

THROUGH THE CATHODE RAY TUBE

By Luke McCampbell



"Everyone likes to be on TV..."

SAVAGE TALES
10



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OVERVIEW

Ah, being a college student. Everyone tells you it's an easy life, with plenty of time to par-tay. Just take the classes, keep your head low, and you're walk it. Of course, no one says what happens when you get a professor that has it in for you.

That is what 'Through the Cathode Tube...' is about. The characters are all final semester college students who the vindictive and evil Dr. Baum has decided to flunk for no good reason. With finals just around the corner, all the students are sweating bullets or sinking into depression as they come to realize there is no way they can pass his class, and without a pass, they can forget graduation.

Just as all hope looks lost, Dr. Baum sends a message to the characters. If they assist him with his research, they'll all get extra credit in his class. It is an offer that is too good to pass up. Like all things in college, however, it's not that easy.

Dr. Baum is doing scientific research, but it involves zapping the characters into a TV land and watching them race through channels as they try to resolve the various situations before they get knocked out or banished to the realm of static. The good doctor is going to observe and use their reactions for his latest paper to the 13th annual International Conference on Mad Science in a few weeks, as well as pass the time on an otherwise dull Saturday.

The poor characters are in for a difficult time. The doctor is planning to run them through a variety of tacky shows. In each channel, the characters have to resolve a situation before they can move on to the next channel. To make matters worse, Dr. Baum is rating each of the characters based upon their performance. After the experiment, the character with the highest total gets an A, the character with the next two highest get a B, and everyone else flunks.

When characters enter a channel, they will not initially know what the doctor is rating or how they can escape the show. If the characters finish all the channels, they are pulled out of the TV. Baum thanks them for their aid in his research, and tells them who got what grade.

DR. BAUM'S SCORING

Though Dr. Baum has specific things he's watching for in each channel, he's willing to reward his subjects for entertaining him. Any time a character makes him really enjoy the show (i.e. amuses the GM), Baum gives a 1 point bonus to the character's overall score. He can only give each character up to 10 points per channel though—so there's plenty of chances for everyone to entertain.

No doubt your players have thousands of great movie and television quotes floating around in their brains. Now they'll actually get a chance to put them to good use. In each channel Dr. Baum gives characters an extra point for using an actual quote—or an overused cliché—at an appropriate or ironic time. Every scenario has a list of sample lines that work well. Keep in mind that these lists are just suggestions. Your players will no doubt come up with their own clever quotes.

SETTING RULES

CHARACTER DEATH

Characters die in TV shows all the time. Dr. Baum, though evil and sadistic, does not want to have a murder charge on his hands. If a character is killed or somehow dies in the show, they will reappear when Dr. Baum changes to the next channel, fully healed, and ready to go.

PART 1: IT CAN'T BE THAT BAD RIGHT?

Read the following to your group when you're ready to begin:

You return to the dorm after a class of pure mental torture: four hours of PSY232: The Psychology of Technology and Culture, taught by one of the most vindictive professors on campus, Dr. Baum. Unfortunately, it is a graduation requirement for all majors.

You don't know your grade but from the veiled hints dropped in class, you are sure that you are flunking and the final is only a week away. You have no doubt the man has it out for you.



TYPES OF CHARACTERS

Characters for this module should fit into a college setting. The specifics of the college are left vague, and if you have players affiliated with a particular college, feel free to adapt the game to that college (and perhaps even a specific professor).

A set of sample characters is provided, but players may want to create their own characters. This is fine, with the following guidelines:

- Combat characters should be few and far between. If you want to limit characters, put a top limit of d6 in any combat skill.
- The only real way to have combat skills will be possibly from intramural sports, SCA, martial arts, or if a character is in ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corp). Allow these characters to go as high as d8.
- Characters should have skills based on their major. The rest of their education is Common Knowledge
- No arcane abilities of any sort should be allowed.

Five pregenerated characters are included in the back of this adventure. These are particularly handy because their alter-egos are included as well. See "The Players".

You boot your computer to find an email from the aforementioned spawn of evil that both confirms your fears and offers hope:

You are failing my class. Given your current average, there is no way you can pass. I do, however, have a proposal. I need assistance in my research. To be precise, I need research subjects. If you would help, I would be willing to count such assistance towards your final grade. Be at my lab on Saturday morning, 9 o'clock sharp if you are interested.

— Dr. Baum

Well it can't be that bad, can it? A day being a research subject for him, and he will give you an A. He can't do anything really bad, right?

ARRIVAL AND PAPERWORK

Hung over or not, all of the characters drag themselves out of bed and go to the good professor's lab. Each one is here for the same reason—to get the experiment the hell over with and pass the class.

You end up at the biggest research building on campus: an imposing ten-story building of labs and technology. Every professor that brings grant money into the school is housed here.

The note on the front door instructs you to go to the third sub basement. After descending three floors, you encounter the sole door on this floor. A sign on the door reads 'Knock to Enter.' Outside, other students from your class are nervously waiting.

The door is locked and resists all attempts to batter it down. The other waiting students are the rest of the PCs. Let the characters meet and mingle. They all recognize each other from the massive class (Professor Baum teaches the class once a week for four straight hours in the largest lecture hall on campus), although they don't really know one another. Let them introduce themselves. When they've finished, the door opens and Dr. Baum steps through to see if his subjects are waiting.

"Ahh, yes. So good of you to volunteer for my experiment," he sneers. "We will get started soon, but first we have to make the institutional review board happy. Come in."

