

# Highway to Hell



An adventure seed for use with

**CONTAGION**  
REVISED EDITION

# Highway to Hell

An introductory adventure seed for



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**P.S.:**

Amanda, remember to untie the captive from the altar before lighting the church on fire!

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*Highway to Hell* is an introductory adventure for the Contagion Revised Edition Role Playing Game. The world of **Contagion** is a dark and terrifying place. On the surface it is no different than the world you and I live in. Most people go on about their lives never realizing the terrors that walk among them.

Despite humanity's vast ignorance, the horrors are there. Monsters walk the night. Some of them are human: psychopaths and twisted, evil people much like those in the real world. Some of them are Hellspawn, monsters in service to demons. But even the Hellspawn have their servants....

*Highway to Hell* is an excellent introduction to the **Contagion** setting. In this adventure, normal people on a normal bus excursion are forced to contend with monsters of human and inhuman nature. An unforeseen accident strands the player characters in rural Illinois. Their only chance of getting help is in the isolated farm community of Flora. Unfortunately for the characters, this town hides a terrible secret.

*Highway to Hell* is designed for 4-6 players of 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> level. People familiar with other role playing games will find something unusual in the design concept of *Highway to Hell*. Rather than being a linear module with events that go from point A to point B, this adventure offers a story seed. Basic events are illustrated, along with character snapshots. The ending is left open and ambiguous, for the Gamemaster to decide.

## HIGHWAY TO HELL

### Premise

The characters are traveling together in a bus. On highway 20, near the small town of Flora, Illinois, the bus is wrecked when the driver swerves off the road to miss "something" that darted across the highway. Cell phones fail and the bus radio is utterly useless, but the bus did pass a sign that read "Flora 2 Miles" just before the accident. Naturally, the party must head into town to find a phone and call for help.

### Behind the Scenes

What the characters do not know is that the accident was deliberately caused by cultists living in Flora. The small town is overrun by a cult that engages in human sacrifice. The cult leader, Father Carl Tucker, is a Skin Feaster and the town's former pastor.

### *Back at the Bus*

About fifteen minutes after the crash, a local farmer (Bobby Schultz) came upon the wreck. Seeing the helpless passengers, he called into town from his house phone to

let Christopher Price know what had happened. Bobby lives on a side road off of the highway out near the bus. If the characters return to the bus (either having called for help, or having escaped the cultists) they will discover a number of cultists equal to the party size x 2 rounding up the passengers at rifle point. If the characters attempt any heroics, the cultists will murder a passenger, probably a child or an elderly woman.

### Objectives

Get assistance for the bus. Discover the truth behind the cult. Defeat the cultists. Defeat Father Tucker. Save the few innocents in Flora.

### Setting

Flora, Illinois is a small town with a population of 142. The vast majority of the townsfolk are either cult members (approximately 50) or children of the cultists (approximately 60). The rest are either cowed into total silence and submission, or utterly oblivious to the bizarre happenings in the town.

At first glance, Flora appears like any other small American Midwestern town. There are two gas stations (Earl's B&B and Citgo), a grocer, a thrift store, a farmer's co-op, a video store, a diner, and a church. The most unusual feature of Flora is the school. One building houses grades K-12. Unlike most small towns that send their children to larger towns for schooling, the natives of Flora like to keep their children close to home.

### *The Church*

Father Tucker's parish is a small Baptist church. It seats about three hundred people in the sanctuary. The sanctuary appears very much like any other small town church. The main entrance to the church is at the south end of the building, leading directly into the sanctuary. There is a baptismal pool to the east side of the main room, and an office to the west. The north side of the building houses a supply closet with candles, incense, and various ritual supplies. There is a stairwell in the northeast corner that leads into the basement.

The basement of the church has concrete walls and an earthen floor. At the south end of the basement an altar has been erected. The stone slab is large enough to hold a full grown human and is decorated with various occult symbols. A Knowledge (Arcana) check at DC 25 will reveal that the symbols are part of a ritual to offer supplication to the demon Ba'al.

### Getting the Ball Rolling

Your first challenge is to find a way to get the characters all onto the bus. Consider character backgrounds while figuring this out. Perhaps everyone is traveling together.

If the characters know each other before the game session begins, this could be the simplest approach. Other possibilities include a comedy of errors, where one or more of the player characters had alternative travel methods in mind, but their initial means broke down or was cancelled, forcing them to take the bus. A scenario like this can instill paranoia in the PCs, leading them to believe that fate put them on that bus.

The bus should have a few passengers besides the characters, but should not be filled to capacity. Shortly after passing the “Flora 2 Miles” sign, as the bus careens down the back country highway, you may offer the PCs a Spot check (DC 20) to notice something dart in front of the bus. A successful test will not allow the character to shout a warning in time for the driver to avoid the accident, though it can help to inspire terror and suspense in the PCs. It is obvious to any PC who sees the creature that it is large and hairy. No other details can be made out, and the creature is gone before anyone can get out of the bus.

