using the ritual items in a way Helen hadn't considered, using a different talisman altogether, or even harnessing the power of the Convergence and draining away its energy so that the portal does not open.

These are all suitable solutions if you want to bring the campaign to a close while staying in the material world. However, if you want to "keep it real" and make the heroes accountable for failure, when the time runs out allow the Convergence to occur. If you want to end the campaign with a bang, an army of demons spills forth. End with the knowledge that the characters have grown into heroes and must lead the resistance to beat back the hordes and seal the gate for good. Alternately, when the Convergence occurs nothing discernible happens. In fact, the night is eerily quiet. Yet somewhere in Pinebox, an odd infant is born. The Demon King has arrived.

WE'RE IN THE SPIRIT WORLD!

What's the spirit world like? I'm glad you asked! First, everything the characters carry through the portal with them manifests in the spirit world. All their firearms, melee weapons, and so on work normally, including using up ammunition. Further, in the spirit world, ghosts and demons are not Ethereal and can be damaged normally.

By instinct the characters treat solid objects as solid, but with a Spirit roll they can pass through doors, walls, and the like. They cannot fly, nor can they activate electronic or mechanical devices in the "real" world. Noises from the physical world unexpectedly intrude upon the spirit world as muted, underwater sounds that twist the mundane into the menacing and abnormal.

The spirit world itself is like a shadowy, underwater version of the living world. If a hero looks out over campus, she sees that the buildings and locations reflect the layers of intense emotions imprinted on them. Newer buildings seem semi-transparent while the ghosts of destroyed buildings endure. Some seem twisted and sad, others warm and inviting. The stadium itself, home to so many emotional athletic wins and losses, is a twisted funhouse of darkness and light.

At the conclusion of Helen's ritual, a portal appears. Helen warns them to mentally prepare themselves for a totally alien, hellish landscape.

THE OTHER SIDE

Despite Helen's warning, the portal's other side at first seems identical to our own world. The heroes have crossed over into the spirit world, a twisted shadow of the living world where the living appear only as flickering blurs when they are visible at all. The heroes are now living ghosts.

Magic—whether from talismans, ritual effects, or even lingering curses—give off an internal glow. The brightest glows come from down the supercollider tunnel, caused by the talismans the heroes unwittingly recovered for Helen's ritual. In the spirit world, De La Garza's Cross takes its true form as a Mayan spear-tip and the blue lens an all-seeing eye. Taking the spirit world projections of the talismans does not cause their portal to fail.

In the spirit world, all weapons are "spirit weapons" and thus the normal demonic resistance to "normal weapons" does not apply.

The elevator is unresponsive, which means the gang must pass through the wall or door, find the service ladder, and climb the elevator shaft to the surface.

The stadium concourse is eerily silent. Once inside the stadium itself, the heroes can see why.

- **Talisman:** Mayan Demon-Slayer (Str+d6, Parry +1, Reach 1, 2-handed weapon). In the spirit world, De La Garza's cross manifests in its original spear form. Add +6 damage when used against demons. A Touch attack against Despoiled Spirits invokes an exorcism with a Spirit +2 roll.
- **Talisman:** Blue Eye. The blue lens from the Lantern of the Deep manifests as a glass-encased blue eyeball. The all-seeing-eye casts a warm glow within a Medium Burst Template, reducing the Toughness of demons and Despoiled Spirits within its light by -1.

CONVERGENCE

Dominating much of the football field, a demonic titan stands locked in weary concentration with its four arms wrapped around the base of an obelisk. The giant's head rises above the top of the stadium, while the tip of the obelisk points several stories further into the starless sky. From its tip, dark energy crackles outward from the stone tower and ensnares brilliant lines of power crisscrossing overhead—the Pinebox ley lines. The conduits of supernatural power creep slowly nearer the obelisk's tip, only feet away from touching. Already, the air surrounding the titan shimmers and the heroes can catch glimmers of the living world through the forming portal.

Heroes who succeed at a Notice roll take note that the titan appears to be having trouble keeping its head upright and its eyes

open. In fact, its weary stance, quivering muscles, and gaunt appearance suggests that it has been locked in this ritual for a very long time. With a Knowledge (Occult) –2 roll, the hero realizes that the obelisk is draining the titan’s life as fuel. The entire diorama is an elaborate ritual that has been building for a millennium and despite its impressive size the titan is neither the demon king nor the Convergence’s mastermind. It’s a nearly depleted battery.

After the initial shock of seeing the titan, the heroes begin to take in other details. Nightmarish winged demons swoop through the sky overhead. Some circle the forming portal while others weave in and out of the stadium. Within their talons the winged horrors carry the ghosts of Pinebox and drop them at the feet of an arch-demon standing immediately below the titan.

Although tiny at the feet of the titan, the Corrupting One is a terror in its own right. Tall and darkly beautiful like an obsidian knife, this demon radiates ancient power. The Corrupting One roughly grasps each spirit and uses its Corruption Special Ability to create fodder for its army. Despoiled spirits restlessly roam the football field and stadium seating, along with a number of imps, chaos demons, and other lesser demons awaiting their assault on the living world.

END GAME

The Dean should make frequent Notice rolls to determine when a winged horror spots the heroes. To the demons, the gang merely appears to be as-yet-uncorrupted spirits and thus don’t initially earn the wrath of the entire stadium. When they are spotted, send one winged horror for every two characters.

If the creatures are not dispatched within four rounds, make a Notice roll for more to join the fight.

Some despoiled spirits should be familiar to the heroes—phantoms they have “hunted” or NPCs (both good and evil) who have died through misadventure. Now insane with torment, their attacks are vicious but uncoordinated, like those of a zombie. If not killed outright, these poor souls can be freed from the Corrupting One’s enslavement with a successful use of holy water, the Mayan Demon Slayer (De La Garza’s Cross), or an *Exorcism*. Freed spirits volunteer to join the heroes.

The obelisk is the key to stopping the Convergence. Allow the heroes to get creative. Destroying it through a direct attack is unlikely, but applying even a small measure of holy water directly to its



surface is enough to interrupt its evil magic. Alternately—and most likely—making the titan drop the obelisk causes it to break when it slams into the ground.

Unfortunately, the titan only drops the obelisk upon its death. Its sheer size makes it easy to hit but hard to damage. Fortunately it ignores all attacks to focus on holding up the obelisk. The Corrupting One is not so accommodating. It and its minions attack with abandon. If the heroes become overrun too quickly, describe a counter-attack by the remainder of Pinebox's as-yet uncorrupted spirits to take some of the pressure off their immediate battle.

DESPOILED SPIRIT

Despoiled spirits are lost souls harvested by winged horrors and enslaved by the arch-demon known as the Corrupting One. Bottomless hunger and pain has driven these spirits insane, making them little more than vicious, mindless instruments of death and chaos. Despoiled spirits only obey verbal commands from the Corrupting One.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d4

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

Special Abilities:

- **The Hunger:** A despoiled spirit can drain a hero's life energy to feed its own endless hunger. The despoiled spirit must make a successful Fighting roll. Rather than dealing normal damage, the target makes an opposed Spirit roll against the attack roll and if failed suffers a level of Fatigue. Characters who become Incapacitated must make an immediate Vigor roll or become a despoiled spirit. Incapacitated characters may recover with rest, natural healing, and escape from the spirit world.

- **Weakness (Holy Water):** Spirit roll or be Shaken.

WINGED HORROR

A winged horror has the muscled physique of a gorilla topped with a goblin-like head. Mocking reptilian yellow eyes unsettle its targets while it aims deadly claws for a disemboweling blow. The eponymous bat-like wings grow from the creature's back, leaving its arms free to snatch prey up into the sky and drop it from great heights.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d4

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

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d6

- **Demon:** See page 95 for the full list of demon abilities.

- **Flight:** Winged horrors have a Flying Pace of 6", doubled as an action, and a Climb of 2. They can carry a grappled target less than their Size at half Pace.

- **Size +2:** Winged horrors stand over 7 feet tall.



THE CORRUPTING ONE

The Corrupting One is a mesmerizing, deadly arch-demon with dark, scaled skin and a flail of molten flame. His otherwise handsome features counterpoint the cold, merciless evil radiating from his black, soulless eyes. Only the Corrupting One can issue verbal commands to his despoiled spirits.

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

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d12, Intimidation d12, Notice d6, Ritualism d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 9(2)

Gear: Molten Flail (Str+d6+2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Thick scales cover his body.

- **Corruption:** With a successful bare-handed Touch Attack, it makes an opposed Spirit roll with the target to corrupt it into a despoiled spirit.

- **Demon:** See page 95 for a full list of demon abilities.

- **Fear (-4):** Anyone within 12" must make a Fear -4 roll.



LANTHEUWYLD THE UNENDING DESTROYER (DEMONIC TITAN)

This ancient titan has been tricked by the Corrupting One into waging war on the living world at the expense of his own life. Over the course of a millennium the obelisk has almost completely drained away the titan's life but the proud demon is too stubborn to waver. He is resolved only in outlasting the obelisk



talisman's final execution and personally making an example of the upstart archdemon. He does not defend himself against the heroes' pitiful attacks.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12+9, Vigor d4

Skills: Fighting d12, Intimidation d12

Pace: 40; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 14

Special Abilities:

- **Demon:** See page 95 for a full list of demon abilities.
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Gargantuan:** Creatures add +4 when attacking the body of Lantheuwylld due to its great size; Heavy Armor
- **Size +10:** The titan stands hundreds of feet tall.

ESCAPE HOME

Once the Convergence Ritual is disrupted, surviving heroes are free to return to the Sweet Heart portal. In fact, the longer they linger the more likely they will be swarmed by enraged demons. Once the survivors decide to flee for safety, switch to the Chase rules found in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook.

This is a standard (5 rounds) Foot Chase, the characters fleeing for their lives with two Wild Card demons and one lesser demon per hero in hot pursuit. The penultimate round occurs down the elevator shaft and the final round is a pell-mell chase through the Sweet Heart base back to the portal. Demons with an Advantage over a character on the last round can choose to enter the portal rather than attack. Such demons have to be fought on the other side.

Characters who fail to overcome a Complication on the last round find that the portal briefly flickered out of existence at the moment they tried to cross through. If still alive, stranded characters can make one more attempt through the collapsing portal on an "extra" round or remain stuck in the spirit world forever.

EPILOGUE

Once home, the characters learn that the strain of holding open the portal drove Helen quietly insane. Her hair is stark white and her eyes eerily blank. Based on the few words

the characters can understand from her mumbling, the witch seems to be reliving the 1950s before she murdered her friends. Although Sweet Heart is not destroyed, its leader is effectively gone.

Once above ground, the heroes find that the graduation ceremony has concluded and their fellow students are streaming out of the stadium to go celebrate. Some might comment on a bizarre special effects light

show in the middle of the football field, but otherwise no one seems the wiser about what was happening all around them.

President Nelson approaches the heroes, hands them each a cardboard tube containing their diplomas, and congratulates them. They've graduated.





Some Savage Tales in this chapter have been written with particular majors in mind, while others are keyed to places on campus, or nearby areas. The “hook” for many of these adventures can be modified for use as an assignment by GlenMac. For instance, Dr. Maclanahan asks the gang to investigate the strange events in the Art Department (See **Beautiful Smile**, page 55).

In the Freshman year, use Dr. Maclanahan or Jackson Green to help the students if they get into trouble. You can also use Pinebox Police Detective Blaine Bishop (**Quid Pro Quo**, page 82), but try to avoid the character becoming a crutch.

RUNNING SAVAGE TALES

With minimal balancing, the Tales presented here may be played at any time during the campaign. Just remember that in *Degrees of Horror* the students begin as common kids who grow into heroes over the course of the campaign, so the challenges they face should grow with them.

Ideally, Freshman tales should be less about physical danger and more about providing a sense of mystery and an opportunity to explore the setting. This is an ideal time to focus on relatively benign supernatural adventures such as ghost hunting and helping spirits find closure to “move on.” Villains tend to run once wounded and the heroes

generally have ways to escape when they get in over their heads. Although the Needler is a recurring threat, the students mostly know it by its “off screen” effects rather than through direct interaction.

Tales for Sophomores should be more dangerous since the villains tend to stay and fight or send in their minions to do their dirty work. The students should get direct exposure to real forces of darkness, though mostly through the work of human agents. As before, the students should have the option to flee in these adventures.

Junior year adventures pit the heroes against other Wild Cards in fights to the death. The evil grows stronger and Tales become deadlier.

Tales run for Seniors should always include the overwhelming evil drawn by the Convergence.

EXPERIENCE

Each character rank (20 XP) corresponds to two full semesters (“a year”) at East Texas University. Experience points are always at the Dean’s discretion, but those seeking more structure can refer to the guide below.

- **3 XP:** Plot Points, Pinebox adventures
- **2 XP:** Savage Tales, equivalent-length Dean adventures
- **1 XP:** Adventures from generator (short-duration)

A BITE TO EAT

While the gang is out getting a bite to eat, a mentally unstable student who thinks he is a vampire attacks a fellow patron.

Recommended: Freshmen or Sophomore

Location: Any restaurant

BACKGROUND

The trauma of witnessing a vampire attack left poor Timothy Diamond convinced that he survived because he is one as well. A week ago he stopped going to classes, having decided that he needed to stay out of the sunlight. Now he believes he must have human blood to survive. The previous night, his mail-order fangs arrived to complete his "transformation." The Sophomore celebrated by killing his roommate and drinking his blood. Afterward, Timothy fled the dorms and hid in a crypt in Wise Shepherd Cemetery. The body of his roommate, Steven Beech, has yet to be discovered stuffed in their dorm room shower.

LATE NIGHT SNACK

Tonight, Timothy is on the hunt. Blood is a poor substitute for a real meal and he has found himself drawn to the smell of the restaurant where the gang is eating. The characters should make a Notice roll to take note of the odd, pale character who is shirtless but dressed in black leather pants, boots, and a long, black coat. He heads directly to a back table. A raise indicates that they notice his "fangs."

Timothy stands and follows his chosen prey (a mother and two young children) as they exit. If the students do not

follow, allow another Notice roll to hear the mother's cry for help when he launches his attack in the parking lot. Timothy carries a hunting knife and truly believes he is a vampire. If he fools the characters as well then they must succeed at a Fear roll.

The student needs to be stopped and his victims rescued, but he is still human (if insane). After taking a single Wound, he lets out a startled "Ow!" and attempts to flee at the next opportunity. If he escapes, proceed to **Stalker** below. If the students subdue him, skip to **Conclusion**.

★ **Timothy Diamond:** Use a Student Extra from East Texas University, adding a hunting knife (Str+d4)

STALKER

In his delusional state, Timothy has to reconcile the wound he received with his self-image as an immortal vampire. He concludes that the heroes must be vampire hunters who are on his trail due to his roommate's death. He resolves to take them out before they do the same to him.

Pinebox Police arrive at the restaurant parking lot within minutes. If the students stick around, the police question them for at least half an hour. A hunt for Timothy turns up nothing... because he circled around and is observing the parking lot from a hiding spot. Once the students leave, he follows and attacks them at the next opportunity. If possible, he waits until he thinks he can pick them off individually, but in any case flees back to the cemetery before sunrise.

If Timothy is unable to attack that night, he returns again the following night even more desperate than before. He has gone more than 24 hours



without food or drink and suffers from a level of Fatigue. The disheveled Sophomore attacks at the first opportunity, although he again attempts to flee if he takes another Wound.

CONCLUSION

Timothy Diamond is in need of psychological help. Hopefully the heroes realize that he is not a genuine vampire and don't kill him. If they do kill Timothy, the students need to be able to prove it was self-defense.

For a follow-up adventure in future semesters, repeat the basic setup but with a vampire child (from *East Texas University*) and two of his human followers.

BEAUTIFUL SMILE

A new painting melts away self-control and elicits lust in students and faculty alike—making the art gallery the source of many new relationships while destroying others.

Recommended: any rank

Location: Martha Patterson Annex art gallery

BACKGROUND

Recently Samantha Wilkes, a student in a basic art class, painted a gorgeous picture of a dark haired beauty with the barest hint of a smile. Everyone who sees the painting is enamored by it, but unfortunately the extraordinary art is a result of a cursed set of artist brushes the poor student picked up at a pawn shop. The cursed brushes not only gifted Samantha with talent, but imbue her painting with supernatural properties. Many people who study her first painting become consumed by overwhelming desire for the first member of the opposite sex (or his own, if that's his thing) that he sees. He simply must kiss this person and profess his undying love. The effect lasts only for five minutes at a time, but a lot can happen in five minutes. Oddly, Samantha is immune to the effect and is never the love interest.