Dr. Baum leads you in to a small, seldom used waiting room. There are some mismatched chairs and couches and an institutional coffee table covered in old magazines. The only other door is a large metal door leading deeper into the lab.

Dr. Baum pulls out a folder and hands each of you a thick packet of paperwork. It starts out simple enough as a waiver document, but very quickly becomes complicated and degrades into a morass of legalese

and very fine print. At the end, there is a box requiring your signature.

"Get to it," he says impatiently. "We don't have much time."

If asked about the contents of the waiver, the professor snaps, "It's standard language stating that the information I gather may be published. I am very busy. You do want the extra credit I'm offering, don't you?"

Let the characters have a few minutes to discuss the waiver amongst themselves. After about five minutes, Baum takes those who have signed inside the lab. Anyone who won't sign is locked out of the lab and his or her chance for an A.

Note: It is your job, as the GM, to get the characters inside. Baum may very well sweeten the deal if necessary. As an example, he may be able to aid the character in obtaining a good grade in another class. (Yes, Baum does have that much clout.) Also, he reminds any characters who are leery that his class is required for graduation. In other words, if they don't sign, they don't graduate.

Remember that although he really doesn't care if the students pass or fail, they are potential subjects for his insane experiment. The point here is to get the characters through the door; otherwise you'll have a very bored player.

THE TVTD

Dr. Baum says, "Now that that's all in order, we can proceed." He takes the paperwork, and leads you through the metal door.

You walk into a lab that any Hollywood director would give his first born to possess. The smell of chemicals assaults your nose as the sound of sparks climbing up a Jacob's ladder sizzles in your ear. The room is very dark, and the various illuminated workstations cast flickering, creepy shadows. There's no way of knowing what's hidden in the darkened edges of the lab, which are hidden in the darkness.

You and your fellow subjects are led to an area that seems to be a mock up of a living room from the 1950s. Dr. Baum points at the room. "All of you sit down on the couches in front of the television. I'll explain the study after a short video." He walks over to a large control panel outside of the mock living room.

Let the characters choose their seats and then continue.

You hear the sound of switches being thrown. Static appears on the TV in front of you. Then everything goes black...

STATIC

...and then gets light again. It appears as if you are in a room of pure static, or snow if you prefer the nontechnical term. The walls are made of the white noise that exists between channels on a TV. A window

appears in the static on the ceiling and Dr. Baum looks down on you, clipboard in hand.

"You all made the transition? Good. Now we have a lot to do, so I will be brief. I'm doing a psychological study and will be watching as you interact through the various... situations you will be put in. Now, about your extra credit. I'll be rating your actions in each of the situations. The student with the highest rating will get an A; the next two highest get a B; everyone else will fail. Okay? Good. Now let me get ready..." With that, Dr. Baum starts to work on a panel next to him.

Dr. Baum won't answer any questions at this point. If pushed hard he says, "You'll figure it out." After a few short minutes he says,

"Okay, we are all ready. Enjoy. And remember, this is for posterity." At that, he pushes a button, and the room fades to black.

OVERVIEW

All characters are students at a local college and, like all poor souls at this school, they must take Dr. Baum's class. This class has a high attrition rate (maybe a few A's, a couple of B's, a C and no D's. All the rest are F's) but occasionally there are those semesters where pretty much everyone is making an A, except for a few that Professor Baum has decided to hate. This semester is one of those semesters, and the characters have been singled out to fail, and the final looming around the corner. The characters could be failing for many reasons—the professor dislikes them, they accidentally ruined an experiment, or they are just slackers. Anything works.

Each character either receives either an email or Dr. Baum talks to them personally about a chance to bring up their grade. Basically, for the possibility of an A, the students have to show up early one Saturday and be test subjects for the doctor's research.



This symbol in a character's title marks it as a Wild Card.

PART 2: SOAP OPERA

The characters awake to the soap opera, 'All My Rich Snobs'.

All of the characters are the rich children of the billionaire tycoon, Trevor Wardrobe. The show opens with the characters being called to Trevor's study. There they are told that only one of them will inherit his fortune—the others will go poor. They have three hours of game time in which to prepare a case for gaining the inheritance. That evening at dinner, Wardrobe plans on hearing hear all the cases and will make a decision on who gets the money.

The characters have the day to spend gaining evidence, forming alliances, and figuring out each other's horrible secret. All of this takes place under the looming threat of a condition called Brain Fever, which keeps terrorizing the Wardrobe family.

SOAP OPERA QUOTES

Looking off camera after being accused of something unsavory, *"That wasn't me, it was my twin sister!"*

"I saved. I thought that meant something to you."

"The reports of my death were greatly exaggerated."

"I'm not a Wardrobe, father. Mother had an affair with an Amoire!"

Any clever reference to a Soap Opera title. ("Our time is running out!" "Yes, like sands through the hourglass....")

Anyone doing the revelation scene from Tootsie.

You may also wish to give a point for those who do their entire dialogue in an over the top, breathy voice full of "dramatic" pauses.

GM NOTE:

For GMs that have never run a character vs. character game, this may be a difficult segment to run. Just keep the following in mind:

1) The characters can't really work together. There is a possibility that they might try, but they won't be reward by Dr. Baum for it.

2) Keep plenty of notepaper handy so the players can pass notes, both to you and to each other. Try to limit out of room conferences between you and a player as it limits how much time you have with the other players.

3) Keep it moving, and keep it fun. It should all be completely over the top. Think daytime soaps on drugs.

