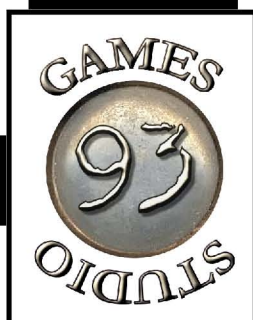
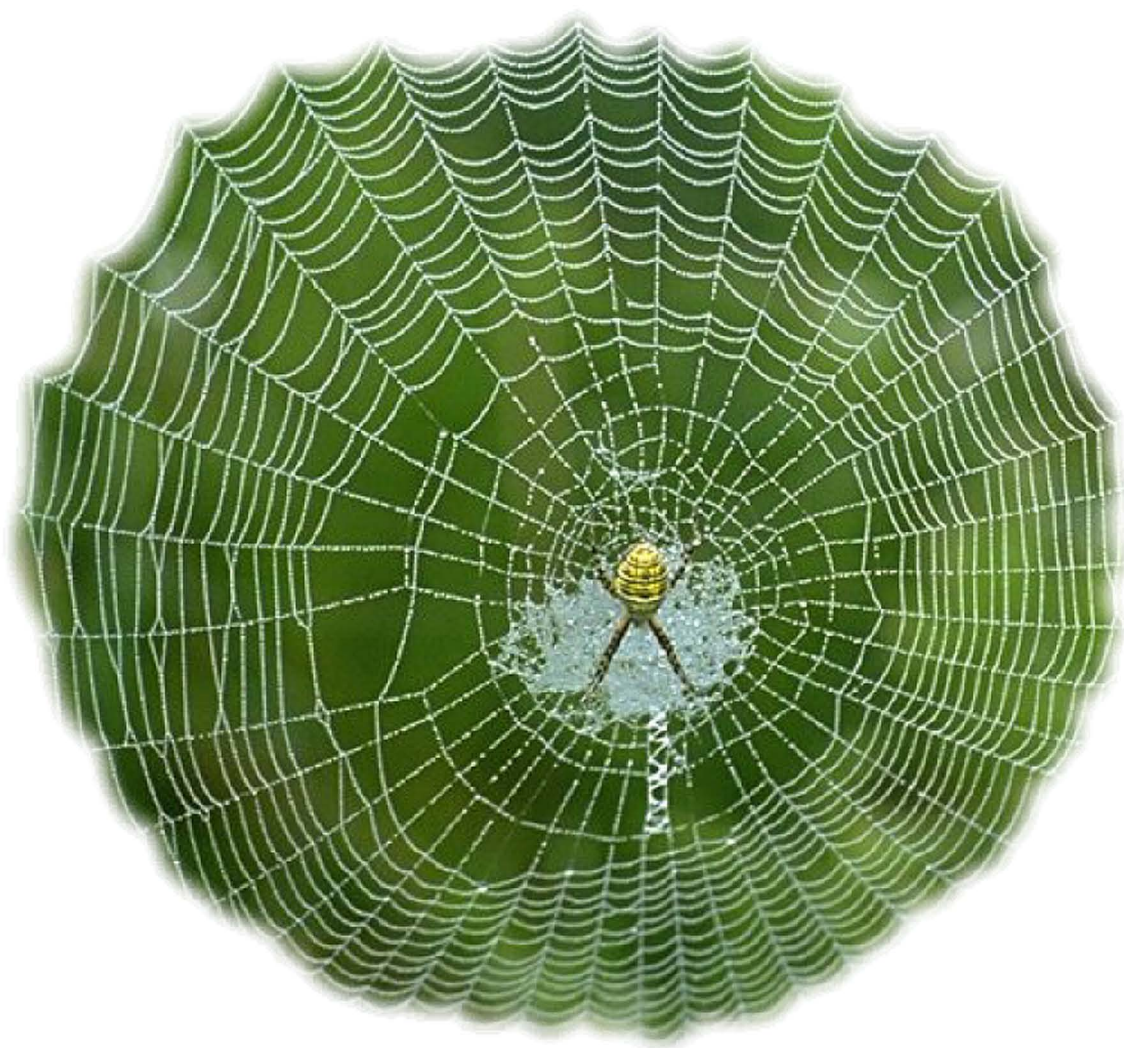


the SWING

SPIDER ASYLUM



A GAME OF REALITY
REALITY IN A GAME

Copyright & Credits

The Swing: Spider Asylum

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93 Games Studio

I will be honest with you; 93 Games Studio started out as one man and the guinea pigs that would playtest for him. In 2001 I started with an idea to toy with making a game. I wanted a side project to keep my mind off of work and to help with a friend who was supposed to move in with me and my family. He never moved in, but I kept working on the game, a little here and a little there.