As word spreads, both male and female students begin coming to the gallery to experience the blissful "love" the painting evokes, making the art gallery more popular than it has been in ages.

PURPLE DRESS AND BEAUTIFUL SMILE

Art Appreciation seemed like a good blow-off elective. Who could have guessed that the professor would actually make you earn your grade? This semester, one or more of the heroes are taking this class and find themselves assigned a class field trip to the ETU Student Art Gallery.

The gallery seems nearly empty of other visitors as the group winds their way through the viewing areas. Empty, that is, until they reach one particular room. Half a dozen students already stand transfixed by a painting, named "Beautiful Smile." One of the early visitors throws her arms around a newcomer and professes her affection.

Anyone who examines the painting must make a Spirit roll (-1 for every minute spent in study) to resist its appeal to passion. Otherwise, they find themselves passionately in love with the first member of the opposite sex they look at. Students who make their Spirit roll may still become the object of affection for those who didn't.

Over the next few minutes, several gallery visitors—including the professor—profess their love to one another (Assign this however you wish). Inevitably, this leads to complicated love triangles and multiple people professing love for the same person. Before long, inflamed passions spark a small riot. This is strictly an unarmed melee encounter, like an upscale bar fight. Those GM characters not under the painting's influence flee the room when the fight begins. If not resolved within five minutes, the painting's effect wears off and the participants dazedly stumble away to care for their bruises. By this point, the gallery manager has called campus security and all participants and witnesses are questioned. No one is arrested on site, but the security officer promises to watch security camera footage and follow up accordingly. Nothing ever comes of this.

- **Students (12):** Use Student Extra from *East Texas University* the same rank as the heroes.
- **Professor:** See Professor Extra from *East Texas University*.



STUDIO VISIT

The artist's name, Samantha Wilkes, is printed on the card mounted to the wall beside the painting. If the sleuths conclude that they need to steal or destroy the "Beautiful Smile," the gallery—only one of several suites in the Martha Patterson Annex—is open from 10 am to 6 pm and is protected by security cameras and motion sensors when closed. Destroying the painting solves the immediate problem, but as you'll read below, the artist is already busy painting new pieces.

The students can find Samantha's physical address with some cyber-stalking and an Investigation (–1) or Streetwise (–2) roll to find one of her friends who is willing to share her address. Samantha has been skipping class recently, so the only way to see her is to visit her apartment. When she answers the door allow a Notice roll to discern that she is unwell. She has been in an artistic frenzy for the last three days, during which she gave her own needs minimal attention. Although not technically "possessed," the cursed brushes have tainted her thinking. Samantha knows

that her minor fame is due to her "special brushes" but the curse magnifies her fears of being found a fraud and fan the flames of anger at any who threaten her newfound success.

After awkwardly conversing for a minute, during which time Samantha becomes increasingly agitated, she eventually invites the gang to check out her new work in progress.

IN DEEP CORN

Samantha's latest work is a pastoral scene depicting a scarecrow guarding a corn field. Whereas her first painting was "passionate," this art is "captivating." Anyone who glances at the painting must make a Spirit roll (–2) or be entranced. So entranced, in fact, that he finds himself literally standing among the giant corn stalks. While their bodies stand transfixed in Samantha's apartment, the spirits of unlucky victims are visibly trapped within the painting. This terrifying situation induces a Fear check.

The thick, healthy corn stalks planted in neat rows stand 7–8 feet tall and block the view from one row to the next as effectively as Medium Cover. Visibility down the rows

extends 12" before diminishing to Light Cover. The only effective landmark, the scarecrow's pole, towers above the corn but is broken off at the top and unoccupied.

The living scarecrow silently and viciously attacks the hapless students. At their first sight of the creature, characters should make a Fear roll. To make matters worse, the characters cannot flee beyond the 20" diameter area that was visible in the original painting. Beyond that, the corn becomes an impenetrable wall.

★ **Scarecrow:** See Scarecrow in *East Texas University*.

MEANWHILE...BACK HOME

Meanwhile Samantha attacks any remaining non-captivated heroes by slashing at them with an art knife (which resembles a scalpel and is equally sharp), shrieking curses about the characters trying to steal her paint brushes. Even though she is correct in a way, Samantha is not in her right mind so hopefully the heroes can subdue her without causing serious harm. The only way to permanently break the curse is to destroy her paint brushes. Snapping them into pieces is sufficient; fire is even better.

If no one is left for Samantha to attack then she chooses her largest brush and begins painting over the canvas. Trapped heroes have five minutes to search for an escape before Samantha completely covers the canvas, permanently imprisoning them within and leaving their helpless bodies to the madwoman.

- **Samantha:** Use Student Extra from *East Texas University*, with the addition of an art knife (Str+d4).

ESCAPE

To escape the painting, the characters must make a Notice roll to find a scrap of canvas partially buried at the base of the scarecrow's pole. The canvas depicts Samantha painting in her apartment. It represents the scrap of soul every artist puts into her work, but more importantly it is a link to the real world by which the characters can return to their own bodies. Characters who concentrate on the "painting" and succeed at a Spirit roll (+2) return to their bodies in the apartment. You can decide whether or not character deaths in the corn field are permanent, but Wounds from the corn field become a level of Fatigue back in the apartment.

CONCLUSION

Destroying Samantha's paint brushes breaks their influence over her and prevents the curse from being continued. The existing paintings remain cursed until destroyed. Once her brushes are ruined, the artist becomes dazed and disoriented before dropping into an exhausted slumber.

Some characters may find themselves testing out new relationships with classmates once the ice was broken in front of the *Beautiful Smile*. Others may find their existing relationships strained to the breaking point by their infidelity in front of the same.

If the heroes fail to follow through and destroy Samantha's first painting, eventually the gallery curator removes it from display and gives it a new place of honor...hanging in his bedroom.

BUGS

A young woman asks for help dealing with a persistent stalker, but the desperate loner has a trick up his sleeve for taking revenge and impressing her.

Recommended: Freshman or Sophomore

Location: Girl's Dormitory

Leads to: **My Little Friends**

BACKGROUND

Johnny Chafe is a classic outsider, mostly due to his love of insects. Nicknamed "Bug Boy" by his classmates, Johnny is a twisted ball of anger, intelligence, and arrogance. While working in the ETU Insectary, he realized that by spraying a custom feed compound on his hands and arms he could mentally control nearby insects. This compound only works on Johnny due to the repeated chemical exposure which has changed his pheromones.

Thanks to his newfound power, Johnny also discovered new confidence. After long worshiping her from afar, Johnny finally gathered the nerve to approach fellow student Missy Jordan. In fact, he refuses to take no for an answer and has begun stalking her. Missy has a good heart and does not want to hurt his feelings, but his obsession frightens her.

STALKER

The adventure begins for the students when Missy asks for their help with a stalker. Missy could be a hero's new love interest, a friend, study partner, dorm roommate, or sorority sister. Missy can give them very basic info—Johnny's name, nickname, and Major.

Characters who pass a Notice roll detect that Missy is holding something back. If pressed, she admits that a close male friend was recently hospitalized after being attacked by Africanized "killer" bees. She doesn't see how Johnny could be responsible, but she worries all the same.

A Streetwise roll confirms that Johnny is generally considered a smart but creepy guy.

Finding Johnny isn't difficult. Since he knows Missy's class schedule, the lonely student frequently loiters around her dorm entrance waiting for her to pass by. Anyone near Johnny may make a Notice roll to smell the insect control compound on his arms and yellowish stains on his white shirt sleeves.

In any conversation initiated by the gang, Johnny begins as Uncooperative (see **Reaction Table** in *Savage Worlds*). Characters who make a Notice roll detect a growing buzzing sound as nearby insects become agitated. Johnny tries Intimidation on the heroes, saying "You don't know who you're dealing with, but you'll be sorry."

If the students don't make the first move then Johnny obliges and seeks out the heroes, jealous over seeing them with Missy.

EXTERMINATION

Eventually, anyone who confronts Johnny becomes a target for his insect friends. When Johnny has had enough of the students' interference, one night he sends a swarm of non-stinging insects such as cockroaches to scare the meddlers. If that doesn't work then he returns the next night with a killer swarm.

- **Swarm (1):** As in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook. No matter how tough you are, being swarmed by insects calls for a Fear roll!

HOWDUNIT?

The coincidences should leave little doubt as to "Bug Boy's" involvement. The question becomes a matter of "how" rather than "who." If the students follow Johnny, he eventually leads them

to the university Insectary, a building in which insects are bred and studied. There, he soaks his arms in his liquid compound and summons a stinging swarm in anticipation of exacting more petty revenge.

Once Johnny notices the sleuths following him he orders the swarm to attack.



JOHNNY CHAFE

Johnny is smart but socially awkward. He gives little thought to personal appearance or hygiene and his shirt sleeves are stained yellow from his insect control compound.

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Intimidation d4, Knowledge (Biochemistry) d8, Knowledge (Entomology) d8, Knowledge (Life Sciences) d8, Notice d8, Stealth d6

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

Hindrances: Arrogant, Outsider

Edges: Scholar (Biochemistry, Entomology)

Special Ability:

- **Control Swarm:** Upon a successful Spirit roll, Johnny can summon and control one swarm of native insects for five rounds or two swarms with a raise. After five rounds he must make a new Spirit roll to extend his control. Johnny must stay within 12" of the swarm to maintain control or it attacks random targets for three rounds before dispersing. This ability is negated if the chemical is washed from Johnny's arms.

CONCLUSION

No one in law enforcement believes that Johnny controls insects. In fact, they treat any such reports as a prank and those making the accusations could get into trouble. Ultimately, no one but Dr. Maclanahan and Jackson believe the story of the geek who can control insects. The best the students can do to protect Missy is a restraining order and Intimidation to discourage Johnny from abusing his control over insects. Otherwise, the bitter outcast could easily become a recurring problem until he graduates or they find some other way of dealing with him.

COOL VODOO!

Pranksters get more than they bargained for when their "zombie voodoo ritual" sends a classmate on a violent spree.

Recommended: Freshman or Sophomore; Activity (Fraternity/Sorority)

Location: Greek Row

BACKGROUND

Over cold beer and a box of old Halloween decorations from a pawn store, fraternity brothers Mike and Steve concocted a plan to scare a gullible friend with a "voodoo ceremony." Among the pawn shop treasures was a genuine shrunken head which became the fake ritual's centerpiece.

On the fateful night, Steve brought their dupe to the frat house's backyard and asked him to help with a harmless "good luck" ceremony they learned about in anthropology class. The elaborately-decorated ceremony was every bit as spooky as they hoped, and on cue Mike acted as though their ceremony went horribly wrong and turned him into a zombie. Even drunk, Mike performed his role (complete with hastily slapped-on "peeling skin" zombie makeup) perfectly...until passing out. Everyone had a good laugh (both at the dupe and Mike) then carried the "zombie" to sleep off his liquor on the couch.

While the made-up ritual did not make Mike a zombie per se, the shrunken head did work a curse upon him. In his mentally vulnerable (drunken) state Mike was hypnotized to believe he was a zombie. Consequently when he awoke on the couch in the middle of the night, he acted like one.

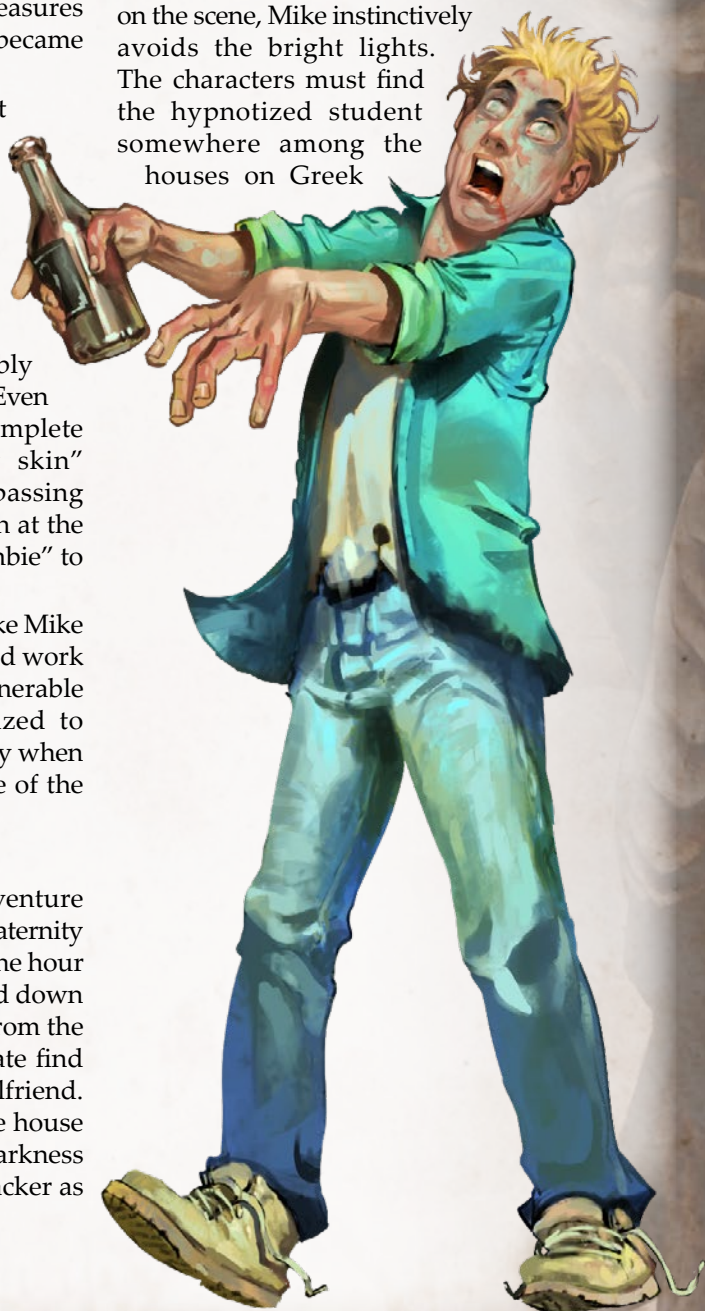
ATTACK

The gang's introduction to this adventure begins at a party hosted at one of the fraternity or sorority houses on "Greek Row." The hour is late and the party has largely wound down when shouts of alarm (Notice) arise from the front lawn. Characters who investigate find a student applying first aid to his girlfriend. They describe standing in front of the house when someone stumbled out of the darkness and bit the girl. Both describe the attacker as "like a zombie."

If the heroes broaden their search, a successful Notice roll reveals Steve sitting on the curb in front of his fraternity house two doors down. He too has been attacked by zombie Mike and is in shock. He is repeating "What have I done?" If helped and questioned, Steve describes the prank and even shows them where they conducted their "ritual." A successful Notice -1 roll indicates that the shrunken head "decoration" seems much more real than their other Halloween props. See **Fear the Head** below.

ZOMBIE TRACKING

Although police and EMS arrive on the scene, Mike instinctively avoids the bright lights. The characters must find the hypnotized student somewhere among the houses on Greek



Row and subdue him (ideally without causing permanent harm) before he hurts anyone else. Mike snaps out of his trance if Shaken, once the sun rises, or if the shrunken head is destroyed. The police (if notified) conclude that Mike was high and “on a bad trip.” He is arrested but later released on bail.



“ZOMBIE MIKE”

The shambling, moaning student wears hastily slapped-on “peeling skin” zombie makeup and is somewhat dangerous but misunderstood. In his current state, most higher-order thinking is dormant.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d4, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4

Charisma: —; **Pace:** 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7
Special Abilities:

- **Fearless:** Under the circumstances, Mike is immune to Fear and Intimidation.

- **Comfortably Numb:** +1 Toughness, +1 recover from Shaken.

FEAR THE HEAD

Poor “Zombie Mike” has been stopped. The adventure is over, right? Maybe, maybe not. If both Mike and the shrunken head survived the previous night’s encounter, then the horror has just begun. After the first night’s excitement, Steve and his fraternity brothers stuff all the props including the head in a cardboard box and throw it in a dumpster at the end of the street.

That night the curse resumes and sends Mike out in search of victims. The evil totem drives Mike on a self-destructive path because if he dies then he will arise as a genuine zombie—and the head gains a body!

