

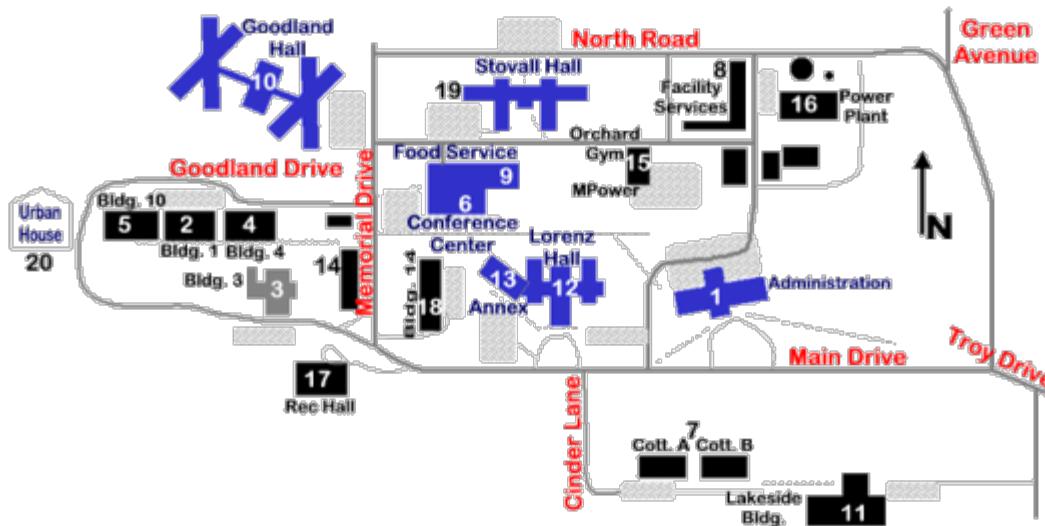
# THE LORDS OF MENDOTA

This is quick little adventure module for the Morrow Project role playing game. It takes place in south-central [Wisconsin](#) and meant to be an add-on to *Operation: Lucifer* R-03. It is also keyed to my ongoing **Morrow Project Travel Guide**. "The Lords of Mendota" is based VERY loosely on the 1989 novel *The Marked Man* by Charles Ingrid. In no way, shape or form am I attempting to violate the copyright of Daw Books, Inc, or in any way offend Mr. Ingrid or his pack of blood-thirsty lawyers.

It is not intended to be a long campaign, though I guess you could end up doing so. It is really just a sidebar to other adventures, an along-the-way sort of encounter. It takes place in [Wisconsin](#), so it could easily be integrated into *Operation: Lucifer*, either at the beginning as teams move from other areas to assist the [Wisconsin](#) team, or at the end as the teams return to their areas after completing that mission. It can also be a part of *The Ruins of Chicago* R-04, I guess, once the situation in that city has stabilized. However you get your teams to Madison, it is likely that they are just passing through on the way somewhere else. See the notes at the end of the document for ways that this can work to make a better session.

In 1989, a Soviet SS-N-8 left the hull of a submerged submarine, bursting out of the cold Arctic Sea and racing into the sky. Arcing in over Canada, the single 2 megaton warhead detached from the missile bus and headed in a gentle curve for Madison, [Wisconsin](#), targeted on the state capitol. The warhead was timed as a ground burst, to explode a microsecond after hitting the ground. Falling out of a snowy November sky, it landed in the parking lot of a grocery store at the corner of McCaffery Drive and Park Street, about two miles south of the capitol building. The massive fireball and blast wave leveled much of the city, digging out a crater nearly a third of a mile wide. 100,000 people were dead within the hour, another 40,000 within the next week as injuries and radiation took their toll on the remaining survivors. The fires rushed through the city, charring everything that was still standing. Only a strong winter storm three days after the nuke hit doused the fires, saving little except some of the outlying suburbs.





With so much death and destruction, the smoldering remains of Madison were largely abandoned by the next spring. A few groups of scavengers and gleaners made the ruins home for a while, battling mutants and radiation in a near-hopeless effort to survive. Over the next century, only scattered bands of people lived in the area, and most of these were temporary settlements. One day in 2086, however, that all changed with the arrival of a group of settlers from La Crosse.

