

UNKNOWN
ARMIES

WEEP

SIX SCENARIOS OF WOE AND RUIN



BY
RICK NEAL, JAMES PALMER, GREG STOLZE, JOHN TYNES, CHAD UNDERKOFFLER



Home is where the heart breaks.

ATLAS GAMES PRESENTS



SIX SCENARIOS OF WOE AND RUIN
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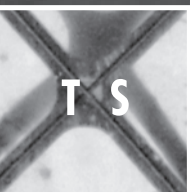
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THE DECISION OF PARIS, TEXAS

BY GREG STOLZE

NEAL BRINKER didn't look like the kind of guy who'd have three women fighting over him. It wasn't just that his buzz-cut was growing out, leaving patches of fuzzy hair on the back of his neck. It wasn't that the black dye job on the growing buzz-cut was starting to show roots the color of sand. It wasn't the baseball cap and the sleeveless "Don't Mess with Texas!" t-shirt. It wasn't even that the "Bahama Gold" tanning lotion he'd smeared on his entire body had been somewhat inaccurately advertised as "never streaking."

It was none of those things. They didn't help, certainly. But even months ago—when he'd had natural skin color, long brown hair and a moustache to distract attention from a rather large nose—there was something in the tone and tenor of his body language that seemed to subtly whisper "I'm not worth it."

It was only if you looked in Neal's eyes that you might suspect him of being anything other than your typical dropout store clerk. Neal was (barely) a high-school graduate, but up until very recently he had indeed been a clerk. Then he'd gotten shot, and had shot some other people, and had crashed a car and found a lottery ticket worth millions. What with all the confusion and unpleasantness and murder, he'd never gotten around to turning in his register key.

Something of those experiences was written in and around his wide brown eyes. Something reckless and hectic and unpredictable. Something that bespoke a very unusual set of priorities.

Neal sat on the bed and looked at the three women, and the wildness in his eyes seemed to be leaking out like hysterical tears, leaking into each of them and into the situation itself.

THE WOMAN with the semiautomatic didn't



know if she could use it. Objectively, she knew she could pull the trigger, she knew the safety was off and a bullet was in the chamber, and she knew how to sight it and knew she should breathe out while gently squeezing the trigger. But she'd never shot a person. She'd never even shot *at* a person. In fact, she'd never even fired on an animal. Just paper targets—even that she hadn't enjoyed much.

But the woman she was aiming at in Neal Brinker's hotel room—a redhead with a broken nose and a mangled wrist, wearing a denim skirt, holding a .38 revolver—stood between her and the ticket. The lottery ticket. Brinker's ticket.

The *magic* ticket.

The woman with the semiautomatic was named Violet McIntyre. She had betrayed her boss—a man with billions of dollars and a private army at his disposal, a man who showed no tolerance whatsoever for failure, never mind treachery—in hopes of persuading Neal to give her his 23 million dollar Power-Ball lottery ticket.

She'd learned of the ticket by accident. She worked in the Chicago “office” of her powerful employer's personal occult conspiracy (an organization called “The New Inquisition,” or TNI for short) alongside a man she knew only as Cage. Cage had been the original owner of the ticket. Brinker had stolen the ticket from Cage (along with a Lincoln Town Car) after leaving Cage bleeding in a ditch by a cornfield.

Cage couldn't seem to let it go. She'd overheard him complaining about it one night at the TNI safehouse.

“I mean, 23 million dollars. 23 million *fuckin'* dollars! That's not his money. It's *my* money.”

“Well, it ain't like he can claim it. Minute he does, you know we're gonna fall on him like a million-ton shit.”

“Damn right. Like a twenty-three million-ton shit.”

Violet had been inclined to dismiss the

conversation as macho trash talking, but something about the way Cage spoke stuck in her mind. He wasn't having fun in that conversation: He was genuinely enraged and bitter. So she'd done some poking around and found out about Neal Brinker. When she saw the confirmation there on her computer screen, indicating that he did indeed have an unclaimed ticket worth \$23 million, a spark somewhere inside her blossomed cautiously into flame.

Violet was fixated on money, but not in the normal and accepted U.S. capitalist fashion. To her, money was much more than a symbol of real wealth, more than status or an indication of worth. To her, money was truth, and truth money. To her, money was literally magical. With enough of it, she could feel the shape of destiny—or shape destiny with her feelings.

Her power was not some fuzzy, vague mysticism that could be dismissed with psychology. It was hard edged and quantifiable and objective. If she received a certain small amount of money, it brought with it a small amount of mystic power—a measure of leverage she could use against the future, or the world, or the mind of another human being. A greater sum brought with it greater power. She knew the border between those sums down to the penny.

But there was a third level she knew of—knew of through vague, irksomely vague rumors. The highest level of all would allow her to blur the lines between money and all the things it touched and purchased. It was power that would allow her to buy anything in the world, anything at all.

The only problem was, she didn't know how much money she needed for that grandest, highest level. She knew it had to be inconceivably high . . . but so many numbers were, really, too large for frail human minds to grasp. Was a million dollars enough? Probably not, lots of people earned a million in the course of a lifetime. An average career at \$50,000 a year could do it.





But a billion? Would it really take that much? Violet couldn't let herself believe that, because . . . because she just couldn't. If the threshold, the barrier that would take her from journeyman to master was that high, she'd never make it, never. She couldn't believe it.

Twenty million?

Twenty million was plausible. Maybe that was it.

But really, it was foolish to think about it. (That's what Violet had told herself, lying in her bed at night, gnawing her fingernails and unable to sleep.) If her billionaire boss couldn't find this Neal Brinker, what chance did she have? Even if she found him, what could she offer that was worth his chance at millions?

Then—almost like a joke—she'd been put on the task force looking for him. Violet could read dollar bills like tarot cards, and her prophetic powers were set to the task of tracking down the man who had defied her master and lived.

Alone, she probably couldn't have done it. She could find numbers that were involved—82 and 271 kept coming up again and again—but not their meaning or context. However, she was teamed with a vague (but always pertinent) tarot reader called Moonglow, and the two of them started to make some headway. Finally, a third prophet—a very odd old woman who claimed to be the last living haruspex—realized that 82 and 271 were not quantities or addresses, but names. Neal Brinker was hiding near the intersection of Interstate 271 and 82.

That very night, three of Alex Able's four most feared assassins were on a private plane to Dallas, where they would pick up a rental car and drive it to Paris, Texas.

Violet took a different flight. Because it wasn't enough to simply steal the ticket, damnit. She couldn't just take it. It had to be freely given.

That was how she'd wound up racing three killers to Neal Brinker. She was desper-



ate to persuade him to give her the ticket. Luckily, she finally had something worth bargaining with.

His life.

“LISTEN, BRINKER,” VIOLET SAID. “You don’t have to go with either of them. You can be your own man! Just give me the ticket and I can make *both* of us rich! Richer than you can imagine!”

“You think you can trust her?” asked the denim-clad redhead. “She’s already betrayed one boss. What makes you think she won’t screw you the same way?”

“Shut up, you,” said the third woman—dark-haired and exotic in a tank-top and miniskirt. She’d been very beautiful that morning, but in the last half-hour her face had gotten two nasty slashes, courtesy of a gravity knife wielded by the woman in denim. Blood was dripping from her forehead into her eyes, but for all that she still had a gun pointing steadily at Neal Brinker. It was a long barreled, blue-steel revolver and (ironically enough) it belonged to the very man she was aiming at. Neal seemed to prefer revolvers, because the gun the redhead held (also his) was one, too—a chrome-plated snubby.

“Neal, you’re a sorcerer like me, you *know* what real power is. Give me the ticket and I’ll have it! Why would I betray someone who gave me that? I’ll have the power to set *both* of us up. We can have it all, have everything, have the money to protect ourselves! Didn’t I save your life already? Didn’t I warn you about Clarice just in time?”

CLARICE WORKED for TNI, like Violet. Like Violet, she was pretty, and like Violet she had dark hair. Like Violet, Clarice was a woman. But there the similarities ended.

Violet’s job with TNI was primarily informational. She sat back and read dollars and made predictions and took the long view. Clarice killed people.

Violet was an attractive woman in her

forties, the kind who might get a second glance if she wore a knee length skirt to the grocery store and had to bend over to get something from a bottom shelf. Clarice got second looks (and more) wherever she went, unless she went out of her way to make herself unattractive. Violet spent forty minutes every morning making herself more attractive: Clarice usually spent half that time on her appearance, and her efforts were to rein in her loveliness, not amplify it.

Violet lived and worked in a world where money was everything, where it was the central switchboard that mediated meaning. Violet’s worldview was locked on lucre, and everything else was secondary.

Clarice trafficked in realms of lethal lust. Her job, over and over, was to meet her man, make him want her, get him alone, and kill him. Poison, usually, but she’d also used the knife, the gun, the strangle cord. Intimate deaths at intimate range.

Clarice knew very little about Neal Brinker, but she knew enough. She knew he was an entropomancer—which meant, in practical terms, that he was crazy and destructive and that he had the power to make the *world* crazy and destructive. She knew he was like a good man or a bad meal—very hard to keep down. She’d been shown his picture and briefed on his first sexual experiences, and she’d been told to find him, seduce him, and kill him before he had a chance to realize what was happening.

The usual deal.

In some small, neglected corner of her heart Clarice always hoped some guy would tell her “no.” Every time she did her usual deal, she did it thinking that this time the target might pass up the offer of easy sex, might think with his top brain, might have some honor or dignity or just plain self-respect. But they never did, and every time the hope got a little dimmer.

Neal had been just like the rest, pathetically eager to believe that he had some quality



that could attract a complete stranger into intimacy.

Only this time, that traitor Violet warned him. That alone wouldn't have been enough to save Neal, but there'd been a third woman waiting in Neal's motel room.

Like Violet and Clarice, the third woman was pretty, dark haired, and had once worked for TNI.

"LOOK NEAL, I know both these bitches are promising you the moon and stars, but I'm the only one here who's going to tell you the truth," Clarice said. "You're in shitty shape, Neal. I got a gun on you and orders to kill you dead, and I'm pretty sure I can do it even *after* she shoots me." She didn't even look at the redhead. She wouldn't let herself. It was all she could do to keep her voice calm.

"Don't listen to her, Neal!" said the redhead.

"No, *do* listen. I'm the only one here who isn't going to piss on your face and tell you it's raining. You give up to TNI and we won't kill you. You'll lose your fucking ticket and you'll probably lose your free will, but you'll live. You go with either of these bitches and I promise you won't live out the month."

"Hah." The redhead didn't actually laugh. "They promised me the same thing in 1998. Instead of meekly going off to get your ass punked out, come with me. Come to the goddess. We know you've been seeking us. We know you want us. Bring the ticket and come with us and we can give Abel the biggest 'fuck you' of his life."

"No, give the ticket to *me*," Violet said. "If you want to go to the Naked Goddess sect that's fine, great, I'll go with you, you'll have someone to watch your back, just give the ticket to *me*!" Violet realized she sounded desperate, but she couldn't help herself.

"It's not too late to come back," Clarice said. "Either one of you. Neal here is a big ticket item. Bring him in and the boss may let bygones be. Who knows, Violet? He might

even let you have the ticket if you promised to punch his ticket on the gravy train."

"Don't I get a say in this?" Neal asked. It was the first thing he'd said since Clarice had stopped fighting the redhead.

"You're the only one without a gun," Clarice said. "So I guess you don't count."

"Shoot me, cunt," he replied.

Violet sucked in her breath, and all the women in the room seemed to get even more tense, but no one pulled the trigger. Neal smiled.

"I charge up on risk," he said gently. "I just insulted a dangerous woman with a gun in my face. Now I *am* a gun. And I can aim at anyone I want."

"Good show, Brinker," the redhead said, cracking a smile. "C'mon Clarice. Put down the gun and walk. We'll let you go, this time. You're outgunned and outnumbered and—with that last move—I think Brinker has you outclassed. You can't win."

"No, *you* can't win," Clarice replied. "Remember Tex? You were with Tex down in Argentina, weren't you? Said he bullseyed a pregnant woman from two hundred yards and didn't change expression."

"What about him?"

"He's here. Specifically, he's in the parking lot, holding a machinegun with a clip as long as your arm. He's got a laser mike trained on the window, and if he hears me leave or get shot, he'll turn this room into a blender. Brinker? You willing to take that much risk?"

"She's bluffing," the redhead said.

"Tell her, Violet."

"Shit," Violet whispered. "Tex is here. I don't know if he's *here* here, but he's in Texas with the mission. Adam too." Her hands were starting to shake with terror. These other people were used to violence, but not her, she was in over her head and she knew it.

"I don't think Tex is out there," the redhead said. "If he was, he'd fire. He's a fuckin' maniac, and Clarice being here wouldn't stop him."

"You're wrong," Clarice said.

The redhead squinted, trying to figure if Clarice was being honest or not.

It should have helped that they were once friends, but really, it didn't make it easier at all.

THE REDHEAD wasn't really a redhead. She used dye, like Neal, only she did it much better. She went by the name Justine Anander, though she'd been born Jeanette Appleton. She'd worked for the DEA and had betrayed them to drug dealers, and then she'd worked for TNI and had betrayed them to the Sect of the Naked Goddess. Nonetheless, she did not think of herself as a treacherous person.

To her way of thinking, she simply had very little tolerance for meaningless bullshit. Initially the DEA had seemed important—saving innocent little U.S. teenagers from becoming crack-piping home invaders, very noble. But the more she did, the more she realized how many people around her were

going through the motions. For every gung-ho officer making cold busts, there was a bureaucrat going through the motions. Worse, she watched as those officers *turned into* bureaucrats. It was like watching butterflies become caterpillars. These dashing, dangerous, *vital* men slowed down and got cautious. Cooler heads prevailed. Discretion became the greater part of valor. Gradually, their beefy pecs and biceps melted downward into complacent beer guts as they spent more time behind desks and less time behind battering rams. The War on Drugs became less important than waiting out the clock, counting another day towards retirement.

She'd sold out because she was searching for something more. Money and danger and the excitement of working both sides against the middle seemed like a good start. Like Brinker, she enjoyed risk. Unlike him, she never started to worship risk for risk's sake. She was making a lot of money, but unlike Violet, that wasn't her Be All End All Ultimate Answer.



Eventually she screwed up, got arrested, escaped and found her way to TNI. She'd hoped, really hoped, that this was going to fulfill her. She wasn't just a pawn in an international game of narco-politics: she was with the major players in the game of Reality itself. With TNI she learned that magick was not only real, but was more real than the life she'd left, the life of money and laws and temporal authority.

She had finally found the issues that really mattered. Unfortunately, the more she learned the more it became clear that TNI was in the game and knew the stakes; they just didn't have a clue what the rules were.

Then she got an assignment to infiltrate the Sect of the Naked Goddess. At first they seemed easily as stupid as anyone she'd ever met—even the druggies were chasing their bliss, not just blindly mimicking the actions of a porn actress who would never, in a normal world, be considered a role model.

It was the tape that started to change her

mind. The last tape made of the actress as an actress. The one that chronicled her transformation from mere human into something unknowably potent and mysterious. Something divine.

After that, her eyes were opened. Before she had seen only a group of sad women, going through the humiliating motions of one of pornography's living tools. After, she realized that there was a border between the banal and the sacred, and that their practices let them cross that line. Anything, no matter how commonplace, could become a vessel for holy insight. A song on the radio, a TV commercial, an overheard phrase on a crowded street—it all had meaning, *everything*. Even a batch of cruddy porn tapes could turn out to be the key to wisdom.

She'd tried—cautiously at first—to explain to her fellow operatives the importance of what the Sect was doing. But they wouldn't listen. They were still hung up on the details of it, on the external appearance. They



couldn't get past the porn. They couldn't get past the obvious.

Justine left them when she realized that all her life had been spent trying to get past the obvious.

The members of the Sect, despite their holy aims, were not ignorant of the violent and dangerous realities of life in the material world. They were delighted to have a woman with Justine's talents on their side, and once they were sure they could trust her she became a favored operative.

It was Justine who learned that TNI was desperately seeking a young chaos mage named Neal Brinker. She was the one who uncovered Brinker's interest in the Sect, and she was the one who tracked him to Paris, Texas just in time to see him heading towards his hotel room with her old colleague Clarice Dominguez.

She'd trained with Clarice and knew she'd only get one good shot. She'd been so focused on Clarice she hadn't been ready for Neal to trash her hand with a mean look and a dose of mojo. She thought she was done for until the other woman—the short one with the Southern accent—showed up.

Jeanette had gone for her knife and Neal had knocked away Clarice's gun and then Jeanette and Clarice were in the shit, knocking one another around the room and through the furniture. Jeanette got some good slashes on Clarice's face, but she had to hold the knife left handed and it was awkward, and Clarice had punched her nose flat and then done something that made her arm go numb so the knife dropped onto the floor. The other woman had kicked the knife away, fumbling for something in her purse. Neal had gone for a cheap-looking blue and yellow gym bag, Clarice had thrown Jeanette into Neal and they both fell. Jeanette and Clarice had grabbed the bag at the same time, torn it. Two pistols had fallen out, each of them had grabbed one just as the third woman pulled a gun from her purse, and then suddenly everything had gotten very still.

"SCREW TEX," JEANETTE SAID after a long moment. "Either he's there or he's not. If he's there, we're all screwed. Even if we surrender, we're screwed. One way or the other, all three of us have robbed, damaged, or betrayed the New Inquisition. If we surrender, they'll kill us for sure. Remember Neal, I worked for them."

"She's lying Neal. You can live through this," Clarice replied. The blood dripping from her forehead was starting to dry in her hair and in the carpet at her feet.

"If you call that living," Violet said, thinking of Winston Kroll, who was practically a prisoner at a TNI safehouse. Worse, there was Jennifer Koeb, who reputedly had no free will left whatsoever.

Jeanette spoke again. "You can give away your one hope for financial security. You can crawl back to TNI and get whipped into the kennel like a dog. Or you can come to the Goddess, Neal. You were looking for us, weren't you? If you've seen the tape, you know. You *know* the right answer, Neal. You can pick slavery. You can choose promises of more if you give away everything you've got. Or you can come to an organization strong enough to resist TNI, strong enough and getting stronger because *we have the truth*, Neal. That's your choice."

"Don't listen to her—"

"No, Neal—"

"Uh, ladies?" Neal's voice quieted them instantly.

All three of them were already nervous, but when they saw him grin their unease increased.

"There's something you all ought to know."

He cleared his throat, almost apologetic. Then he spoke.

"One of my guns only has one bullet in it."

There was just a brief second as the two women with Neal's revolvers realized what this meant . . .

. . . and then it all went south.





A FEW OF MY FAVORITE THINGS

BY JOHN TYNES

UNKNOWN ARMIES



"AMERICA IS A VAST CONSPIRACY
TO MAKE YOU HAPPY."
—JOHN UPDIKE

"DON'T YOU WANT SOME CHANGE?
I THOUGHT YOU WANTED CHANGE."
—JACK





This is a quick and dirty *Unknown Armies*

scenario suitable for most any group of player characters. To get things started, the PCs are on foot in a lonely part of the city late at night. They might be leaving a rendezvous, or on their way to a bar, or maybe you've just put them in that situation for the purposes of this session. It doesn't matter.

As they pass an alley, a disheveled old man in a filthy trenchcoat takes a step out of the shadows and leers at them. "You're in *my city* now," he barks, "and I *really, really* love you."

If the PCs stop to talk to this obvious lunatic, he mumbles something about how he'd like some change. "Can ya gimme some change, man? I need some change." He doesn't respond rationally to questions or offers of money and after a moment waves his hand dismissively and wanders off down the alley. If for some reason the PCs follow him, he climbs into a dumpster a block later and goes to sleep, paying no particular attention to the world around him.

The PCs can resume their journey.

The City at Night

The next four encounters all occur as the PCs walk the streets at night, trying to get to their original destination. But they're no longer in the same city, and this place is very strange:

- Pay phones and wireless devices such as cell phones or PDAs make only a low buzzing sound, and the buttons do nothing.
- Parked cars look normal, but make hostile growling noises when touched. If the PCs try to open one, cars nearby start growling, too, until they leave the car alone. If they persist, the noise stops as soon as the door opens. However, none of the cars work.
- Buildings are dark and locked; no one is inside any of them except where noted.
- There are no street signs or traffic signals.
- None of the area traversed is familiar to any of the PCs, even if it should be.



Encounter One: The Gun

Two drunken, middle-aged women get out of a car across the street. One of them screams, “I’m a gun! I’m a gun!” The other woman runs staggering over to the PCs, bawling for help. “She’s a gun! She’s a gun!”

She’s right. The first woman screams again and a bullet erupts from her mouth. Roll initiative and proceed by combat rounds.

The PCs can do what they like. The first woman’s only interest is in shooting her companion while continually screaming “I’m a gun! I’m a gun!” and her companion’s only interest is in not being shot. The PCs are in danger only if they try to intervene, in which case they’ve got to kill or incapacitate the gun-woman—or hang tough until she’s fired six shots, at which point she’s out of bullets and begins to cough with a staccato clicking sound.

Either woman can explain that their names are Frances and Jenette, and they were drunk-only arguing over a long-ago ex-lover when Frances lost her temper and started shooting. Neither woman sees anything odd in Frances’s ability to fire bullets by screaming “I’m a gun!” and will respond to related queries with defensive rationalizations (“Nobody was supposed to get hurt!”) that completely sidestep the unreality of the situation.

Eventually either the two women exchange a sloppy hug and wander off down the street, or an ambulance arrives to pick up any wounded or dead characters; if the latter, see

the nearby boxed text. If possible, give one of the women the chance to say, “After this, it’s time for some *change*,” as she leaves the scene.

Frances, I’m a Gun

Summary: Frances is drunk and ticked off at her longtime best friend, Jenette. Jenette once stole Frances’s boyfriend, or maybe it was vice versa, and she can’t remember his name but you know, he was the love of her life, or at least she says so tonight. Also, Frances can shoot bullets from her mouth by screaming “I’m a gun!”

Personality: Unpleasantly angry when she’s drunk. Drunk all the time.

Obsession: Drinking.

Wound Points: 50

Stats

Body: 50 (Doughy)

Speed: 40 (Poor Aim) (F)

Mind: 40 (Clouded)

Soul: 20 (Bitter, Empty)

Skills

Body Skills: Remain Standing 25%, Thrash Wildly 36%

Speed Skills: Dodge 22%, Drive Drunk 38%, Gunmouth 24%

Mind Skills: Look Around 19%, Sports Trivia 25%

Soul Skills: Charmless 18%, Deceive Self and Others 19%

The Ambulance

An ambulance might turn up in several of this scenario’s encounters. Each time, it is driven by a friendly Hispanic paramedic named Jesus (*hay-soos*) who makes jokes with the PCs about the dangers of being on the street at night. He discounts any strangeness they report with a cheerful, “Ah, people see all kinda crazy stuff in this city, man.” PCs who played through the scenario “Bill in Three Persons” (see *Unknown Armies*, p. 212) may recognize Jesus from that scenario, though he doesn’t remember them or recognize the situation they met him in. “Naw, man, you’re thinking of some other Jesus.” He can’t give them a ride or tell them any useful directions. “Hey, I get lost down here myself.” If the PCs force their way into the ambulance, it won’t start up again until they’ve left.



Gunmouth: Frances has six bullets in her body—one for every time her heart has been broken—that she can shoot at fire-arms velocity and accuracy from her mouth. She cannot generate more bullets until she undergoes more heartache.

Madness Meter

Violence Unnatural Helplessness Isolation Self
1 H/0 F 0 H/0 F 2 H/4 F 3 H/3 F 6 H/4 F

Jenette, Stop Shooting Me

Summary: Jenette has some vague recollection about a guy she loved or Frances loved or some darn thing. But she's pretty plowed tonight and just wanted to get back home when she and Frances started arguing over whatever it was.

Personality: Ambitionless sidekick to a lower form of life than she is.

Obsession: Drinking.

Wound Points: 40

Stats

Body: 40 (Stringy)

Speed: 30 (Staggering) (F)

Mind: 50 (Dogged)

Soul: 45 (Wants Better)

Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 17%, Struggle 32%

Speed Skills: Dodge 19%, Drive 22%

Mind Skills: *Days of Our Lives* Trivia 23%,

See Danger All Around Her 39%

Soul Skills: Pick Up Older Men With Tracheotomies 44%, Deny Misfortune 37%

Madness Meter

Violence Unnatural Helplessness Isolation Self
0 H/0 F 0 H/0 F 1 H/2 F 2 H/1 F 3 H/1 F

Encounter Two: The Bible

The PCs enter a street where some of the buildings are covered in pages torn from Bibles and glued into place. They hear a shout and, looking up, they spot a chubby man standing on the roof of a two-story apartment building across the street. He waves at them and yells a hello. A couple of loose Bible pages fall from a stack in his hands and drift lazily down to the sidewalk. He'll happily engage in conversation with the PCs, but he's hard of hearing and they have to shout. He can tell them the following:

- His name is Fred Lewis.
- He's gluing Bible pages to the buildings because the Word of God is binding, and without it everything just falls apart.
- He doesn't know anything in particular about the PCs, their predicament, or the other people they've met tonight. He insists he's in Minneapolis.

Fred repeatedly asks the PCs to talk louder because he's almost deaf. As they talk, he leans further over the edge, trying to hear them better. After a couple of questions, he loses his footing and falls to the sidewalk. A trail of fluttering Bible pages follows him down.

Fred hits the ground with an awful thud and starts moaning and wheezing. He doesn't appear to have any obvious injuries, but

Finding the Old Man

The PCs are likely to assume that the weird old man they met at the start of this scenario is in some way responsible for what's happening to them. Between encounters, allow the players to try finding him. Since there are no street signs, you can call for Mind rolls to try and retrace their steps. But the streets keep changing and nothing makes sense; they're not going to find the old man until you're ready for them to, though they might hear him singing in the distance from time to time.

clearly he's in pain. Despite this, he does his best to carry on the previous conversation until the ambulance arrives.

Should any of the PCs begin applying Bible pages to Fred's body, he sighs and relaxes as if he was being healed. "Ah, that changes everything." But even with this, he's still getting on the ambulance.

Fred Lewis, Bible Gluer

Summary: Fred believes the city is falling apart all around him and it's up to the binding power of God's Word to hold it together. He has an apartment nearby full of Bibles he looted from abandoned motel rooms, and he's slowly trying to paste pages over all of existence lest things fall apart.

Personality: Affable yet demented.

Obsession: Saving the world through the Word of God.

Wound Points: 60

Stats

Body: 60 (Chubby)

Speed: 35 (Clumsy) (F)

Mind: 55 (Directed)

Soul: 50 (Deluded)

Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 33%, Struggle 45%

Speed Skills: Dodge 24%, Drive 26%

Mind Skills: Bible Trivia 42%, Notice Decay 52%

Soul Skills: Cheerful Conversationalist 44%, Lie Badly 15%

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
0 H/0 F	0 H/0 F	0 H/1 F	4 H/0 F	0 H/1 F

Encounter Three: The Flag

The PCs are approached by a boy of ten, whose eyes are red from crying. He needs their help.

His name is Jack, and some "bad men" have kidnapped his sister, Lynn. They kidnapped him, too, but he just got away through the window of a broom closet. He thinks these men are going to kill Lynn unless someone saves her, and fast. He doesn't know who the men are, but they're always following Lynn around. He points to a Veterans of Foreign Wars building in the next block; painted on the front of the building is a large American flag. That's where they've got Lynn.

The PCs don't have to help. If they wander off, Jack will plead with them briefly. Then he'll pout and yell, "Don't you *want* some change? I thought you wanted *change!*" Should this interest them for some reason, he'll offer to give them all the change he has if they save Lynn. How much is this? "You'll find out!"

If the PCs do decide to help, Jack leads them to the window he escaped from in an alley alongside the VFW building. They can sneak in here, or choose some other course of action.

In the large central hall, a small girl of six or so is sitting in a chair on the stage. Her hands are tied to the chair and she is crying softly, her eyes squeezed tightly shut.

Drifting in the air around her are the bodies of four dead boys, about eighteen years of age. Each has been dead for some time and they're mostly desiccated, wearing the encrusted clothes they had on when they died in forgotten basements and warehouses. They bob around Lynn in complete silence like corks on water, making no motion except drifting, nudged by currents of air; their corpses are rigid and dry.

Occasionally something clatters to the floor: pennies, nickels, and other coins fall sporadically from the mouths of the dead floating boys. If possible, reinforce this by dropping actual coins on the floor during play a couple of times a minute during this scene.

Rescuing Lynn is easy: they're just dead boys, after all. The PCs need only untie Lynn's



hands and lead her out of the VFW hall. As they do so, however, the corpses drift along after the girl, though they still seem to make no conscious moves to indicate any form of life.

And indeed, they are completely lifeless. At some point the PCs may realize that the dead boys are attached to Lynn by slender filaments that end on the girl's head: her own hair is tied to them, keeping them close like balloons on strings. "They *follow* me everywhere I go," Lynn whispers sadly. If the PCs simply cut the hairs, the dead floating boys drift off into the night. Change continues falling from their pockets as they are lost amongst the stars.

Should any of the PCs take violent action against the dead boys, nothing in particular occurs besides bits of dust and dried flesh breaking off. The bodies can be pushed around by violence, but they do not leave Lynn until the hairs holding them in place are cut.

Jack and Lynn hold hands until the ambulance arrives to take them away. If the PCs ask Jack for the change he promised them, he

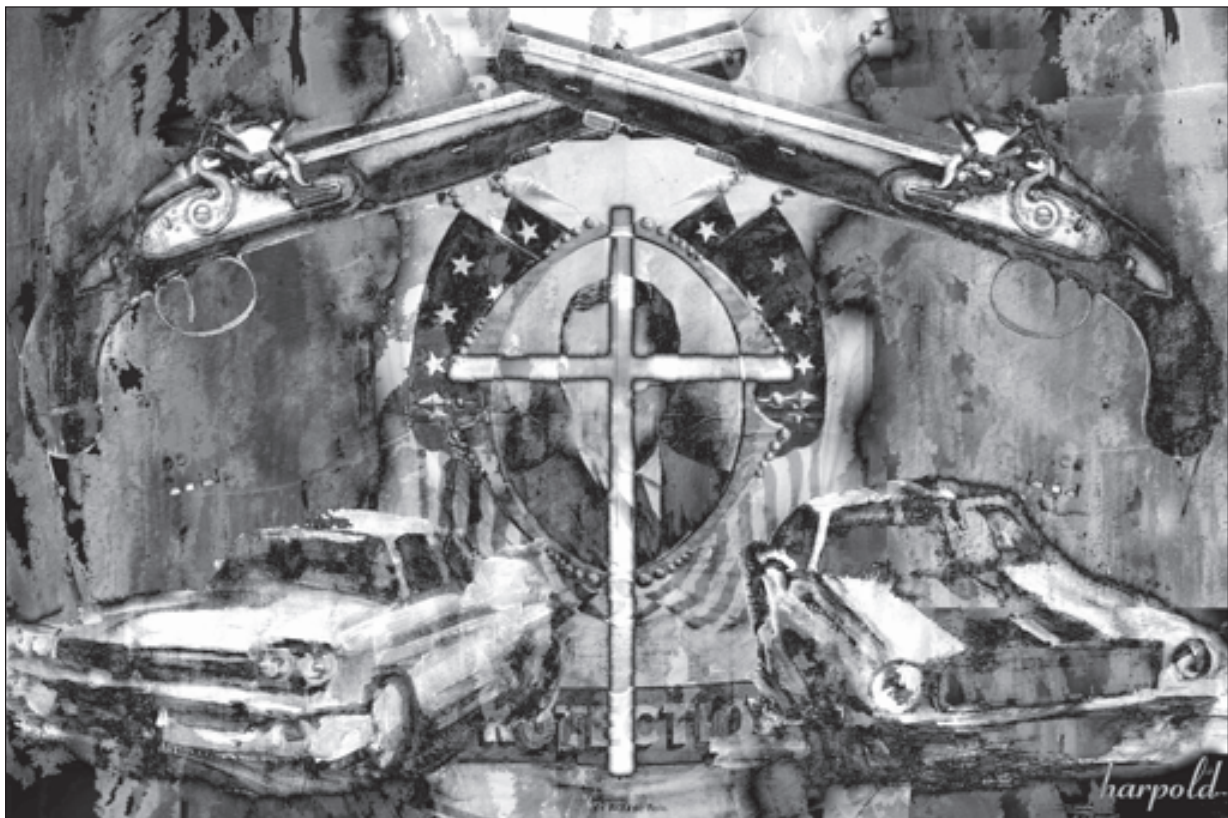
blushes. "They took it all," he says, meaning the dead boys, "but you can have some if you want." There are dozens of coins on the floor of the VFW hall, all of them minted in 1963.

Encounter Four: The Automobile

The PCs may have already discovered the curious reactions that cars here have when touched. Now, every car in earshot begins this strange, menacing growling, beginning with the closest cars and spreading quickly into the distance. The city is alive with a terrible sound.

The PCs might want to run, or take cover indoors. They can do whatever they like.

After a few moments of growling, the closest car snaps on its headlights, and then all the rest begin to as well. The effect spreads just as the growling did. It's followed by engines starting up and revving, and then all the front hoods begin slamming open and shut like giant mouths.



MATT HARPOLD

Around this time, the ambulance arrives, come at last for the PCs to take them out of here. Jesus waves at them from the window and honks his horn. “Quick!” he yells. “They’re waking up!”

If the PCs ignore Jesus or are too afraid to venture outside, the cars begin moving. They circle the PCs’ location endlessly, clacking their hoods and revving their motors. Jesus drives away when the cars start moving, but returns from time to time to try again; if the PCs have waited until the cars start moving to get in the ambulance, they’ll have to make Dodge rolls to avoid being knocked around. Meanwhile, the cars get more and more aggressive, ramming the PCs’ defenses and trying to get at them.

If the PCs get in the ambulance at any point, Jesus guns the engine and goes blazing away from the neighborhood. The cars are in hot pursuit.

Jesus is the only paramedic in the ambulance so he’s driving. There is a body in the back, however, covered in a sheet. “Don’t mess with him, man, he’s a goner.”

A car rams the back of the ambulance and the rear doors fly open; they are now broken and can’t be shut again, hanging askew on their hinges. Through the open doors, the PCs see the lean and hungry cars clacking their hoods, fan belts sticky with saliva and rabid foam, headlights flashing dizzily.

Clever PCs will take the assorted hints throughout the scenario and begin throwing change into the open front hoods of the cars. (Less-clever PCs can be encouraged in this endeavor by Jesus.) Lacking cleverness or change, the PCs might throw other objects into the cars’ machinery, or use firearms or spells. Resolve these attacks as you see fit, and allow the PCs to destroy some of the cars by screwing up their works. Assume that a given car needs 20 Wound Points to be disabled, and that each coin does 1 point. Of course, there

are plenty more cars where these came from. All around, cars slam into the sides of the ambulance, sending the PCs staggering around the inside, trying not to fall out the back.

Jesus can tell the PCs that he’s trying to get to the hospital where they’ll be safe. “The city, man, it’s all crazy tonight!”

In the midst of this chaos, there’s a moan from under the sheet. Underneath is the old man the PCs met at the start of the scenario; if they looked under the sheet before now, that’s fine. He doesn’t start moaning until after the PCs have tangled with the cars for a bit.

Jesus flips out. “The dude’s alive!” He asks if any of the PCs have medical knowledge; regardless, he verbally walks a volunteer through prepping an injection to save the old man’s life. Call for assorted Mind rolls, keep banging the devouring cars against the ambulance, ask for Speed checks to maintain footing in the swerving vehicle, and so forth until the injection is complete. Go to the conclusion.

If for some bizarre reason the PCs hurl the old man’s body out the back of the ambulance at any time during the chase, Jesus screams as they do it and there’s a tremendous wreck; skip the moaning and the revival and go straight to the conclusion.

Conclusion

The PCs are on foot, unharmed, in a lonely part of the city late at night. They might be leaving a rendezvous with a contact, or on their way to a bar, or maybe you’ve just put them in that situation for the purposes of this session. It doesn’t matter.

As they pass an alley, a disheveled old man in a filthy trenchcoat takes a step out of the shadows and leers at them. “All I wanted was some *freaking* change. Next time stay outta *my* city. I don’t *love you* anymore.”

The PCs can resume their journey.





SWAP MEET

BY RICK NEAL

UNKNOWN ARMIES



"TAKE CARE TO SELL YOUR HORSE BEFORE HE DIES.
THE ART OF LIFE IS PASSING LOSSES ON."
—ROBERT FROST

"LET ME TAKE THAT OFF YOUR HANDS."
—LINDSAY WILLIAMS



It's been almost fifteen years since the last one,

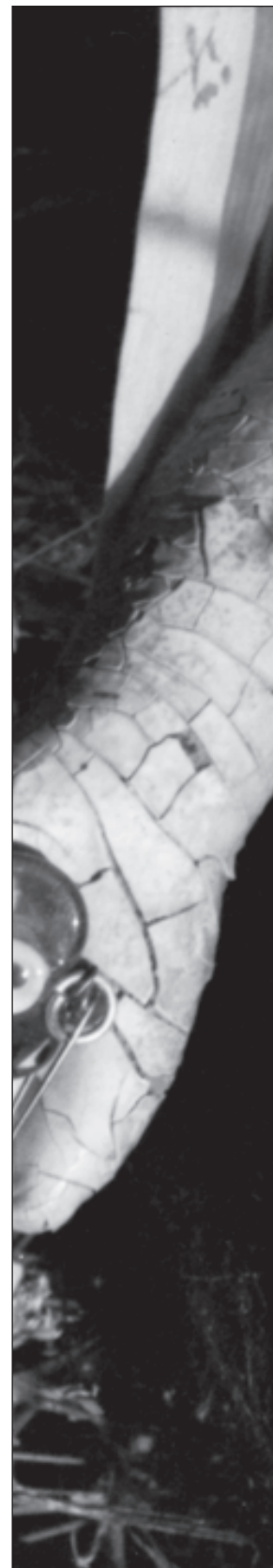
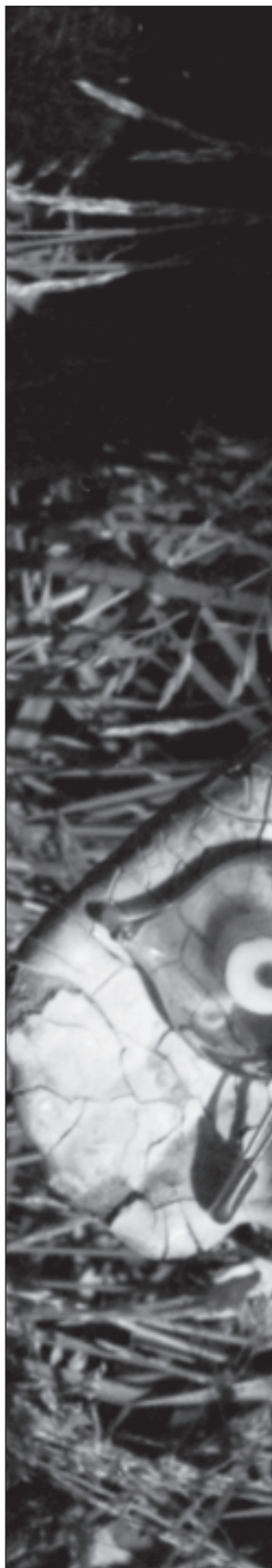
but word on the street is that there's going to be another Swap Meet. What's the big deal, you ask? Well, at this Swap Meet some of the most powerful Avatars of the Merchant get together to cut deals. Word is that they listen to any deal offered to them, and sometimes, if they've had a good run at the Meet, they can give you some incredible merchandise. Swap ten years of life for the sight in your left eye. Trade a ritual straight up. Become a concert pianist, and all it'll cost you is your mechanical ability.

There's a catch, though. They don't exactly advertise. You want to get in the door, first you have to find out where and when it is, and that's some of the most valuable information in the Underground. You want a ticket to this show, better be ready to squeeze every source you've got, touch every contact, call in every favor, and follow every lead, 'cause the big boys don't want to deal with a horde of clamoring losers. But if there's something you need—really, *really* need—this is the place to find it. It's just gonna cost you.

Using the Swap Meet

The Swap Meet is a tool to help you move your campaign along.

It's a good way to introduce something into your campaign that you want the players to have, but you don't want to just give them. Because just about anything can reasonably be found at the Swap Meet, you can use it to provide the perfect item, artifact, or bit of information you need to drive your campaign forward, and make the players work to get it. Need the address of the last old-school Qabbalist in North America? You can buy it at the Swap Meet. How about a knife forged of meteoric iron, quenched in the blood of innocents? We got a special on those. The true name of the demon that's possessed the head of programming at the local radio station who keeps sending those encoded messages to his diabolic cronies? Now that one's a little spendy.



If your players need something to advance the plot, but you don't want to just hand it to them on a platter, send them to the Swap Meet. By the time they finish jumping through the hoops and negotiating with the Merchants, they'll have sweated blood for whatever they get. They'll value it, and use it carefully, because they will have paid dearly for it. You'll be able to move the plot ahead with the characters a little more experienced and a fair bit more worn down.

This scenario is not designed for beginning characters and one-shot games. The story works best if there is a pre-existing campaign framework to fit it into, and if the characters are experienced enough to handle a couple of nasty shocks. New characters are generally not hardened or skilled enough to deal with some of the surprises, and running it as a one-shot requires the GM to do a lot of preparation work to come up with the characters' goals and their information resources outside of what is detailed herein.

Information

The Swap Meet works well as a source for fundamental pieces of important information you need to provide the players in order to keep your campaign moving along. Names, places, stories, rumors, dossiers, connections, all these things are for sale here. If there's a stumbling block keeping your players from making progress on your main campaign mystery because they can't find someone

with the right bit of info, they'll jump at the suggestion of the Swap Meet as a potential source for that missing fact they need to make their move.

Good ideas for this sort of information are things like the backstory to important GMCs or conflicts that are shaping your campaign world, the secrets of using an important artifact, names and addresses of important GMCs either as contacts or as targets, or rituals needed to effectively counter a main threat. Given the amount of effort that's going to be involved in getting to the Swap Meet, make sure that the potential payoff is worth it for the characters. They will have earned it, and skimping on them at this point could make them turn on you.

Equipment

The Swap Meet is the ultimate MacGuffin store. If there's an obscure item, rare book, or unusual artifact the players need, this is the place to find it. Again, it's a great place to have them go to get that one item that can save the day, whether it's the component for a ritual or the hidden heart of the main villain. Run them through the wringer just getting to the Swap Meet, and then make them negotiate to actually bring the item home with them.

This is an ideal way to introduce specialized one-off items with particular importance in your game. If the characters' chief enemy has enacted a ritual that renders him immune to all harm

A Note About the Timeline

This scenario can be set any time you like during the year, and it makes very little difference. Set it when you need it to be set. For consistency's sake, the scenario is written with the expectation that it begins in mid-September, giving the characters about four weeks to do their research and find out about the location of the Swap Meet in time for the Canadian Thanksgiving long weekend, which is when it is taking place. This holiday takes place on the same weekend as the American Columbus Day.

If this doesn't work for you, change it.

All that you have to alter in the scenario are the dates you give, and some of the description of the town of Hat River in the autumn. Make it fit into the timeline of your campaign, so you don't have to either rush the PCs through the investigation or let large chunks of time pass in the midst of the storyline.

It's your campaign. It's your scenario. Make it fit.



except from obsidian Aztec sacrificial blades, this is the place to let them buy one. If the ritual the characters need to perform to protect their home from an enraged golem requires hair from three different rabbis who have been buried in the soil of Jerusalem for fifty years, you can probably find stock of that here. It doesn't minimize the rarity of the item or substance, while still allowing the players to get their hands on what they need. Once.

Personal Objectives

Providing the tools to move the campaign forward is all very fine and well, but sometimes it can be fun to let the characters do things for their own reasons. UA characters are obsessed, marginalized, and generally somewhat disturbed. They've got their own agendas for most of the things they do, and this case need not be an exception. Pretty much every character in your UA game has a very personal reason for wanting to get to the Swap Meet. Maybe the Mechanomancer wants her memories of her first boyfriend back. The sociopathic gun bunny wants to get back in touch with his feelings so he can relate to his son again. The avatar of the Demagogue wants a pencil used by JFK's speechwriter.

This can be a good way to bring subplots to the fore in your campaign, giving the characters a chance to deal with issues they've created in their backgrounds, possibly resolving things and allowing them to move on. You don't have to give them exactly what they're looking for in this case; maybe your Mechanomancer regains her memories of her first boyfriend only to find that he abused her until she killed him. It can lead to new sub-plots, new problems to resolve, and new storylines for the characters.

Price

This is always the catch, isn't it? On the one hand, you want the characters to get whatever it is that they came to the Swap Meet for. On the other hand, you don't want to drop it in their laps just because they made it to the end of the run. You have to find a happy medium, something that fits for your campaign. Here are some things to consider.

First, anything really funky isn't going to be sold for money. Singular artifacts, powerful rituals, secret information, and most intangibles like extra life are all bartered for things of equal value and power. These sorts of items are worth more than mere money; they are power in and of themselves. Nobody's going to seriously consider

Where's the Godwalker?

You've got this gathering of some of the most powerful Avatars of the Merchant, getting together to do business, buying and selling the real good stuff, making deals of mythic and epic power. Where's the Godwalker of the Merchant in all of this?

Far, far away.

Thorvald Drake (see *Statosphere*, p. 36) may once have attended these gatherings during his rise to Godwalker status, but now he doesn't go near them. He has about as much desire to walk into a room full of powerful Avatars who are looking hungrily at his position as he does to tape a target over his face and wander through a live-fire rifle range. He didn't get where he is by being suicidal, and he sees no reason to start that sort of thing now.

This is not to say that he doesn't keep track of these things, though. He generally knows about every transaction that takes place at the Swap Meet, especially by the big boys. He has spies there, and gets reports. After this, he knows the characters and what they bought, and can probably figure out why. He may not do anything with this information, but remember that he has it.

It might prove to be valuable.

an offer of any amount of cash for the secret name of the Freak, for example. It's far more valuable than that. Think of this as a good way to rid the characters of any annoying artifacts you've begun to regret giving them—they can trade 'em in on something more suitable to the campaign.

Second, favors owed may be money in the bank, but if the debtor dies before the favor is called in then the vendor is out of pocket. This means that anyone trying to pay with a promise of a future favor is going to be scrutinized carefully, and the odds of their survival are going to be weighed into the value of the favor. Don't forget, there are some people who can collect that favor even after death.

Third, negotiating the price of whatever they've come for can be as challenging for the characters as the rest of the trip. Just because they've made it to the Swap Meet doesn't mean there's any reason to make things easy on them. Maybe they need to get something from one of the other vendors, who only parts with it for something someone else is selling and so on, in the classic Tom Sawyer ring of exchanges. Use the price as a jumping-off point to another adventure, if you want. Perhaps the Merchant in question only parts with the ritual in exchange for a personal item of Alex Abel's. Ready-made quest!

Fourth, even if things go smoothly and the characters are able to make the purchase they need at the Swap Meet, they've now come to the attention of greater powers. They've been noticed, and the way they conduct themselves at the Swap Meet can have far-reaching implications. Allies and enemies made here can easily wander into the rest of the campaign to mess up the characters' lives.

The key thing with the price is that the characters should feel the cost personally. Make sure they know that they've paid, and may be paying for some time to come.

Strip Mining

Maybe the Swap Meet doesn't interest you, or fit

into your campaign. That's always a possibility. If you have no place for it in your game, don't use it. At least, don't use all of it.

The scenario is designed to revolve around a number of characters that fit into rather obscure niches in the Occult Underground. These are some of the most fanatical and strangest followers of the Merchant archetype that exist in the world. It's easy enough to pull them from this setting and drop them into one that's more in sync with the rest of your campaign.

Like one of the scenes? Lift it and use it in an adventure of your own design. Need a high-ranking Merchant for another plot? There's a batch of them in here, some with serious problems. Help yourself.

In short, this adventure can easily be dismantled into its component parts for use in different parts of your own campaign. Break it down and play with it. Go ahead.

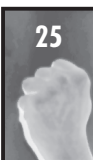
Hearing the Word

Once you've decided how you're going to use the Swap Meet, you need a plan to let the characters know about it. The people in charge don't want a lot of pedestrian traffic, so they don't advertise, and they gather somewhere out of the way. People who know about the Swap Meet, for whatever reason, don't spread the word too wide; they want the best pickings for themselves. This is the ultimate garage sale, and as any fanatical soccer mom can tell you it's best to get there early.

The way you let your characters in on the existence of the Swap Meet is going to vary based on what kind of narrative structure you're using, the relationship between the characters and the rest of the Occult Underground, and what sort of characters they are. Here are a few simple suggestions.

Orders

If your group is a TNI hit team or something similar, word can come down from on high about the existence of the Swap Meet. They can be



ordered to investigate and report, or to obtain some specific item or information. They don't need much more impetus than just the order, but the pot-of-gold sort of stories surrounding the Swap Meet should get them thinking about some side purchases of their own.

This sort of thing works well for more groups than it might first appear. Not only TNI, but also the Sleepers, Mak Attax, or any extended, hierarchical cabal may send down orders for the players. Also, private investigators with occult ties may take on clients who either want to find the Swap Meet or get something from it. Any outside agency can present the characters not only with the base information about the Swap Meet, but an entire agenda to accompany it.

Rumors

If the characters are more independent, they can pick up information about the Swap Meet on the street, listening to their informants or talking to any Avatar of the Merchant they know. This needs to be tailored properly to fit into your campaign, evaluating both the source and their relationship with the characters. Remember that those who know about the Swap Meet want to keep the number of attendees down so they get a better chance at the good deals. They are probably going to be careful not to mention the Swap Meet casually, although there are some that know about it, have no intention of finding it, and love to mouth off about how in-the-know they are. This lets the players know that the thing is happening, but otherwise will probably just start to annoy them.

The knowledge of the existence of the Swap Meet can be a great bargaining chip. If you're using the Swap Meet to provide something the characters need to carry on to the next stage of your campaign, someone may offer to sell them the rumor of where they might find such a thing, or use it to save their own skins. Maybe it's payback for a favor done in the past, or an investment in a future favor. It probably doesn't come cheap, even though it's just the fact of the

existence of the Swap Meet that's provided. Any hard information only comes as the result of a concerted investigative effort on the part of the characters.

Turnabout

If neither of these approaches fits your group, turn the tables on them. If you've got a Merchant avatar in the campaign that the players are familiar with, for example Jordan Clay (see UA, p. 204), send him to the characters trying to convince them to tell him where the Swap Meet is because he thinks they know. If you don't have someone in place to handle this role, try Edward Macoy.

Edward Macoy is a young man following the path of the Merchant. He sees the Swap Meet as an excellent place to work some deals in a far more elevated stratum than he can normally access, thereby gaining a leg up in his pursuit of the archetype. He knows about the Swap Meet from a casual comment made by an older Merchant named Helena Iglesias, whom he met in Spain about a year ago. The old woman mentioned the Swap Meet in passing, then quickly glossed over it, refusing to admit she'd even mentioned it. It stuck in Edward's mind, though, and he's been chasing it ever since.

The reputation of the characters has led Edward to them in the belief that they know the location of the Swap Meet. He approaches them in a neutral place, introduces himself, and asks what it would take for them to sell him the information he wants on the Swap Meet. He expects the characters to be cagey and deny any knowledge, so he plays along, with knowing winks and circuitous talk, trying to arrive at a deal, never believing for a second that the characters have no idea what he's babbling about.

This is going to get annoying for most characters fairly quickly. If they blow Edward off rudely, he figures they're being cagey and returns in a couple of days, after doing some research. He has definite offers for the characters at this point, based on what he's been able to find out about them. He's careful to only offer things he

can actually deliver. If he's blown off again, he gathers up some thugs (use the Stock Thug stats in UA, p. 211) and tries to beat the information out of the characters. If that fails, he runs. He knows when he's in over his head. If it looks feasible, he tries to keep track of the group in hopes that they'll lead him to the Swap Meet when they go.

On the other hand, if the characters treat him courteously and convince him they know nothing about the Swap Meet, Edward tries to broker a cooperative deal: they use their contacts to find the location of the Swap Meet in exchange for Edward providing transportation and lodging once they know where they're going. If necessary, he sweetens the deal with up to one thousand dollars per character for their assistance. Refusal at this point means Edward moves on to try his next most likely lead, and out of the characters' lives. He doesn't make it to the Swap Meet this time around, so following him is a waste of time.

Whichever way things turn out, the PCs are now aware of the Swap Meet and have some information that may intrigue them. Things should progress smoothly from there.

Edward Macoy, Earnest Young Merchant

Summary: Edward's only been consciously following the path he's on for a couple of years, but it's taken over his entire life and mind. He is convinced that he is destined to ascend, and that he has the favor of the Invisible Clergy, whom he privately terms the Gods of Exchange. He wants in on the Swap Meet now to trade on more elevated levels than he usually can, and to start making a name for himself.

Personality: Edward burns with the fire of a True Believer, and what he believes in is his own destiny. Everything he says and does is colored by his belief that he is fated for greatness, as long as he can live up to it.

Obsession: Fulfilling his destiny as the next God of Trade.

Wound Points: 50

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Mockery. He can take it when others don't believe, but he does not tolerate disrespect.

Fear Stimulus: (Self) Blowing a deal. This is a sign of a flaw in himself that may compromise his destiny.

Noble Stimulus: Win-win deals. An exchange that benefits everyone involved, including himself, is a thing of beauty to Edward, and confirms his worthiness in his own eyes.

Stats

Body: 50 (Healthy)

Speed: 55 (S) (Controlled)

Mind: 60 (Attentive)

Soul: 80 (Golden Boy)

Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 40%, Struggle 30%

Speed Skills: Dodge 35%, Drive 40%, Target Shooting 25%

Mind Skills: General Education 30%, Notice 45%, Cost/Benefit Analysis 50%

Soul Skills: Charm 60%, Lie 50%, **Avatar:** Merchant 55%

Cost/Benefit Analysis: Edward can make a decent guess as to whether or not a particular exchange is going to benefit any of the parties involved more than another, and this helps him come up with equitable exchanges for all involved. He likes trades to be equal, and tries to make sure that no one gets shafted by a deal he brokers.

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
2 H/1 F	3 H/0 F	0 H/1 F	0 H/0 F	2 H/0 F

Possessions

Edward usually carries a .38 pistol with him, dresses in expensive suits, and carries an Italian leather briefcase. He drives a late-model BMW.



Word on the Street

The Swap Meet exists primarily as a rumor in the Occult Underground. Those few who have heard about it know very little, and most of what they do know is wrong. Anyone who starts tapping sources of information about the Swap Meet gets a mish-mash of wish fulfillment, cautionary tale, disinformation, and speculation, with very little means of separating the wheat from the chaff. Some common rumors are listed below. Feel free to elaborate or change them as you see fit, and toss in a few of your own that serve the purposes of your campaign. Whenever you hand out hard information, mix in a couple of the rumors to make things interesting.

- **There's an entry fee for the Swap Meet. It's your soul.** Alternately, it can be ten years of your life, fifty thousand dollars, the head of Alfredo Garcia, whatever. Something to give the characters pause. In reality, the entry fee is the effort required to find the location.
- **The sponsors of the Swap Meet are all-powerful demons who feed on the greed of the attendees.** While the Merchant avatars may profit from the greed, they don't really feed on it, and they're not demons.
- **The Swap Meet is run by Cagliostro, the only apprentice of St. Germain.** Well, Cagliostro is one of the sponsors but it's not *that* Cagliostro. It's a pretty common pseudonym amongst the more pretentious folk in the Occult Underground.
- **St. Germain always attends the Swap Meet and sets up a stall.** This is pure crap, of course. The First and Last Man sees no reason to wade through the power-hungry dukes at the Swap Meet. He can probably get anything he wants elsewhere.
- **Members of the Invisible Clergy frequently attend, especially the archetype of the Merchant.** Again, this is garbage. What would they need here?
- **The Merchant Godwalker is going to be there.** Nope. He didn't get where he is by waltzing into large gatherings of enemies, and he's not going to stay where he is if he starts.
- **The Swap Meet is always held in the main marketplace in Jerusalem at midnight.** The characters should be able to spot this one as false pretty quickly. If it were that easy to find, why would they be looking for it? Substitute any location that tickles your fancy, and roll this one out a couple of times from low-level stooges.
- **The original Naked Goddess tape is going to be for sale there.** Not likely, unless you want to use this method to put the tape in the hands of the characters. There are probably a few copies of various generations floating around, though.
- **The Swap Meet is a front for a slavery ring.** Well, there are a lot of shady deals going on here, many of which would not stand up too well to official scrutiny. There may be a little people-trading going on, but it's not the focus of the Swap Meet. You can modify this rumor to include drug running, prostitution, or anything that might muddy the waters.
- **It's all a set-up to weed out powerful and determined dukes.** If you want this to be true, go for it. There's something kind of appealing about using this sort of honey trap to lure the characters into a nasty ambush. Make them work for the opportunity to be slaughtered. The adventure, however, is written with the assumption that this isn't going to happen.
- **It's all a hoax.** Again, this might be a fun turnaround for the adventure if you don't want to use the Swap Meet as written in your campaign. But the adventure is written with the assumption that the Swap Meet is real, and does take place.