On the second night, Mike instinctively seeks out the heroes (or barring that, known associates) since they stopped him the previous night. He is also tougher than before—Comfortably Numb increases to +2 Toughness (total Toughness of 8) and it takes a Wound to snap from the trance. Assuming he survives the night, Mike is understandably upset at this turn of events. The shrunken head plays prominently in his thoughts while acting as a zombie, providing a path for investigation.

CONCLUSION

Unless the heroes find the shrunken head and destroy it, Mike continues to revert to his alternate personality each night he goes to sleep. If the heroes don’t stop him, the police eventually kill him in the middle of one of his violent attacks. True to the shrunken head’s curse, Mike’s body arises as a genuine zombie (use zombie from the *Savage Worlds* rulebook) and homes in on the totem. Once the zombie and the shrunken head are reunited, it gains sentience as a lich (in the *Savage World* rulebook, knowing 2d6 Rituals) and further terrorizes the campus.

CURSE OF THE BLACK GUARD

The sleuths are honored for a job well done, but the tainted “reward” comes from vengeful Black Guard cultists.

Follows: *Last Rites of the Black Guard*

Recommended: Junior

Location: ITS-A-LOCK Storage Facility

Leads to: Resurrection of the Black Guard

BACKGROUND

In the aftermath of the events in *Last Rites of the Black Guard* (a Pinebox adventure available at peginc.com), the mystic binding keeping the mummy Dr. Heimglimmer from reanimating was destroyed. However, his quest for true immortality is incomplete. While Dr. Heimglimmer has returned from death with the knowledge of how to complete his transformation from hideous mummy to immortal human, the betrayal by Hector Martin and Irwin Revinowitz left him wary of trusting the eleven remaining members of his cult. Instead he bides his time watching the Black Guard from the shadows to see who remains faithful to his instructions.

In fact, the surviving members of the cult are in disarray without the forceful leadership of Dr. Heimglimmer or Hector Martin keeping them in line. Of those remaining, attorney Sarah Tinsley thinks herself worthy to be the new leader of the Black Guard and aims to prove it. Having ferreted out the heroes’ identities from her colleague Lisa Gray, she planned a special sacrifice that will ensure her role as Master.

A GIFT

Shortly after *Last Rites* or any adventure in which they help an innocent person, the heroes are invited to the home of Sara Tinsley. Tinsley's name appeared on the list of Neo-Birkhuhn found in Heimglimmer's home, but she does not know that. If they found the list, allow the students to remember that detail with a Smarts roll modified by -1 for every two semesters that have passed since finding the list.

Tinsley informs them that their efforts to make Pinebox a better place have not gone unnoticed. She tells them that a local club of business leaders would like to reward them for their service and she presents them each with a check for \$100 and a lapel pin. If asked, she says that the business leaders wish to remain anonymous for the time being. However, she promises that any club member who sees the lapel pin will come to their aid in times of need.

The lapel pins are in fact Talismans of Servitude created by Sarah Tinsley to subjugate the heroes to her will.

TALISMAN OF SERVITUDE

Trappings: An overwhelming compulsion.

Requires activation through a master token. These lapel pins focus the *puppet* power for six hours upon those who wear the pin at the time of activation and fail the opposed roll.

CURSE OF THE BLACK GUARD

Hours, days, or weeks later (Dean's prerogative) Tinsley activates the talismans and forces the heroes to come to her. Students who resist the compulsion remember it vividly, which may allow them to track and find their less fortunate friends.

The sleuths find themselves at the ITS-A-LOCK storage facility, owned by one of the Neo-Birkhuhn. This fenced and gated public storage business includes a hanger-sized building at the back with four private, locked garages for oversized vehicles such as large RVs. Heroes who fell prey to the talismans' influence are sent to one such garage, which has been converted to a ritual site. It is painted with runes, lined with candles and burning incense, and even adorned with ancient Egyptian pieces of art. Characters



may make a Smarts roll to recognize certain similarities with artwork in the basement of "Frank Manz." Although not talismans per se, the artwork allows ritual magic to be focused more easily (+2 Ritualism).

Tinsley marches the heroes up to an altar, where she binds them and prepares them for a black magic sacrifice to enslave their souls—just as Heimglimmer had done with his victims. Tinsley is joined by three other Black Guard: Jonathan Haswell, Monique Caverly, and Samantha Delarosa. Although short on skill they are high in ambition, which is why they sided with Tinsley in her gambit for power.

During the lengthy preparatory period during which Tinsley gathers her power for the ritual to come, the talismans' effect wears off. The students must find a way to escape on their own or with the help of friends who resisted the lapel pin's influence. See **Ritual Magic** in *East Texas University* for the consequence of disrupting a Black Magic ceremony during the Gathering Power phase.

Because this ritual is simply a display of power to solidify her place as the Neo-Birkhuhn's leader, the followers are not interested in fighting to the death. If they are Shaken, they attempt to flee. On the other hand Sarah Tinsley is committed to her goal, heart and soul, and fights until killed or disabled.

- **Ritualist (3):** Use Ritualist from *East Texas University*.



SARAH TINSLEY

Sarah wants to reunite the Neo-Birkhuhn with herself as the new Fuhrer (leader). She is fanatically driven to succeed and sees everyone as mere chattel for her rise to power.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Knowledge (Occult) d10, Notice d10, Ritualism d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d6

Charisma: —; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Vengeful (Minor)

Edges: Strong Willed

Powers: *create talisman, puppet, slumber*

Gear: Glock 9mm pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, RoF 1, Shots 17, AP 1), Dagger (Str+d4)

CONCLUSION

Assuming the heroes survive the encounter, four Black Guard members are likely dead or gone. Those who flee the fight choose to skip the country rather than face the repercussions from the law or their fellow Neo-Birkhuhn. Recognizing that opposition has been removed, the mummy Heimglimmer summons the remaining seven loyal Neo-Birkhuhn and reveals his return. His followers begin the final preparations for the ritual that will bestow true immortality. Continue to **Resurrection of the Black Guard** when ready.

CUTTER'S DENISE

With graduation only days away and supernatural activity at a fever pitch, the heroes receive a call to rescue an old teacher—again.

Follows: English Patient, Night of Reckoning

Recommended: Seniors

Location: Wise Shepherd Cemetery

Leads to: Walpurgis Night

BACKGROUND

April 28th to April 30th is traditionally a time when evil is at its most powerful, and this year the full moon and the Convergence have magnified the effect like never before. This adventure is written to take place on April 29th and is the second of three unrelated scenarios meant to ratchet up the tension in the days leading up to the final Plot Points. The first is **Night of Reckoning**. This adventure assumes you have played **English Patient**.

In the aftermath of the **English Patient**, Professor Cutter became obsessed with the occult. The doctoral student became even

THE REAL GUY

In real-life Matthew Cutter is well-known in *Savage Worlds* circles and he has been a constant supporter of our works. He won the right to be included in this book by supporting our Autism fundraiser and we want everyone to know that he is NOT arrogant and is a great guy! He requested a gruesome death and we were happy to oblige. Thanks Cutter.



more eccentric than before, spending all his spare time reading books and shady websites about the secrets of rituals and the spirit world.

This night, the obsession led him to attempt an ancient ritual to speak to his dead grandfather. Unfortunately, the wild magic was too much for him to control. He awakened two zombies and skeletons for each character, as well as a number of lesser manifestations.

Even worse, the ritual's failure also invoked a demon named Krassus. This crafty demon seeks to spread as much havoc as possible before sunrise. Consequently, it lets the frightened professor summon help.

CUTTER'S DEMISE

A hero gets a frantic call at 2 am.

"Oh my God! What have I done? Help me... please! They are coming for me. I'm at the Wise Shepherd Cemetery. Help!"

The caller then drops the phone and all that can be heard is the sound of running footsteps, followed by shuffling and moaning.

After making the call, Cutter is captured and possessed by Krassus. When the gang arrives, he approaches them as a friend (or at least acquaintance) in dire need of aid but at the first opportunity the demon encircles the students with undead and reveals its true form. Cutter's skin rips away to reveal the emerging reptilian body of Krassus.

As before, at sunrise all foes turn to dust.

- **Skeleton (2/hero):** As in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook.
- **Zombie (2/hero):** As in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook.



KRASSUS

Krassus first appears as Professor Cutter but later bursts through the unfortunate professor's skin to reveal its true reptilian form. The demon's leathery skin, soulless eyes, and fearsome claws strike fear into all but the most stalwart of heroes.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d12

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d12, Intimidation d12, Notice d8,



Stealth d8

Pace: 6; Parry: 8; Toughness: 11 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Thick scales cover his body.
- **Control Undead:** Krassus can control any undead within its Spirit die type times 3" range.
- **Demon:** See page 95 for a full list of demon abilities.
- **Fear (-2):** Re-read the part about leathery skin, soulless eyes, and fearsome claws.
- **Infravision:** Halve all penalties for bad lighting when attacking living or other heat-producing targets
- **Razor Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Size +1:** Krassus stands 8 feet tall.
- **Speak Languages:** Krassus can speak any human language.



DARKNESS FALLING

Accidental exposure to research waste gives frightening changes to a young coed who seeks the heroes' help.

Recommended: Junior or Senior; Science majors

Location: Any

BACKGROUND

While doing course work in Dr. Ramirez's Organic Chemistry labs, student Veronica Nails stumbled against a container and spilled her professor's research waste on herself. Veronica quickly covered up the incident, fearing a failing lab grade for a safety violation. While cleaning up, some of the dark liquid absorbed through her skin.

SOMETHING IS WRONG WITH ME

Either due to their friendship or reputation for helping people with strange problems, several days after the accident Veronica seeks help from the heroes. She tells them that she has felt "strange" ever since her accident and wants help in finding out what Dr. Ramirez



is researching so that she'll know whether or not she should be worried.

Two days later, Veronica's pupils grow black and she gains the Darkvision ability, leaving her painfully sensitive to normal levels of light.

After four days Veronica's skin begins darkening. She becomes distrustful and tells the heroes to leave her alone. She also gains the Shadow Dancing ability, giving her +2 to Stealth rolls when attempting to hide.

Eight days after contacting the heroes, Veronica gains the Shadowport and Shadow Bolt abilities. She is also well on her way to completely losing her mind. She has become deeply narcissistic, distrustful, and quick to anger and violence.

In 16 days she is totally consumed by the darkness, becoming an incurable, living shadow lost to her insanity and a hatred of the ones who failed her.

★ **Veronica Nails:** Use Student from *East Texas University*, adding the Special Abilities as appropriate until the full transformation. See page 65 for the living shadow's Special Abilities.

RESEARCHING THE RESEARCH

Dr. Ramirez is tight-lipped about the research he does when he's not teaching. With enough digging and a successful Investigation -2 roll, the sleuths learn that the professor studies and catalogs substances provided by the United States Homeland Security department. The exact source and nature of the materials is classified.

To stop the effects, the students must steal a sample of the same black, oily research waste from the lab and perform their own analysis or find a sympathetic accomplice. Although the substance itself defies classification and appears highly toxic, with a successful roll in Knowledge (Chemistry) or similar, they realize that the substance breaks down under UV light. Fortunately for Veronica, the mystery substance literally only goes skin deep, permeating no further than the dermis layer. If the characters can lure her into a lab UV sterilization chamber or even a tanning booth (sunlight is insufficient), the substance can be rendered inert. Destroying the malady requires at least 15 minutes of high UV exposure for each day since the original

accident. This process may be done in short duration "treatments" to prevent skin burns.



LIVING SHADOW

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d4, Stealth d6

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

Special Abilities: When fully transformed Veronica gains the following abilities:

- **Darkvision:** Sees normally in total darkness.
- **Ethereal:** As per *Savage Worlds* rulebook.
- **Insane:** She acts erratically and without reason, but is driven by hatred for those who she believes failed her and seeks to hurt them whenever possible.
- **Shadow Bolt:** She may cast *bolt* using Spirit for activation. She has 5 Power Points, recharging 1 per hour in darkness.
- **Shadow Dancing:** With a Spirit roll, she can make shadows move within 12" in a Small Burst Template. The area counts as darkness (-2) for 1d6+1 rounds.
- **Shadowport:** Teleport through shadows up to 12" in line of sight as an action.
- **Shadow Stealth:** +4 Stealth rolls, in addition to any normal light condition modifiers.
- **Weakness (Light):** She must make a Vigor roll at -2 in direct, full-spectrum light (flashlight, full sunlight, etc.) or be Shaken and suffer a level of Fatigue (recovered after 10 minutes in darkness).

ENGLISH PATIENT

An unpopular lecturer reaps painful karma for his treatment of his students, but an innocent also suffers his fate.

Recommended: Freshman or Sophomore

Location: English Literature class

Leads to: Cutter's Demise

BACKGROUND

Professor Cutter is a demanding doctoral student who taught English Literature while working on his own degree. His tendency to berate and belittle his students earned him the nickname "Lil'



Nap"—short for Little Napoleon as well as his ability to put the class to sleep.

His class this semester not only includes the heroes, but Keyva Bordeaux, a Voodoo practitioner from just north of New Orleans. One day in class during lecture Q&A, she asked Professor Cutter about the failing grade she earned on a paper. Cutter responded with a typical tirade, ending with "This is an English class, not a Cajun one. Learn the language."

Hurt and insulted, Keyva decided it was time to teach him some manners. She broke into his office after hours and took a blue fountain pen, a comb, and a picture of Cutter and his ex-girlfriend, Katy Robins.

KARMA HURTS

The heroes' adventure begins on a typical class day. Cutter arrives late to class, this time complaining loudly about someone having broken into his office. The lecture begins normally, and before long he finds a student to belittle.

Without warning, Cutter cries out and rubs his eyes vigorously with his knuckles. Within moments tears pour down his face and the professor falls to the floor in agony. A student volunteers an unopened water bottle to flush out his eyes, but to no avail. Cutter is frightened and in pain, and before long he begs one of his students to drive him to the hospital.

Any heroes who make a Notice -1 roll see that Keyva never removes her right hand from her large brown handbag during the entire episode. If anyone confronts her right then and there, her bag contains a classic Voodoo doll of Cutter. His eyes are marked in a red pen and crushed hot pepper seeds litter the bottom of her purse. The doll is linked to a curse altar in her dorm room, upon which rests several candles, some dried blood, and the picture and the comb. The lecturer's fountain pen forms the backbone of the doll.

JUSTICE OR VENGEANCE?

The next day, campus news outlets report that two students—a former couple no less—were pepper-sprayed at the same time but buildings apart. The two victims are in stable condition but the usual treatments seem to be ineffectual. They are effectively blinded and remain in serious pain.

The following class day, students wait in the hall before class and talk about what happened. With a successful Streetwise roll, sleuths learn that most express at least a token amount of sympathy for the disliked teacher, or at least his ex-girlfriend. Of them all, Keyva seems the most bitter and callous. She says that he got what he deserved and that the other victim was probably just in the wrong place at the wrong time. In fact, she seems upset that her fellow students express any sympathy for Cutter whatsoever. Just as the substitute lecturer arrives to unlock the door, Keyva stomps away.

WHO DO?

With a successful Investigation -1 roll, characters can identify some of Keyva's online profiles, from which they learn basic information such as her hometown and address in a women's dorm. With a raise, they also see that she has been complaining about Cutter since the first week of class, including a recent comment about wanting to "give that man some schooling of his own."

If the heroes confront Keyva directly, she denies being involved. With proper roleplaying and a successful Persuasion roll (+1 if they mention his girlfriend's suffering), she angrily admits "giving him what he had coming." With a raise, Keyva can be convinced to end Cutter's torture. Otherwise, she ends the conversation by flashing a peek at the doll in her purse before snapping it closed and snarling, "He ain't done yet."



KEYVA BORDEAUX

The young woman from rural Louisiana only intended to use the voodoo doll once. After dabbling in Black Magic she has become petty, quick to anger, and even remorseless over sweeping up an innocent—Cutter's ex-girlfriend—in her revenge. If she creates dolls for new enemies, the Black Magic Corruption will only worsen.

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

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d4, Knowledge (Occult) d6, Notice d6, Ritualism d8, Stealth d6

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

Hindrances: Vengeful (Minor)

Powers: *pain transference*

Gear: Voodoo doll

NOW WHAT?