After a year of working on it, I realized that I might have something. I started working overtime to get something into playtest and found a group (Regimental Quarters) willing to try it out. They helped to flesh out the system and boost my confidence. At GenCon and Origins in 2003 I met James (RPGNow.com), and made plans to enter the PDF RPG market. I also discovered print on demand technology which allowed me to enter the print RPG business without mortgaging my home.

In December of 2003 I released *The Swing* in both print and PDF formats. Since then I have released over 25 more products (mostly small PDF supplements) and have reached agreements with RPGNOW, DriveThruRPG, Arima.it, Digital Book Booth, and Lulu to sell my products. I have also hired 4 freelance writers, worked with UKG Publishing to help produce maps for some of our games and have freelanced with White Wolf, Ronin Arts and Expeditious Retreat Press.

93 Games Studio is committed to bringing the real world into the gaming world. We have all played fantasy, been there, done that; now its time to play reality.

If you are interested in joining this endeavor please email me or check our website for our submission guidelines and we can go from there or check out our submissions page for more information.

The Swing: Spider Asylum requires the use of The Swing: Reality Guide published by 93 Games Studio.

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About Monte Lin

Monte Lin is a freelance writer with a several publication credits; an adventure in Dungeon magazine issue #105, an article in Dragon magazine issue #323, and another article for Dragon awaiting approval. Monte also has written a d20 Future time travel supplement under consideration for Morrigan Press.

Chapter 1

Setup

Tradition is a guide and not a jailer.

W. Somerset Maugham

Introduction

“Spider Asylum” is a short adventure for experienced characters for the Swing role-playing game. The characters come to the Spider Penitentiary to explore a possible spiritual site and discover the Federal prison overrun not by the inmates, but by crazed guards and possessed staff.

The characters quickly learn not only of an unorthodox experiment, but of a history of spiritual influence on Spider Penitentiary itself.

The adventure takes place in the desert of New Mexico, which has a WILL Rating of 2. The Penitentiary itself, which discourages a connection with the spirit, raises the WILL Rating to 6 or so. However, for the sake of this adventure, the default WILL Rating is 2.

Background

The Pueblo Revolt begins in 1680 when a shaman named Popé organizes the Pueblo Indians in New Mexico against Spanish rule. After driving them back to Santa Fe, then El Paso, Popé establishes himself in the Governor’s Palace and maintains rule until his death in 1688. The Revolt officially ends in 1692 when Diego de Vargas leads a band of men to retake New Mexico. After over a decade of starvation and constant raids from the Apache, the Pueblo agree to adopt the Christian religion and surrender.

A Pueblo woman named Ysabel establishes a Christian hospital in New Mexico. She names it the House of the Spider in honor of the Pueblo creation myth.

Sometime, in the 1840s, Joseph Smith, a freed black slave, travels west to seek his fortune. Upon discovering the then abandoned House of the Spider, he reopens it as a roadside inn and hotel, keeping the name in honor of Anansi, a West African spider trickster figure. He eventually marries a local Indian woman.

In the late 1880’s, a Paiute Indian named Wavoka blends traditional mythology with Christian symbolism and develops an apocalyptic religious worship known as the Ghost Dance. The Dance, believed to provide its practitioners a new connection to the spiritual world as well as protection from bullets, ultimately comes to failure at the Massacre of Wounded Knee in December 29, 1890.

A Sioux survivor of the massacre and practitioner of the Ghost Dance escapes and takes refuge in the House of the Spider. He adopts the English name Daniel to disguise himself. He marries the owner and inherits the property.

During the Prohibition Era, the new owners of Spider House, Shylock Smith and his wife Maria, turn the hotel into a speakeasy, serving wines from local New Mexican vineyards as well as hard liquors. Spider

House prospers and expands into its current eight-wing structure.

After the economic collapse of the Depression and rationing of World War II, the federal government purchases the Spider House and converts it into a penitentiary in the 1950s. As the decades pass, Spider Penitentiary remains a tenth the size of other New Mexican prisons. It quickly develops a reputation as a dumping ground for trouble inmates and reject staff.

A week before the PCs arrive, Doctor Frederick Comus cures an inmate, William "Hamlet" Sheer of his violent tendencies as well as mental retardation. He petitions to Warden Gaoler to apply the treatment to the rest of the inmates but Gaoler shouts down his request.