Getting There

It's a long trail from the first Swap Meet rumor to the point where the characters are sauntering up to a stall with their life savings in hand. The whole chain of information is going to be dependent on your campaign, and you may want to involve certain important GMCs in the plot, like an allied or opposed avatar of the Merchant who wants to help or hinder the characters. Feel free to do this: make the adventure serve the needs of your campaign.

What you should remember is that the trail goes deep into a particular subculture of the Occult Underground. The OU is not homogeneous, but is instead composed of a number of small special-interest groups with some minor overlapping interests. As you get deeper into any one of these little subcultures, you find things getting far weirder than you may have initially expected. Granted, the Merchant is not the most twisted archetype in the Clergy, but take the idea of commerce to excess and you find some pretty funky stuff.

What follows is a set of encounters that can lead your characters into this subculture, showing them the strangeness inherent in it, until they finally arrive at the Swap Meet. They are arranged in an escalating chain of bizarreness so that you can follow it directly, but it may be better interspersed with some of your own encounters to keep the proper feel for your campaign. In other words, you can use the adventure as an adventure, or as a developing subplot within other adventures.

Always keep in mind that you are leading your characters into something that should be unnerving and even repellant, especially if you have any avatars of the Merchant in the group. They may begin rethinking their dedication when they start to see some of the strange alleys it can lead you down.

The encounters mainly center on a given individual or group that has some information about the Swap Meet, or can at least point people in the right direction. What it costs the characters is outlined, as is the effectiveness of different tactics used in obtaining the information

Following the Bread Crumbs

The trail laid out in the scenario is pretty linear and leads step by step from the first hint to the Swap Meet with no real side trips. It can seem a lot like railroading to players who are run through it strictly as written. This is because the various clues along the way are designed to expand and contract, accordion-like, to let you throw in some of the favorite GMCs from your campaign. Here's how it can work.

After their encounter with Merchant avatar Edward Macoy, the characters check him out with Jordan Clay (see UA, p. 204), to find out if he's on the level. Jordan Clay gives him a clean report, and tells the characters that he's heard some rumors about a mobbed up Bodybag downtown who may be able to help them out. This leads the characters to Maria, who can't track down the Trader's Guild but gives the characters the number of her old teacher. This guy's the powerful GMC Entropomancer who's been a constant thorn in the side of the characters, although they've never really had an open conflict with him specifically. He runs the characters through several hoops before he sends them on to the Trader's Guild. The Guildbrothers decide that the price for the info about the Spider is that the PCs must collect the credit cards to deliver to him, which is a lot easier to do with the help of Jeeter (see UA, p. 204) and his homeless buddies. They want the characters to take care of a problem they're having with a local street gang run by an old nemesis of the characters . . .

Get the idea? All of a sudden, instead of three steps the trail's up to six or seven, and the linear nature of the main clues is hidden in the general background of your ongoing campaign. The characters no longer feel that they're being led around by the nose, but rather that they're working their butts off to follow the thin threads of rumor.



needed for the next step. Because you're working with Merchants here, everything costs and everyone has a price.

No cities for these encounters are provided, so you can drop them in anywhere you need. Given the number of powerful Merchants, it's a good idea to spread them through a couple of nearby cities. Place Maria in the campaign's hometown, put the Trader's Guild in one nearby city, and the Spider in another. If you're starting out in Chicago with Maria, stick the Guildbrothers in Milwaukee and the Spider in St. Louis. Or put Maria in Las Vegas, the Trader's Guild in San Francisco, and the Spider in Los Angeles. Keep the cities close enough together that it's believable for word of such things to spread, and to make sure you can pull the right parties together when it's time to whack the characters with a big stick.

Contact One: Maria and the Mobster

Maria Saputo is a young Italian woman who is dating one of the soldiers of the local capo. She's also a minor Entropomancer who lends her services to her boyfriend Anthony from time to time. She's fairly well known in the Underground as someone who's always willing to pay for information, which she passes along to her boyfriend. She also sells information, as long as it doesn't hurt the local mob interest.

Because of her reputation as a reliable information source with reasonable rates, Maria is a good early contact for the characters. They can get word to her that they want a meet by passing the request through her network of informants, who are mainly gang members and street people. Within a few days, word comes back agreeing to a meet at a local diner.

The Meet

If Maria is meeting a single character, she arrives alone at the meet about half an hour before the appointed time, choosing a back corner booth. If she knows or suspects that there is more than

one character coming, Anthony accompanies her, taking a seat nearby at the counter to keep an eye on things. Both are extremely ready for any sort of treachery unless the characters have previously established a good working relationship with Maria or the local mob.

Should someone threaten Maria with Anthony present, they suddenly find Anthony's 9mm pistol pressed to their temple. They have one chance to back off or take the bullet. If Maria is alone, she slaps anyone threatening her with a blast spell. She's not defenseless.

On the other hand, if the characters treat her with courtesy, Maria is courteous in return. She speaks politely, especially if she's heard of any reputation the characters have built locally. This courtesy does not prevent her from acting quickly should the situation warrant it. All in all, if the characters play it straight then so does Maria.

What Maria Knows

About the Swap Meet, not a thing. In fact, she's quite upset that this is the first she's heard about it, and intends to ask her informants some rather pointed questions. The idea of something this big slipping under her radar is distinctly unnerving to her, causing her to have some second thoughts about the effectiveness of her intelligence network.

Of course, she doesn't let on any of this to the characters. She has an image to maintain, after all. What she does do is try to pump them for as much information as she can, while pretending to be deciding how much to tell them. She starts with questions like, "How much do you know already?" and moves into more definite questioning based on what information the characters give her.

Once she feels that she's got all the information the characters have, she says she has to check on a couple of things and get back to the characters in a few days. If pressed into a corner, she grudgingly admits this is the first she's heard of the Swap Meet but she intends to find out all

she can. She is willing to share the information with the characters for the right price.

Maria's Legwork

First thing Maria does after the meet is to get Anthony to keep an eye on the characters. She assumes they try to follow her and figure out what she's up to, and she wants to make sure that Anthony is on hand to help out in the event of any unpleasantness.

Whether she's admitted her ignorance to the characters or not, Maria immediately starts turning over stones to find out all she can about the Swap Meet. What she uncovers makes her nervous, as she realizes this thing is taking place several layers above the arenas where she usually plays the game. She comes to the conclusion that, given her rather modest aspirations of getting Anthony into a position of power and keeping him there, she is in way over her head with the whole Swap Meet thing.

This brings her to an idea. She decides she'll

sell the name of a powerful Merchant to the characters, along with an introduction to get them in the door, and let the characters take it from there. She's tempted by the prospect of the things she can find at the Swap Meet that might help her and Anthony, so she gets Anthony to keep a discrete eye on characters as they go about hunting down more information. This breaks her taboo, unfortunately, so she's got to go work up some more juice quickly or she's of no use to Anthony should he need her. A few hours at the blackjack tables in Atlantic City will set her up again, and she keeps an emergency stash of money for such purposes.

Anthony makes a subtle tail, surprisingly enough, as he only needs to keep track of the general comings and goings of the characters and doesn't need to monitor their every move. If a character tries to spot a tail outside, let them make a Notice roll to locate Anthony. Inside a building, characters have no chance of spotting Anthony because he's just waiting outside. Anthony stays on the characters until shaken,



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chased off, or the characters make it to the Swap Meet—where they bump into Maria and Anthony, innocently shopping away.

The Second Meet

The second meet takes place three days after the first, at the same diner. Maria is there alone, with Anthony waiting outside to follow the characters when they leave. She offers to sell the characters an introduction to the Trader's Guild, a group of powerful avatars of the Merchant who should be able to help the characters track down the Swap Meet. She also passes along a couple of rumors that she's picked up, although she's careful to let the characters know that these things are unconfirmed. Unless, that is, they've managed to piss her off, in which case she relates the information as if it were gospel.

The introduction by Maria gets the characters

directions to the Trader's Guildhall, but not much more. Once inside, it's up to the characters to get what they want.

As the characters leave, Anthony starts following them. He doesn't work too hard at it, because he knows that if he loses them, he can pick them up again at their appointment with the Guildbrothers.

The Price

So, what does this little runaround cost the characters? Well, if they buy the story about Maria just needing to check some sources, she charges them five thousand dollars up front for the results before she even starts working. If the characters have got her to admit she knows nothing about the Swap Meet, she holds off setting a price until she knows what she has.

Then she asks for five thousand dollars for the

Playing With Fire

Maria and Anthony are running a dangerous game. The mob has a snuff-on-sight policy regarding adepts, because of their tendency to be unpredictable whackos. Trying to use them in the organization resulted in a lot of problems, bad feelings, and dead people all around, and the capos don't like the unnecessary expense. How far can you really trust someone who has to do the kind of twisted things that adepts do to be useful?

Maria loves Anthony, and loves the lifestyle he and his business associates lead. She wants to help him get ahead in the organization with her mojo, but has to do it very subtly. If anyone finds out that she's playing with magick, both she and Anthony are worm food. Anthony knows about her abilities, and likes the advantage they give him, but is very cautious about overusing them and is absolutely paranoid about anyone finding out about them.

So with all this to lose, why are they doing this? Well, Anthony knows he's not the sharpest knife in the drawer, limited in his ability to advance in his chosen career. With Maria working behind the scenes, he's got a chance to be a much bigger deal than he could manage alone and he knows this. He thinks it's worth the risk, as long as they're careful about things.

As for Maria, well, she's still a Bodybag. Every time she taps into the wild and wonderful world of the Occult Underground, she runs the risk of someone finding out about her mob ties. And the deeper she gets in with the twerps and the ding-dongs, the more likely she is to mess up her gravy train with the mob. This dual risk gives her some nice juice. She wants the lifestyle of the beautiful people in Anthony's world, but needs the power from the ugly slugs in the OU to get there. The higher she gets in the mob, the more she risks losing. At some point, the game's not going to be worth the candle and she's going to turn away from her magickal contacts and abilities because there's too much to lose.

Unless she gets caught first.

introduction, but can be bargained down to three thousand.

If the characters don't want to part with that kind of cash, Maria accepts a favor on account. She knows that the kinds of people who come looking for this type of information often have some rather unusual talents that she may be able to put to use in furthering Anthony's career.

Bartering information is also possible, as it is the one commodity that Maria values more than money. If the characters have some information that is useful to her or to the mob, she gladly makes the exchange. If the information turns out to be false, the characters are going to be in a world of hurt as Anthony and Maria both come after them, looking to make an example.

Maria also accepts magickal artifacts or rituals in payment, provided they are directly usable by her or Anthony and are extremely subtle. Remember, if Anthony gets caught using magick, the only chance he has at survival is to cleanse his honor by kacking the *strega* who put the spells on him. That makes "subtle" an absolute necessity.

Maria Saputo, Gangland *Strega*

Summary: Maria is the twenty-two-year-old girlfriend of Anthony Vespucci, a rising star in the local Mafia. She has worked hard, using both her Entropomancy and her skills at acquiring information, to make sure that Anthony rises in the organization and that he brings her with him. Her reputation on the street is that she pays very well for reliable information, and also shares what she knows at reasonable rates, as long as the goals of the recipients don't interfere with mob business. She is also known to gamble heavily, although she has yet to run up a debt that she is unable to cover.

Personality: Maria sees herself as a kingmaker, working behind the scenes to put her man on the throne. She doesn't really think that Anthony can cut it as a leader; his gifts are more suited to a subordinate role. She does think that he can rise a good deal higher in the organization than he

has, and she's looking for that nicer life. When it comes to the exchange of information or the use of magick, Maria is all business, looking for the best deal she can cut and the most effective use of her resources. This generally means that she deals with people fairly and courteously, although she can be merciless to those that cross her.

Obsession: Playing the game. The politics surrounding advancement in the Mafia are delightfully convoluted and dangerous, and Maria gets a big thrill out of pulling the strings, always with the chance that someone's going to notice.

Wound Points: 45

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Being out of the loop. Maria hates not knowing what's going on, and is prone to tantrums when someone lets her down in this regard.

Fear Stimulus: (Violence) Being pegged as Anthony's hole card. She has pulled off a couple of coups for Anthony, and she knows that if the other soldiers find out she's a valuable asset for him, she's as good as dead.

Noble Stimulus: Taking care of Anthony. He may have started as an easily manipulated puppet, but Maria's come to feel responsible for him, and to love him.

Stats

Body: 45 (Vivacious)

Speed: 50 (F) (Smooth)

Mind: 60 (Quick)

Soul: 60 (Controlled)

Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 30%, Struggle 20%

Speed Skills: Dodge 20%, Drive 20%, Shoplift 40%

Mind Skills: General Education 40%, Notice 35%, In The Loop 50%

Soul Skills: Charm 45%, Lie 35%, **Magick:** Entropomancy 55%

In The Loop: Maria can make a roll to see if she knows any given piece of gossip or local



information that has a direct bearing on her and Anthony. A second successful roll allows her to place that information in context and make a decent guess about the impact it has on their lives.

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
2 H/1 F	4 H/0 F	3 H/0 F	0 H/0 F	1 H/2 F

Possessions

Maria doesn't like weapons, and tends to not carry any. She feels that anything she can't handle with her magick is best left to Anthony. She usually has five minor charges picked up from gambling and dealing with the Occult Underground.

Anthony Vespucci, Mobster on the Rise

Summary: Anthony is the epitome of a street-level mob soldier: big, brutal, and not terribly bright. He knows that he's just another goon, but with Maria's help he's starting to see a way to climb above that and claim a position of more power and comfort. Maria's track record has convinced him to trust her implicitly and follow any instructions she gives, whether or not she actually explains them. He's done it before, and it's always worked out for him. At her direction, he's started developing new ways of relating to people, ways that don't rely on standard alpha-male intimidation and appeal. He's not very good yet, but he's working on it.

Personality: Anthony is a thug, aspiring to be a gentleman mobster. He likes to play the part of a tough guy, but the limitations of that role are becoming apparent to him and he's slowly developing other tactics—ones more likely to inspire loyalty than fear. He still has a strong need to be respected for his physical skills, but he's starting to see the value of other types of respect.

Obsession: Being in control. Anthony wants to be the quintessential alpha-male, always trying to be leader of the pack. He often stumbles.

Wound Points: 75

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Being called stupid. Anthony is very sensitive about his intelligence.

Fear Stimulus: (Unnatural) Magick. What he's seen Maria do when she's riding high on the mojo scares the crap out of him, and makes him more sure than ever that the mob needs to steer clear of magick. Except him, of course.

Noble Stimulus: Looking after Maria. Not only is she his meal ticket, he loves her.

Stats

Body: 75 (Huge)

Speed: 65 (S) (Well-oiled Machine)

Mind: 35 (Not Too Quick)

Soul: 40 (Shallow)

Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 60%, **Beat You Senseless** 65%

Speed Skills: Dodge 50%, Drive 40%, Blow You Away 60%

Mind Skills: General Education 15%, Notice 15%, Follow 25%

Soul Skills: Intimidation 30%, Lie 20%

Follow: Anthony can effectively tail someone, keeping himself unnoticed, and can pick up the tail again if he loses it.

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
7 H/0 F	0 H/2 F	1 H/1 F	3 H/0 F	5 H/0 F

Possessions

Anthony generally carries two 9mm semi-automatic pistols, one in a shoulder holster and one in a holster in the small of his back. He also keeps a .38 revolver as a back-up in an ankle holster. In his pocket he usually carries a silencer for one of the 9mm pistols, a switchblade, and gloves. In the trunk of his Mercedes he's got a pistol-grip shotgun and an Uzi, as well as lots of ammo for all his weapons and a big plastic tarp.

Contact Two: The Trader's Guild

If the characters have dealt civilly with Maria, she warns them to bring a large number of one-dollar bills with them to meet the Trader's Guild, and explains that they have to pay for every answer they get. Take careful note of how many singles the characters bring with them. The Guild are a collection of Merchants who view every aspect of life as an exchange of valuable commodities, and have descended so far into that perspective that they no longer have the ability to relate properly to the mundane world.

These are the kind of people Maria says the characters need to find the Swap Meet. They are deeply involved with the mystery of the Merchant, and have abandoned almost all mundane considerations in their exploration of the secrets of the archetype. They are much more in tune with the mystic flows of the Statosphere than she is, and better able to identify the pooling of power that marks the Swap Meet. Or so she hopes.

The Guildhall

The meeting place of the Trader's Guild is a far cry from the high-rise image and reputation Merchants typically cultivate. They gather in the sub-basement of a run-down, turn-of-the-century office building, in a room tucked in behind the furnace room. To get in, the characters have to buzz the building superintendent and say they're here to feed the furnace. The super lets them into the basement and points to a trap door with a ladder leading down to the furnace room. A large, bald, black man stands guard at the door to the Guildhall, and requires each person wanting to enter the room to pay him. He says that they should give him what their consciences dictate, and accepts as little as one dollar from each. Any less and he gets insulted and turns them away. If attacked, he is more than ready to defend himself.

The walls and floor of the Guildhall room are undecorated concrete, marked with decades of

water and rust from the pipes overhead. The only furniture in the room is a heavy wooden table and the six chairs that hold the Guildbrothers.

The Guildbrothers

The Guildbrothers resemble a group of Mormon missionaries who have spent the last decade living rough on the street. They dress in identical black suits that have not been washed in recent memory, with shirts that may once have been white. Their hair is uncut and uncombed, and the four males in the group are heavily bearded. They smell of mildew and rancid sweat, and the odor is somewhat overpowering in the small room. Until the first answer has been paid for, none of them speak.

Questioning the Trader's Guild is going to be pretty frustrating. Every time the characters ask a question, the Guildbrothers look at each other in silent conference, then one of them holds up a number of fingers to the characters, indicating the number of words in the answer. When the characters have counted the appropriate number of one-dollar bills onto the table, the Guildbrother takes the money and provides the answer. If interrupted in the process of answering, the Guildbrother stops, calculates the remaining words in the answer, and returns the correct number of bills. The answers are always fairly economical in terms of number of words, but can be overly literal. Characters may have to dig for the information they need.

Of course, the characters have no idea about this process. They can try to interpret the rules from the actions of the Guildbrothers, they can ask the Doorman for help, or they can try something more direct.

Trying to figure out the rules is going to make for a bit of a puzzle. The Guildbrothers mime counting out money, and stop the characters when they reach the right amount the first couple of times, but they lose patience if the characters don't seem to be catching on. If that happens, they refuse to help any more until the characters figure out the proper rules of exchange.



The Doorman will gladly explain the rules, for the sum of one hundred dollars. This is by far the easiest way to get the facts.

If the characters attack the Guildbrothers or try to threaten them, things can go to hell very quickly. One of the Guildbrothers can attack with a Struggle skill of 50%, another pulls a pistol from under the table and attacks with a Shoot skill of 50%, and a third one can bounce around the room with a Dodge skill of 50%. Any sound of combat brings in the Doorman very quickly, and any adepts have to cope with the Mystery of Trade skill of the Guildbrothers. It will be very tough to get anything useful out of the survivors.

What the Guildbrothers Know

The Guildbrothers know that the Swap Meet exists, that it's taking place this year in the next few weeks, and that it's happening somewhere in Canada. Their method of imparting this information can be a little arcane, so it may take a while for the characters to find it all out. Dealing with

the payment per word can also be a little tough on the GM, so here are a few standard questions, their stock answers, and the price for each.

- Does the Swap Meet Exist? Yes. 1\$
- When will it take place? Soon. 1\$
- How soon? In the next few weeks. 5\$
- When exactly? We don't know. 3\$
- Where is it happening? In Canada. 2\$
- Where in Canada? We don't know. 3\$
- How can we find out? Ask someone else. 3\$
- Who should we ask? Someone who knows the answer. 5\$
- Who would know the answer? We don't know for certain. 5\$
- Any guesses? Yes. 1\$
- Who? The Spider. 2\$
- Where is the Spider? Hiding. 1\$
- Do you know where the Spider is hiding? Yes. 1\$
- Will you tell us where? For a price. 3\$
- Are you going to the Swap Meet? No. 1\$
- Why not? It is too far from the Guildhall,



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where we are safe. 11\$

- **Is Rumor X true?** Yes or No. 1\$ Note that the Guildbrothers can make a decent guess, but aren't infallible.
- **Is it dangerous there?** Of course, fools. 3\$

The big question, of course, is what it will cost to find out where the Spider is hiding. They tell the PCs their price for free.

The Price

When one of the characters asks what it will cost for the Guildbrothers to tell them where the Spider is, the Trader's Guild exchange triumphant looks. The one on the left end stands up and recites the following, at a fairly good clip, ignoring any attempts at interruption or questions.

"Let it be stated that the Party of the First Part, hereinafter referred to as You, seek to gain a Consideration from the Party of the Second Part, hereinafter referred to as Us. The aforementioned Consideration, to wit, information concerning the current whereabouts of a Third Party, hereinafter referred to as the Spider, is in Our possession, and We will release it, without let or hindrance, to You, upon acceptance of a Commission, hereinafter referred to as the Task.

"The particulars of this Task are as follows: first, that You will bear away with You a particular Object from Our presence. Second, that You will protect this Object to the extent of Your abilities, keeping it safe from all threats and retaining possession of the Object until the Task is discharged. Third, that You will bear the Object into the presence of the Spider, whose location We will disclose to You as the fulfillment of Our commitment in this exchange. Fourth, that You shall transfer possession of this Object to the Spider, retaining no liens or reservations, so that it passes completely into the ownership of the Spider. Fifth and finally, that You shall stand ready as the Object is inspected by the Spider, and shall take full and complete responsibility for any faults found in the Object as a result of said inspection. This shall constitute the discharge-

ment of the Task, and shall end Your obligation to Us in the matter of this exchange.

"If, after acceptance of this Task, You fail to discharge it in a manner acceptable to Us, You hereby agree to accept such Penalties as We shall deem fit, without reservation. In this regard, You shall forfeit immediately Your sense of sight to the Trader's Guild, not to be returned until such time as fit reparations are made to Us.

"Please state Your acceptance or rejection of the aforementioned terms and conditions. This contract constitutes a binding Agreement of Exchange, and may be enforced as such. Clarifications and repetitions are subject to a surcharge of one hundred dollars each."

If the characters have any questions about the speech, the Trader's Guild answers them at the price of one hundred dollars each, explaining that they have a package that they need to deliver to the Spider, and that they will tell the characters how to contact the Spider if they agree to bring the package to him. Accepting the terms means that, should the characters try to evade their part of the bargain, they have agreed to surrender their sight to the Trader's Guild. That means that, if the Guildbrothers make a successful Avatar: The Merchant roll, any character breaking the deal will be struck blind. The contact method involves inserting one's ATM card into any ATM machine and entering the code 774337463333. The Spider will then contact the character.

What's the package? Three hundred cut up credit cards. Why? Well, the Trader's Guild doesn't think that it's any of the characters' business why. If the Spider chooses to tell them, fine.

Of course, the characters can refuse to carry the package, in which case they don't get directions to the Spider. They have a (sort-of) name now, so they might be able to track down the Spider on their own, but that's up to you. Trying to beat the information out of the Trader's Guild is probably a lost cause, and certainly gets the characters' reputations trashed in the Merchant network. Divination may work, if the characters



come up with something suitably funky, but computer searches probably won't, and they certainly alert the Spider if they're attempted.

Another idea is to go back to Maria and ask her to tell them where the Spider is. She doesn't know, but she can find out in a few days for the sum of ten thousand dollars. This is steep, but meeting with freaks like the characters isn't going to be easy to explain to the mob if it's noticed, so Maria wants to make it worth her while and discourage repeat visits at the same time. She can't provide an introduction, but can produce the information.

Guildhall Doorman

Summary: The Doorman has no name, having traded it away for the his sixty years of agelessness in the employ of the Guildbrothers. The Trader's Guild didn't want anyone with the weakness of a name to be guarding them, so that was the price for giving him the job. He also gets to keep any money given to him for admittance to the Trader's Guildhall, and gets to loot the bodies of anyone he has to rough up to keep out. He likes his work, and obeys the dictates of the Trader's Guild with scrupulous accuracy.

Personality: In his role as guardian, the Doorman is laconic in the extreme. He speaks only what is necessary for his job, and refuses to discuss things that have no bearing on his task. He projects an image of barely contained rage, which he finds useful for keeping uppity visitors in line.

Obsession: His job. He does his job, and he does it well.

Wound Points: 80

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Disrespect. He has an important role, and he hates it when people don't recognize that.

Fear Stimulus: (Self) Meeting someone who knows him and remembers his name. He would lose his job here if he reclaimed his name.

Noble Stimulus: Protecting his charges. He's

ready to die for the Trader's Guild, who have kept him in their employ for over sixty years without letting him age.

Stats

Body: 80 (Mammoth)

Speed: 70 (S) (Snake Quick)

Mind: 40 (Gets By)

Soul: 40 (Follower)

Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 60%, **Dirty Fighting** 75%

Speed Skills: Dodge 60%, Drive 25%, Sneaky Bugger 65%

Mind Skills: General Education 15%, Notice 40%

Soul Skills: Charm 15%, Lie 15%

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
8 H/1 F	3 H/0 F	0 H/0 F	4 H/1 F	9 H/3 F

Notes

The Doorman's Dirty Fighting cherries are all Second Helping, allowing him to make another attack roll immediately in the same round that he rolls a matched success, with no penalty.

Anyone who can tell the Doorman his name (Gareth Wilkes) forces him to take a rank-10 Self check. Failure results in him immediately fleeing the area, never to return. The Trader's Guild is not pleased about losing their Doorman.

Possessions

For when he needs to defend the Guildhall, the Doorman carries an aluminum baseball bat with pieces of sharpened rebar driven through the business end. This deals +6 damage, and causes firearms damage on a matched success, as well as allowing a second attack.

The Guildbrothers

Summary: There are six Guildbrothers, but they have identical stats. They have traded aspects of themselves back and forth so often that now they

are effectively homogenized, without any real individual identities. They each appear different, and two are women, but they dress in identical black suits and they haven't washed or bathed in a very long time. They look like street people in suits.

Personality: Very little. Everything the Guildbrothers do is shaped by exchange, and they do nothing unless there is some return on the effort. This can tend to make them rather alien to normal people, even the PCs.

Obsession: Exchange. The trading of one thing of value for another.

Wound Points: 50

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Giving something away for nothing.

Fear Stimulus: (Self) Being given something for nothing.

Noble Stimulus: Encouraging fair trade. The mystic key to exchange, they feel, is that all involved parties be satisfied with the results.

Stats

Body: 50 (Average)

Speed: 50 (F) (Average)

Mind: 70 (Two Steps Ahead)

Soul: 70 (Guiding Lights)

Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 15%, Struggle 15%

Speed Skills: Dodge 15%, Drive 15%

Mind Skills: General Education 15%, Notice 15%, **Mystery of Trade** 40%

Soul Skills: Charm 15%, Lie 15%, Avatar: The Merchant 70%

Mystery of Trade: This is their magickal understanding of the act of exchange. It allows them to understand the underlying symbolism behind ritualized exchanges, such as the transactional nature of magick, and to manipulate it slightly. With a successful roll, they can twist any magickal effect an adept

performs in their presence by changing the symbolic meaning of the exchange of power for effect. The roll is rounded to the nearest number divisible by 10, and the result is applied as a negative shift to the adept's magick roll.

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
2 H/1 F	4 H/1 F	2 H/0 F	1 H/3 F	9 H/5 F

Notes

In addition to the above skills, the Guildbrothers have a collective pool of skills that they trade back and forth as needed amongst themselves. For game purposes, assume the Guildbrothers have a rating in any mundane skill equal to the governing stat, but that only one of them can use it at one time.

Possessions

The Guildbrothers generally don't have much in their possession. They each have a couple of hundred dollars and there is a .45 semi-automatic pistol in a holster fastened to the underside of the table. Other than that, and their filthy black suits, nothing.

Contract Three: The Spider

So now the characters are off to see someone called the Spider. If the last group of Merchants didn't make them nervous, the Spider should. Beyond the normal obsession with commerce, and the bizarre obsession with exchange, you find someone that even the Trader's Guild thinks is a bit nuts.

That's the Spider.

The Spider has tapped itself into the actual process of trade, becoming the conduit for thousands of transactions a day. To say that the Spider is not entirely human any more is to damn with faint praise the superlative job that it has done turning itself into a monster. And this is what the characters need to deal with.



Into the Web

One does not simply approach the Spider. One must first make contact and arrange for an audience. This is done by invoking its attention at an ATM, which is the extent of the instruction for finding the Spider that the Trader's Guild (or Maria) provides as their part of the bargain. The act of invoking the Spider is simple, requiring a character to insert his or her ATM card into the machine and type the code 774337463333 (Spider God 333). This flags the attention of the Spider, who identifies the name on the ATM card, calls up all relevant records, tracks down the telephone numbers registered to the character, and calls the character either on cell phone or home telephone.

The minimum time before the call arrives is ten minutes, and if the character does not own a cell phone, their home telephone is ringing when they arrive home. The voice on the other end when they answer is cultured and androgynous, sounding quite artificial, and it identifies itself as the Spider. It listens to whatever the characters have to say, but is unimpressed unless the characters identify themselves as couriers for the Trader's Guild, in which case it provides directions to its current lair.

If the characters are not acting as Trader's Guild couriers, they have to appeal to the Spider's ego in order to arrange an invitation. Marveling at the contact method is a good first step, and entices the Spider to speak a little more about what it is, and what it has accomplished. If they build a good relationship, which in the Spider's view is one where the characters are in awe of it, they may respectfully request an audience, which the Spider magnanimously grants to them.

The directions that the Spider provides lead the characters to a loft apartment in a section of the city that's beginning to go to seed. Unusually for this part of the city, the door to the building is covered by three separate security cameras, and has an advanced electronic lock system. There is a call box at the door, with a single button on it.

Pressing it produces a response in the same voice heard on the phone, asking who it is. If the players identify themselves appropriately, the door buzzes open and they are told to come directly up to the top floor.

The Parlor

At the top of the stairs is a short hallway, ending in a fire door. Beyond that is the Spider's lair. This is a large loft apartment with a high, beamed ceiling and hardwood floors. Most of the space is occupied by various cases of electronics and machinery, wired into each other in an unlikely and baffling maze of cables. Some of the boxes are clearly computer equipment, some are medical devices, and some are large constructions of gears and arms resembling Mechanomancer clockworks. The cables that join them vary from standard computer cables to fiber optic trunks and hydraulic hoses. It all blends into an insane network of devices feeding into the Plexiglas box in the center of the room.

The Spider rests in this box. It is a strange-looking human being of indistinct gender, with a bloated stomach, shrunken chest, and atrophied arms and legs, lying in a filthy rope hammock. Its limbs are twisted at awkward angles, and twitch spastically from time to time. The face is locked in a drooling grimace, with one eye clouded by a cataract, and the head dangles on a spindly neck. Strings of greasy, matted hair dangles down over the torso, and the finger- and toenails are long and dirty.

Perhaps the most unappealing part of the Spider's appearance is the number of wires and tubes that penetrate its body. Fiber optic cables run into the back of its head, telephone cord pierces its throat, many copper wires plunge into the chest above the heart, brass arms pump in and out of the Spider's back, and tubes carry liquids into and out of the abdomen. The Spider is the centerpiece in a bizarre cybernetic mobile, rocking gently in the middle of the box. The first glimpse of the Spider is worth a rank-5 Unnatural check.

There are a number of small arms reaching out from the front of the box, each with a small gripping appendage. The Spider, speaking in the same artificial, androgynous voice from a speaker overhead, instructs the characters to place the package from the Trader's Guild within reach of these arms, and to leave it there. It then deigns to answer a few questions, as long as the characters feed its ego and continue to flatter it. Failure to do so causes it to become rather surly, and it shortly dismisses the characters.

If the characters are not acting as Trader's Guild couriers, the Spider grants them the requested audience, again answering a few questions as long as the characters are properly awestruck and deferential.

The Spider answers questions concerning what it is, and what it hopes to become, but avoids questions as to its origins, not being comfortable remembering what life was like before the change. It is offended at questions as to its gender, as it feels that those who ask such things have completely missed the point. If allowed, the Spider goes on at some length about its incredible power and the change it hopes to bring to the world, going on about how the trade and the trader are one, and that information transfer is the true medium of exchange, and how soon all the world will understand the glory that it has seen: typical self-made deity ranting. It even tells the characters that the credit cards they have brought it (if they did) are all cards that it has personally canceled as an expression of its power. They now form the core of a powerful fetish it is building to help keep it on the Merchant path. All through the conversation with the Spider, its head lolls lifelessly on its pencil neck, saliva flowing freely from its mouth, which doesn't move as it speaks.

If the characters decide that the world is better off without the Spider—and who could blame them—they may decide to attack. This is a bad idea unless they are very well prepared. Firstly, because of the Spider's high Avatar: The Merchant skill, each character must pay the Spider before they may attack it each time (see

UA, p. 173), and the computer equipment in the room counts as the Spider for this purpose. Secondly, the box in which the Spider dwells is six-inch-thick bulletproof Plexiglas. Third, hidden in the ceiling are a number of automated weapons that the Spider can activate at will. These take one round to ratchet down into position. The gears make enough noise that everyone can see what's happening and respond. On the second round, the guns flood the area in front of the cube with flying bullets, causing each character to automatically take one firearm wound each round he stays in the area, unless he successfully Dodges. Any Dodge success means he avoids all damage.

Finally, even if they escape with their lives, the Spider can completely destroy their credit record, financial history, and keep them from amassing any kind of money in an electronic form for as long as the characters and the Spider live. Or, at least, until it loses interest in them and goes back to contemplating its electronic navel. For a god, the Spider has a remarkably short attention span, probably due to its high-speed connectivity. After about a week of screwing over its eternal enemies, the Spider gets bored and moves on to something else.

Barring a panic attack, the characters probably get around to asking the Spider about the Swap Meet.

What the Spider Knows

The Spider knows about the Swap Meet. It's just never paid much attention to it. It can find the location by tapping into the financial records of some of the more powerful Merchant avatars it knows of. It checks their purchases and cross-references the airline tickets and hotel reservations to find the ones that are going to the same place around the same time. This takes it about six hours. Once it finds the location, it can contact the characters and provide them with the information. Wasn't that easy?

The location, by the way, is a little resort hotel outside of a small village, just a couple



hours to the north and east of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. It's the Wendigo Hotel in Hat River, Manitoba. The date set is in the early autumn, which in Manitoba is mid-October. In fact, it's the weekend before the second Monday in October, which just happens to be the Canadian Thanksgiving long weekend.

The Price

First and foremost, the Spider wants awe and respect. Any other approach causes it to be surly, unhelpful, and eventually hostile. This is the minimum requirement to get cooperation. If the characters are properly awed by the majesty that is the Spider, it agrees to find the information for them and provide it, as long as the characters make it worth its while.

The main thing the Spider wants is a stronger connection to the Merchant Archetype. If any of the characters have the Avatar: The Merchant skill, the Spider demands some of their mystic connection. This translates into the Spider taking 7% skill from the Merchant character, bringing its own Avatar: The Merchant skill to 98%. This level of skill won't last long, as the Spider has drifted too far from what the collective unconscious conceives of as the Merchant, but it holds it for a while.

If there is no Merchant avatar in the group, then the Spider trades for an information retrieval skill: research skills, notice skills, detective skills, computer use skills, or anything else that sifts the environment for usable data, then collates it. It wants at least 20%, and takes either all from one character, or from several; it's not fussy in this regard.

If this isn't agreeable to the characters, it offers one final price. All the characters must turn over to it, for one year, all their finances. They can deposit and withdraw as desired, but their investments are totally at the Spider's disposal to do with as it pleases. It is trying to achieve a mystical presence as a Merchant power in the Occult Underground, and it hopes to do this by taking control of as much of the Under-

ground's finances as possible, becoming identified with trade in that respect. Once it has the permission and the access, the Spider does its utmost to make sure the funds increase, building a base of respect and awe, and enticing more to submit to its financial management. Of course, it plays pretty fast and loose with the rules, and it's likely to wind up with the police investigating all these accounts for fraud, theft, and tax evasion—unless the Sleepers spot the irregularities first.

When the Spider shares its information with the characters, it is far from humble about the exchange and expects reverence for its abilities and its accomplishments. If the characters provide this willingly, all goes well. If they discount the magnitude of the Spider's capabilities, they are rudely dismissed and warned never to return. After a few days of sulking, the Spider decides that it's time for some divine retribution, and starts messing in petty ways with the characters' online financial transactions. If the characters ignore this, the Spider gets bored after about a week and lets them off the hook. Should they take any action, the Spider starts to treat the characters as its nemeses, monitoring their activities and interfering any way it can, as long as the characters keep messing with it.

The Spider, Computer Nightmare

Summary: The Spider has hooked itself into the global banking network by trading away bits of its own brain and body for the ability to interface directly with the data flow. Thousands of purchases and sales are processed every day by its own nervous system, turning it into the ultimate expression of trade. Unfortunately for its chances at ascension, it has also removed itself so far from humanity that it no longer even begins to fit into the idea of the modern Merchant. Only by using its virtual presence to buy and sell online and through strange rituals that it has developed for the purpose has it maintained its exalted tie to the Merchant archetype.

Personality: The Spider is torn between glorying

in its accomplishment in merging the data and the mind, and bitterness in the fact that it now no longer partakes of the human ideal of the Merchant that drew it to this pass. It acts like a petulant little god, belittling those who don't acknowledge the majesty of its accomplishment, and fawning in the admiration of those clever enough to flatter it. It knows that it is truly a force to be reckoned with, and it likes to hear it from time to time.

Obsession: Whatever its obsession may originally have been, now it is obsessed with proving that it didn't make the wrong choice after all when it became the thing it is today.

Wound Points: 10

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Being mocked. It will not stand for disrespect.

Fear Stimulus: (Violence) Being disconnected will reduce it to an invalid, and that terrifies it.

Noble Stimulus: The Spider is very magnanimous to those who show it the proper awe.

Stats

Body: 10 (Not Much Left)

Speed: 10 (F) (Almost Immobile)

Mind: 90 (Computerized)

Soul: 95 (Godlike)

Skills

Body Skills: None.

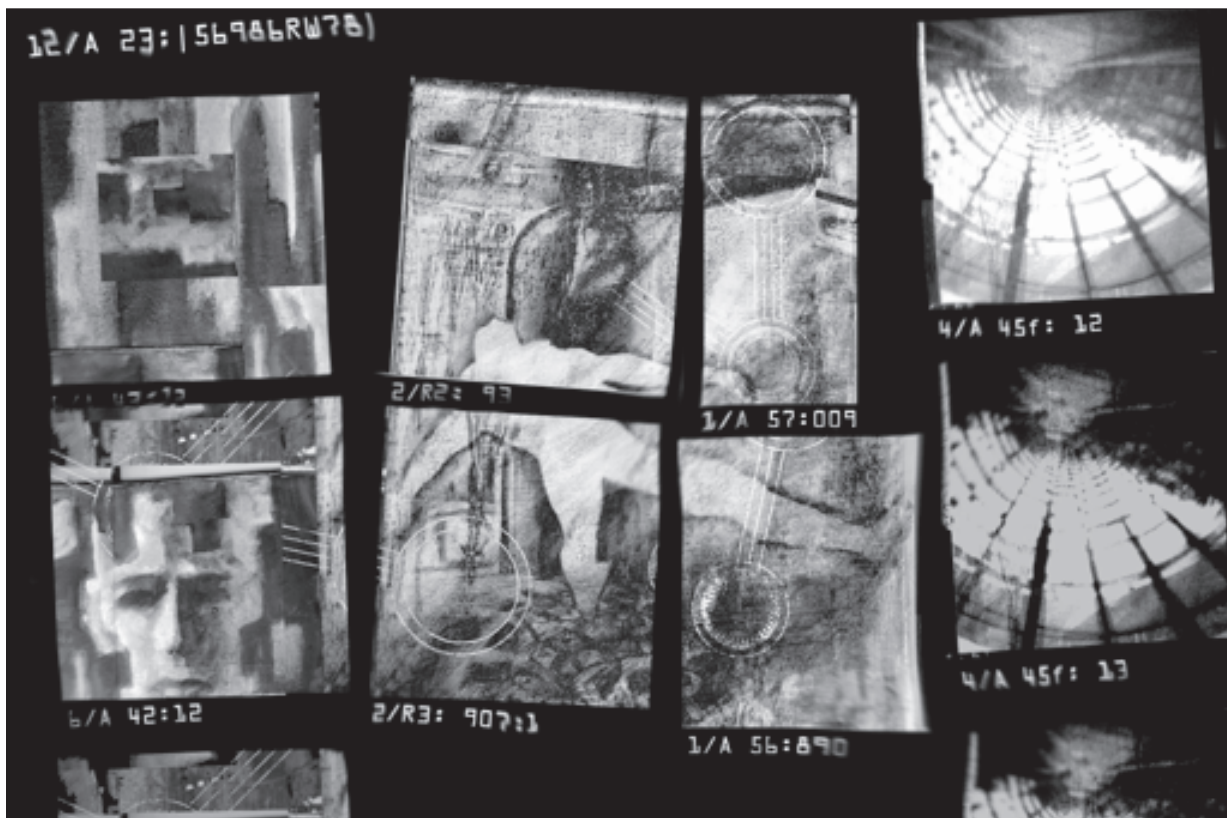
Speed Skills: None.

Mind Skills: General Education 80%, Notice

70%, **Mystical Computer Interface** 90%

Soul Skills: Charm 20%, Lie 70%, Avatar: The Merchant 91%

Mystical Computer Interface: The Spider can tap into the network of financial transactions that take place online and process a number of them itself. With a successful roll, it may find one desired transaction happening somewhere in the world and process it internally, altering it in any way it wants. All relevant information about the transaction is



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also accessed every time it does this, so it is able to keep track of specific people and events through this medium.

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
0 H/3 F	10 H/1 F	6 H/1 F	5 H/1 F	10 H/2 F

Notes

While it is no longer able to do anything for itself physically, the Spider is still moderately safe from harm in its lair. It remains in a bulletproof Plexiglas cube when strangers are present, and has several automated weapons trained on the killing field in front of the cube. If attacked through its peripherals, all attacks do only hand-to-hand damage, and each piece of machinery has 20 wound points. Each piece of machinery destroyed causes the Spider one wound point of damage from its total of ten.

Possessions

Mainly some highly sophisticated computer equipment and the machinery needed to maintain its own life. It's not terribly concerned with physical comfort, as it spends most of its subjective time in the world of electronic trading. It has summoned and bargained with the soul of a nurse who now resides in the Spider's life support system to help keep it safe, and with the souls of a couple of computer geeks who now inhabit the complicated interface system the Spider has built, helping to convert the data into something palatable to its once-human mind.

That's Far Enough

If the characters have been playing friendly with all the Merchant freaks so far, there are probably a couple PCs with a real urge to stomp something. They've had to make nice with some of the most irritating and bizarre elements of the Occult Underground, biting their tongues and bobbing their heads to get what they came for. I'll bet they're itching for a fight.

Let's give it to them.

Now that they have the secret of when and where the Swap Meet is taking place, they've got a target as big as all outdoors painted on them. You think everyone just kept quiet about their interest? Not likely. These are the types of people who sell information for magickal power, after all. The characters have enemies, after all. This is a game of furious action, after all.

Who's it Gonna Be?

So many possibilities.

The characters have enemies of their own who probably would like to both interfere with their plans and get the information about the Swap Meet for themselves. Use this as another opportunity to tie the scenario back into your main campaign. If you've got an appropriate bad guy in the campaign that would fit, by all means throw him in. If you've got one that wouldn't fit, but it would mess with the characters something awful, throw him in. If the characters are after something to stop one of your main villains, then this is the perfect time to send a goon squad after them.

If you don't have anything that you want to use here, we've got you covered. Remember Anthony, the mobster boyfriend to entropomancer Maria? He's been discretely following the characters, just keeping track of where they're going and to whom they're talking. He's been tough to spot, and fades if noticed, so as to pick up the characters later. This means that unless the characters killed him earlier, he's still on the job. He notices when the characters start to make travel plans. He has instructions to scare them off, so that there's less competition at the Swap Meet, and he and Maria can have the run of the place. He's also pretty nervous about the fact that these schmucks now know about Maria, and he wants to make sure something gets done about that. Of course, he'll need a good excuse to give any goombahs he brings along as back-up, something like how they stole ten thousand dollars and a kilo of uncut cocaine from him . . .

If Anthony was somehow spotted and taken out, Maria is out for vengeance and can count on

a pack of hard boys to help her out. She can put together a band of thugs just as easily as Anthony could, and she can find the characters with a little bit of mojo. She wants payment in blood for the loss of her ticket to the top.

Don't like that one? How about the Trader's Guild? Were the characters reasonably polite and agreeable? Even if they were, the Guildbrothers might want to protect the secret of their Guildhall. The Doorman and a mob of friends can be dispatched like little flying monkeys to do the bidding of the Guild, and lay an unholy beating on the characters.

There's always the Spider. Why would it want to hurt the characters? Well, maybe it's realized that they were only humoring it, patronizing it so they could steal its secrets and go away, mocking it to their friends. Maybe they weren't all that polite at all, or maybe it's seen the patterns in the mystical web of data in its head that tells it they must die. Let's face it: the Spider is so far around the bend that it can see its own butt. It doesn't need much of a reason to track down a bunch of ruffians to perform a sacred hit for it.

Keep in mind that the characters aren't the only ones on the Swap Meet trail, and that pretty much everyone they've talked to about it is just the type to sell that conversation to someone else. Easy enough to have another group of aspiring shoppers find out about the characters' plans, and try to warn them off so as to cut down on the competition for the Blue Light Really Specials.

Not enough for you? Mix and match. Anthony wants to off the characters, but their old buddies from that rival cabal show up wanting to squeeze the Swap Meet location out of them. The characters are caught in the middle of a deadly crossfire, both sides trying to cap them, but one wanting some info first. Maria has to involve herself to make sure the characters go down. Then along comes the Doorman, slipping through the cover, closing in on the characters to plant his baseball bat in their heads.

Pick your opponents, pick your reasons, and drop a grade-A obstacle on the characters as they

try to get out of town. Focus on warning them off, scaring them away from the Swap Meet, making them miss the plane. Watch the difficulty carefully, because you don't want to kill the heroes this close to the goal, right? Right?

The Setup

Now, where should you hit them? I say go with the classics. There's a reason they endure.

Early morning, on the way to the airport to catch the plane to Winnipeg, a big black van comes up behind the characters' vehicle and tries to run them off the road. If the characters are traveling by cab, the driver begins to panic and needs to be controlled in some way, or he careens off the road into a nearby obstacle. Whether the van stays on the road or not, a couple of pistols poke out of the windows and open fire at the PCs' vehicle. If the characters exit the vehicle, your group of baddies jumps out and proceeds to unload on them. After a round or two of this, before the characters can pull it together, their opponents pile back into the van and speed away.

Of course, that won't work if the characters are traveling to the airport on foot or by bus or subway. In this case, our villains follow the characters, not trying too hard to remain hidden, hoping to cause the PCs to run somewhere private, where they can work undisturbed. If the characters are traveling individually to the airport, stick a bad guy or two on each of them. Place the toughest customer, such as Anthony or the Doorman, on the most physical character. If Maria is in on the hit, sic her on the one with the strongest magick.

Keep in mind that you may have more than one group trying to get their hands on the characters. A black van opens up on the characters' cab, which promptly jumps the curb and hits a hydrant. As the dazed characters stumble out to face their attackers, a second van pulls up, hoses down the bad guys with Uzis, and tries to haul the still-groggy characters away to be interrogated.

If none of those setups work with the



characters, why not just ambush them at the airport? Parking garages are beautiful places for noisy gun battles, hide-and-seek chases, and big-time mojo blasting. If at all possible, this is the tactic that Anthony uses, waiting until the characters park and leave their vehicle before pulling up and thumping them. The Doorman also likes this one, being able to hide amongst the cars with his crew, and jump the characters as they pass. Nothing like a little Dry Gulch action at the airport.

The Smackdown

You've got the who and the where laid out, now you need the how and the with what.

One thing to keep in mind is that this isn't a dungeon crawl where every monster cries "BREE-YARK!" and fights to the death to protect his pouch of gold: the characters' opponents are going to have a limit to what they're willing to put up with. When things go badly, they pull back and try again later. About the only one who might fight to the death would be a grief-stricken Maria if Anthony is toast, and she's just as likely to pull back and look for another opportunity if things go too badly.

You're the best judge of what the characters can handle, so it's tough to tell you how much to throw at them. A good base is one main bad guy, like Anthony, plus one standard thug (see UA, p. 211) for each character. Arm them with .38 revolvers (MD 50) and switchblades (AD 3), and turn them loose. If they seem to be no challenge for the characters, bring in another interested party or a squad of reinforcements.

Alternatively, let the bad guys fight smart. If the action is taking place in the airport parking garage, use the cars for cover and the stairs and ramps to flank the characters' positions. Give the villains a teargas grenade or two, or maybe a flash-bang. If things are happening in a moving vehicle, throw some driving hazards (see *Lawyers, Guns, and Money*, p. 86) at the characters and force them to split their attention. Let the cabby try to knock one of the characters out of the cab

or pull a gun on someone. On a solo run through the subways, there are all sorts of hazards, ranging from cops to dead ends, for the character to contend with. Give the bad guys radios, and let them cut the character off when he or she hits the street.

If the bad guys are turning out too tough, bring on another batch but make them take out the first crew before turning on the characters. Give the PCs enough time to make a daring escape, or try some sort of negotiation. Bring in the police, which quiets everyone down pretty quickly. Turn the cab driver into an impromptu ally, or an amazingly good driver. If nothing else is helping, vehicular accidents and other acts of God can leave the characters with a real sense of having narrowly escaped, and a few hints about the Invisible Clergy and their ability to mess with probability can turn a desperate save into a source of endless paranoia.

The key is to make the characters realize that they now know one of the Big Secrets in the Occult Underground. Show them what the stakes are like when they sit down at the table with the big boys. Hit them hard, rough them up something fierce, and show them that there are people out there who would happily kill them for what they know, or just to prevent them from telling someone else. Be careful that you don't add too many entanglements, though; the characters are supposed to be heading to the Swap Meet, and you don't want to bog them down so much that they miss it. Use the attack to either resolve some of the loose ends they've created in the scenario, or to tie the hunt back into your campaign. It can also serve to reveal a new opponent, but you have to make it clear that they don't have a lot of time to do anything about it just now.

Picking up the Pieces

The aftermath of the battle may be a little bit tricky to deal with, especially if the police are involved. A graceful fade from the scene is probably in the characters' best interests, but that may prove difficult if the authorities have arrived

and settled things down. In general, leave an out for the characters, a way that they can extricate themselves from the scene without legal entanglements. Don't make it easy, though.

You might make the way out hard to spot, forcing them to think a little. Do they have a character that could reasonably bluff her way out? Perhaps a Personamancer (see *Postmodern Magick*, p. 107), flashing a "badge," taking the rest of the characters into custody. That gets them out of the net of authorities fairly quickly, once they think of it. Perhaps a fire escape ladder in the alley, when the police start closing off the ends. Quick characters can be up and out of the way before anyone gets close enough to positively identify them. Then it's just a matter of a lengthy chase across the rooftops.

Another nice trick is to have the method of escape be unpleasant. Crawl underneath all the cars, sneaking down to the parking garage entry. Drop down into the sewers to avoid the police. Trade clothes with a homeless person to sneak away. Make it something that the characters would hate having to do. If they're well-dressed, let them escape across a muddy field. If they hate being out of control, force them into a cab for a high-speed getaway. Got one of those independent, proud bunches? Rescue them with someone who calls for a favor later on.

On the other hand, if the characters are making a move to the Swap Meet with plenty of time to spare, arrest them. Throw them in the holding cell and arraign them. Force them to make bail, and then skip town to make it to the Swap Meet. You can build an entire series of adventures out of the fallout from this one little dust-up, and still get them to the church on time.

If you think they've suffered enough, let them do what they do best and work their own way out of it. You want them to think about how dangerous their knowledge of the Swap Meet is to them, and if you think they've got the point, lay back and let the characters scamper. The rest of the game, they're going to be waiting for the other shoe to smack them upside the head. You can taunt them with that for several sessions to come.

Of course, maybe you don't want that. If you really want to drive home the dangers of wasting time, here's a real good opportunity. Make them miss the Swap Meet because they haven't been clever and quiet enough, and got themselves entangled in a big fracas when they should have been skulking away to their plane. That means you don't get to run the rest of the adventure, but it really makes a point to the players, and in ten or fifteen years when there's another Swap Meet, they won't dawdle.

The Swap Meet

Now they're on their way: safely aboard an airplane, heading to a quiet little city in Canada, and then to a nice little resort town in the Manitoba woods. They're waiting to do some business with the big players in the game, a little battered, a little paranoid, but victorious. Not much can get in their way now. Of course, they aren't quite there yet. There are still a few logistical hurdles to jump through.

Some things to keep in mind are the normal trip through customs, where any weapons, including pepper spray, are confiscated; exchanging currency; renting cars; booking accommodations; and getting directions. Even if they are just taking a short jaunt across the border, this is most likely a trip into another country and involves some preparation. Also, it is the beginning of autumn in Manitoba. Dress warmly.

Winnipeg

Winnipeg is a small city of approximately three-quarters of a million people. Despite this low population, it's the biggest city in the area. You have to go west across Saskatchewan and into Alberta before you get into a bigger city, and east all the way to Toronto, really. South, the closest city of any size is Minneapolis. This makes Winnipeg an important nexus in the geographic center of Canada, and all the cross-country land routes pass through it.

It's a prairie city, which means that it spreads



out rather than up. Apart from the downtown area, most buildings are under ten stories. The streets are wide, and there are no freeways as such. Because of the abundance of wide-open streets, just about any point in the city can be reached by car in less than half an hour, no matter where you start.

Winnipeg closes up pretty early on most weeknights. Except for a few of the seedier bars on Main Street, and a very few private clubs, things tend to shut down shortly after one in the morning. Most establishments other than bars close around ten in the evening, just one hour after the malls close. It's a quiet place.

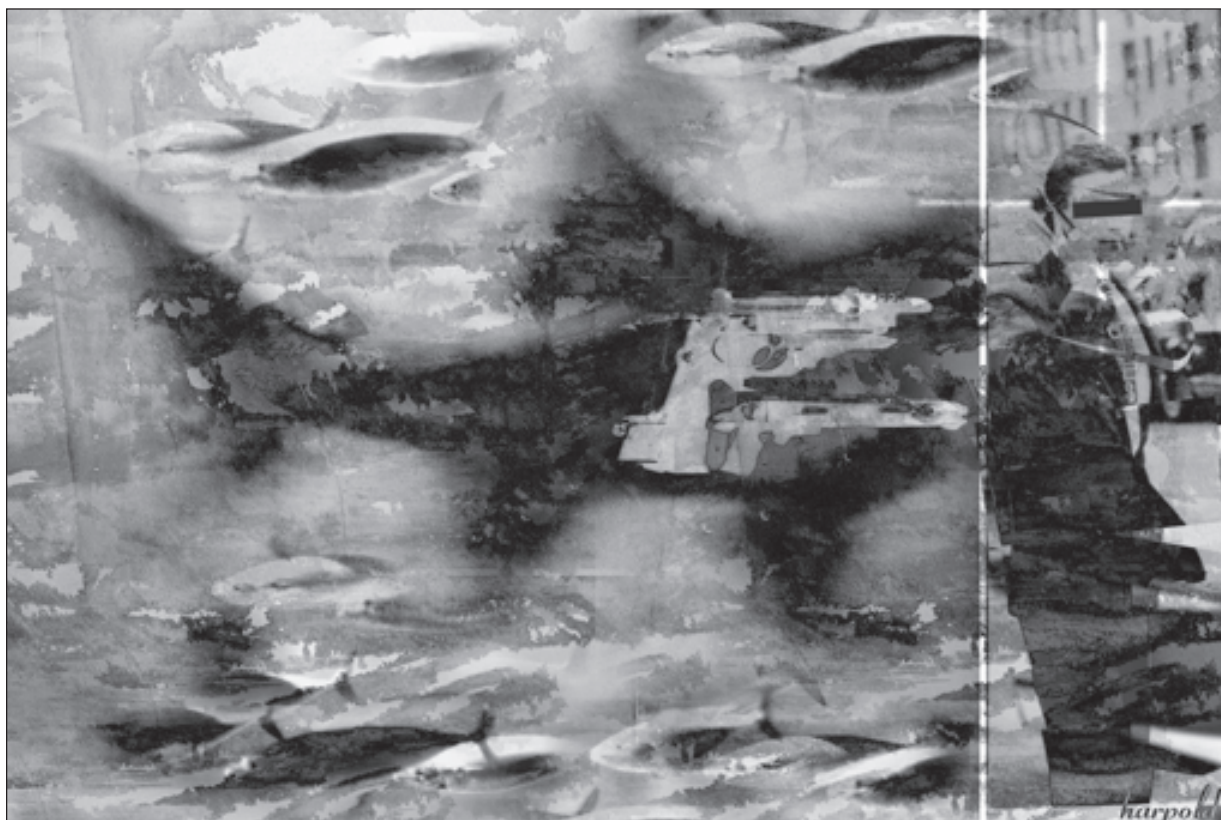
Temperatures at this time of year are widely variable. Days can reach as high as 25 degrees Centigrade (77°F), or just hover around freezing. Nights usually dip down below freezing, and the frost has started to show up most nights. The leaves of the abundant elm trees that line the city streets have entirely turned by the middle of the month to a yellow-gold, and the lawns are starting to fill with the fallen foliage. Despite the

possibility of sudden drops in temperature, most Manitobans still dress fairly lightly, taking advantage of every day they have before parka weather sets in.