With a Knowledge (Occult) -1 roll the gang learns that they must either get control of the voodoo doll, regain possession of the victim's personal items that would have been used at Keyva's voodoo altar, find someone to perform a counter-ritual on Cutter, or find and perform their own counter-ritual. Fighting fire with fire (counter-rituals or rituals of protection) also require a personal item belonging to Cutter and his girlfriend (who remain hospitalized). Of course, they can also bully Keyva into quitting her revenge—making themselves a new enemy in the process.

HOUSE CALL

If the gang visits Keyva's dorm room, her roommate Trystie answers the door and allows them inside. Trystie knows about her roommate's voodoo altar and is frightened by it. She doesn't know what to do, but she knows that she doesn't want to face her roommate's wrath. Allow a Notice roll for the sleuths to discern Trystie's distress.

A successful Persuasion roll convinces Trystie to reveal her roommate's voodoo altar hidden in a dresser drawer. Otherwise, she nervously admits seeing her roommate put a voodoo doll in her brown handbag, but refuses to materially help them out of fear of reprisal.

If the sleuths find Keyva's voodoo altar, removing Cutter's picture and comb breaks the curse. However, Trystie's fears are well-founded and her roommate redirects her ire. Soon, Trystie begs the heroes to break her own curse.

CONCLUSION

Cutter and his girlfriend remain blinded until the curse is lifted. Without the gang's interference this could last for months, until someone new draws Keyva's ire. Ultimately, the students have multiple avenues for helping Professor Cutter. Some result in drawing Keyva's ire, possibly making her a recurring enemy. Although not above scrappin', she prefers to exact her revenge from a distance.

If Cutter and his girlfriend become aware of the students' help they are both grateful. Though normally he would be a skeptic, his experience makes him a believer.

FROM DAVID TO GOLIATH

Wanna-be football player Benito Ramirez displays supernatural strength during an altercation at the Pizza Barn.

Recommended: Sophomore or Junior; Activities (Athlete)

Location: Pizza Barn

BACKGROUND

Marla Driver is the kind of person who makes one bad life choice after another. Having flunked out of ETU the previous semester, she made ends meet as a personal trainer and aerobics instructor while figuring out her next move. When a Sweet Heart Foundation researcher approached her under the guise of a health food company wanting to pay trainers \$10,000 to test out a new protein shake, she jumped at the chance with no questions asked. Her job was simple: administer the mixture to a client for several months and report the results.

In walked Benito "Too Small" Ramirez, a second stringer who sat on the bench throughout his high school career. For all his effort, he remained too small...until Marla became his personal trainer. Within a month Benito gained thirty pounds of muscle and 4 inches of height, which he attributes to a late growth spurt. Since this particular drug—one of many being researched for the top secret Super Human project—is not detected by doping tests, Benito was accepted onto the Ravens football team. Marla, enamored of the new and improved Benito, even began dating her test subject.

BAR FIGHT!

The adventure begins as a night like any other at the Pizza Barn. The pizza is hot and spicy, the drinks cold, and the jukebox loud. After the friends settle in, Benito and Marla arrive and take a booth adjacent from the gang. At some point during the evening a big cowboy flirts with Marla, Benito becomes angry, and a fight breaks out. Soon the cowboy's friends gang up on Benito.

Whether or not the heroes step in to help their friend, they may make Notice rolls during the fight to see a physical change come over Benito. As he loses himself in the rage, Benito's



entire body seems to swell, his skin turns ashen, and his face contorts into an inhuman mask. He attacks friend and foe alike and only subsides when no one remains to challenge him or he is knocked out. At the fight's end, a bouncer evicts everyone involved.

- **Cowboys (4):** Use Thug Extra from *East Texas University* without any gear.



BENITO RAMIREZ

The small student somewhat resembles a bulldog—short, squat, but all muscle.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6

Charisma: —; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (7 when enraged)

Hindrances: Major Habit (Protein Shake)

Special Abilities:

- **'Roid Rage:** When angered, he must make a Spirit roll or become enraged. In this state his Vigor and Strength increase one die type and he lashes out at anyone who gets in his way, friend or foe, for the next 5 minutes.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

If one of the sleuths is on the ETU football team with Benito, a Common Knowledge roll confirms that his formerly good-natured friend has developed a growing temper problem both on and off the field. A Streetwise roll reveals the basics of Benito's history and his recent "growth spurt," whereas a Streetwise -2 roll exposes Marla's down-and-out history and her recent free-spending ways (as a result of her windfall).

Benito's coach only opens up to someone in the ETU athletic program, otherwise he cites student privacy. With a successful Persuasion roll, he reveals that he was suspicious of Benito's growth spurt and had him tested for performance-enhancing drugs almost immediately. When the tests came back clean, he accepted the kid onto his team.

Characters who visit with Benito or follow him for a while can make a Notice roll to observe that he is never far from a sports bottle with his "protein shake."

IT CAN'T BE THAT BAD!

The heroes may find an opportunity to take the drug as well. Users gain a die type of Vigor and a die type of Strength, but also gain the 'Roid Rage ability (see Benito's profile). Once off the drugs for a month, the user loses the additional dice of Strength and Vigor and for the next semester suffers a -1 Toughness due to loss of fortitude.

THE SHAKES

Once the sleuths identify Marla's "protein shake" as the source of Benito's transformation, the next logical step is to stop Benito from taking more. The football player is addicted, refuses to listen to reason, and quickly rises to anger if anyone suggests cutting him off. Marla keeps the dry powder in her apartment, making theft another—albeit more drastic—way to intercede. Even if the students fail to act at all, sooner or later Sweet Heart decides that the test has run its course and cuts all contact with Marla.

Regardless of way Benito is cut off from his drugs, his inner demons whip him into his worst 'Roid Rage yet. This time his skin not only takes on an ashen appearance, but it toughens like a leathery armor that raises his Toughness by 1 and twists his face into a nearly unrecognizable demonic mask. Unless stopped, he rampages through campus toward the football stadium. Benito savagely attacks anyone who gets in his way as well as anyone present at the stadium when he arrives. He is not driven to kill so much as to cause as much destruction as possible.

CONCLUSION

Marla confesses her complicity if confronted, but has little proof and no way to contact her "health food" company.

It takes four days for the worst of Benito's withdrawal symptoms to subside. If the showdown ends in public, the authorities take charge and the student is sedated in a hospital. To keep their crime figures low, ETU officials call Benito's rampage a mental breakdown. He is dropped from the football team and assigned to anger management therapy.

GHOST HUNT

GlenMac asks the students to investigate a haunting at a trailer park.

Recommended: Freshman or Sophomore

Location: Indian Summer Trailer Park

BACKGROUND

Last year Jaime Contreras abandoned his wife and their three year old daughter to live with another woman, Linda Smith. He later filed for divorce and now lives with Linda and her four year old son, Nathan, in the Indian Summer Trailer Park near the Indian Mounds State Park. Jaime is not a good man, though he is not evil either. He drinks too much and can be loud and obnoxious, but he is not violent and genuinely cares for his new family.

His ex-wife's mother is an ancient crone named Anna Rodriguez. Anna is a practicing "Bruja" (witch), who is angry at her former son-in-law and gets revenge by calling a poltergeist and a ghost to haunt him and his new family. Anna doesn't want to hurt anyone, only to scare them and punish Jaime for the hurt he caused her daughter and granddaughter.

Jaime suspects the haunting's cause but is afraid to confront the Bruja. A co-worker told him about the crazy man at the university who can get rid of ghosts, so in desperation he called GlenMac—making no mention of his former mother-in-law.

THE ASSIGNMENT

Professor Glen Maclanahan (and Jackson Green if applicable) contact the gang and ask for their help to research and document the haunting of the Contreras family. GlenMac allows the students to decide how to investigate the haunting and offers them \$100 each for a weekend's work. He also shows them how to use his ghost hunting equipment (several cameras, 2 video cameras, two motion detectors, and two electronic recorders) if this is their first ghost investigation.

THE HUNT

Linda Smith's trailer home is surprisingly roomy and has been cleaned in anticipation of their guests—at least, as clean as a four year old will allow. Although Nathan is

mostly oblivious to the spirits, his mother and Jaime clearly appear frazzled. They describe strange lights and noises in the middle of the night, electronics turning on and off, and occasional feelings of dread. Activity begins at sundown and lasts until morning.

- **Poltergeist (1):** Use the Poltergeist from *East Texas University*, adding the Electronics Manipulation and Spirit Storm ghostly Special Abilities.
- **Ghost (1):** Use the ghost from *East Texas University*, adding the Drain Electricity and Scent ghostly Special Abilities.

ANY TIME

If the students successfully initiate a séance (a ritual for the *grave speak* power), the find the spirit's answers vague and unhelpful.

FRIDAY NIGHT

The family goes to bed early, leaving the students alone on duty overnight. Require Fear rolls as appropriate throughout the night. Normal neighborhood sounds filter in through the trailer's walls, but eventually even the trailer park goes silent. The hard blue-white light of a security light filters through the kitchen curtains, casting the

room in a soft glow. Abruptly, a loud stomping noise marches down the hallway. While the characters investigate, more than a dozen plastic cups apport from a cabinet to the kitchen table in an intricately stacked pattern. If a video camera is trained on the area, the table appears momentarily bathed in shadow before revealing the cups.

Sporadically throughout the remainder of the night, the characters experience abruptly drained batteries, brief cold spots, and the strong smell of motor oil.

SATURDAY NIGHT

The ghosts seem even more agitated the second night. Again, require Fear rolls as appropriate. Within an hour of the family going to bed, the television flicks on, changes channels several times, then shuts off.

Later, footsteps pace the hallway and the smell of fresh soil occasionally wafts by. Shortly after midnight, a male voice bellows "Hey!" near one of the ghost hunters, waking the entire house.

Unattended personal items or equipment disappears and is found by Linda in the oven the next morning. The night's hauntings



climax in the early morning with a Spirit Storm—a whirlwind of small household items—for two rounds in a room occupied by one or more of the students.

The ghosts offer no clues to their identity or ways of ending the haunting, but after the Spirit Storm Jaime breaks down and admits that his former mother-in-law is probably responsible. He begs them to speak to Anna and convince her to end the haunting.

LA BRUJA

Anna lives in an old, wood-framed home on the north side of Pinebox. She is ancient witch, but not evil. Her initial attitude toward the students is Neutral but with suitable roleplaying and a Persuasion -2 roll she can be convinced to release the spirits she has awoken to haunt the Contreras family. If the students mention Nathan in this conversation, they suffer no -2 modifier to the roll. Anna is satisfied to have scared Jaime and promises to leave him and his family alone.

If the gang foolishly decides to attack Anna, she puts them all to sleep using her talisman. When they awaken, they are cursed. See the *curse* power in *East Texas University* for details. Alternately, if they instead befriend “La Bruja” then they find her a useful source of information about the supernatural.



ANNA RODRIGUEZ

Anna is not an evil witch, but she does wish to punish her ex-son-in-law. She may be persuaded to stop her attacks on him.

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

Skills: Knowledge (Occult) d8, Notice d6, Ritualism d8

Charisma: —; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Elderly, Vengeful (Minor)

Edges: Witch/Warlock

Powers: *bind entity, curse, grave speak*

Gear: Old Pacifier (*slumber* talisman, activation “Shush now.”)

CONCLUSION

True to his word, GlenMac pays the students for their stressful weekend work. None of the evidence is conclusive proof of the existence of ghosts, but he is pleased with the results nonetheless.

GREEK TRAGEDY

A ghost seeks help with unfinished business at a fraternity house.

Recommended: Freshman or Sophomore

Location: Frat house

BACKGROUND

Last Fall, students Dave Dalton and Krystle Hunley had a few too many drinks and let things go too far in his fraternity house while their friends were at a football game. After their tryst, Krystle’s boyfriend Vance burst into the room. Enraged, he shot Dave in the head and threatened that Krystle would die too if she told anyone what happened. Krystle told authorities that Dave committed suicide in guilt over their fling, then she dropped out of school and went back home to San Antonio.

Now after a winning football game the gang is celebrating on Greek Row, where the fraternities and sororities are trying to out-party one another. Some are also using the time to skirt the strict rules of Rush Week to quietly and unofficially target potential recruits. The heroes are introduced to the members of each house, told of the organization’s history, and encouraged to ask questions about Greek life.

WHAT WE’RE ALL ABOUT

On this night a Senior in the fraternity, Vance Crawford, introduces himself to the gang and does his best to make sure they have a good time. He takes them on a tour of the house and extols the great benefits of joining the frat, pointing out various trophies and photos of present and past political figures who are alumni. Vance comes off as a really nice guy who loves life in the fraternity.

ONCE A BROTHER, ALWAYS A BROTHER

After they’ve been there about an hour, Vance gets a call on his cell phone and asks the students to excuse him. As he leaves, allow a Notice roll to detect a cold chill. Another frat member appears and introduces himself as Dave Dalton. (If necessary, use a ghost in *East Texas University* for Dave.) He nods in the direction Vance went and tells the friends that Vance is a nice guy but that he has a bad temper, “He can be a real killer



sometimes." He then turns the conversation back to the party.

Dave gently leads the gang away from the main room and toward the stairs, all the while telling them about the fun he has had as a member of the frat, especially when it comes to girls. He points up the stairs to the room on the left and in a conspiratorial tone tells them that his room is known as the "Love Shack." He goes on to describe how he's set a video camera up in the air vent of his room so he can record "all the action."

Vance calls out to the friends from across the room, at which time Dave disappears. Vance tells them that he has to leave for a bit but asks them to stick around and have fun. If someone mentions Dave to him, the characters should make a Notice roll to detect the flicker of shock that he quickly covers. He shrugs, saying, "I guess I don't know that guy." Regardless, he leaves and invites the gang to party with everyone else.

If the group asks any other frat members about Dave, with a successful Streetwise roll they are pointed to Dave's picture on the wall, below which reads "*David Dalton, R.I.P.*" along with his birth date and death—about a year ago! They are then told the story about Dave's guilt-driven "suicide" over a fling with a frat brother's girlfriend. Vance Crawford, the betrayed boyfriend, was deeply upset by the whole ordeal but seems to have finally come to terms with what happened.

If no one thinks to ask about Dave, have them make a Notice roll. On a success, they find the picture themselves.

SEEING IS BELIEVING

The key to the truth lies in the air vent of Dave's old room. No one knew he had been taping his sexual encounters so no one thought to look for a camera. The equipment is still in the air vent, though the battery is long dead. Once the battery is charged or the camera is plugged in, the grisly details of Dave's murder can be watched.

If the gang doesn't think to check for the video camera, Dave's ghost visits them again. He wants justice and is especially drawn to anyone with Knowledge (Occult) or Ritualism. This ghost does not want to cause physical harm, so he manifests in such a way as

to guide others to carry out his unfinished business.

CONCLUSION

Vance crumbles if the heroes confront him. Dave's murder was a crime of passion and Vance doesn't have the stomach to fight or kill again. Revealing the video to the authorities results in Vance's arrest for murder.

The gang isn't invited to join that fraternity.

HANGING TREE

Recommended: Sophomore

Location: Hanging Tree

One of the most odd landmarks on campus is the Hanging Tree, an enormous Live Oak in front of the stately President's Home. Dating back to the 1880s, at least 24 people met their maker hanging from the large boughs of this ancient oak. Most were criminals executed for murders, horse theft, or shootings in the late 19th century. However, the last victim was Cornelius (Neal) Washington, an African American who was lynched nearly sixty years ago. The anniversary is coming up in six days and Neal's ghost has been summoned for a chance at vengeance.

TWISTING IN THE WIND

This tale begins when the students spot a body hanging from the tree late one night (11:48 pm) as they drive by. Upon stopping to investigate and walking under the tree's canopy, anyone who fails a Spirit roll is overcome by a sense of dread. The body they saw is missing, but those who conduct a search (Notice roll) discover a historical marker at the base of the tree.

The Hanging Tree

The Texas Forestry Service believes this tree is more than 250 years old. Many 19th Century outlaws were hung from its branches, some following legal trials but others lynched in a type of frontier justice. At least 24 souls departed life hanging from this tree. The practice ended when the site was chosen for the President's home...with one exception. In 1958 Cornelius Washington, a local African American who was a campus groundskeeper, was found hanged one morning. No one was ever charged for the crime. The Hanging Tree serves as a reminder of the importance of the rule of law and the fragile nature of civilization.

If the students let the matter drop, the same figure is spotted the next night, which is reported the next day in the *Raven's Report*.