CHANNEL RESOLUTION

The resolution to this channel is easy—someone has to be named the heir of the Wardrobe fortune. There is no sharing. It's all or nothing.

WHAT DR. BAUM IS RATING

Dr. Baum rates as follows:

1 point for backstabbing an ally.

-1 point for being backstabbed by an ally.

1 point for killing off another character.

4 points for being made the heir.

1 point for staying ethical (must survive to the end resolution).

THE PLAYERS

Each character has an alter ego in the soap opera channel. We've created those of the pre-generated characters, but if your players have their own characters, you'll need to create alternates in advance.

This should be based on the character, but taken to an extreme. A straight A student might be a Nobel Prize contender while the captain of the football team is most likely the star of the last Super Bowl, with girls swooning over him. In any case, let your mind soar—nothing is too over the top for this channel.

Each character also has a deep, dark secret and several hints to lead the other characters to the horrid truth. Again, we've created ones for the characters provided in the adventure, but if you have your own characters you'll need to do some work.

Each secret needs to be different, but, like the alter ego, you should go crazy. Each of the hints is progressively more revealing, with the last one being a dead giveaway. Some possibilities are: the character is actually adopted, the character once helped an escaped criminal flee to the rain forest; the character is a drug addict, etc. You will need to keep some notes on each character's alter ego background.

TED GERTZ

Ted's alter ego is Moonbeam Wardrobe, a militant eco-warrior who's not afraid to blow up a few corporate execs to get his message across. He spends most of his time living in the wilds, hugging trees and shooting poachers.

Dark Secret: Let's just say he recently returned from Peru with a vial of Diran Tchitona bacteria...

Hints: Passport with Moonbeam's picture but a fake name and a stamp from Peru; Owns a large number of latex gloves; Has a second refrigerator which he never uses; Has an extensive library devoted to flesh eating bacteria.



JASON TAM

Jason's alter ego is Nigel Wardrobe. Jason isn't the oldest, or the youngest sibling. In fact, he's so immensely dull that he could drive paint to peel. He has a monotone voice, an outstanding knowledge of boring trivia, and a desire to spread his knowledge. Nigel is an accountant, and he knows LOTS

of interesting accounting stories.

Dark Secret: Nigel is actually a sadomasochist with a rubber fetish and an unhealthy interest in large men and women.

Hints: Frequently buys bundles of rope; Frequents a bar in the nearby red-light district; Receives multiple prank calls with heavy breathing asking if "Manimal" is there; His padlocked basement contains several sets of chains and a camcorder and a very revealing video.



ROXIE YADON

Roxie's alter ego is Tabitha Wardrobe. She's a hotshot reporter for a major paper, with several Pulitzer Prizes. You name it and she's covered it in the news. She's even mastered a dozen languages, and has been put up for a Nobel Peace Prize for her investigative journalism.

Dark Secret: Tabitha isn't all she seems. Her writing is actually the work of a man by the name of John Parker. Tabitha just takes the glory. What's her hold over him? A few glossy 8 x 10's telling a strange story of animal friendship.

Hints: Many letters and emails written by Tabitha have bad grammar and spelling; Spending lots of time hobnobbing at big parties suspiciously never stops her from meeting her deadlines on unrelated articles; She is single but often seen out with the same mysterious man;



John Parker is always covering trivial stories in the same area but they are expertly written.

DONA STRINGHAM

Dona's alter-ego is Lucretia Wardrobe, the sexiest model ever to strut the catwalk. When she swings her hip, men's hearts don't just skip a beat, they stop dead. Not only could she have every man alive, she probably has.

Dark Secret: Lucretia Wardrobe actually died two years ago after being kidnapped by Colombian drug dealers. Lucretia is actually Pablo Gonzalez, a top Colombian drag queen. If he... she inherits, the money is going south.

Hints: Lucretia has a keen interest in the Colombian men's soccer team; She has several pairs of men's shoes in her apartment; Despite her amazing looks she is never involved in a relationship; Her medical records and actual passport (which she keeps hidden) are all under the name Pablo Gonzalez.



KURT KEEF

Kurt's alter ego is Hank Wardrobe. Star pitcher and batter for the World Champion Chicago Cubs, he holds almost every record in the game. He's on his sixth wife, and needs the money to pay all the alimony on the previous marriages.

Dark Secret: Kurt was actually behind the wheel of the automobile carrying Trevor's late wife when it crashed. He swapped seats with her afterwards to avoid the blame.

Hints: Newspaper clippings of the accident show him being pulled out of the passenger side of the wreck; Hank never lets anyone else drive while traveling; He has several DUI arrests (but no convictions); Hank has a scar on his chest caused by the steering column.



THE SETUP

You open your eyes to a large ornate study. You and your fellow subjects are all standing or sitting in the room, but it is a frozen frame, not allowing movement or action as if someone has hit pause on a VCR. In the background, the theme music of the show starts to fade as you hear the disembodied voice of a narrator introduce you as the children of billionaire tycoon, Trevor Wardrobe.

Do a brief overview of the characters' alter-egos here in a cheesy voice-over style, ending with, 'but they each harbor a dark and terrible secret.' Don't say out loud what the secret

is—either tell the player in private or pass a note. Do this for all the characters before continuing.

As mentioned above, the entire scene is paused for this. The characters can hear what is happening, but can't move or speak.