Winnipeg International Airport

Winnipeg International Airport has only a single terminal and one entry point for international flights. Arrivals come in on the second floor of the terminal, and then must go down two sets of escalators to the basement to pass through customs and collect their luggage before returning up to the ground floor to leave the building.

Canada customs is notorious for having no sense of humor and no tolerance for people trying to put one over on them. Characters who try to lighten the mood are just asking for their luggage to be searched carefully, and anyone found with even the smallest violation faces the full penalty of the law. There is often a drug-sniffing dog on duty in the customs line-up, roaming up and down the lines with its handler,



MATT HARPOLO

checking all incoming passengers. Use the standard police stats in the rulebook (see UA, p. 211) should the characters decide to start something in the airport. There are generally five to ten customs agents in the area at any given time,

and airport security and police begin arriving within minutes should an alarm sound.

Having passed successfully through customs, incoming characters return to street level and exit the terminal. It's about a two-minute walk to the

Canadian Gun Laws

Canada is very different from the United States in the key area of firearms. Without a constitution that includes the right to bear arms, Canada has much stricter controls over who gets a gun and what they can do with it. All firearms, no matter what type or who owns them, must be individually registered; without the proper registration, the owner is unable to even buy ammunition.

In addition to this, all handguns are considered restricted weapons, and are illegal to own unless you are in the armed forces, on the police force, a member of a shooting club, a licensed gun collector, or you are the proprietor of a business that sells such weapons. Beyond that, short-barreled pistols, sawed-off shotguns, and anything that can be set to automatic fire are prohibited, as are any modifications to weapons that minimize the sound of firing or muzzle flash. About the only people in Canada who are able to obtain a license for a concealed weapon are plainclothes police officers.

If you come in as a visitor, the best bet you have for getting a permit to carry a weapon in any way is to bring a hunting rifle, and make sure that you have all the paperwork completed and faxed to the Chief Firearms Officer of the province you'll be visiting some weeks before you come. If you really, really need to bring in a handgun, you're going to need to be a registered contestant in a shooting contest, and you can then carry your handgun, unconcealed, from your lodgings to the contest site and back again.

Of course, that's if you want to bring the weapon in legally. There's always the option of smuggling the weapon past customs, but keep in mind that Canada customs takes an extremely hard stance on such attempts. You're looking at serious trouble if they catch on.

Because the setting of the scenario is a relatively small city, there's not a whole lot of opportunity to purchase an illegal weapon. The local chapter of the Los Bravos, the main motorcycle gang, is pretty much history after running afoul of the Montreal Hell's Angels. The street gangs are predominantly formed of First Nations youth—people the U.S. typically call Native Americans—and they're not going to talk to anyone who doesn't have a reference or isn't obviously a member of one of the First Nations. What may be possible is picking up a rifle or shotgun that's unregistered at an estate sale or farm auction, but these things are usually in pretty poor shape. Of course, stealing someone else's gun is always an option, but that carries its own risks.

If you do manage to get a firearm, the police response to the presence of firearms is slightly different from that of their U.S. counterparts. Keep in mind that in Canada, pointing an unloaded gun at someone is an indictable offense and carries up to a five-year jail term. Most police departments, especially the RCMP detachments in rural communities, are used to seeing citizens with various rifles and shotguns constantly, and don't react too extremely to them. But the sight of a handgun, especially in a tense situation, is going to provoke a very serious response. Nothing gets discussed or explained until the weapon is in the hands of the police and the bearer is completely disarmed and restrained. Then you can try to explain yourself.

Just in case it needs to be said, please remember that these are guidelines for a game, and are somewhat simplified from the actual statutes regarding firearms in Canada. Please don't use this as a real-world primer.





rental cars, and then off into the wilds of Manitoba.

The Drive

The drive from Winnipeg to Hat River is about ninety minutes. It's four-lane blacktop for about half the distance, then two-lane blacktop. Scenery is generally farm fields and woods, with a little town clustered around the highway every ten minutes for the first half, and then nothing but the occasional service station until Hat River. The land is pretty heavily settled by Manitoba standards, but that just means the farms are a little closer together. It's still a pretty long walk to the nearest house if you happen to break down on the highway.

The names of the towns in this part of the province are predominantly French, such as Beausejour, although attempting to speak in that language to any of the locals gets you a funny look and some butchered high-school French in reply. The actual inhabitants are generally of Ukrainian, Polish, or Latvian descent, with a little bit of English, Irish, and Swedish thrown in. Stopping in any of the little towns for food gets the characters a fairly normal menu, although with the addition of borscht, perogies, cabbage rolls, and kielbasa.

The last leg of the trip from Winnipeg to Hat River is about fifteen miles of winding highway through thick mixed forest. Deer and bears are abundant here, and many cars have been wrecked by colliding with deer that try to dart across the highway in front of them. Except for the two or three miles of road at either end, there are no houses at all on this stretch and it gets mighty dark at night, with the tall trees and no lights except the headlights of the cars. Traffic is sporadic, although there is a fair bit heading towards Hat River around sunset, as people head out to the wilds for Thanksgiving. Shortly after dark, traffic drops off to almost nothing.

Hat River

The village of Hat River lies on the banks of the Winnipeg River. It's a quiet little farming and tourist town, with about twenty-five hundred

people living in and around the village. During tourist season in the summer, the population quintuples, as families from Winnipeg and even further afield swarm out to their cottages for the swimming, boating, and fishing. Around Thanksgiving, though, the town is pretty empty. There's not much activity in the streets except for Saturday, when it seems everyone in the municipality comes in to town for groceries.

The Locale

Hat River is located on the border of the prairies and the Precambrian Shield, so bedrock outcroppings and forests with thick undergrowth separate the farmland that surrounds the village. Deer, beaver, muskrats, and skunks are common in the surrounding forests, with the occasional bear and coyote. In the fields and swamps are large numbers of ducks, geese, and partridge. Hunting and trapping are popular with the locals, and some of the summer people also come out during the hunting season to participate. The sounds of rifle shots in the fall don't cause much excitement.

The town itself is stretched out over about three miles north to south along the west bank of the Winnipeg River. The downtown area occupies about two blocks near the north end of the town, with residential areas and schools stretching away south. There are two hotels in town, each with a restaurant and bar. There are also three grocery stores, a handful of clothing stores, and two huge hardware stores. A Chicken Chef and a Subway on the west side of town operate all year round, with two ice-cream shops opening up in the summer, one down by the river and one by the highway.

The two hotels are Riverview, which looks out on the river and is comfortable if not fancy, and Finnegan's Inn, which sits on the north edge of town and is somewhat seedier. For entertainment, locals either go to the bar or rent videotapes. There's not much else going on.

The Locals

People in Hat River tend to be both friendly and

reserved at the same time. They are careful not to intrude on strangers, not to pry into people's business, and not to put themselves forward. But if asked for assistance or included in a conversation, they are outgoing, pleasant, and very talkative. Everyone knows everyone else, and gossip is a popular pastime. Characters can find out a great deal about residents of Hat River who they know nothing about, but whatever they say to the locals quickly finds its way into the rumor mill, as well. In a town this size, that means that everyone knows everything within a couple of days.

Enforcing the law and keeping the peace in Hat River is a small detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, consisting of ten officers, and the four Natural Resource Officers, who keep an eye out for poachers and such. These are the only people in the municipality who are licensed to carry handguns, although the NRO's usually don't. They all take a very dim view of anyone who does have a handgun on their person or in their vehicle, and tend to err on the side of caution when confronting someone they suspect to be armed. They don't react nearly as strongly to rifles and shotguns, as many of the locals have these on hand for hunting or eliminating vermin on their farms.

Just for the record, the Mounties don't wear their red serge dress uniforms for everyday duty. They dress in a subdued uniform of tan and black, with a yellow stripe running up the sides of the pant legs, and black billed cap. The red serge is only for special occasions.

Anyone in town or the surrounding farms can provide directions to the Wendigo Hotel, and are more than happy to if asked. They've noticed a large number of people coming in to the hotel in the past couple of days, and are having fun gossiping about the strange folk who seem to be congregating there. If the characters are striking in any way, they will be remembered and discussed with many gleeful speculations and fabrications. Strangers can't pass unnoticed in town at this time of year, and the weird ones always get a lot of air time on the rumor radio.

Wendigo Hotel

The Wendigo Hotel is about twelve miles out of town, half of which is travelled through on a gravel road winding through a collection of farms and wood lots. The gravel road is called, not very originally, Wendigo Road, and passes over a wide range of terrain. The road was named after the hotel, which was named by people who had no idea that a Wendigo was a native spirit tied to cannibalism. They just liked the sound of the word. Of course, you don't have to tell the characters that.

The fields are dotted with round bales of hay as tall as a man. The trees in the woods are just about bare of leaves, with the evergreens standing in sharp contrast to the rest of them. The bedrock forms mounds thirty and forty feet high just off the road. A few farmers are finishing the baling, and there are a couple driving their tractors along the road from their fields to their farms. The dust is thick if vehicles are moving at any speed, and the ditches along the roads are full of stagnant water six feet deep.

It takes about twenty minutes to get from the town to the hotel under normal conditions. If characters are unfamiliar with driving on gravel roads, or if they manage to get lost, it could take a lot longer. Again, there is no public lighting outside of the town limits, so it gets very dark at night.

Accommodations

The hotel is set near the beach in a cottage development made up of seventy or eighty trailers. They are pretty much all empty this weekend, as none of them are heated—they're for summer folk. The main building is a two-story wooden building consisting of about fifty guest rooms, kitchen, dining room, banquet room, lounge, and manager's quarters. A newer addition is the indoor swimming pool, which has been grafted onto the side of the more rustic hotel sometime in the past ten years.

Inside the lobby, a placard announces the Swap Meet, which takes place in the banquet hall.



It starts at six in the evening on Friday, and runs continuously until noon on Monday. All the rooms are booked, so unless the characters reserved theirs in advance, they have to make alternate arrangements for accommodation back in Hat River.

The swimming pool is open from ten in the morning until ten in the evening every day, and the dining room from seven in the morning until eight in the evening. Room service is available until midnight. The lounge opens at two in the afternoon, and closes at midnight. It is not open at all on Sunday.

The Merchants

Merchants are thick on the ground hereabouts. There are ten or so actual avatars of the Merchant, with bodyguards, as well as another ten or so vendors who do a brisk trade in the unusual without a connection to the archetype. The remainder are, like the characters, the lucky few who have found their way here. In addition to these people staying at the Wendigo Hotel, there are about fifty or so more people who are booked into the Riverview or Finnegan's, and commute to the Swap Meet every day. Everyone has his or her own agenda, and everyone is paranoid and packing some kind of heat, whether it's a hunting rifle or a nasty bit of mojo.

The Merchants are driving the hotel staff to distraction with their constant bargaining and haggling over every little expense and service, and their goons are making everyone nervous. The twitchy folk who have come looking for their own little piece of the pie add to the general atmosphere of suspicion and danger. This whole place is a powder keg.

If they haven't got themselves kacked earlier, Maria and Anthony are probably in attendance. If there was any unpleasantness between them and the characters earlier in the adventure, they apologize, excusing it as being just business. They are friendly with the characters, holding no grudge as long as the characters reciprocate.

Remember Edward Macoy, the earnest young

Merchant who may have set the characters on the trail way back at the beginning of the adventure? If he's here with them, he actually proves himself somewhat useful in schmoozing with the other Merchants, and can greatly improve the standing of the characters in the eyes of this strange gathering.

If there is a Merchant avatar that your characters already have some relationship with, you may want to include him or her in the Swap Meet. Especially if the characters never bothered to ask their friendly neighborhood Merchant about the Swap Meet: it's always fun to show them how easy it could have been.

The Sponsors

There are three organizers for this Swap Meet, all of whom are extremely powerful avatars of the Merchant. They decided to put it on, and then each told a couple of people and let it arrange itself after that. That's how the organization happens: simply through word of mouth in the tight-lipped Occult Underground. The sponsors are assured of both exclusivity and variety in this way, which is what they're looking for. This time, the three sponsors are Arthur, Beatrice, and Cagliostro. None of these are actually their names, but Cagliostro is the name he uses regularly, while Arthur and Beatrice are pseudonyms that are disposed of after the Swap Meet.

Arthur was the primary motivating force behind this Swap Meet, and he invited in Beatrice and Cagliostro because of the way that their specialties complimented his own. He deals mainly in material items, although not just mundane ones. He carries a wide variety of rare and unique items, and prefers to be paid in cash for them. He generally has several minor artifacts around for sale at reasonable prices: things like Skeleton Keys and Hands of Glory. In addition, he may have one or two significant artifacts with him, and may also know of the whereabouts of a major artifact. He loves clockworks, and generally gives good value for a new and unique one.

Beatrice is here because otherwise she might

miss something she needs to know about. She also likes the pained look Arthur gets on his face when she goes into her mad seer act. She is ready to buy and sell information of just about any description, and prefers to pay and be paid in information. She knows several rituals, the names of many of the prominent dukes, and the secret plans of a dozen sects. Of course, a lot of what she knows is going to be about worthless, clued-out posers, but she still knows it, and gladly takes trade even for the worthless stuff. With no compunctions about people's privacy, she gladly shares as long as she gets good return.

Cagliostro comes to these things because he loves being the devil that people sell their souls to. It makes him feel good to grant them their deepest desires without them having to surrender their entire beings to the slavish pursuit of their dreams. Although he dresses and acts like a Satanist, he truly feels that he's on the side of the angels. He just gets a kick out of the act, and likes to make people think long and hard about what they want and what it's worth to them. He deals mainly in the things that have lasting value in his mind: the intangible qualities and abilities of humanity. He accepts payment in kind, or in just about any other form, as long as he sees that the customer is going to value the purchase to a magnitude he feels is appropriate. To this end, he often weaves his sales pitch around the life of the person the quality was purchased from, making the exchange seem far more mystical and valuable, using a language style cribbed from Ray Bradbury. ("This . . . this is the distillation of a young boy's summer, spent running wandering through the woods, following in the footsteps of his beloved grandfather, learning the signs left by passing animals and men. It is a summer of shared discovery, and the memories of a simpler, happier time. What is that worth to you?")

All three of the sponsors spend some time in the banquet hall during the day, although they tend to conduct their business with each other and any big trades in private.

Arthur, Swap Meet Sponsor

Summary: Arthur is one of the three powerful Merchants who make the Swap Meet take place. He is here to trade in a neutral venue with other powerful Merchants, both to keep his hand in at the high-level trading and to catch up on gossip. Arthur's primary interest is in rare and obscure items, and he is a good person to send the characters to for an artifact or other item. He is one of the older avatars of the Merchant present, at nearly ninety years of age, and has been coming to the Swap Meet for years. He is one of the primary forces behind the continuation of the institution, both for practical and sentimental reasons. He is a staunch traditionalist.

Personality: Arthur is the epitome of an old-world gentleman, quiet and reserved, with a charm based on the manners of a bygone era. He is tall and spare, dresses in conservative good taste, and has a thick shock of silvery hair and matching mustache. When he speaks, his low voice has the trace of a German accent, but it is quite faint. Arthur continues to sponsor the Swap Meet because this is where he started moving up the mystic ladder of the Merchant. He has a certain fondness for the institution as well as a desire to use it to keep abreast of what's going on in the Underground, and to move some of his rarer items. It has also proved quite valuable in allowing him to acquire hard-to-find things for his clients.

Obsession: Fair dealing. Arthur finds the true joy to be in exchanging items of value between honorable clients, with everyone satisfied with the result. He takes a profit for himself because he feels the workman is worthy of his hire, and his connections and skills in smoothing the way are a service that few can provide as well as he can.

Wound Points: 40

Passions

Rage Stimulus: People who want something for nothing drive Arthur to distraction, as they undermine his entire estimation of the purpose of his calling. He doesn't mind bargaining or





negotiating, but cheating, stealing, and being unreasonable about the value of what is offered are guaranteed to infuriate him.

Fear Stimulus: (Violence) Thorvald Drake, the current Godwalker of the Merchant. Arthur is close enough to heart of the Merchant's path to be viewed as a serious contender for Godwalker status, and he's terrified that Drake might decide to eliminate the threat by simply killing him.

Noble Stimulus: Honorable behavior. He values those who behave by a code that he can understand, and deals honorably with them.

Stats

Body: 40 (Fit For His Age)

Speed: 40 (F) (Slowing Down)

Mind: 70 (Incisive)

Soul: 99 (Rock Solid)

Skills

Body Skills: Struggle 20%, General Athletics 20%

Speed Skills: Drive 15%, Dodge 20%

Mind Skills: General Education 65%, Notice 70%, Mystic Artifacts 50%, **Appraise** 60%

Soul Skills: Charm 80%, Lie 70%, Avatar: The Merchant 96%

Appraise: Arthur can compare the value of various items, either in terms of barter or in terms of approximate cash value.

Mystic Artifacts: This is Arthur's knowledge of the existence, powers, and creation methods of a wide variety of artifacts. He can, with a successful roll, speak knowledgeably about any given artifact the characters have heard about.

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
3 H/0 F	4 H/0 F	1 H/2 F	0 H/0 F	0 H/1 F

Possessions

Arthur specializes in material goods, often with magical powers. He can reasonably be expected to have at least one of any common, minor artifact for sale, or be able to put his hands on

one in short order. He can also sell the details about creating several of the minor artifacts, although that's not his main interest. Significant artifacts may be available at your discretion. He deals fairly with the characters as long as they don't try to cheat him or rip him off.

Beatrice, Swap Meet Sponsor

Summary: Beatrice might look like Arthur's female counterpart—if she didn't affect the dress and behavior of a gypsy fortuneteller. She appears decades older than her fifty years, and wraps herself in colorful scarves, skirts, and beads. Her jewelry is as gaudy as the rest of her dress, although of much higher value: diamonds and rubies glitter at her ears and throat, amethysts and emeralds dance on her fingers, and heavy ropes of gold drape about her neck, wrists, and ankles. She specializes in information, and isn't above using her Entropomancy to divine the answers her clients are looking for.

Note that Beatrice is not, in fact, an avatar of the Merchant, but has been buying and selling information for such a long time that most people just assume she is.

Personality: Beatrice affects the manner of a deranged prophet, cackling and making cryptic references to the foggy future. She projects an all-seeing, all-knowing demeanor, laced liberally with pure insanity. Behind this show she is a canny, perceptive person who understands that knowledge is power, and that being underestimated by her clients can net her some wonderful bargains. She refuses to break character with the public, although she can sometimes be seen talking calmly and clearly with the other sponsors.

Obsession: Knowing it all. Beatrice plans to accumulate all knowledge for herself. She loves trading information, because she never winds up with less than she started with.

Wound Points: 45

Passions

Age Stimulus: Being lied to. Exchanges of information, like any other exchanges, are meant

to be a trade of items of value. If one receives counterfeit data, one has been cheated. Considering that you can give someone information freely without reducing what you possess, this angers Beatrice like nobody's business.

Fear Stimulus: (Helplessness) Not knowing the answer to a client's question. She hates feeling that she hasn't achieved the pinnacle of information possession to which she aspires, and being reminded of it just drives home the fact that she may not live long enough to know it all.

Noble Stimulus: Honesty. If someone is straightforward with her, she does her best by them.

Stats

Body: 45 (Wiry)

Speed: 50 (F) (Spry)

Mind: 90 (Razor Sharp)

Soul: 99 (Illuminated)

Skills

Body Skills: Struggle 15%, General Athletics 20%, Dance 40%

Speed Skills: Drive 20%, Dodge 40%

Mind Skills: General Education 20%, Notice 80%, Keep It Straight 80%

Soul Skills: Charm 50%, Lie 60%, **Magick:** Entropomancy 75%

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
2 H/0 F	6 H/1 F	2 H/0 F	2 H/1 F	7 H/0 F

Notes

Keep It Straight: Beatrice can keep track of all her information without having to write it all down. With a successful roll, she can pull any piece of information she knows to mind with no hesitation. She can thereby project an air of omniscience that she finds useful in her dealings.

Possessions

Beatrice usually doesn't carry any weapons, relying on her Entropomancy to see her through the difficult times. She does have an Ouija board into which she has bound a demon to answer





questions for her, and she consults it when she either doesn't have the answer she needs or she wants to impress the marks. She knows a great deal about the Occult Underground, including who's who and what they're up to, and is familiar with a number of rituals. If the characters have come to the Swap Meet looking for an important piece of information, Beatrice is the one to see.

She usually has ten minor charges and two significant ones, gleaned from selling dangerous information about dangerous people to other dangerous people, and then selling the information that she sold the information and . . . you get the idea. She uses her charges to conduct divinations if the price is right. She prefers to use tarot cards for her readings, shuffling them extensively, then closing her eyes and tossing them into the air, reading her answers in the ones that land face-up on the table.

Cagliostro, Swap Meet Sponsor

Summary: First off, he's not the real Cagliostro. Most people in the Occult Underground can probably name five or ten people who have used the name, and none of them are the true Cagliostro as far as anyone can prove. This one does a better job at the shtick than most, and uses it to his advantage when working his Faustian bargains with customers. Cagliostro is a young man with dark hair and beard and intense green eyes. He dresses the part of the evil sorcerer to perfection, with all-black suits, silver jewelry, and a walking stick with a skull on top. He deals in the intangibles: skills and abilities, extra life and true happiness.

Personality: Cagliostro does his character to the hilt, with a deep, liquid voice and a faint smile playing around his lips. His eyes sometimes seem to glow from within, especially when he starts his sales pitch. He tends to go for a subtly condescending air when dealing with his clients, never quite belittling them, but definitely coming across as being slightly amused by their desires and motivations. He has used his Merchant abilities to bring himself close to the pinnacle of human

ability, and he uses this to further unnerve his clients. Play up his mysterious, sinister demeanor, keeping the characters nervous and unsure in their dealings with him, even though he may be one of the safest people to bargain with at the Swap Meet. Don't let them catch on to that.

Obsession: Strangely enough for his behavior, Cagliostro is obsessed with helping people to improve themselves. He doesn't just gift people with what they need, though. He knows that they do not value what they feel they have not earned.

Wound Points: 120

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Being mocked. He does not tolerate disrespect.

Fear Stimulus: (Isolation) Being out of touch with the needs of his customers.

Noble Stimulus: Granting wishes. He goes out of his way to work a miracle for someone, as long as he is paid with something appropriate.

Stats

Body: 100 (Tempered Steel)

Speed: 100 (S) (Perfect Control)

Mind: 100 (Brilliant)

Soul: 100 (Magnetic)

Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 75%, Martial Arts 90%, Endurance 80%

Speed Skills: Drive 60%, Dodge 80%, Run 90%, Acrobatics 90%

Mind Skills: General Education 90%, Notice 90%

Soul Skills: Charm 90%, Lie 90%, Avatar: The Merchant 91%

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
5 H/0 F	5 H/0 F	5 H/0 F	5 H/0 F	5 H/0 F

Possessions

Cagliostro is skilled at using his walking stick with his Martial Arts skill, and as it is a sword-stick he draws it if he finds himself in need of a more serious weapon. He keeps a large briefcase

with him at all times that contains his wares: tiny bottles filled with a variety of thick liquids in which he stores the intangibles that he trades. If the characters have come to the Swap Meet looking for a skill, ability, or other abstract quality, Cagliostro is the person to see.

Doing Business

The banquet hall is filled with tables arranged along the walls, much like the dealer room of any convention. The Merchants have set up their wares and settled down to do business. They manage to stay at their tables about twenty hours a day, anxious to not miss any chance to sell something. There are a wide variety of items available, some authentic and some not. Any moderately mundane ingredients for rituals can probably be had at a reasonable price in the room, and maybe even a minor ritual or two, although those are drastically more expensive.

Standing near the tables of their employers are the large men who protect them. Use the standard stats for thugs from the rulebook (see UA, p. 211) should you need them. Anyone stepping out of line in here is going to get stomped by everyone's pet goon, because none of the Merchants want any disruption to this Swap Meet. Who knows when there'll be another one?

In the center of the room are three curtained booths. These are the sponsors' tables, and they deal in a little more privacy than the common Merchants do. Each of the booths generally has another goon outside it at all hours, and two inside with the sponsor. Anyone messing with these folks deserves what they get.

The sponsors are not generally in the banquet hall at the same time. Arthur comes in at ten in the morning, and meets potential customers until four in the afternoon. If there is something that needs a more private venue, he arranges an appointment with the characters in his room after dinner. Beatrice comes in around noon and stays until eight or ten in the evening. She sets up private appointments for people in her rooms if she needs to consult her Ouija board or exchange

a significant ritual. Cagliostro, of course, shows up at midnight and stays until dawn, which comes around seven in the morning. He does not grant private appointments outside of these hours.

Any serious violence in the hotel brings the RCMP to investigate and restore order. They are pretty hard line about strangers coming in and busting up the property of a local, and are not swayed by normal attempts at bribery. After all, they had to drive all the way out from town.

Shopping Around

You know that the characters are going to do some looking around at the various tables at the Swap Meet. How could they possibly resist? There are a wide range of strange people and creepy items on display, and you can use this opportunity to play up the weirdness factor of the gathering. Below is a list of some interesting personalities working the booths.

- **Andy Campbell** is a twitchy little fellow. His washed-out green eyes shift rapidly and nervously behind his thick glasses and he talks a mile a minute, always looking anywhere but in the eyes of the person that he's talking to. He gets uncomfortable and defensive if anyone even hints at not believing what he's saying, which may give the customers the idea that he's hiding something about his wares. Andy is actually exceedingly careful about his acquisitions, and has the highest quality items most of the time; he's just not good with confrontation. He specializes in ingredients, rather than finished products, and his table is covered with bottles, little plastic bags, and tins of strange substances. Some of the claims on the packages seem pretty unbelievable, like the bottle of Bill Clinton's sweat, the packet of hair from the tail of saber-toothed tiger, or the ground teeth of Jack the Ripper. Still, if you need a specific ingredient for a ritual or artifact, his products can be trusted to be the real deal. Andy wants cash or favors for his wares.



- **Karen Gill** dresses like a jungle explorer and talks up the difficulties she's faced in obtaining her wares. See those herbs? She had to gather those by starlight in the garden of a third-world dictator. That statue was recovered from the Nazis who stole it from a rabbinical scholar. Everything has a harrowing story attached to it, and she milks the tales to drive up the prices on her rather mundane offerings. Her wares are a mish-mash of minor curiosities ranging from simple herbs and powders, through rare books, to statues of blasphemous evils from beyond the pulp writer's imagination. Her minor stuff is usually what she claims, but the only thing magickal about the more mysterious articles are the enchanting stories she spins about acquiring them. She is most anxious to trade for working rituals or artifacts.
- **Geoff Good** doesn't hard sell, he doesn't haggle, and he doesn't seem to care if he sells anything. The one thing he does care about is always being paid in amounts divisible by three. If the offer isn't a multiple of three, it's not acceptable. He also doesn't feel the need to explain this to anyone, as it's a geas that he's accepted in return for the connections that let him find his very small selection of very high-quality merchandise. He makes three counter-offers of appropriate amounts, and becomes quite irate if people keep offering amounts indivisible by three. There is very little on display on his table, but it's all superb: signed first editions for the Bibliomancers, rare vessels for the Dipsomancers, historical items for the Mechanomancers, and special mementos for the Iconomancers. The prices are high, but the items are worth it.
- **Lindsay Williams** is more concerned with buying than with selling, and uses her booth as bait to draw people in where she can scope them out and start making offers for things that interest her. She has a good eye for spotting things of value, both magickal and mundane, and is very tenacious when

someone doesn't want to sell. Her table is loaded with weird crap, most of it at least mildly disturbing, stuff like pieces of famous people's tombstones, photographs of accident victims, and scrapbooks full of airline crash clippings. She's not peddling anything worthwhile, using this as a buying trip for her regular customers. She'll take anything in payment for her crap, preferring things with resale value. She pays in cash or the promise of special rates in the future.

- **Willy Sykes** goes by the name of Odin, trying to cash in on the Norse myths. He dresses in bedraggled jeans and tee shirts, usually with a fringed leather jacket. His right eye is missing, a similarity to the Odin myths that he makes the most of. He's pretty up on the mythology, but there is no true mystical connection there. Willy's just trying to put together a decent offering to trade with Cagliostro for his dead son's resurrection. He'll lie, cheat, steal, and con for this goal. He's got a nice little assortment of occult writings, holy water, defiled communion wafers, illicit drugs, home-made absinthe, and other odds and ends that are pretty non-specifically occult. He's a generalist, and will take anything of value in trade. Every little bit helps.

Aside from the interesting people, there's a lot of freaky stuff on the tables. Here's a little taste of the weird things the characters may see if they look around. No game stats are included, allowing you to decide on a case-by-case basis what these things are worth.

- A baboon skull painted with Chinese pictograms
- Three Batman Pez dispensers bound together with rusty barbed wire
- A copy of *Finnegan's Wake* with every third word blacked out
- A mummified baby's hand with fleur-de-lis painted on the fingernails
- A box of vacuum tubes, each painted with a different alchemical symbol

- Baby turtles with shells enameled in mandala patterns
- A necklace made out of G.I. Joe Kung-Fu Grip hands
- Mandrake roots, with the heads blindfolded and gagged
- A snow globe shaker depicting a lynching
- Boxer shorts with the Templar cross on them
- An Easy-Bake Oven scribed with ancient Greek recipes
- Three black voting balls from a Masonic lodge sealed in Lucite
- A clasp knife tied shut with violin strings
- A fez with a bullet hole through it
- A set of the three monkeys who see, hear, and speak no evil, with a fourth monkey that is covering its groin with its hands
- A bronze spearhead, the tip snapped off
- A Colt .45 Peacemaker
- Disney animation cell from *Fantasia*, featuring Mickey casting the spell in the “Sorcerer’s Apprentice” sequence
- A notebook, written in first-century Aramaic, chronicling the day-to-day life of an eleven-year-old girl in Boise, Idaho
- A monocle with red glass
- Han Solo’s blaster pistol
- Photographs of the characters with their friends and family

Fun and Games

So, you’ve got a whole bunch of twisted, obsessed people gathered at a mystical garage sale in the wilds of the Canadian woods. What do these people do for fun? Here’s a few plot hooks for you to throw in. Some of them can be easily resolved at the Swap Meet, while others can serve as the start of a whole new set of wacky adventures for your characters, should they get involved.

- Someone’s been running around the Swap Meet one step ahead of the characters, buying up all the toys they’re interested in. Given the kind of people the vendors are, it’s going to take a little effort and some smart

trading just to find the identity of the claim jumper. Getting the stuff from him is even tougher. Is he just trying to make a profit by raising the price for the characters, or is this a plot to deprive the characters of the tools they need to take out their enemies? Maybe it’s just a coincidence. But maybe not.

- No one’s sure how, but Selena Ramirez (see UA, p. 205) has managed to make her way to the Swap Meet. Characters may recognize her from her television program, and get nervous when she doesn’t seem to be buying anything. She tries talking to a lot of the attendees, however, and is never without a large handbag over her shoulder. She’s planning on doing a special on this strange event during sweeps week, and has a small still camera in the bag which peeks out a lens disguised as a glass bauble on the side. There’s also a voice-activated audio tape recorder in her inside blazer pocket. Most of the people at the Swap Meet shy away from anyone asking questions just on general principle, but if the crowd figures out what she’s up to, Selena is going to be in a great deal of trouble.
- The characters buy a little something from Lindsay Williams that seems intriguing, but nothing special. Unfortunately, she’d forgotten that it was earmarked for a special customer of hers, an Eastern School Cryptomancer (see *Postmodern Magick*, p. 71) who needs it for an elaborate lie he’s set up. Lindsay approaches the characters a little later, offering to buy it back with a slight bonus thrown in. If the characters refuse, she offers up to double what they paid. If that doesn’t work, she sells the characters’ names to her other buyer, who is quite put out at the extra effort involved, and over the next several months proceeds to make the characters sorry for interfering.
- Some soldiers of the True Order of Saint-Germain, on a hunting trip in Hat River, hear about the Swap Meet and come down for a look-see. What they find convinces them that the Swiss Banks have infiltrated even calm,





quiet Canada. Needing more information, they try to capture a couple of attendees on their way to or from the hotel, someone like the characters. If they're successful, the characters can look forward to long interrogation sessions where they are beaten until they confess the connection between the Swiss Banks, the Vatican, and the whole Peacekeeper U.N. force, which was a Canadian idea, after all.

- Some clever fellow has stolen a small but valuable vial of Princess Di's tears from Andy Campbell. When Arthur hears about this, he is furious. He gathers the sponsors for action. The whole Swap Meet gets locked down by the sponsors and their goons, and everyone is given one chance to turn it in and leave without consequences. When no one does so, everyone is subjected to a search, and the vial is found on the person of one of the characters. Hilarity ensues.

Aftermath

The characters have until Monday noon to complete their desired transactions. At that time, the Swap Meet dries up and blows away, leaving no trace of itself by one in the afternoon. The town returns to normal in time to get back to work on Tuesday morning.

Wrapping Up

At this point, the characters have either accomplished their objectives at the Swap Meet, or they haven't. Either way, they have to make their way back to Winnipeg and home again. Keep in mind that any purchases they made at the Swap Meet are probably going to have to pass through customs at some point, and must be dealt with appropriately. They may also have to make a report to their superiors in TNI, or the Sleepers, or the Sect of the Naked Goddess, if they were sent there on orders. They can spend the trip back composing their reports, and getting ready to jump back into the hectic world of the Occult

Underground. Things are probably going to start happening quickly once they get home.

Loose Ends

With a nice vacation out of the way, the characters may have overlooked a little bit of unfinished business that you can bring back to haunt them. If they left any of their contacts on the trail to the Swap Meet with a less-than-favorable impression of them, there may be some nasty people waiting for them at the airport. In the case of the Spider, their finances may be in a shambles.

If the trip to the Swap Meet was to obtain a weapon or information with which to combat an enemy, remember that their enemy hasn't been sitting still while they've been gone. His or her plans are advanced by a few days at least, and maybe he or she has taken advantage of the characters' absence to take out a couple of the characters' allies, or set some traps. If nothing else, there may once again be goons waiting at the airport.

A more subtle danger is the way the characters have exposed themselves during the hunt for the Swap Meet. They've been asking questions of people who routinely sell information. Even if they didn't reveal anything sensitive about themselves or their plans, just the fact that they were known to be asking may be valuable to someone. This is a good little thread to keep working in the background for a little while, then spring on the characters when they're up to their necks in other problems. Sink or swim, guys!

Jumping Off Points

Besides the main reason for the characters going to the Swap Meet, and the way it advances your campaign in that regard, it also gives you the opportunity to expand the campaign in a variety of ways. Not only are the characters among the elite who have gone to the Swap Meet, and possibly met one or more of the sponsors, but they may have run into a number of other hooks for further plots along the way.

If they've paid anyone with a favor, that gives

you a wonderful way to pull them into a future adventure, moving the campaign along in the direction you want and showing how the Occult Underground is connected by a web of contacts and favors. It doesn't even have to be the original person who calls in the favor; the favor might have been traded two or three times until it comes back to the characters to be redeemed. This sort of thing happens all the time, especially with the Merchants.

Want to introduce a new group or characters to your campaign, either as an ally or an enemy? Well, anyone might show up at the Swap Meet. The Grail Knights (see PoMoMa, p. 162) may have one or two members on the scene, because you never know. TNI and the Sleepers may be there to keep an eye on things, and the characters can run into them. The Sect of the Naked Goddess is still looking for the tape, so it's conceivable one of them might have made it here.

Rome or Carthage (see PoMoMa, p. 180) might be looking for a tool, human or otherwise, to use in their ongoing game. And there's nothing like dropping in a couple bat-shit crazy soldiers from the True Order of Saint Germain, looking to spread the faith or simply find out what this "Occult Underground" crap is all about.

Anything they purchase can also be a lead to another adventure. Maybe the sword they bought is cursed, or the ritual requires the heart blood of a Minoan bull to work. Off they go to get that taken care of. And if they bought somebody's skills or abilities, well, the strange memories and desires that come along with them may send them seeking a more personal goal of getting their heads straight.

Any way you want to use it, the elements of the Swap Meet, and the characters' participation in it, can have a profound impact on your campaign for some time to come.





DRINK TO THAT

BY GREG STOLZE

UNKNOWN ARMIES



"I ENVY PEOPLE WHO DRINK—
AT LEAST THEY KNOW WHAT
TO BLAME EVERYTHING ON."

—OSCAR LEVANT

"CAN'T HAVE NO HOOTCHIE KOOTCHIE
MAN 'TIL YOU GOT THE HOOGH,
AND THAT'S THE HOME TRUTH."

—DOCTOR UGLY MOUTH



“Drink to That” is a little different from

the stock-standard RPG scenario. Where the average scenario has players start at Point A and progress, concentrating on the conflicts presented until they reach Points B, C, and/or D, “Drink to That” is intended more as a subplot that develops in the background. Ideally, it builds and builds until the PCs are faced with an ugly decision that turns even uglier than they feared.

So instead of a setup that leads immediately to a series of time-fixed events, “Drink to That” is a series of general events that occur when *character actions* trigger them. The pivotal events for Barney Kay Kubiky are reactions to what the PCs do—because, after all, Barney’s destiny is intimately tied to theirs.

In some ways, running “Drink to That” is simpler than the average scenario. There’s no question of railroading the PCs into a certain decision or shoe-horning them into a given situation. Everything that happens should feel like it flows from their choices and needs because it all does—at least, until the final act.

The three acts of “Drink to That” have to go in order, but other than that there’s no particular timing needed. It probably feels a bit more natural if you give it a good amount of time to develop, but as long as the PCs feel comfortable with the Kubikys, and feel like they know them, the payoff should work.

Each act has a section called “Stimulus.” This is the sort of thing that initiates that Act. Act Two, for instance, has “The PCs need some help” as its stimulus. Any time the PCs need some help—they’re stuck on a clue in another plotline, they’re menaced by an enemy they don’t know how to handle, they’re in the dark about some aspect of the occult—then Act Two can logically occur. The key to running “Drink to That” successfully is to wait for the proper stimulus. If things go just right, the PCs perceive Barney as a useful resource and go to him voluntarily. This is what leads them deeper into the story of his life, and to their eventual choice.



“Drink to That” is a sequel (of sorts) to “Bill in Three Persons,” the introductory adventure in the *Unknown Armies* rulebook.

Act One: First Round

Stimulus

Things are going unusually well for the PCs. Perhaps they’ve just finished up one plotline or story arc and have not yet gotten entangled in another. If they’re TNI operatives, they may have just done a tidy job for the head honcho. If they’re Sleepers or reality cops, perhaps they silenced a particularly loathsome or dangerous -mancer of some sort. If they’re Naked Goddess cultists, perhaps they’ve just acquired some religious artifact—the Goddess’ old teddy bear or one of her high school textbooks. If you’re using the other scenarios in this book, right after the big climax in “The Green Glass Grail” or “Garden Full of Weeds” is a good time to introduce Barney.

Response

Some other NPC tells the PCs they should look up Barney Kubicky for some reason. The reason should, ideally, appeal to the characters’ desires. Kubicky has a reputation for being fairly in-touch in the local magick scene. (If the PCs are longtime scenesters themselves, you may want to simply say they already know Barney or have heard of him.) In any event, Barney and his family were gone for a while. But now they’ve moved back into town.

Barney’s reputation is best summed up as “clever, drunk—and small potatoes.” He’s a minor dipsomancer with a trick or two up his sleeve, but there’s a general feel that at some point he’ll probably bite off more than he can chew. In the meantime people’s attitudes range from tolerance to affection.

Here are some pretexts that could lead the PCs to seek out Barney:

- They’re looking for an unregistered fire-arm, and Barney is said to be selling his old .45 now that he’s on probation.
- They’re asking about some individual, and Barney was seen talking to him/her a week or two ago.
- They’re curious about an organization, and Barney had some crazy stories about that group—said he got the inside skinny when he got loaded with an ex-member who later wound up dining on a bullet.

You get the idea: they want a clue, and Barney is the clue dispenser. His favorite hangout is a place called Munchy’s Old Rock Inn.

Munchy’s is dim, narrow, and decorated primarily by a large pastel painting of the owner’s old cat (the “Munchy” for whom the bar was named) hanging behind the bar. The floor is crunchy from peanut shells and a little sticky in places from lost inebriate opportunities. The chairs look like aluminum kitchen chairs from the 1970s, and they’re just a little too low for the Old West style tables they surround. But the peanuts and popcorn are free and they’ve got Budweiser on tap.

When the PCs ask about Barney, the woman behind the bar rolls her eyes, says “You just missed him,” and jerks her head towards the back door. The sounds of muffled shouts come from that direction.

Barney—a chubby man in his forties with big brown eyes and a bad comb-over—is out back with two men who are younger, stronger, and tougher than he is. They’re having some sort of dispute, and as the PCs enter the scene the shorter punk muscles Barney into a full nelson while the other one punches him in the stomach.

The PCs should be able to resolve this situation easily. The toughs are more than a match for Barney, but if they’re outnumbered or out-weirded they split pretty quick. A PC who pulls a knife or gun can make them retreat, and any use of magick scares the crap out of them. They make some vague threats to Barney as they leave (“You better not try your





Barney Kay Kubiky

Barney drives a forklift at a warehouse, moving pallets of blank copier paper into trucks. It's a dull job, but he drinks to make it more interesting. After work and on weekends he's a minor player in the occult scene. He doesn't need to drink to make that more interesting, but he does anyhow.

Barney sometimes wishes he was content to work and watch TV and raise his kid, but he knows he's got a thirst for something more. He sees no way it's going to help anyone in the long run for him to pretend he's a normal guy when he knows, and his wife knows, and his *real* colleagues all know he's In The Know.

Unlike many occultists, Barney isn't into it because he wants power or has an axe to grind. He likes magick. He likes the way it makes him feel. He's friendly to other occultists (of just about any stripe) because he finds the whole thing *so neat*. He wants them to like him, too, even though he knows his abilities are pretty slim compared to those of a significant adept.

Barney served five years in prison as a result of his occult involvement: he was arrested on the scene of a burglary and convicted. Depending on whom he's with, he's either ashamed of his jail time or strangely proud. After all, he didn't rat out his friends. That's worth something, right?

Overall, Barney is a good-time guy who wants to like other people and wants them to like him. He can be a little defensive and he's got a bit of temper when he drinks, but he also knows that a lot of people can kick his ass. That's taught him some impulse control.

Barney's stats aren't particularly important. He's got a dipsomancy skill around the 50% mark, but he only uses the minor spells. Furthermore, he has no blast. (If the PCs ask, he just says "I never got taught it.") Don't worry about him in combat—he just dodges. He probably gets knocked around but never gets seriously injured unless the PCs attack him for some bizarre reason. If a PC attacks him, he runs away with surprising swiftness and the PCs never meet him or his family again.

Barney is also clairvoyant, meaning he gets visions of other places and other times—but only the past. These visions are blurry, imprecise, unreliable, and he only gets 'em when drunk. In other words, the PCs can't use Barney as some kind of all-purpose encyclopedia that solves every riddle. But this power *is* a GM escape valve for when the PCs get stuck.

Vonda Kubiky

Barney's wife Vonda is a pleasant, polite, plain-and-tall woman. She's a little younger than Barney and she works in a grocery store.

Initially shy, she warms up to characters who befriend her and they discover a woman with a kind heart and a good sense of humor. A good listener, she doesn't mind hearing other people's problems—in fact, she seems happy to do it.

She met Barney about twenty years ago when (as she tells it) she was a little "wilder." The two of them grew up in Miami, and they'd go to the shore in the morning, swim and surf all day, then stay there for a cookout or beach party until dawn. Some weekends they only went home to shower and steal more money from their mothers' purses.

Ray Kubiky

Ray is a normal kid of thirteen. He's not bright, he's not stupid. He doesn't know as much as he thinks he does about girls: instead, he knows too much about stuff he doesn't need. He likes playing pool and shooting hoops and eating soft-shell tacos. He listens to loud, mopey rock and despairs of ever being understood. But show him a good fart joke and he'll laugh until soda shoots out of his nose.

tricks around my 'hood again old man, you clear?") but they *do* leave and Barney is extremely grateful to the PCs. He buys them a round (or tries—if they order anything other than beer, he doesn't have the cash to cover it and has to add it to his tab, earning him a glower from the bartender). More importantly, he gives them his full cooperation on whatever it is they're investigating. His information shouldn't be terribly secret or powerful, but it's useful. He also gives them his phone number and beseeches them to call him for "Anything—anything at all you need. I'm your man. You really saved my hide back there, and don't think I don't appreciate it."

If the PCs don't think to go back to Barney themselves, give them a month or so of game time and then have someone else recommend that they talk to Barney about their problem *du jour*. This time he's not in trouble, but is still effusively glad to help them out. If you want to introduce Barney's oracular powers, the second or third encounter is probably a good time.

The Point

You want to set up Barney as a minor ally, a boozehound who's not worth anything in a fight but who owes the PCs a favor. It may work to include Barney as a minor character in a few other scenes—not doing anything or possessed of any particular knowledge, just around to be around. Get them used to having Barney around drinking.

Act Two: Happy Hour

Stimulus

The PCs need some help—preferably something a little bigger than a name or some gossip. Getting serious firepower, hiding from the Sleepers, skipping town after a major felony, or hiding a body are all good stimuli for this scene.

Response

If they don't think to call Barney for assistance

in their problem, he contacts them. Says he "got a funny feeling" that they were in Dutch. Initially he's all smiles and willingness to give assistance. He arranges to meet the PCs at Munchy's or some other place. He gets there first and has a couple empty beer glasses in front of him when they arrive.

Barney and the characters don't talk for long before a woman walks in the door and comes up to their table, a frown on her face. Barney hastily stands up and says "I'd like you to meet my old ball and chain, Vonda." She gives them kind of a strained smile and asks him if they can speak in private. He rolls his eyes at the PCs and excuses himself.

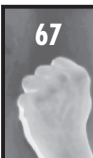
If anyone listens in (which isn't too hard—Vonda is trying to keep her voice down but she's distraught), they find out that Vonda is upset because their son Ray has run off and she doesn't know where he is. Barney is insistent that he has to help his friends. Vonda asks if "helping his friends" means he won't be home until dawn again, reeking of booze. Barney's silent, then says, "You knew the deal when you married me."

If the PCs respected his privacy for some reason, he comes back to the table and mentions that his son has run off, but he acts like it's no big deal. Vonda gives him an unhappy look and asks if he's going to help her look for him. Barney turns and yells, "I'll look when I'm ready to look, dammit!" Vonda flinches and makes for the door.

There's a couple ways the PCs can react.

If they ignore the family drama and try to get on with their business, Barney can't seem to get over it. Over the course of the evening as he helps out the PCs, he keeps apologizing for Vonda interrupting them, along with telling them that his son has "gotten really pissy lately." He also offers them openers like, "Can you believe her nerve?" or "Women—it's always something, ain't it?" Try to make it as clear as possible that the more he drinks, the angrier he is.

Later in the evening, if it's plausible, have him run across Ray and yell at him, sending



him home to his mom. (More detailed suggestions for this scene are included below.)

If the PCs chastise him for yelling at Vonda and/or for neglecting his family, he apologizes—at first. He puts his hands up, says he's not the easiest guy to live with sometimes, tells them he'll buy her some flowers tomorrow, tells them she's exaggerating and Ray is probably just at some friend's apartment. However, as the evening progresses and he gets more drunk he finds some way to raise the subject again. This time he's self-righteous: his family is none of the PCs' business. Who do they think they are, asking him for help and then prying into personal matters? They don't know shit about his life. It's real easy to pick and pry from the outside when they don't know what's really going on. And how come they only come to him when they need something, huh?

This may prompt the PCs to look for Ray. If not, they and Barney may run across him by chance, if it's plausible. Play it by ear.

If the PCs offer to help Barney and Vonda

look for Ray, he tries to dissuade them at first, but not *too* hard. Vonda is extremely grateful. Working together, it doesn't take long to find Ray hanging out at a juice bar/pool hall called Daryl's Main Event. When Barney walks in the door the guy behind the counter says, "I thought I told you never to come back here." Barney replies that he's just getting his kid and leaving.

Ray is sullenly playing pool with a couple other teenagers who sulk off into the shadows and won't meet anyone's eyes. Vonda hugs him (he resists and looks humiliated) and then scolds him for running off. When she asks why he didn't tell her where he was going, he glances at Barney, then shrugs. Anyone who makes a Notice roll, or who succeeds with any skill that includes reading emotions, can see that Ray is a little scared of his dad.

Barney suggests that Vonda take Ray home. If he's been drinking much already, he makes some snide remark about hoping she can keep track of him this time. In any event, he tells Ray "We'll talk about this when I get



THOMAS MANNING

home,” then turns to go off with the PCs.

Behind his back, Ray glances at his friends and then sullenly says “Yeah, whenever that is.”

Barney spins back towards Ray. If Barney’s been drinking lightly, he just turns and glares. If he’s been drinking a little more heavily, he swears at his son and raises his hand. In either case, Ray flinches and Vonda does too.

The Point

You want to introduce Vonda and Ray and get the PCs thinking that Barney’s got problems at home. Just as Barney could work as a minor character on the scene or in the neighborhood, even when there’s nothing going on, you can now have the PCs run into Vonda and Ray during fairly calm times in their lives.

Regardless of whether the PCs looked for Ray, Barney eventually invites them over for supper with his family. This is a chance for the PCs to see another side of the family dynamic. When he’s not drinking, Barney is a hell of a guy—funny, loving, helpful, cheerful, a joy to be around. He’s also a good cook. While Ray and Vonda are both glad to have him around sober and happy, perceptive PCs may notice they’re a little leery—they’d really *like* to be seduced by this family bliss, but they just can’t seem to buy it all the way.

If the PCs talk to Vonda or Ray about Barney they’re both reluctant to say much, even though it should be clear by this point that something is going on. Ray is a little easier to crack. All he says is that he’s glad his dad’s out of jail but . . . well, he just wishes Barney “was more like a normal dad.” If the PCs ask what he means, Ray can’t (or won’t) explain it, but vaguely alludes to “that stuff you and him go off and do. *You* know. The weird stuff.”

Vonda’s trust takes a little more effort to earn, but she really does need to talk with someone. She says she knew about Barney’s “habits” when they were dating, but she thought that getting married might make things

a little better. But they just seemed to get worse. When she got pregnant, she thought that might make Barney a little more cautious about his occult entanglements, a bit more discreet about “charging up.” But it didn’t work out that way. Now he seems to be drinking more than ever, claiming he needs to be ready to “defend” his family if anything happens.

Act Three: Last Call

Stimulus

The PCs are relaxed and happy. They’ve just successfully completed another difficult mission, and they’re feeling rewarded and competent.

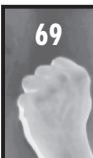
Response

Vonda and Ray show up at their door unexpectedly. If it’s plausible that two or more of the PCs would be gathered at one of the PC’s homes, that’s where they are and that’s where Vonda goes. Otherwise, she goes to the home of the kindest PC, or the one who seems like the leader. Privacy is important for this scene.

Vonda’s upset and she’s got a fading black eye. Ray has a livid hand print on his face. She tells them that Barney did it. She’s afraid of him and came to the PC (or PCs) because she didn’t know where else to turn. “All my other friends left me because of Barney,” she says bitterly.

If the PCs run true to RPG form, they gather immediately to discuss the problem. Vonda and Ray can tearfully recount Barney’s mounting paranoia and abuse (both of alcohol and of them) as he got deeper into the occult underground. Tonight was the first time he actually hit Ray, and Vonda decided enough is enough.

As the PCs get the full scoop, Barney shows up. He’s drunk and angry, but he won’t physically attack anyone. Instead, he rails at the PCs for being phonies and for prying into his life. He says his drinking was fine with them as long as he was casting spells to make their lives safer and easier. If he’s been privy to



"Tough Shit for You, Vonda."

It is not quite inconceivable that the PCs just shrug their shoulders and show Ray and Vonda the door. If they do, Ray, Vonda, and Barney all vanish overnight. Nothing the PCs do, including magickal divination, is sufficient to find them or learn what happened to them, ever. It's as if they never existed.

any of the PCs' moral lapses (and remember, the man's a clairvoyant) then he throws those in their faces, asking "Who are *you* to judge?"

Barney wants to take Vonda and Ray home and he doesn't want the PCs to meddle. Anyone who tries to play peacemaker gets the full force of his anger. Play this argument mean and nasty. When you think you've cranked the unpleasantness up about as much as you can, Barney makes an ultimatum. Either the PCs can butt out and let him solve his own problems, or he'll never help them again.

This is the PCs' choice, and he won't leave until they promise never to interfere with his family again. If they *do* give their word (regardless of whether they mean it or not), Ray and Vonda reluctantly leave with him. See the box titled "Tough Shit for You, Vonda" for the outcome.

If instead they defy Barney and insist on trying to help his wife and son, he continues to scream abuse at them as the door opens. (Even if it's locked, it opens.)

In walks the sheriff from "Bill in Three Persons."

The sling and cast are off his arm and he's in a bad mood. (PCs who make a Notice roll and beat a 15% see that his nametag says "Ragoczy" and that his badge number is 333.)

Barney demands to know who ratted him out to the police. The PCs can ask Sheriff Ragoczy anything they want but his most likely response is, "Oh, shut the hell up."

If anyone tries to stop him from arresting Barney, he glares and says, "If you mess up my uniform, I will be very pissed." Pistols, knives, spells—none of it works on this guy (who is, after all, the Comte de Saint Germain). Gunshots and the like leave holes in his uniform and prompt angry glares at the offending PC,

but he takes no action against them. He just says something that sounds like "atzor, melekh" to Barney. (Anyone who speaks Hebrew recognizes it as "Stop, king.")

When he hears the words, Barney collapses into a pile of garbage. Beer cans and empty bottles are his bones. A particularly large Chianti bottle with moldy wicker on the bottom serves as a head, while stacked and cracked shot glasses make up his spine. His fingers and toes are plastic cocktail swords. His clothes remain, but they're now stained with rancid wine and stale beer.

Give the PCs a moment to react before Sheriff Ragoczy turns to Vonda. She screams as he says "atzor, malka" ("Stop, queen"). Then she dissolves into trash as well — this time broken videotapes and water-damaged self-help books.

Ray just stares, then nods quietly as the Comte says "atzor, hayal" ("Stop, pawn"). Ray is reduced to chipped dishes, grass clippings, and old newspapers.

If the PCs didn't attack before, it's a good bet that they do now—either that, or they run away. If they run, no explanatory exposition for them—the destruction of the Kubicky family remains completely unexplained.

If they stick around, however, the Comte/Sheriff tells them to calm down and says "They were never real anyhow. There's no reason to be upset."

The situation—at least, the situation as he's willing to explain it—is this: the Kubickys were golems. They were never born, they had no parents, they were never truly alive or self-aware. They had no souls. Granted, they could mimic feelings, awareness, and the other trappings of humanity very accurately. "But you must accept that they were artificial beings," says Sheriff Ragoczy, "no more

capable of true pain than a chair or a cardboard box. Or, I suppose, you could believe that I'm a sorcerer who can turn people into piles of garbage. Either way, I recommend that you listen closely."

He created the Kubicky family as a test of the PCs' ethics and they passed. "There is, as the saying goes, good news and bad news. The bad news is that you may have to perform a very unpleasant task on my behalf some time in the next ten to fifty years or so. The good news is that the odds of this task being necessary are really very remote." He then hands them an envelope containing the Ritual of Ersmon Rarisly. "If it ever seems likely that I'm trying to destroy the world, I'd be obliged if you used this ritual on me. I've already taken the liberty of giving you an enchantment that will penetrate any disguise I adopt. Now I'm off to forget I ever knew you—unless you have any questions?"

It's quite likely that they do, but the most common answers from the Sheriff are "Don't worry about it," or "It doesn't really matter." Some other common questions and their answers follow.

Q: What does this ritual do?

A: Don't worry about that. It's unlikely that you'll meet anyone else on whom it might work.

Q: What if I don't want to kill someone, or die, doing this ritual?

A: Well then, find some other silly tit to cast it on me.

Q: Why us?

A: You handled the Bill Toge situation modestly well, and your treatment of Barney and Vonda proved that you're willing to give up material advantage

over intangible, ethical concerns.

Q: What did you mean, "destroy the world"?

A: Oh for Pete's sake. You understand all the words, don't you? Believe me, if it's happening you'll know.

Q: Why do you have to go forget about us?

A: If the ritual becomes necessary, I'll want to kill you before you cast it. Unless, of course, I don't remember that you exist.