If the team researches Cornelius Washington, they find plenty of information. Even a failed Investigation roll uncovers a newspaper article describing the discovery of Cornelius Washington lynched on the Hanging Tree.

On a success, they discover several newspaper articles about the lynching and a group of vigilantes dubbed the Justice Seven. According to the articles, seven men were investigated for the crime but never arrested or charged. They were William Marston, Cole Fowler, Mark Graves, James Denman, Ray Calendar, Ben Casey, and Steven Johanson. Six of the seven men were white males, but James Denman was an African American.

On a raise, the students also learn that the Justice Seven became vigilantes after some of their children were assaulted in the early 1950s.

For those who discovered the identities of the Justice Seven, a follow-up Investigation roll reveals that two of the men are still alive and have local addresses and phone numbers. They are Cole Fowler who lives in the Whiskey Creek Apartments, and Ben Casey who lives south of Pinebox off highway 96.

THE JUSTICE SEVEN

The students may decide to contact or investigate the two surviving members of the Justice Seven. If they do, they quickly discover that Cole Fowler is dead. Should they visit his residence, they discover his body in his apartment. Otherwise, they read about it in the next day's paper. He was found on his bed, apparently a victim of hanging and strangulation though no rope has been found. The police ruled it a homicide, and depending on the group's actions, they may find themselves people of interest by the local detectives.

There are two Ben Caseys in the phone book and both live off Highway 96. The elder resides in an old ranch style home. He is easily upset upon any mention of the Justice Seven or the lynching of Neal Washington. He refuses to discuss any of it and threatens to contact the Police. His son, Ben Jr., is a local policeman and any hero with Connections to local law enforcement knows of him.

Ben, Jr., on the other hand, is very interested in the death of Cole and worried for his father. He doubts any supernatural reason for the murders, but he tells them what he knows about the Justice Seven.

HISTORY LESSON

In 1953, several children in the Pinebox area were abducted and murdered. James Denman's daughter Laylie, Ben Casey's son Thomas, and Cole Fowler's daughter Megan were all found badly beaten and then strangled to death. A man named Ray Jenkins was arrested and sentenced to death for the crimes. Many, including Ben and James, believed he was innocent. The men formed the Justice Seven to find the murderer they believed was still living amongst them.

Neal Washington was the true criminal, guilty of assaulting and killing several children from 1952 to 1958. The Justice Seven caught him in the act in June of 1958 and beat the murderer for over an hour, eventually hanging him from the Hanging Tree at 11:48 pm.

In another example of small-town justice, the men were questioned but never charged with the lynching. Ray Jenkins' case was appealed and the judge quietly acquitted him of the crimes.

THE INVESTIGATION CONTINUES

The next night, again at 11:48, a ghostly body appears hanging in the tree for approximately one minute. Any pictures taken reveal a skinny, tall black man standing at the base of the tree (though not visible by the naked eyes). A few minutes before, the ghost attacked the son of William Marston, Rudy, now a 57 year-old man who works as a security guard for the Raven's State Bank of Texas. Since it's unlikely the heroes are watching Rudy, they may learn of the murder in the paper or on the news the next day.

The ghost is taking his revenge by killing those that lynched him. If the perpetrators are already dead, it settles for killing the man's oldest living relative instead. Washington kills one a day, with the last being Ben Casey, Sr., unless the heroes find a way to stop him.

ANOTHER DESCENDANT

One fact conveniently overlooked by the white newspaper reporters



was that Neal Washington had a wife and daughter. His daughter, now a little over 60 years old, blames every misfortune in her life as a result of the men who hanged her daddy. It is she who is summoning her father's spirit to get revenge.

FINAL RESULTS

There are several ways this rampage may end. An exorcism (*banish*) can stop Neal Washington's nightly returns. Another solution is to catch Ms. Washington in the act of her ritual at the base of the tree. Although the police would never believe stories of magic and ghosts, the very idea of jail is enough to convince her to stop.

★ **Neal Washington:** Use a ghost from *East Texas University*.

★ **Monique Washington:** use a Ritualist from *East Texas University*.

HAZELING INCIDENT

A sorority member needs components for a ritual, and she knows just who can help.

Recommended: Freshmen or Sophomore

Location: Pinebox Cemetery

BACKGROUND

Hazel Kurth is tired of being overlooked and ignored. She thought that belonging to a sorority would finally give her a place to fit in, but even among her fellow Kappa Mu Deltas she is often invisible.

Not for much longer.

Although not normally a bookish person, Hazel found herself fascinated by a peculiar book left forgotten in the bottom of the dresser drawer by the previous owner of her room. After nearly a year of obsessive study, she has deciphered its contents and understands what the book promises...and what it requires.

During her search for the unique components required by her book, Hazel discovered that other students—

the heroes—are also collecting ritual components. She wants their stash, and more.

SCAVENGER HUNT

This adventure begins for the heroes during a hunt for Exotic ritual components. When they arrive at the component's location they find that someone else has beaten them to it.

A Notice roll reveals that someone has carelessly dropped their "shopping list" of ritual components. The list includes the item "scooped" from the students as well as additional items. The final, uncrossed item on the list is "fresh human lungs collected at moonrise."

Beside the entry is a reminder "Hide cooler by Justin Dale tombstone before Wednesday night."

The students now know the time and must identify the cemetery referenced in the note by finding the one with Justin Dale's tombstone.

PINEBOX CEMETERY

At the cemetery at the appointed time, a young woman stumbles through the darkness calling for help. She seems drunk or drugged, yet clearly upset. Her clothes are stained with dirt and grass and her blouse torn.

The young woman—Hazel—acts relieved when the students come to her aid. She explains that she was lured to the cemetery for a sorority "initiation," was drugged, and escaped when her attacker heard a noise and left to investigate.

Hazel begs the heroes to take her to their vehicle and away from danger. Once inside, she looks for signs of the other components. Whether or not she



finds them, once the vehicle is in motion she pulls a knife from under her clothing and attacks. She reasons that the students won't be able to use their numbers against her while they are driving. She wasn't kidding about needing those lungs.

CONCLUSION

Hazel is consumed with completing her ritual, to the point of being prepared to take a human life. The young woman is clearly crazy and needs professional help, so hopefully the students don't kill her. Also, it would be really difficult explaining the body.

★ **Hazel:** Use the Ritualist found in *East Texas University*.

HERE'S THE STORY

A student journalist gets a tip on the rash of pet disappearances.

Recommended: Journalism major or journalism-related Activity, upperclassman

Location: Pinebox City Cemetery

BACKGROUND

After her brother died en route to base after receiving a combat injury, Kalikah Shear became obsessed with battlefield medicine. Now a young Associate Professor at ETU, Kalikah is working on a promising line of research into a drug that promotes heart and brain activity even after traumatic shock. Unfortunately, Kalikah's fiancé is cut from another cloth. One quiet weekend while hanging out with his fiancé in a lab she shares with other researchers, for kicks Lester Fagan injected the drug into another researcher's dying baboon.

Much to their shock, the baboon reanimated. However, Kalikah's fascination became disgust once she realized that the creature's brain had suffered too much damage. Disgust became horror when she realized that their typical euthanasia drug didn't work on the reanimated creature. To make matters worse, it escaped while they were sneaking it to the biomedical incinerator.

In the days that followed, Pinebox fell victim to several pet disappearances. Rumors begin circulating that a Satanic cult is responsible.

DANGEROUS TIP

The hero receives a phone call from a man who claims to know the truth behind the pet

disappearances and asks if the reporter will pay a reward for the information. The man, Lester, haggles over the price but eventually agrees to offer up the scoop. He tells the reporter to meet at the Pinebox City Cemetery at midnight during the full moon—and to bring a camera.

CEMETERY

As promised, Lester waits for the students at the cemetery entrance. Allow a Notice roll to detect the outline of a pistol under his shirt. He tells the reporter that the creature is nothing less than a chupacabra. He explains that he caught sight of the creature more than a week ago and concocted a plan to draw it into a trap. Lester has been chaining small animals to a tree in the cemetery, away from the lights that the beast seems to shun. He promises to give the young reporter and her friends a front row seat and the story of a lifetime—in exchange for a “reward.”

In short, Lester's plan is to divert suspicion away from Kalikah and pocket a little cash in the process. He even hopes to parlay the news story into some personal fame as he kills the creature, although he hasn't thought ahead to what will happen when the body is identified as a laboratory primate.

As they approach the place Lester picked out as a hiding spot, a successful Notice roll reveals the whimpering of a puppy Lester is using as bait.

After a couple of hours on stakeout, allow a Notice roll to pick out a new rustling sound coming from upper branches within the grove. The puppy resumes its whimpering as a gray shadow descends down the tree trunk and silently alights on the ground below. Characters should make a Fear roll from encountering this clearly inhuman creature. Unless one of the other students take action first, Lester draws his pistol from under his shirt and fires a shot.

★ **Lester:** Use the Blue Collar Worker found in *East Texas University*, with the addition of a Smith & Wesson .357 (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6)



ZOMBIE BABOON

This undead creature created in a lab finds light painful and craves blood since it has no metabolism of its own. This creature can move quickly (unlike traditional shambling zombies) but is less graceful than it was when alive.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d10, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Size -1:** The baboon is dog sized.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness, +2 recover from Shaken. Called shots do no extra damage (except to the head-see Weakness).
- **Weakness (Head):** Called Shots to a zombie's head inflict +2 damage.
- **Weakness (Light):** Bright lights give the zombie a painful

headache, resulting in a -1 to skill rolls. Consequently it avoids light when possible.

NOT PART OF THE BARGAIN

Regardless of whether or not Lester hits, the creature acts merely agitated. It snatches up the puppy and attempts to climb the tree but is arrested by the chain leading from the puppy's collar to the tree's base. It stops and tugs at the chain until attacked again.

At this point it is up to the students to give chase in any manner they see fit. Much of its original survival instinct has lapsed, making it more aggressive than a living baboon. It instinctively uses trees for travel and concealment, and launches itself upon a victim from an overhead branch if given the opportunity. The creature tends to stay and fight unless driven away by bright light.

CONCLUSION

If the students successfully kill the zombie baboon and recover its body, they find an ankle tag that reads "Property of ETU Biomed Lab 3. #899283830." Either tracing this back to the lab or publishing a story with Lester

Fagan's name eventually leads to Kalikah's confession.

LITTLE LOST GIRL

A little girl standing on the roadside pleads for help, sending the sleuths in a hunt for her murderer.

Recommended: Junior

Location: Driving between Lake Greystone and Pinebox

BACKGROUND

A little more than a year ago, eleven year old Christa Levens was snatched from her front driveway, assaulted, and murdered by neighbor Niles Henry. A week later her body was discovered by hikers off a rural road but the murder was never solved. The child's mother couldn't deal with the loss and committed suicide, while her father turned to alcohol, eventually losing his job and being evicted.

Now Niles Henry has struck again, taking a ten year old named Dawn Ramirez from the elementary school playground. Police issued an Amber Alert, but after two days still have no leads. Niles hasn't killed Dawn yet, but he will do so in two more days. Christa's spirit has returned in an attempt to save Dawn from her fate and to bring her murderer to justice.

LOST

As the students return from a trip outside Pinebox, characters who make a Notice roll spot a little girl with long brunette hair and a sad face standing on the empty roadside. With a raise, they also notice the girl's torn, blood-stained pink blouse. Every student must make Spirit rolls, and the one with the highest roll hears a girl's voice say "Help me. Help her." As the car whizzes past, she turns and disappears into the forest.

If the students decide to ignore the ghost and keep driving, three days later they hear that a girl's body has been discovered in roughly that area. If appropriate to your campaign, Christa reaches out again once Niles chooses a third victim.

If the sleuths stop, they find no sign of the girl. However, they do find tattered yellow crime scene tape wrapped around some trees and decayed remains of a small funeral wreath (left by Christa's mother). A successful

Common Knowledge roll (-2) allows the student to remember hearing about a child's body being found a little over a year ago.

A HISTORY LESSON

A successful Investigation roll reveals the public details of Christa's abduction and murder. Police noted at the time that in such cases the victim often knew the assailant, but no suspects were ever arrested. The article also notes the address of the home where the abduction took place, and a raise reveals that Christa's mother, Janie, committed suicide three months later.

Peter Levens' own self-destructive slide isn't documented in the newspaper, but with a successful Streetwise -2 roll the sleuth learns that he can be found in Pinebox's small homeless shelter. Meeting Peter serves little purpose but to upset him.

A Common Knowledge roll indicates that the hero has heard the current Amber Alert for an abduction similar to the one they are investigating.

THE LEVENS HOUSE

Today Christa's former home sits vacant, a weathered "For Sale" punctuating the overgrown front yard. Niles Henry lives diagonally across the street. He keeps his latest victim, Dawn, in a small hidden room beneath the kitchen floor rug.

When the students investigate the Levens home, allow another Notice roll. The highest result sees movement in the house, as if someone passed in front of a bedroom window. If the gang wishes to investigate, the house can be entered with a successful Lockpicking roll. Alternately, windows break on any successful attack (Parry 2) and doors have a Toughness of 8, but the characters must also pass a Stealth roll to avoid a call to the police by concerned neighbors.

Allow the sleuths to search for several minutes, then have Christa's phantom manifest near a front window. (Fear roll!) The ghost does not speak, but points through a window to Niles Henry's house and shakes her head sadly before vanishing from sight. Students who look through the window see Niles Henry carrying groceries into his home. Ten minutes later he turns on classical music very loudly (to drown out any cries or screams from Dawn).



- **Christa:** Use the ghost from *East Texas University* for Christa, if needed.

CONCLUSION

Even without evidence, the police are required to check out any tips regarding murder or kidnapping. If the students contact the police before the 48 hours is up, the authorities find Dawn Ramirez's backpack in Niles Henry's house, leading to her rescue.

If the students cross the street to take matters into their own hands or seek more evidence, a Notice -2 roll reveals Dawn's faint shouts over the loud music. Niles answers the front door for no one but the police, but the rolls for breaking into Niles Henry's home are identical to the ones for Christa's. Inside the house, Dawn's cries can be heard without a penalty to the Notice roll. Realizing his danger, Niles immediately attacks any intruders.

Dawn's rescue leads to a \$2,500 Crimestoppers reward and the good will of law enforcement, who for the next adventure respond one level better on the Reaction Table (see *Savage Worlds*) than they otherwise would.



NILES HENRY

Niles Henry is a soft-spoken civil engineer at a small Pinebox firm.

He also has a monstrous taste for murder and a secret desire to be caught or killed.

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

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

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Death Wish

Edges: Block, No Mercy

Gear: Butcher Knife (Str+d4)

MY LITTLE FRIENDS

A professor's death by insect attack hearkens back to an old adversary.

Follows: Bugs

Recommended: Juniors or Seniors

Location: Life Sciences building on the way to class

BACKGROUND

Frustrated at his Entomology professor's high esteem for Johnny Chafe, graduate student Eddie Ruiz stole a notebook from his rival. Later, he realized the journal contained Chafe's chemical formula for bestowing mental control over insects. Thinking to capitalize on the discovery, Ruiz perfected the drug by separating specific insect DNA and recombining it with Chafe's feeding compound. Unlike the original formula, Eddie's version is administered directly to the bloodstream.

Eddie has taken the serum for more than two weeks and begun suffering from paranoia over his secret being stolen. He thinks his formula will win him accolades from the scientific community, and by "scientific community" he means the attractive Dr. Sheila West. Naturally, he was crushed to learn that Dr. West had begun dating her colleague Dr. Lyle Canton. Worse, he realized that the new formula was changing him into a bizarre, insect-humanoid. With his sanity slipping and his powers over other insects blossoming, the graduate student took matters into his own hands to make Dr. West his "queen."



THE STING

The adventure begins as one or more of the sleuths make their way to class in the Life Sciences building on a Monday morning. A shriek rings out from down the hall and gawkers quickly form near a professor's office doorway. Inside lies the gruesome body of Entomology professor Dr. Lyle Canton, covered in hundreds of insect bites and stings. A search of the office fails to reveal more than a few harmless insects still secure in their terrariums. A relevant Knowledge roll such as Knowledge (Forensics) or a Smarts -2 roll reveals that the poor professor appeared to have died early in the weekend.