The study is definitely owned by someone of taste and money. Half the furniture is at least a century old, maybe older. Sitting behind an ornate mahogany desk is a large, bulky man with a graying beard and bald head. He looks up as you all come in.

"Good morning," he says as he gestures for you to sit.

After you sit, he continues speaking. "I have an announcement to make. The doctors say I only have a few weeks to live. Apparently I have contracted the rare Peruvian disease, Diran Tchitona. With that, I have to move my attention to matters of inheritance and who will manage my vast fortune."

Trevor takes a sip of water and continues. "But rather than just split the money, I have decided you will prove

to me which of you should run the family. You have 3 hours to prepare a case—for yourself, for another, against another, or all three. The cases will be presented at dinner tonight. Whoever presents the best case will become head of the family. I will see you all at 5:00 this evening. Good luck."

With that Wardrobe gets up and walks out. The large grandfather clock strikes 2:00PM.

DISCOVERING THE SECRETS

As is obvious from Trevor Wardrobe's speech, only one character can inherit the fortune (unless the characters do something really odd like getting the will rewritten, change Wardrobe's mind, or get him committed). Given their goal, the characters are going to have to spend their time going to various places in the nearby town, trying to find the dark secrets of their siblings.

The mechanics for finding this dark secret are quite simple. It boils down to an Intimidation or Persuasion check, if they're trying to get it out of others, or an Investigation or Streetwise roll if they use public records, newspaper, the internet, or the word on the street. Assign a modifier from +2 to -2 depending on the questions they are asking and where they are asking them. For instance, asking an ex-lover about recent purchasing habits would be at -2 but asking an ex-lover about deviant sexual behavior would be at +2.

Each success and raise will reveal one of the hints, but they will have to put the big picture together by themselves. With a failure not only is nothing learned but whoever they're investigating is aware that they're snooping around. If a one is rolled on the Skill die regardless of the Wild Die the character has let something slip and the target of their investigation actually learns one of their hints instead! Each roll uses 30 minutes of their 3 hours.

BRAIN FEVER

Of course this wouldn't be a soap opera without the impending threat of some disease striking the characters down at a moment's notice. Any time a character rolls a critical failure, he is struck down by brain fever. The character is unconscious and won't wake up for 1d4 x 30 minutes.

DINNER

After the characters have had their 3 hours, the dinner gong rings. Trevor Wardrobe waits in the dining room for his children. The characters should have dressed for dinner, either by realizing time was running out, or being warned by the servants. Tardiness will not help anyone's case.

Trevor Wardrobe listens to the various cases put forth by the characters. How do you decide which character wins? Listen to their plea, weigh up evidence for or against them, then pick one. Easy.

If you feel the need to have players make rolls for this situation, make a Persuasion roll with a -6 penalty. (Wardrobe

MISSY QUOTES

"I'm right here!" In annoyance when an ally takes down a zombie the character is fighting

Striking a pose after dispatching an enemy, "Hail to the King baby."

Got Brains?

Breaking out into a rendition of the Scooby Doo theme song.

COMMERCIAL QUOTES

Any quote about crash test ratings after a spectacular wreck.

Quietly whispering "Zoom zoom," and speeding off.

Pulling up next to another car and saying "That thing got a hemi?"

There is no substitute.

is a billionaire after all; he's used to looking through shams.) The highest result will earn the points from Dr. Baum. If none succeeds in persuading Wardrobe, have the billionaire introduce them to his illegitimate child, who will be inheriting the company.

As soon as Trevor names an heir, the screen freezes. Give some sort of corny 'to be continued line', and move to the next module.

A giant sounding 'click' reverberates through everything as the world fades to black.

PART 3: CHANNEL FLIPPING

After the drama of the soap opera, Dr. Baum has decided to watch something a little more fun. Of course, he'll be rating the characters, but he's not going to waste his time briefing them. From here on, the characters are just popped into various shows with no briefing.

GM Note: Keep the pace moving. If the action on any of the following channels gets too slow, jump to the next one. If you have an idea for a random channel, feel free to toss it in as well. In fact, the appendix of this document has a number of various channel options.



MISSY THE ZOMBIE EVISCERATOR

The characters next appear in a graveyard after dark. At the end of the graveyard is a mausoleum containing their (as yet unknown) goal—their captured friend Missy, the Zombie Eviscerator.

The characters have the following weapons: Ted, a hand axe; Jason, a baseball bat; Roxie, a knife; Dona, a pair of throwing knives; Kurt, a sharp stake. If you're using your own characters, hand out weapons as you see fit.

If the characters ask for something specific, let them have it, but make them ask. Don't allow things like chainsaws or guns. The characters will need to fight their way towards the mausoleum and kill the vampire that is raising the zombies.

The graveyard measures 24" by 12". Scattered through the map are tombstones, placed so the PC's don't have a straight line to the mausoleum. A tall fence surrounds the graveyard. It can be climbed, but any character doing so is out of the

scene. There is an entrance to the graveyard behind the characters, but a mystical energy shield now blocks it. At the end of the graveyard is the mausoleum. It's 3" by 3" and has one door.

ZOMBIES

There are 3 zombies per character scattered around the map. Some will be hiding behind the large tombstones; others will be visible, but none start closer than 12" to the characters.

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

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

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

Special Abilities

- **Claws:** Str +d4.
- **Fearless:** Zombies are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. Called shots do no extra damage (except to the head).