Q: Who are you?

A: I was the first man, and I'm supposed to be the last.

That's about it. The Comte leaves before the questions get too ridiculous.

There are no further repercussions from this scenario. Barney and his family are gone for good—"mysteriously vanished." No occult scholar, no matter how educated, has ever heard of "Ersmon Rarisly." The name "Ragoczy" was a pseudonym used by the historical Comte de Saint-Germain, for what that's worth.

The only difference is that the PCs will, on occasion, see the Sheriff on TV. It's never on a sitcom or drama—always the news. He's never in the forefront, either. But they might

spot him moving around in the background while the President makes a speech. They might see him shaking someone's hand when the stock market sets a new high. Or they might see him among the humanitarian observers at some third-world tragedy. If they should ever bump into him on the street he just looks at them blankly, and has no idea who they are.

The Ritual of Ersmon Rarisly
Two persons are required for this ritual, in addition to the intended subject of its effect. One participant, the "efficiant," must dress all in blue. The other participant, the "renunciant," must dress all in white. Both efficiant and renunciant must willingly take part in the ritual, and both must be fully cognizant of what the ritual entails.

In the presence of the ritual's subject, the efficiant must ask the renunciant the following question: "Will you shoulder the burden of freedom, that you might free another?" The phrasing must be exact, and no word can be mispronounced.

The renunciant must then nod once, but no more than once, and reply "I venture into the unknown future to correct the broken past."

When the efficiant has received his answer, he must draw forth a weapon of some sort and kill the renunciant in a single motion. Some quantity of the renunciant's blood must then be placed on the forehead of the ritual's subject. The effect of the ritual is immediate.

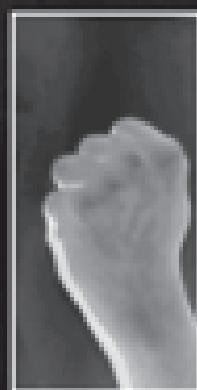




THE GREEN GLASS GRAIL

BY CHAD UNDERKOFFLER

UNKNOWN ARMIES



"THE ONLY WAY THAT I COULD FIGURE THEY COULD
IMPROVE UPON COCA-COLA, ONE OF LIFE'S MOST
DELIGHTFUL ELIXIRS, WHICH STUDIES PROVE WILL HEAL
THE SICK AND OCCASIONALLY RAISE THE DEAD,
IS TO PUT RUM OR BOURBON IN IT."

—LEWIS GRIZZARD

"BITE THE WAX TADPOLET NO SIBI FEMALE HORSE
STUFFED WITH WAX! DAMN CHINESE AND THEIR
DIALECTS! NOW, IT'S HAPPINESS IN THE MOUTH!
THAT'S WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT! HAPPY IN
MY MOUTH, SONNY! HAPPY!"

—ELIJAH MCGILLICUDDY



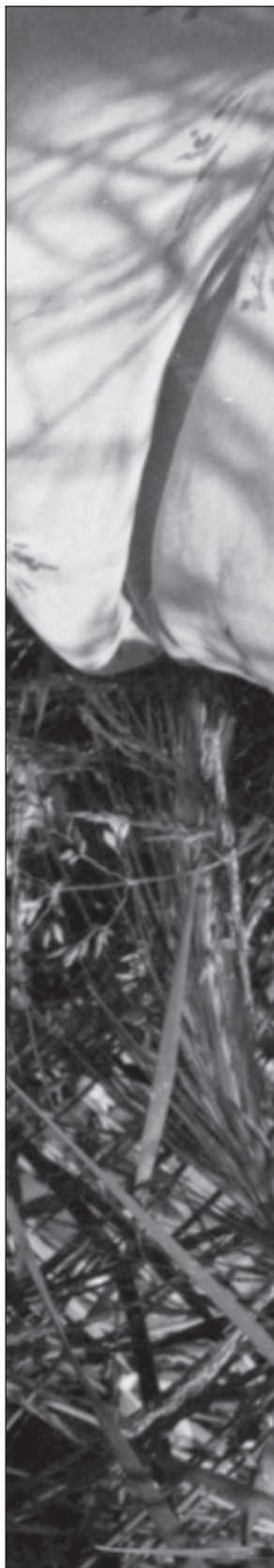
“The Green Glass Grail” is part scenario, part toolkit. It presents several plotlines, story elements, events, themes, and a large cast of characters, all of which you can tether together in a variety of ways. The goal is to present a very fluid situation you can customize to best match your campaign style and the PCs your players portray. It’s not a linear plot or even a coherent, pre-planned story. It’s an investigation-oriented, player-driven, free-form narrative environment where the story develops organically in the course of play. This is a case where the tale is in the telling.

This is not without its challenges. There is a lot of material here, and a lot of decisions to make. In the interests of convenience, we’ve included a worksheet on p. 82 where you can record the ways in which you make this scenario into *your* scenario. It lists the decisions you’ll make, step by step, with page references to all the various elements. Besides using it during your preparation, you should also find it very useful during play since it serves as a handy index; stick a paperclip on that page for ease of reference as you run the game.

The design of this scenario is somewhat experimental. GMs often have to tinker with published scenarios to make them work in a campaign, and this scenario’s approach should greatly facilitate that. But GMs also use some scenarios as pick-up-and-play works they can run with a minimum of preparation. If you’re looking for that kind of experience right now, there are other scenarios in this book that can serve such a purpose—as well as those in our first scenario anthology, *One Shots*. Those looking for a rewarding challenge, read on! (And even if you don’t feel like tackling this little project, it’s full of characters and concepts you can rip off for your own campaign.)

Location, Location, Location

Your first decision is where the scenario takes



place. It's written to fit within most any western city, but the question is whether it takes place in your campaign's main city or in another location that your PCs travel to.

The scenario deals heavily with the city's occult underground. It presents a number of cabals, dukes, and unnatural phenomena both indigenous and migratory. As the head zookeeper, you could prepare for this scenario by gradually working the local elements into your campaign, laying the groundwork for the story to unfold at the proper time. If you instead want to have it in another metropolis, you can just drop the PCs into this existing milieu cold turkey.

Think about this question as you read the following sections. You should get a feel for whether they'd fit into your local setting or whether they should be banished to another locale, a sort of theme park full of thrill rides for tourist PCs to visit and enjoy without having to live with quite so many consequences.

Background

As described in the sourcebook *Postmodern Magick*, Mak Attax did something amazing on January 1, 2000. Derek "Superconductor" Jackson, leader of Mak Attax, traveled to the island nation of Tonga, where the first minutes of the first day of what was widely considered the new millennium would occur. Global television networks broadcast those opening ceremonies, and no one realized that in the midst of the singing crowd was a young man with a mission.

Mak Attax had spent the preceding several months engaged in their biggest operation ever: the Safe and Happy New Year program. Thanks to doses of random magick dispensed through the world's fast-food restaurants, they thwarted numerous plots by terrorists and madmen to disrupt the millennium celebrations—plots Mak Attax didn't even have to know about, thanks to their magickal program—and instead encouraged the spread of joy and harmony around the world. The culmination of this program happened as

Tonga's clocks marked the start of the new year: Derek magickally hijacked the singing crowd in Tonga and used them to enact a working called the Ritual of Light.

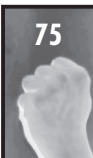
Happiness and a sense of community spread first through the crowd and then around the entire planet, the symbolic power of light and life transmitted by the energies of global telepresence. It was the Mak Attax agenda writ large: instead of just using a fast-food chain to dispense magick to the masses, Derek and his cohorts used the medium of television itself. To the shock of the occult underground, a bunch of slovenly burger-flippers pulled off what was quite likely the greatest magickal event in human history.

What not even Mak Attax knew is that during the Ritual of Light, the very Statosphere had kissed the Earth, and left lingering traces of lipstick. Seeds were sown and left to ripen. Shards of pure possibility lay waiting for those who can find and claim them.

The Ritual of Light

The way the Ritual of Light works is that for a short time in the vicinity of the ritual, the ever-shifting odds of the Statosphere smooth out into an amiable upward curve. This is due to a shift in control of probability from the consciousness-proxy of the Invisible Clergy to the mutual desires of everyone emotionally connected to the caster—friends, family, lovers, *etc.*—who happen to be in the vicinity. This control is tentative and faltering, but real enough that chance gets skewed in favor of what the "connected" folks generally want.

The insight that Mak Attax brought to the table at the cusp of the millennium was that "vicinity" could mean "global" under the right circumstances—via telepresence. The key conduit is an emotional connection to the caster—feelings of love, friendship, and camaraderie, such as those shared by billions around the world as Y2K unfolded peacefully. (An "emotional connection" could include





Bonding via Tilts [see *Statosphere*, p. 40] and connections forged by Proxy Rituals [see *Postmodern Magick*, p. 52] as well.)

Without the unusual circumstances of that New Year's, with the global live broadcasts, the party atmosphere, and the earnest desires for a safe and happy Y2K facilitated by the Maks' program of magick-charge dispersal, it wouldn't have affected many people at all. It's a magickal concept that's been waiting for all of history to be exploited: "Give me a lever long enough and a place to stand, and I can move the world." The Statosphere trembled, twisted, and even *touched* the physical world and no one, save possibly the Comte, could have expected such a thing.

For one glorious day, the Invisible Clergy were not in charge. *We* were.

Mak Attax got one thing wrong, though: the Ritual of Light isn't biased towards happiness. It merely accentuates the broad desires of its users. In the wrong hands, it could unleash a global nightmare.

Shards of Infinity

As the ritual's potency lapsed and the Statosphere retreated from the gross matter of the world, shards of the Statosphere remained behind in the earth awaiting happy discovery or their own blossoming potential. These fragments have bizarre powers; as a sliver of pure chance and probability, they can do just about *anything*. The most obvious quality of these fragments is, of course, that anyone who learns about them desires one *very* badly. Given the shaped-by-consciousness nature of the Statosphere, it is common for shards to manifest as familiar objects.

It could also be that each shard resolves its form into an object the first time someone encounters it, based on what they were thinking. So if some guy was thinking, "Hey, a Coke would really fix me up right now," as he walked near this pliable node of reality, his conscious thought and subconscious needs

warped the shard, and bang! There sits the Green Glass Grail, ready and waiting for him.

The Green Glass Grail is therefore a perfect example of this. It's a shard of the Statosphere in the form of an old 6 oz. Coke bottle. Other shards might coalesce into forms like a working model of a flying saucer, a "real" vampire à la Bram Stoker (or more likely, Bela Lugosi), the True Cross, or Santa Claus. The Cardboard Palace (see *Postmodern Magick*, p. 147) could be such a shard.

The Grail was discovered by Vera Leitwinder, a slightly cracked do-gooder living in the city where the scenario takes place. She used it for several months to help the homeless and became known as the Angel of Mercy. But the restless Grail passed out of her hands, and soon after she was murdered by the Street Phantom—an insane magickal predator seeking her healing touch to quiet the madness of its mind. The Grail is now loose on the streets, and could be in anyone's hands.

Vince Jenkins

Vince Jenkins was a cliomancer, magickal theorist, and member of Mak Attax. He was dedicated to the search for new and useful magick that could bring power to the people. His particular specialty was researching rituals, and that was his primary role in the cabal. He assisted Derek Jackson in the decryption of the Ritual of Light from an old manuscript.

During his research, Jenkins came across a number of references to the formula for the immortality-granting Sovereign Cure, also known as the major ritual Resurrection Body (see *Unknown Armies* p. 83 and *Postmodern Magick* p. 166). No surprise there—anyone investigating moldy old alchemical formulae finds those dead-end references by the stack. But then he started hearing rumors about an "Angel of Mercy" who was dispensing sips of "magick hooch" (or "strong medicine," or "the Blood of Christ") to the homeless of the

New Ritual: The Ritual of Light (Significant)

Cost: 4 significant charges

Ritual Actions: A short chant of catchy and repetitive words that seem to melt in the mind, not in the ear.

Effect: Set aside the dice for fifteen minutes of game time. Every time during those fifteen minutes of glory that the PCs would normally roll the dice, have the players and GM vote verbally for “succeed” or “fail.” Majority wins. If there’s a tie, it’s a success. Unanimous votes for success or failure of all players but not the GM equals a “matched” success or failure; a unanimous decision including the GM indicates an OUACOWA or BOHICA.

New Artifact: The Green Glass Grail (Significant)

Also known as the Real Thing, this green glass soda bottle fills with Elixir Vitae (see *Postmodern Magick*, p. 167) every morning at dawn, growing a new cap at the same time. While under the influence of Elixir Vitae, one cannot die. One dose can sustain life beyond its natural limits for one full day. That’s twenty-four hours of immortality.

Of course, the Elixir doesn’t provide any healing of wounds, removal of pain, curing of disease, retardation of aging, or cessation of continuing damage such as poison or radiation burns. It merely holds death at arm’s length. This can really suck if you get capped in the head. You got brains leaking out, your motor control and involuntary functions are all over the place, your mind is disorganized (literally), you’re probably unconscious, *etc.* And you cannot die, even when death would be a blessing, until the effects wear off. Heaven help the victims of a vivisectionist who has a supply of Elixir Vitae. Cheers.

For dipsomantic purposes, a dose of Elixir Vitae grants a significant charge.

city, healing their hurts and helping them get through the chilly nights.

Jenkins believed there were no coincidences in the Occult Underground, and began to look into what the deal was. Half-insights, fuzzy notions, and veiled clues gleaned during the translation of the Ritual of Light resolved into sense: something clicked in Jenkins’ head, and he thought he understood what the ritual had actually done. Perhaps a nugget of Statosphere-power granted a transmutation ability to an adept out there, or maybe a pot of coffee was transmogrified into a life-giving elixir by brute magickal force, or possibly the underpinnings of the universe shifted a little, empowering a specific alchemical formula that had never worked in the past.

Jenkins held to the last theory, drawing a parallel to a crackpot-even-for-the-Occult-

Underground theory of his own that he came up with while watching a fourth-generation copy of the Naked Goddess videotape. He believed that the Ascension of the Naked Goddess fundamentally changed the nature of magick and made it more accessible—just as She (in her guise as Porn Star) was more “accessible” than the average woman.

If something similar had happened with this alchemical elixir, Jenkins believed that the merest taste of Sovereign Cure could free the minds of the most mundane skeptic to wonder. And magick being what it is, Jenkins was sure that if he could get his hands on either the formula or a sample, he could summon or detect other Statosphere shards through the use of a proxy ritual: a win-win scenario. He dropped a note on one of the private Mak Attax email lists he subscribed to, a list called





Brainfood Crew that was dedicated to magickal research.

Science Project

Derek Jackson agreed with Jenkins—seeking out the Sovereign Cure recipe was a noble goal, one that was right up the Maks’ alley. They wish to usher in an age of proletarian magick, after all, and if Jenkins was right they could simply spike all the fast-food soda fountains and *zap!*—mass satori. Derek encouraged him to continue his research and investigation.

Reports to the Brainfood Crew came thick and fast. The daily digests were studded with occult history, daily discoveries, and code names: Flamel, the Androgyne, Eco, Barbara, Pemberton, Green Lion, Albertus Magnus, Fitzhugh’s Dreamshop, Saint-Germain, mercury, Hite, Paracelsus, Paulo Coelho. Discussions flew, archives bulged, everybody chipped in their two cents. References to “the Real Thing” kept showing up in oracles, graffiti murals of kingfishers and goblets appeared on downtown walls, and stories of a mysterious stranger dispensing a life-enhancing elixir reached regional urban legend status. Jenkins transferred three times in nine months to different franchises around the country, finally arriving in the city of the scenario’s action ten weeks ago. He was certain that this was the true location of the Angel of Mercy’s ministrations—and thus home to a shard of the Statosphere itself.

After just a few tantalizingly productive weeks at the new locale, Jenkins finally came across someone who claimed to have a copy of the formula: a great lead. Unfortunately, Jenkins reported to the Brainfood Crew that the lead crapped out on him and the consequences were getting kinda hairy. Then there was silence.

Dead End

Jenkins was found dead out in the boondocks at the bottom of a ravine where a burned body sat behind the wheel of a Chevy Impala.

Dental records identified it as that of Jenkins. Beer cans and a marijuana pipe were found in the crumpled wreckage. The cops said he had stolen the car, went joy-riding while drinking, whooping it up, and must have lost control on the back-country gravel road. The police statement boiled down to “pothead slacker car-booster exits the gene pool: case closed.”

Derek Jackson didn’t buy it. He knew two things that the police did not: Jenkins was terrified of cars—refusing even to ride in one—and was straight-edge to boot: no booze, no drugs, no red meat, no sex. In Derek’s mind there was no doubt that Vince Jenkins was murdered. He wants the killer found, and Jenkins’ investigation into the location of the shard continued.

Gamma Crew

So Derek turned to the Open Sesame Crew, one of the restricted Mak Attax mailing lists of trusted members. He told them Vince Jenkins had been onto something big and probably got murdered for it. Immediately, a number of Maks volunteered to do something about it.

Derek winnowed through the volunteers and selected a trio he felt would be an effective team—partially based on how close they lived to the target city, but also on how they’d comported themselves as Open Sesame list members. He code-named this three-person investigative team “Gamma Crew,” inspired by *The Incredible Hulk*. (“You wouldn’t like me when I’m angry.”)

But word has leaked that the Maks are onto something big and the local Occult Underground is buzzing. Joining the Gamma Crew on the ground is a TNI investigator, Dena Kustoris. She probably isn’t alone. Some believe the Sleepers killed Jenkins because he was getting too close to something. Jenkins’ landlord has been able to put a nice down-payment on a new car from all the money being slid at him to unlock the deceased’s former apartment. Why the hell did some loser cabal called Satan’s Chosen Temple send flowers to Jenkins’ funeral

with a card that read “Burn, baby, burn!”? Most disturbingly, who sent email to the Brainfood Crew mailing list claiming to be Vince Jenkins, even as the cobweb farmer was burning to death out on Route 5?

Rumors About Vince

There are a lot of rumors floating around about Vince Jenkins and his death. Feel free to put these words into the mouths of clued-in and clueless GMCs alike.

- “He finally figured out that ritual he was working on while driving, and it made him spontaneously combust!”
- “I knew that straight-edge crap was all an act.”
- “The Sleepers got him!”
- “That wasn’t Jenkins—he faked his own death!”
- “I have it on good authority—through unofficial-official channels, if you know what I mean—that the Zetans abducted him.”
- “The Street Phantom got him! Jenkins must have figured out who the Street Phantom really was, and it capped him!”
- “I summoned up his spirit last night on my TV and he said that Jimmy the Snake killed him!”
- “The New Inquisition got him!”
- “I heard he was into some freaky kind of sex-magick and was on his way to a hippie sex-farm when he ran off the road. Gross, huh?”
- “Good riddance. He smelled like grease and cat-piss.”
- “I heard the Wandering Jew ran him over, then torched the car to hide the evidence.”
- “Vince Jenkins is *dead*!?”

The Truth About Vince

The sequence of events that lead to the murder of Vince Jenkins appears below. If the scenario

unfolds as part of a campaign, this list can be used as a rough timeline of events.

1. Jenkins discovers clues to the possible existence of both a formula and a sample of the Sovereign Cure, possibly created in the aftermath of the Ritual of Light.
2. Jenkins contacts T-Joe Walters of Satan’s Chosen Temple (see UA, p. 200), who claims to have gotten the formula from beyond the Veil. Jenkins buys the formula for \$500 in cash up front and \$500 on the back end if it works.
3. Jenkins purchases rare ingredients for the ritual from local magick store Fitzhugh’s Dreamshop. Fitzhugh and Jenkins discuss rituals and alchemy. Fitzhugh mentions that the ingredients Jenkins is buying aren’t typical for a Philosopher’s Stone formula.
4. Suspicious, Jenkins tests the elixir produced by T-Joe’s formula on a stray dog, which is quickly possessed by a demon. The dog goes bananas and busts up his apartment before escaping out the window and down the fire escape.
5. Mavra Piagetti of the TNI crew Smart Patrol (see *Lawyers, Guns, & Money*, p. 55) finds a suspicious email from Jenkins on a hard drive acquired during a TNI field mission. Alex Abel taps investigator Dena Kustoris to find out what she can about the guy.
6. The Street Phantom kills the Angel of Mercy (Vera Leitwinder) and consumes her heart using the Consume Soul ritual, in the mistaken belief that she had a “healing touch” that could soothe the raging voices in its head. This just makes it even angrier and less stable.



7. Jenkins uses cliomancy to make T-Joe pay for the possession attempt by casting a number of minor formula spells on the teenaged Satanist. Repeated uses of You Remember Now have messed up T-Joe's head by making him "remember" screwing a cat, eating his own feces on a hot dog bun, and being brutally beaten by midgets dressed in diapers, bowler hats, and combat boots (Jenkins was flipping between *Under the Rainbow* and *A Clockwork Orange* on cable at the time). In addition, repeated uses of Gnostic Gossip have caused everyone who knows T-Joe to have "heard" some of these things. This makes T-Joe very unhappy.
8. Jenkins stops by the Dreamshop to buy new lab equipment and talk about the Sovereign Cure. Fitzhugh takes him into the back room to look at the goodies he has back there (described later). They talk about alchemy some more, and end up splitting a pizza. Jenkins trades Fitzhugh his copy of the Naked Goddess videotape for a whole new set of glassware.
9. Dena Kustoris hits the local scene on behalf of TNI, looking for Jenkins under the cover of being an insurance investigator. The police discover Leitwinder's body and quietly start looking into information on serial killings. T-Joe contacts his favorite demon—who calls itself Zoraduul the Sumerian—to get some help dealing with these weird rumors. Since "Zoraduul" is still stuck in the stray dog, T-Joe ends up with another demon who pretends to be Zoraduul. Nonetheless, the demon fingers Vince Jenkins.
10. T-Joe comes to town and prowls around, looking for Jenkins so he can to kick the nerd's teeth in. He contacts the false Zoraduul and convinces him to slap an Astral Parasite on Jenkins for favors to be paid



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later. Then he gets thrown out of his motel room, because the manager “don’t want no sick cat-humpin’ pervers in this establishment!” He has to give a maid \$300 to get his stuff back and is close to broke.

11. Days later, the possessed dog finds the impoverished T-Joe as he is rummaging through garbage cans for food and starts hanging around him, remembering vaguely that he’s a friend. Jenkins begins to weaken from the Astral Parasite stuck to him. Vera Leitwinder’s body is discovered and “Angel of Mercy Murdered!” appears in the local newspaper. No mention is made of the missing heart.
12. T-Joe sights Jenkins and a chase ensues. In the course of avoiding T-Joe, Jenkins ends up hiding in the back room of the Dreamshop. When Fitzhugh closes the store that night, he invites Jenkins to crash at his place for awhile. Jenkins agrees, and tells Fitzhugh he’ll meet up with him there in an hour. Unfortunately, the Street Phantom catches up to Jenkins and lures him back to its pad by pretending to be the Angel of Mercy. Dulled by the Astral Parasite, Jenkins falls for it easily.
13. The Street Phantom performs the Consume Soul ritual, gaining Jenkins’ memories and cliomancy. It disposes of the body in a faked-up car wreck, and the Phantom’s eerie *madi* abilities ensure that the police can’t put two and two together when dealing with this case. This prevents them from connecting the missing-heart corpses of Vera and Vince.
14. The Phantom’s partial absorption of Vince’s memories clue it in to the Grail and the Ritual of Light. Still seeking solace for its jumbled brain, the Phantom sends email to the Brainfood Crew list asking questions. Derek Jackson recognizes the mes-

sages as a sham and boots “Vince” from the list—only to regret it when he learns that the guy was dead when the messages were posted in his name. Derek forms Gamma Crew.

15. Jenkins’ funeral. T-Joe sends flowers courtesy of Satan’s Chosen Temple with the “Burn, Baby, Burn!” card. Dena Kustoris reports this to TNI, and is told to continue her investigation.

So What’s the Scenario?

In broad strokes: the PCs dive into the Occult Underground in pursuit of their own agenda, which might focus on Vince, or the Grail, or the Phantom, or some combination thereof. Other cabals and dukes do their own thing at the same time. Sooner or later, they cross each other’s path and sparks fly. Eventually, a dramatic resolution occurs.

That’s it! Within that that loose framework, your players’ choices and your reactions to those choices build the story. But first we’ll tighten up that framework a bit in the next section.

Preparing the Scenario

Vince Jenkins’ death can be the central mystery around which the scenario orbits. But if the PCs are uninterested in figuring out who killed the Mak, the Green Glass Grail can serve as the goal. Or rumors of the Street Phantom’s mysterious agenda could command their interest. All are valid paths through this scenario.

The GMCs are likewise malleable. Dena Kustoris can be played as a recurring obstacle or feature—she’ll be questioning everybody and holding her cards tightly to her chest, but if she hits trouble then TNI backup comes down hard. T-Joe Walters has a number of uses: straight-up bad guy, comic relief, or



Plot Skeleton Worksheet

Use this worksheet to check off the choices you make about the story and characters. It also serves as an index to the various elements of the adventure for ease of reference during play.

Step One: Location (Write Your Choice)

(p. 83)

Step Two: PC Involvement (Check One)

- ☐ Mak Attax Crew (p. 83)
- ☐ The Sleepers (p. 83)
- ☐ TNI Strike Team (p. 83)
- ☐ Magick Cabal (p. 84)
- ☐ Circle of Friends (p. 84)
- ☐ Reality Cops (p. 84)
- ☐ Occult Investigators (p. 84)

Step Three: Plot Threads (Check Any)

- ☐ The mystery of Vince Jenkins (p. 84)
- ☐ The Green Glass Grail (p. 84)
- ☐ The Street Phantom (p. 84)

Step Four: Plot Elements (Check Any)

- ☐ The Homeless (p. 84)
- ☐ Love Triangle (p. 85)
- ☐ The SHUs (p. 85)
- ☐ The Suicide Kings (p. 86)
- ☐ Unnatural Phenomena (p. 86)
- ☐ Pass the Bottle (p. 87)

Step Five: Themes (Check Any)

- ☐ Interaction (p. 89)
- ☐ Mystery (p. 89)
- ☐ Action (p. 89)

Step Six: The Phantom

Part One: The Phantom's Identity (Check One)

- ☐ Dena Kustoris (p. 104)
- ☐ Hector Garcia (p. 112)
- ☐ Mike Fitzhugh (p. 115)
- ☐ Elijah McGillicuddy (p. 120)
- ☐ Other (p. ____)

Part Two: The Phantom's Profile (Write Your Choice)

Goal(s):

(p. 90)

Motivation(s):

(p. 90)

Concentration:

(p. 90)

Step Seven: Events (Check Any, Write Order)

- ☐ ____ Grail Tag! (p. 90)
- ☐ ____ Grilled by Dena (p. 91)
- ☐ ____ In the Shop of Dreams (p. 91)
- ☐ ____ Meeting T-Joe (p. 91)
- ☐ ____ *He's* the Street Phantom?! (p. 92)
- ☐ ____ You Want Fries With That? (p. 92)
- ☐ ____ Phantom Sends a Message (p. 92)
- ☐ ____ T-Joe Meets Trouble (p. 92)
- ☐ ____ Meet Nicky Fitzhugh (p. 93)
- ☐ ____ Unnatural Phenomena Happens (p. 93)
- ☐ ____ Homeless Person Grabbed by the Phantom (p. 93)

Step Eight: The Climax (Check One)

- ☐ Confronting the Phantom (p. 94)
- ☐ The PCs Get the Grail (p. 95)
- ☐ The Phantom Gets the Grail (p. 95)

additional obstacle. His role depends on how he relates to the PCs. Gamma Crew can be rivals, allies, or just a confusing presence. Local duke Mike Fitzhugh can help solve some of the mysteries, but may also be a victim of violence. And any one of several GMCs can be the Street Phantom, since it's presented as an overlay you attach to an existing GMC of your choice. You can play the Phantom broadly as a serial killer addicted to better learning through cannibalism, a tragic Promethean figure, a Faustian seeker corrupted by knowledge, or an evil mastermind bent on world domination. It can also just be a nasty freak who needs to be put down like a mad dog. (Of course, there's already a mad dog with a demon in its head. He hangs out with T-Joe.)

Using the worksheet at left, proceed through the following steps and customize the scenario as it pleases you. Try using a pencil, since you'll probably change your mind a couple times as you plan. When you're done you'll have what we'll call a Plot Skeleton; more about that later.

Step One: Location

As noted earlier, decide where you want the scenario to take place. If your main campaign setting is suited for the action you've read so far, go for it. Otherwise, it's time for a road trip.

Step Two: PC Involvement

The way you get a PC group into the action has a strong effect on how you set up the rest of the scenario. Suggestions for different PC cabals and campaign styles follow. Pick one outright, or jot down your own notes on how to get the PCs involved.

Mak Attax Crew

Like Gamma Crew, the PCs also volunteered to look into Jenkins's death. They're all expected to work together, though Gamma

Crew can be handed the scut work while the PCs deal with the main action. The Gamma Crew members can "courier" charges from other Maks to the PCs via the Lesser Correspondence ritual. Alternatively, they could be a rival Crew not necessarily working with the PCs, just out for the glory of finding Jenkins's murderer or research.

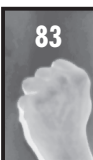
The Sleepers

The Sleepers know what the score is because of the efforts of their Mak Attax mole on the Inner Circle and Brainfood Crews, Hannibal Prepajchal (see *Hush Hush*, p. 21). Unfortunately, Prepajchal wasn't tapped for the Gamma Crew. The info on the mailing lists Prepajchal has access to is starting to annoy his Sleeper handler, Wu Zhanhan, because the normally ass-backwards and counterproductive Maks are moving very quickly and efficiently on this investigation and Wu doesn't like it. Anyway, with all the cabals converging around this Jenkins affair, things are bound to get ugly. That's why the PCs have been sent in. Their orders are simple. If anyone gets noisy and starts disturbing the Sleeping Tiger, hush them up. Spirit away anything that looks suspicious. Find out what's sparking all the unnatural phenomena, and quell it.

TNI Strike Team

Alex Abel has assigned the PCs' strike team to one or more of the following tasks:

- Pick up Dena Kustoris's investigation and follow it into the weird.
- Investigate and evaluate the danger of this "Satan's Chosen Temple" cabal.
- Discover Superconductor's identity.
- Triangulation of concurrent episodes of eerie radio voices and periods of missing time indicate that a significant artifact is in the area. Secure it and bring it back.



If the PCs are with TNI, you're best off minimizing Dena Kustoris. She should be a purely mundane employee of TNI, doing purely mundane private detective work, and her main job is to brief them when they arrive and dispense clues when you need to prod the players. (Unless, of course, she's the Street Phantom.)

Magick Cabal

"Something big is going down right under our noses. Murders, mayhem, and unnatural phenomena: all could mean substantial power. Everybody else is going downtown to snoop around—so should we!"

Circle of Friends

Jenkins may have been an email buddy of one or more of the PCs. Knowing about his hatred of cars and his straight-edge lifestyle, the "facts" of his death just don't sit well with them.

Reality Cops

"We're getting reports of a possessed animal downtown. It fits all the signs. We'll swing down there tonight and put the poor beast out of its misery." They're here for the Hellhound (p. 108), but they'll soon find out that the dog is the *least* of what's going on.

Occult Investigators

"This mysterious death, Vince Jenkins, happened after the victim spent a lot of time in the company of a cultist associated with something called 'Satan's Chosen Temple.' The circumstances around his death have some people whispering cover-up. We should check it out—could be devil-worshippers!"

Step Three: Plot Threads

There are three Plot Threads in this scenario:

1. The mystery of Vince Jenkins.
2. The Green Glass Grail.
3. The Street Phantom.

Pick a Thread to serve as the main plotline. For a more complex experience, you may want to explicitly fold in one of the other Threads as a subplot. Or braid together all three for the full experience. Plotline bleed is bound to happen anyway (and many GMs see it as a good thing), but you have control of how influential you wish each Thread to be.

Step Four: Plot Elements

These are chunks of story and information for your use during the scenario. Look them over and decide which you'd like to use.

Plot Element: The Homeless

There are a dozen street people rumored to have sipped from the Green Glass Grail. Five of them are missing (Old Yellow, Trixie, Jimmy the Snake, Pat, and Ronnie), all victims of the Street Phantom. Of those who remain, all they remember is a trenchcoated figure with a hidden face urging them to "drink and be well." The taste of the fluid was like fire and ice, and they seemed to feel a bit better afterward. They have several uses to the PCs: some of the bums could get visions of the Real Thing in their dreams, others could be used to dowse for it through a Proxy Ritual, and one of them could actually have passed along the bottle to another GMC, by "rescuing" it from a dumpster and then handing it off to someone else.

Here are some sample street folk who have tasted the Real Thing and have yet to disappear:

- **Abdul:** Suffers from paranoid delusions. Resisted taking a sip because he thought it was a CIA "brain-rinse" formula. His flailing arm ended up spilling a dose all over himself, though . . . and he still worries about it.

- **Elizabeth:** Elizabeth is an older woman, a drunk who has AIDS. The Elixir just made her higher than a kite.
- **Jimmy:** Jimmy should have died of hypothermia that cold, cold night. As it was, he just suffered tremendous frostbite and lost all the fingers on his right hand. Because he *should* have died without the influence of the Real Thing, he's a good candidate to be affected by mystical weirdness.
- **Kandy:** A hooker given her sip after a customer beat her. She believes it healed her broken ribs, though they were really just bruised.
- **Michelle:** She was suffering from hunger and malnutrition. Still is. Felt no effect from her sip.
- **Susanna:** While under the influence of the Elixir Vitae, this bag lady suffered a mortal throat wound. Because of the Angel of Mercy's gift she survived. Like Jimmy, she's a good candidate for mystical weirdness.
- **Wang Ho:** He was suffering great hunger. The elixir didn't really do anything for him, but he believes it lessened the pangs in his stomach.
- **Elijah McGillicuddy:** A local crazy, detailed on p. 120. If he isn't the Street Phantom, he's the one who had the Grail after Vera did and has since passed it on.

The Street Phantom has been hunting down these folks to question them about the bottle, and possibly even to use them to find it.

Plot Element: Love Triangle

Okay, what we've got here is your basic love triangle: Mak Attaxer Hector Garcia likes his fellow Crew member Maria Perez, who likes local occult entrepreneur Mike Fitzhugh. Fitzhugh wants to be a friendly mentor to Garcia, who isn't buying it, and is suspicious of Fitzhugh. He's also trying to dig up dirt on Fitzhugh to show Perez that Mikey isn't all sweetness and light.

It's a heaping bowl of conflict to start with, but when you add in that one of these guys might be the Street Phantom, well, it ratchets up to eleven.

Plot Element: The SHUs

A certain famous fast-food chain has identified a particular subset of their customers as *SHUs*, or Super-Heavy Users. A SHU is someone who eats at the restaurant four or more times a week. In the *Unknown Armies* setting, these SHUs are front and center for receiving more magickal jolts from Mak Attax than anybody else. The local SHUs are a trio of men in their twenties, each of whom have a mageekian ability they can use once per day with a successful Soul check. They aren't conscious of these powers, so it's up to the GM to determine when one might activate.

- **Andy:** He's blessed with the ability to sense whether or not a fact placed before him is true or false. Unfortunately, he discounts these hunches because of his belief that "nothing is *that* simple." He's also a budding conspiracy theorist.
- **Scott:** Known to the workers at the restaurant as "the Fry Guy" due to his copious consumption of super-sized baskets of the greasy spuds, Scott has developed an exceptionally soothing voice. He can plant post-hypnotic suggestions merely by speaking. Of course, he's far too shy to speak with anyone if he can avoid it.
- **Tom:** He can summon the strength and vitality of five men (Body 100), but is too lazy to put forth even the simplest physical effort.

The SHUs are useful to have wandering around in the background. They can serve as Greek chorus, sources of clues, sources of red herrings, or just plain annoyances. Since they each consume at least four meals per week at the same restaurant, the PCs have a good





chance of seeing at least one of them at breakfast, lunch, or dinner, purchasing their greasy sustenance.

Plot Element: The Suicide Kings

The street gang known as the Suicide Kings terrorized the downtown neighborhood streets in the 1970s. They wore black jeans, white T-shirts, and leather jackets with the King of Hearts painted on the back. The logo above the card read “Suicide Kings,” and the member’s name appeared on the front right breast of the jacket. They were more than a little retro.

Mike Fitzhugh, now the owner of Fitzhugh’s Dreamshop and a minor duke, joined the Kings in his youth along with his brother Nicky. When the Kings started dealing dope instead of just smashing windows and boosting cars, Mike got himself off the street and into a back-room lab where he mixed up a lot of illegal product. Nicky stayed on the streets and got into more trouble.

Over a period of about five years, the Suicide Kings broke up and drifted away. Mike had seen an addict die right before his eyes and was on a self-improvement kick, two Kings died in a wreck during a joyride, and a bunch of Kings (including Nicky) got picked up for selling LSD to high school students. Mike dodged the bullet, but the others went up the river for a number of years.

Only three of the seven original Suicide Kings are left alive: the Fitzhugh brothers and one other. The third, if present for the scenario, is the GM’s choice.

Although the Kings aren’t directly involved in the scenario, their symbology and history may be of interest to some PCs. If you’re into tossing symbols around in the course of play you should give this plot element a shot.

The “suicide king” is the King of Hearts. The card is called this because the King seems to be shoving his sword through his head. The sacrificial King is a great trope, for those of you up on your Frazer, Eliot, or Powers.

There should be plenty of Suicide King imagery still floating around the neighborhood. We’re talking hearts, cups, playing cards, grails, water, wine, blood, drugs, dreams, prophecy. All that stuff is good. After all, the King of Hearts is related to the Tarot King of Cups—the Cup *is* the Grail. QED.

In the Tarot, Cups represent the emotional, psychic, spiritual, and relational world. Cups are vessels: female and watery. The sexual underpinnings of the symbolism should be apparent. Being water, they can be calm or stormy; in this way it’s differentiated from the Oriental concept of *yin*, but that connection is a fun one to explore as well. The shape and form of water is dependent on both its container and temperature.

As ruler of the emotional realm, the King of Cups is empathetic, generous, and accepting. He uses dreams as oracles of his inner and outer worlds. He is secure in himself, but limited by the rules he has established. He tends to be connected to business or law. He is also a skilled negotiator, kind, considerate, and responsible, but ambitious. Usually, the King of Cups signifies a man of ideas and agility of mind.

Plot Element: Unnatural Phenomena

The presence of the Green Glass Grail creates magickal static of unnatural events and phenomena. At dawn and at dusk, within a half-mile radius, the Real Thing causes one or more people to suffer fifteen minutes of lost time and causes all radios to tune into the ghostly wails of demons for one minute.

A way to indicate time-loss to the PCs might be a sudden jump from ambient light to darkness—no twilight progression of dusk. Another would be seeing a bank’s hanging digital clock/temperature sign jump ahead a quarter-hour in moments.

One way to indicate eerie radio stuff to the PCs is to have the weird sounds overheard from a passing car, have all the radios in an electron-

ics store display window flip out, or have a kid's boom box start squealing and smoking.

Other unnatural phenomena (see *Unknown Armies*, p. 145) suitable for this scenario include:

Minor

- Cold spot
- “Bubbly” spot (tactile sensation)
- Stench of wine
- Small object vanishes without a trace
- Spontaneous appearance of soda water
- Spontaneous appearance of soda syrup
- Batteries drain
- Glass shatters
- Weird coincidence (doesn't involve people)
- Find an omen (points to current short-term goal)

Significant

- 3 minutes and 33 seconds of missing time
- Hysterical blindness (area effect)
- Loud fizzing sounds that drown out everything else
- Synchronicity (coincidence involving people)
- Red flashes and visual ghosts (the flash-bulb effect)
- Invisible force crushes things (gunshot damage to non-living objects)
- Spontaneous wounds (1d3 Wound Points lost)
- Visions/immersive hallucinations (2 minutes)
- Brain fog (momentary clouded judgment)

Major

- Building struck by lightning
- Reality erase
- Moment of peace (all spirits banished; all magick and channels quelled; everyone in area loses a Failed mark from their highest Meter; all is calm)

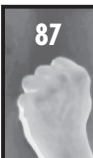
- Instant eclipse (daytime)/sun on the moon (nighttime)

Plot Element: Pass the Bottle

At one point in this scenario, Vera Leitwinder had the Real Thing, and was using its powers on the indigent and homeless. Who has it now? Is it lying in a garbage can in some back alley? Is it tucked away in a safe deposit box? Could a small child be drinking it right now, smiling? Anyone could have had it or could be currently holding it, except for the Street Phantom. Indeed, it's a good idea to keep track of who currently possesses the Green Glass Grail, because it *should* switch hands. (Also see the event “Grail Tag” on p. 90.)

Here's a general idea for what each of our main GMCs could do if they get their hands on the Real Thing, and the immediate repercussions of those actions. Some elements change depending upon who the Street Phantom is in the scenario.

- **Dena Kustoris:** Dena shoves the bottle into a reinforced-steel briefcase and calls Alex Abel, who scrambles Eponymous (see *Unknown Armies*, p. 192) backed up by some TNI heavy-hitters. They hit the scene within 12 hours, grab the Green Glass Grail, and hoof it to the nearest TNI safehouse. If Dena loses the Real Thing, she leaves its recovery to the experts.
- **T-Joe Walters:** Via Ouija board, T-Joe's demonic entourage clues him in that the bottle is pretty special. He hides it under a loose floorboard in the hostel. He drinks from it every day, thinking it's giving him “kool majik powerz” which, of course, he brags about loudly and inanely to everyone he meets. If he loses it, he makes a half-assed attempt to recover it but gets discouraged easily.
- **Gamma Crew:** The Gamma Crew sends an email to Superconductor. Superconductor gives them a Fed Ex account number and





an address at a mail service where it can be delivered (with Express Overnight Special Handling and plenty of insurance). If Gamma Crew loses the Green Glass Grail, they try again and again until they recover it, the persistent little buggers.

- **Mike Fitzhugh:** The first thing Mike Fitzhugh does is drink from the Real Thing, thinking it's a pre-New Coke bottle of soda ("back when Coke didn't taste like Pepsi"). Then he forgets about it, leaving the empty bottle on his desk at the Dream-shop. When he sees that it refills (and recaps) itself the next morning, he analyzes the bottle. Once he realizes what's in the bottle, he has a hard choice in front of him: keep it and risk all the sharks that begin to circle around him, or quietly dispose of the artifact.

If he opts for the former, he beefs up his security systems and gets a little paranoid. Happy, friendly Mike is replaced by mean, crabby Old Man Fitzhugh.

If he decides the Green Glass Grail is too damn big to handle, he drains off a week's worth of Elixir Vitae and then calls the infamous Merchant avatar known as the Bad Man (see *Postmodern Magick*, p. 157), whose number he's never had the gumption to use before. The Bad Man sets up an auction, Fitzhugh gets a cut of the commission, and everything is roses. Juan Martinez of the Bad Man's Dealership is dispatched to ink the contract and collect the goods. While he's waiting for Martinez, Fitzhugh keeps the Real Thing in his floor safe. The Grail could subsequently turn up in the scenario "Swap Meet."

- **The SHUs:** If one of the Super Heavy Users (described earlier) gets the bottle, his special ability goes into hyperdrive while under the effects of the Elixir Vitae. This means the SHU can use his spiffy little mageekian power at will, not just once per day, and it is immediately obvious to anyone with an occult clue that he's got

something special in his magickal pants. He throws the bottle away after draining it, but only in a public trash receptacle. He remains clueless, at least until the freaks come out of the woodwork and turn his life upside down.

- **Nicky Fitzhugh:** Nicky, who's just made parole, drinks the Coke and throws the bottle away. But the Real Thing has a strange effect on his aura—it notches up in "brightness" by a factor of ten. The effect of this is that Nicky sticks out like a sore thumb to anyone with Aura Sight or similar abilities, he gets "inserted" into cast divinations or clairvoyant visions, and he automatically succeeds at all Stress Checks without gaining Hardened marks. Until the end of the day, that is.
- **Elijah McGillicuddy:** Elijah drinks from it, hides it under a park bench, and forgets about it. Lather, rinse, repeat.
- **"Joe Six-Pack/Jane Soccer-Mom":** The Green Glass Grail moves through the mundane population quietly. No one notices its magickal properties, though some accident or assault victims survive when they shouldn't. If the PCs are stalled, a newspaper article about such a "miracle" might get them back on track.

Note that the Real Thing is a good candidate to be *the* Grail, and all of the Grail Knights (see *Postmodern Magick*, p. 162), especially Paracelsus, would be interested in it. Grails also tend to attract certain archetypes like magnets. Whether this is due to an underlying mystical sympathy between powerful symbols, the intentional manipulations of the Invisible Clergy, or just predilection of the Archetype in question is a mystery. Particularly susceptible are the Demagogue, the Fool, the Healer, the Hunter, the Mother, the Mystic Hermaphrodite, the Necessary Servant, the Pilgrim, and the True King. Any avatars of these archetypes could be sucked into the mystic prop-wash of the Real Thing.

From the canon UA GMCs, two that would be particularly interested in the Green Glass Grail are Dirk Allen and the Freak. Immortality appeals to both of them, for different reasons. Maybe Allen wants to make it a present to the Freak to get it off of his case. More likely, he wants to use it to keep his diseased body functioning despite his old cirrhotic liver. And imagine how frightening the Freak could be if it could charge up with no fear of accidentally killing itself.

Step Five: Themes

There are three main themes:

1. Interaction
2. Mystery
3. Action

Pick a Theme for the “flavor” you wish for the scenario. Do you want mostly characterization-intensive discussions and dealings with

GMCs? Pick Interaction. Want puzzles, secrets, and general weirdness? Pick Mystery. Want car chases and things blowing up? Pick Action. You can add any other themes here that you want as well—Family, Love, Jealousy, whatever. Check UA p. 119 for ideas.

Step Six: The Phantom

Select a GMC to be the Street Phantom. The recommended selections are Dena Kustoris, Hector Garcia, Mike Fitzhugh, or Elijah McGillicuddy. You can select a different GMC if you wish, or even a PC if you have an adventurous player or want to run a split-personality plotline.

Whoever ends up as the Street Phantom, their **Goal(s)**, **Motivation(s)**, and **Concentration** has a fundamental effect on the Plot Skeleton. Goals are what it wants, Motivations are what’s driving it towards those Goal(s), and the Concentration is the manner in which the Street Phantom comports itself on the path



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The Street Phantom Candidates

Street Phantom	Theme(s)	Motivation(s)	Concentration
Dena Kustoris (p. 104)	Interaction, Mystery	Figuring It All Out	Research
Hector Garcia (p. 112)	Mystery, Action	Hungry for Power	Misdirection & Theft
Mike Fitzhugh (p. 115)	Interaction	Changing Things	Charm & Lies
		From Behind the Scene	
Elijah McGillicuddy (p. 120)	Action	Healing & Mayhem	Hit & Run Weirdness

to those Goal(s). The overlaid GMC's Passions and Obsession should have a strong influence on all these elements. See the nearby boxed text for a quick thumbnail of the candidate Street Phantom's recommended Theme(s), Motivation(s), and Concentration. More detail appears in the individual GMC descriptions later in the text.

For some basic Goals, try to place yourself in the position of the selected GMC/Street Phantom, and look at how he or she would follow the Plot Thread. In Thread One (Jenkins's Murder), the Street Phantom is focused on covering up its involvement in the crime—but not necessarily its identity. In Thread Two (Green Glass Grail), the Street Phantom is one of the questers searching for the Real Thing. In Thread Three (the Street Phantom), it is desperately trying to keep its identity secret, but not necessarily its role in the murder.

Step Seven: Events

At this point, select Events from the examples below—or come up with your own—that should happen along the way to the Climax (see Step Eight). They can happen at any time, at any location, in any order, subject to how you wish to run them. Not all of them need happen; they can be fiddled with to your heart's content. If a GMC mentioned in the event is not one you're using, feel free to replace him or her with another GMC or even a PC.

Each of the events below are noted for the Plot Threads and Themes they work best in. If

a Thread or Theme appears in parentheses, we recommend that you play the parenthetical element in a minor key, as it were. That's not to say you cannot make "Meet Nicky Fitzhugh" an Action scene—feel free! These notations are provided simply for ease of assembly into a Plot Skeleton, the outline for the way the scenario can unfold.

Event: Grail Tag!

Threads: All

Themes: Action, Mystery

The Real Thing should switch hands often enough to help make the mystery interesting to the players, but not often enough to be frustrating. That's something a GM will have to gauge in play. A good guideline would be to hand-off the bottle after every two events (actual in-game time between handoffs depends on how the GM wishes to pace the scenario). Sadistic GMs can hand the Green Glass Grail to the GMC that the PCs last spoke to, just to rub salt in the wound. Three switch-offs is a good number to have happen before the Street Phantom finally gets its pudgy fingers around the Real Thing. Then, move directly to the Climax. An amusing thing would be for the Street Phantom to get a hold of the *empty* Green Glass Grail, then lose it before it refills. That'll piss the Phantom off mightily.

Getting the Real Thing out of the hands of the PCs for a Grail Tag requires careful GMing. The first time they get their hands on

it, be merciless: exploit any opportunity the PCs give you to take it away from them. Fiat it. If they take their eyes and hands off of it for a second, it's gone. Maybe it fell off the windowsill, or a cobweb farmer fried their memories and walked off with it, or they suffered some Lost Time, or they got their pocket picked by three gypsies, or a booze-hound teleported it away from them. Get it away from them, preferably after they've contacted their bosses (if any).

That's *only* for the first time, to clue them that this isn't a run of the mill artifact and they'll have to watch their backs. If they get their hands on it again, fair enough—no more fiats. The only way to get it away after the first time is through in-game use of the GMCs and their limited knowledge and abilities. No cheating.

Event: Grilled by Dena

Thread: Vince Jenkins

Themes: Interaction, (Mystery)

Dena Kustoris catches up with the PCs, preferably in a restaurant or café, and gives them her insurance investigator spiel. (This works best if the PCs are known associates of Jenkins' or are poking around into his murder.) She just needs 10 minutes of their time to answer some questions. If the PCs refuse, she'll thank them and go away. But not too far away—she'll start tailing them with binoculars and the parabolic mike and request background searches on them. Then she'll come back with suitable blackmail material in hand and ask them for a moment of their time again. If they still say no, she delivers the incriminating evidence to where it does the most harm. End of story.

If the PCs are a TNI Strike Team, she'll very grudgingly share her info on Jenkins—and only Jenkins, those were her orders from the Boss—and leave the PCs to continue her own investigation.

Event: In the Shop of Dreams

Threads: All

Theme: Interaction

The first time the PCs enter Fitzhugh's Dreamshop, Mike will be polite and affable. He'll be chatting with a couple of deadheads/Phish fans/aging hippies who are browsing the "water pipes." After he finishes helping them, he'll wander over to the PCs and ask if he can be of assistance to them. He doesn't announce that he has piles of nifty artifacts in the back room, but he very quickly picks up on dropped hints. Once he sees the color of the PCs' money, he'll move to the back room, leaving the front room under the watchful eye of Chuck, his assistant. He'll also make it clear to the PCs that he has friends in both the Occult Underground and the Criminal Underground who will find and *hurt* anybody who tries to steal, stiff, or injure him.

If the PCs succeed in being charming and aren't obviously idiots, he'll open up to them, asking them questions about their areas of interest and expertise, then pointing out likely wares. He'll mention without reservation that he loves the neighborhood, he's nervous about this Street Phantom character who's stalking the streets, that his brother is due out on parole, that Jenkins was his friend, and he's convinced Jenkins was murdered. He'll tell them for either cash or a favor that an investigator (Dena Kustoris) has been around asking questions, and that she stunk of alcohol at 9 A.M. He won't talk about his youth in the Suicide Kings unless pressed, or the PCs got a matched success on their persuasion attempt.

Event: Meeting T-Joe

Threads: Vince Jenkins, (Green Glass Grail)

Themes: Interaction, (Action)

When the PCs meet T-Joe, they should quickly notice that he's a clueless, swaggering moron. His new friend, the possessed dog he's calling "Hellhound," should be within shouting



distance, if not by his side. He'll try to sell his automatic demon possession juice as whatever ritual that the PCs want: Lead to Gold, Spell-breaker, Resurrection Body, whatever. This leads quickly to a line of bull: "You're the kind of people who might be interested in joining up with my group. We can help you meet your full potential. Come and visit our Temple. And bring some money." T-Joe generally ends the discussion at some point with vague and overblown promises or threats.

If the situation devolves to combat, Hellhound will instantly come to T-Joe's aid; T-Joe tries to run away (see below, "T-Joe Meets Trouble").

Event: *He's The Street Phantom?!*

Thread: Street Phantom

Themes: Interaction, (Mystery)

The PCs notice they've been seeing an overweight man with sunglasses and a big white beard repeatedly. If they pay attention, it really does seem like he's following them around! The old man is constantly mumbling under his breath "Blind 'til X-mas!" over and over again (he pronounces the "x"). Then he'll break into mild streaks of raving, usually repeating and embellishing whatever was recently said to him. He especially likes answering a question with the same question, just rephrased.

When confronted, this is just Elijah McGillicuddy, a retired carpenter originally from Dayton, here in town visiting his niece. Unfortunately, Elijah wandered off without his "brain pills" and now he's delusional. The police are currently looking for him, and should catch a glimpse of him in about twelve minutes from when the PCs start interacting with him.

Event: *You Want Fries With That?*

Thread: Vince Jenkins

Theme: Mystery

One of the SHUs doesn't show up at the Mak

Attax HQ for three days straight. This is an indication that Something's Afoot. On the fourth day, the SHU wanders in, beaten, bloody, looking like hell, and orders his regular meal. He doesn't realize that he's a mess. The Street Phantom has grabbed him, interrogated him, and wiped most of the interrogation with drugs, head trauma, and weird mystic shit. If questioned, the SHU remembers only a dark figure and the stench of spilled beer. However, perhaps the PCs can do some memory recovery on the poor sod. They might be able to determine the general neighborhood of the Street Phantom's Pad with a little mind-spelunking through Psychology, Hypnosis, or Random Magick.

Event: *The Street Phantom Sends a Message*

Threads: Street Phantom, (Green Glass Grail)

Themes: Mystery, (Action)

Something happens that clearly spells out to the PCs that the Street Phantom is watching them; the creepier, the better. A recurring nightmare starts up with a huge, shadowy figure telling them to back off. A gargoyle falls off a building to smash close to the PCs, and the shattered pieces of the statue whip up and around them in a malevolent dust-devil for a moment. They wake up to find a warning painted in blood on the ceiling over their bed, which quickly evaporates, leaving no trace. Overnight, a sinkhole opens up under their car and swallows it whole. They find that homeless people are all humming the same song when they pass by. The cracks in their windshield form the letters of a message. That sort of thing.

Event: *T-Joe Meets Trouble*

Threads: Vince Jenkins, (Green Glass Grail)

Themes: Action, (Interaction)

The Gamma Crew, Dena Kustoris, or the PCs have found T-Joe, and T-Joe runs. The hunt is on, with the pursuers on the young Satanist

like stink on a monkey. Use the Chase Rules from *Lawyers, Guns, and Money* (p. 86–89) or just use opposed Driving or General Athletic rolls. If the Hellhound hasn't been dealt with yet, it swoops in during the third round of a chase scene to mess with T-Joe's pursuers.

If T-Joe gets away, that causes an immediate Green Glass Grail handoff (see above, "Grail Tag!"). If T-Joe is caught, he'll act tough for about 5 minutes. Then, all in an instant, T-Joe cracks like an egg, crying and wetting himself. He'll spill everything he knows, without reservation. Even if he hasn't been an important part of the scenario thus far, you may want to use him as a clue dispenser to help the PCs; maybe he saw or heard something they'll find useful.

Event: Meet Nicky Fitzhugh

Thread: Green Glass Grail

Theme: Interaction

Wherever the PCs are—at the Mak Attax HQ, a bar, in line at the bank, taking a leak in a gas station—they see a late-thirties man wearing a leather jacket with the image of the King of Hearts on the back. The logo reads "Suicide Kings," and the name on the front of the jacket reads "Nicky."

Nicky Fitzhugh is out on parole, looking for a beer, a smoke, a buck, a lay, and a job. When he meets a PC, he'll hit them up for one of them. He's just as friendly as his brother Mike, but much dumber and louder. He really doesn't want to work for his brother Mike, but will if nothing else comes up. He's not against more criminal work—Nicky ain't that bright, and has a strong self-destructive streak. He's clueless about magick, the Occult Underground, the Street Phantom, everything—he's been in prison for the last six years.

Nicky almost seems to glow with luck and togetherness, thanks to his taking a swig from the Grail earlier today. He knows nothing about the nature of the Grail. He just found the unopened bottle outside a convenience

store and figured it must be his lucky day. Afterwards, he tossed the bottle somewhere or other. And now every freak in the area wants to be his friend in the hopes that they can use him to find the Green Glass Grail.

This forces a "Grail Tag!" event.

Event: Unnatural Phenomena Happens

Threads: All

Theme: Mystery

Select an Unnatural Phenomenon to occur from the list in "Plot Elements" earlier in this scenario. This is to add to the mystery and strangeness—and the phenomenon can also serve as a clue to the next point on the Plot Skeleton.