The day before the PCs arrive, Doctor Comus unleashes the machine and removes all the violence and the madness from the inmates, but summons the Trickster spider guarding Spider Penitentiary. It takes its power from the generator and the spiritual pattern created through the electrical system.

Prologue

A magically-aware contact of the PCs asks them to check out a federal penitentiary in the New Mexico as a favor to him. He offers either a solution to a current quest, owes them a big favor in the future, or pays them a sum of \$4000. He suspects that the federal prison is a mystic site and wants the PCs to ascertain its nature and manifestation. Luckily, he knows the administrator of this Federal prison and can get the characters in under the guise of making the prison a historical landmark.

He provides airplane and rental car transportation for the characters, but leaves them to figure out what they need to bring.

He also gives them the work phone of Warden Anton Gaoler, the administrator of the prison.

If the PCs use the work phone number to call the Warden, Gaoler says the following:

"You're the inspectors? Thanks for calling. We've been having some staffing problems lately and I'm wondering if we can postpone your inspection for about a week. I know its short notice and all, but we're really understaffed right now and we don't have the resources and time to help you with your work. It would make things much more convenient if you rescheduled."

Warden Gaoler pushes the PCs to change their plans. He never threatens the PCs, and eventually gives in if need be. However, the character who calls Gaoler will need to succeed on a Sensory Attribute check against a Difficulty of 20 (Extended) to hear the strain in Gaoler's voice, as if he was under immense stress.

The character's contact, if asked, suggests that the characters venture to the Penitentiary anyway, just to be sure.

The characters arrive at the Albuquerque International Sunport Airport on a bright, dry day. They find a rental car of their choosing awaiting them at the airport with a map, directions, and identification as members of a New Mexico Historical Society. The Spider Penitentiary is an hour southwest of Albuquerque by car across New Mexican desert near Highway 60.

When they arrive, an empty guard station by the electrified fence greets them. Luckily, the fence is wide open.

The PCs notice a few cars and two large prison buses in the small parking lot in front of the building.

Chapter 2

The Big House

What other dungeon is so dark as one's own heart! What jailer so inexorable as one's self!

Nathaniel Hawthorne

Spider Penitentiary

For various administrative reasons, Spider Penitentiary never receives the funding it needs to expand. Whereas other New Mexican prisons hold nearly four hundred inmates and requisite staff, Spider Penitentiary currently houses 48 inmates, ten guards, and five staff including Warden Gaoler, James Warner, Doctor Comus, Cassie Veritas, and Alfonso Ramirez.

Spider Penitentiary has no actual specialty. Instead, it receives troublesome inmates, but not violent gang bosses or even high-profile killers, merely those inmates who don't cause enough trouble for harsh treatment, yet inflict administrative headaches. Mostly, Spider Penitentiary takes in those who have not yet been placed in a permanent prison.

The Spider Penitentiary does not run a rehabilitation program, though it manages a counseling and psychological evaluation program represented by one man, Doctor Frederick Comus. As per regulation, he provides psychological intakes for each inmate. Again, many of the "temporary" inmates languish here for years before moving on, conveniently forgotten by the federal bureaucracy.