VAMPIRE, YOUNG

Hiding in the mausoleum is a young female vampire. Many of her special abilities won't matter as this is a quick combat—just focus on the basic combat stats. Of course, this is "Missy, the Zombie Eviscerator," so the vampire has a special weakness to witty remarks. Clever players can use this to their advantage.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12+1, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Swimming d8, Throwing d6

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

Special Abilities

- **Claws:** Str +d4.
- **Frenzy:** Vampires can make two attacks per round with a -2 penalty to each attack.
- **Level Headed:** Vampires act on the best of two cards.
- **Sire:** Anyone slain by a vampire has a 50% chance of rising as a vampire themselves in 1d4 days.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. Called shots do no extra damage (except to the heart—see below).





- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Vampires catch fire if any part of their skin is exposed to direct sunlight. After that they suffer 2d10 damage per round until they are dust. Armor does not protect.
- **Weakness (Holy Symbol):** A character with a holy symbol may keep a vampire at bay by displaying a holy symbol. A vampire who wants to directly attack the victim must beat her in an opposed test of Spirits.
- **Weakness (Holy Water):** A vampire sprinkled with holy water is Fatigued. If immersed, he combusts as if it were direct sunlight (see above).
- **Weakness (Invitation Only):** Vampires cannot enter a private dwelling without being invited. They may enter public domains as they please.
- **Weakness (Stake Through the Heart):** A vampire hit with a called shot to the heart (-6) must make a Vigor roll versus the damage. If successful, it takes damage normally. If it fails, it disintegrates to dust.
- **Weakness (Witty Remarks):** Characters can actually damage the vampire with witty remarks. Use the standard Tests of Will rules. If a character actually roleplays a witty remark, give him a bonus to his die roll. Additional Shaken results from Tests of Will *can* cause wounds.

WHAT DR. BAUM IS RATING

- 1 point for each zombie the character defeats without assistance
- 1 point for surviving to the mausoleum
- 2 points for defeating the vampire
- 1 point if a character takes charge and leads the others (that's Missy's job)

COMMERCIAL BREAK

The characters are dropped into a car commercial. Not a dull, boring one, but one that has various cars weaving back and forth between one other at breakneck speeds. The goal is to get their car to the end of an airport runway, where a car carrier is waiting.

Give each character a different vehicle—a minivan, a truck, a sports car, anything that seem fun. Start them at one end of the airstrip and let them loose. The carrier can hold all of the cars but one.

Run this situation using the Chase rules from the *Savage World* rulebook. The characters have exactly 10 rounds to reach the carrier. At the end of the 10th round, use the characters' positions to determine in what order the race finishes. Forcing rivals off the road is perfectly fair play, as is ramming them.

It is important to run this section at a heart pounding pace. Remind the characters that showing off gains Dr. Baum's favor. To help the mood, throw some random obstacles at the racers (tires, airport workers, airplanes...) that they'll need to avoid.

Optional Rule: At the start of the chase, every player makes a Driving roll representing their car's starting position. The character with the highest roll is 1st (and is one Range Increment before 2nd character). Since next round, normal Chase rules apply. You draw a card at the beginning of each round for initiative and roll Driving.

The cars start in the middle of the race, so feel free to require a Driving roll to represent the characters finding themselves suddenly driving cars very fast.

WHAT DR. BAUM IS RATING

4 points for first, 3 points for second, and so on.

2 points for the best crash.

1 point for each stunt or tricky maneuver.

Finally, allow the characters to make some sort of pose before the end of the commercial. You've seen those cheesy commercials—the man gets out, smooths his hair and winks, the sexy lady leans over the hood to show her cleavage. The best or most entertaining pose gets 1 point. Actually doing the poses in real life earns an extra point, and probably make everyone break out laughing.

PART 4: DEEP SOUTH KUNG-FU

Dr. Baum next zaps the characters into the final part of a kung fu show mixed with a southern good ole boys show. (One of those insane crossovers some TV executive was sure would work.)

The characters are all hillbilly students of the Flying Mosquito Dojo in Alabama. The evil Warlord of Atlanta, Shirley Kingson, an ex-pupil at the dojo, recently kidnapped their mentor Master Buddy.

This channel only covers the final part of the show—the attack on the Warlord's rival dojo, the Shining Skunk Dojo. The earlier parts of the show (the bits leading to this event) are given in summary by the narrator. Remember to use your best fake Alabama accent for this scene.

Well them there samur-eye boys (and gals) are in a tight pickle. They found out Master Buddy was kidnapped by the warlord of Atlanta, Shirley Kingson. She's one mean pole-cat. After fighting off a hoard o' ninja at Hartsfield International Airport, and posing for quite a few photos as well, the samur-eye set off in hot pursuit.

So now the samur-eye boys (and gals) are standing in front of the evil dojo on Peachtree, staring down two hillbilly ninja. I wonder if they'll save Master Buddy? Either way, it's time to whup some butt.

SPECIAL RULE: DESCRIPTIVE COMBAT BONUS

As the characters are playing highly trained southern samurai, let them take advantage of the following rule both inside and outside the dojo.

When a player announces their action, they have the option of describing what they are doing in a little colorful depth. The more entertaining and impressive their description is, the higher the bonus. This is Kung Fu Theater—things like running on walls or jumping on people's heads are

DEEP SOUTH KUNG-FU QUOTES

Staring a room full of enemies down coldly, *"...and I'm all out of bubblegum."*

"When you can take the pebble from my hand young Bubba, then you are ready," after you take down an allies enemy for him.

"Yeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeehaaaaaw!" at nearly any time.

Humming a horn version of "Dixieland" when heading off to the next scene.