Event: Homeless Person Grabbed by the Street Phantom

Threads: Green Glass Grail, Street Phantom

Themes: Mystery, (Action)

One of the street folks from the "Homeless" plot element is grabbed by the Street Phantom. If it happens out of the PCs' view, it should be one of the people they have spoken to or wanted to speak to. Otherwise, the next clue they come across indicates that they need to speak to the missing person. If, when, and in what condition the victim is found is your choice. A word to the wise, though—dead men tell no tales, and if the PCs' leads keep showing up dead then the players are going to be frustrated.

If the PCs actually see the Street Phantom try to kidnap the person, a lot depends on how the Street Phantom intends on doing it. Mystery and Interaction themes are best played with an open face—if Dena's the Street Phantom, she'd openly take the homeless person away for a private talk on the Jenkins case in that vein. If it's a more Action-themed game, she might do a trench-coated and masked snatch 'n grab on the poor unfortunate.

If the PCs interfere, the Street Phantom chooses discretion over valor and flees. This





can lead to a chase sequence. Use the Chase Rules from *Lawyers, Guns, and Money* (p. 86–89) or just use opposed Driving or General Athletic rolls. The Street Phantom has an advantage in chase scenes—its madi powers can help it squeak out of a tight place (see the “Confronting the Phantom” climax).

Step Eight: The Climax

Selecting a Climax for the scenario is intended to be picking a point to aim for rather than hard-coding a result. Think of it not as a depot on a railroad line, but rather as a landmark to hike towards overland. Depending upon the Plot Thread(s) selected and the PCs’ and GMCs’ actions and reactions, the *actual* Climax of the scenario might be quite different than the intended one. The suggestions below are to assist you in coping when things strike out in a different direction.

Climax: Confronting the Phantom

This Climax is suitable when the Plot Thread is focused more on the Street Phantom than the Green Glass Grail. It’s also handy to have ready if one of the PCs tumbles to the identity of the Street Phantom you’ve selected before reaching the Phantom Gets the Grail climax, on the next page.

If the PCs unmask the Street Phantom, and the Street Phantom is Dena, Hector, or Mike, make a Mind roll for it. If successful, the Street Phantom ducks and weaves verbally, denying the charge until in a position to flee or distance itself at maximum benefit. (Elijah just snaps.)

The overlaid GMC personality determines how to proceed:

- **Dena** opts for blackmail, using secret information she’s been able to gather on the PCs/GMCs, and tries to cut a deal. If that doesn’t work, she attacks each character at their weakest point.
- **Hector**—figuratively if not literally—

points and yells, “Look! Your shoe’s untied!” or leaks a flash-bang charge and then runs, runs, runs. He then does guerrilla warfare on the characters, trying to blindside or backstab them.

- **Mike** appeals to the PCs/GMCs that he has the best relationship with, reminding the character about how open, helpful, and friendly he’s been. Then he casts aspersions on the character he has the worst relationship with, dropping leading hints and seed-crystals of doubt about that person. He denies everything until he gets away. When he goes to ground, he’ll dedicate time, money, and energy to puppet-mastery. He’ll hound the characters with thugs and weirdness until he gets them right where he wants them.
- **Elijah** goes into a frenzy. He starts dropping freaky-wild madi mojo like it’s going out of style. Then he swings his big, grizzled retired carpenter’s fists around, slamming them into people’s faces. If he gets seriously injured, he runs. The next day, he does it all over again.

Recall that the Street Phantom has useful abilities here that should aid it in conflicts of any nature, be they physical, mental, social, or mystic.

See **Aura** is valuable in determining the mood of the PCs and may allow the Street Phantom to “draw to an inside straight” in interactions where emotions have a strong influence (Charm and Lie rolls stand out strongly here). It also allows the Street Phantom to target the most dangerous adversaries first. In general, the chain of being from most dangerous to least goes adept, avatar, wild talent, mundane. Of course, an Avatar of the Executioner probably trumps a Cliomancer, and a pistol trumps both of them.

Occult Countermeasures allows the Street Phantom to hide himself from being detected by magick and possibly even Avatar channels. He can also use it to set nasty little pseudo-

magickal “traps” or “mines” that should inconvenience occult characters, such as a creative attempt to force an adept or avatar to break taboo (forcing a Bibliomancer to hand over a rare book, for example), or a psychological puzzle that would attract the attention of someone magickally obsessed (carefully stacked piles of pennies, nickels, quarters, half-dollars, and dollar coins in an intricate pattern). Stuff like that.

The **madi abilities** of the Street Phantom cause subtle shifts in the universe to match what it desires. Unnatural Phenomena happen such that things align with what it needs. For example, it leaks a charge and a fuse box blows, making all the traffic lights in a four-block radius turn green and escaping in the ensuing confusion. These abilities can also be used in a directly offensive fashion: the Street Phantom cannot select what happens to the character it decides to “whomp on” but something interesting and annoying (or cruel and unusual) should happen to the targeted character. For example: suffering Missing Time in combat, Hysterical Blindness while driving, or Spontaneous Nosebleeds at the Mayor’s Cotillion.

Do not neglect the overlaid GMC’s abilities and connections: Mike Fitzhugh might have an alchemical preparation on him somewhere—and he also has ties to a number of thugs and leg-breakers. Hector Garcia has his lockpicks, and Dena Kustoris has her .38 Special.

Even after being unmasked, the Street Phantom will hang around—it wants the Green Glass Grail, remember. So unless the PCs take it out the first time, this whole scenario can be run over again, using a different Plot Skeleton, and with the added plot elements of a revealed Street Phantom, possible other factions on the scene, and a different Climax.

Climax: The PCs Get the Grail

If the PCs manage to regain the Green Glass Grail after their first loss, the GM must again become ruthless. The rest of the local Occult

Underground is still looking for it, including one pissed-off madi Phantom. Without resorting to fiat or divination, pay close attention to everyone they speak to about it, everything they do, every little move they make, and determine if one of the other factions would twig to their possession of the Real Thing as a result. If they could, then move the factions in.

The first possible point of closure here is for the PCs to hand off the Real Thing to their superiors. Once the bottle leaves the scenario city, they’re done. Maybe a couple straggling factions show up to ask them questions about it, but it’s gone. Finito. The End. Rack up the experience points and move on.

If the PCs are free agents and they successfully assert and defend their right to the Green Glass Grail, perhaps they can set themselves up as Keepers of the Grail and Dispensers of the Elixir Vitae. (At the very least, this requires neutralizing the Street Phantom in some way.) That status quo could last anywhere from a month to a year before the Big Cabals come knocking. See “Repercussions,” below.

Climax: The Phantom Gets the Grail

The PCs should be present when the Street Phantom finally gets its hands on the Real Thing. When the Phantom realizes that the person it’s speaking to has the Green Glass Grail, it flips out and takes it from them. If it discovers the Real Thing’s hiding place, it loses all composure in a mad rush, pawing for the bottle. It does not hesitate to hurt, maim, drive mad, or kill anyone who stands in its way. If the obstacle is one of the PCs, so much the better. The attack should be unexpected and fierce. Once the Phantom has the bottle, it runs, bringing all of its knowledge, skills, and powers to bear on getting away to the Pad or another safe-house. See the “Confronting the Phantom” Climax on the previous page for ideas on how this can play out.

When the Street Phantom consumes the Elixir Vitae, things are going to go south



quickly. First, the Elixir won't heal its mind. Indeed, its composure frays completely—it loses even the mildest veneer of stability. Secondly, it'll give it a significant charge. Thirdly, the dose makes it immortal for the next 24 hours. Fourthly, it should cause a Major Unnatural Event. Something big and weird and centered on the Street Phantom. See the “Unnatural Phenomena” plot element for ideas.

The Street Phantom comes down like a hard rain on everyone it perceives as an enemy. This includes all the named GMCs in this scenario and the PCs. However, even though it's nuts and (temporarily) immortal, it still has serious qualms at jabbing a sharp stick into the ass of the Sleeping Tiger. Luckily, its madi powers help the mundane authorities ignore what's going on right under their noses—until it's too late.

The first enemy the Street Phantom targets should be a GMC or PC that pissed him off

during (or previous to) the scenario. If the Street Phantom is Hector Garcia, then Mike Fitzhugh is at the top of his list. If Mike is the Street Phantom, T-Joe Walters is in his sights. (Dena and Elijah have no immediate enemies as written; their primary targets depend on how the scenario has been playing out.) Note that Garcia does not kill Perez and Mike does not kill Nicky. Other than that, anything goes.

This first target is murdered brutally and gruesomely, to send a message. Then, after a day or so, the Street Phantom starts moving down its “shit list.” See “Confronting the Phantom” again for ideas on how a particular overlaid GMC might operate. It keeps fierce hold of the Elixir to ensure its continued life, even in the face of terrible wounds inflicted by the PCs. They may need to make some fast allies to take the newly energized Phantom down for good—and of course its increased activities may draw fresh attention from outside cabals.



DREW TUCKER

Step Nine: The Plot Skeleton

A Plot Skeleton shows the mileposts along the journey. They do not necessarily have to be hit in order, unless the GM feels the scenario flows better that way. How the PCs get from point A to point B should be their business. The Plot Skeleton just serves as a projection of a shortest path.

You assemble your Plot Skeleton using the worksheet on p. 82. A typical Plot Skeleton would consist of something like this:

Plot Thread: Green Glass Grail

Themes: Action and Mystery

The Street Phantom's Identity: Hector Garcia

The Street Phantom's Goal: Get the Real Thing for himself

The Street Phantom's Motivation: Wants Power

The Street Phantom's Concentration: Misdirection and Theft

Events:

- Grail begins in the hands of one of the "Homeless" plot elements
- Unnatural Phenomena Happens
- Grail Tag!
- In the Shop of Dreams
- T-Joe Meets Trouble
- Grail Tag!
- The Street Phantom Sends a Message
- Meet Nicky Fitzhugh
- Unnatural Phenomena Happens

Climax: The Phantom Gets the Grail

Voila! One scenario, ready to run, if you're a seat-of-the-pants type of GM. If not, there's enough foundation here to flesh out even further.

Major GMCs

Feel free to populate the background with rumors or hints of other interested cabals that do not appear written up in this scenario—the

Cult of the Naked Goddess, the House of Renunciation, 101001101, Rome and Carthage, the True Order of Saint-Germain, *etc.* All the Occult Underground would be interested in grabbing the Green Glass Grail—it's a powerful artifact, after all (and if Jenkins's theories were right, it could be used to attract or dose other Statosphere shards).

References *in passim* and a few red herrings about other cabals are fine, but be careful not to overdo it—if there are too many options, the PCs might feel as if they're drowning in a sea of useless information. You should allow them to quickly discount any cabal or faction not involved in the scenario.

Note that each GMC write-up has a section called "What Dena Knows" detailing what Dena Kustoris, PI for TNI, has discovered about them thus far. Also, most of the GMCs have a section on locations that are associated with them. Finally, a few of the GMCs have an additional section called "[X] Is the Street Phantom," providing customization notes for overlaying the Phantom template on that GMC.

Vince Jenkins

This information is provided in case you put Vince into play previous to the events of this scenario. The write-up could be important if the PCs need to interact with Vince before he gets whacked. A whole introductory adventure could be run around his acquisition or ownership of a fourth-generation Naked Goddess videotape, for example.

Location: Vince Jenkins' Apartment

Address: Gutman Apartments, 134 Candler Way, Apt. 653. College Heights. 555-1433.

What the Apartment Looks Like: The apartment should be cordoned off by the Boys in Blue. But it isn't—more of the insidious "ignore my crimes" fog that surrounds the Street Phantom. Sealing up Jenkins's apartment



just fell through the procedural cracks. The landlord will let anyone in to search the place for \$100 cash money. This is a studio apartment with dingy whitewashed walls and a faded red carpet. The single window is patched with plywood, and leads out onto a rusty fire escape. A dingy kitchenette and a crummy bathroom, both terribly cramped, complete the floor plan. Other than a single bed (unmade), a TV tray, and lot of black milk crates holding books, notebooks, and such, the place is pretty well bare. A successful Notice roll shows that more people have been through Jenkins's crap than Grand Central Station, looking for something of value. If anything of reasonable value had been here before, it's gone now. It is obvious that things are missing—especially wall hangings, his personal computer, television set, numerous books, videos & DVDs, and the stereo, as well as all of the pages of interest from his notebooks. PCs might find a number of recent receipts from Fitzhugh's Dreamshop, but the weird alchemical ingredients Vince bought there may be missing, or just stored in the fridge. A playing card is tacked to a corkboard in the kitchen: a King of Hearts, also known as the "Suicide King." There are fast-food wrappers everywhere and some crappy local souvenirs.

Using Vince Jenkins's Apartment: Vince's apartment is basically a dead end, though many of the scenario's events could happen inside it. Then again, Jenkins *was* smarter than everybody's giving him credit for. Maybe he found a truly inspired place to hide some of his notes—encrypted in the Morse code splatters of pancake mix across his counter, or hidden in a plastic bag inside the (expired) gallon milk carton, or wrapped up on the inside of the toilet paper roll. Heck, it's conceivable that one of the soda bottles just sitting in his fridge is the Green Glass Grail! He knew the Ritual of Create Homunculus—is a teeny-tiny Vince Jenkins roaming around the apartment, fighting off the rats and roaches for burger scraps? (If there is, the little guy knows every-

thing that happened to Vince.) Don't neglect any bugs or booby-traps other factions searching for the Green Glass Grail may have left in the apartment! Also, Jenkins is an excellent candidate for having a Nosy Neighbor Lady.

What Dena Knows

She's got all the details of the police report on Vince Jenkins. She knows that he worked at the fast-food restaurant near the college campus, has some information on his credit history (fairly normal, though it should be noted that Jenkins did a lot of internet shopping), got confirmation that he spent a lot of time either online or at the college library, and basic "he was a nice, quiet boy" information from his neighbors. She has discovered his straight-edge philosophy from his co-workers, and realizes that it doesn't jibe with the police outlook. She knows he met with T-Joe at a local fast-food place (the one near T-Joe's motel), and that his bank account is empty from two big ATM withdrawals: \$500 two weeks ago and the remaining \$645.56 last week—after Jenkins was found dead.

Stats: Vince Jenkins, Cliomancer Victim

Summary: Former Classics major, morning-shift grill monkey, part-time web designer. Helped Derek Jackson decode the Ritual of Light. Member of the Brainfood Crew of Mak Attax. Vince was straight-edge: no booze, no drugs, no red meat, no sex; it was relatively easy for him to give all these things up. Only his dedication to Mak Attax's "holy prole" cause convinced him to actually prepare what he deemed "poison" for another's consumption: before he died, he had started seeing it as a sort of homeopathy.

Personality: 100% taped-glasses, sweaty-haired nerd. Definitely carries the Mark of Kirk.

Obsession: (Magick: Cliomancy) The secret history behind history, and the power it grants.

Wound Points: 40

Pick One

- ❑ **High Road:** Vince is a selfless—if annoying—crusader trying to bring about a new magickal golden age.
- ❑ **Middle Road:** Vince is an average nerd who thinks he'll get a better shake in a more magickal world.
- ❑ **Low Road:** Vince wants magick to run wild so that he can get revenge on all those guys that gave him wedgies in junior high.

Passions

Rage: Smart people who nonetheless “poison” themselves with drugs, booze, red meat, or sex.

Fear: (Violence) Automobiles. His twin sister was killed by a car when they were 5, beginning a life-long fear and hatred of automobiles.

Noble: Attempts at true communication and cooperation, unfettered by preconceived notions or overt agendas, bring out the best in Vince.

Stats

Body: 40 (skinny)

Speed: 35 (klutz) (F)

Mind: 85 (ubergeek)

Soul: 70 (compelling, like a train wreck)

Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 20%, Struggle 15%, Annoying Whiny Voice 15%, Hiking 20%

Speed Skills: Driving 0%, Dodge 35%, Taser 20%

Mind Skills: Mythology (General Education) 40%, Notice 25%, Occult Research 25%, Web Design 15%, Geek Lore 15%

Soul Skills: Charm 10%, Lie 25%, **Magick:** Cliomancy 53%, Geek Networking 18%

Annoying Whiny Voice: Treat as Distracting Physique (see UA, p. 42)

Geek Lore: Anything about comic books, anime, SF&F, *Star Trek*, *Buffy*, or RPGs.

Geek Networking: He has lots of geek friends that he communicates with over the Internet. They're a resource.

Magick: Cliomancy: His main charge sites are the home of a local World War II general (on the college campus), and a hotel room where Elvis had a party (about six blocks from his apartment). Both provide minor charges. (The Street Phantom may be using these, as well.)

Notes

Vince knew the following rituals:

Create Homunculus (UA, p. 82), Lesser Correspondence (UA, p. 196) and Scurvy Livestock (UA, p. 82), Le Chevalier (a proxy ritual, PoMoMa, p. 52) and Recorded for Posterity (PoMoMa, p. 48).

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
0 H/1 F	5 H/2 F	3 H/3 F	6 H/2 F	1 H/1 F

Possessions

Horn-rimmed glasses held together with tape, a taser, ratty backpack, and a spiffy wearable computer with clip-on display for his glasses. Vince once owned a fourth-generation copy of the Naked Goddess videotape, now in Fitzhugh's Dreamshop. The Bottle of “Elixir of Life” that Vince brewed according to T-Joe's formula is also in the Dreamshop. At the GM's option, Vince may have spent the time and effort to create a Homunculus using the ritual that he knew. If so, the Homunculus is still hiding in Vince's apartment.

The Angel of Mercy, Compassionate Soul

The late Angel of Mercy was a spinster social worker named Vera Leitwinder. She continued her life's work after retirement last year by volunteering among the homeless of her city. The Green Glass Grail came into her hands three months ago, a scant twelve hours before she suffered a massive heart attack. The power





of the Elixir Vitae she had drank kept her alive until the paramedics were able to get her stabilized and taken to a hospital. During a particularly intense OBE (Out of Body Experience) her astral body traveled across town, drawn to the Real Thing sitting in her garbage can at home.

Leitwinder had read the Bible and the *Weekly World News*. She knew the score. She knew to keep it quiet, too—otherwise, it would be embarrassing. When she was discharged from the hospital, Vera took it as her mission to bring the “healing” power of the Green Glass Grail to the city’s unfortunate. While she saved a few lives doing this, she had no idea that she increased the suffering of a handful of others, including a mortally-wounded hit-and-run victim and a poor soul whose body froze solid one cold night. She was fond of Elijah McGillicuddy (described later), and was very upset that the Real Thing seemed to have such a lesser effect on his mental problems.

Due to her ministrations, the Angel of Mercy got saddled with the rep (at least in the Occult Underground) of having some sort of healing touch, when all she was doing was passing out samples of magick hooch. Indeed, she had begun to believe that the power of the Real Thing had passed into herself, as she drank from it weekly, on Sunday, after church. The Green Glass Grail passed out of her hands just a few days before the Street Phantom killed her and ritually consumed her heart in a misguided attempt to absorb this healing power.

When the police discovered Leitwinder’s body missing its heart, they kept that information quiet. They made some requests to the FBI on serial killers, but that’s all come to nothing so far. A day or two later, the local paper ran a front-page story on Leitwinder’s sad tale with the headline “Angel of Mercy Murdered!”

No mention was made of the mutilation. The eerie madi abilities of the Street Phantom ensure that the police do not connect her case

to the Coroner’s report on Jenkins’ burned corpse—it was missing the heart as well.

Location: Vera Leitwinder’s Old Apartment

Address: 23 Parsifal Way, Apt B. Lakeside. 555-4787.

What the Apartment Looks Like: Her apartment had been cordoned off by the police pending investigation, but once the Street Phantom chowed down on Jenkins’s heart, they stopped coming around. The landlady tried to help the police, but when she repeatedly got put on permanent hold by the police operator, she eventually just took down the tape and rented it to a young married couple. The couple are just moving in, so it’s very bare save for boxes and bustling newlyweds.

Using Vera Leitwinder’s Apartment: Her possessions were donated to a local women’s shelter. All her former friends and neighbors thought of her as a “real treasure,” but absolutely *none* of them knew about the Green Glass Grail. They had noted her increased consumption of soda pop since her heart attack, and notice that she had become somewhat haughty and full of herself in the last month.

What Dena Knows

Almost nothing—Kustoris has no reason to look for info on the Angel of Mercy, unless she makes a tenuous connection with the murder of Jenkins. Even if she does, the cops are keeping a tight lid on the details of the case and see absolutely no relationship between the two killings.

The Street Phantom

There are rumors about a new player in the Occult Underground—a menacing bastard called only “the Street Phantom.” Nobody’s sure who it is or what it can do, exactly. All that’s known for sure is that the Street Phan-

tom has kidnapped people to interrogate them about their magickal powers or interests. Some of the people are released, in a worse condition than when they were picked up and with only fragmentary memories of the ordeal. Some turn up dead. Rumors run wild: it's a gangster, a Sleeper, a serial killer, a TNI hit man, an adept, the Comte de Saint-Germain, or a hoax to the *n*th degree. In the last few weeks, however, it has been acting even creepier, and weird stuff is starting to happen more often.

The Street Phantom is an overlay, to be placed over another GMC. The short recommended list from GMCs in this scenario are Dena Kustoris, Hector Garcia, Mike Fitzhugh, and Elijah McGillicuddy. This scenario is written with usage of one of those GMCs in mind. For other options, check out the nearby boxed text.

Agenda

- Find the Real Thing and use its powers to heal its mind.
- Hide its murder of Vince Jenkins.
- Eliminate its enemies (or suspected enemies).
- Other motives as appropriate for overlaid characters.

Location: The Street Phantom's Pad

Address: 50 Sydney Avenue. Edge of Downtown. 555-1296.

What the Pad Looks Like: This is a one-story shop ("City Souvenirs"), boarded up and seemingly abandoned. It is centrally located with regard to the other locations in this scenario. There is one entrance: a padlocked side door. The shop has three rooms: a large front room, full of broken display cases and furniture and a metric assload of cruddy souvenirs, a small back office which is utterly bare except for a folding chair tastefully appointed with rusty manacles, a small desk, a huge velour chair for the Street Phantom, and a vast basement. The stairs down to the basement are in the small office.

The basement is stuffed to the gills with the sort of stuff you'd expect to see in an adept's lab: skulls with candles on them, monkey fetuses in formaldehyde, bubbling flasks of fluid, coiled glass tubing running everywhere, kiddie beach pails full of graveyard earth, you know—the works. Shattered beer and wine bottles litter the floor, and the stench of booze hangs in the air fetidly. There's a painting of the King of Cups hanging on the wall upside down—the Tarot card that would eventually

Alternate Phantoms

If none of the "short list" GMCs appeal to you, what about a demon, inhabiting random different GMCs at different times? (For a really freaky take along those lines, the Street Phantom's primary body might be the poor possessed dog that's been hanging around with T-Joe!) Any of the non-adept GMCs in the sourcebooks can work well; the Sample Player Characters (see *Unknown Armies*, p. 206-11) are quite interesting selections. Or if that doesn't appeal, maybe the Street Phantom can be an alternate personality or Split (see UA, p. 154) of one of the PCs, running a bizarre shell-game.

For an even farther-out angle, perhaps the Street Phantom *is* the Real Thing—the Holy Grail was known to have a limited form of self-will, and indeed followed some of the Grail Questers around like a loyal dog. What better shock for a bunch of PCs than when they grab the flapping sleeve of the Street Phantom's trenchcoat and whirl it around to look into the glowing bottle of the Green Glass Grail hovering there in mid-air? For total out-and-out weirdness, maybe the Street Phantom is none other than Vince Jenkins's Homunculus, driven mad by being severed from its master: tiny, but deadly.



transform into the modern King of Hearts. And a dry-erase board bears all the names and specialties of the players on the local scene—including the PCs.

Using the Street Phantom's Pad: This is a great place to have a climactic confrontation with the Street Phantom. There are plenty of props to pick up and throw, electrical arcs, cover to dive behind, glassware, and unstable chemicals. The small office can also be described to the PCs by lesser adepts and gutter trash who have been taken into the presence of the Street Phantom and roughed up physically, mentally, or magickally. Indeed, the mysterious Street Phantom may kidnap a PC, question him in the Pad, then dose him with hallucinogens and its weird madi mojo, leaving only weird disjointed images behind that may arise in the PCs' dreams.

What Dena Knows

She doesn't know anything about the Street Phantom.

Stats: The Street Phantom, Mysterious Threat

Summary: Before it all began, the Street Phantom was a regular person—living, working, and getting by. Then, a crazy old drunk slapped this poor fool on the back and *did* something. All of a sudden, this innocent victim was having panic attacks, hallucinations, visions, and horrible nightmares, culminating in a coma that lasted three days. It took years of delving through the Occult Underground to piece the whole story together. The drunk was a boozehound named Leon Boswell, who had done something called a “proxy ritual,” which used the Street Phantom-to-be as a living shield against the malign magicks of his enemies. The Street Phantom didn't cotton to that, and thirsted for vengeance.

The Street Phantom eventually discovered the Ritual of Consume Soul, and consumed

Leon Boswell's wine-marinated heart two years ago in revenge. In doing so, the Street Phantom gained a tremendous amount of occult knowledge instantaneously. Since it could gather charges but not use them, it could only “leak” them to cause random Unnatural Occurrences. Its appetite was whetted for *more* power and knowledge, but its mind was unhinging slowly from failed Stress Checks. The Street Phantom did not chow down again until last year in Chicago: a doctor named Frank Honeywell, who had tenuous connections to the Chicago occult scene, crossed the Street Phantom and paid with his heart and soul. Again, it gained knowledge to the detriment of its sanity.

When the Street Phantom recently heard about a mysterious Angel of Mercy, it felt a possibility for regaining mental equilibrium had been revealed to it. Alas, it was not the case. In a fit of rage, it killed and ate Leitwind-er's heart. From the fragments of her memories, it learned of the Green Glass Grail and coveted the bottle for its power and its promise of healing. Hanging onto the last few shreds of sanity, it went on the hunt for the Real Thing.

Vince Jenkins soon fell into its clutches, and the Street Phantom played him for a patsy. Of course, when it consumed Jenkins' soul and absorbed his Cliomancy, it went utterly and irrevocably insane, but gained true power—that of a madi (see below). Hey, them's the breaks in the Occult Underground, eh?

The Street Phantom desires the Real Thing, believing that the Sovereign Cure can help quiet the tremendous clamor of its madness and unify its fractured, Swiss-cheesed memories. It's returned to tricking or dragging informants back to its Pad for interrogation. Neither the police nor the FBI have any information on a cannibal with a taste for hearts—the subtle touch of the Street Phantom's new madi powers wiped the slate clean.

Note that the Street Phantom may have a faint aroma of alcohol around him, and that he'll probably be frequenting Jenkins's old charging sites for Cliomancy.

Additional Skills to Add to the Overlaid GMC

Mind Skills: General Education +10% (see note under *Madness Meter*), Memories of Leon Boswell 21%, Memories of Frank Honeywell 18%, Memories of Vera Leitwinder 12%, Memories of Vince Jenkins 8%, Occult Countermeasures 15%

Soul Skills: Lie +5%, Cliomancy 15%, Dipsomancy 21%, See Auras 20%

Rituals: Consume Soul

Notes and Special Comments

Cliomancy and Dipsomancy: Note that due to the ritual of Consume Soul, the Street Phantom has gained two magickal schools, neither of which are its Obsession skill. This means a number of things, the two most notable of which are: 1. it's completely nuts, and 2. it cannot actually do cliomantic or dipsomantic magick (though it can still gather charges through drinking alcohol or visiting cliomancy locations). On the upside, it has gained the abilities of a *madi* or *whirlpool* (see *Postmodern Magick*, p. 36), with the ability to break down the barriers between the mundane and the unnatural.

In short, this means the following:

- Whenever a magickal charge is spent within its range (33 feet for a minor, 33 yards for a significant, and 3.3 miles for a major), the Street Phantom gains a duplicate charge.
- Charges “leak” out of the Street Phantom just as mundane folk leak charges when subjected to the ritual of Lesser Correspondence (see UA, p. 196).
- It can purposefully leak a charge with a successful Soul check.
- It can only hold a charge for 12 hours before it leaks out spontaneously.
- Relevant effects are determined by the unique Passions and worldview of the overlaid GMC. These effects should generally be subtle and should use the examples of Unnatural Phenomena (see UA, p. 145–146) as a guide.

An option for the madi here—and use of this option is only for the Street Phantom, no one else—is that 10 significant charges are equivalent to 1 major charge *only for the purposes of leaking Major Unnatural Phenomena*. If the PCs and GMCs are slinging lots of siggy juice around, well, then everybody should get a sip.

The Street Phantom starts the scenario with 4 minor charges and 3 significant charges to leak with its madi powers.

Note that even with the above option enabled, a madi's powers does not make the Street Phantom unbeatable; the scope of what it can do should be stringently compared against the listed Unnatural Phenomena in the book. Being a madi (and despite the colorful sobriquet) should not make the Street Phantom into Doctor Doom or Sinestro—he's more in the vein of the Joker or Doc Ock. He's got a couple of neat toys, but a quick guy with a nightstick could still take him out.

The Consume Soul Ritual: see boxed text.

Madness Meter (H/F)

Add two Hardened notches to the GMC's Violence and the Unnatural Meters, then set all the Failed marks to 5. After consuming the heart of Vince Jenkins and gaining the Cliomancy skill when it already knew Dipsomancy, the Street Phantom blew all of its already tenuously balanced Madness Meters and went stark raving mad.

One of the ways to play this without obviously indicating extreme lunacy to the PCs is to play the character relatively straight, with some exceptions:

- When a subject touches on or references one of the Passions of the overlaid GMC, the GMC should become irrational. If Mike Fitzhugh is the Street Phantom, then whenever someone mentions jail he gets wound up—he talks louder and faster, he fidgets, he drums his fingers on the table, he repeatedly says, “I don't wanna go to





jail,” before each sentence he speaks, he doesn’t pay attention to whatever the PCs say to him in favor of repeating his thoughts/feelings on the subject, *etc.* (By the way, this is a serious situation for Fitzhugh, since his brother Nicky is shortly getting out on parole.)

- After consuming the intellects of four different people, the Street Phantom is quite the know-it-all on certain subjects. Indeed, it might be unable to restrain itself from lecturing people (and with contradictory statements of fact) if one of the following topics comes up: alcohol, history, medicine, social work, or the occult. This should be played up subtly as an aspect of its madness.
- Optionally, with the integration of Vince Jenkins’ Cliomancy knowledge, the Street Phantom may have just “realized” that it’s actually an Atlantean. Its fragile mind might have utterly bought into the Cliomancy-Atlantis connection, seeing itself as a

reborn or reawakened immortal Atlantean adept-lord. But the Hidden Atlantis has many enemies—those that covet its vast powers gleaned from all history—and the Phantom knows the value of keeping the secret of its identity under its hat. (This option is particularly fun for blurred admissions, lunatic rants, weird clues, and red herrings by the netful.)

Possessions

The Street Phantom has a substantial amount of money, pilfered from its victims’ bank accounts, plus the possessions of the overlaid GMC. In a high-powered campaign, it may have a significant dipsomancy vessel taken from Leon Boswell.

Dena Kustoris

The New Inquisition employs a number of mundane investigators to do background checks and the like, usually in preparation for

New Ritual: The Consume Soul Ritual (Minor)

Cost: 5 minor charges

Ritual Action: The invoker of this ritual can absorb the knowledge of another human being when he eats the target’s heart. Preparation of a suitable human heart requires the use of thirteen specially-consecrated spices and herbs, disposable cooking pans marked with mystic sigils, and eating utensils that are at least 100 years old but not made of silver. By reciting the words “tchan velso tw’whoga!” between every third bite, the victim’s soul is chewed up and digested into the invoker’s. The meal cannot be interrupted by anything; the eater must finish the heart in one sitting.

Effect: This intentional cannibalism causes a Self check of at least Rank-9. A Mind skill called “Memories of (Name)” is automatically gained at a level equal to the margin of success of the ritual roll. The player may pick any two skills that had belonged to the owner of the heart and take one at 15% and the other at 10%; if he chooses a skill that he already has, the invoker may boost the skill by the appropriate percentage. (*Example:* When casting Consume Soul while eating Leon Boswell’s heart, the Street Phantom is rolling against its Soul of 45% [this number is just an example, since it depends on which GMC is the Phantom]. It rolls a 24. The difference between the roll and its skill is 21%, thus it gets the skill Memories of Leon Boswell at 21%.) The GM then determines two additional skills from those remaining that the consumer and consumed hold in common, and *reduces* them both by 10%, to reflect cognitive dissonance rising from the two sets of memories. Newly gained skills can be increased through experience point expenditure, just like any other skill.

a clued-in field team. Dena Kustoris has been dispatched to do a little information gathering before the big boys come to play.

Agenda

- Investigate Vince Jenkins.
- Investigate Satan's Chosen Temple.
- Investigate the PCs.
- Recruit the PCs for TNI.
- Make some money on the side.

Her Opinions of Others

(see each GMC to see what Dena knows about them)

Adele Cox: "That little girl is just a paper tiger for all her karate hoo-haw."

Angel of Mercy Murder: (puzzled) "You think that's connected? Why?"

Mike Fitzhugh: "He has the criminal connections to have Jenkins iced, but he seems to have genuinely liked the geek. Then again,

Fitzhugh is friendly with Garcia, too, and Perez seems to have some mad love for the old guy. Messy."

Nicky Fitzhugh: "He's a punk, an old thug. Other than being Mike Fitzhugh's brother, I don't see much connection to the case."

Hector Garcia: "He's definitely unsavory, but too much of a screw-up to kill Jenkins. I don't get the killer vibe from him. Still, he knew the geek, and the cops did *find* a hash pipe in the car."

Vince Jenkins: "I have no idea who would want to kill this loser. But somebody did, and did it sloppy. I'll figure it out soon enough."

The Street Phantom: "Never heard of him."

Maria Perez: "Perez let slip that she had known the geek before starting work at the franchise. Maybe she dated him, but I doubt that—she was way out of his league. Still, you never know what rocks some girls' worlds. Say she was. Then Garcia found out about it and snapped. It doesn't quite fit, though."

T-Joe Walters: "I know he's dealt with Jenkins



DREW TUCKER





but he's cagey—I haven't been able to track him down yet. I think that he might be the best bet for the killer—look at the flowers he sent to the geek's funeral. Plus, I've heard some stuff that makes me think he's nuts."

Location: Kahn Motel

Address: Route 5 & I-13. Outside of the city. 555-1305.

What the Motel Looks Like: Your basic motel, middle-of the road quality. Rather clean and well-appointed. It has a swimming pool.

Using the Kahn Motel: Just in case someone tails Dena. She'll also meet any PC team of TNI provenance here, but no one else.

Stats: Dena Kustoris, "Samantha Spade"

Summary: Dena is a private investigator who spends most of her time taking pictures of philandering spouses. One day, on the trail of a straying hubby, she found that there was no "other woman" at all; the wayward man was going to the park, at midnight, to study some weird flavor of martial arts (see *Postmodern Magick*, p. 186). Soon afterward, TNI caught up with her to ask her a few questions about what she had seen of the mysterious Fu Hsing Hwang. Impressed by her attention to detail and solid investigative skills, TNI offered her a position at D level clearance. For 50 grand a year, Dena was in—she spends money like it was going out of style. Dena has no frickin' clue about the Occult Underground, adepts, avatars, magick, the Unnatural, nothing. Indeed, she'll give a sardonic laugh if any such thing is mentioned. Dena's a hard-drinking woman, though she's never sure whether she prefers ouzo, vodka, or single-malt Scotch. The faint aroma of booze around her may lead some clued-in folks to think she's a booze-hound. They're wrong.

She's been on the case for 24 hours, and has some cursory information on each of the major players already. The cover story she's using is

that she's an investigator with the Key Life Trust Insurance Company, checking out Jenkins's death before they pay out to his beneficiary.

Personality: (Aquarius) Dena can paint the big picture from just a few dribbles of clues.

Obsession: Synthesis. Dena is obsessed with connecting all the dots.

Wound Points: 60

Pick One

- ☐ **High Road:** Utterly loyal to TNI; loose lips sink ships. But enough money offered should make her agonize for a bit.
- ☐ **Middle Road:** Enough folding green can make her quietly stop looking, though she still won't betray her employer, TNI.
- ☐ **Low Road:** She knows something weird is going on, and she wants to know why, and she's damned if her employer (TNI) is going to get in the way of her figuring it all out.

Passions

Age: Cheaters. She hates people who cheat on their wives, on their taxes, on their golf game, whatever.

Fear: (Self) Dena is scared of connecting the dots incorrectly and looking like a fool, especially to her new employers.

Noble: Fair play. Keeping things even-steven and on a level playing field warms the cockles of her heart.

Stats

Body: 60 (in great shape)

Speed: 45 (in no hurry) (F)

Mind: 60 (perceptive)

Soul: 45 (rough manners)

Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 25%, Brawl (Struggle) 35%, Nondescript 25%

Speed Skills: Driving 25%, Dodge 30%, Guns 25%, Sneak 30%

Mind Skills: General Education 25%, **Put It All Together** (Notice) 58%, Tail/Shadow

25%, Photography 15%
Soul Skills: Charm 15%, Lie 25%, Play Dumb
 20%, Hard-boiled Reputation 20%

Nondescript: See *Lawyers, Guns, & Money* (p. 82). Very little about Dena's appearance stands out; she makes very little impression on people the first few times they meet her. If someone sees her only briefly, they must roll over her Nondescript skill and under their own Mind stat when trying to give a description or otherwise identify Dena—even to the point of picking her out of a police lineup.

Madness Meter

Violence Unnatural Helplessness Isolation Self
 5 H/3 F 0 H/0 F 2 H/0 F 0 H/1 F 1 H/2 F

Possessions

PI license, .38 Special and conceal & carry permit, cell phone, business cards, trenchcoat, binoculars, parabolic mike, digital camera, mini-tape recorder, fake Key Life Trust Insurance Company ID and business cards.

As the Street Phantom

If Dena is the Street Phantom, she's done a doozy of a job faking out her TNI bosses. Still, as she's a "low on the totem pole" mundane operative, she may have squeaked through. One easy way to do this is to make Dena a split personality—the primary personality is Dena, with the Street Phantom sneaking out in the night. She would have to live relatively close by the scenario city, if not actually a resident of it, as the Street Phantom kills the Angel of Mercy before Dena is "officially" on the case; but that offers up plot hooks that can point to the Phantom's identity. She works on covering up her involvement.

Dena as the Street Phantom is interesting with a PC team of TNI agents. A focus on the themes of Interaction and Mystery works well. Her overall **Motivation** is Figuring It All Out. Dena believes that with enough data, she can

connect all the dots. All of them. Everywhere. Her **Concentration** is Research: she will spend a lot of time studying everyone on the scene, compiling the information, and targeting their weaknesses. Then she pulls out all the stops and hits them with their pants down.

T-Joe Walters

Satan's Chosen Temple isn't just a clueless cabal: they're a really most sincerely clueless cabal. To start with, they have no idea that there *are* other cabals, though they have rumors of a couple dukes—but only garbled accounts of Dirk Allen (who they only know under a pseudonym of "Benedict Ginsburg") and the Freak (who they think is some sort of King-Demon-In-The-Flesh named "Rakasha"). T-Joe Walters is even worse—he's caught up with his own fantasies about his, ahem, "bad-self" and has no conception of how badass he ain't.

Agenda

- Try and convince some other sucker to get possessed using his gaffed ritual and pay for the privilege.
- Trade on the notoriety of his funeral bouquet. Hint broadly that he was the one who whacked Jenkins.
- Get the demon back out of that poor doggie's body.
- Buy a nice present for his superior, Rebecca DeGhoule (see UA, p. 200).

His Opinions of Others

Angel of Mercy Murder: Doesn't read the newspapers or watch the news. "So what?"

Vince Jenkins: "Yeah, he got his, man. You just watch yourself; you wouldn't want what happened to Vinnie to happen to you, huh?"

Location: Hudson Youth Hostel

Address: 114 Sixth Street. Theater District.





555-1269.

What the Hostel Looks Like: Like a college dorm furnished in “Fifties cruddy.”

Using the Hudson Youth Hostel: Just in case someone tails T-Joe.

What Dena Knows

From what she’s heard, he’s young, brash, and loaded with cash. She knows he’s dealt with Jenkins but strangely hasn’t been able to track him down yet.

Stats: Thurston Joseph “T-Joe” Walters

For T-Joe’s write-up, see *Unknown Armies*, p. 200-201. Add 3 Failed marks to T-Joe’s Self Meter, and note the effects of Jenkins’s Gnostic Gossip spells for new rumors that are attached to him.

An ally from Beyond the Veil has dictated a ritual to T-Joe that produces an elixir—“The Elixir of Life”—which lowers resistance to demonic possession (see nearby boxed text). T-Joe communicates with his main ally (“Zoraduul the Sumerian,” really a former accountant from Des Moines obsessed with voyeurism) through a Ouija board. Unfortunately, word has started spreading through the Astral Plane, and now demons are lining up for a shot at a susceptible body.

T-Joe is a clueless braggart—he’ll try to impress the PCs with the power of T-Joe Walters and Satan’s Chosen Temple. This attempt should show how pathetic and clueless SCT is if the PCs are clued-in; if the PCs are clueless, SCT may be a credible threat to investigate. In any case, T-Joe is dense as only a teenage boy can be dense. He blew most of the money he got from Vince on booze and “table massages” before he got tossed from his motel and had to use a big chunk of it to get his belongings back. The demons currently swarming around him on the Astral Plane aren’t helping much either. They’re all waiting for a chance to jump into the next unsuspecting body

that sucks down the Elixir of Life. These petty demons haven’t been able to (or maybe just don’t want to) come through with ways for T-Joe to get more money, so he’s eager to sell his fake ritual again, and has lowered the price to \$300 up-front and \$300 afterward.

Pick One

- ☐ **High Road:** He’s running this mission on Rebecca DeGhoulé’s orders.
- ☐ **Middle Road:** It’s a ploy he cooked up on his own to rise in Rebecca’s estimation.
- ☐ **Low Road:** T-Joe’s making an attempt to wrest power from Rebecca by making his own demonic connections.

The Hellhound

Use the stats for a Lycanthrope (see UA, p. 152) for the Hellhound.

This is a dog’s body, possessed by the demon “Zoraduul the Sumerian.” He’s hanging around close to T-Joe—at worst he’s within earshot of the Satanist—because T-Joe is his only hope of getting out of the dog’s body before his personality completely evaporates. (That should happen in another four days or so.) If a situation ever devolves to combat with T-Joe, Hellhound should appear soon—if he’s not there already—and come to T-Joe’s aid.

The last lingering traces of the obsession that enabled Zoraduul to pass back across the Veil—voyeurism—is reflected now only that the Hellhound is utterly distracted by naked or scantily-clad humans. He’s like the little dog in the old Coppertone ad pulling down the girl’s bathing suit. Any appearance of such forces a Stress Check for the Hellhound. If successful, the dog merely sneezes once and continues with what it’s doing; if it fails, it momentarily loses control, and either suffers rapt paralysis (drooling stare) or hyperactive panic (tries to hump the person’s leg). The poor doggy never gains Hardened or Failed marks, either. Alas.

The selection of the breed of dog that Zoraduul is inhabiting can have a strong effect on how this GMC plays out. For your standard threatening horror canine, you can't beat a big beast like a mastiff, pit bull, husky, doberman, great dane, St. Bernard, or german shepherd. For a selection with a little more pathos and hidden menace, there's always the bulldog, beagle, irish setter, poodle, or general ragamuffin mutt. For comedy or irony, you can't beat a chihuahua, shar-pei, or daschund.

The Hellhound's Agenda

- Get out of the canine body before his mind is irrevocably lost.
- Look at naked people.
- Protect T-Joe.
- Cause mayhem.

The Gamma Crew

Summary: As members of Mak Attax, all of the members of the Gamma Crew (Adele Cox, Hector Garcia, and Maria Perez) know the ritual of Lesser Correspondence (see UA, p. 196). Derek Jackson—who they only know as “Superconductor”—has given them their own encrypted mailing list. They are new to each other in person, though they have communicated frequently via email. Indeed, Hector already has quite the crush on Maria, simply from her posts to the Mak Attax email list.

Overall notes follow. Individual write-ups for each member of the Crew appear after that.

Agenda

- Find out what happened to Jenkins.
- Find out what Jenkins learned about the Sovereign Cure and the Real Thing.
- Punish Jenkins' murderer.
- Forge alliances with compatible cabals.

Their Opinions of Others

The three members of Gamma Crew each have their own perspectives on the situation.

Adele Cox

Angel of Mercy Murder: “It makes me angry that someone killed her.”

Mike Fitzhugh: “Maria likes him—he's cute enough for an old guy, I guess. I don't see it.”

Hector Garcia: “He's cool, but he has it *bad* for Maria. Dummy.”

Vince Jenkins: “He got murdered and nobody's doing anything about it! I'm so pissed!”

Dena Kustoris: Knows Kustoris is lying about being an insurance investigator through her use of Aura Sight. “I don't trust her.”

The Street Phantom: (shudder) “I heard it was a vampire.”

Maria Perez: “She's great! She's such a good listener. I'm glad we met.”

New Ritual: The Elixir of Life (faux-alchemy)

Ritual Action: This ritual involves boiling up a batch of small amounts of really heinous psychedelic chemicals (LSD, peyote, 'shrooms, datura, and a couple handfuls of nutmeg) in a gallon of white wine. The fluid is kept at a rolling boil until most of its volume evaporates; the preparer must chant mumbo-jumbo over the mixture throughout the reduction. The elixir is then left to cool, and should be decanted into a clean container. An 8 oz. dose gives the negative shift and has some disorienting effects. A 16 oz. serving is enough to make a person seriously woozy and tripped out for an hour or two; a 32 oz. dose should knock them on their ass for a day; more than 32 oz. in a sitting could kill someone. The recipe makes 32 oz. of elixir.

Effect: All Soul checks to avoid demonic possession or regain control of a possessed Body are at -30% for a day after drinking this fluid.



Hector Garcia

Adele Cox: “Cox is funny. You should hear her when she gets going. Amuses me no end, man.”

Angel of Mercy Murder: “That poor woman. She was just trying to help. Geez.”

Mike Fitzhugh: “I don’t like him, man. He’s always up in my shit, trying to be my dad or something. But, I gotta deal with him to unload warm materials and pick up some of the jazzy stuff he happens into. Jenkins liked him.”

Nicky Fitzhugh: “My cousin up in the state pen told me that Nicky Fitzhugh was a cool cat. Can’t wait to see him around.”

Vince Jenkins: “He was a loser, but damn, man—he was a loser I knew and worked with. And he was wicked smart. Damn.”

Dena Kustoris: “You mean the insurance lady? Man, I was baked when I talked to her! Totally *baked*!”

Elijah McGillicuddy: “That’s that old nut who walks around pissin’ himself, right?”

The Street Phantom: “There’s your murderer, right there. Some spooky bastard decided to fry himself up a Mak, and Jenkins pulled the short straw.”

Maria Perez: “Maria’s a sweetheart. And pretty.” (changing the subject) “Hey, who do you like in the game tonight, man?”

T-Joe Walters: “Never met him, but I heard that Jenkins got burned on a deal with him. Said the little punk fed him a bum formula. Oh, this T-Jerkoff is in it deep. I heard from someone that he’s some weird perv-o—kittens and midgets. Freaky.”

Maria Perez

Adele Cox: “She’s like the little sister I never had.”

Angel of Mercy Murder: “Terrible, terrible thing. Do you think it’s connected to the Jenkins murder?”

Mike Fitzhugh: “He’s really cool. Older men

are so much more mature, you know?”

Nicky Fitzhugh: “Mike talks about his brother all the time. You know, he’ll be out on parole any day now!”

Hector Garcia: “Hector’s nice, but he’s just a boy. And how can you trust a thief?”

Vince Jenkins: “He was a real jerk, but he thought he was onto something that could help the cause. We have to find it.”

Dena Kustoris: “Nosy bitch. I don’t think she’s really with the insurance company. I don’t know who she’d be working for, though.”

Elijah McGillicuddy: “He’s just a poor, sick old man who likes mustard on his french fries.”

The Street Phantom: “That Street Phantom is an occult operator. I can feel it.”

T-Joe Walters: “Never met him, but Jenkins said he bought a rigged ritual from him. And I hear that a bunch of midgets beat him up last week.”

Location: Mak Attax Field HQ

Address: 677 Chandler Way. College Heights. 555-1251.

What the Mak Field HQ Looks Like: This fast-food restaurant is identical to many others that sprout like weeds across the nation. It has one difference from most of its ilk, and by such a sign may you know its secret role: the grease traps never need to be cleaned. The most important things about this restaurant are:

- Jenkins worked here.
- All of the members of the Gamma Crew have been transferred here.
- It attracts the Super Heavy Users.
- There’s old graffiti on the back of the restaurant, almost hidden behind the dumpster: “Suicide Kings Rule!”

Using Mak Attax Field HQ: The Gamma Crew meets here every day to confer, plot, and plan. Dena Kustoris has often used the HQ as a low-key meeting place to question suspects

for “the Jenkins insurance case.” Mike Fitzhugh stops in every morning for a breakfast sandwich, hash browns, and coffee. Nicky Fitzhugh may be applying for a job here.

Location: Pemberton Drive ‘n Snooze Motel

Address: Route 5. Near the city limits. 555-5288.

What the Motel Looks Like: Your basic low-end cheapo motor lodge. Dirty and run-down. Cox and Perez are staying here, splitting a room.

Using the Pemberton Drive ‘n Snooze Motel: Just in case someone tails one of the girls. Hector shows up regularly (he generally trucks back out to the burbs to crash.) They’ll have confabs here if none of them happen to be on-duty.

What Dena Knows

Adele Cox: Has seen a photocopy of a *National Enquirer* article about Cox’s prepubescent feat (described in her stats).

Hector Garcia: Garcia’s juvie record has been sealed—but her contacts say it’s just for some petty shoplifting.

Maria Perez: She is the employee of the month for the college franchise, despite having started less than a week ago. Perez also let slip that she knew Jenkins before starting work at the franchise. Has six credit cards and a decent payment history.

Stats: Adele Cox, Pocket Enforcer

Summary: When Adele was twelve, a heavy bookcase fell on her grandmother, pinning the old woman. It had taken two burly movers substantial effort to bring it upstairs just the day before. Alone, skinny little Adele lifted the bookcase off of the old lady, allowing her to wriggle free. From that day forward, Adele has been able to see auras and perform a number of feats of strength far beyond that of a

woman her size. An important thing to note, however, is that even though Adele is a full black-belt martial artist, she’s never actually fought outside of the context of a tournament. She should suffer Violence stress checks if actually confronted with real combat.

Personality: Picture a short, female, black Joe Pesci by way of Michelle Yeoh

Obsession: (Kung Fu) Don’t take any crap from anyone.

Wound Points: 70

Pick One

- ☐ **High Road:** There are magick creepy crawlies out there. Somebody’s gotta even the odds for the regular people, give them the tools to fight on their own, and help defend them ‘til they learn how to do it!
- ☐ **Middle Road:** The best way to help some people is to beat up other people.
- ☐ **Low Road:** Adele wants to hurt people that she deems “deserve” it.

Passions

Rage: When bad things happen to people who don’t deserve it, Adele gets really steamed.

Fear: (Helplessness) Adele is afraid of bats.

Noble: Helping out others physically—moving a couch, carrying groceries, cleaning a kitchen.

Stats

Body: 70 (ripped)

Speed: 65 (speedy) (S)

Mind: 45 (dippy)

Soul: 50 (nice)

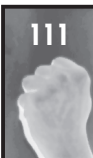
Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 35%, **Kung Fu (Struggle)** 45%, Hysterical Strength 35%

Speed Skills: Driving 15%, Dodge 45%, Throw 35%

Mind Skills: General Education 15%, Notice 15%, Hairy Eyeball 25%, Hong Kong Cinema 20%

Soul Skills: Cutie Pie (Charm) 35%, Innocent Look (Lie) 25%, Aura Sight 20%



Hysterical Strength: As Feat of Strength (from *Lawyers, Guns, & Money*, p. 82). This is for slow, careful, sustained muscular exertion, not fast, explosive movements. Thus, it's good for lifting very heavy objects, pulling apart handcuffs, snapping ropes, tearing phone books in half, *etc.*, not punches and kicks. If used on someone held in a choke, however, it can knock them unconscious quicker. (At the GM's option, Cox can only make Hysterical Strength rolls if she's failed a Stress Check.)

Hairy Eyeball: Size up opponents (from *Lawyers, Guns, & Money*, p. 84). With a successful roll, Cox can find out if the person she's looking at has a higher or lower Struggle, Dodge, or General Athletics skill than she does, or a higher or lower Speed or Body stat. She gets no more details than "higher" or "lower."

Madness Meter

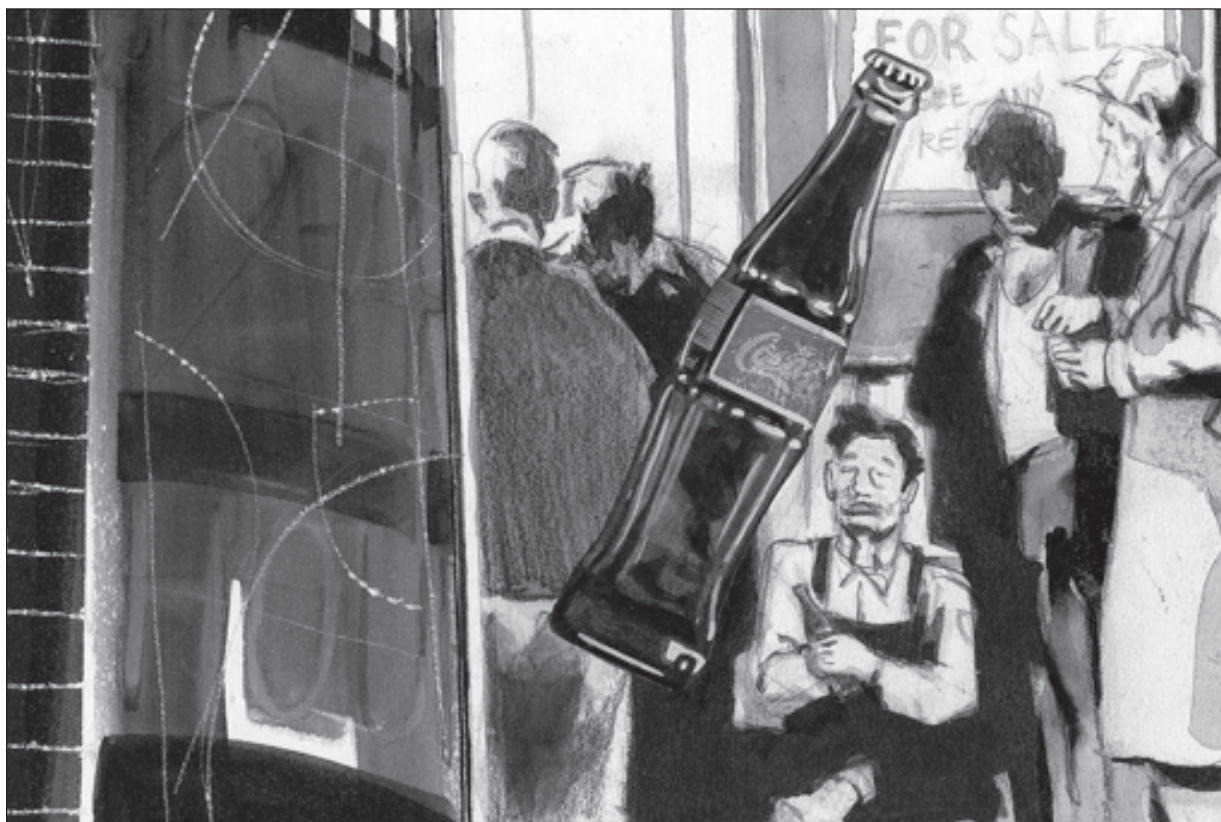
Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
0 H/0 F	2 H/1 F	2 H/2 F	0 H/0 F	0 H/0 F

Possessions

Throwing stars, nunchucks, a Bruce Lee autograph, perfectly clean gi—with a Hello Kitty face on the back.

Stats: Hector Garcia, Beatnik Burglar

Summary: Inveterate slacker, always trying to get ahead with as little effort as possible. Friendly, if a little laconic. No staying power. Laid back, cool, Type B personality all the way: a hipster neo-beatnik. David Niven cat-burglar with some Zorro, Fonzie, and Jack Kerouac for flavor—or at least that's how he sees himself. He has a nasty scar on the palm of his hand from a time he tried to filch a mean little clockwork. Garcia lives about twenty minutes away by motor-scooter.



DREW TUCKER

He met Jenkins in person at a Brainfood Crew party, and disliked the supercilious little prick because of all his temperance-preaching. When he heard how Jenkins had died, he was shocked. The rumors of foul play spurred him to volunteer for the Gamma Crew. Hector is openly interested in his fellow Gamma Crew member, Maria Perez, but she just seems to ignore him. He doesn't much like Mike Fitzhugh, both because Maria likes him and he's patronizing as hell to Hector.