After investigating the area, the settlers came to the sprawling Mendota Mental Health Institute. This large state hospital facility was located on the north shore of Lake Mendota, some six miles north of the epicenter of the blast. While damaged by blast effects and later by fires, much of the physical structure of the Institute survived in initial nuclear strike. As the blast wave radiated out from the epicenter, however, it pushed the water of Lake Mendota into a huge tidal wave. This 80-foot tall wall of water swamped over the Institute, flooding out the buildings and carrying away many of the smaller wooden structures. The radioactive waters also served to kill off any surviving patients and staff, some after lingering illnesses. Within a month, the Institute was devoid of life, though three of the larger stone and concrete buildings still stood in the smoking mud flats.

The settlers found no life in the rambling ruins of Madison but some clans of scavengers and mutant rats. Moving into the Mendota Institute, they recognized the value of the intact buildings and welcomed the opportunity to start a new life here.

They worked tirelessly to clean up the facility and build a life. The grounds were cleared and planted and hunting expeditions were organized to scour the ruins for useful salvage. Other people filtered in from outlying communities, lured by the promise of a better life. They then settled down and went about making babies and watching the sunsets over the lake for the next 30 years. Except for an inordinate love of art and music, this settlement differed little from similar settlements all across [Wisconsin](#).

The current leader of Mendota is a man named Charles Warden, one of the original settlers to Mendota who laid the foundation of the community. The community center, and Charles' residence, is in the old Lorenz Hall building, the most intact of the pre-war structures. Charles collects books and pre-war art. His prize possession is a 1988-vintage copy of Macaulay's *The Way Things Work*, which is an invaluable resource for any community.

Another of these first settlers was a man named Gillander, who was Charles' brother. Gillander was a mid-level Psychic, though his brother was not. This talent was found to be hereditary, as the children born to him at Mendota also possessed this trait. Though Gillander himself died three years ago in the first Scagger attack, his two children have grown to maturity and have become the most important people in the settlement. Both brother and sister are "Protectors", using their abilities to sense dangers and prepare defenses, as well as actively engage and combat the attackers.

The Mendota community until recently was doing quite well for itself. The problem is that in the last three years, the settlement has increasingly been threatened by a large band of mutant Scraggers from the north.

Normally Scraggers do not attack large settlements, and are generally insular. While hostile to humans, they normally just attack solitary travelers or small camps, never anything as large as Mendota. The reason for this odd behavior is Blood Stone, the leader of this band of Scraggers. Possessing a level of intelligence higher than normal for his kind, Blood Stone has forged his tribe into a fairly effective fighting force. Having burnt out several small rural towns, Blood Stone turned his attention to the growing enclave in Madison. For the last five years, he has staged attacks on the Mendota community, aiming to totally wipe them off the planet. So far, the superior weapons and defensive planning of the humans, led by the psychic talents of Gillander's children, have kept the community safe.

The stress of these attacks, however, has had a terrible effect on the community. People have been killed, others have chosen to flee and tensions are high most times. It is no longer a pleasant place to live.

## THE COMMUNITY OF MENDOTA

Encompassing the entire Mendota Institute grounds, plus much of the northwest shore of Lake Mendota, plus an area of open cropland to the north and northwest. This community is typical of numerous settlements that hug the edges of urban ruins. The people farm and hunt and make babies like anyone else. Horses and donkeys are used, more donkeys than horses as they do better in the narrow streets.

The Mendota community is armed with a variety of weapons. There are just a handful of modern firearms, mostly kept secure in Charles' care. There are some black powder rifles of recent import, but mostly the defenders are armed with bows, slings, blowguns, slingshots and melee weapons.

A strong tradition of chemistry in the community has allowed them to produce a number of chemical agents for use in combat defoliants, a magnesium and water mixture which produces an intense blinding flash, green-white poison gases, and a mild hallucinogenic called amberose. These chemicals are put into glass vials and often used to defend against the Scraggers. The poison gases are especially effective against these mutants.