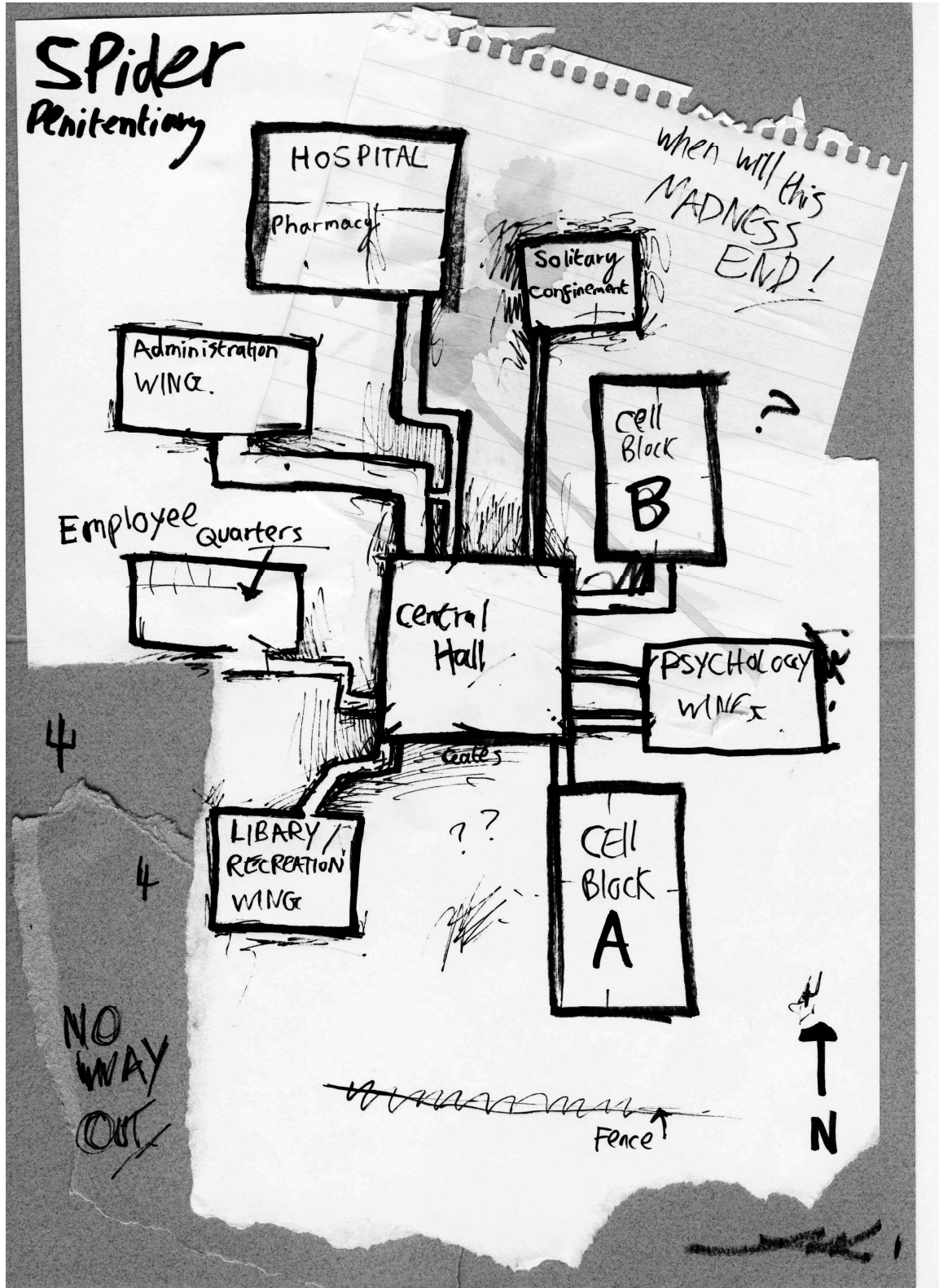
In effect, Spider Penitentiary is a kind of prison limbo, where inmates and staff go when no one else wants them. Guards and staff alike know this is a dead-end career path.

Central Hall

Broken double doors lead to the Central Hall, the 24-meter wide round structure that serves as the main access for the eight other wings. A curved administration desk lies in front of a giant steam-pipe monstrosity, which looks like a cross between a massive stove and an electroshock therapy machine. Anyone with a WILL of 1 or higher senses intense anger and violence emanating from the machine. Those with a WILL of 0 still feel unsettled by the mess, like some abstract art piece depicting a Freudian nightmare.

Any attempt to take apart the machine unleashes a condensed packet of rage upon the responsible character(s). Those targeted must succeed on an opposed Wits + Intuition + WILL versus Doctor Comus' Wits + Intuition + WILL against a Difficulty of 16 (Normal) or immediately engage in Close Quarters Combat with the nearest character. Each round, the character receives another roll against the same Difficulty. Those with the Angry or Berserker Obstacles receive a cumulative One Step Penalty.

Deep inside this infernal machine, Doctor Frederick Comus serves as the emotional power plant for his own invention. Having internalized the very fear and anger he sought to dispel from his patients, Dr. Comus now finds himself a literal prisoner of his own inner demons.



If the PCs ever manage to breach the inner core of the machine, they find Doctor Comus stretched out on a makeshift crucifix made of two long pipes. However, Doctor Comus and his machine represent only the surface of the problems facing the Spider Penitentiary.

The Legs of the Spider

If the Central Hall forms the body of the spider then the legs form the different Wings. If looking down on the Penitentiary from above, then on the left side from bottom up, are the Library/Recreation Wing, the Employee Quarters, the Administration Wing, and the Hospital/Pharmacy.

On the right side from bottom up, are Cell Block A, the Psychology Wing, Cell Block B, and Solitary Confinement.