Naming and saying goodnight to each person you knock out in turn, *"g'night Jim Bob, night Billy Boy, night Sue Ellen..."*

After any misunderstanding *"What we have here is a failure to communicate..."*

Any Bruce Lee imitations, including noises and poses.

encouraged. Give Fighting bonuses as you see fit based on the descriptions but penalize characters who use the same description more than once.

OUTSIDE THE DOJO

Ordinarily, the characters might opt to find a safe way into the dojo. Of course, this here is hillbilly kung-fu TV, and a full on throw down is the only option. The two hillbilly ninja guarding the door may seem like easy pickings, but as soon as the fight begins, 6 more of their buddies come screaming through windows in hillbilly high-kick poses.

Like in the Missy channel, if the characters ask for equipment let them have it. Otherwise, they each have a katana (Str+d6+2). If they start asking for guns, give the ninja similar guns as well.



HILLBILLY NINJA

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Notice d6, Shooting d4, Throwing d6

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

Edges: First Strike

Gear: Katana (Str+d6+2), ninja throwing stars (Range 3/6/12, Str+d4)

INSIDE THE DOJO

Bursting through the doors, you find yourselves in a large, open area of rice paper walls and bamboo floors. On the walls are weapons of various martial arts. Tall, wooden columns surround the room. At the end of the long room sits your master cross-legged in a bamboo cage. The Warlord looms and gloats over him.

"So," she says, having noticed your entrance, "you boys are here for Master Buddy? I reckon you done gone and beat up plenty of my hillbilly ninja, but I've got more of them than Elvis had fried banana sandwiches." With that, a hoard of ninja burst through the rice paper walls and race toward you.

There are 2 ninja per character. This is a fight to the cinematic death. The channel ends if the Master is saved (a character must get adjacent to him and spend one round untying him), the characters die, or Dr. Baum gets bored.



SHIRLEY KINGSON, WARLORD OF ATLANTA

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Taunt d12, Throwing d6

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

Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Improved First Strike

Gear: Katana (Str+d6+2), ninja throwing stars (Range 3/6/12, Str+d4)

WHAT DR. BAUM IS RATING

- 1 point for being alive when the master is saved.
 - 2 points for the best death scene.
 - 2 points for getting the finishing blow on Shirley.
 - 4 points for taking Shirley down single handedly.
 - 1 point per person acting appropriate for hillbilly Samurai.
- (If you are happy with their performance, they get the point.)

PART 5: CAMP PERDITION

At last, Dr. Baum drops the characters into the final show: a horror movie where they are the stars. He sends them to Camp Perdition.

The goal here is to survive, plain and simple.

THE CAMP

Camp Perdition is a summer camp that has seen better days. Many buildings are falling apart or have holes in them. To make it worse, a serial killer with a wicked sense of irony has made the place a death trap. What fun!

RUNNING THE CHANNEL

This is probably the easiest channel to run, although keeping the tension high may prove difficult. The characters enter the camp when their car breaks down outside. From there, let them explore as they see fit. Encourage exploration with the sound of a phone ringing somewhere in the camp, or someone calling for help, or the sounds of a party in one of the old abandoned cabins.

Of course, surviving this exploration will be difficult. Each area is detailed below with what actions are most likely to cause the characters' death. If a character does the listed action, they get one chance to survive. All characters seeing the death, or the results thereof, should make an immediate Guts check.

Now smart players (and maybe their characters) should realize by now that Dr. Baum is probably enjoying watching discord and confusion. You might want to remind the players or characters that it's a competition to see who gets the A. If the characters figure out the traps, there's no reason they can't try to get other characters to fall into them in hopes of a few extra points.

SPECIAL RULES

The characters die if they take more than three wounds. Don't roll on the Knockout Blow table—they're dead. No save. No second chance.

GLOBAL DEATHS

If a character goes off alone at any point, the character gets a one-on-one encounter with the homicidal maniac. You can run this in another location, so the other players don't know what is happening, or in front of them to get their blood pumping. Now the odds of a character surviving an encounter with the maniac are slim.

If the character survives, they can go running back to their friends in fear. If the character gets killed, then their severed head or other body parts are waiting for the party

in the next area. If, by some miracle, the killer is wounded or otherwise taken down, he will be up and fully healed for the next scene automatically.

The above also happens if a male character and a female character go off somewhere for some private time. The maniac will go after whichever is easiest to attack.

WHAT DR. BAUM IS RATING

1 point for anyone surviving.

2 points for pushing someone else into a death trap (knowingly.)

1 point for acting in a appropriate but foolish manner (wandering off alone, investigating a blood pool thoroughly without looking up etc.)

2 points for surviving a scene with the maniac in it.

RESOLUTION

Believe it or not, there is a resolution to this death trap. When the characters are finally about to explore the last area, a phone rings from within. Once inside, they can use it to call for the police and end the channel. Of course, they still have to contend with the death traps of the particular room.

Feel free to add more areas and more death traps. Only you know what will scare the life out of your players.

AREAS

ARTS AND CRAFTS CLASS ROOM DEATH TRAPS

- Light switch is wired to the camp power grid for instant electrocution.

The victim must make a Vigor roll at -2 each round to avoid taking a wound. Whether the roll succeeds or not, the character's hand clamps around the switch, and he is unable to act. The other characters will have to try to get the character away from the switch. If they directly touch the character being electrocuted, they have to make a Vigor roll at -2 to avoid taking a wound.