In the past, they had some homemade "missile guns" firing chemical defoliant rockets, but these have all been expended years ago during the first assaults by the Scraggers.

There are currently just 26 people living in this community, 18 men and 8 women. Before the Scraggers first began attacking there were about 50 more than this. Some have left for safer areas to the west, others were killed and some captured by Scraggers. Those that remain in Mendota are the most hearty and the most determined to protect what they have worked to build.

**Director Charles Warden:** The leader of the Mendota community, a job that has the title "Director" from the office that he occupies. One of the original colonists from 30 years ago, he is now about 55-years old. He is running a bit to the fat side, though still a strong and big man. He is a very capable leader, and a literate well-meaning man, and has made Mendota what it is today.

**Veronica Warden:** "Ronnie" is Charles' wife and a gorgeous thin brunette. She is just 31-years old. Ronnie's mother brought her as a teenage from Chicago, where she was fleeing The Machine. She died soon after arriving, and Ronnie was raised by Charles, who eventually took her as his wife.

**Gerald, Art, Mendes, Remmick, Valdees, Weber, Stein, Castro, Franco, Thigpen, Boyd, and Gray:** Young men, the fighters of the community who bear the brunt of the combat against the Scraggers. They are all between the ages of 18 and 30, the first generation born at the complex.

**Irene, Shellyann and Delia:** The females of this generation, aged 23, 27 and 28.

**Alderman, Oletha, and Wyethe:** The three remaining first settlers from La Crosse. They are all in their late 50s and 60s now.

**Jennifer, Ramos, Stefan and Alma:** The third generation children, mostly under 13 years of age.

## The Lords of Mendota, the psychic children of Gillander♦

**Lord Thomas:** A big strapping virile and vigorous blonde man with a mustache, 24-years old. He is the nephew of Charles. An Empath and Seer, with a slight powers of Truth-Reading and Projection. He is also a Dowser, which comes in handy sometimes. He also uses his talent to help his aim with his rifle and throwing stars, making him a deadly sniper. He is a violent man, willing to kill and main an one, Scagger or human, who threatens his people. Master of knife fighting, probably the best in the state, he carries at least three blades and several throwing stars in addition to his rifle. Thomas is one of the few men who regularly travels into the ruins of Madison to look for salvaged goodies and treasures. He also gathers up toys and trinkets for the children in the community and they worship him for it, swarming to him whenever he returns like Santa.

**Lady Nolan:** She is a beautiful woman, strong and resourceful, 28-years old. Brown hair and each eye a different color, blue and brown. An Empath and a Healer, with mild forms of TK and Firecasting. She can also calm animals and get them to follow her. She is often the more-human side of her brother's vengeful wrath against the Scraggers and Nesters.

## THE SCRAGGERS

Scraggers are the product of radiation-induced racial regression. They are big humanoids, throwbacks to Neanderthals in appearance and culture. Their bodies are covered in hair and males average 6'5" to 8' tall and 260 to 550 pounds, females somewhat smaller. They use blunt weapons such as clubs and cudgels, but their powerful muscles and large size make them formidable opponents in any combat.

Currently camped in the thick oak and hickory forests northeast of the city. Their main base is around a small fresh-water lake in rural Columbia County, about 30 miles from Mendota. The land between there and Madison is gently rolling cropland, and can be walked in a few days. Usually, the Scagger raids are two-day affairs. They force march to a point a few miles from Mendota, rest there for the night, and attack at dawn the next day. This regularity has allowed the humans to beat back the attacks successfully every time. The Scraggers, even Blood Stone, simply lack the intelligence to plan feints or diversionary attack, relying instead on brute strength and terror.

There are perhaps 200 total individuals in the tribe, maybe 130 of them males. Of those 130, perhaps 90 are fighters, a very strong force. The sporadic attacks against the Mendota people have been costly, with up to 75 casualties in the last few years alone.