When the accident occurs, each player must make a successful Reflex save (DC 15) or take 1d4-1 points of subdual damage as they are flung about the inside of the bus.

When the characters manage to get their bearings, they discover that the bus has been tipped on its side. The bus radio has been damaged, and as they are out in the country, no one’s cell phone seems to be getting any signal. If the characters volunteer to walk into town to get help, give them an extra 5 Experience Points at the end of the game. If not, have the bus driver suggest that they go.

The walk into town is dark and creepy. The only ambient light comes from the half-moon and the faint starry sky. Empty fields lie on both sides of the highway, with the occasional dead tree along the side of the road. You may want to give the characters a feeling that they are being watched. While they are not actually under any surveillance, you may ask them to make Spot or Listen checks, though even a successful check will reveal no information (there really isn’t anyone there.)

As the characters approach the town, they see the small run-down buildings of Flora. It is apparent, even from a distance, that the town is poor. The two largest buildings in the town are the farmer’s co-op and the church, both of which can be seen from the outskirts.

The first buildings that the characters actually approach as they enter the city are Henry’s Diner to the left (north) and Earl’s B&B on the right (south). Both establishments are open, and where the characters go will effect how they are received.

If the characters elect to go to Earl’s B&B they will find Earl behind the counter. Recognizing that the characters are not locals, Earl will attempt to usher them out of the store and out of town as quickly as possible. He will direct them to the payphone in the building, but will tell them to “keep your yakkin’ to a minimum!” Earl should come off as a crotchety and slightly creepy curmudgeon. In truth, he simply doesn’t want to see any outsiders get dragged into the cult’s activities, but he is too frightened to try and warn anyone.

While the characters are at Earl’s, they will see a red 1994 Chevy S-10 pickup truck (which belongs to the Price boys, see below) peel out of the restaurant across the way, burning rubber and heading out of town in the direction of the bus.

If the characters go to Henry’s they will find some locals around. The place is somewhat busy, with Christopher, Michael and Gabriel Price sitting at the counter, four cultists sitting in a corner booth, and Karen Price waiting tables. When the characters enter, Karen will immediately ask to help them, seeming almost rushed. Alert characters (Spot check DC 10) will notice that all of the diner’s patrons seem to give them an uncomfortable glance as they enter the restaurant.

Karen will tell the characters that the payphone is out of order (which is a lie). She will encourage them to sit and eat, or at the very least enjoy a cup of coffee. She will even offer to place a call for the characters, explaining that she cannot let the customers use the company phone. She will not actually make the call, but she will lie to the characters and say it was done. A successful Sense Motive check (DC 15) will reveal the obfuscation.

If the characters mention the wreck and the stranded passengers, the Price boys will wait a few moments, and then make their way out of the restaurant. If this occurs, the characters will see them peel out of the restaurant parking lot in their truck, headed out of town in the direction of the bus.

If the characters actually do order food, Karen will write a note on their guest check which reads, “Get out of town while you can.” If the characters try to ask her about the note, she will attempt to shush tem, looking very frightened. Should the cultists or her brothers overhear the exchange, they will come over and harass the characters, attempting to kidnap them. It is also very likely that Karen will be assaulted to “silence her treacherous tongue”. When the characters try to leave either establishment, they will be accosted by a number of cultists equal to their party size +1. These cultists will try to take them alive, but are not above grievously wounding them. During the

struggle, the PCs may make a spot check DC 10) to notice three pickup trucks headed out of toward the bus. If the PCs are captured, they will be taken to Father Tucker's parish. If they should escape they can either return to the bus or, if they are adventurous, investigate the town. If the characters are captured at any point, they will be bound in ropes and taken to the church. The gathered survivors will be rounded up and taken into the basement. Once the characters are gathered in the basement, one of the prisoners is tied to the altar. Father Tucker steps forth in a heavy state of decomposition. As he begins feasting on the sacrifice, the cultists begin engaging in ecstatic chanting. This is the PCs opportunity to attempt an escape. By this point the cultists will have set their weapons aside, trusting that the captives are well secured. This is not quite the case. The bindings are not well tied at all (requiring an Escape Artist check DC 19 to escape, the character can take 10 or 20) and the rope is not of terribly exceptional quality (Break DC 20). If the characters struggle free, they automatically surprise the cultists and can freely grab the rifles that are lying about. The cultists will not fight if held at gunpoint. If this happens, Father Tucker will step forward, commanding the cultists (except for the Price boys) to leave as he attacks the characters. Christopher, Gabriel and Michael will fight at Father Tucker's side. If Christopher falls, Michael and Gabriel will stop fighting and try to escape or surrender. Christopher will keep fighting whether or not Father Tucker survives. The only way to stop him is to subdue or kill him. If the characters are victorious the cultists allow them to freely leave town. They may wish to take Earl or Karen with them, depending on the earlier events of the story. If they send back law enforcement, they will find that the cultists have all skipped town, but there will be evidence of their grisly activities.