- Supply closet is rigged so that if someone opens it they get a buried by a pile of crudely made Indian wallets, all filled with lead pieces.

The victim may make an Agility roll at -2 to dive out of the way. On a failure, he suffers 4d6 damage.

MESS HALL / KITCHEN DEATH TRAPS

This area is divided cafeteria style—a large, open area with the kitchen off to one side.

- Shotgun in the oven fires when it is opened.

The victim may make a Notice roll at -4 to spot the triggering mechanism as the oven is opened, and stop before the trap activates. If the roll is failed, the victim takes 3d6

CAMP PERDITION QUOTES

While trying to figure out why everyone keeps dying, *"Okay the rules of a horror movie are..."*

Saying *"He had to split,"* instead of telling your friends that you found someone cut in half.

Asking anyone *"You're not a virgin are you?"* at nearly any time.

"Okay, John you check out the kitchen, Mary you look in the dorms, Betty you check by the docks and I'll see what I can find in the office," after deciding that everyone should stick together for safety.

Getting the killer—or a friend—impaled on spikes and saying *"Stick around."*

Making fun of a frightened companion instead of calming them down, *"They're coming to get you Barbara..."*

damage twice (the shotgun is double barreled and rigged to fire both shots at once).

- Walking into the walk-in freezer reveals a gruesome sight: previous victims of the camp hanging like slabs of meat on large rusted hooks. (If any characters have died, here is a great place to put their bodies). As soon as the character steps all the way in, the freezer door slams shut and locks itself. Poisonous gas from the cooling unit filters into the room.

The victim can hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to his Vigor, but then automatically suffers a wound each round. The freezer is soundproof.

Getting into or out of the room requires a Lockpicking roll at -4 or a Strength roll at -6.

- Inside the walk-in pantry is a doll. If a character picks it up, the ceiling pulls away and heavy knives drop straight down. The character must make an Agility roll at -2 or suffer 6d6 damage.

The victim may make a Smarts roll at -4 to notice the triggering mechanism as the doll is picked up before the trap activates.

- If a character uses the toilet in the bathroom, poisonous snakes drop from the ceiling. There are 6 snakes (use viper stats but each bite causes an automatic wound if the character fails a Vigor roll -2.) The snakes have the Drop for the first round.

FIRE RING DEATH TRAPS

- Gunpowder trap in the fire ring. If someone lights a campfire, it blows up, causing 5d10 damage to anyone who fails an Agility roll -4.

DOCK DEATH TRAPS

A number of boats line the dock. A couple are in good shape. The rest are not. On the sand are some beach chairs.

- If someone gets in a boat, it tips over and they are dragged under by the maniac. Escaping requires an opposed Strength roll. Each failure causes the character to take a wound as he swallows a lung full of water.

Of course the dead lifeless body of the character quickly floats to the surface. Anyone who goes swimming also gets dragged under and killed.

- If someone sits in a beach chair, the sand underneath gives way. They must make an Agility roll at -4 or suffer 5d6 damage from sharp metal spikes at the bottom of the pit.

BUNK HOUSE DEATH TRAPS

The bunk house is a large cabin with one open area containing the remnants of 5 bunk beds. Only one is still intact, though looks like it's on its last legs.

- Laying on the bunk causes the top to fall, smashing anyone below, and then the entire bunk falls through the floor to another pit trap of sharp metal. The victim is allowed an Agility roll at -4 to avoid taking 5d6 damage.



JERRY THE MANIAC

Jerry is insane. He saw way too many movies about homicidal maniacs, and his warped minds believe that it's all a run down summer camp should be for! He holds no grudge against the characters. They are just playing their part in this movie.

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

Skills: Fighting d12, Shooting d10, Swimming d10

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Quirk: Homicidal Maniac, Obese.

Edges: Block, Dodge, First Strike, Improved Frenzy, Improved Sweep

Gear: Huge axe (Str+d12)

Special Abilities:

Escape Routes: Jerry has well hidden escape routes everywhere. He can choose to use one during a combat

round to escape and recover should the characters happen to hurt him. Of course, even if Jerry is gone the death traps are still around.

- ♦ **Unstoppable:** Even if someone manages to Wound or Incapacitate Jerry, he will be up and full functional in the next scene.

PART 6: AND BACK AGAIN

Finally the characters are brought back to the real world. They appear in the hall outside of Dr. Baum's lab—everyone is there and no one is injured.

Through a loudspeaker, Dr. Baum says, "You're all back. Good. Very well, my research is done. You may go now. I will tell you via email what grade you will receive. And if I tell you that you're going to pass my class, don't bother showing up for the rest of the semester—including the final. Come to think of it, there isn't much point for the rest of you to show up for the rest of the semester either. I'll see enough of you again in the fall." With that, the speaker goes off.

That's it for the module. Total up the scores and tell the players who got the A (the highest score), B (the next 2 highest), and who failed (everyone else). It's your call on what happens in the case of a tie.

APPENDIX

CONTINUING CAMPAIGN?

Of course, this could be a continuing campaign. Once the professor has them in the system, there is no guarantee he will let them out. Or maybe the device breaks and he is attempting to fix it while they are going from channel to channel. Even though he is evil, he really doesn't want the characters to die. The institutional review board frowns heavily on that sort of thing. Their disapproval could make further research difficult, or even impossible. So he'll actively try to get the characters out. But as long as they are out before anyone starts to miss them, he won't fret.

A continuing campaign requires many more different channels and program ideas. Below are some channel ideas.