Personality: (Pisces) Lazy as hell most times, he's razor-sharp in a pinch.

Obsession: (Breaking & Entering) Gettin' in an' gettin' out—dat's what it's all about, man! That's real freedom, real liberty, real power! If I can get at it, it's mine, baby.

Wound Points: 53

Pick One

- ☐ **High Road:** Hector sees himself as a stoner Robin Hood, taking from the rich and giving to the poor—and he sees magick in exactly the same terms.
- ☐ **Middle Road:** Hector believes that everybody should share the magickal wealth, except that since he's the one handing it all out, he should get first dibs on the cool stuff.
- ☐ **Low Road:** Hector really wants to take everything he can for himself, but is wracked with guilt and compensates by being overly generous.

Passions

Rage: Getting trapped—be it physically (in an alley) or mentally (into a single course of action).

Fear: (Unnatural) Hector hates clockworks, plain and simple.

Noble: Generous to a fault. Hector gives gladly of himself to help others—so long as it doesn't interfere with his lazy, low-impact lifestyle.

Stats

Body: 53 (weekend b-ball)

Speed: 70 (quick-fingered) (F)

Mind: 51 (toasted, nicely toasted)

Soul: 64 (amigo!)

Skills

Body Skills: B-Ball (General Athletics) 30%, Streetfighting (Struggle) 25%, Hold Your Smoke 25%

Speed Skills: Ride Scooter (Driving) 35%, Dodge 35%, Five-Finger Discount (Sleight of Hand) 30%

Mind Skills: General Education 20%, Notice 25%, **Breaking & Entering** 36%

Soul Skills: Charm 26%, Lie 30%, Play Harmonica 15%, Play Bongos 24%

Hold Your Smoke: Like Hold Your Liquor, but for *cannabis sativa*, dude.

Notes

Hector is “dead” to the Cardboard Palace (see *Postmodern Magick*, p. 147), and cannot take advantage of its abilities due to a tragic episode last year.

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
0 H/0 F	4 H/3 F	0 H/0 F	1 H/0 F	0 H/1 F

Possessions

Penknife, pipe, nickel bag of pot, lockpicks, chewing gum, lighter, pack of Camels.

As the Street Phantom

Stealing memories is the penultimate type of theft; the ultimate is the theft of magick power. Garcia had Jenkins's trust—a helluva lot more trust than any other person in the scenario. There's evidence pointing to Garcia found in the death car—a car he could have easily boosted. He's trying to cover up the murder so he doesn't get caught, especially since that would screw up his chances with Maria. Eventually he might kill Fitzhugh, though he probably wouldn't set him up for the Consume



Soul Ritual. He's not afraid to mix it up if push comes to shove.

Garcia as Street Phantom works particularly well with the Mystery and Action themes. His overall **Motivation** is Hungry for Power. Hector believes that with enough juice, he can be free to do whatever he wants to. His **Concentration** is on Misdirection and Theft.

If Garcia's unmasked as the Street Phantom, his Crew members freak out. And exactly how they freak out is important.

Cox either fights or flees, depending on how her Violence meter looks. More Hardened than Failed marks means she attacks him immediately, alone if necessary. More Failed than Hardened marks means she flees. An equal amount of Failed and Hardened marks means she has to work up the nerve to do it, but she should attack him, preferably with back-up.

Perez should run to Mike Fitzhugh for protection, then contact Superconductor. Jackson will ask his most trusted Inner Circle members—the ones he's met in the real world, not just on the net—to road trip with him to the scenario city and take Garcia down. That includes Maks like Harvey Duopolous and Monica Burberry. His uncle Hermann *definitely* rides shotgun.

Stats: Maria Perez, Sin Eater

Summary: Maria lost her left leg to cancer when she was eight. She's grown up to be a caring and self-motivated teenager who people instinctively turn to when they need a shoulder to cry on. She joined Mak Attax to feel like she's part of something, and her natural talents led her to become part of the Brainfood Crew. Maria is one of the reasons Brainfood Crew has been so effective—her role is “bullshit-detector,” pocket therapist, and voice of reason. She knew—and disliked—Vince Jenkins, at least via email. Maria has a crush on Mike Fitzhugh, owner of Fitzhugh's Dreamshop, but is too shy to say anything.

Personality: (Cancer) Sensitive, loyal, and

mystical. Not ditzy at all; indeed, if there's such a thing as a magickal pragmatist, Maria is it.

Obsession: (Play Guitar) Opening people's minds and hearts through music.

Wound Points: 50

Pick One

- ☐ **High Road:** Maria would like to teach the world to sing, in perfect harmony.
- ☐ **Middle Road:** Maria thinks that by including mystical elements in her songs, she can not only bring more magick into the world but also pull ahead of the music pack—which is important, because she's got something worthwhile to say.
- ☐ **Low Road:** Wants to use magick so she can kick both Britney and Jewel's ass on the music charts.

Passions

Rage: Being patronized in any way.

Fear: (Self) Sometimes she feels left-out of the mainstream due to her disability and all the time she spent in hospitals as a kid.

Noble: Cheering people up.

Stats

Body: 50 (striking)

Speed: 30 (severe limp) (F)

Mind: 80 (brainy)

Soul: 94 (old soul)

Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 20%, Struggle 15%, Pretty Girl with a Bad Limp 25%, Endure Pain 20%

Speed Skills: Driving 20%, Dodge 15%, Slow Dancing 19%, Aim Pepper Spray 24%

Mind Skills: Psych Major (General Education) 35%, Notice 35%, Occult Lore 15%, Hypnotherapy 15%

Soul Skills: Charm 35%, Lie 15%, Avatar: Confessor 57%, **Play Guitar** 69%, Sing 24%

Pretty Girl with a Bad Limp: Treat as Distracting Physique (see UA, p. 42)

Avatar: The Confessor: See *Statosphere*, p. 52–53, for the full write-up of this Arche-type. A brief thumbnail appears here for ease of reference. The Confessor listens to the secrets of those under emotional stress and can bring healing. **Taboo:** Must listen to tales of woe without interruption or pause, save to offer advice or a solution. Must record secrets. **Channels:** 1-50%: Maria can use an enhanced version of Aura Sight a number of times per day equal to the tens digit of her Avatar skill to see visual representations of the character's Madness Meters, Passions, and Obsessions floating around them (a hood for the Executioner, a spear for a Savage, a crown for a True King, etc.) 51-70%: Maria can act as a Sin Eater, removing Hardened and/or Failed marks from a character's Madness Meters in exchange for hearing their secrets; a minor secret equals 1 mark, a significant secret is worth 2 marks, a major secret can eliminate 3 marks, a mortal secret (one that could destroy lives) can totally clear one Meter; usable twice per day.

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
0 H/0 F	3 H/1 F	1 H/2 F	1 H/1 F	2 H/2 F

Possessions

Nifty prosthetic leg, can of pepper spray, acoustic guitar with case.

Mycroft "Mike" Fitzhugh

The proprietor of Fitzhugh's Dreamshop is semi-clued-in to the Occult Underground. He knows enough to realize there are sharks—big sharks!—out in those waters. He tries to remain as circumspect as he can, just to be safe, but he's hungry to know more.

Agenda

- Protecting his brother Nicky, whether

Nicky likes it or not.

- Protect his neighborhood.
- Gain more knowledge of the occult.
- Track down the Real Thing for himself.
- Stay out of jail or any restraining enclosure.

His Opinions of Others

Adele Cox: "Nice kid. Ditzzy as hell, though."

Angel of Mercy Murder: "Horrible. I heard she was missing *parts* when they found her."

Nicky Fitzhugh: "My brother just got out of the slammer, again. I hope this time he keeps clean. I gotta get him a job. If he decides to work here again then I can fire that loser Chuck."

Hector Garcia: "He reminds me of me at that age. I wish I could get him in here to work for me so I could fire that jitbag Chuck."

Vince Jenkins: "Smart guy. A real nerd, but he knew his tricky stuff, I'll give him that. A shame. I was starting to like him when he got killed."

Dena Kustoris: "I don't trust her. The Jenkins kid didn't have any life insurance. Who is she kidding?"

Elijah McGillicuddy: "He's a sad old man who never hurt anybody. Terrible the way his niece lets him walk around like that. I give him a sandwich when he stops by."

The Street Phantom: "I hear whispers and rumors. People are scared of whoever—or whatever—this Street Phantom is."

Maria Perez: "Cute girl. She gets around great on that peg-leg of hers. Sweet kid."

T-Joe Walters: "I know Jenkins was having trouble with this punk. The guy was trying to pass off a dangerous formula that sounded like bad news. Like possession bad news. I offered Jenkins a place to stay, but that's when he vanished. I think this T-Joe had something to do with it, that shit-eating cat-fucker."

Location: Fitzhugh's Dreamshop

Address: 423 Falcon Street. Downtown. 555-6243.





What the Dreamshop Looks Like: Fitzhugh's Dreamshop is your one-stop occult shopping experience. Its front room is that of a New Age-influenced headshop. You got your basic crystals, tie-dyes, incense, artistic bongos, *etc.* The proprietor, Mike Fitzhugh, is well-regarded and almost respected in the local Occult Underground. People enjoy dealing with him—he knows enough about the scene to be helpful, but not enough to be a danger (or so they think). That's the biggest reason his place never gets wrecked, but he does have a solid security system just in case. The main store is a smallish, tasteful (as far as it can be) room with exposed girders. But through the beaded curtain is a world of wonder.

The back room of the Dreamshop serves as a pawn and consignment shop for occult goods. It's larger than the front room, and is done up in a rundown "rich uncle Egbert's library" sort of style. There are a few wing-back chairs that have seen better days, brass lamps with green glass shades, and a sturdy wooden table in the middle of the room. Filing cabinets—some made of wood, some of metal, and some of plastic—contain most of the goodies.

Currently, the back room has a whole bunch of crap that is esoteric but not particularly magickal. It looks like the Addams Family's garage sale. Mixed in with the curios and the white elephants are some interesting things. Fitzhugh generally has the goods under lock and key, but a PC might get lucky and find a pony amidst the manure. It can't be anything too spiffy, because then either Fitzhugh would have it locked up, or somebody would have snagged it already. You might include limited artifacts that mimic a minor spell, objects of interest to cobweb farmers, boozehounds, bookworms, *etc.*, or mundane but magick-looking items.

The "good stuff" that Fitzhugh has locked up in his bigass tempered-steel floor safe include some alchemical preparations he's whipped up himself. The two he has currently

in stock are "Anti-Fingerprint Salve" (user doesn't leave clear fingerprints for twelve hours) and "Aura Juice" (when the fluids in two vials are mixed in the presence of ongoing or recent magick, they glow). Other than that, he has two Travel Bonds, a fourth-generation copy of the Naked Goddess videotape (bought from Jenkins), a Wooden Nickel, a Skeleton Key, and a car that never needs its window-washer fluid reservoir changed. Fitzhugh usually has a local entropomancer whip up a few Lucky Charms, but he's currently sold out (all these items are found in *Unknown Armies* and *Postmodern Magick*, but use whatever you like). He also has the remaining dose of T-Joe's booby-trapped "Elixir of Life;" he knows what it is and plans to pitch it as a "Possession Potion."

Mundanely, Fitzhugh's Dreamshop doesn't deal in guns or ammo, but does handle other sorts of weapons—nunchucks, butterfly knives, even a couple swords. He has some electronic equipment, mostly pawned "spy gear" that you order out of the backs of magazines.

Above the back room, in a secret attic behind the storage area, is Fitzhugh's alchemy/drug lab. He really doesn't do much street chemistry anymore—at least, not on the scale he used to. Maybe he'll whip up a batch of bathtub LSD for a friend's hippie commune potluck, but that's about it. He's mostly producing alchemical product.

Mike Fitzhugh's assistant Chuck, a clueless high-school dropout, watches the store when Fitzhugh needs to work the back room. He realizes that Fitzhugh has a secret lab, and knows that he'd be fired—if not beaten senseless or whacked in the night—if he ever mentions it.

Using Fitzhugh's Dreamshop: The Dreamshop can be used as one of the hub locations of this scenario. It's a source of supplies and a convenient gathering place. Fitzhugh was a new friend of Jenkins's. People are already swinging by to ask questions. Many of the events would

work admirably well set in the Dreamshop. Since Jenkins was spending a lot of time here with Fitzhugh before he died, he may have hidden a computer disk with some of his notes here.

Location: Mike Fitzhugh's Brownstone

Address: 50 Green Street. Edge of Theater District. 555-1269.

What the Brownstone Looks Like: This is a well-appointed two-story brownstone. There is nothing out of the ordinary about this domicile. The furnishings are a little worn, patched here and there, obviously second-hand, but still good stuff. The Cleavers, Nelsons, or Huxtables would settle in just great. There are no busts of Crowley, no fat tomes of forgotten lore, no latch-hook rug acupuncture charts, no oddly-colored or oddly-scented candles, no wavy-bladed Kris knives, no terribly Frazerian or Campbellian artwork hanging from the walls, nothing. It's clean, tidy, and boring. Which can be fairly suspicious in itself. The only things of note are a battered leather jacket hanging in a corner of the coat closet, bearing the painted design of the Suicide Kings, and an origami swan folded out of a burger wrapper, hidden under the couch in the living room—is it a note? A ward? A bug? Just artfully folded trash?

Using Mike Fitzhugh's Brownstone: Being the amiable sort that he is, Fitzhugh may invite PCs or GMCs that he “takes a shine to” back to his place for drinks or coffee. He'll try to allay their suspicions while studying them for any sign of weakness that he can use against them, if necessary. It's also a good place to hide out if the Sleepers come, or Alex Abel activates a Hit Squad. Who would look for an adept in such (relatively) posh digs? Fitzhugh, like Jenkins, is an excellent candidate for having a Nosy Neighbor Lady, only Fitzhugh's NNL is far more frustrated—Mike never does anything remotely weird at home.

What Dena Knows

Mike used to be member of a gang called the Suicide Kings. Suspected street chemist. Nicky Fitzhugh's brother. Picked up a half-dozen times a decade ago for police line-ups, never arrested. Might be dealing drugs out of his headshop, but no proof—or he's paying off the right cops.

Stats: Mycroft “Mike” Fitzhugh, Dreamshop Proprietor

Summary: After their parents died in a plane crash in the late 1960s, Mike Fitzhugh and his younger brother Nicky (*nee* Nero), ended up living with their Aunt Sadie downtown. Sadie utterly neglected her nephews, and both of them were dedicated gang members by puberty—the Suicide Kings gang, described as a plot element on p. 86. Mike's high natural intelligence led him off the street and into makeshift drug labs brewing up the gang's product.

One night in 1979, Mike witnessed a “client” OD and die. That was the moment he realized that there had to be more to life than making and taking dope—but that's all he knew. He started spending his drug money on textbooks, correspondence courses, chemistry sets, and library dues. He was desperate to get out, and chemistry was the straw he grasped to save from drowning. What else could he do?

Alchemy.

Mike got sidetracked in his study of chemistry by its mystical parent. Interest piqued, he studied the subject. Because of his street connections and quietly ruthless nature, he soon brushed up against the Occult Underground. Immediately, Mike tried to insert himself into this seedy magical subculture. He made a lot of progress in a short amount of time—after all, he could whip up a steady supply of drugs, always had money to spend, and “knew people” who could handle illicit things. He learned quickly.

Mike's alchemy led to him to a double



opportunity. The first opportunity was the access to power (magick potions? sign me up!). The second opportunity was strictly business (if a crackhead goes to great lengths for a tiny piece of rock, how much farther will a nutty old clockworker go for steam fittings from *Fulton's Folly*?). Fitzhugh's Dreamshop sprang from the unification of these goals. He distanced himself from the remaining Suicide Kings—not hard, as the rest of those idiots were in rehab or jail—and set himself up with a little headshop. He could hook people up with various things out the back door, hold some items, fence some others, and everybody was happy. And so it's been going for 15 years.

Mike is reserved about his street gang past, but he talks about it guardedly if eased into it; a blunt question about the Suicide Kings clams him up. Mike has no idea of the intensity of Maria Perez's infatuation with him, but knows that Hector Garcia doesn't like him. For his part, Fitzhugh is patiently extra-kind to Garcia, seeing Hector as a twenty-years-younger reflection of himself. However, he's informed the young thief that if he ever catches him stealing from the Dreamshop he'll deep-fry Hector's *cojones*.

Personality: A great, amiable guy who's easy to get along with (until you cross him). He's got hundreds of friends (that he plays off against one another). Easy to talk to (and he remembers everything you say).

Obsession: (Alchemy) Real power is the ability to change things.

Wound Points: 55

Pick One

- ☐ **High Road:** Fitzhugh likes being the local sage, and shares his knowledge cheaply—but refuses to sell at all if the information could compromise a friend. He's not dealing drugs out of the back room of the shop.
- ☐ **Middle Road:** Strictly business: cash on the barrelhead equals magick for you. He can get you what you need, but doesn't create product any longer.

- ☐ **Low Road:** Fitzhugh gets off on being the local go-to guy, and sells his knowledge dearly. He also brews drugs up in the back of his shop.

Passions

Rage: Being ignored. Nothing jerks Mike's chain so much as that.

Fear: (Helplessness) Mike never wants to be locked in, be it in a jail cell, in a room, or in a car. This is a mild form of claustrophobia—so long as he can physically get out, he's fine. If restrained somehow, he flips.

Noble: Mike actually wants to help out his community. His neighborhood raised him, he feels he owes it something, and gives back what he can.

Stats

Body: 55 (athletic)

Speed: 50 (smooth) (S)

Mind: 65 (self-educated)

Soul: 55 (intense)

Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 20%, Kick Your Ass (Struggle) 25%, Weightlifting 20%

Speed Skills: Driving 20%, Dodge 20%, Use My Nine (Firearms) 20%

Mind Skills: Street Chemistry (General Education) 30%, Notice 20%, **Alchemy 29%**, Run A Business 16%

Soul Skills: Charm 30%, Lie 35%, Street Contacts 24%, Occult Contacts 18%

Alchemy: See *Postmodern Magick* (p. 167) for more detail about an alchemist at the top of his game. Mike Fitzhugh is nowhere near that level. In theory, alchemy should allow Fitzhugh to do just about anything; in practice, he is limited to extremely subtle effects that are less overt than random magick or minor Unnatural. So no healing potions, but maybe a salve that doubles the speed of natural healing; a block of incense that helps you remember

where you left your car keys when inflated in your apartment; an ointment that provides a single 5% shift in a stat for one action, but is only potent for a quarter-hour when exposed to air. That sort of thing. A good rule of thumb is one full week of brewing, mixing, and refining plus \$100 worth of ingredients grants a minor charge equivalent—with a successful Alchemy roll. A failed roll means Mike has to start over.

Notes

Fitzhugh knows a *faux*-Lead Into Gold ritual brought to town by T-Joe, which is actually an invitation for demonic possession.

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
5 H/2 F	3 H/2 F	1 H/1 F	2 H/1 F	1 H/0 F

Possessions

Ruger Super Redhawk, Fitzhugh's Dreamshop, old Camaro. He also has access to a number of acidic and caustic substances in his alchemy/drug lab. Currently, he has the bottle with the remaining dose of trapped "Elixir of Life" (see above) that Jenkins brewed up.

As the Street Phantom

If Mike Fitzhugh is the Street Phantom, he's come to look upon the consumed memories of Leon Boswell as a blessing in disguise. Through his hatred of Boswell and search for vengeance, Fitzhugh has discovered the secret of True Alchemy—anthropophagy, the gaining of knowledge through cannibalism. It just makes sense, doesn't it? What also makes sense is that he shall own the Green Glass Grail: he can *feel* in his bones that it's true. Mike came to the understanding long ago that crime sucks, and that knowledge was what paid. And magick—alchemy—is the highest form of knowledge he's found yet.

Fitzhugh as Street Phantom works particularly well when focusing on Interaction as a

theme. His overall **Motivation** is Changing Things From Behind the Scenes. He **Concentrates** on using Charm and Lies to set characters against each other, then he'll strike while they're at each other's throats. If Mike is the Street Phantom, he is knowingly leading Perez on, and surreptitiously rubbing Garcia's nose in it.

Nero "Nicky" Fitzhugh, Freshly-Ex-Con

Nicky is a man in his late thirties, affable and exuberant. However, he's also dense, loud, and lacks basic human caution. He's fresh out of jail and on the street on parole after serving six years for selling drugs. He is one of the surviving Suicide Kings and usually wears the signature leather jacket with the image of the King of Hearts logo. He's looking for the basic necessities: a drink, a dame, and a daily grind. If all else fails, his plan is to stay with his brother Mike and work in Mike's headshop, but he hasn't gotten there yet. All things being equal, he'd rather find his own job and be his own man.

Use the stats for a Stock Thug (see UA, p. 211) for Nicky. His Violence, Helplessness, and Isolation Meters have 10 Hardened notches divided amongst them. If you're using the Meet Nicky Fitzhugh event, note that he drank from the Green Glass Grail the morning of the event and is affected accordingly.

Agenda

- Meet woman. Get laid. Repeat.
- Get a job.
- Visit with his brother Mike.
- Get his own place.

His Opinions of Others

Angel of Mercy Murder: "That's too bad. Geez, you go away a little while, and the old neighborhood goes to crap."

Mike Fitzhugh: "I love my brother, but I hate it when he starts using all those big words and





stuff. He don't even mix up smack no more. Thinks he's better than me. I'd rather keep it real."

The Street Phantom: "Who?"

What Dena Knows

Used to be member of a gang called the Suicide Kings. Convicted criminal. Mike Fitzhugh's brother.

Elijah McGillicuddy, Raving Loon

An old bearded fat man with sunglasses. He keeps up a running stream of commentary under his breath, then he'll break into streaks of cursing and swearing. He gets a phrase caught in his head, and won't let it drop for days. Currently, the phrase *du jour* is "Blind till X-Mas!"—pronouncing the "x" when he says it.

McGillicuddy especially likes answering a question with the same question, just re-phrased. He's been in town visiting his niece, a local streetwalker and addict named Rhonda. She lets the old nut crash at her place (when he remembers her), but doesn't much care about where he is. So he wanders the streets, day and night, sleeping wherever he falls. For some unknown reason—perhaps just luck or coincidence—he hasn't been run in by the cops. Ever.

Elijah used to be a carpenter back in Dayton, before he lost it. He's still in good shape. If needed, use the stats for the Stock Thug (see UA, p. 211). He has blown his Helplessness meter completely, and his Isolation meter is completely Hard. Elijah is a local, notable loon.

Agenda

- Stay warm.
- Eat.
- Sleep.
- Warn them all about the bugs. (Warn who?) Who cares?

- Kill all the bugs! (What bugs?) The ones in the corners. Of your eyes.

His Opinions of Others

Angel of Mercy Murder: "And the Angel flew down, but Heaven wanted her back. I kept her little bottle, then I threw it away. Angels don't litter, why should I? I need it back to fix the cracks in my head, though."

The Street Phantom: "I gotta tattoo of Casper under my skin and it talks at night, yessiree-bob!"

Maria Perez: "That little gimp girl cooks the best damn french fries ever, you hear me, boy?"

T-Joe Walters: "He's hangin' out with a bad crowd, I seen. Malingerers! Putting words and thinks into his melon. Melon don't got no seeds, boy!"

What Dena Knows

Absolutely nothing, nor does she have any reason to.

As the Street Phantom

If Elijah McGillicuddy is the Street Phantom, it can be satisfying to run the scenario as a simple, pure-action bug-hunt. You've got a crazy madi warping reality. Stop him. Let the PCs run across him a few times in more innocuous circumstances. Elijah's main **Motivations** are Healing and Mayhem—if he can't get the one, he'll settle for the other. His **Concentration** is simply Hit and Run Weirdness.

Repercussions

If the PCs were assiduous in dealing with the Street Phantom, the local Occult Underground has been a little shaken up but things quickly return to "normal." If it all went to hell and the Street Phantom is wild, blood and magick is running rampant in the streets until they

deal with him (the most likely), one of the Big Cabals brings the hammer down (probable), or maybe even the Sleeping Tiger wakes up, hungry (long-shot nightmare).

Mundane Response

Everything up to solid proof of the existence of magick or a major riot with hundreds of people witnessing magick should be discounted as a drug war between rival gangs. The madi abilities of the Street Phantom provide that much obscurity. Of course, that means that any PC or GMC hauled in as a result is treated as a drug criminal—even if such a thing is blatantly ridiculous. Think Kafka, Orwell, Huxley, with some Sartre or Beckett for that kangaroo-court flavor.

Involved Cabal Responses

Each cabal should respond a little differently to the effects of this scenario as regards the

Green Glass Grail. Their responses are divided into “Cabal Possession” (if the cabal ends the scenario with possession of the Real Thing), “Response to PC Possession” (if the PCs have set themselves up as Keepers of the Grail), and “Private Little War” (if the Street Phantom retains control of the bottle and starts settling scores).

Mak Attax Crew

Cabal Possession: If Mak Attax gets hold of the bottle, they’re gonna start field-testing its properties in Harvey Duopoulos’s home franchise in DeKalb, IL.

Response to PC Possession: The Maks try to acquire “samples” for their tests, but since they can’t pay much at all, it’s gonna have to be all on charm and promises.

Private Little War: Once blood is shed, Super-conductor tells all Maks in the area to bug out. Even the Grail is not worth more people dying.



DREW TUCKER





Satan's Chosen Temple

Cabal Possession: If Satan's Chosen Temple hangs onto it, the cabal gets famous fast—but celebrity can be a bitch. Mak Attax labels them the enemy, maybe even blaming them for Vince's death if they didn't find out about the Phantom. TNI either wipes them out or recruits them as demon-summoning specialists; either way, they pry the Grail out of the kids' fingers. The Sleepers spy on them and hand the documentation over to the Order of Saint Cecil, who murders every last one of the little Satan-loving bastards in a John Woo hail of automatic gunfire—which gets problematic if they're under TNI's wing. Essentially, they're wiped out or co-opted within three months and the Grail jumps owners again.

Response to PC Possession: None. Unless he had it in his hands during the course of the scenario, T-Joe might not even know the Green Glass Grail exists.

Private Little War: Run away! Run away!

The Sleepers

Cabal Possession: If the Sleepers end up with the Green Glass Grail, it goes directly to Berlin to be locked up in the Fabulous Room of the Berlin Temple of Truth.

Response to PC Possession: They try to get it away from the PCs, mostly through sneaky and ruthless methods. If those fail, the Cabinet meets and promotes the PC cabal to a "dangerous" status, then the gloves come off.

Private Little War: The Sleepers are geared to pacify the local Occult Underground, by any means necessary. One of their leaders, hard-boiled Hong Kong cop Wu Zhanhan, should be on the scene to direct Sleeper efforts to mystify and cloud the weirdness from the mundanes. They don't know that the Street Phantom's madi abilities are doing this also.

TNI Strike Team

Cabal Possession: If TNI ends up with the Real

Thing, it goes directly into Alex Abel's briefcase. He then ends each day with the pause that refreshes.

Response to PC Possession: They offer money first. Then they offer magick. Then they offer threats. Then they kill everyone.

Private Little War: Hit Squads are sent in to scrounge through the wreckage for neat magickal goodies or possible allies, but not to get involved unless attacked.

Uninvolved Cabal and Duke Responses

The Green Glass Grail is a potent enough draw that other cabals not involved in this scenario can sit down at the table to play their hand. It's a big deal, this Statosphere shard. It's like cheese to a hungry mouse. Here are some story seeds to get your ideas flowing. These folks appear in various UA sourcebooks; if you don't know who they are, just ignore 'em.

101001101

Response to PC Possession: Try to obtain the Real Thing for use in ghostlights.

Private Little War: The Rayhab keeps its people clear.

The Dealership

Response to PC Possession: Juan Martinez presents himself to the PCs to talk about what they'd want for the Real Thing, speaking as the Bad Man's agent.

Private Little War: The Bad Man shows up in person, to see what deals can be made in the carnage.

Grail Knights

Response to PC Possession: The Knights hear the rumors of the existence of the Green Glass Grail within a couple months, and most of them come looking for it. How they come depends totally on the character of each of the Knights.

Private Little War: Each Grail Knight would probably lead his own splinter faction into the warzone.

The House of Renunciation

Response to PC Possession: Some Rooms may dispatch Agents to lure the Green Glass Grail into the House. The capabilities of an Anti-Grail are left as an exercise for the reader.

Private Little War: There are lots of opportunities for Renunciation in the midst of a war and in its aftermath.

The Order of Saint Cecil

Response to PC Possession: The Order most probably would not be aware of the PCs' possession of the Green Glass Grail, unless it comes up during their involvement in the Private Little War. If they get their hands on it, top Cecilite theologians will determine if it is a true sacred relic (and due veneration and usage) or a mere magickal artifact (and consigned to the fire).

Private Little War: Father Etienne Destiné (last seen in *Hush Hush*, p.124–125) may be coordinating the Cecilite enforcer units.

Sect of the Naked Goddess

Response to PC Possession: The Sect tries to get their hands on it by whatever means they can, because the Grail is a powerful female and sexual symbol.

Private Little War: Despite the attraction of the Symbol, the Sect stays out of open warfare over it. Too dangerous.

Team Salvation

Response to PC Possession: Fools rush in where angels fear to tread. They waltz in if they see the PCs “abusing” the power of the Green Glass Grail.

Private Little War: As above, but they’ll probably get whacked hard.

True Order of Saint-Germain

Response to PC Possession: If Randy Douglas decides that the Real Thing can be used to trap the Comte somewhere, he’ll send his soldiers for it. Otherwise, they won’t know about it.

Private Little War: If there are riot troops in the streets, Douglas might send some trouble-makers to take advantage of the chaos.

Dirk Allen

Response to PC Possession: Allen tries to buy or steal the Green Glass Grail, if it’s convenient. Otherwise, pass the Scotch.

Private Little War: Allen stays far, far, away from any fighting.

The Freak

Response to PC Possession: The Freak may stop by to chat, and offer something outrageous for the bottle. It definitely wants it.

Private Little War: The Freak might show up, just for jollies. Probably not, though.

If none of these options appeals to you, and the Real Thing is too *real* for your campaign, well, just remember: glass is fragile. If somebody drops the darn thing, it’s dead forever. Dreams die cheap.





STOON LAKE

BY GREG STOLZE

UNKNOWN ARMIES



"If there were a verb meaning 'to believe falsely,' it would not have any significant first person, present indicative."

—LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

"BIGFOOT, I'M TELLIN' YOU! TALLER'N
YOU AND STANK LIKE THE DEVIL'S FART!
SAW IT WITH MY OWN EYES! SMELLED
IT WITH MY OWN NOSE!"

—ED CLIFFE





Stoon Lake, Minnesota, seems like a

normal place. It's a small town on the shore of a small lake. It provides groceries and gasoline and a post office to many of the small farms (and some large corporate ones) that surround it. It also offers fishing bait, two restaurants, and one small souvenir shop to the tourists who stay in vacation homes that go all around the waterfront.

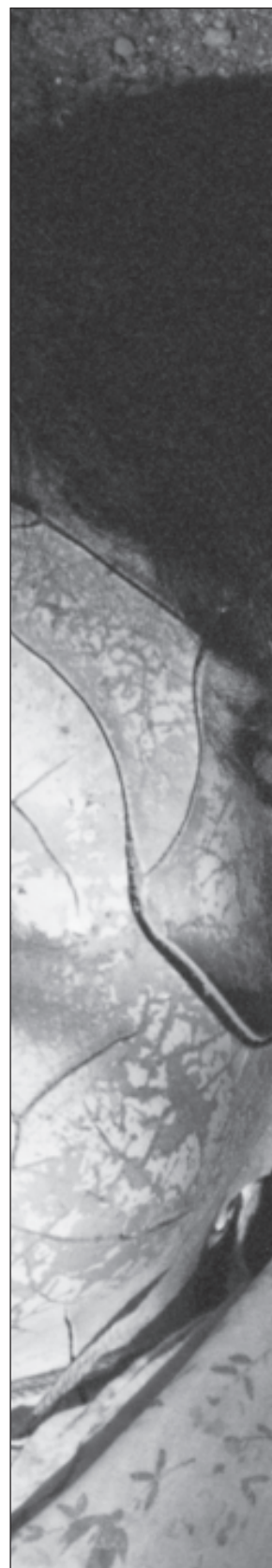
When Stoon Lake was first surveyed, its shape earned it the name "Spoon Lake." A transcription error onto an early map made this into "Stoon Lake," and when the township was founded in 1854 the name became fixed. A piece of folklore has even grown up explaining that the lake was actually discovered by Scots (or Irishmen, depending on whether you're talking to someone whose name starts with Mc or with O') and that it should have been "Stone Lake." But maybe that's not really relevant.

What's relevant is that two French trappers saw a mysterious hairy figure in the Stoon Lake vicinity in 1891, and since that time the region has had periodic bouts of sasquatch activity.

Who Cares?

The Stoon Lake Bigfoot Attack (as it rapidly becomes known on the Web, complete with Those Capital Letters) seems, at first blush, like a fairly minor urban legend. How, exactly, is it supposed to attract the attention of important characters like the PCs? The answer lies in what interests them and who employs them.

Mak Attax: One of the members of the email list posts links to the deputy's report, a minor news story about the mayor's sighting, a collection of links on past bigfoot activity, and a recent news article (see next page). Some Attaxers think this is a sign that the mundane paradigm is finally starting to crumble, letting creatures of myth and magic(k) return. Someone should check it out! There could be



unicorns coming through next! After all, remember the opportunity we missed with that big wolf/snake thing near Vancouver.

The Sect of the Naked Goddess: The unceasing research into Herself's personal history has uncovered the possibility that in high school She was (briefly) friends with a girl named Drew Brooks. Brooks' family had a vacation cabin on Stoon Lake—in fact, a cabin right near the dock where local Ed Cliffe took his (almost) famous photograph of Bigfoot.

TNI: In one of his earlier books, Emil Dodustov theorized that “bigfoot” sightings might actually be the confused memories caused by *werewolf* sightings. TNI's library has a ritual that requires the skin of a “loup garou” and which is supposed to provide the power to change form and cloud memories—and who knows, maybe ignore any damage short of silver bullets?—so the PCs get sent to skin that lycanthrope.

The True Order of Saint Germain: The boss said we should find out more about weird shit. This here shit in this newspaper sounds pretty damn weird. Let's give up on finding this Bat Boy kid and try for bigfoot instead.

The Sleepers: This Mia Gilona character is pretty sharp. It sounds like those dingbat Mak Attaxers are heading up to Stoon Lake on her say-so, so it's a good idea to get some of our people in there to run interference between her and them. Killing the burger boys is only going to whet her appetite; it would be much better for all concerned to get some major discrediting done.

A Typical PC Group of Misfits and Weir-
does: Dude! It's like, *bigfoot!* Cooooool.

Residents and Others

Ron Williams, Bigfoot Victim

Story: Ron's IQ is a bit above average, but his mom's income was a bit below. That's not surprising: Ron's dad died when Ron was very young. It was a lingering, expensive death. The

“Bigfoot Attack” in Minnesota?

Mia Gilona
Ipcress News Service

STOON LAKE — On July 18, Ron Williams of Stoon Lake, Minnesota, was admitted to Keil County hospital with a broken leg. That much is certain.

What is less certain is how his leg got broken. “I was at my mother's house,” Williams says. “I'd just finished cleaning out her rain gutters and was carrying the ladder back to the garage when I smelled something terrible. Just this nasty, road-kill kind of smell. Maybe I heard something, I don't remember. I turned, and there was something. It was tall, taller than me, with dark fur. I yelled, and I think I tried to shield myself with the ladder. Then it hit me and I don't remember anything after that. I don't know if I passed out. It was all so fast. Then I was dragging myself into the house to call 911.”

Williams is cautious about saying who, or what, is responsible for his injury, but other locals will say what Williams won't.

“The smell, the tallness, the dark hair—it sounds like the other bigfoot sightings around here,” says Ed Cliffe. “The only thing different is the violence.”

Cliffe is more than a local observer. In 1968 Cliffe took a now-famous photo of what he and the three men who were with him insist was the legendary sasquatch. In 1977 he set out to capture the creature and failed, but did produce a fairly clear cast of an oversized footprint. He has been hunting “bigfoot” in the Stoon Lake region ever since.

“I've seen it, or them, more than once, but they've never been bold enough to attack. They're usually shy—I've never even gotten a good shot at one with a tranquilizer gun. This attack could be a case of rabies. Or something like that mad cow disease. But we definitely have to find out.”

Cliffe and Williams aren't the only Stoon Lake residents who've spotted the elusive creature. In fact, Mayor Gene Mullen reported seeing a hairy figure from his fishing boat only two weeks before Williams was hospitalized. This follows on the heels of a 1999 report filed by a sheriff's deputy named Donna Gufrey that stated (see *Bigfoot* page 9)

Williams got along okay, but they had to scrimp and there wasn't too much left over. Ma Williams never let Ron forget it, either.

Ron can't actually remember when he started hanging around with Gene Mullen. They were probably four or five when the Mullens invited little Ron and his mom over for some Christian charity.



Gene had a lot of cool toys. Ron had a lot of cool ideas for getting into and out of trouble. From that moment on, the two were best friends.

While they were pretty much inseparable until puberty, there was always—*always*—a tiny bit of a competitive edge to their friendship and play. Each one genuinely liked the other a lot, much more than any of the other boys in their grade, but Ron thought he should be the leader of the pair with Gene as his sidekick. Gene thought *he* should be in charge.

They both ran track, but Gene was the star—always running a little faster to be sure he beat Ron. Ron was the class valedictorian, obsessed with his four point GPA—so he'd have something to lord over Gene.

But it was all in good fun until Dora moved into town.

In a small high school, certain things can become very clear. It was clear that Gene was the richest and most popular kid. It was clear that Ron was the smartest boy. When Dora arrived, it was clear that she was the smartest, prettiest, liveliest, *most desirable* girl. Ron and Gene both fell for her—and knowing the other wanted her made each desire her more.

It complicated matters a great deal when Dora became *friends* with both of them. This was not all that hard, from her point of view, since each was so fun and clever when alone with her. It was only together that they started to show off and one-up and generally make teenage asses of themselves.

Finally, she made them both swear they would never, *ever* try to be more than “just friends” with her because she could tell how screwy everything would get if she ever “dated” one. She was unwilling to destroy either friendship, just over a boyfriend.

That was okay until they graduated from high school. Ron got a full ride to Minnesota State, Dora went to Harvard, and Gene went to Boston College. A freshman year of Gene's charms wore Dora down. At least, that's how Ron sees it.

Ron went on to pharmacy school but he always planned to come back to Stoon Lake. After all, he couldn't abandon his mama who'd worked so hard. Plus his best friend Gene was there, still running the family business.

Not to mention Dora. His good friend. His good, close friend. His best friend's wife.

He got married and divorced and that pretty much shut people up about his love life. Now he lives alone on the shore of the lake and works in the town pharmacy. Currently his leg is in a cast, after what the papers call “a bigfoot attack.”

Motivation: It's tough but fair to say that Ron never fully grew up. He wants to show off and be special. He's deeply jealous of his old friend. Although they never, *ever* talk about their history with Dora, they cruelly kid one another about everything else. They have poker games with a couple other local “men of quality” who have learned very well how to enrich themselves by playing Gene and Ron off one another. They spend many weekends on the lake seeing who can catch the biggest fish, or in the fields trying to bag a buck with the most points.

Ron fears that Gene feels superior because he got to marry Dora and be mayor of the town. Secretly, he's terrified that Gene might really *be* superior.

That's one reason he doesn't want Gene to win again by pushing through his newest scheme: developing part of Stoon Lake into a tourist RV camp with west coast real-estate speculator Gretta Schliff. (He also thinks it will pollute the lake and rob the town of its small-town charm.) He tells himself he loves Gene like a brother, and it's probably true in some way. But sibling rivalry sure can be a bitch.

Ed Cliffe, Sasquatch Stalker

Story: Ed's a local fuel-oil supplier who saw bigfoot standing next to his truck back in 1968. While the three buddies he was with were squinting or hollering, Ed pulled out a camera and snapped a blurry picture. Since

then he's divided his time between his fuel-oil business and the woods around Stoon Lake, trying to get another picture, another footprint, or (best of all) an actual live specimen.

Oh, and there's the bar. He splits his time between the business, the woods, and the local bar.

As the years have flown fruitlessly (and probably pointlessly) by, Ed has become increasingly desperate to get his conclusive proof. It's a vicious circle: the more time goes by without results, the more an ass he looks. This makes him more anxious to make good on his claims so he works harder, hunts more, puts in more time—and looks even stupider when these *increased* attentions yield nothing.

Donald Cruz, the new owner of the land where Ed took the Bigfoot photo, refuses to let Ed onto the property. This has only fueled Ed's eagerness to go there. But at the same time he hasn't done so, because as long as he respects Cruz's wishes he has an excuse. "Yeah, I *would* have found it, if not for that meddling Don Cruz!"

Motivation: Find the beast, find the beast, find the beast. And when he can't find the beast, his motivation is to drink. He drinks until finding the beast, or not finding it, or never getting married, or never getting rich, or never getting famous doesn't matter any more.

Gene Mullen, Mayor

Story: If not for Ron Williams, Gene would probably be less successful and a lot dumber. Happier, maybe, but less smart and probably not mayor.

Before he met Ron, Gene had no idea he was lucky. Ron and his mom were really Gene's first experience with people who didn't have it as good as he did, and it disturbed him. What disturbed him even more was he could easily see that Ron was smarter than he was.

Gene had to wonder: was it being an orphan and poor that made Ron so smart? If that was so, shouldn't he, Gene, want to give up his advantages so he could be smart too?

But if it *wasn't* those bad facts that made Ron smart, how much better would Ron be if he'd been born in Gene's shoes?

(The first time he read *The Prince and the Pauper*, Gene burst into tears.)

While Ron grew up in the unpleasant but uncomplicated position of envying a richer, better-looking friend, Gene had to deal with the confounding paradox of envying his friend's unhappiness. Even today, Gene can't find a comeback when Ron digs in with something like "Unlike someone I could mention, I *personally* earned every single thing I've got." When Ron gets like that Gene nods, gives a rueful not-quite smile, and quietly says "You're right, Ron," while privately wishing Ron would just shut up and get over it already. But nodding and ruing and agreeing—that's what friends do.

Yet while one part of Gene is ashamed that he's richer and more successful than Ron, another part is absolutely certain that Ron could not be mayor. No fuckin' way. He's got book smarts, sure, but he hasn't got people smarts. Ron would never realize that when you're trying to get someone on your side, it's often *better* if you're not smarter than they are. But Gene figured that out pretty early in life.

His desire to seem nicer, rather than smarter, is what has gotten him through most everything, but he can't shake the feeling that he's a fraud, that his success is not really his own, just the result of circumstance.

Even Dora.

Sure, he was the one who asked and who slept with her and put the ring on her finger, but everything was so different at college. What if Ron had been in Boston too? Meaning, really, what if Ron was rich enough to go to school there?

Winning the race doesn't mean much when the other guy never made it to the starting line.

Motivation: Gene wants to prove to himself, once and for all, that he can accomplish something on his own. Bringing an influx of tourist dollars to the town would do that, so he



needs to court Gretta Schliff and make sure that the P.R. is not only steady, but positive.

Gene wants to get away with cheating on Dora because he loves her and doesn't want to hurt her—though this desire to not hurt her hasn't stopped him from having guilty sex with an 18-year-old whose parents live four doors down the street. At the same time he *does* want to get caught. Then maybe Ron will finally acknowledge that Gene is the best, because he can *throw away* the woman that Ron could never even have in the first place. Or maybe he wants to get caught so Dora will leave him for Ron, the hardworking self-made man she should have been with in the first place.

Really, he's just not sure *what* he wants in his personal life, so he distracts himself as much as he can with work. Luckily, that's not hard right now.

Dora Mullen, Mrs. Mayor

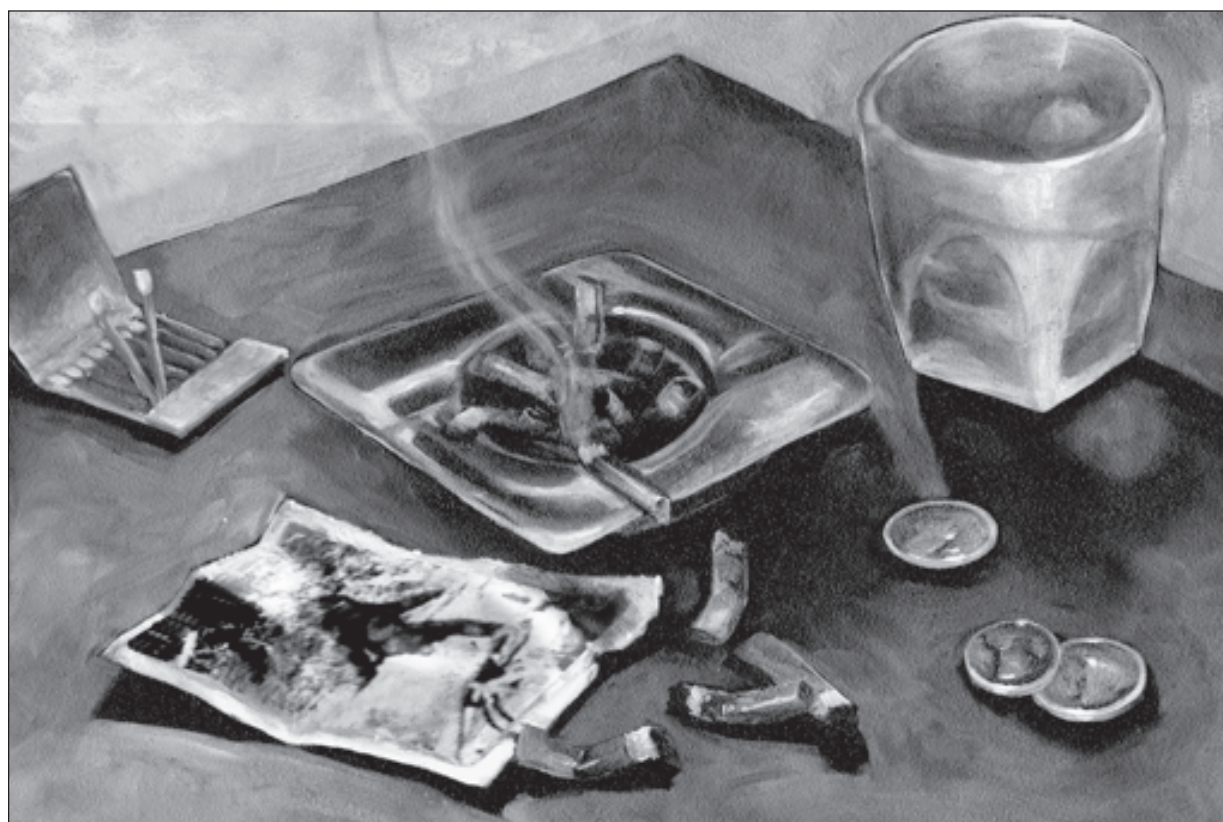
Story: When she was twelve, a man broke into

the house of Dora's parents. It was the middle of the night. She saw him and screamed and he ran away, but she never felt safe in that house again.

When she was fourteen, her parents moved to Stoon Lake and Dora loved it. She liked swimming and hiking and fishing and riding her bike down to Smitty's Big Dipper for an ice cream cone. Some of the people were a little dour, but others were very friendly—and more importantly, you could keep track of everyone. There weren't *strangers*. There weren't those big, smeary crowds like back in Boston, crowds where you knew you might never see any one of the people again.

She liked Stoon Lake and she liked Ron and Gene. Ron always had something interesting to say, and just being around him made her feel smart. Gene always made everything feel comfortable and natural. She liked them both and she was smart enough to see the love triangle coming and try to saw the points off early.

Nowadays, she wonders what would have happened if she'd succeeded.



THOMAS MANNING

Maybe it's memory gilding the lily, but she remembers those high school days as priceless and precious and pure—as a time when she couldn't imagine being without either of her friends, even though she couldn't imagine marrying either one.

But college changed everything. Or maybe it just changed Gene. Back in Stoon Lake, he'd always had a quiet confidence—the confidence that came from knowing he had the respect, if not the friendship, of everyone he met. But in Boston she was his only friend, and he felt lost and afraid and uncertain.

After years of competing with Ron to show her his best side, what won her over was when he showed her his weaknesses.

Telling Ron she was dating Gene was the hardest thing she ever had to do, but he took it well. At least, it seemed like he took it well.

Once they returned to Stoon Lake, Gene was back in his element. It only seemed natural that he'd marry Dora, take over more and more of his father's business, and eventually get elected mayor. It's almost as if Gene was some rare plant that could only grow in Stoon Lake soil, but when he's there he flourishes and expands magnificently.

The only problem is, Dora was used to being the soil he took root in. She's been teaching at the local school and doing charity work and she's involved with the church, but she barely feels married anymore at all.

What frightens her is how little she misses it.

Motivation: Dora is starting to get a little suspicious about Gene's "late meetings" and "business lunches." She also thinks he and Ron are both flat-out lying about their "big-foot sightings." She'd like to get to the bottom of all her suspicions, but at the same time she's not sure she'd like what she'd learn about her two closest friends.

Gretta Schliff, Developer

Story: Gretta was a west coast real-estate speculator who got burned bad and decided to

head out to the flyover states where (she expected) everyone would be stupid and easy to manipulate.

That attitude didn't play well in Chicago. Or in St. Louis. So now she's washed up on the shores of Stoon Lake and wants to see if she can buy up some cheap land, build an RV campground and make the lake enough of a tourist attraction to push up property values. Then she can unload her purchases and, with her stake renewed, return to "civilization."

Motivation: She wants Stoon Lake to become a vacation destination and she doesn't care how it happens. She's pretty dubious about this "bigfoot" angle, but Gene assures her that the people who come out for the kitsch value will be won over by the charm of small town values, or something like that. She's waiting and seeing. She does not, for even one moment, believe there is any kind of *real* bigfoot running around.

Mia Gilona, Freelance Muckraker

Story: Mia has been *so close*. She just knows it. But the only editors who trust her instincts are the same ones who have staffers on the "celebrity diet and anorexia" beat. No thanks. Mia has higher goals than boosting tabloid circulation. She wants to track down stories that *mean* something.

She thought she was onto it when she heard all those stories about a mysterious "Dr. Frakes" or "Dr. Farouk" in Chicagoland who could cure nearly *any* disease for a million bucks cash—but most of her sources disappeared almost overnight and the rest started stonewalling hard.

Then there were the leads about a serial killer who actually *bit out his victims' eyes*—a serial killer mysteriously ignored by the FBI and the RCMP. But again she was met with curious silence, almost as if someone was throwing up barriers in front of her.

Now she's left her native Milwaukee for Stoon Lake in hopes of uncovering the truth



behind this bigfoot matter. At least it makes good copy, and maybe this time she can find a story that doesn't just slip through her fingers.

Motivation: Proving that bigfoot is real could be the scoop of the decade. But proving it's a hoax would also lend her some much-needed credibility. It's win-win for Mia—as long as she can unequivocally prove *something*.

Donald Cruz, Uncooperative Landowner

Story: Donald was a homely kid, and like a lot of homely kids he became an introvert. Like many introverts he was good at his studies—in his case, it was math and science that drew his attention. He started his math degree the same year his college started offering “computer science” as a course of study, and he graduated with a double major in both. After doing some coding for a bank and then for AT&T, he got recruited by the National Security Agency. They had seen his concise but powerful security programs, had noted his skill with cryptography, and thought he might blossom into a good asset.

Cruz blossomed beyond their wildest dreams. He was quite good at encryption, but it turned out that he had an unsuspected genius at *decryption*.

So never mind that he was funny looking and crabby and generally a big pain in the ass to deal with. He was an asset, and the NSA was happy to give him whatever he wanted as long as he kept popping codes.

It turned out that what Donald wanted more than anything else was solitude. He wanted to get away from all the “stupid people” and live by himself somewhere so he could really concentrate on the squirrely regions of higher math.

His bosses were reluctant to let him telecommute when he was dealing with matters of national security, so he made them a deal: instead of doing the decrypting himself, he'd write them a piece of software that could

do what he did, only faster and with fewer security concerns. They were intrigued and gave him a year off to do it.

The result was a program called TBIS-CUIT. It was good—better than any other decryption software they had—but not up to his hype. It was, however, promising enough that they gave him five years to work on TBISCUIT 2.0. He bought a house on Stoon Lake and has been coding hard for the last year and a half.

(Incidentally, he picked Stoon Lake because his college girlfriend's parents, the Brooks family, had a cabin up there, and that's where he lost his virginity. In fact, he's bought the same house they used to own.)

Motivation: Putatively, to perfect TBIS-CUIT 2.0 and be left alone. His return to Stoon Lake probably indicates some kind of urge to reconnect with humanity, but any impulses of that sort are ruthlessly repressed.

Of course, all this repression and isolation have given Donald some odd quirks. He talks to himself. He eats with his hands. Some days he doesn't bother to get dressed or shower. But he can pull himself together when it's time to go to the store.

The Truth

Here's the straight dope, campers.

In 1891, two French trappers saw a pair of bears ransacking their cabin. Bonnette thought he'd locked the door, but he hadn't.

The 1968 sighting wasn't a bear. It was an exceptionally hirsute and mind-altered hippie. He was checking the truck in the hopes of satisfying his munchies, and took off when he saw four heavyset squares coming at him. If Bonnette hadn't been such a good storyteller eighty years earlier—or if Cliffe and Hall hadn't *both* thought it was their week to bring beer—it's possible that none of the four fishermen would have thought “sasquatch.” But they did.

Ed Cliffe really enjoyed the local notoriety

The Community Grid

To find out what the major players in Stoon Lake think about each other, simply find the person being asked in the left hand column, and follow the line across until you find the column for the person being asked *about*. Comments they'd say aloud are in quotes. What they really think but probably wouldn't say without some persuasion is in parentheses.

	Ron Williams	Ed Cliffe	Gene Mullen	Dora Mullen	Gretta Schliff	Mia Gilona	Donald Cruz
Ron Williams	(I'm smarter than everyone else in town.)	"I never believed Ed 'til I saw it. Guess I owe him an apology." (Saucepot.)	"Gene an' me go way back. Don't always agree, but he's one of my closest pals." (Lucky S.O.B.)	"Dora's a real gem—Gene's a fortunate guy." (Should have married <i>me</i> .)	"Can't say I care much for her big city airs." (Polluting bitch wants to carve up my town for tourists.)	"I think she's on to something big!" (Almost as smart as me. But not quite.)	"Huh?" (Who?)
Ed Cliffe	"I never thought the Sasquatch would get violent!" (What the hell happened?)	(Is this the best you could do?)	"I didn't vote for him." (Rich, stuck-up prick)	"Don't know her too well." (Great rack, nice ass.)	"She just wants to turn this place into the Wisconsin Dells." (Bitch.)	"She's got street smarts, but has she got woody ways, y'know?" (Wonder what she looks like naked?)	"He hasn't let me onto his land, and I think that's where the Sasquatch live. If they're violent, he better watch out." (Whatever.)
Gene Mullen	"Ron's a smart guy. If he said it happened, it did." (Not as smart as me.)	"Ed's been chasing this thing longer than anyone." (And if it lived in a six-pack, he'd have caught it by now.)	(Doin' great!)	"She's the best wife a mayor could have!" (Is she cheating on me? Does she know I'm cheating on her?)	"She's got some really exciting, important plans that can move Stoon Lake into the 21 st Century." (brown nosing + bigfoot = \$\$\$!)	"Responsible reporting is essential for democracy." (Gotta get her to re-spin this story.)	"Ah, another one of Stoon Lake's fine citizens. He's entitled to his privacy, of course." (Who?)
Dora Mullen	"Ron's a terrific friend. Has a great sense of humor, too." (What could have been? Nah.)	"Ed's a touch eccentric, but his heart's in the right place." (Boozy old moron.)	"Oh, we've been together since we were high school sweethearts." (Is he stepping out on me?)	(What the hell went wrong?)	"We all hope Gretta decides to stay here and settle down." (Dull, dull, <i>dull</i> woman.)	"I wish she'd realize there's more to Stoon Lake than Bigfoot tales." (Arrogant urban hipster trash.)	"Donald Cruz? Doesn't ring a bell." (Who?)
Gretta Schliff	"It's possible, of course, that he just had some sort of accident." (Yokel.)	"I must say, I'm not impressed by his evidence." (Drunken hick.)	"He's made me very welcome." (Toadying provincial—but useful.)	"Such a charming woman." (Nauseating little hayseed.)	(Fuck the trees. Where's the nearest Starbucks?)	"Didn't she get reassigned from the 'ex-girlfriends of Leonardo DiCaprio' beat?" (Irritating and inconsequential.)	"I'm sorry, who?" (I just don't give a fuck.)
Mia Gilona	"His injuries were real, no doubt about <i>that</i> ." (He's hiding something.)	"If my expense account comes through, I'm going to hire him as a guide." (Sober, he might be good for something.)	"He's been very charming, if not completely helpful." (Great ass, nice hair. Pity he's such a tool.)	"I haven't spoken with her." (Little Miss Cheese Princess, grown up into Queen Shit.)	"Well, I have to consider her interest in getting good publicity, if she's developing here." (Bitch.)	(I'm smarter than everyone else in town <i>put together</i> .)	"He's very secretive. Did you know he works for the NSA?" (Probably no connection. But if there <i>is</i> . . .)
Donald Cruz	"Never heard of him." (Who?)	"If he calls me again, I'm getting a restraining order." (Total nutjob.)	"I don't pay much attention to local politics." (Who cares?)	"Don't know her." (Huh?)	"I believe she's interested in building some kind of godawful trailer campground." (If she does it, I am <i>out</i> of here.)	"I've read her article. I think what she <i>really</i> wanted was to write science fiction." (Loser.)	(Why can't people just leave me the hell alone?)

his “bigfoot picture” got him. As more people bought him drinks and asked him about it, he became increasingly convinced that what he had seen was a genuine cryptofauna phenomenon. As the initial interest died down Ed started to miss it, and became increasingly vehement about what he’d seen. (He also started drinking more on his own dime.) Convinced that he alone had the wits to capture the creature, he made his loud, public declaration to that effect, and he believed it. But, out in the woods, doubt set in. Afraid of looking foolish by coming home empty-handed, he forged the plaster cast, salving his conscience with the notion that making fake proof of a true thing wasn’t really *lying*. More like an “explanation.”