If the characters manage to escape they must travel to the next town over, Belvedere (about 15 miles away) to receive medical attention and contact law enforcement. Depending on the outcome of their encounters with the cultists, they may well be chased the entire way to the town. If the PCs go to the police, an investigation will ensue revealing the cannibal cult, but Father Tucker will escape.

## Characters of Note

### Flora Cultists

Many of the citizens of Flora are members of Father Tucker's cult. The stats presented here represent the average cultist. Feel free to adjust these stats to present the appropriate challenge to your players.

**Alignment:** Lawful Evil

**Equipment:** (any one weapon as follows) .357 Revolver (2d6 damage), Hunting rifle (2d10 damage), Scythe (-5 attack, 2d4 damage 20/x4 critical), Sickle (1d6 damage), or Pitchfork (-5 attack 1d8 damage 20/x2 critical)

**Feats:** *Great Fortitude, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Simple Weapons Proficiency*

**Occupation:** Rural

**Skills:** Bluff +1, Craft (Mechanical) +3, Drive +1, Handle Animal +1, Intimidate +2, Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) +3, Profession (varies) +1, Spot +2, Swim +1

**Wealth:** 4

Typical Cultist (Medium Human, 1 <sup>st</sup> Level Bystander)					
CR	1/4	DEF	9	BAB	+0
			(-1 DEX)		
STR	9	<i>Touch</i>	9	<i>Grapple</i>	+0
DEX	9	<i>Flat Footed</i>	10	<i>Reach</i>	5'
CON	9	HD	1d6-1	ES	5' by 5'
INT	9	HP	5		Saves
WIS	9	MAS	9	FORT	+1
CHA	9	INIT	-1	REF	-1
CP	3	SPD	30'	WILL	+0
Attack	Melee-1, Ranged -1				

GM Notes:

*Gail Dawson**Earl Fowler*

Gail is the tenth grade teacher at Flora school. A very faithful member of the cult, she has the distinction of having offered up the first human sacrifice in the town. Her husband Reggie had been a cheating drunk. Gail was never a vengeful woman, and she often sought comfort from Father Tucker's words. When Tucker began steering his congregation toward dark activities, Gail threw herself into the hellish doctrine wholeheartedly. Tying up her drunken husband she brought him to the church to be offered up in ritual sacrifice.

GM Notes:

Earl runs the B&B gas station. He is not a member of the cult, though he is certainly aware of their activities. Though Earl is too scared to act against the cult in any way, he will do his best to usher out-of-towners on their way should they stop in his gas station. He will not talk about the cult, even if questioned. If he is pressed too hard, or intimidated by the PC's he will simply crack, becoming catatonic with horror.

GM Notes:



At age 19, Chris is the eldest of the Price children. A trained sadist, Chris learned the arts of abuse and intimidation from his father. Being a star football player, Chris is in excellent physical shape and has no qualms about using that advantage to bully anyone he perceives as weaker than him (which includes everyone except Father Tucker). Chris doesn't have any redeeming qualities and revels in the evils of the cult. He is a prime candidate to one day become Hellspawn.

**Alignment:** Chaotic Evil

**Equipment:** Club (1d6), Leather jacket (+1 impromptu armor), Pitchfork (1d8+2 damage 20/x2 critical), Unarmed punch (+4 attack 1d6+2 subdual damage)

**Class Features:** Pushing the Limit

**Feats:** *Archaic Weapons Proficiency, Brawl, Improved Massive Damage Threshold, Simple Weapons Proficiency*

**Occupation:** Rural

**Skills:** Climb +3, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) +0, Profession (varies) +3

**Wealth:** 5

Christopher Price (Medium Human, 1 <sup>st</sup> Level Bruiser)					
CR	1	DEF	13	BAB	+1
			(+1 DEX, +1 equipment +1 class)		
STR	14	<i>Touch</i>	12	<i>Grapple</i>	+3
DEX	12	<i>Flat Footed</i>	11	<i>Reach</i>	5'
CON	15	HD	1d10	ES	5' by 5'
INT	9	HP	12	<i>Saves</i>	
WIS	15	MAS	18	FORT	+3
CHA	14	INIT	+1	REF	+1
CP	5	SPD	30'	WILL	+2
Attack	Melee+3, Ranged+2				

*Gabriel and Michael Price*

Twin boys, Gabe and Mike are not quite as evil as they are stupid. Yes, they follow the cult's teachings, and yes they obey Christopher's wishes, but the 14 year old twins honestly don't know any better. Both are straight-D students who are far more comfortable mutilating animals in the family barn than attending class. It might be possible for them to see some kind of redemption if they could be removed from the cult (and Christopher's) influence. They love their older brother very much however, and would die for him. They also love their older sister, honestly deluding themselves into believing that she enjoys her constant mistreatment.