OTHER SHOWS

Kids TV: The characters are placed in a world of fantasy and make-believe (with just enough realistic elements to

educate) and have to incorporate the day's lesson into their activities.

Space Show: Flying through space, discovering long lost civilizations, sleeping with aliens. I mean it's the prefect show—for the leads that is. Too bad the characters are playing the part of the expendable red shirts.

Cop Show: Car 1001 where are you? Send the character on an insane romp through the seedy underbelly of society as they try to figure what moral lesson this clone of top rated cop shows is trying to teach.

Game Show: Super extreme nihongo challenge! Yep, it's everyone's favorite, a humiliating and degrading Japanese game show! Anything is fair game with this kind of show.

War Movie: Shoulder that pack soldier! We are in Vietnam. Or World War Two. We have to survive the current operation and report back. Of course, if it's an earlier war movie, most of the characters may survive. If it's of more recent vintage, maybe the CO will make it.

INCORPORATING OTHER SAVAGE SUPPLEMENTS:

For a campaign, this framework can be really useful. Any of the Savage Tales or Savage Settings can be plugged easily into Cathode Tube. The Savage Tales can make a marathon of shows Dr. Baum is watching.

For example:

Tour of Darkness: The book contains a great mission generator and is a full savage settings. You could keep the characters going for a while with just the generator and not even tie it into the supernatural part of *Tour of Darkness*.

Zombie Run: Like Dr. Baum wouldn't love to watch his subjects fight through this! Finally you could really play with the characters' (and, to some degree the players') minds by making it seem like they are back in the real world. It could be a good bit until finally they realize they are on a show.

Privateer's Bounty: Age of the sail, spooky fog, broadsides and cutlasses. How could Dr. Baum pass this show up when he's in the mood for a little blood and pirate booty?

Highwater War: Epic fantasy is the order of the day for this Savage Tale. The characters take on the roll of high level advisors to the king of Highwater during a time of stress and impending war. Can they figure out what's going on in time to fortify the borders from the roving hordes?

Smuggler's Cove: Dr. Baum will get a kick out of putting the characters in the shoes of a group of children in pre WWII England. Caves, mysterious strangers and no one to save the day but the kids and their friends.

Prisoner of Pain: Mystery and suspense collide with a medieval world when one of the character's is abducted by a wizard gone mad! Can his friends put the pieces of the puzzle together before his demented torturer takes him apart bit by bit?



TED GERTZ

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d4, Vigor d8
Skills: Climbing d4, Driving d4, Fighting d4, Healing d6, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Nature) d4, Persuasion d6, Repair d6, Survival d4, Shooting d4, Tracking d4
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6
Edges: Luck, Fast Healer
Hindrances: Clueless
Background: Nature is your friend! Those evil businessmen and scientists are destroying nature! Ripping up trees! You came to college to educate those that would destroy it to cherish it. Every bunny is precious. Every wolf is a misunderstood dog! Protect the wildlife!

JASON TAM

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Gambling d4, Knowledge (College Major) d4, Lockpicking d4, Notice d6, Repair d4, Shooting d4, Stealth d4, Streetwise d4, Survival d4, Swimming d4, Taunt d4, Throwing d4
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5
Edges: Quick
Hindrances: Cautious, Quirk (plays with his baseball cap)
Background: You are average. You blend easily into a crowd and basically know a little bit about everything (even if it's not always right). In classes you normally keep to the class average. Maybe a good grade here or a bad one there, but basically absolutely average and you're fine with that.

ROXIE YADON

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Driving d4, Investigation d6, Knowledge (College Life) d4, Knowledge (Journalism) d8, Knowledge (Spanish) d6, Knowledge (Science) d8, Taunt d4
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5
Edges: Scholar (+2 on Knowledge (Journalism) and (Science))
Hindrances: Curious
Background: You came to college to find your future. Unfortunately, it wasn't the first major you picked. Or the second. It seems to be the third—that is, if you can graduate.

DONA STRINGHAM

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d8
Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d4, Healing d4, Knowledge (College Life) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d10
Charisma: +4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 6
Edges: Attractive, Charismatic
Hindrances: Greedy (More Power than Wealth), Quirk: Valley Girl Accent, Vengeful (Major)
Background: You are a babe. You are the one who is always invited to every party and the one who can always find a date. You've even been able to use your looks to help get good grades in some classes. The male professors (except Dr Baum) are so easy to manipulate. Of course, if anything gets in your way (Sororities, jocks, geeks) you have been known to destroy their lives—sometimes physically. But, hey, a girl needs a hobby!

KURT KEEF

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Climbing d6, Driving d4, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Healing d4, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d4, Throwing d6
Edges: Brawny
Hindrances: Overconfident, Stubborn
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7
Background: You are a major league baseball star in the making and boy do you know it. People either want to be you, or be around you to bask in your popularity.

			Jason Tam				Shirley Kingson
			Dona Stringham				Hillbilly Ninja
			Kurt Keef				Hillbilly Ninja
			Ted Gertz				Hillbilly Ninja
			Roxie Yadon				Hillbilly Ninja
			Dr. Baum				Hillbilly Ninja
			Trevor Wardrobe				Hillbilly Ninja

			Hillbilly Ninja				Zombie
			Hillbilly Ninja				Zombie
			Hillbilly Ninja				Zombie
			Hillbilly Ninja				Zombie
			Zombie				Zombie
			Zombie				Vampire
			Zombie				Jerry the Maniac