AN OLD FRIEND

If the characters played **Bugs**, this should be enough to alert the students that either Johnny Chafe has returned or someone else has continued his experiments. If Chafe is still alive and at ETU, he answers their questions upon a successful Persuasion roll. His disposition toward the characters greatly depends upon how they resolved **Bugs**, so adjust the difficulty accordingly. With a raise, Johnny also discloses the missing notebook and a suspicion that it was stolen.

INVESTIGATION

A visit to the ETU Insectary and a successful Streetwise roll reveals that Dr. Sheila West and her graduate student, Eddie Ruiz, failed to appear to give a lecture. With a raise, they also learn that Ruiz had a crush on his professor.

The addresses of both can be found with a little time on the Internet and a successful Investigation roll. Ruiz lives in a one bedroom, second floor apartment. Breaking in requires a Lockpicking roll, or the door has a Toughness of 8 if they want to kick it in. The apartment is unoccupied other than countless insects which scurry across the floors, walls, and ceiling. If the students enter, they should make a Fear roll from all the scuttling insects. The apartment offers no clue as to Ruiz's current whereabouts, but a Notice -2 roll reveals strange shapes reminiscent of armor plating discarded on the floor. A Knowledge (Entomology) roll allows the student to identify these as abnormally large molted exoskeleton.

THE QUEEN

Dr. West lives in a brick home in upscale Timberland Village, a gated community off Lake Greystone favored by better-paid ETU professors and administrators. An older, compact economy car is parked in the driveway but no one answers the front door. A Notice -1 roll reveals a spare key hidden above the door frame. Alternately, the front door can be opened with a Lockpicking -1 roll. The backyard patio door can be opened with a Lockpicking roll, or the glass broken with any successful attack (Parry 2). Students forcing their way in should make a Stealth roll to avoid a call to the police from observant neighbors.

As at Eddie's apartment, Dr. West's house is infested with all manner of crawling and flying insects. The creature that had once been Eddie Ruiz is biding his time inside, watching the cocoon that holds the unlucky Dr. West. Eddie attacks as soon as he notices the heroes. He has grown an exoskeleton, large eyes, and two sucker-like fangs. He can also control up to 2 swarms.

- **Swarm (2):** As in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook.



INSECT CHIMERA (EDDIE RUIZ)

Eddie was a good looking, tall thin man, but the metamorphosis change has turned him into something that crosses a human, an ant, and a grasshopper. He's pretty gross.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (3)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +3:** Exoskeleton protects all areas of Eddie's body.
- **Bite:** Str + d6
- **Control Swarms:** Upon a successful Spirit roll, Eddie may summon and control 2 swarms per hour, with a range of 48".
- **Claws:** Str+d6
- **Hop:** Eddie can hop 1d6" in a straight line instead of using his Pace.
- **Pounce Attack:** When Eddie hops to attack someone, he gets 2 full claw attacks and gains an extra +2 to hit and damage.

• **Weakness (Insecticide):** A Called Shot to the face with insecticide spray is treated as Poison (Paralysis) and Eddie must make a Vigor roll. Failure means he is paralyzed for 2d6 minutes. Success decreases the time to rounds and a Raise reduces the effect to Fatigue.

CONCLUSION

Attempts to publicize Eddie's transformation are dismissed as another lame college hoax.

If the heroes rescue Dr. West, the cocoon breaks easily and she awakens in two days. (Use Professor from *East Texas University* if necessary.) She checks out okay, but secretly has not survived unchanged. Dr. West can now control insects as well, though she suffers none of Eddie's mental problems and means no one harm.

NIGHT OF RECKONING

Supernatural activity reaches a fever pitch in the days leading up to final exams and graduation, leading to former foes reanimating for a single night to enact revenge.

Follows: English Patient

Recommended: Seniors

Location: Any

Leads to: Cutter's Demise

BACKGROUND

While April 28th to April 30th is a time when evil is traditionally at its most powerful, this year the addition of a full moon and the Convergence has magnified havoc in Pinebox like never before. Hauntings, creature attacks, and High Strangeness are at an all-time high.

THE RECKONING

In occult circles, April 28th is known as a Night of Reckoning. Each hero faces one "reanimated" foe of your choice from the previous three years. The enemies take physical form with the addition of the Undead Special Ability. All other attributes, including Smarts, remain identical. The adversaries appear at midnight and remain animated until defeated or the first rays of sunlight appear the following morning.

- **Old Enemy (1/hero)**

NON-DENOMINATIONAL DEMON

Led by a charismatic student with a secret, religious crusaders team up with the heroes to cleanse evil from campus. Unfortunately, their interpretation of "evil" is overly broad.

Recommended: Juniors or Seniors

Location: A dark outdoor corner of campus, at night

BACKGROUND

While visiting Cairo on a "study abroad" trip, student Dan Freeman purchased an attractive amulet. Unfortunately, the amulet was cursed. The amulet imbues the wearer with supernatural powers of persuasion, but taints and twists its owner with the drive to create a holy war.

Dan returned to ETU filled with religious fervor. His fiery damnation of various groups and demands for earthly punishment alienated many members of the campus non-denominational prayer group...but not all. He called his followers the "Sword of Adam" and they pledged to patrol the campus at night, searching for "sinners" and dealing out punishment.

To that end, lately students have noticed—but mostly ignored—hand-written signs warning that "sinners will be punished," listing such sins as drinking, smoking, dancing, listening to music, and members of the opposite sex speaking to each other in public.

THE CAVALRY ARRIVES

The gang's adventure begins late one night on a dark stretch of campus sidewalk. The students could be on their way back from the library after a late night of studying or they might be investigating rumors of a creature that preys upon unwary students. Regardless of their intended destination, a successful Notice roll allows them to detect a shriek of terror. When the characters arrive, they see a pair of imps harassing a young coed.

One round into combat the heroes find themselves assisted by a trio of ski-masked fighters. The fighters help corner the creatures and even dispatch them if given a chance.



In the aftermath, the vigilantes introduce themselves as the “Sword of Adam.” With a Notice roll, the hero notes that the leader wears an odd charm hanging on a chain. Dan sounds out the potential new allies, his tone friendly and his explanations perfectly reasonable. He suggests that they team up again the following night to cleanse the campus of an even greater nest of evil.

- **Imps (2):** Use the imp found in *East Texas University*.
- **Sword of Adam regulars (2):** Use Student Extra in *East Texas University*, adding Fighting d6 and baseball bats (Str.+d4)



DAN FREEMAN

Dan is a charismatic leader who exudes confidence. Sadly, his cursed talisman has made him both violent and delusional. Such is his way with words that even his arguments for extreme measures sound reasonable.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice

d6, Persuasion d8

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

Hindrances: Delusional, Vengeful

Edges: Charismatic, Command, Fervor

Gear: Baseball bat (Str.+d4); Crusader’s Burden (talisman with Command and Fervor Edges but cursed with Delusional and Vengeful (Minor) Hindrances; once activated by saying “Hear me,” the talisman remains in effect until removed).

NEWS

The following day, the Pinebox newspaper reports on a known drug dealer who was pulled from his parked car and beaten. The police labeled the attack as drug gang violence despite the stash being destroyed rather than stolen and a handwritten note left on their hood claiming “the Lord’s retribution.”

IT’S A PARTY

Late the following night the same masked vigilantes greet the heroes at the prearranged time and place, acting more comfortable and

openly using one another's first names. Dan hands out spare masks to the gang and leads everyone inside the Rockefeller Psychology Center. There, they find a quartet of young women in the middle of a ritual. Anyone who passes a Ritualism or Knowledge (Occult) roll can identify it as a spell for granting knowledge. Specifically, the witches are preparing to cheat on a test.

The Sword of Adam members smash the ritual components then shift to the young women themselves. Should a hero object, Dan says "They're *witches*, of course they're evil! Get them!"

The young women flee if able, but otherwise defend themselves. While Dan's two followers settle for roughing up the witches and letting them run, Dan is out for blood. He doesn't stop until his victim is incapacitated or someone makes him to stop. If the heroes force a confrontation right there, skip down to **Sinners** below. If instead the gang follows along, then at the end of hostilities they can make a Notice roll to spot the note Dan dropped in the shambles. It is similar to the flyers posted around campus. Dan then leads them out and instructs them to meet again the following night. This pattern continues, with Dan talking them into ever more morally questionable acts in the name of protecting campus and "cleansing the stain of evil."

- **Sword of Adam regulars (2):** Use Student Extra in *East Texas University*, adding Fighting d6 and baseball bats (Str+d4)
- **Witches (4):** Use the Ritualist Extras found in *East Texas University*, arming two with silver candlesticks and two with ceremonial daggers (both Str+d4).

★ **Dan Freeman:** See page 81.

SINNERS

When the heroes finally reject Dan's crusade, their former ally turns enemy. If the characters force a showdown on their terms, Dan tries to persuade them to walk away so that they can discuss their differences another day. He wants to buy time to rally more troops and lead them on a surprise raid against the heroes.

Eventually it comes down to a fight. Use enough Extras to make the battle challenging.

Dan's followers are zealous but not suicidal. If the characters identify the talisman as the source of Dan's commanding presence, they can

negate it with a counter-ritual or by removing it from around his neck.

CONCLUSION

If the gang leaves Dan in possession of the talisman, in time he uses his persuasive skills to rebuild the broken Sword of Adam. Only separating him from the talisman releases him from its curse. Once freed, he suffers an "awakening" and realizes the gross error of his ways. He disbands the Sword of Adam, drops his engineering major in favor of theology, and becomes a strong campus advocate for peaceful dialog.

Should a character attempt to use Dan's talisman herself, she must make a Spirit roll -4 or fall under its evil influence. A success means nothing happens.

QUID PRO QUO

The characters find a chance to get out of trouble with the law. All it takes is a small favor for the District Attorney.

Recommended: Any

Location: Golan County Courthouse

BACKGROUND

Use this adventure if the students attracted a little too much legal attention while righting wrongs. They have been charged with a serious crime and have to appear at the courthouse before a Grand Jury, who will decide whether or not to indict them. This phase of criminal proceedings sometimes takes place many months after the original charge, giving you flexibility in timing this adventure.

One day prior to the hearing they are summoned to the District Attorney's office.

Fortunately for the heroes, the District Attorney Dennis Holloway has problems of his own. His college-aged son, Grant, has fallen in with the wrong crowd. A *really* wrong crowd—a cult engaging in regular blood sacrifices.

YOUR DAY IN COURT

District Attorney Dennis Holloway leads the students (and their attorney, if present) into his office and closes the door behind them. Once everyone is seated, he explains that he is familiar with their police file and had done some additional campus research about them in preparation for the hearing. After beating

around the bush, he finally comes out and makes an offer. If they agree to help him with a personal problem, he will see to it that the Grand Jury decides not to send their case to trial. The students' attorney is cavalier about the offer, explaining that this is small town justice and the best way to win a trial is avoid it altogether.

Assuming the heroes agree, Dennis explains that his son has fallen in with a dangerous cult. He wants the students to go in and get Grant out of their clutches—with force if necessary. You have two ways to proceed. You can either use this as a lead-in to the Pinebox adventure *Brainwashed*, or the District Attorney gives them a picture of his son and sends them to Police Detective Blaine Bishop for information on the cult.

PINEBOX PD

Inside the Pinebox Police Department, the heroes are led to a high-walled office cubicle belonging to the detective. Bishop is a tall, good-looking African American who exudes a quiet confidence. The detective expresses sympathy for Holloway, but points to a file on his desk and tells them that giving them access would be against the law. He then says that he's going for coffee and that they should be gone when he returns.

The file Detective Bishop left on this desk contains information about the cult leader Lorrie Chandler and her followers. Ask who reads the file (two maximum), then have each make a Smarts roll to determine how much information they can speed-read before Bishop returns.

Those who make a basic success learn Chandler's home address, where eight followers,

including Grant, live with Lorrie under her full-time control. With a raise, they learn that she and her followers reputedly perform occult rituals to attain supernatural powers in advance of a coming cataclysmic event. (Crazy stuff, right?) So far they haven't been caught doing anything illegal, although the PD suspects that they are sacrificing animals.

LORRIE'S HOUSE

The cult leader's house is surprisingly normal—a 20 year old brick home in a small, middle-class Pinebox neighborhood.

No matter the time of day the gang arrives, the entire cult is occupied with a ritual in the soundproofed, attached garage. This black magic ritual involves blood sacrifice (whether human or animal is up to the Dean). Entering the house is a standard Lockpicking roll or they can force the door (Toughness 8).

Grant Holloway stands in the open doorway between the kitchen and garage, his back to the heroes. All the cultists' Notice rolls are at -2 due to their focus on the ritual. Just as the heroes arrive, Lorrie finishes Gathering Power and begins the Dramatic Task of the ritual itself.

Characters who look past Grant at the ritual must make a Fear check at the horror of the blood sacrifice in progress. Once they know what they're looking at, the sleuths can pick out the victim's muffled cries over the sound of chanting. If they disrupt the ritual, Lorrie suffers Ritual Failure but orders her followers to grab the intruders. The cultists attempt to subdue the intruders as a replacement sacrifice, preferring to use their superior numbers to Gang Up and Grapple.

• **Cultists (8):** Use the Cultist Extra found in *East Texas University*. Includes Grant Holloway.

★ **Lorrie Chandler (1):** Use the Ritualist found in *East Texas University* with the addition of a pretty smile and a keen "country chic" fashion sense.



CAVALRY

Despite his earlier claim about not interfering, Detective Bishop is parked in his personal car just down the street watching the house. He is in plain clothes, off duty. If the battle spills out the front door or if they've been inside too long, he rushes to assist. As long as they have Grant Holloway in tow, he also helps cover the heroes' tracks before calling in his colleagues.

★ **Detective Blaine Bishop:** See Detective Blaine Bishop found in *East Texas University*.

CONCLUSION

If the heroes extract Grant Holloway alive, they have the District Attorney's extreme gratitude. Grant is admitted to psychiatric care in an attempt to "de-program" Lorrie Chandler's influence. True to his word, Holloway "loses" the evidence against the students and advises the Grand Jury not to indict them. Inform the players that they can take the Connections Edge at the next opportunity to maintain the long-term help and trust of either Detective Bishop or the District Attorney.

If Grant died during the rescue attempt... well...they're screwed.

RESURRECTION OF THE BLACK GUARD

A Black Guard cultist begs the sleuths for help in defeating the Nazi mummy Dr. Heimglimmer.

Follows: Curse of the Black Guard

Recommended: Juniors or Seniors

Location: Jenny Chapman's home

BACKGROUND

Following the conclusion of **Curse of the Black Guard**, the Neo-Birkhuhn may have seemed smashed for good. However, the hideous mummy Dr. Heimglimmer was content to remain in hiding and bide his time. That time has finally come. Only recently has Heimglimmer summoned the remaining Black Guard together and revealed his resurrection.

However, true immortality is not yet his.

While hundreds of enslaved souls shield him from death, he is still trapped between the living and undead as a mummy. That will change when

he performs a dark ritual to regenerate his flesh and grant himself the true immortality he sought for most of his life. To achieve his aims, he instructed the remaining seven Black Guard to seek out the highly exotic components needed to perform the ritual.

Yet, not all is well among the remaining Black Guard. One among them, Jenny Chapman*, was horrified at the creature Heimglimmer became and even more-so the possibility that she would meet a similar fate. She pried the gang's contact information from Lisa Gray and hopes to use the characters to stop Heimglimmer.

In the first edition of Last Rites, this character was named Sylvia Valruhn. She is the "striking brunette" in the photos found in Dr. Heimglimmer's home. If you played the 1st edition pdf, then change her name back to Sylvia Valruhn.

THE BIG REVEAL

The gang's involvement begins with a call from a woman named Jenny Chapman, who claims that Lisa Gray recommended them for helping with her haunting. Allow a Smarts roll to recognize her name from *Last Rites* (if they learned it). Jenny is paranoid about Heimglimmer discovering her betrayal, so she insists on meeting somewhere private.

When the sleuths meet her, they find an older, statuesque brunette who begins by confessing that she is a member of the Black Guard who wants to "defect." She explains that she dated "Frank Manz" for a number of years, but it was only in the last few that she learned his secret. He played upon her fear of growing old and convinced her to join his Neo-Birkhuhn as a means of learning the secret to eternal youth.

She explains that their encounter in Heimglimmer's house stopped Lisa Gray's haunting but created an even greater monster. Revinowitz and Martinez had turned on the Nazi, blocking his access to the spirits that kept him alive. When the cultists were defeated, Heimglimmer regained control of the souls and used them to resurrect his body as a mummy. For Jenny, the lure of eternal youth and beauty has been replaced by the reality of becoming an undying, hideous monster.