Life in the camp is lax. When they are not out raiding or hunting, the men are usually lying around drinking beer and fermented ass-milk. Not surprisingly, the females exist solely to serve the men, doing almost all the farming and gathering and baby raising. They have donkeys and stocky ponies in the camp, wall-eyed ewe-necked wild stock, small and scruffy to have survived in this environment. They ride barebacked and have so far failed the grasp the concept of cavalry attacks, rarely even taking one with them on their raids. Captives are not treated well once they are in the camp. Women are raped and enslaved at best, men are often cannibalized.

The Scagger camp is crawling with hundreds of dogs that they have bred to act as scouts and hunters. The packs are led by "packmasters", who live, eat and sleep with their dogs every day. These dog packs are rarely used in attacks against humans in defended positions, but can be effective against targets in the open. They are mostly used as "trailers" to hunt food and escapees. They also make sneaking into the Scagger camp nearly impossible.

**Blood Stone:** The Scagger leader, whose higher intelligence is the result of a union between him and a captive female with latent mental illness. All power is held by Blood Stone, all his people listen to and follow him without question. Kill him and the Scagger tribe will soon wander off rudderless and no longer pose an active threat. He usually stays in his canopied tent when not on a raid, surrounded by dog packs and captive women.

**Half Moon the scribe:** One of the few Scraggers with the ability to write and read, though at a second grade level at best. He is Blood Stone's most trusted advisor, though he doesn't trust him to carry a weapon near him. Blood Stone's predecessor was killed by his own scribe with a writing stick so he is very cautious. Half Moon is worried that continued raids against the Mendota people will serve only to further weaken the tribe. He is unsure what to do about it,

but he is certain that Blood Stone's quest to kill all the normal humans will lead to their own destruction.

**The "grand assault":** Before the snows start to fall heavily, Blood Stone is planning a final grand attack on Mendota, using every available fighter he has, and this time armed with fire. Probably within the next month or so, weather depending, he will march. This attack will surely overwhelm the defenders, though losses will be tremendous. It will take at least three years for the tribe to recover from this battle, but if not eliminated when down, will only cause more death and destruction throughout southern [Wisconsin](#).

## THE RUINS OF MADISON

There is a good chance that your team might want to venture into the ruins of Madison, especially if you give them a reason ; ) When one speaks of going "into the ruins" they are usually referring to the area north of Lake Monona and east of Mendota. Only a few of the bravest men from Mendota ever venture very far into this area, and only a handful have ever go into the southern part of the city. Down in the southern half, south of Lake Mendota, there is little but an overgrown field of rubble with a big yawning crater in the middle where the bomb hit. Out towards the northeast edge the damage begins to lessen, though it is still nearly-complete.

Life in the ruins is difficult and often short. There is little clean water or reliable forage for animals and disease is rampant. The people in the ruins survive on small-plot farms and hunting small game. These include wild cats, wild goats, wild pigs, deer and birds. All of these are good eating. The most common vegetation in this area are scrub oaks and furze bushes, with patches of choppy grass where water has settled. Throughout the ruins are lots of wild thistle, gorse and foxtail growing quite high in some places, making travel especially sticky in the summer.

**The fire line:** A section of the southern ruins that used to house a pre-war gasoline refinery. Blasted in the war, the rubble burned for decades, casting a sooty black pall over the area. Over time the fires have slowly died out, but there are still several smoldering fitful fires burning underground. Smoke leaks out through vents and holes in the blackened rubble, making a hazy smog over the area. This generally marks the southern most area of the ruins that are occupied, north of the fire line are the Nesters and south of the fire line nobody lives. A great deal of superstition has grown up around the underground fires, and everyone has their own theory.

**Nesters:** The local name for the people living in the ruins. These are small clans of various scavengers and squatters, plus some people formerly from the Mendota community have been expelled for various reasons. They eek out a basic hunter-gatherer life, suffering from the predations of animals and other humans, but somehow managing to stay alive and reasonably well-fed. They have formed clans and jealously guard their territories, occasionally fighting over them. Territorial boundaries are marked with signs and totems, and any traveler will want to pay heed to whose land they are entering. There might be a total of 130 Nesters in all the ruins, in about four clans and several smaller family groups. They use burros occasionally, but usually walk where they want to go as the ruins are still cluttered. They are armed with primitive weapons, bows, melee weapons and the occasional zip gun.