GM Notes:

*Karen Price*

Karen is a 17 year old senior at Flora school. She works nights at Henry's Diner to help pay the bills around her house. She is aware of the cult's activities and is technically a member, though she engages in the rituals and meetings out of fear as opposed to devotion or faith. Karen's father, Jack, is physically, verbally, and sexually abusive. Her three brothers, also avid members of the cult, often spend their Friday nights tormenting and gang raping Karen. Unbeknownst to her, she is pregnant with her eldest brother's child. Karen is a broken, hopeless young woman.

GM Notes:

*Bobby Schultz**Father Tucker*

Bobby, the operator of the farmer's co-op, serves an integral role in the cult. Upon completion of the blasphemous rituals in the church, Bobby takes the leftover human remains to the co-op for processing as fertilizer. This practice helps keep outsiders from uncovering the true state of things around town, on the rare occasion that outsiders even visit. As of late, Bobby has grown a bit morbid, collecting souvenirs from the bodies. An ear here, a bit of skin there, yet he seems to have no purpose in his collecting. He simply tosses the parts into the walk-in freezer at the co-op. None of the cultists know about this practice, which could easily compromise their secrecy. If Bobby's habit were to be discovered, he may well wind up being the next sacrifice.

GM Notes:

Father Tucker was once a good pastor. He cared for his flock and did his best to be Christ-like in his daily life. As time passed he began to grow prideful in the attention he received from his congregation. He realized that he could control their actions, making them follow his every whim. He succumbed to the sin of Pride and began taking some of his parishioner's wives. One evening, Rebecca Price (mother of the Price boys) refused to submit, fighting the priest off and accidentally killing him. He immediately rose as a Skin Feaster and devoured the woman. Since then he has constructed and promoted the cult among his former flock.

**Alignment:** Lawful Evil

**Feats:** *Simple Weapons Proficiency*

**Skills:** Climb +6, Jump +6, Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) +6, Listen +8, Spot +8

**Special Abilities**

**Flesh Weakness (Ex):** A skin feaster that successfully deals damage to an opponent with its necrotizing touch attack must spend its next turn devouring the flesh that has fallen from that opponent's body. It takes no other actions during this time but can defend itself normally. It can consume an amount of flesh equivalent to 3 points of Constitution damage (or drain; see **Necrotizing Touch**) per round.

**Necrotizing Touch (Su):** With a successful melee touch attack, the skin feaster causes lumps of flesh to fall from the target's body, dealing 1d3 points of Constitution damage; a successful Fortitude save negates (DC 13). On

a failed save, the target must attempt a second Fortitude save at the same DC. Failure indicates that 1 point of the Constitution damage already taken becomes Constitution drain instead.

**Skin Regrowth (Su):** If a skin feaster manages to eat an amount of flesh equivalent to 6 points of Constitution damage (or drain; see **Necrotizing Touch**) in any 24 hour period, it begins to regrow its skin. This process requires 1d6 hours. For the next 1d3 days thereafter, the skin feaster appears just as it did before its death, excluding scars, moles, or other minor skin imperfections. Only the creature's appearance changes—it is still an undead with all of its usual species traits except Flesh Weakness, which is not active while the skin feaster wears its new skin. Once this period is over, the skin feaster's regrown skin sloughs off, restoring it to its usual appearance and reactivating its Flesh Weakness.

**Undead:** As undead creatures, skin feasters are immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, and mind-affecting effects. They are not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, ability drain, energy drain, or effects of massive damage, or any effect requiring a Fortitude save unless the effect also works on objects or is harmless.

Father Tucker (Medium Undead, Skin Feaster)					
CR	3	DEF	16	BAB	+2
			(+3 DEX, +3 natural)		
STR	10	<i>Touch</i>	13	<i>Grapple</i>	+2
DEX	16	<i>Flat Footed</i>	13	<i>Reach</i>	5'
CON	N/A	HD	4d12	ES	5' by 5'
INT	11	HP	26	Saves	
WIS	15	MAS	N/A	FORT	+1
CHA	12	INIT	+3	REF	+4
CP	4	SPD	30'	WILL	+6
Attack	+2 melee (1d4, claw)				
Full Attack	+2 melee (1d4, claw) or +5 ranged				

GM Notes:

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