The frightened cultist says that the mummy has set up court in Irwin Revinowitz's former

home, but until Heimglimmer is denied the source of his power he is unkillable. She warns that the mummy seeks to complete his mastery over the enslaved souls, gaining true immortality. For now, each soul is bound to Heimglimmer by a personal item—a “fetish.” Unfortunately, after his betrayal the mummy learned his lesson and split his trove of enslaved souls into three hidden caches. To defeat the Nazi doctor, these caches must be recovered and the souls released from bondage.

Jenny has only deduced the location of one of the caches, but she hopes to gather more clues from within Heimglimmer’s Neo-Birkhuhn. The first cache of fetishes is located in shed 27 of the ITS-A-LOCK mini-storage facility the heroes visited in **Curse of the Black Guard**.

EVIL STORAGE

After the messy battle from **Curse of the Black Guard**, the ITS-A-LOCK owner made a token effort at appearing more secure. The characters must make a Stealth roll to evade a roaming security guard who patrols the property on a golf cart. The shed can be opened with a Lockpicking –1 roll or with the assistance of bolt cutters and a Strength roll –2.

The cache of fetishes is hidden in plain sight within the Nazi’s 10×10 storage unit. A large clear glass vase contains a collection of knick-knacks, from locks of hair to spectacles. Each item, numbering in the dozens, represents a single soul enslaved by Heimglimmer. Breaking or destroying the item breaks Heimglimmer’s link and frees the soul.

Unfortunately, Heimglimmer panics as soon as he feels himself weaken. Since he does not know which cache was disturbed, he sends a pair of his Neo-Birkhuhn to each. If the heroes destroy the fetishes at the mini-storage, a pair of cultists arrive shortly thereafter and attack on sight. These are Heimglimmer’s more fanatical Neo-Birkhuhn, who fight until dead or incapacitated.

- **Neo-Birkhuhn (2):** Use the Ritualist Extra found in *East Texas University*, adding the following gear: Zippo Lighter from Hell (*burst* talisman from *East Texas University*) and Colt 1911 pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 7, AP 1)

HE’S ONTO US

Jenny calls the gang shortly after the battle’s conclusion. Heimglimmer called her, both furious and frightened. He ordered her and another Neo-Birkhuhn to retrieve a cache of his fetishes in a cemetery mausoleum, kill anyone nearby, and return immediately. The Nazi knows that he is under attack and is pushing forward the immortality ritual to today.

Jenny tells the heroes that she incapacitated her cultist partner, but that it is only a matter of time before Heimglimmer deduces her betrayal. She instructs the heroes to retrieve the second set of fetishes and bring them to her house for a counter-ritual against Heimglimmer.

The fetishes are where Jenny describes, although you may add a trap to the mausoleum (such as quicksand based upon the *entangle* power) to further challenge the heroes.

JUSTICE

When the heroes arrive at Jenny’s home, they find her murdered corpse. Heroes succeeding in a Notice roll find a coil of rope and might correctly deduce that the Neo-Birkhuhn she incapacitated freed himself and killed her.

If the heroes search the house and make an additional Notice roll, they note a trail of soil leading from the garage to the kitchen. Stretched out upon the kitchen table is a crude sculpture of a man made from a mixture of clay and dark, rich graveyard soil. Its forehead is marked by a series of Hebrew letters. Those with Knowledge (Hebrew) or a successful Investigation roll decipher the word “Justice.”

A Knowledge (Occult) roll allows the heroes to identify this figure as a golem. This particular specimen has a cavity in its chest where its heart would be. With a Knowledge (Occult) –1 roll or a Smarts –2 roll to recollect Jenny’s last phone call, the heroes deduce that they should take the fetishes she asked them to save and place them within the cavity. Doing so and covering the cavity with more dirt completes the ritual, allowing the golem to animate. The golem arises from the kitchen table and silently plods out of the house. It pays no attention to the heroes, but only follows its



own internal instinct to take the closest path to its goal.

Should the heroes not find the golem or choose to destroy the fetishes instead, the mummy is still weakened but does not have the distraction of the golem's attack.



GOLEM

This mute, man-shaped creature was created for a single purpose—to deliver long-delayed justice against Dr. Heimglimmer. It is fueled by the spirits of those whom Heimglimmer have wronged, thus denying the mummy a source of his power and turning it back against him.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d6

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

Special Abilities:

- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; No additional damage from called shots; Do not suffer wound modifiers; Immune to poison and disease.

- **Fearless:** The Golem is immune to Fear and Intimidation.

- **Slam:** Str+d4

SHOWDOWN

Since Jenny told them that the mummy was at Revinowitz's house, the heroes should have little question as to their next destination. If in doubt they can follow the golem's trail.

Heimglimmer and his four remaining Neo-Birkhuhn have begun gathering power for the immortality ritual in the pool house at the rear of the property. Central to the ritual is the small pile of soul fetishes (the final third). If the heroes successfully animated the golem, it disrupts the process upon its arrival (see "Casting" in the **The Dean's List** chapter of *East Texas University*). If the golem was not animated then the heroes must distract the ritualists and obtain the fetishes.

The final encounter is a straight up fight. Unfortunately, as long as even some of his fetishes remain, Heimglimmer regenerates at an alarming rate. Only once the fetishes are destroyed can the mummy be killed once and for all.



DR. FRANZ HEIMGLIMMER

Dr. Heimglimmer is a genuine Nazi who extended his life through Black Magic at the expense of his concentration camp victims. While true immortality eluded him, his rituals turned him into a living mummy. Now he seeks to finish what he started.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d8, Spirit d12, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d8, Healing d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Occult) d10, Notice d6, Ritualism d12, Shooting d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10

Special Abilities:

- **Darkvision:** Suffers no penalties due to lighting.

- **Fear (-1):** Anyone seeing the mummy for the first time must make a Fear roll.

- **Spirit Control:** He can use his enslaved spirits to wield the following ghostly Special Abilities: Fear, Phantom Weapon, Scent, Spirit Storm

- **Undead:** +2 Toughness, +2 to recover from Shaken. No additional damage from called shots.

- **Invulnerability:** Unless the spirits he binds are freed, he is invulnerable and can only be Shaken.

- **Weakness (Fetishes):** Once all the fetishes are destroyed (except for those that may be used in the golem), Dr. Heimglimmer loses his Invulnerability and Spirit Control special abilities.

- **Weakness (Fire):** Once the fetishes are destroyed, Heimglimmer's weakness is revealed. His skin is dry and flakes off and easily burned. He suffers an extra +4 damage from fire.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

Professor GlenMac asks the heroes to investigate a haunted campus theater.

Recommended: Freshman or Sophomore, Theater major, Extracurricular Activity (Performer)

Location: Patterson Theater, Martha Patterson Language Arts Center

BACKGROUND

In the 1970s Jeff Tanner, star of an ETU production of *The Glass Menagerie*, committed suicide by hanging himself from the stage's catwalk. Two nights later his understudy took over the gentleman caller role and kissed Jeff's girlfriend. Tragically, a light fell and struck them both, killing Darla Phillips and wounding the understudy. Superstitious actors blamed Jeff's jealous ghost. They were right.

The truth is that Jeff's understudy, Gene Smith, murdered him for a lead role—but not the one in the play. Gene had long pined for Darla and was furious when on-stage attraction simmered into a real-life romance. In a fit of passion he strangled his rival and then hung him from the catwalk to make it look like suicide.

After graduating from ETU, Gene took the stage name Conner Mayes and went on to a modest television acting career in commercials and walk-on roles. However, the guilt of Jeff's murder and Darla's subsequent death left the actor a neurotic mess. Now after nearly 30 years Conner has returned to ETU as a professor to prove to himself that the only ghosts are the ones he carries inside.

Unfortunately, Jeff's restless spirit isn't so accommodating.

AN ENTERTAINING JOB

The heroes' adventure begins with a call from GlenMac who asks for their help looking into weird stories coming from the cast at the Patterson Theater. The professor loans them a small case of ghost hunting equipment (one item for each of them) and asks them to attend play practice to document any paranormal activity. If this is their first ghost hunt, he or Jackson (if present) also gives them a quick lesson on using the various electronics.

Alternately, if one of the characters is a Drama major or has an acting-related Activity then allow the character to "audition" for the play and win a role in the lead-up to this adventure. Describe an inexplicable crashing noise and uncomfortable feelings of being watched backstage during the first week of practice, making the cast increasingly nervous.



PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

The ghost hunters meet a group of students leaving just as they arrive at the campus theater. Inside, they find the play production in chaos. A stage partition wall tipped over onto some actors. Although no one was seriously injured, some students quit on the spot.

The director, Conner Mayes, is the only adult in the auditorium. Although in a heated discussion with an assistant, he eventually notices the heroes and growls, "Unless you're volunteering to replace them, get out!"

Smart characters will jump at the opening. Otherwise they must pass a Persuasion roll to convince Conner (who begins as Uncooperative) to let them stay.

If they take the jobs (enough for everyone), the director offers roles in the play to anyone with a Charisma greater than zero. Others are assigned stage crew, lighting, makeup, and so on. Conner then calls a 15 minute break and stalks outside to smoke and calm his nerves.



CONNER MAYES / GENE SMITH

Most only know Gene Smith by his stage name, Conner Mayes, and no one remembers his connection to the ill-fated production of the *The Glass Menagerie*. Although normally charming and full of Hollywood insider stories to dazzle the students, the stress of "weird stuff" during play practice has him chain-smoking and irritable.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d4, Persuasion d8

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

Hindrances: Enemy (Major)

Edges: Attractive

MEET AND GREET

As Conner stalks away, a young student steps in and introduces herself as Kieleigh Westbrook. She offers a quick tour backstage and introduction to the cast. Although ETU theater productions are open to any who

audition, the theater students are a relatively small, tight-knit (if contentious) group. Even so, Kieley assures them that the production just began and they can easily catch up.

With a successful Streetwise roll the ghost hunters can learn about some of the theater's paranormal activity from Kieley or any of the cast you introduce.

- Cast members have heard a voice coming from supposedly empty backstage areas.
- Others have glimpsed motion from the catwalk above the stage, which is off-limits.
- Someone keeps moving the props around.

PHANTOM OF THE THEATER

The play's haunting is best carried out over a number of days, making it ideal for interweaving with another adventure. For added effect, do a search for "one act play" on a streaming video website and play the dialog softly as background noise during game play.

Supernatural activity only happens during play practice. Ghost hunters carrying equipment at the time of each event get a Notice roll to detect a sudden spike in readings. Add, elaborate, or condense the scenes below as necessary.

A CHILL IN THE AIR

As you stand backstage, you feel a cool draft from behind. You see nothing noteworthy behind you, no open doors or whistling air vents, yet the coldness deepens. It grows like a moving wave until a bone-sapping chill crashes right through where you stand. Your breath condenses into fog and you're wracked with an uncontrollable shiver. Mercifully, the burning cold heart sweeps onward, leaving you in its wake.

SCENE OF THE CRIME

Characters backstage make a Notice roll to catch a glimpse of movement from the catwalk above the stage. Heroes who climb the ladder to the catwalk and make a Notice -1 roll find the name "Gene" traced in a layer of dust. No other dust is disturbed.

FOR DARLA

A character waiting in the curtains for his cue feels a pair of hands on his shoulders. No one appears to be behind him, but the feeling persists. A presence seems to lean against his back and a voice whispers in his ear, "This is for Darla." Moments later, the phantom hands travel to the character's throat and squeezes.

The ghost makes an unarmed attack each round to cause damage (choking). The victim may try to evade or use defensive tactics to shake off his attacker but must be able to counter the Ethereal ability to counter-attack. Jeff's ghost quits after causing a Wound.

DID YOU SEE?

With a Notice roll, a hero standing backstage spots a male body hanging by its neck from the catwalk overhead. Its face is swollen and splotted purple. When the character looks up at it, the body abruptly spins on the rope and makes eye contact with the hero. It rasps "Did you see Darla?" then gestures to a spot on the stage. Jeff disappears the moment the character looks back down to the stage.



JEFF TANNER (GHOST)

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6; Notice d4

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

Special Abilities:

- **Cold Spot:** Jeff may reduce the temperature within a Small Burst Template by 5 degrees Fahrenheit times his Spirit die type.
- **Ghost:** May only be harmed by magical attacks; can pass through physical matter; affects the physical world using Spirit for Strength; causes Fear; immune to Fear and Intimidation; invisible; slow Regeneration; salt may block or harm.
- **Haunting Grounds:** Jeff's spirit cannot leave the theater.
- **Resolution:** Jeff's spirit remains restless until his murder is solved.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Sleuths who research the name Darla associated with the theater can make an Investigation -1 roll to find her basic school record and the circumstances of her death. The article includes a short mention of her boyfriend Jeff Tanner's suicide, as well as the accident that killed Darla and injured her costar Gene Smith. With a Notice -1 roll, the characters recognize their current director in an accompanying cast photo.

CONFESSION

Jeff's ghost continues haunting the play until Conner Mayes is



brought to justice. If the ghost hunters fail to connect the dots then have GlenMac prompt them to try a séance, where the phantom drops even more clues about the director's guilt. Ultimately it's up to the heroes to pick the time, place, and method of their confrontation with Conner Mayes.

If the students choose to confront their director with accusations, treat the encounter as a Social Conflict to make Conner break down and confess. If the confrontation occurs in the theater, Jeff's ghost appears during the last round to add weight to the accusations.

If the heroes confront Conner but fail to get him to confess, the next morning he is found hanging from the catwalk in the exact same spot that Jeff had been found.

WALPURGIS NIGHT

The heroes are plunged into hell on earth when they awaken the day after Graduation Day to find Pinebox overrun by demons and undead.

Follows: Cutter's Demise

Recommended: Seniors

Location: Student's bedroom

BACKGROUND

It's April 30th—Walpurgis Night, days away from the end of the semester and Graduation. This is the night when evil is purportedly at its most powerful. This year the addition of a full moon and the Convergence (if you're playing the Plot Point Campaign) magnifies the havoc in Pinebox like never before. Tonight, the heroes are drawn into a shared nightmare.

NIGHTMARE SCAPE

Each student awakens at dawn to the continuous wail of sirens. Doors to neighboring dorm rooms or apartments are left open and in complete disarray. The power is out city-wide and the local radio station is off the air. Although cell phones work, no one other than other heroes answer. A Notice roll reveals that cell phones and other battery-operated devices show the date as the day after Graduation. They have missed the Convergence.

Even if the characters suspect that it is all a nightmare, they cannot awaken until the end of the adventure. This should *feel* like Hell on Earth,

with everyone they've come to know having suffered horrific consequences. Outside, the streets are littered with the dead, undead, and the wholly unnatural. The only other human visible far down the street is mobbed and killed by a pack of gremlins right before a hero's eyes.

Should the characters contact one another and plan a meeting, every moment spent outdoors increases their chances of being discovered and overrun. Treat their travel through the town as a Dramatic Task. Those who fail are cornered and torn apart by demons.

SURVIVOR

If the heroes manage to gather, they encounter another survivor (ideally a well-known NPC) who was witness to the devastation. He describes a cloud of death rolling over campus, followed by a horde of demons and undead ravaging those who survived the initial onslaught.

END RUN

Demons continue to prowl the area in which the students assemble. Even the sanctuary (see **Sanctuary** on page 23) is not completely secure from such overwhelming supernatural activity. Demons make Notice rolls until the heroes are discovered. The creature makes a warbling shriek and is soon joined by others of its kind. Throw wave after wave of demons and zombies until they are clearly trapped and fighting a losing battle. Finally, an überdemon stomps up to the fringe of battle, lets out a roar and prepares to charge.

...and the heroes awaken from their shared nightmare with a certainty that they've just glimpsed the future. It is the morning of Graduation Day and the world is still safe—for the time being. Characters keep experience earned but erase Wounds, Fatigue, or Fear effects. If possible allow some token physical blemish to carry over from the dream.

- **Demon (∞):** Any demon from *East Texas University* or *Horror Companion*. Go nuts.
- **Skeleton (∞):** As in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook.
- **ÜberDemon (1):** See *East Texas University*.
- **Zombie (∞):** As in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook.