The Mendota community looks at the Nesters with disdain and has few qualms about killing them if found near the settlement. They view them as barely human, and refuse to see otherwise. Their opinions about the Nesters are mostly false preconceptions. The Nesters are actually much more culturally advanced than the Mendota people want to give them credit, despite their clannish lifestyle. Some of the Nester clans would even be willing to help the Mendota people if asked the right way.

**Herman:** The leader of the largest clan of Nesters in the ruins, which numbers about 35 people. A huge red-haired man who took over after the last leader was killed by Lord Thomas. Herman would be willing to aid the Mendota community if some concessions were made.

**The old killer:** Deep in the ruins there lives a solitary Nestor who is said to know a hundred ways to kill a man. A bounty is on his head by the Mendota leaders, but few have tried to collect it, and none have returned alive.

**Wolfrats:** The urban ruins are home to innumerable packs of "wolfrats", large mutated rodents who fill the urban niche of scavenger and predator. They are as large or larger than pre-war dogs, lean and mangy beasts with razor-sharp claws

and tails that drag behind them. Each pack is led by an Alpha Male wolfrat, kill that one and the rest of the pack will quickly drift off until another leader rises up. They have only a limited fear of humans, which makes them dangerous if encountered in numbers. With food being limited in the ruins, the wolfrats tend to eat their own kind if one is wounded in battle.

**Wild dogs:** The ruins are also home to packs of feral dogs, descendants of pets that survived the war. These wild dogs hunt in groups, but rarely take on humans unless they are traveling alone. During times of drought or other stresses, the dog packs get a lot more desperate and brave.

**Bigfoot:** There are whispered rumors of an "ape-man" living in the ruins. Some have seen a large biped, with long russet hair and clawed hands, working its way through the eastern fringes of the ruins.

**Lake Mendota:** This large lake dividing Madison in half was a polluted cesspool for many decades after the war. Only in the last 50 years or so has it been diluted enough that its waters won't kill you on contact. The Mendota community stays off the Lake for the most part, though some of the members have sailed across it before. The water is not suitable for drinking, even with boiling or straining. It would take a serious pre-war technology to make it potable.

**Animals in the lake:** There are rumors of mutant lifeforms in the lake, though few have seen any. These rumors speak of fish the size of killer whales and shark-like creatures with rows of teeth. The truth is less than the fiction, but there are some mutant eels and fish in the Lake. There are also a few Snappers.

## PLAY OF THIS ADVENTURE

Clearly the main point of this encounter is that in a month or so the Scraggers are going to attack. If they choose not to help now, or provide just a minimal amount of help, the Mendota people will be wiped out. When and if the team comes back through this area they will either find the complex held by the Scraggers, or more likely, burned down and littered with mutilated skeletons. If they didn't help when they could have, let this play heavily on their emotions. Maybe Thomas or Lady survived and is now out looking for the team to exact vengeance for their lack of care. Nothing like a Warlock with a revenge complex hunting you to really make things interesting.

If they do stop and offer help, to what degree might depend on how much time they have to spend here. If they are on the way to somewhere in a hurry, like to chase the lost nuke, they might just offer some tactical assistance. They could even try and assassinate Blood Stone, which would forestall the attack, or just help fortify the complex so it might survive.

If they have the time to stay, they could do either of the above, or something different. They could even stay and help repel the Scraggers' grand assault. If they do so, the Mendota people, and the two Warlocks more importantly, will be forever indebted to them. Having a pair of Warlocks on your side might be a good thing.

The ruins of Madison are also open for investigation. Maybe the team will enter the ruins to try and get the Nesters to help the Mendota people. This is probably the best option long term, as the two groups really need to work together to make this area stable once the team has left. Maybe if the complex is indeed overrun, some survivors are hiding in the ruins, waiting to be rescued. The Nesters can be played any number of ways. They are generally not hostile, but if the Mendota people are being really cranky, then you could have the Nesters and the Scraggers team up.