More than one Stoon Lake inhabitant secretly suspects that Ed faked the footprint, but by that point doubting the bigfoot stories seemed almost disloyal. Not many people were willing to come out and state emphatically that they were True Bigfoot Believers, but neither were there many who completely ruled out the possibility.

Furthermore, Cliffe’s evidence (such as it was) had finally gotten some nationwide play. The “sasquatch tourists” weren’t very numerous—rarely more than five or six a summer, if that—but Stoon Lake residents still found it kind of nice to live somewhere famous. Even it was just a *little* famous, among a demographically insignificant subculture.

These offbeat (and sometimes gullible) guests got a lot of attention in an insular burg like Stoon Lake. Not surprisingly, bigfoot-themed pranks and hoaxes became a favorite pastime for local teenagers—and if it was a tourist who got fooled, all the better. Almost everyone in town can, with a little encouragement, tell a humorous story about fooling someone good with a gorilla suit—just like everyone in town can, if pressed, present a dead-serious and fairly plausible story of an encounter with something that could have been bigfoot. (“Well I didn’t *see* anything, but I sure heard something.”)

The pranks and the visitors kept sasquatch on the minds of Stoon Lake’s people, but many of the stories were obviously clumsy hoaxes. Most of the rest were unreliable, coming from senile senior citizens, wide-eyed pre-pubescent, or overweight guys with messy beards who’d driven all the way from Roswell and weren’t going home without a sasquatch story of their own. It all had a definite “urban legend” glow about it until Donna Guffrey’s report.

Deputy Guffrey did indeed see a very hairy figure in the woods—the hairy figure of eccentric nudist Donald Cruz. If she hadn’t grown up with Bonnette’s story and Ed Cliffe’s evidence and Stoon Lake’s general sasquatch cultural miasma, she might have recognized him for what he was. But she didn’t, and she’s got a well-deserved reputation for being down-to-earth.

News of Guffrey’s report was on the Internet within days (if not hours) and in the summer of 1999 every rental cabin, hotel, and lodge within an hour’s drive of the lake was full of wide-eyed bigfoot hunters.

Mayor Gene was amazed and pleased. His analysis is that *Twin Peaks* and *The X-Files* have made the paranormal acceptable to a lot of people with money to spend, and he’s hoping to make Stoon Lake the Wisconsin Dells of the paranormal. When developer Gretta Schliff bought up a stretch of lakefront land adjoining Donald Cruz’ property and started talking about making it into an RV campsite, Gene threw all his mayoral weight behind making it a reality. To add some fuel to the fire, he filed a “bigfoot sighting” of his own.

Not everyone in town is so enthusiastic. Fun was fun, and it was okay being a *little* famous, but you used to be able to fish on the lake without some dingdong in a motorboat blasting past with his binoculars trained on the woods. You used to be able to hunt and hike without finding the four-wheeler tracks and discarded Mars bar wrappers of erstwhile cryptozoologists.

Stoon Lake Bigfoot Timeline

1891: Two trappers, Leo LeTrey and Jacques Bonnette, return to a sealed winter cabin twenty miles north of Stoon Lake only to find “a pair of monkeys” within, ransacking their stores. When the two men fire their rifles, the “monkeys” flee. The few items of food they’d left within (coffee beans, flour, a large jar of molasses, and a flitch of bacon) are disturbed, and the cabin is full of brown fur. There’s no structural damage to the cabin. Although Bonnette insisted that the cabin had been locked, there’s no sign that the door had been forced. They said they’d seen two monkeys, one very large—at least six and a half feet tall and enormously muscular—and a second one much smaller, perhaps its child.

1968: Four men—Andrew Lee, Ken Bates, Ed Cliffe and Mike Hall—go fishing on Stoon Lake in the late afternoon. When they return to their campsite they see a lanky, hairy figure crouching by their truck. It flees when they came close, but Ed Cliffe manages to take a blurry picture as it retreats into the woods.

1975: Ed Cliffe sets out to capture the creature with a tranquilizer gun. He fails to do so, but does succeed in making a cast from a footprint found in the muddy ground.

1980–1999: Various people report seeing “bigfoots” and “sasquatches,” but no hard evidence turns up.

1999: Sheriff’s deputy Donna Guffrey reports seeing a tall, hairy figure in the woods as she’s driving on Locust Road north of the lake.

This Year: In June, Gene Mullen reports seeing a tall, powerfully-built and hirsute figure keeping pace with his fishing boat in the woods near his home. In August, Ron Williams is admitted to the local hospital with a broken leg and multiple bruises. Williams claims he sustained the injuries after being attacked by the Stoon Lake Bigfoot.

Ron Williams was even less enthused. Part of it, to be sure, was his unwillingness to suffer fools gladly, married to his certainty that the proposed RV park would bring in plenty of them. But perhaps just as much was his desire to see Gene *lose*. Gene’s always gotten everything he wanted (at least that’s how it looks to Ron) and Ron was itching to take him down a peg.

His grand opportunity came when he was up on a ladder, fooling around with a saggy spot on his mom’s rain gutters. As she was leaving to get groceries his mom let her dog—an Irish wolfhound—out the back door for a piss. When it saw Ron it charged him, hoping for a scratch on the belly. Instead, it knocked the ladder over. Ron broke his leg against the railing around his mom’s back patio and bruised himself up pretty good. Unfortunately for Ron, his mom’s a bit deaf and she didn’t hear a thing as she drove away to the store.

This meant Ron had to drag himself into the house and call 911 himself.

As he lay on the floor waiting for an ambulance, Ron felt pretty sorry for himself. Like many people in that mood, he thought how much it would cheer him up to pull a dirty on someone else. Who better than his best friend/enemy, Gene? So when the EMTs showed up and found him broken, battered, and covered with bad-smelling hair (courtesy of the wolfhound) he gave them a jumbled story about bigfoot and begged for anesthesia.

It didn’t take long for the story to spread, and it didn’t take him long to get his story straight in his own mind. It was, in his humble opinion, a masterpiece. Vague enough to sound authentic, but detailed enough to sound credible. It was certainly good enough to hook Mia Gilona from Milwaukee.

Gene didn’t believe it for a second, but he



Hey! Where's the Funky Stuff?

It may have caught your attention that there are no adepts, avatars or genuine unnatural phenomena in Stoon Lake. Not only that, but the potential for gunfights, explosions, car chases, and other UA staples is notably absent.

These elements were excluded deliberately. I'd be a hypocrite of political proportions if I suddenly started condemning gunfights, car chases, and weird mystic stuff since I'm one of the guys who's spent the last couple years shoveling them into the UA *oeuvre*. However, given all the invention people like to devote to coming up with new schools, new creatures, new rituals *etc.*, I thought it might be a good change of pace to slip in a nice red herring with *nothing* paranormal going on. I find that adventures in the Scully/Scooby paradigm keep a game honest. In an ideal horror game, characters shouldn't be able to count on anything—not even to the extent of reliably expecting a supernatural explanation.

If you want to import some more typical UA elements to Stoon Lake, I recommend that you do it by having the big guns and kewl powerz in the hands of other outsiders. Instead of having a real bigfoot, have the PCs and some other group of weirdoes (TNI? The Sleepers? Other mixed nuts?) bickering and squabbling over what turns out to be a *fake* bigfoot. It'll be ironical! Or postmodern! Or just plain fun.

couldn't very well call his longtime best friend a liar, now could he? The story hasn't scared away *all* the yeti tourists. But it's scared away the *best* ones, damnit—the sarcastic ones from the cities who are used to spending four dollars for a cup of coffee. The bigfoot kitsch enthusiasts are a lot less enthusiastic about something that can and will break your leg—and now it's a lot harder to be ironically detached in the woods at night. (Thanks a million, *Blair Witch Project*.) Those who remain are wild-eyed, toothless degenerates who drove all the way from Florida claiming the Skunk Ape ate their dog.

People like the PCs, for example.

Trampled Under (Big)Foot

So far, what you (the GM) have is a big pile of characters, setting, history, and background. The question is, how do you cook it all together into something that fits your campaign? There's no good way to predict what PCs are going to do, but much of what happens in Stoon Lake could be influenced by the PCs' actions. So, instead of a static structure, here

are some of the people the PCs may talk to and what encountering them may entail.

Deputy Donna Guffrey

An obvious place to start is with the most official report: the document filed by a Deputy Sheriff.

The report is open to view, but all it states is that Deputy Guffrey saw a “hairy figure” off in the woods near Donald Cruz' property. It was moving away and did not change course when she called to it. After briefly attempting to follow it, she lost it in the forest.

Deputy Guffrey is unavailable for comment. She got married recently and is on a two-week honeymoon in Cancun. The other officers stress two things if asked about her report: first, she never *said* it was “bigfoot.” She just said she saw a hairy figure. Second, she's a reliable, sensible and down-to-earth cop. If she said she saw a hairy figure, that's what she saw—no more, no less.

Ron Williams

First Visit: On their first visit, Ron is tickled

pink that people from far away are coming to ask him questions, but he hides it very well. He spins a good yarn about the “sasquatch” coming out of the woods, moving fast, breaking his leg and knocking him out. If the PCs believe him, he suggests they go talk to Gene Mullen about the safety issues raised for tourists. He casually mentions how close he is to Gene and offers to set up a meeting. (Privately, he wants to pour salt in Gene’s wound, and thinks that a group of nervous tourists is just the way to do it.)

On the other hand, the PCs may doubt his story. What with magick, avatar powers, or plain intimidation, catching him in a lie isn’t that hard. He’s doing this for fun: the minute anyone hits him or pulls a weapon, he caves. He also calls the cops if the PCs rough him up or threaten him.

Second Visit: The PCs are likely to revisit Ron if they’re suspicious that he was yanking their chain on the first attempt or if they’re still sold on “bigfoot” and want more details to aid them in their efforts to capture it.

Frustration and suspicion are both elements that may lead the PCs to push a little harder on Ron. If frightened (or simply badgered for a long time) he admits his fraud, but accuses Gene of fraud as well. He can explain the Gretta Schliff connection and encourages the PCs to go bug Gene next.

If (for whatever reason) the PCs tell him that Gene is cheating on Dora, he turns very pale and is silent, then turns very red and starts loudly demanding to know how they know.

Mia Gilona

The PCs’ interaction with Mia depends on whether she judges them to be useful or dismisses them as pathetic dingbats. Handle this however you wish: Mia doesn’t have a lot of patience for people with outlandish stories or substandard social skills, but if they show her any impressive feats of magick she’s

definitely interested. (Of course, if she publishes or tries to publicize the PCs’ abilities then the Sleepers go from “alert” mode to “full bore information termination” mode. They’re unlikely to kill *her* of course, but they either pressure or try to kill the PCs. If they fail to kack the PCs, they brainwash her and sic the cops and FBI on the PCs with an involved frame job.)

The best way to get her on their side is to offer information she doesn’t have already. If they’ve disproved Ron’s or Gene’s claims or caught Gene cheating on Dora, that’s sufficient to impress her with their sleuthing.

If Mia dismisses the PCs as goofballs, they may decide to follow her. She talks to Ron without learning anything and goes into the woods with Ed. If the PCs don’t have wilderness skills or experience, Ed and Mia quickly lose them and the PCs wind up lost in the woods all night. Stress the cold, the darkness, the eerie sounds, ask them for Soul and Notice rolls that don’t do anything, remind them how hungry and sleepy they are, maybe throw in a Helplessness check or two. In the morning, they hear a motorboat off to their right and can blunder their way to the lakefront, where two stone-faced fishermen look at them like they’re lunatics and drive right on past. Nonetheless, once they’re on the shore they should find their way back to town.

If they *do* have the skills to track Ed and Mia, Ed is able to double back and come up behind them with his rifle at the ready. (Whatever his flaws, Ed is a very competent woodsman, and he’s been wandering around Stoon Lake for about fifty years.) This confrontation could turn nasty, but doesn’t have to. If the PCs are sensible, Mia and Ed may be impressed by their tenacity and skill. Or they may blame the PCs for “scaring off” the sasquatch and give the a basic “scram kid, you bother me” speech. Neither Mia or Ed make a first aggressive move, but if there is a fight the standard PCs should take them out pretty quickly. (A mean GM might give Mia a hand-



gun and a 35% Shoot skill, or upgrade Ed to a handgun and a 45% Shoot skill. Both of them have Body 45%, Speed 40%. Mia succeeds at all initiative checks, while Ed fails.)

Alternately, a mean GM might decide that the meat of the scenario is how the PCs avoid taking the rap after murdering Mia and Ed in the woods. After all, they've identified themselves, spent money, been seen talking to the victims, they're outsiders, and Ron may be able to finger them as the people who threatened him.

If instead Mia teams up with the PCs, she can be sent off to follow leads while the PCs do their own thing. (This is a better option than having her tagging along.) This gives you a chance to pace revelations as you wish: she can go off and find out that Ron was lying while the PCs are trespassing on Donald Cruz's land with Ed. Or she can find out the connection between Gene and Gretta Schliff while the PCs are shaking down Ron, and so on and so forth.

Gene Mullen

People who get an appointment to talk to Gene are in for plenty of glad handing and spin. He's extremely vague about his own sighting: "Well, it was dark, of course, and it's hard to see through all those leaves. Now if it was autumn, boy, you should see it up here in the autumn! It's like the forest just explodes in color." He wants Ron's story to get discredited so that Ron looks bad and so the "bigfoot tourists" don't get scared. But at the same time he doesn't want *all* the area bigfoot mythology exploded. So he plays it as friendly and slipperiness as he can.

If confronted about his connection to Gretta Schliff, he makes no secret about it. "Of course I want the town to expand. Of course I want more tourist income. I'm the mayor, aren't I? Why wouldn't a guest want to come to an unspoiled natural lake with friendly people and gorgeous scenery?" He stoutly denies that he lied about his sighting. "Why

would I lie about it? To get attention? Hey, people are already discovering what a vacation wonderland Stoon Lake can be!"

If the PCs try to see Gene without an appointment, that's another matter. The mayor's office says he left for home. Dora says he's still at the office. If the PCs have seen his Ford Explorer before, they can get lucky and spot him driving off into the woods. Easily followed, they find his truck parked and they hear shouting a little ways down a nature trail.

What's happening is this: Gene has decided to break it off with his girl on the side, and she's not taking it well. (Don't try to do this line by line.) If the PCs interrupt, she runs off into the woods and Gene turns on them, angrily demanding to know what the hell they want. On the other hand, if the PCs don't interrupt then she runs off into the woods and Gene follows her.

Gene can be blackmailed once the PCs know about his mistress (or ex-mistress, really). He's got some money, but he'll tell his wife (and file charges against the PCs) if they demand more than \$5,000. The knowledge of his infidelity can also be used to leverage the truth out of him about his sighting—and his suspicions about Ron's sighting. He begs the PCs not to reveal what they know. "It won't just be bad for me—it'll be bad for the whole town!"

If they want to, they can even bully him into not running for re-election.

Dora Mullen

Dora isn't terribly important to the bigfoot element of the doin's at Stoon Lake, but she is the center of the love triangle between Ron and Gene. If characters just visit her cold and ask her what she thinks about "bigfoot" she says she doesn't really have an opinion. She's never seen it herself and she knows that a lot of locals think bigfoot hoaxes are fun. But she knows a lot of people really do believe in it. Even if pressed, she won't say she's confident

in the stories of Ron and Gene—her husband and her close friend. She might make some oblique reference to their competitiveness instead. (“Well, those two are still boys when it comes to one-upping each other.”)

If the PCs tell her Gene was (or is) stepping out on her, she initially refuses to believe it. If they describe his girlfriend that persuades her, but she doesn’t let on to them that she’s convinced. Instead she insists that they leave, and she calls the cops if they refuse.

Once the PCs are out of her house, she goes off to Ron’s. She’s awfully distracted, so she doesn’t notice if the PCs follow her.

If Ed or Mia is with the PCs, or if the PCs tell anyone what they know, the resultant scandal loses Gene his next election, wrecks his marriage, and covers all three of them with a scandal from which they never recover.

Ed Cliffe

If they go looking for Ed by day, they can find

him in his office at Northlakes Fuel Oil, Inc. He’s got an office to himself, so he’s happy to invite them in, close the door, and avidly tell them all about Yeti myths, sasquatch sightings, tales of the Florida Skunk Ape, and (of course) everything there is to know about the Stoon Lake Bigfoot. He’s eager to help any capture expedition that he considers “serious.” Anyone who offers him money is “serious.”

As with Ron, intimidation or magic can get Ed to admit he faked the footprint, though he does resist for a while. He is 100% convinced that his photo is the real thing, though.

(As a side note, Ed is very familiar with the lifelong competition between Ron and Gene. He happily tells the PCs the love triangle backstory—at least, the story as he understands it, which is that Ron was always in love with Dora but Gene married her ’cause he’s better looking.)

If they meet Ed by night, they can find him at McMurtry’s Bar and Grill. Early in the evening he’s just having a few beers and is



THOMAS MANNING

Cryptofaundling: the Mystery Hunter Narrative Structure

The word “cryptozoology” comes from Greek (or is it Latin? One of those old-timey languages) words meaning “secret” and “animals” and “word” (indicating “knowledge”). It is the much-maligned field of trying to find animals that are recorded in legend, but whose existence has never been verified by science.

It’s quite different from discovering new species. If an experienced biologist could get deep enough into the Amazon jungle, or under the Australian deserts, or within the forests of northern Russia, she’d be unable to sit down without squashing an undiscovered species of insect or nematode. (That’s the way it seems sometimes, anyhow.) No, cryptozoologists are the poor sods trying to capture *el chupacabra*, or dissect a Yeti, or at least get a really good picture of the mystery monster of Lake Champlain.

Muddying one’s boots in the wilderness looking for something that may or may not exist seems to be a pretty far cry from the usual UA soupçon of gunfights, occultism, and pimp-battered whores. But with a bit of stretching, a narrative structure based on searching for the unknown can fit surprisingly well and provide a lot of pay dirt. Specifically: *continued*

mellow. The later it gets, the drunker he becomes, until he’s ready to go out into the woods right then and there. (Anyone who goes out in the woods with Ed drunk *does* get lost, and Ed definitely passes out around midnight.)

Assuming the PCs have more sense than to go out into the woods with a drunken hick, they can get into even *bigger* trouble. Sober or drunk, it doesn’t take much to get Ed’s opinion that many of the best sightings have been on Donald Cruz’s property.

Donald isn’t giving *anyone* permission to tromp through his woods, regardless of incentive. In fact, he won’t even meet with people in person, and after the first phone call, the PCs get an answering machine.

Ed is reluctant to go onto Cruz’s property, but he can be persuaded—especially after a few stiff ones.

After climbing over a barbed-wire fence marked “No Trespassing,” the PCs find themselves in some dense forest. Lead them around for a while, raising the tension. Mention how far from the road they’ve walked and how lost they’re feeling. (Unless a character has skills or experience relating to woodlands ability, assume everyone but Ed is completely lost after the first half hour.) Have Ed go very serious and tense on them as time passes,

hissing at them whenever they step on a loud twig, frequently gesturing for them to freeze, and so forth. Call for Notice and Soul checks now and then, for no particular reason.

Then, as the sun starts going down, the characters come upon a stream that (Ed says) leads up to a spring. Following the stream up, they spot a hairy figure dunking its head into the spring at the same time it spots them. It rises and bolts. Play out the chase briefly. If the PCs open fire, Ed doesn’t shoot, but if they don’t he shoots and hits with his tranquilizer rifle.

The figure is, of course, a naked Donald Cruz playing nature boy on his own property. The PCs have ten minutes before the tranquilizer wears off. (Ed played it safe with the dosage, not wanting to kill his “bigfoot” if he could help it.) If they’re there when he wakes up, Cruz’ first comment is, “I’m going to sue the living shit out of you.”

The PCs are guilty of trespassing and battery at the very least. If they fired at him with anything other than a taser or the tranquilizer, that’s assault with a deadly weapon.

The outcome of a criminal trial is beyond the purview of this adventure, but given the evidence, the PCs are likely to pay some heavy civil damages and may even do some jail time.

Serious Scenery. In normal UA, the word “exotic” connects to “dancers” more often than “location,” but a gang of cryptozoologists can span the globe, dodging death on every continent. This is your chance to face the challenges of frostbite in Fargo, malaria in Malabar, and trench foot near the Tigris and Euphrates.

Simple Story Starts. With such a clearly defined yet open-ended mission statement, the Mystery Hunter narrative structure allows lazy GMs to spin out a fairly small number of potential plot hooks, confident the PCs will bite at anything involving a lost dinosaur mesa.

Splendid Shams and Simulacra. Given the distortions of the media and the expectation that most of their cases will be duds, genuine discoveries—perhaps a new species of ape instead of a “Sasquatch,” or just about anything from the “Unexplained” chapter in *Unknown Armies*—can be few and far between and still be very rewarding. Cryptozoologists win either way. Like Mia Gilona, genuine discoveries make their careers. But uncovering fakes, or just explaining misleading evidence, provides them with credibility. And even sham books on the subject can sell well and support new projects.

What’s particularly interesting is that a lot of “failures” to a cryptozoologist can tie into more traditional UA tropes. Specifically, they could run into a fraud, a hoaxer, or the byblows of the truly unnatural.

That said, there are a few drawbacks to a lengthy Mystery Hunter game.

Stylistic Stutter Steps. In matters of theme and tone, a Mystery Hunter narrative structure has more in common with *Doc Savage* than *The Exorcist*. I’m not going to say the pulpy tone is better or worse than UA’s typical transcendental horror, but it is *different*. UA’s rules are built to play a gritty horror game, and may jar a bit when used for pulp. (The secret damage system can cover a multitude of sins, however. Just take it easy with the stress checks and let people succeed without rolling often and it’s close enough to pulp for government work.)

Supplement Sadness. Simply put, most UA supplements are written for character groups who are either in, or working towards, an urban occult subculture. Mystery Hunter groups are focused on the unknown and tend to spend more time in the Great Outdoors. (Tying a Mystery Hunter group into “Drink to That” or “Swap Meet” takes a lot more doing than roping in a TNI team or a band of Reality Cops.) This makes it great for GMs who like to do a lot of work on their own (or GMs whose players—bless their hearts and wallets—buy and read a lot of UA supplements). But be aware that if your players choose to be Mystery Hunters, you’ll want to either make sure they’re willing to investigate the Occult Underground or be prepared to do a lot of prep.

Success Suckage. Sometimes the worst thing that can happen to a story is for the protagonist to get what he wants. If you’re prepared to end things when they discover that living brontosaurus, fine. But if the game keeps going after the PCs really have proved that, no shit, there’s Sasquatch in them there hills, be ready to change it drastically. Success should open up as many plot doors as it closes. Initially, Mystery Hunters are scorned and ignored. Now, they’re hounded by fans, paparazzi, and crackpots. Before, they had no credibility. Now, they have too much responsibility.

The biggest mistake you can make in running a Mystery Hunter narrative structure is to try and keep things the same after they’ve made their big success. I’ll give you an example. We’ve all seen sitcoms where the central conflict was, “Will Boy and Girl get together?” After a few teasin’ seasons, they almost always do. And after that, unless the series writers are really sharp, the show just deflates. After the deflowering, what do you do for an encore? In a novel, the answer is, “Type ‘THE END’ and wait for my advance.” If you want to keep playing with the Mystery Hunters, you need a better answer than that.





GARDEN FULL OF WEEDS

BY JAMES PALMER

UNKNOWN ARMIES



"BEAUTIFUL DREAMER, WAKE UNTO ME,
STARLIGHT AND DEWDROP ARE WAITING FOR THEE."
—STEPHEN FOSTER

"THE WORLD IS BEST RID OF THIS PLACE,
AND THIS PLACE OF THE WORLD."
—MARCUS LONGMAN



This adventure is set in the absolutely

worst part of whichever city your campaign happens to be located in, the part where nobody goes if they can help it, the part where the poor and the desperate and the lost drift to. It's called Garden View; in New York, it would be in the Bronx, in Chicago, a near parallel to Cabrini Green, in Seattle, an exaggerated version of the Central District. Think drugs, excrement, crime, disease, despair, and poverty. The buildings are falling down, there are needles scattered carelessly about the streets, some rooms have ten or fifteen people living in them, there are buildings full of squatters where the only toilet is a bucket in the corner or a stinking hole. The word that will most readily spring to most PCs' minds is "filthy."

Poverty and race in America being what they are, the population of Garden View is largely black with some Hispanics. Fifty years ago, Garden View wasn't like this. It was poor, but had thriving black and Jewish communities, several jazz clubs, its own local newspaper, and even a school. It was a popular place for rich white kids to slum, too—like Harlem in the 1920s. But as people moved out to better areas,

A man of words and not of deeds
Is like a garden full of weeds.
And when the weeds begin to grow,
It's like a garden full of snow.
And when the snow begins to fall,
It's like a bird upon a wall.
And when the bird begins to fly,
It's like an eagle in the sky.
And when the sky begins to roar,
It's like a lion at the door.
And when the door begins to crack,
It's like a stick upon your back.
And when your back begins to smart,
It's like a penknife in your heart.
And when your heart begins to bleed,
It's red and red and red indeed.

and as jazz dried up as the in-thing, and with the advent of drug culture, things went downhill . . . and further downhill . . . and further, until they hit absolutely rock-bottom.

Chronicles of the Unknown!

The causes of Garden View's decline seem tragically obvious; economics, urban flight, drugs. There is, however, a hidden factor in this story: Marcus Longman, a science-fiction and fantasy writer, alcoholic, lecher, and former Godwalker of the Chronicler. Longman was a pioneering black writer of short stories for such magazines as *Imagination*, *Fantastic*, and *Unknown!*, as well as a journalist for the local Negro newspaper. Today he is largely forgotten. His tales focused on the fears, dreams, and legends of his neighborhood, a mixture of urban terror and *voudoun* tales, marked by a tone of lyricism, irony, and anger. A typical example is "Shades," about young white couples who move into a largely black area and become increasingly nervous at night, starting to feel that the shadows around them are alive. Eventually they are literally consumed by the darkness. Another, "Jesus Lift Me Up," is concerned with a small evangelical gospel church whose members, after they die, continue their service to the Lord as zombies.

Longman's stories so well reflected the lives of the people around him, albeit fantasticated and exaggerated, that he gradually—and at first unknowingly—assumed the role of an Avatar of the Chronicler. Eventually he became aware of his new abilities and, more clearly than ever before, of the things that haunted Garden View. He had the smarts, balls, and power to become the Godwalker, ascending to this position in 1958. But he lost it in 1960, when the devastating end of his relationship with Yvonne Cole, a young white woman, caused him to stop writing altogether, and he drifted into a job as a store clerk. He's now a bitter, alcoholic old man who is barely scraping by on his pension.

Recently, however, Longman has taken up

writing again. Unfortunately, his considerable creative energies are now being directed towards violent pornography, written for his own personal gratification and largely concerning the degradation and humiliation of those he feels have hurt or betrayed him. This would be of no concern to anybody but Longman save that the current Godwalker of the Chronicler recently died, and there was no obvious candidate to replace him. Consequently, Longman's stories are acting as a channel for some of the pent-up creative powers of the collective unconscious. His stories are being acted out by those around him. A force normally of order, the Chronicler, has been transfused and infused with chaos and entropy, and it's this that's empowering Longman.

This is, as they say, a bad thing. Prominent among the horrors being unleashed are two members of Longman's own family: his ex-girlfriend Yvonne and their son David. Both are now empowered by the force flowing from Longman, and they have their own plans for the unfortunate inhabitants of Garden View.

Yvonne was already a crazed, violently racist old woman, but she has now become a *loogarou*—a Caribbean witch-ghost. She is using her power to steal the souls of newborn black children, reasoning that by taking and "cleansing" their souls she spares them the original sin of being born to what she believes is an inferior race. David, a former CIA agent, has turned himself into a figure of urban legend: the Mirror Man, whose dark shades capture the souls of his victims.

The deadly pair are only the tip of a very large iceberg. Garden View is so charged with power at the moment that unwitting channels of the supernatural come two a penny, and the already vicious and chaotic nature of life there is turning into something quite nightmarish. The tensions and fears underlying the problems have been there for years, festering away, but in the last few months Longman's sudden rush of power has turned Garden View into the paranormal equivalent of Chernobyl.



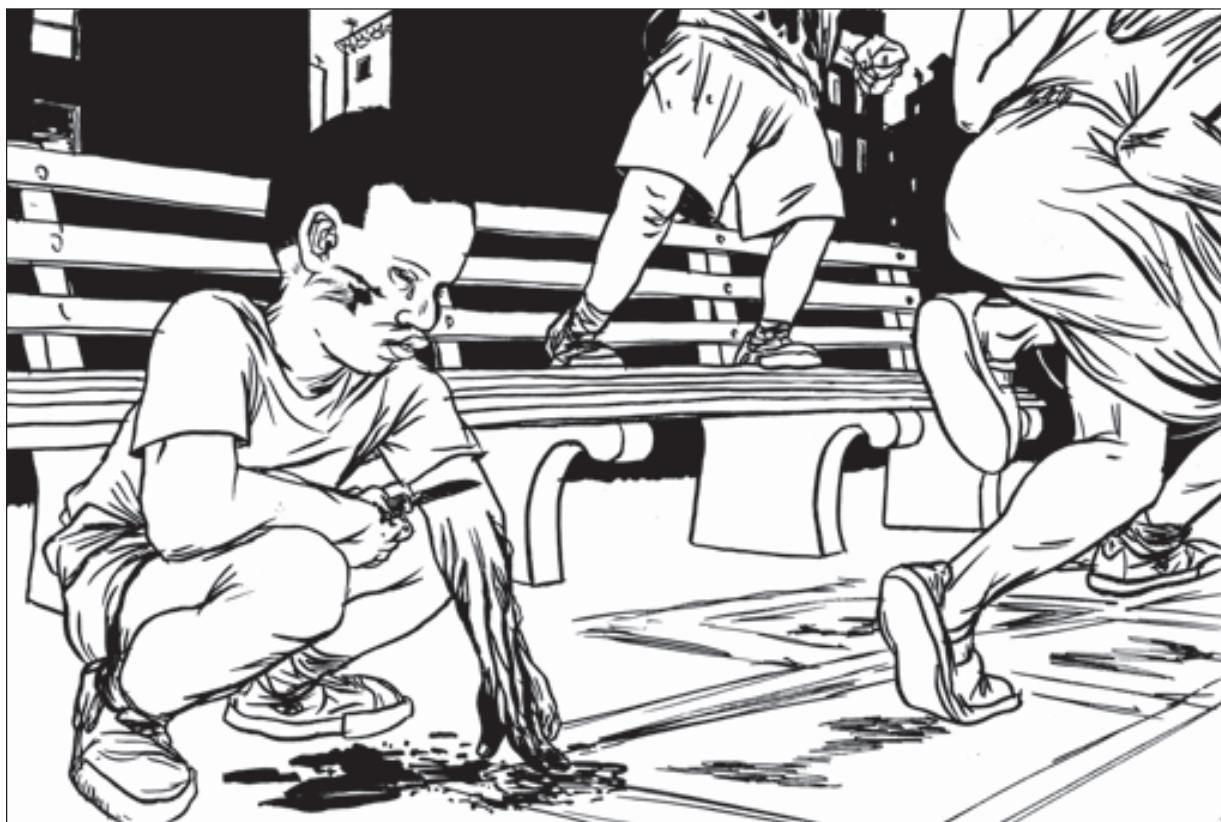
Mood

“Garden Full of Weeds” is designed, firstly, to have the feel of dirty urban horror, both fictional and real. For the fictional, try Clive Barker’s “The Forbidden.” For the real, look at David Simon’s *Homicide: A Year on the Killing Streets*. Secondly, it should also feel like a folktale. Not the cleaned-up, moralistic tales we hear in childhood, but the bloody, cruel, often seemingly illogical originals.

For the urban horror, emphasize the poverty, amorality, and dirtiness of life in Garden View, combined with the visceral nature of the horrors plaguing it. Be as explicit as your players can cope with. For the folktale, make sure your players never feel themselves fully on top of what’s going on. They should feel like children in a world of adults, only vaguely able to grasp the principles behind the mighty events rocking their world. Even after the story is finished, mysteries should still linger.

The two moods work together in that for many of the PCs, Garden View will seem like another, stranger world altogether. The scale of urban poverty is not something that is particularly comfortable to see up close—ask any social worker. In the middle of all of this, however, there are flickers of community, of happiness, of love. Just when the PCs are starting to see Garden View as something dark and terrible, throw in family photographs, children doing homework or trading baseball cards, a dealer weeping over the death of his brother. There is hope.

In general, play up the mood of isolation and fear. Garden View should feel totally separated from the rest of society, like a lonely little country village that happens to be in a city. If at all possible, set the story in a cold, bleak winter. When the PCs go back to the “normal” world, emphasize its warmth, comfort, and luxury.



NATHAN FOX

Loogarou

Loogarou are Caribbean monsters, a cross between witches, vampires, and ghosts, who may have their origins in Christian and African witch-mythology. Normally old women, they can leave their skins behind and go out at night to suck blood. Sometimes they bear a witch-mark in their normal form, such as a discolored spot or third nipple. Salting their skins prevents them from returning to them, and results in their eventual destruction in the sunlight.

In the world of *Unknown Armies*, *loogarou* do not exist. But Marcus's own particular crazed mythology has seized upon the image as suitable for Yvonne, empowering her with similar abilities. *Loogarou*, by the way, is also sometimes used to refer to werewolves (I believe it literally means "skin-changer" or something similar, but don't hold me to it), which may lead PCs up the wrong path at some points. To some extent, this scenario is sort of a dark twin to "Stoon Lake."

Themes

The key theme of this adventure is the intersection of race and identity. For all of the main characters, their ideas about race have affected the way they see themselves and the world. To some degree, each of them sees the world as a war between black and white, darkness and light. This attitude echoes that of the "normal" world towards Garden View. Those outside the Garden see it as another world, a dark, terrifying world; those inside see the outside world as out to destroy them. The race of PCs will be very important in the adventure, and you may want to use black and white as much as possible when describing how buildings, places, and people appear. You can play up white PCs' feelings of alienation and detachment towards the events in Garden View, and perhaps black PCs' feelings of either sympathy or contempt—a middle-class black PC, for instance, may well look upon the people in Garden View as being fundamentally failures, trapped by themselves, not their race.

Another theme is the power of motherhood. Mothers are intensely important within Garden View, largely because the fathers are so often absent or unknown. The feeling should be that the bond between a mother and child is an intense, almost mystical one, and that the severing or abuse of it is a terrible thing. Yvonne and David Cole may even echo each

other's movements and habits, although they've been separated since Yvonne gave David to her sister to raise shortly after his birth.

Another possible theme is childhood innocence. The children in Garden View are the worst affected by the horrors plaguing the neighborhood, and to some degree they also have the clearest insights as to what is going on. At the same time, though, they sometimes give the impression of having lost their childhood entirely. Emphasize the youth of many of the people the PCs meet: children with guns.

Foreign Lands

This adventure is terribly American. No other Western country really has quite such a legacy of racial division, poverty, and hatred—largely because of the legacy of slavery—or such racially driven politics. There's a decent-sized Third World nation within the United States, hidden away from "normal" eyes. If your campaign is primarily European, your PCs will probably have to holiday.

An exception: the adventure could work with only relatively minor changes in Australia, in one of the dirt-poor Aboriginal suburbs. Here Yvonne Cole's stealing of the babies' souls would echo the "stolen generation" of Aboriginal children, taken from their parents by the government. Racial heritage in Australia is much less clean-cut than in America, and



there are very few “pure” Aboriginals. So play up the ambiguity of race, and the fact that, even in a tiny degree, a different “blood” can set you apart.

The Course of Events

“Garden Full of Weeds” is intended to be a very loose, non-linear adventure. Unlike many UA scenarios, the existing power groups aren’t really involved. Nor is there an existing conflict between supernatural entities, nor any direct threat to the PCs or life as we know it—just a small part of town that has gone to hell, and that the PCs can walk away from any time they choose.

The course of events depends largely upon the actions of the players. However, certain events occur if unchecked by the PCs, as well as many omens that gradually reveal themselves over the course of play, perhaps providing vital clues as to the nature of what’s going on. Or, quite possibly, simply confusing the Hell out of the PCs.

Here, then, is what may well happen. The PCs arrive in Garden View with one or more leads, probably looking for whatever is killing the babies. They do some initial investigating and discover some clues as to the nature of Yvonne Cole, the old woman who is behind the deaths. At the same time they are discovering that Garden View is in a fairly terrible state anyway, the streets being controlled by an insane, vicious, and savvy new gang called “the K.” They also discover that a strange trenchcoated figure is the new bogeyman of local children—probably through talking to the brothers and sisters of the murdered babies—and this same figure (David Cole, ex-CIA agent and creature of the darkness) begins to stalk them.

David Cole is probably taken down by the PCs relatively early, as he will directly attack and harass them; behind him, unfortunately, is his mother, Yvonne, who is less powerful in direct assault but much more difficult to harm

or trace. The PCs will also have to deal with the K, which will be continually harassing them, possibly with lethal intent. Behind the K is their leader, “Cutter” Jim, who is in fact an aged white supremacist using magick to manipulate the group. At some point, the PCs may or may not discover the ultimate cause behind all this—Marcus Longman—and perhaps resolve the underlying supernatural problem by channeling the warped power of the Chronicler in some different fashion.

The Hook

Of course, the PCs need a reason to become involved in Garden View in the first place. There are two likely hooks: the pollution of the mystical atmosphere in the city by Garden View, and the incredibly high rate of child mortality within the district. Several possibilities for various common campaign frames are presented below. It’s also possible that any of the groups described below might be undertaking their own separate investigations of the Garden, providing another source of danger or aid for the PCs if you want to spice up the pot.

The New Inquisition

Alex Abel’s resident psychics and seers keyed him in to what was going on in Garden View when the apple one of them brought for lunch exploded in a shower of maggots just as he mentioned a relative there. Abel started really worrying when a psychic’s wooden statue of the Virgin Mary burst into nettles, and a talented diviner began to get cramping pains in his belly whenever he moved his dowsing wand near the district’s location on a map. A little more work dug up the information that not a single child born within Garden View in the last seven months had lived more than two weeks, and that nobody within the city authorities seems to be giving a shit. Abel is angry as hell, and he’s sending a team down there to dig dirt and kick ass.

The Cult of the Naked Goddess

There's something seriously wrong with sex in the city. All the Goddess's videos in the stores suddenly seem to be those that show her at her most dirty and degraded—some of them even have a body double of her in recently filmed bondage scenes (which a close examination will show to be taking place in recognizable locations in Garden View). When 3:33 rolls round each morning and afternoon, one of the porn booths in the city switches to nothing but birthing videos. While one of the PCs is gaining charges, he finds himself crying out at the moment of orgasm, "My son, oh my son, would that I had died in your place!" A quick casting of Synchronicity breaks the PCs' car down in Garden View; clearly this is where the Goddess's work needs to be done.

The Sleepers

Frankly, the Sleepers wouldn't normally be too worried about what's going on in the Garden as long as nobody else notices it. It's not as if they don't have enough to do elsewhere. But the bad mojo is leaking into the rest of the city, and there are omens showing up right, left, and center, and it's probably just a matter of time before people other than the sensitive start seeing them—perhaps it's time for the PCs to go down there and find out what's going on.

The Order of St. Cecil

There's a small Catholic church in Garden View, run by a dedicated but tired priest who saw something distinctly strange in Rome in 1972. When his few, elderly congregants start coming to him with stories of witchcraft, demonic cats, and a man who catches souls in his sunglasses, he knows enough to place a long-distance phone call to a tiny office in the Vatican.

Mak Attax

Naturally, the world's biggest fast food chain has an outlet in Garden View. After all, cheap, unhealthy crap is just what the place needs. A bold member of Mak Attax works there; what other place is in greater need of the little bursts of hope served out with each Happy Meal? He's started to get feedback from his use of the Lesser Correspondence ritual, though: little images from his customers of a man standing in the shadows, of babies rotting in cribs, of a terrible dark wood—this isn't really Mak Attax's field, but maybe it's time to get proactive, you know?

The House of Renunciation

Any of the House's Rooms (as described in *Statosphere*) could well become involved in Garden View. There's enough twisted and damaging obsession in there to draw the heavy attention of the Room of Cold Reflection, enough apathy and soullessness to attract the Room of Rusted Things, enough pain to lure the Room of Heart's Burden Lifted, and its precarious balance between civilization and nature might be tempting for the Room of Ignorance.

Magick Cabal

It starts when one of the PCs is attempting a relatively minor working, something they do—well, not on a regular basis, but when necessary. The magick works, but with it comes a terrible wrenching in their stomach, a psychic pain. To use the argot of the '60s, it's bad vibes, man. This pain, which worsens the closer the magick-worker is to Garden View, seems to be affecting the entire cabal. Combined with a couple of the omens described later, the PCs ought to be taking a little trip into the badlands soon enough.

Circle of Friends

One of the PCs from a poor background has a





young female relative or friend unfortunate enough to live in Garden View. She recently had a baby who died within two weeks of birth. Ever since then she's been seeing cats everywhere she looks, finding claw marks on her furniture, and hearing low meows in the dark. The PC may well dismiss this as hysteria—until she asks him to stay the night for protection.

Reality Cops

Bad, bad things are happening. Rumors of any one of them should be enough to draw any decent protector to Garden View—where the PCs discover that the truth is worse than their nightmares.

Occult Investigators

The PCs are staking out some member of one of the groups above when the person they're watching starts to take a peculiar interest in Garden View. A few weird encounters and your average group of investigators should be barking to get in. Alternatively, the PCs are attempting to discover the legendary Tune of Midnight, which summons tenebrae from the darkness, and have laboriously (and preferably

in the course of another adventure) discovered that David Cole knows something about it. Tracing him to Garden View, they find that there are even more mysteries to be unraveled.

The Real Hook

Whatever motivations the PCs think they have for being in Garden View, they are also unwitting tools of the Statosphere. The universe is bleeding from the absence of the Chronicler, and Marcus Longman is like a festering boil that needs to be lanced. The PCs have been subtly guided to act as agents for this task, which is why they are immune to the blindness which Marcus's powers have cast over most others trying to interfere in Garden View. They find their journey to Garden View exceptionally smooth and lacking in any form of chance meetings, delays, or accidents, as the Invisible Clergy exert a tiny part of their influence; this, unfortunately, does not apply within Garden View itself. The PCs will likely be utterly unaware of this underlying reason for their visit, but the GM can use it to make interesting things happen.

Bad Omens

The events in Garden View, naturally enough,

The Park

The Park is located smack bang in the center of Garden View. Theoretically it's Thomas Park, named after some long forgotten local dignitary, but everyone just calls it the Park. It's surrounded by a dark iron fence, spiked at the top, with six gateways; many of the bars of the fence are rusted or broken. The interior of the Park is heavily wooded, and people steer well clear of it at night. Deep in the woods is an abandoned children's playground, the frames collapsed, the swings spidery, long forgotten. The homeless take shelter in it, lighting little wood fires which never quite seem to get out of hand; there's also a pack of wild and rather nasty dogs. The homeless give food to the dogs, who guard them for it like ancient kitchen gods.

Essentially, the Park's role is to function as the Woods of fairytale. It seems much deeper and larger than it could possibly be in reality, and monsters lurk within. At some point the PCs should definitely find themselves deep inside the Park, jumping at shadows, seeking out one killer or another. Yvonne Cole lives in the woods in a little hut, a distant shadow of the Little Grandmother, Baba Yaga, the witch in the forest.

The Liegeless Land

Unknown Armies campaigns sometimes feature mystical urban conflicts between various True Kings, Urbanomancers, Cliomancers and the like, with each petty king occupying a small part of the city. If this is the case in your campaign, then Garden View is a wasteland: nobody claims or occupies it, or wants to. One or two may have tried to claim part of the territory, and found it feels like poison in their veins when they do so.

The last known True King of Garden View was Daddy M, a pimp and Plutomancer in the 1960s and '70s who took his stable of prostitutes as his wives and had many children, some of whom were keyed in enough to want his throne. Surprisingly, he wasn't killed by one of them. He simply disappeared one day, sparking a vicious internal war that ended with half his children dead and nobody in control of Garden View. Since then it's been a no-man's land.

are throwing off all kinds of nasty unnatural phenomena. Many of these may serve as useful clues for the PCs, being more in the nature of portents than threats. GMs whose players are fond of divination magick, and who don't wish to short-circuit the plot by giving them answers too early, can substitute modified forms of these omens, as the confusion of the Statosphere around Garden View, the blurring of the boundaries between order and entropy, plays merry hell with attempts to predict the future. They are presented in rough order of intensity. (Several other possible omens, it should be noted, are described under the individual factions.)

- A PC glances at the adult magazine section of a newsstand only to see, disconcertingly, that all the women on the front covers seem to be both black and pregnant. A second glance shows this to be just a temporary impression.
- The light of a candle glows black for a brief instant.
- The TV channels seem strangely obsessed with retrospectives of the O.J. Simpson trial.
- Children are playing hopscotch, and the loser is cutting himself and mixing the blood in with the chalk. When asked why, the reply is a shrug and "Don't know. Just seemed right."
- A PC notes that all the chessboards in a local park are black and red, not black and white.
- A statue of the Buddha seems suddenly pregnant, not fat, with his smiling mouth gaping in a great hungry grin.
- A PC's white sheets, while he's out of the room, seem to have arranged themselves into a KKK robe and hood.
- A PC sees a cat in an alleyway, cornered by a rat nearly twice its size.
- A male PC suffers sudden, excruciating pains in his stomach, for no apparent reason.
- Near a maternity hospital, the PCs hear the wailing of babies—or possibly cats.
- A tire blows on a car, and the sound it makes is not like a gunshot, as normal, but disconcertingly like the rattle of a last breath.
- A PC sees the shadow of an old man cast against a wall, typing frantically.
- One of the PCs is reading the newspaper when the ink turns to blood, soaking the paper and probably the PC. The blood turns back to ink a few minutes later. (Unnatural-1)
- Looking at herself in the mirror, a PC sees a tall man, clad in suit, trenchcoat, and mirrored sunglasses, staring back at her, with her own reflection shown in the glasses. (Unnatural-1)
- A PC makes a phone call, only to hear his mother's voice, panting in labor, as a ghostly echo on the line. The other party



seems completely unaware of this, continuing their chatter as his mother gasps in pain. (Unnatural-1)

- Late at night, a PC feels a tiny form snuggle against him, cold and clammy against his neck. It disappears as soon as he touches it in any way other than lovingly, or if he turns on the light. (Unnatural-2)
- A PC looks into a cradle or a pram and sees the baby's face replaced with that of a cat, hissing horribly. (Unnatural-2)
- A white PC wakes up with black skin and facial features, or a black PC wakes up with white skin and facial features. Water washes it off, revealing her true skin and flesh underneath. The new flesh burns as it peels off. (Self-3)

Longman's Fragments

Fragments of Longman's current writings can be found scattered throughout Garden View, spontaneously manifested in one form or another. Their content is violently pornographic, featuring abuse, bondage, racial-abuse (of whites and blacks), rape, and torture; the name Yvonne frequently crops up, normally as a subject of abuse. Most GMs will simply want to broadly describe the contents; those who believe their groups can handle such material might want, for props, to pull some of the innumerable examples of such material from the Internet, improve the style a little, and change some of the names.

Here are some possibilities for the appearances of Longman's fantasies.

- On the back of discarded gambling slips.
- As junk mail.
- On a post-it note on a refrigerator.
- Written on a wall in a close, slanting hand.
- Replacing the Bridge column in a newspaper.
- Slipped into a book a PC buys second-hand.
- Tucked into hospital records.
- On scraps of human skin, in a PC's bed.

In addition, images of Longman himself sometimes appear, pale and flickering, like images from a failing film projector on a wall. These may act out significant scenes from Marcus's life, such as his first meeting with Yvonne, his discovery of his wife's suicide over his affair with Yvonne, and the quarrel that destroyed him, or they may be darkly pornographic, like his writing.

The Rhyme

The old children's rhyme, "A man of words and not of deeds," neatly exemplifies what's going on in Garden View. The series of changes within the poem are symbolic of the changes occurring within the garden, reality being shaped by metaphor. (Well, technically simile, but let's not push it.) It should be noted that there are numerous versions of this rhyme. In particular, there are two endings, one deadly and one hopeful—which of them emerges triumphant will depend on the PCs. Symbolism from the rhyme can be worked into descriptions of events—weeds grow between the cracks of old buildings, a passing plane is like an eagle, during a storm the thunder is like the roar of a lion, a PC hit in a fight feels it like a stick upon his back—and the actual lines of the poem show up in various forms, such as:

- Graffiti on a wall.
- On the back of a bus ticket.
- Shaved into the fur of a dead cat.
- A shy, quiet voice from a supposedly unplugged radio.
- Coughed up, in blood and phlegm, by a dying man.
- Spelled out on a Scrabble board.
- The solutions to a crossword puzzle.
- A banner hung above a doorway.

Investigating

Most of the information to be picked up in Garden View can be found through simple

The Other Version

A man of words and not of deeds
Is like a garden full of weeds,
And when the weeds begin to grow
It's like a garden full of snow,
And when the snow begins to melt
It's like a garden full of felt,
And when the felt begins to peel
It's like a garden full of steel,
And when the steel begins to rust
It's like a garden full of dust,
And when the dust begins to fly,
It's like an eagle in the sky,
And when the sky begins to roar,
It's like a lion at your door,
And when your door begins to crack,
It's like a stick across your back,
And when your back begins to smart
It's like a whip across your heart,
And when your heart begins to fail,
It's like a ship without a sail,
And when the sail begins to sink,
It's like a bottle full of ink,
And when the ink begins to write
It makes the page all black and white.

observation and questioning. PCs may have problems, however, finding a convincing excuse for their interrogations. Both the playtest groups pretended to be from the social services, on the grounds that the ID was reasonably easy to fake and it was a good reason why they'd be asking around after the babies. PCs who pretend to be law enforcement officials—or who actually are law enforcement officials—find residents' responses sullen, antagonistic, and dishonest.

Pretty much everyone in Garden View is black. White PCs, therefore, will stand out a mile off, and have a considerably harder time talking to the people there, who will tend to assume an aggressive or a subservient stance—either telling the PCs to get lost, or telling them what they think the PCs really want to

hear. At the moment, almost everyone is also scared; they've been having very, very bad dreams, and hearing very bad things, and they're not in a mood to trust strangers.

Dead Babies

One of the first tasks for many groups, undoubtedly, will be investigating the unnaturally high infant mortality rate within Garden View. A freakishly high number of children have been dying in the last seven months, thanks to Yvonne Cole's flights out of her body at night to eat their souls. The obvious places to begin investigating this are the nearest public hospital (as appropriate to the city) and the Department of Human Services.

The doctors seem strangely oblivious to what's been going on. Some follow-up calls have been attempted, certainly, but none of the health workers are particularly keen on going to that neighborhood themselves. A little prompting will shock them into a response as to the sheer number of the deaths, but this will be rapidly numbed once outside of the PCs' presence. This reaction, naturally, is caused by the negative influence of the Chronicler, blinding people as to what's going on. (PCs who check the newspapers, by the way, will find absolutely, utterly no mention of Garden View for the last seven months.) The rate, too, has been hidden by the fact that a great many of the deaths haven't been reported. Some autopsies have been performed, as described below; these were highly inconclusive and generally came up with SIDS—Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, or “we don't have a clue what happened.”

The care workers—principally Daphne Horton, a middle-aged, thin, nervous black woman, and Lucy Jacobwitz, a sarcastic Jewish woman given to a paternalistic approach towards the “schwartzes”—are somewhat more responsive, but also overworked, underpaid, and sleepless. They're having enough problems dealing with the live children, let alone coping





with the dead ones. Each of them has some hundred and fifty or more children to deal with, and they haven't been comparing notes recently, being somewhat overwhelmed by a rash of child abuse, beatings, midnight terrors, and so forth. They might possibly have picked up on something of the story of "The Mirror Man" from their charges.

Going door-to-door on the various dead children will have somewhat more useful results. Naturally, the mothers are not in the best of states, but there are concrete clues to be picked up. This should also be a chance to properly introduce the PCs to the joys of Garden View. The deaths all occurred in fairly similar circumstances—during the night, with no sound or warning, just an absence of breath.

The list of dead babies, and the circumstances in which they died, is as follows. Feel free to make up more unreported deaths, if need be. Rough times are given for the deaths; take a few moments beforehand and work out exact dates based on the time in which the adventure is taking place.

- **A nameless female baby** who died seven months ago, aged one week. Her mother is Arlene, a fifteen-year-old prostitute and heroin addict with a thin pretense of street toughness covering her child-like nature. She lives in a squalid squat. The other inhabitants of the squat were only vaguely aware she was pregnant, and she had the baby by herself. The night her baby died she was sick and coughing up blood and hallucinating—she believes she saw a vampire drink her baby's blood. After she died, Arlene threw the body into a trash heap and has been crying hysterically ever since.
- **JoJo Washington**, who died six months ago, aged ten days. Her mother is Louise Washington, eighteen, the girlfriend of a drug dealer named Little Jo. She was born in the hospital, and the death was reported. Louise is shaken but not hysterical; she is a fairly together, practical girl. She lives

in an apartment provided by her boyfriend, which she keeps in a reasonable condition, and has another son by Jo named Sam, who is one year old. She has a vague recollection that the night JoJo died she saw some kind of funny light outside.

- **Henry Samson**, who died six months ago, aged twenty-seven days. He's the son of a secretary, Catherine, twenty-two, married to Jonah, who works at a local McDonald's. He was their first child and they're torn up bad. She hasn't been able to stop sitting in his room, and Jonah's increasingly angry at her for no good reason. The night Henry died, Catherine heard cats fighting outside. They live in a house in decent repair for the neighborhood.
- **Brenda Frazier**, who died five months and a week ago, aged fifteen days. Her mother is Karen: plump, eighteen, unemployed, with two other babies by a different father. She reported the death to the hospital, but she's reluctant to talk to the PCs because her current boyfriend, Jim, is violently jealous of other men and frequently beats her. When the PCs call, Jim is probably slumped inside on the bed, passed out from drinking. If woken, he gets interested in the PCs: he's violent toward men, lecherous toward women. He has a Struggle skill of 30% and a Body of 60. If the PCs get to talk to Karen, they'll find she's still very disturbed by Brenda's death and especially by the insinuation of the hospital workers that she might have been responsible. She'll protest that she loved that baby so much she'd never do anything to hurt her. A big black cat was hanging round the day Brenda died, if the PCs ask.
- **Rick Wahls**, who died four and a half months ago, aged seven days. His mother is Lucy: obese, unemployed, twenty-nine, with six children, living in a two bedroom apartment. The oldest, Dennis, thirteen, will defend his mother aggressively. She

doesn't know who Rick's father was. She's convinced Rick was taken to be with the angels, because two of the children woke and saw a bright shining light over his bed and over him hovered an angel. When they checked he was dead, gone to Heaven, such a good little child.

- **Lew Jim James**, who died four months ago, aged fifteen days. His mother is Mary Sara, a beautiful eighteen-year-old girl, addicted to crack and a part-time prostitute. She didn't report the death and gave the body to a friend to incinerate. She doesn't know who the father was; she has a boyfriend but he was put away for murder three weeks before that, and it might not have been his anyway. There are muddy cat footprints all over her doorstep.
- **LaraAnne Booker**, who died three months and three weeks ago, aged thirty-seven days. Her mother is Sandra, a scrawny seventeen-year-old married to Roddy, a dealer. Roddy is probably out, but is violently upset if he discovers anyone talking to his wife. (He's probably hopped up if he runs into the PCs, being a user of his own product; Body 50, Speed 60, Struggle 20%, Guns 20%.) They haven't reported the death, but the PCs may find out through relatives—Katherine is the half-sister of Lisa Wallace, below, whose grandfather may well mention it. Katherine is in a state of religious mania. The night LaraAnne died there was a storm, and she saw a great white ball of flame enter the room and take her child, and heard the scratching of devils outside the door of her apartment. (The scratches are still there, at roughly cat level.)
- **Susan Whittier**, who died three months and two weeks ago, aged forty-five days. Her mother is Kate, a thirty-four-year-old housecleaner with two other children who divorced her "lousy deadbeat" husband six months ago. She's a tough, capable woman, badly hurt by her daughter's death.