WICKED LITTLE BOOKS

The students take a temp job cataloging books in a private collection, but supernatural forces have other plans. This adventure makes a good introduction for students interested in learning Ritualism.

Recommended: Sophomore

Location: Ashwright Mansion Library

BACKGROUND

Marvin Ashwright was a well-known local philanthropist and businessman who disappeared in 1998. Ashwright actually died alone in a hidden room while performing an occult ritual. His body was destroyed and his soul fused with his house, a sprawling Victorian-style mansion deep in the woods of the Big Thicket.

After a considerable legal battle, his children finally succeeded in having their father declared dead. The family has begun executing his will, including the donation of Ashwright's large, private library to ETU. Among the library's collection are several tomes of rare, highly sought-after occult lore. Helen Lane, an extremely powerful ritualist, wants the books and has decided to interdict them before they reach the ETU Library.

HELP WANTED

The heroes are drawn into the adventure by taking a high-paying weekend job cataloging the Ashwright collection and packing it up for transport to the ETU library. The students are asked to begin work Friday after class and work through the weekend so that movers can transport the boxes Monday morning. The massive, mostly non-cataloged collection spans several large rooms. The mansion is currently unoccupied and the students are encouraged to spend the night so that they can finish on time.

FRIDAY NIGHT PRANKS

The spirit of Marvin Ashwright haunts the home, but he is not evil and the haunting is mainly of the harmless prank variety. Characters observe any of the effects below after a successful Notice roll.

- When a character leaves a room, she detects the sound of footsteps from the room she

just left. If she investigates, she finds three tall towers of intricately stacked books.

- A character passing a mirror catches a glimpse of a serious-looking elderly gentleman reflected behind him. No one is there.
- Students hear a muffled, indistinct voice coming from the next room. Upon investigation, the voice shifts to the next adjoining room, and so on.

UNWELCOME—AND UNDEAD—GUESTS

On the second night of the heroes' cataloging/packing, several shuffling zombies enter the house and attempt to steal half a dozen occult books. The zombies only attack the students if attacked or if the heroes attempt to block them. If the students have a hard time fighting the zombies, Marvin Ashwright's spirit moves against the undead. Doors slam on them, tables move and fall on them, etc. Dispatched zombies rapidly decay, leaving behind only ragged clothes and coffin dust.

- **Zombies (4/hero):** As in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook.

SECRET ROOM, SECRET BOOK

After the students fend off the zombies, Ashwright's spirit decides that the heroes are worthy of his prized possession. The ghost triggers a latch which allows a secret door to swing open. The hidden door leads to a small room decorated with bizarre carvings and runic figures.

A book rests upon a pedestal in the center of the room. It is one of Ashwright's personal, handwritten workbooks on ritualism, gleaned from years of research. With study, it can open the path of Ritualism for the heroes. Once the techniques are mastered, the journal details the following rituals: *dispel* and *grave speak*.

CONCLUSION

After the attack, the heroes are able to make good on their job and movers arrive Monday morning to deliver the remaining books to the library. The student's pay varies depending on how much damage the house sustained during the zombie attack (which no one believes).



CHARACTERS

Below are some of the noteworthy characters, both alive and dead, found in the *Degrees of Horror* Plot Point Campaign.



NINA CASTLE (GHOST)

Nina, a former ETU student and Protector, persists today as a ghost. In life, she hid a powerful talisman, De La Garza's Cross, for safekeeping in her gold medal swimming case. When Helen LaCroix, a fellow Protector, killed her with immolating fire magic, the secret to the cross' location died with her.

Nina can do more during the first Plot Point adventure **Sweat Lodge** (page 11) due to the arcane symbols around the arena.

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Notice d4

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

Special Abilities:

- **Cold Spot:** She may reduce the temperature within a Small Burst Template by 5 degrees Fahrenheit times her Spirit die type.

- **Drain Electricity:** Nina can drain the electrical capacity of a battery or batteries in a device. She may also reduce or temporarily stop the electrical current in a room.

- **Ghost:** May only be harmed by magical attacks; can pass through physical matter; affects the physical world using Spirit for Strength; causes Fear; immune to Fear and Intimidation; invisible; slow Regeneration; salt may block or harm.

- **Haunting Grounds:** Nina is limited to haunting the building in which she died: the Roost.

- **Illusion:** The ghost can create a short illusion pertaining to her life and death.

- **Imprint:** Nina can project an emotion or short memory to a receptive person. This special ability extends beyond the Roost due to her earlier connection with the students.

- **Resolution:** Nina's spirit cannot move on until she resolves her unfinished business. She must pass on the cursed talisman she was protecting to worthy guardians.

- **Scent:** Nina can fill a Small Burst Template with a single odor, typically the smell of smoke or burning flesh.





HELEN LANE (LACROIX)

Helen LaCroix was born in 1930, the daughter of a voodoo priestess and a Native American shaman of the Hainais Caddoans outside of New Orleans. Most of her background is covered in the notes preceding the *Degrees of Horror* Plot Point Campaign, but her statistics are included here for completeness as well.

Today the powerful ritualist poses as Helen Lane, an associate provost at ETU, so that she can discretely monitor the researchers funded by Sweet Heart Foundation.

Although more than 80 years old, the raven-haired beauty looks as though in her early 30s. She began publicly dating Professor GlenMac in part to fend off other suitors, but she has developed a genuine fondness for the eclectic ghost hunter.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Healing d4, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Occult) d12, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Ritualism d12, Shooting d4, Stealth d4

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

Hindrances: Arrogant, Stubborn, Vow

Edges: Attractive, Charismatic, Followers, Hard to Kill, Memorized Ritual (multiple), Witch/Warlock

Powers: Helen has access to most anything, but has memorized *banish*, *bind entity*, *boost/lower Trait*, *blind*, *create talisman*, *darksight*, *detect/conceal arcana*, *dispel*, *divination*, *forget*, *mind reading*, *open gate*, *puppet*, *summon demon*, *summon swarm*.

Gear: Helen carries a number of talismans she's made or relics she's acquired:

- **Cold Iron Dagger** (*smite*): Str+d4. Activated by the phrase "Give me strength."

- **Amulet of Protection** (*armor*): Activated by touch.

- **Ring of Vitality** (*boost/lower Trait*): Helen uses it to boost her Vigor and raise her Toughness. It's activated by twisting it around one's finger so that the black opal faces downward.

- **Puppeteer's Ring** (*puppet*): Helen crafted this ring to help her get her way. It's triggered by touching the person to be charmed and saying "Of course you do."



DR. GLEN MACLANAHAN— AKA "GLENMAC"

Dr. Glen Maclanahan believes in the paranormal, conspiracies, and the supernatural. Although twenty years separate them, GlenMac's best friend is his research assistant and graduate student, Jackson Green. Their mutual fascination of the paranormal and quest for scientific proof has drawn them into many a ghost hunt.

Secrets: GlenMac is in love with Helen Lane (Lacroix), whom he began dating shortly before the beginning of the *Degrees of Horror* Plot Point Campaign. Sensing his keen intelligence and flexible mind, she taught him ritualism and later recruited him into her inner circle. GlenMac put his power to use by making his Scottish terrier an animal familiar.

GlenMac is a good-hearted man who genuinely believes he is helping save the world.

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Healing d4, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Occult) d10, Notice d6, Ritualism d6, Shooting d6, Swimming d4

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

Hindrances: All Thumbs, Curious, Quirk (Overly drawn to the supernatural)

Edges: Brawny, Memorized Ritual, Tough as Nails, Witch/Warlock

Powers: *banish* (memorized), *bind entity*, *dispel*, *familiar*, *grave speak*, *spirit shield*.

Gear: Argyll, pocketknife (Str+d4).

ARGYLL (SCOTTISH TERRIER)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d4, Notice d8, Stealth d8

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

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str damage but counts as armed.

- **Familiar:** Telepathic communication with owner and understands simple commands (see *familiar* in *East Texas University*).

- **Size -2:** Argyll is less than a foot high and weighs 20 lbs.

- **Small:** Attackers subtract 2 from their attacks to hit.

CREATURES

While the majority of foes can be found in *East Texas University*, the following creatures are specific to the *Degrees of Horror* Plot Point Campaign.

CHUPACABRA

The chupacabra is a savage and stealthy carnivore. It attacks victims with two straw-like fangs, which allow the beast to suck the blood from its prey. Like the yeti and Loch Ness monster, chupacabras are cryptids—rare, non-supernatural creatures not recognized by science. The chupacabra prefers the tropical rain forests of Central America, but ranges throughout the Caribbean, South America, and the southern United States.

Chupacabras stand roughly three feet tall when upright on their hind legs and are fearsome creatures to behold. A canine head rests upon a simian-like body covered in short, sharp quills. The chupacabra can change the color of these porcupine-like quills to provide camouflage, making it an especially dangerous predator under the right conditions. A row of longer quills runs the length of the beast's back.

More than a decade ago, the Sweet Heart Foundation (see page 6) captured a pair of chupacabras and used their DNA in genetic engineering and cloning research. Although the project primarily focused on human enhancement, they did not shy away from the idea of an inhuman army under their control.

Despite the modifications done to the chupacabra physique, all varieties share certain characteristics which are described in a Monstrous Ability entitled Chupacabra.

CHUPACABRA ABILITIES:

- **Chameleon Coat:** The chupacabra's quills can change color and texture to adapt to its surroundings. This provides a natural bonus of +2 to all Stealth rolls.
- **Infravision:** Chupacabra halve penalties for dark lighting against living targets (round down).
- **Quill Shot:** As a normal attack, a chupacabra may fire a quill from its body (Range 2/4/8, Damage 2d4, RoF 1).
- **Vampiric Bite:** When a chupacabra gets a raise on a

Fighting roll, it lashes out with two straw-like fangs and drains the victim's blood. This causes the victim Fatigue and gives the chupacabra the Hardy ability (and heals a wound if it's a Wild Card). The victim's Fatigue can cause death, and fades every eight hours.

WILD CHUPACABRA

The statistics for the wild chupacabra below corresponds to the chupacabra entry in *East Texas University*.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Healing d4, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Throwing d6

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

Special Abilities:

- **Bite / Claw:** Str +4.
- **Chupacabra:** +2 Stealth, halves illumination penalties, quill attack, causes Fatigue with a raise on a Fighting roll and gains the Hardy ability (and heals a wound if a Wild Card).
- **Size -1:** Wild chupacabras are the size of large dogs.

IMPROVED CHUPACABRA

This genetically engineered creature is larger (at four feet tall) and more humanoid than its wild cousin. The arms are larger and more powerful and its quills exude an oil that causes paralysis in humans. Although intelligent for an animal, this breed still requires significant training or a psychic handler to provide oversight.

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

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d10, Throwing d8

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

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** The spiny quills that cover the improved chupacabra's body are unusually tough.
- **Bite / Claw:** Str+d6.
- **Chupacabra:** +2 Stealth, halves illumination penalties, quills, causes Fatigue with a raise on a Fighting roll and gains the Hardy ability (and heals a wound if a Wild Card).
- **Level Headed:** The creature acts on the best of two cards.

• **Poison:** A victim struck by one of the improved chupacabra's quills must make an immediate Vigor roll. A raise means no effect, success paralyzes the victim for 2d4 rounds, and failure paralyzes him for 2d6 minutes.

CHUPACABRA HYBRID

This creature represents an even more advanced version of the improved chupacabra. It's fully humanoid, though it retains its quills and hollow fangs. Hybrids are also frighteningly intelligent; fully understanding spoken commands and capable of using simple tools—including firearms!

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

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d10, Healing d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Shooting d6, Throwing d8

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

Special Abilities:

• **Armor +1:** The spiny quills that cover the chupacabra hybrid's body are unusually tough.

• **Bite/Claw:** Str+d6.

• **Chupacabra:** +2 Stealth, halves illumination penalties, quills, causes Fatigue with a raise on a Fighting roll and gains the Hardy ability (and heals a wound if a Wild Card).

• **Improved Frenzy:** The chupacabra hybrid may make two Fighting attacks each action at no penalty.

• **Level Headed:** The creature acts on the best of two cards.

• **Poison (-1):** A victim struck by one of the chupacabra hybrid's quills must make an immediate Vigor roll. If failed then the victim is paralyzed for 2d6 minutes, whereas a success reduces the effect to rounds. A raise further reduces the effect to a level of Fatigue instead.

DEMONS

The information below is identical to that in East Texas University and is included for the Dean's convenience.

Demons come in all shapes, sizes, and with many varied powers. Minor demons are relatively easy to fight, but greater demons could bring about Armageddon.

Many can possess people spiritually, but at times they can even manifest physically and walk among humans. Fortunately for humanity, it usually takes tremendous energy for a demon to physically manifest in our world. This limits their incursions to occasional forays or summons.

DEMON ABILITIES:

All demons have the following characteristics, which are collected in a Monstrous Ability entitled Demon.

• **Bane (Holy Items):** A character may keep a demon at bay by displaying a holy item. See **Bane** in *East Texas University*.

• **Immunity:** Demons are immune to poison and disease.

• **Infernal Stamina:** Demons gain a +2 bonus to recover from being Shaken.

• **Resistant to Normal Weapons:** Demons suffer only half-damage from non-magical attacks except for cold iron (see below).

• **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take +1d6 damage from pure iron weapons. "Cold" refers to their relative purity—not their temperature.

• **Weakness (Holy Water):** Demons contacted by holy water make a Spirit roll or become Shaken. Wild Card demons are Fatigued. See **Holy Water** in *East Texas University*.

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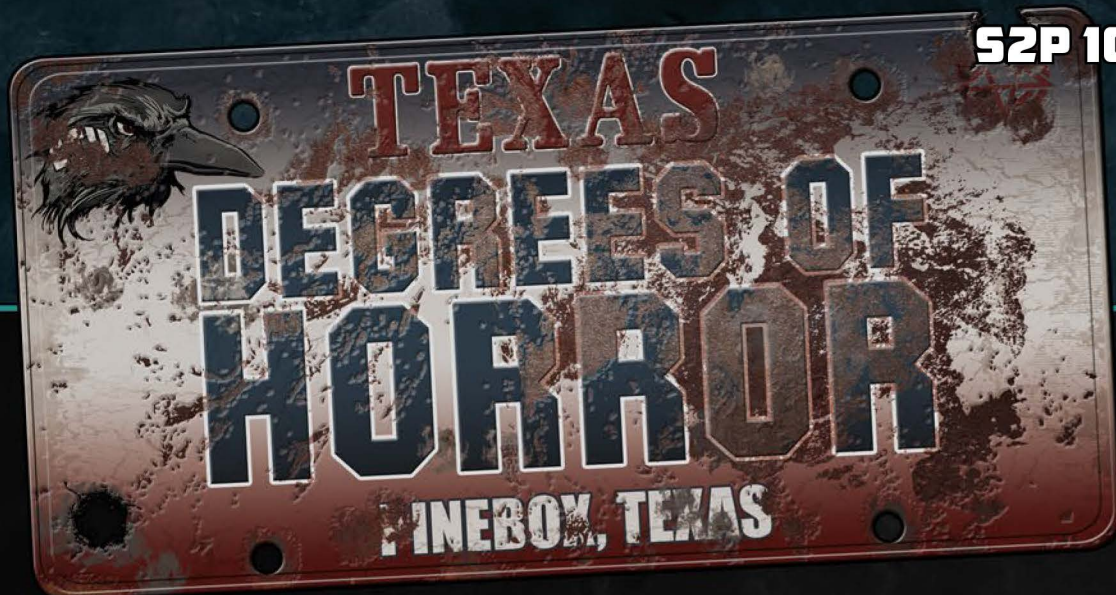
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YOUR BOYFRIEND DUMPED YOU. YOU'VE GOT EXAMS FIRST THING IN THE MORNING. AND THE WORLD'S GOING TO END AT MIDNIGHT UNLESS YOU STOP IT. LOOKS LIKE ANOTHER ALL-NIGHTER WITH THE STUDY GROUP.

Degrees of Horror features a full-length Plot Point Campaign that takes the students from Freshman to Seniors, and uncovers a mystery as old as the faculty themselves. The syllabus includes classroom intrigue, dark conspiracy, dusty mysteries from the past, killer exams, massive parties, and new horrors to torment the student body.

Degrees of Horror also includes a full course-load of Savage Tales that work equally well with the Plot Point Campaign or your own epic saga.

Degrees of Horror is a Plot Point Campaign for East Texas University. It requires that book and the Savage Worlds core rules to play.



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