She'll be more willing than most to talk to the PCs, but she didn't notice anything—except for the howling of cats outside.

- **Mark Henson**, who died three months ago, thirty-three days old. He wasn't killed by Yvonne, however. He was starved to death by his mother, Margaret, a crack-addicted sixteen-year-old who was barely aware that her baby existed. His death hasn't been reported yet, but Lucille lives in the same building as Lucy Wahls, who might mention that she hasn't heard that baby crying any more. PCs who talk to Lucille will find her paranoid, cold, and almost completely unmoved; she claims to have sent her baby to relatives, but is obviously lying. Mark's body is under her bed; it's a Helplessness-3 check to see it.
- **Luke Walton**, who died two months and a week ago (Yvonne caught the flu, accounting for the three week gap), aged eighteen days. His mother is Frances, a plump woman in her mid-twenties who works at a garment factory, with four other children by her husband, Rob, a supervisor at the factory. She's in a deep depression but remembers that she heard a most terrible howling outside and, when she went in to see her baby, saw a flickering light through the window. Rob is a scrawny, short man, seemingly quiet, who regularly beats his other children and Frances.
- **Darmeka Louise Poe**, who died two months ago, aged four months. Her mother is Jane, a thirty-eight-year-old prostitute, who weaned herself off heroin when she realized she was pregnant and was making a hard effort to raise her child. She was servicing a client in the next room when Kate was killed, and she's been near-suicidal ever since. She won't talk to PCs, except to insult them.
- **Jim Lawrence**, who died seven weeks ago, aged twenty days. His mother is Hanna, fifteen years old and still living with her mother and six siblings. The child is her



Real/Horror Stories

Talk seriously to doctors, nurses, and social workers about child abuse and they'll generally start telling you their own personal horror stories. This isn't done out of a desire to shock, but from a need to unburden themselves of horrors seen, to try to communicate to those outside how bad things can be. The PCs probably encounter people in Garden View with this need several times, and it may bring home to them how horrific the world can be, without any need for the supernatural.

I called a friend of mine, a young nurse in an ordinary English town, and she told me the three worst cases she's personally encountered, which fit perfectly well into the mouths of the medical and social workers of Garden View. More and worse can be found in many books.

The first was a girl of fifteen, brought in by her father with severe internal injuries. During the initial examination, she was asked, as gently as possible, whether she had been raped, had a boyfriend, and so forth. All she could repeat was "My daddy didn't do it." The examination revealed repeated vaginal and anal rape over a period of ten years—since she was five. It turned out that her father and uncle had been accustomed to raping her simultaneously.

The second was a fourteen-year-old girl, a cocaine addict and prostitute who still lived with her family and concealed both facts from them. Her grandfather had been paying her for sex and videotaping the act. Her little sister found the tape and used it to blackmail her grandfather and sister, making over a grand and a half before they ran out of money and she turned them in.

The third was a three-year-old girl who was found unconscious with "WHORE" carved deep into her back. With her was an envelope containing photographs. It lay on the staff-room table at the hospital for a day, because nobody wanted to open it, until one of the surgeons who'd operated on the girl—she recovered—did so. The photographs were of a man carving the words into her back, then urinating onto them. He was arrested and convicted. Afterwards he was a frequent patient at the prison hospital, at which many of the same staff worked part-time.

brother Lawrence's, who's been sexually abusing her since she was nine with her mother's complicity. No father is listed on the hospital records. Hanna will attempt the seduction of male PCs in an exaggerated, desperate way; she's in a bad state, and keeps screaming at night. She's also naturally psychic, and the night that Jim died she saw the face of a terrible old woman in her dreams, cloaked in white flame. This will be conveyed amidst a whole lot of rambling, however.

- **Susie Anne Smith**, who died five weeks ago, aged three and a half months. Her mother is Anne, married to George, both twenty-four and shop workers. They have an older son, Jake. George hasn't gone to work since his daughter died. He has been

drinking heavily and Anne's been trying to keep him together. She thinks she saw a UFO the night Susie died, a bright light in the sky.

- **Thomas and Jacob Wallace**, who died a month ago, both aged seventeen days. They were identical twins. Their mother was Lisa, a fifteen-year-old schoolgirl, orphaned and living with her grandparents. The father was one of the boys at her school, but she hasn't told her grandparents which one. Her grandfather and grandmother, Henry and Anna, survive in their small house on a tiny pension; it's one of the nicer areas of the Garden, which isn't saying much—they still have enough locks on the doors and windows to guard a small prison, and they've been burgled

twice this year. Lisa is deeply depressed and sits in her room most of the time. Henry and Anna are very helpful to PCs with a convincing story, and talk about what a good area this used to be, back in the '50s. There are cat footprints in the room that the twins were in, on the window ledge.

- **Nicky Jakes**, who died three weeks ago, aged a month and half. His mother is LeAnne, a nineteen-year-old crack addict, living in absolutely squalid conditions with other addicts; she hasn't reported the death. She's near-suicidal and is reaching her breaking point.
- **Rojene Fisher**, who died eight days ago, aged five weeks. Her mother is Julie, a sad-faced thirty-six-year-old struggling to raise three other children, including a sixteen-year-old daughter. Her husband is Day, a part-time dealer who regularly hits her and sexually abuses her daughters; she's unconsciously aware of this second fact. Her daughter, Susie, may ask the PCs for help if they seem to be from some kind of government authority. She's been steeling up the courage to do so for months, and her baby sister's death has made something snap inside her. Day is a slim, foul-mouthed man, a few years younger than Julie, but he breaks if confronted with his abuse of his daughters.
- **DeeDee Smith**, who died two days ago, aged three days. Her mother is Gilda, a fearful twenty-one-year-old woman suffering from a variety of paranoid fears, some of which may have some basis in truth. She'll claim she saw a great white ghost the night her baby died, looming up to eat her soul, but then she'll also claim to have been a virgin when she became pregnant with DeeDee, and that the CIA infected her with AIDS. The PCs may well end up playing into her fantasies in some way or another, though she isn't violent.

The Great White Ghost

When Yvonne Cole leaves her body and goes out to suck souls, she takes the form of a glowing white ball of flame. She normally does this in the wee hours of the morning when no one else is around—and she also flies high to avoid notice—but some folks may have seen her. In particular, the homeless, criminals, and insomniacs might be witnesses. She's generally been taken for an optical illusion, an angel, a ghost, or a UFO. She might be described as being “like ball lightning,” “all bright and glowing,” “a flaming ball,” or “like the sun, if the sun was all white.”

Voodoo Lady

Currently, there is only one child under the age of six months alive in Garden View, a three-month-old boy named Benjen Wallis. He's the son of Fanny Wallis, a twenty-three-year-old, dimly pretty garment worker whose husband, George, died a year ago in an accidental shooting. Her seventy-year-old grandmother, Kate, is a joyfully happy fat woman who hasn't ever allowed the fairly grim conditions of her life to depress her. Kate is steeped in a mix of superstitions—some of which, fortunately for Benjen, are true. She had a bad dream a few months ago about a great white demon ball, a werewolf, that wanted to eat her grandchild. She covered the room with charms to prevent this.

Most of these protections—*veve* symbols on the floor, garlic across the door, the windows bound with red cords, the posts of the cradle-bed placed in little bowls of salt water—are useless against Yvonne, but one is more effective. Kate scattered huge quantities of loose change around the walls of the room and Yvonne was forced to stop and count every penny when she tried to enter. If PCs find out about Benjen—one of the mothers who has lost children may know Fanny, and be bitterly jealous of her—then they may have a chance to



observe Yvonne hovering outside of the building at night, afraid to enter lest she be caught there till dawn.

The Cats

What Yvonne hasn't realized, unfortunately for her, is that she isn't actually consuming the babies' souls. She's killing them, yes, but what she's draining is the rich spiritual energy of a newborn child: their innocence. Normally, pre-conscious children who die become fairies (see *Postmodern Magick*, p. 129) but Yvonne has drained off enough of their nature to give them a strange kind of consciousness. The souls are surviving on a very nasty, primal level, and they're angry. They're not powerful enough individually to do anything, but since their sense of self isn't strong they're able to muster some collective power. Not enough to possess a human being, but enough to take possession of most of the Garden's cats.

Despite what the PCs may suspect, these

cats are trying to find Yvonne. They're managing to get to most of the sites of her killings, but they don't have the power to do anything except howl, scratch, and generally draw attention to themselves—like a baby's crying. The chief effect of this is probably to throw a massive red herring in the way of the PCs. Players probably associate the deaths with the cats, with some reference to the legend about cats sucking babies' breath. One or two of the residents of Garden View, particularly the older ones, may harbor this superstition themselves. ("You don't let a cat in the same room as a baby, no sir, not unless you want it to suck that babe's breath right out.")

The cats also monitor the sites of their old homes, and several of the deprived mothers may mention a feeling of having been watched recently. Once the PCs have visited a few homes, they'll draw the cats' attention themselves. At first the cats won't be certain what the PCs' intentions are, and so merely watch them from a distance. They may prowl around



NATHAN FOX

wherever the PCs are staying, follow them on the rooftops, or peer in through windows—whatever you think would creep the PCs out the most. Eventually, unless the PCs are particularly dumb or violent, the cats decide that the PCs seem to be on their side. They can then begin to function as helpful guides, attempting to lead the PCs to other deprived mothers or possibly even to Cole’s apartment or Yvonne’s hut.

The Clinic

Several mothers may make reference to having been to “the clinic” while they were pregnant. This is the Saving Light Motherhood Center, a small squat building with a faded sign outside. It’s the closest Garden View comes to a public health center. The staff gives advice and support to pregnant women and young mothers. It is funded by several evangelical and fundamentalist churches, and its primary agenda is to discourage abortion—generally with some degree of subtlety—but it also provides of much-needed care.

The head of the center is Dr. Thomas Lewis Lexington, a big, bluff white man from New Mexico with a luxuriant moustache who is an ordained preacher in the First Church of Christ Jesus (he switches between Rev. and Dr. as needed). He tends to be more concerned for his patient’s souls than for their bodies. The chief nurse is Janice Underton, a black woman in her late thirties. She’s rather more concerned with their mental and physical wellbeing; although strongly opposed to abortion, she had one herself as a teenager and appreciates the factors involved somewhat more than Lexington does.

The clinic is intended as a red herring for suspicious PCs looking for cults and suchlike; it may also be a fruitful source of names and information. Since it first moved in six years ago there have been a number of break-ins, arson attempts, and so forth, and consequently a couple of the larger members of the contrib-

uting churches are normally around the place during the day as orderlies and security guards. The clinic has two doctors and ten nurses, all of whom work part-time.

The Witch’ll Get You

If Yvonne notices that the PCs are asking questions about her, she goes after them in her *loogarou* form. Her plan is to follow them at night to determine where they’re staying, then sneak in to suck the soul of the youngest member of the group. Her *loogarou* shape isn’t exactly designed for stealth, however, being bright and glowing, and PCs may well spot her trailing them in the sky above. She’s not that great a threat, being used to dealing with those who can’t fight back, although PC groups without magick may have a hard time hurting her directly.

Yvonne Cole, Old Witch

Summary: Yvonne Cole was a pretty young girl from a wealthy, upper-middle-class family. Her parents expected her to go to university, make some attempt at an education, and then marry well, if not happily. Instead, she shocked them by adopting a taste for cigarettes, Communism, and black lovers.

When she met Marcus Longman at a club one night, she was 21 and he was 34. The attraction was instant, and she moved in with him within the month. She became pregnant, he urged her to get rid of the child, and beat her viciously when she wouldn’t. She ran back to her parents, who threw her out of the house. Her sister, a kind woman, took in the baby, and Yvonne, virtually destitute, became a secretary.

Over the years she has become increasingly, bitterly racist, blaming Longman and all blacks for her woes. In her memories, she has turned their love affair into a brutal rape, and convinced herself that she miscarried after he beat her; she hasn’t seen her son David since





he was a toddler. A few years ago she moved back to Garden View, where she rapidly acquired a reputation as a vicious old witch among neighborhood children, who she would regularly curse and spit at. Cast out of her home, she moved to a tiny hut in the woods of the Park.

It was there that she found herself becoming surrounded by the whispers of folktale. She saw the children outside her window with empty blank faces, smelled the sweet smell of their succulent souls, so close, so close . . . and she reasoned that it was time she took revenge, for had she not been cast out, thrown away? And was it not better for the children to die than to live as members of the cursed tribe of Ham? She has become a witch of a rather more literal kind, the *loogarou* of Caribbean myth, capable of leaving her skin behind and going out as a ball of flame to suck the energy of new-born babies and send their souls into the void.

Personality: Bitter, hate-filled, and quite evil.

Obsession: The inferiority of blacks and their conspiracy against her.

Wound Points: 35

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Being reminded of her history.

Fear Stimulus: Rape.

Noble Stimulus: Yvonne maintains a strong affection for young, married white couples.

Stats

Body: 35 (Bent Old Woman)

Speed: 35 (F) (Slow)

Mind: 60 (Twisted Intelligence)

Soul: 70 (Powerful)

Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 10%, Unexpectedly Vicious 25%

Speed Skills: Decent Shot 10%, Dodge 10%, Drive 05%

Mind Skills: Communism and Jazz 40%, General Education 30%, Watch For Those

Damn Kids 30%

Soul Skills: Charm 10%, Lie 50%, **Loogarou** 70%

Loogarou: Yvonne can leave her skin and send her spirit out as a ghostly, translucent ball of white flame, cold and insubstantial to the touch, which can seep through even the smallest of gaps. She cannot be damaged by physical weapons while in this form; only magick blasts or sunlight wither and destroy her. A handful of scattered change will also delay her, requiring her to halt and count every penny. Salting her skin will prevent her return to it, eventually resulting in her destruction by sunlight.

While in *loogarou* form, she has the power to steal souls. Against babies, she needs only to cover their mouths with her flickering form for a few moments. Against adults and supernatural beings, it works like the Dipsomancy spell of Soul Sipping. She does not consume the soul, however; it usually passes beyond the Veil, although the souls of infants tend to hang around as faeries. Seeing Yvonne's witch form is an Unnatural-2 check.

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
1 H/1 F	6 H/1 F	2 H/0 F	8 H/1 F	4 H/5 F

Possessions

A small pension, tattered race-hatred pamphlets and newsletters, and a .22 handgun.

The Old Woman In The Woods

Yvonne was evicted from her home three years ago and since then has lived in an old groundskeeper's shed in the Park. She is barely known to the other vagrants who dwell there, but they might recognize a picture of her. The hut is full of clutter: racist propaganda, knives, and rotten food. Yvonne is especially fond of chicken bones, and throws them outside when

done chewing. This gives the ground before her hut a boneyard look.

Following Yvonne back to her hut at some point shouldn't be that hard, though finding her in the first place may be. PCs might find a recent birth and stake out the infant in order to guard it; in this case give them DeeDee Jones, the daughter of Carmen, a sweet little sixteen-year-old counter assistant who is in bad need of a father-figure. She looks to the PCs for comfort and assistance, especially since she's heard some of the stories going around.

The direct way of dealing with Yvonne is to take her out with magick as soon as she's seen in *loogarou* form, but she's slippery, cautious, and liable to flee as soon as she takes any damage. Craftier PCs follow her back to her hut and wait till daybreak. Really crafty PCs who have read up a little on the *loogarou* return to her hut another night and cover her skin in salt, thus making it impossible for her to regain human form and resulting in her painful dissolution in the sunlight.

The PCs may well end up confronting Yvonne as her ordinary self, however, during the day. In this case, they are faced with a nasty, vicious old woman, heaping abuse on them, throwing things, and probably biting and scratching. Killing her is perfectly possible, but should cause severe moral qualms in most PCs—after all, there's a big difference between suspecting that an old woman is really a baby-eating demon and shooting said helpless old woman in the face. This should be around a Violence-6 check, at least. Talk is useless: Yvonne denies everything. In fact, really mean GMs may want her daytime self to be unaware of the activities of her *loogarou* form.

Removing Yvonne from the Garden is the most humane solution. Deprived of the power behind her shapechanging she drifts away into a merciful, natural death within a couple of months. If the PCs are very lucky or persistent then this removal might be done via the DHS, but is more likely to be accomplished by the private resources of the PCs. The New Inquisi-

tion or the Sleepers, for example, are quite capable of faking identification for one of the PCs as a close relative, and then having the old lady committed to a good private nursing home a long way away.

Another possibility: the cats follow the PCs to Yvonne's hut and get there first. The PCs hear a loud, high-pitched scream and arrive to find her on the floor, dying from a thousand scratches and bites—or a clean-picked skeleton if they've left a gap between visiting her for the first time and coming back. Either way, there are hundreds of little paw prints on the grimy floor.

The Mirror Man

Local children, the PCs rapidly discover, have a new bogeyman: the Mirror Man, who watches you from the shadows, clad in trench-coat, suit, and mirrored sunglasses. He can eat your soul up with a glance, and centipedes crawl out from under his boots. His mom never loved him, nor did his dad, and he killed himself when they told him so, when he became a man. He worked for the Government, and he hates black children. And white children. He invented AIDS. He touches you in bad places. He *lurks* in bad places. If you sing to him, he'll come get you, but playing hopscotch drives him away.

This is David Cole, who, as described below, is currently stalking local children. The relative innocence of childhood allows some of them to notice him, unlike the adults around them who are oblivious to his presence and activities. PCs who stake-out some of the children Cole is watching, and who are exceptionally careful and perceptive, may be able to spot him, though he disappears into the darkness at the first opportunity.

David Cole, Living Ghost

Summary: Yvonne farmed her child off to relatives as soon as she could, unwilling even



to look upon him. Unfortunately for David, his aunt and uncle lived in a white-bread suburb not noted for its tolerance of mixed-race children. Not outgoing by nature, the abuse of his childhood contemporaries and the embarrassed attitude of his relatives drove him into a grim isolation.

“Spook” was what they used to call him. Little spook, spy, black-boy, ghost, who nobody saw and nobody cared about. His loneliness drove him into study, and a scholarship, and four years at college in a largely self-imposed isolation, away, concealed, secret. Nobody noticed him, despite his high grades and athletic talents. He slipped away from photos and meetings and the memories of his classmates.

When he applied for an analyst’s post at the CIA, however, somebody noticed his remarkable talent for remaining hidden and he was moved within the year to field work. Soon he was doing the darkest of black ops: El Salvador, Nicaragua, Tibet, France, Afghanistan, always in the shadows. He murdered, he ran guns and drugs, he stood by while children were slaughtered.

With the end of the Cold War, Cole moved into more specialized work, largely analytical and administrative. He was never considered for the highest level posts, because nobody could ever really remember who he was. Now his isolation has finally caught up with him, combined with the influence of his father’s stories. He is convinced he is dead, gone, a genuine spook. Desperate for human contact but unable to find it, he has begun trying to bring others into the shadows with him—through death. He has begun to murder, attempting to form a new family of ghosts, one that will shelter and protect him. He is changing into a figure of urban myth: the Spook, the Mirror Man, the Trenchcoat Bogeyman, whose sunglasses hold desperate souls and who can whistle up the dwellers in darkness.

Personality: (Scorpio) Desperate, obsessed, driven, completely insane.

Obsession: David wants to stay in the shadows

with his new family.

Wound Points: 55

Passions

Rage Stimulus: People pointing at him.

Fear Stimulus: (Isolation) Having his family taken away from him.

Noble Stimulus: David wants to gather and protect people who are dead like him.

Stats

Body: 55 (Athletic But Aging)

Speed: 65 (S) (Paranoid Speed)

Mind: 70 (Lonely Brilliance)

Soul: 40 (Withered)

Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 45%, Killing Up Close 40%

Speed Skills: Dodge 35%, Drive 20%, Killing At A Distance 40%, **Out of Sight, Out of Mind** 60%

Mind Skills: Black Ops 40%, General Education 35%, Paranoid Alertness 50%

Soul Skills: Charm 10%, Head of the Family 35%, Lie 20%

Out of Sight, Out of Mind: This represents Cole’s remarkable ability to avoid notice. People simply don’t remember his face, or see him in the shadows, or recall his name. If the PCs are looking for him, he can roll on this skill every couple of minutes to just fade away.

Head of the Family: This skill allows Cole to command the demons imprisoned within his sunglasses to perform magick, in an opposed role against their Soul. A matched failure results in the demon being released, a 00 results in all the demons being released. Consequently, Cole only uses this skill in emergencies.

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
9 H/3 F	6 H/3 F	6 H/3 F	10 H/5 F	9 H/5 F

Notes

Cole is the most direct threat to the PCs in this adventure. If used properly he is quite lethal, but his paranoia and fragile mental state should allow the PCs to take him down one way or another. He should only appear in the shadows, a figure of looming darkness and night fears.

Cole knows the tune that attracts tenebrae from the darkness, which he learned in Russia in 1993 from an insane GRU veteran renowned for his ability to make corpses disappear. When Cole kills someone, he whistles up the tenebrae and feeds them the body. If there is no corpse present then the tenebrae attack any humans handy, including Cole.

A particularly keen-eared PC might be able to remember and replicate the whistling tune, but will find it has unpleasant side effects. Each time the tenebrae are called up, the PC must roll against his or her Soul. (Cole doesn't have to do this because he is so strongly associated with the shadows.) A failed roll means that nothing happens, a matched failure results in the tenebrae going after a living target, and a BOHICA means they target the PC specifically.

In addition, whether the roll is passed or failed take the tens die and add that number to a new Soul skill possessed by the PC called Shadow, but don't tell the PC until the skill reaches 25%. This skill can be used to hide or sneak in darkness using a sort of mental deflection similar to Cole's Out of Sight skill. At higher levels, the skill can create minor supernatural events related to darkness such as sudden shadows or short-circuits in indoor lighting. The skill has the unfortunate side effect of attracting night creatures, beginning with owls who perch on the PC's house and cats who take a particular fondness to him or her. At 50%, tenebrae begin to lurk nearby at random times, and at 75% various revenants join them. If the skill ever reaches 100%, the PC fades entirely into the shadows and is never seen again.

Possessions

Cole's most valued possession is his mirrored sunglasses, which, when placed over the eyes of a dying individual, captures their soul as a demon. There are currently three demons imprisoned within the glasses, seeing through his eyes and subject to a constant torrent of Cole's crazed thoughts. They are:

Catherine Hamilton, a young CIA agent lured into Cole's offices late at night and brutally executed, making her into his "wife." He has faked her records so she appears to be on an undercover operation in China. Her CIA background and constant exposure to Cole's mind has resulted in her sharing many of the same delusions as Cole, but she maintains a core of herself, including a desperate desire to escape. She has a Soul of 50 and a Mind of 60.

Lawrence Merton, an elderly inhabitant of Garden View. Cole broke into his apartment and beat him to death, making him his "father." Nobody has yet come to check on him, and his Social Security checks are on direct deposit. His mind has almost completely broken and he babbles endlessly to himself. His Soul is 30 and his Mind 15.

Bobbi Smith, a middle-aged, white, divorced woman who Cole stalked and killed late one night after her car broke down driving through Garden View, making her into his "mother." She is listed with the police as a missing person. Both practical and spiritual, she is by far the most together of the demons and is keen to break out of her imprisonment and move on to whatever fate awaits her beyond the Veil. Her Soul is 65 and her Mind 55.

PCs with abilities such as Second Sight or Hear the Dead might see the faces of the demons on Cole's glasses, or hear the constant and bizarre conversation Cole maintains mentally with them.

Cole carries a variety of guns, security devices, and a very sharp knife, and wears a bulletproof vest underneath his shirt. He drives a large black sedan, normally assumed to





belong to one of the local dealers, and keeps about \$600 in his wallet. He still has an apartment in Washington, and an account containing some forty-three thousand dollars; he never spent much. He has fake ID in the name of a Burton Thomas; his real ID is in his apartment.

Cole's Family

David Cole is determined to acquire a proper family, drawn to the Garden as he is by the tainted echoes of his father and mother in the Statosphere. But he plans to do this by killing people, trapping their souls, and feeding their bodies to the scuttling tenebrae (see UA, p. 154). He already has a “wife,” “father,” and “mother”; his next aim is to acquire some cousins and children.

Approximately a day after the PCs arrive in Garden View, Cole murders a local prostitute and crack addict named Holly so she can be his cousin. He does this by picking her up in his car, shooting her in the head, and whistling up the tenebrae in the Park to eat her body.

Two days later Cole beats an old woman, Jean Wilson, to death as she fumbles to open the numerous locks on her door and get inside. She becomes his paternal grandmother. This time he summons the tenebrae right there in the hallway, where the light has been out for some time.

Five days after that, Cole begins killing children. He's been stalking them for some time, trying to decide which would make good inheritors of his line. The first victim is Tonya Bee, a pretty eight-year-old girl. Cole kidnaps her while she's waiting for her mother to pick her up from school, then he murders her in the car.

The second is Christopher Thompson, a thirteen-year-old gang member, who approaches Cole to offer drugs and is promptly knifed to death. The third is Alexandra Violet, a ten-year-old child prostitute whose mother acts as her pimp and attempts to sell her to Cole. Cole kills both of them, but doesn't bother to take

the mother's soul. After that, Cole goes back to stalking, trying to decide if he and his wife really need more kids. Sadly, the disappearances attract almost no attention from either the outside world or the children's parents, for whom the kids barely existed in the first place—one of Cole's criteria for choosing them.

Men In Black Coats

When David Cole notices the PCs, his first paranoid reaction is to assume they're from the government and that they've come to destroy his family, which they kept him away from for so long. He may not be certain of this at first, and observes the PCs at some distance, quite possibly bugging their rooms. When he is certain—and he latches onto almost anything as evidence for his fears—he attempts to murder the PCs.

His plan is to isolate one or two from the main group, possibly by using himself as bait, or by placing fake phone calls and notes. Once he has them in an appropriate dark place, he either executes them straightaway or knocks them out with a powerful tranquilizer to be taken back to his apartment and interrogated about their plans and masters. He may well lurk in a PCs' hotel room, waiting until they enter, then knifing them quickly and silently. It is quite possible that he identifies one of the PCs as a suitable member of his hypothetical family, which means he tries to give that person enough dying time to let his glasses take his or her soul.

Cole's Apartment

Cole's apartment is rented from a Morton Freebody, who barely remembers his tenant's age and sex, let alone face. The apartment door is locked and bolted, and there are several complicated alarm systems—pressure and beam—which trigger alarms on Cole's pager, car phone, and inside the apartment

itself. Cole normally enters through a side door in the basement of the neighboring abandoned building. The main room is small and ridiculously tidy. One would hardly think that anybody lives there, save for the camp bed, wardrobe of suits, stack of frozen meals, and extensive collection of guns. There are, however, several other rooms for the members of Cole's "family." Each is decorated appropriately: flowered wallpaper and women's dresses for his wife, toys in the kiddies' room, and family photographs stolen from his victims or cut from old newspapers.

Taking Cole Out

The Mirror Man is probably one of the PCs' first targets, seeing as he's a child-murdering paranoid psychopath. Cole himself is incredibly elusive, glimpsed only in shadows and reflections, but he can be caught. His car, for instance, is much more noticeable than he is, and PCs who follow it can determine the

rough location of the basement apartment to which he occasionally returns. Bait might also work, but the PCs would have to be callous to risk a child's life to draw Cole's attention. He may, of course, simply end up cornered after attempting to murder them. Another possibility is that Cole is drawn towards his parents, and might confront either one of them at the same time as the PCs.

However the PCs eventually find Cole, the encounter probably ends in his death. When he dies, try to break his sunglasses at the same time, resulting in the release of the demons he has trapped within—which immediately attempt to possess the nearest humans or animals. Cole might whistle up the *tenebrae* in his dying moments; the PCs would be well advised to run at this point, letting the scuttling shadows eat his body.

The K

The walls of Garden View are covered with the normal ghetto graffiti: boastful slogans,



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obscenities, memorials, everything from casual defilement to lovingly crafted art. Gang symbols are everywhere, if you know how to read them, and the walls carry messages—you're not wanted here, this is ours. One symbol is particularly prominent, that of a backwards K within a red circle.

Anybody under the age of 30 or so will be able to tell the PCs that this is the symbol of a relatively recent gang, the K (or OKs, or Special Ks, or KOs—the symbol is more consistent than the name). Members don't wear anything identifying themselves as such. They mainly deal crack and meth, though they've also performed several violent robberies, one or two even outside the Garden. They formed a few months ago from the remnants of two other gangs that had been in a long feud and lost several of their members, and are rapidly acquiring a reputation for being callously violent and extremely lucky. There are certain rules about making hits, and the K have been breaking them: shooting people in front of their mothers, kidnapping and occasionally murdering girlfriends and children, torturing and mutilating rather than killing. They are particularly partial to tarring and feathering their victims.

The head of the gang is "Cutter" Jim, given the name thanks to his liking for knives. He's a slim, handsome twenty-four-year-old black man who is far more cunning than his age would suggest. He's from down South (or another part of the South, depending on where you set the adventure) and speaks in a deep, menacing drawl. He's only been around as long as the Ks and nobody knows his family, though he established himself surprisingly fast.

As the PCs may discover, the K are actually a bizarre spin-off of the Klu Klux Klan, even though their members are black. Cutter is really Leonard Oakley, one of the three remaining members of the Kuklos (or "circle"), a semi-Masonic cabal who were instrumental in the founding of the KKK. (In real life, the name of the KKK does indeed come from the

Greek "kuklos.") Oakley is sixty-eight, wrinkled and white, but also a Personamancer, which is how he's maintaining his façade. Cutter is just a Mask, a Personamantic artifact that allows Oakley to assume another form. The K are a plaything for him, a way to mystically reestablish the power of his fading cabal while having some fun among the "niggers." He has been drawn here as a channel for Longman's own self-loathing; the K have been unconsciously targeting places important to the writer. They burned down a small museum of the area's history, they so terrified the owner of Longman's favorite store that he hung himself, and they have daubed the walls of Longman's building with filth. He's oblivious to their muddled affections, as are they.

Talking to members of the K—a risky business, as described below—elicits the information that Cutter is only about in the evening; nobody knows where he goes in the mornings and early afternoons. He spends that time gathering Personamancy charges, visiting various friends in his Oakley identity. Properly threatened or bribed, the K member may also reveal that there is an initiation ceremony which involves "three of the brothas holding the new nigga down, an' pretending they be Jewboys, while he says some crazy-ass words. Heal and conceal, somethin' like that. Mother-fucking voodoo shit." This is actually a bastardized version of the Masonic initiation ritual that involves the ritual rebaptism of the initiate after their torture by three "Juwes." The words are the initiate's oath to "hele, conceal, and never reveal" the secrets given to him. Cutter is using this ritual simply for its symbolic power; it has no direct mystical effects, and most of the members of the K aren't that loyal.

Leonard Oakley, Lies Even To Himself

AKA "Cutter" Jim, Atropis

Summary: Leonard Oakley was from one of

the best families in town. Everyone knew the Oakleys: they were fine upstanding church-going folk, and generous with their money. Fine upstanding white folk. And white folks were the chosen of the Lord, the highest branch on the Darwinian tree, plain superior to others, as any fool knew, and as Leonard Oakley sincerely believed. And when those who were obviously inferior got above themselves, well, Leonard Oakley went to the picnics at the lynchings like other children of Alabama in the 1940s.

But Leonard was a smart boy, and he was able to put together his mother's dark "Italian" beauty, and the songs she used to sing him, and found the old Negro woman she used to visit, ancient and senile, who she called "Granmama." He learned that he was one-eighth black, an octaroon; he bore the mark of Cain, he was not one of the chosen, the pure.

So he told himself that this wasn't true, that he was as white as the next man, but he knew in his heart it wasn't so and that he was pretending all the time to be something he wasn't, to be clean. It came to a head when he was seventeen, though, drinking with some of his friends, talking about the girl he was courting, and one of them laughingly remarked that he must have a touch of the tarbrush in him, a little bit of nigger, he was so horny to get into her skirts, and Leonard had a gun to hand.

He shot his friend in the face and ran that night, for the boy he had killed had come from a family just as good as the Oakleys, and he knew even his father would have a hard time buying off justice. He was in a hotel room two nights later when he woke to find three hooded figures by him. They introduced themselves—in portentous tones—as Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, the Fates, the leaders of the Kuklos. The Klan? he asked. No, they said, older than the Klan, and more knowledgeable, and mightily impressed by a boy who would murder just because somebody slandered his good pure blood.

The Kuklos took him in and fixed his trial,

because back then their purse was mighty deep. He rose within the cabal fast enough, learning the ways of magick from Atropos, the ender of men's lives, and he wreaked some serious havoc in the Occult Underground for a while. But eventually he found support for the Klan and the Kuklos fading, and new recruits were few and far between. He had ascended to the position his mentor once held, but now he was the head of a dying organization.

His founding of the K is his last attempt to symbolically revitalize the Kuklos, this time by making his enemies do their own work in destroying themselves—as well as to express his own feelings about his secret blood. He takes an evil pleasure in watching the other members of the K call each other "nigga." He's working independently from the rest of the Kuklos, although they're dimly aware of what he's doing.

Personality: An evil, twisted, secretly self-hating old bigot. Strom Thurmond on crack.

Obsession: The mystical purity of the white race.

Wound Points: 40

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Uppity niggers.

Fear Stimulus: (Self) The exposure of his true racial background.

Noble Stimulus: The preservation of the white race. He's very concerned for children and mothers, provided their "blood is pure."

Stats

Body: 40 (Tough For His Age)

Speed: 40 (Spry Old Gent)

Mind: 70 (Twisted Smarts)

Soul: 70 (Deep and Dark)

Skills

Body Skills: Cuttin' 35%, General Athletics 20%

Speed Skills: Dodge 20%, Drive 15%, Good Ol' Shotgun 30%

Mind Skills: General Education 25%, Notice 45%, Racial Theory 40%





Soul Skills: Lie Like A Weasel 70%, Personamancy 60%, Southern Manners 50%

Madness Meter

Violence Unnatural Helplessness Isolation Self
6 H/2 F 5 H/2 F 3 H/1 F 3 H/0 F 7 H/4 F

Notes

Oakley racks up charges at a fair rate just for hanging around other racists, thanks to his “tainted” blood. He doesn’t get any charges for posing as Cutter because he uses magick to do so. Assume he’s carrying roughly three significant and ten minor charges at any time.

Possessions

He has several Masks, which he constructs from papier mache and paints brightly. The first and most commonly worn is of Cutter Jim, who was originally a young black housebreaker Oakley killed back in 1964. Another is of an ex-wife, a sharp, pained-looking woman with long black hair. The third is a Beast Mask, that of a lion with a genuine mane; this has been enchanted to utter the lion’s terrifying roar, which forces a Helplessness-4 check on those who hear it. The last and most precious is the Mask of an Executioner who used to work for the Kuklos, and is a white Klan hood.

Oakley also owns an antiquated Civil War general’s outfit, which he keeps concealed among his gangsta clothes, his Klan robes, a number of firearms, and a series of letters from Lachesis, another member of the Kuklos council, urging him to continue with his great work.

Cross Burning

The K would be a fairly nasty group in any event; that they’re caught up in Longman’s fantasies just makes them even more vicious. As things progress, the K are increasingly caught up in the imagery and methods of the Klan. Members take to wearing white suits, especially when out doing business. A fifteen-year-old boy from a nearby neighborhood

can’t give their signal when they flash him, and so they take him into the Park and lynch him. They start using the burning cross to intimidate local businesses, and their members assume the swagger of a small-town sheriff in the Deep South, walking along in the sure knowledge that they own the streets and calling people “boy.”

The K’s Territory

Conflict with the K is almost inevitable, but the level of intensity may vary. If a K member notices a PC or group of PCs simply walking along the street, his reaction varies depending on the PCs’ appearance. White men who aren’t visibly threatening may be robbed, probably with knives rather than guns, at least at first. Black men over thirty are left alone unless they obviously don’t belong to Garden View. Men who look intimidating—bulky, grouped together, guns, whatever—are reported back to “Cutter,” but left alone.

Women on their own are taunted and harassed. If it’s night or a particularly deserted area they’re probably robbed, and possibly raped.

Young black men—and possibly some whites—are flashed the K gang symbol: the hand held up, thumb and finger together to make a circle. The correct response, as the PCs may be able to observe, is to hold your left hand straight up and place your right hand against it diagonally. Not giving the signal, depending on the mood of the K members and the numbers of the PCs, may result in being shot straightaway; it certainly provokes a violent response of some kind, or a physical challenge. (Your average member of the K, by the way, probably has a Body and Speed of 55 or so, a Mind of 50, a Soul of 40, a Firearms skill of 20%, a big show-off gun, and a ridiculously baggy pair of pants.)

If the PCs are seen frequently, and especially if they start asking questions about the K, they are taken to be either clumsy cops or members of another gang muscling in on the

K's territory. The more official and the more white the PCs are, the more likely the Ks are to come to the first conclusion, in which case Cutter orders things toned down for a little while just in case. The general level of tension in the Garden, however, means that some of the Ks may well attempt to take matters into their own hands and kill themselves a pig or two, probably by walking up and shooting the unsuspecting PC in the gut with a gun concealed in the sleeve of their jacket. If the Ks think the PCs are from a rival gang then they kill them as soon as possible, though they capture them first to torture them as a warning to future interlopers.

If the PCs display magickal ability and knowledge of this gets back to Cutter, he assumes they're members of a rival cabal determined to take him down. He has a fairly thorough knowledge of the dangers and weaknesses of Plutomancy, Epideromancy, Dipsomancy, Urbanomancy, and Personamancy; other schools are largely unknown to him and frighten him more. He's been out of touch with the mainstream of the Occult Underground for years. He knows about the Sleepers, for instance, but not the New Inquisition or the Naked Goddess. He orders the Ks to kidnap one of the PCs at gunpoint—preferably one who hasn't displayed magickal talent—and then joins the party himself in the shape of said PC, either through use of a minor spell or by taking the time to create a Mask. He won't remain for long—probably an hour or so—but he uses that time to gather as much information on the PCs' abilities, equipment, and goals as possible. Once he's got an idea of what the group can do, he uses his disguise to lure them into a K ambush. His most likely disguise would be that of a child, pointing the PCs towards where “the bad men who tried to hurt me” came from.

The K Buildings

The K occupy two large, decaying apartment blocks near the Park, though many members

still have their own apartments elsewhere, often with girlfriends and children. There are normally five or six people on guard at the HQ, their chief concern being other criminals—drug dealers, after all, are notoriously profitable targets. There is also a steady stream of people in and out of the building, most of them junkies coming to get their fix. Nervous white guys from the city are not unknown, and PCs planning an infiltration could find this a convenient disguise.

Drugs are kept strictly to the second floor and above, giving a few crucial extra seconds to dispose of them in case of a raid; there are air horns, the kind used by sports fans, on all floors for exactly this eventuality. The main doors are steel-plated, with a slot allowing for gunfire, though there are no security cameras. The personal living spaces of K members are generally a curious mix of squalid conditions and hugely expensive personal gear: \$1000 stereos, huge TV screens, filthy blankets, kitchens that haven't been cleaned in months, money in bags on the bed. Cutter has an apartment on the top floor, which is noticeably cleaner and less ostentatious than the rest. His secret personal possessions can be found locked away in the bedroom, in a drawer underneath a mirror; there is a minor blast set to trigger on the first person to look into the mirror who isn't Oakley.

Dealing with the K

The PCs' dealings with the K can be wrapped up in two ways. I personally get cheerfully excited thinking about a long running gunfight through the streets a la *Heat*, followed by a tense close-up confrontation in the K's building, full of people whirling around doors, throwing tear gas, and such. This might be facilitated by PCs bringing the extent of the K's activities to the attention of the police—which seems fairly obvious, but you'd be surprised how reluctant most players are to hand something over to the proper



authorities. (Another cunning thought: faking evidence that the K are trying to move in on a serious gang's territory. From a brutally pragmatic point of view, other drug dealers are far more likely to shoot to kill than police.) If things do end up in this kind of overly dramatic firefight, I recommend you take the cinematic option of having the vast majority of the K members drop on a single successful attack roll rather than tracking their wound points normally.

More subtly, the PCs may want to expose Leonard Oakley. This can be accomplished magickally, or by the recourse of removing his Mask while the rest of the K are around. Oakley is crazy enough not to notice this and to keep on talking in his Cutter persona, while the rest of the K looks on aghast. Oakley won't last long if this happens.

Bad Things

The following events may unfold over the course of play, unless the PCs do something about them.

The general atmosphere of corrupted sexuality, violence, and racial tension caused by Longman's stories is building up to a brutal climax, and the PCs are unfortunate enough to see some of the results. Feel free to make up more nasty events as you see fit; in general, assume that rape, abuse, and murder have become even more vicious than under the normal combination of poverty and desperation.

A Small Pogrom

There's an old man, Isaac Dienman, who works doing door-to-door collections in the Garden: no-money-down stuff which people end up paying through the nose for. As it happens, he's German, not Jewish, but everybody thinks of him as a Jew and is likely to refer to him as such. A few of the families the PCs talk to may mention him; he might even show up while they're there. Sometime within the first few days of the adventure, Dienman is beaten to death on a crumbling staircase by



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Tracking Down the Kuklos

PCs who read Oakley's letters from a fellow Kuklos member, Lachesis, may well head down to Alabama at some point to see what they can do about this little cabal. Being a well-raised racist, Lachesis includes his address on the letters. From the tone of the letters, which talk constantly of "friends in high places," "rising again," "the power of the burning cross," and which claim credit for just about every murder and arson in the South for the last year, naïve PCs may be expecting a conspiracy of power and scope.

What actually exists are a few ancient, nasty old men. Oakley was the only one of them with any mystical powers, and the youngest; the rest are the remnants of something that may once have been much bigger. Their children are generally Klan members, their grandchildren tacit racists, and their great-grandchildren don't care. Lachesis' address (his real name is Jim Snowdon) turns out to be a nursing home, and he's a wizened prune of eighty-eight being cared for by a superbly tolerant middle-aged black nurse who tidies up his stacks of Aryan propaganda with an exasperated sigh.

five or six people, and his body left hanging there from the stairwell with a swastika carved into his chest—a Violence-2 check to see.

pulling them apart stops their movements, as does daylight.

Bad Dogs

Curb-crawling is a fairly common phenomena in Garden View. One Friday night there are a whole bunch of nice cars in the Garden, the drivers getting \$20 blowjobs, when a terrible howling strikes up. The Johns have suddenly found themselves unable to talk, and can only howl like dogs. Most of the whores get out of the cars as fast as possible. The Johns generally react in panic, their latent feelings of guilt triggered, and try to flee on foot. If the PCs stop one they see there's a desperate fear in his eyes and his teeth have sharpened—it's possible he may bite them.

Phantom Whores

The prostitutes of Garden View often leave a spare change of clothing hidden under garbage cans or cardboard boxes. One night these clothes pick themselves up, form into roughly human shapes, and begin echoing the customer-seeking movements of their owners—an Unnatural-1 check to see. Burning them or

Daddy's Still Home

Horace Yard has been abusing his four children, two boys and two girls, since they were toddlers. He did this with the complicit silence of his wife, who died a couple of years back. The oldest girl is fourteen now, and today she took the kitchen knife and plunged it deep into her father's wicked heart—but he's still moving at night, pinned against the wall, kept in an unnatural existence, unable to die until the knife is removed. The children are both terrified and triumphant, throwing rocks and sticking pins in him as he gurgles and moans. None of them have the courage to take the knife out for fear that he'll live again. If the PCs are moving around at night, they may hear his cries; investigating finds the family dog chewing on his not-yet-dead leg and his youngest daughter, eight years old, sticking a knife and fork into his stomach, twisting around the revealed entrails. It's a Violence-5 check to see, and an Unnatural-3 check when they realize he couldn't possibly be alive in such a condition. If the kitchen knife is removed then he crumples onto the floor, and





appears to have been dead for days.

The Snowfallen

If the scenario takes place in winter, a Snowfallen may well put in an appearance, drawn by the mothers' grief. This particular Snowfallen is a young Maori woman, 6' tall with a statuesque beauty, whose child was taken from her in a raid by another tribe in the 16th Century and who died of grief soon afterwards. She walks through the falling snow, near-naked, with an intense sadness. If approached she will sing to the PCs, switching effortlessly between jazz, gospel, and blues, all tinged with sadness, but never finishing a song, just letting verses trail, fragmented and broken:

Another man done broke a word
 Another man done broke his word
 Another man done broke the word
 The truth could not be heard—so—
 Somebody's gonna have to pay
 And it looks like you and me.

She don't come up until the sun goes down
 She don't go down until the sun comes up
 She catches souls in her magic cup,
 Leaves us all to crumble and drown.

The Terrible Old Man

The ultimate resolution of events in Garden View depends on finding Marcus Longman. Several of the older residents of Garden View mention—and exaggerate—what a bright shining place Garden View used to be, including its literary heritage. They might even mention Longman by name. The scraps of his writing appearing in various omens also provide clues, as should the ghostly fragments of himself he throws off. Particularly bright players may put together the clues and deduce the involvement of some kind of storyteller or writer; a little research finds some of Longman's stories, and his address can be obtained

through the phone book. (Dirk Allen, by the way, was a fan of Longman's stories, and readily associates the name with Garden View if the players happen to know him.)

The most likely way to discover Longman, however, is through Yvonne Cole, who still keeps a battered folder of his short stories and a collection of photographs of the two of them together (annotated with notes such as "M. and me, Mar. 1st, '59) locked in what used to be a hope chest within her hut. She hasn't looked inside it for years, and it's heavy with dust. It's also possible that either Cole or the cats might discover Longman for themselves and lure the PCs into finding him as a way of taking revenge or finding release. Whichever way, try to keep the discovery of Longman until late in the adventure. Confronting him should be the climax of the game.

Longman lives in a government-provided housing block, on the seventh floor. His apartment has a bedroom, living room, bathroom, and kitchen. He doesn't have any hot water and the place is overrun with cockroaches. His furniture is old and rotting, and the whole place is covered with scraps of paper on which Longman has typed or scribbled his fantasies. There is a stack of cans in the kitchen; Longman generally eats straight out of them and rarely washes his cutlery. The smell is atrocious.

The old writer is antagonistic, cantankerous, and quite unwilling to let the PCs disturb him. If they pester him, they are likely—especially if any of them are female and reasonably attractive—to become written into his stories, resulting in things becoming distinctly more dangerous for them as they become the focus of attention by the various unsavory elements of the Garden. Persistent PCs eventually get to talk with him.

Marcus Longman, Chronicler Gone Wrong

Summary: When Longman was young, he was going to change the world. His stories were

going to make science fiction a respectable genre at last, his journalism was going to shake up Washington, his tales were going to break down the barriers of racial prejudice and show the world the true strength of the Negro. He was happily married, though childless, making a decent living, and the world was fresh and new and wonderful.

Then he met Yvonne Cole, a white girl of, as they said, good family, slumming it down among the Negroes, and the first time he saw her it was like fireworks went off in his heart. He left his wife to move in with her, much to the horror of her family and his.

It was then that he first began to see what was really going on in his neighborhood: the demons that buzzed around the back streets like fat flies, the walking dead men in the clubs, the skittering scuttering things in the darkness, the cold women in the snows, and he began to write about them, and the people who met them, and the changes it wrought upon their hearts and souls, until he realized that he himself was becoming one of these creatures, something of power and majesty, that he at last held the power to change the world in his hands.

And then—Yvonne got pregnant, and suddenly, terribly, he couldn't face the thought of being a father. Something snapped and broke inside him, some terrible fear that the child would take his power, drain him, and he urged her to get rid of the baby. She refused and he hit her: once, twice, three times and more, until she was bruised and bleeding and weeping, and then he walked out into the cold. He came home to find her gone, and his grim-faced brother sitting on the sofa, bearing the news of his first wife and a bathtub now full of blood.

He never found Yvonne again. He stopped writing and the power leaked out of him, went elsewhere. He worked as a store clerk for many years, packing bags full of groceries and ringing up change, and he never set pen to paper or fingers to typewriter. He never slept with another woman.

Recently he felt the need swell inside him,

but he hadn't talked to anyone in years, not properly, and he had nothing to write about but hatred and pain and sex; he began to scribble down stories, fantasies, desires, full of dirt and hate and dead babies and whores and himself, master over all. He sits in his apartment, a dried-out stick of an eighty-six-year-old man, wizened and bent, a bottle of cheap whisky to the side of his desk, and he spills hate out onto the page, barely aware of its effects on the outside world.

Personality: A bitter, twisted, sad old man.

Obsession: Changing the world through his work
Wound Points: 30

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Being judged because of his race.

Fear Stimulus: His power being stolen from him.

Noble Stimulus: Deep down, Longman still secretly wishes to change the world for the better.

Stats

Body: 30 (Elderly And Frail)

Speed: 25 (F) (Arthritic)

Mind: 65 (Widely Read)

Soul: 85 (A Channel)

Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 10%, Stay Up Way Later Than An Old Man Should 30%, Struggle Feebly 5%

Speed Skills: Dodge 5%, Drive 15%

Mind Skills: Compulsive Reader 60%, Knows the Garden 35%, Observe the World 40%

Soul Skills: Channel For Forces Way Beyond His True Comprehension 85%, Charm 15%, Lie 40%, **Writing** 70%

Channel For Forces Way Beyond His True Comprehension: Longman is a focus of the currently askew force of the Chronicler, which is the root cause of all this mess. This also means that the Statosphere protects him (though not the Invisible Clergy themselves, who are disturbed by the whole business). He may flip-flop any roll that attempts to harm him.





Madness Meter

Violence Unnatural Helplessness Isolation Self
1 H/1 F 3 H/2 F 6 H/2 F 5 H/3 F 2 H/1 F

Possessions

A pension, old clothing, and a typewriter.

Broadly speaking, things can go two ways. Longman can be disposed of violently by the PCs. This would be unfortunate, as described below. The other resolution is a gentle one: if Longman can be convinced to cease his self-obsession and write about things around and outside him, he can assume, again, the role of true Godwalker of the Chronicler.

This requires some finely balanced roleplaying by both the players and GM. Longman hates the world and everything in it, and wishes to have nothing to do with it. Even after the supernatural effects of his writing are shown to him, he dismisses the rest of Garden View as “a bunch of goddamned degenerate niggers who deserve everything they get,” waves off the death of children with an assertion that “there’s too many of the little bastards in the world as it is,” and expresses the belief that “the world is best rid of this place, and this place of the world.” The key to breaking him down is to bring home the effects of his selfishness upon his lover and son; how they’ve become twisted, evil people, largely because of him; not even just through his supernatural powers, but through his abuse and neglect.

Longman may well attempt suicide if forced into truth, but he probably doesn’t have the strength or resources to do so. Gentle, persistent persuasion should give him some insight as to what has to be done, and he sits down and begins, for the first time in decades, to write about something other than himself. What he writes about depends on the PCs’ suggestions—the dead children, his son, the contrast between the old and new states of Garden View, whatever. GMs with experimental players may even ask them to compose the final story themselves,

collectively taking on the role of Longman.

The act of writing merely puts an end to the increasingly supernatural side of things. The hatred and pain and danger remain, and must be dealt with individually by the PCs. This means, for instance, that David Cole is still a dangerous psychopath; he isn’t, however, a mystically empowered, ghost-wielding dangerous psychopath.

Longman’s writing eventually finds publication again, and a small following. His original stories are rediscovered and collected by a small-press publisher. He doesn’t gain any great success, but he does begin to gradually work through his past in his writing. It is most popular in Garden View itself, where his exposure of the political, personal, and even paranormal forces at work makes some look a little harder at their own actions. A small seed of hope has been planted. The place remains a slum, but one that is gradually improving. If the PCs return, they will find no miraculous transformations, but less of a feeling of utter despair.

Red And Red And Red Indeed

Longman taking up writing again represents the positive end of the rhyme that governs Garden View, the words on the page all black and white. The alternate end, on the other hand, is rather more unpleasant. If the PCs simply kill Longman, the statospheric power he was channeling is released under the loose direction of Longman’s spirit, now a hate-filled, vicious demon. The problems of Garden View become briefly, and horrifyingly, exaggerated.

The Park begins to grow outwards, the trees consuming the streets and tearing up the sidewalk, transforming the whole district into dark fairy-tale woods. Each tree seems to hold a human being in positions of either torture or sexual ecstasy. The long-defunct fountain in its center explodes in a shower of blood. David Cole becomes a being of living shadow, flickering in and out of the darkness, and killable only if trapped in an area of complete light.

Godwalker Candidates

Here are three possible candidates for the position of Godwalker of the Chronicler, their attempts currently frustrated by Marcus Longman's mystical blockage of the role.

Patrick Leary, among America's best-known television war correspondents. He is particularly known for his coverage of African wars, which he tends to present in a highly paternalistic, somewhat despairing style, as though the Africans were children doomed to endless squabbling. In Africa, he also became an initiate of the Leopard Man cult, whose members allow themselves to be possessed by lycanthropic spirits. At least one of his rivals has been found torn to pieces by a wild animal.

Calvin Blake, visionary comic book artist, whose work on prominent DC titles has recently started to include material from his visions. They depict the "Unknown Clergy," the gods who secretly control the world, and the powers that those who follow them gain.

Debbie Chan, who runs an underground newspaper in China dedicated to exposing the wrong-doings of the Communist government. Only twenty-three, she is passionately committed to journalism, truth, and the propagation of *samizdat*.

Fathers begin to consume their children, breaking off limbs and cramming them into mouths suddenly wide and gaping with teeth.

Yvonne Cole becomes a literal witch, cackling and screaming and throwing children into a boiling pot. Massively charged with power, she is able to use her magick skill to blast those who approach her, withering their flesh with the evil eye. The cats shriek throughout the darkness, and fall upon anyone who comes close, rending their flesh. The K don white robes and mount black horses, each riding with a hangman's noose in one hand and a burning cross in the other, hunting down human prey.

It is, in other words, a living nightmare. PCs who try to flee find that the woods seem endless, and are inevitably drawn back in. There is, in fact, remarkably little that the PCs can do except hunker down and try to survive—or, given the number of Unnatural and Helplessness checks they're going to be making, freeze up in panicked terror. There's no point in providing stats for the opponents they face; the keywords here are *near-overwhelming force* and *utter terror*. Don't give the players a chance to pause or rest or think. Horror should be coming in at them from all directions, and their recourse should be running or hiding.

Fortunately, this type of situation cannot last long; the statosphere has an immune system for this kind of thing. Within ten minutes there is a rush of great wings, a terrifying shriek (in Longman's voice), and a sudden silence. The woods are gone from the streets, though the sidewalks and buildings are still torn and broken. Men look at themselves in the mirror, seeing the flesh of their children hanging from between their teeth, and reach for the swiftest form of oblivion. Yvonne Cole collapses into a withered corpse, David Cole simply disappears, the cats are slaughtered in droves, and their motivating infant souls are seized by the Cruel Ones, unseen but heard all around. PCs who intervene in their soul-harvest are broken in two with one single, invisible blow; merciful GMs may simply leave them shredded, bloody, and amnesiac, but still alive.

The event is rapidly justified as a terrible riot, motivated by the discovery of a dead and tortured child. The PCs stagger out of the broken buildings torn and battered and red and red and red indeed.

Leaving Things Alone

If the PCs never resolve things with Longman and merely take care of Yvonne and David, events in



Garden View wind themselves up in their own fashion. Without Longman's family around to be direct conduits of horror, his writings merely motivate the inhabitants to extremes of depravity and self-hatred, and the neighborhood sinks even lower. Eventually it is all but abandoned, leaving only empty shells of buildings where not even the most brave or desperate souls go. Only Longman is left, living off stored food and captured cats, writing out his dark fantasies until he eventually collapses of a heart attack, freeing the statosphere for a new Godwalker of the Chronicler and releasing Garden View from his curse. People drift back there gradually. It remains a place for the desperate, criminal, and lost.

Other Resolutions

Physically removing Longman from the Garden is certainly a possibility, as it breaks the symbolic link between him and the area. But

he is exceedingly reluctant to go, and resists with all the strength he can muster; should he die in the attempt, apocalypse results.

Another possibility is to fill the Godwalker position with somebody else, who can then sever Longman's connection to the statosphere. This is somewhat outside the scope of this adventure, though brief notes on some possible candidates are included nearby.

Perhaps the easiest resolution, in many ways, is to force Longman into the House of Renunciation. Depending on the room, this likely has the same effect as talking him out of his misery, only without all the roleplaying. GMs who think the players may respond to the prospect of having to perform said persuasion with jokey catcalls of "Turn away from the Dark Side, father!" may want to make this option clearer, perhaps by including one of the agents of the House from *Statosphere*, who already has Longman marked down as a target.



NATHAN FOX



*We all work in the
office of unfinished
business.*