Two large metal-reinforced double wooden doors connect each Wing to the Central Hall. The Wings roughly measure 9-meters wide and 27-meters long.

Library/Recreation Wing

One half of this wing contains various nonfiction books and magazines on old wooden shelves. The literature tends toward practical knowledge, such as auto mechanics, carpentry, and other trades. No popular culture or fiction is allowed in the library.

The other half has a ping pong table and various workout equipment such as a bench press and free weights.

Two guards, still in uniform, draw crude images of spiders on the floor, walls, and books. Broken pens and pencils litter the wing. An inmate, still in his orange prison uniform, lies bound, gagged, bloody and bruised yet awake. With a successful Sensory Attribute check against a Difficulty of

16 (Normal), the PC notices the inmate signaling to them with his eyes.

The two guards leisurely wander from behind a bookshelf, each holding a Colt 1911A1 in their hands. The guards attempt some small talk, sizing the PCs up. If they perceive them as dangerous, they open fire. If not, they raise their weapons and tell them to get on the floor with their hands on their heads. If the PCs surrender to them, the guards handcuff them and toss them next to the inmate.

The guards have no actual plan other than to take over the other wings. They spend most of their time drawing the crude spider images, occasionally reveling in their power over their captives. After a few hours of this, they become more and more violent, striking their captives, and then eventually shooting them.

Characters can escape from the handcuffs with a successful Strength + Dexterity + Escape: Restraints against a Difficulty of 20 (Extended).

The captive is William “Hamlet” Sheer, the mentally-challenged young man Doctor Comus cured a week ago. The thin tall inmate speaks in an uncertain soft voice. If freed from the guards, he tells the PCs that he remembers only fragments of his previous life. He knows he killed his parents and siblings in a hazy red rage, but he feels none of those feelings now. Instead, he exhibits a paralyzing remorse and guilt. He remembers that the guards never treated him particularly well, but they never became homicidal like this.

Lastly, he mentions that Doctor Comus did something that “freed his head,” then a few days later, all hell broke loose. He hasn’t seen Doctor Comus since. He believes that the majority of the guards have the other

inmates captured in both Cell Blocks A and B.

Employee Quarters

This wing contains three stories with three small rooms on the second and third floors, measuring eight by eight meters, with a communal bathroom at the end with a toilet, sink and stand-up shower. A narrow flight of stairs to the other floors flank the bathroom.

Only a few employees, specifically the Warden and a couple of guards permanently live on-site. The other employees drive in from the surrounding small towns. On occasion, such as during shift changes, some guards and the other miscellaneous employees take a spare room and stay the night.

The first floor contains the kitchen and dining area. The farthest ten meters on the first make up a basic kitchen with a large refrigerator, counter, and six-burner stove. Due to the power outage, the melted water from the refrigerator floods the kitchen and a bit of the dining area. The rest of the floor is devoted to metal benches and tables

In one of the rooms, inmates George Paz and Dan Pacific locked themselves in during yesterday's chaos. Both have similar stories to tell, remarking that yesterday everything went haywire and the guards began beating all the inmates during the recreation period. They reflexively ran toward this wing and just hid here. The room they choose happened to have a small fridge, so they've been hiding in here, sneaking out to use the toilet, and eating snack food. The previous occupant also kept a package of loose tobacco and a pipe, which both George and Dan smoke quite often.

Administration Wing

The Administration Wing contains the offices of the staff, files on all the inmates, and the accounting department. The wing consists of a dozen cubicles separated with standing partitions.

The PCs find Warden Anton Gaoler in one of the accounting cubicles (a sign on a partition designates the area the accounting department) digging around the file cabinets. Stacks of papers and folders surround him.

The large mustached man ever-teetering on an ulcer tries to manage the Spider Penitentiary with faux cheerful professionalism. Dressed in a suit and tie a size too short for his round frame, Anton Gaoler always looks uncomfortable.

Those with a WILL Rating of 1 sense a relaxed atmosphere at odds with the disorder in the Penitentiary. With a successful Sensory Attribute check against a Difficulty of 16 (Normal), the characters swear they feel a little drunk. In fact, if any of the guards wander into this wing, they holster their weapons, and shout out for Shylock to get them a drink. Warden Gaoler then digs around one of the desks, and pulls out a bottle of rum and a couple of mugs. He pours them a little while small talking. By all accounts, both Gaoler and the guards think they are in the Spider House bar. They continue this performance for hours.

If he notices the characters, he says the following in a rushed nervous tone:

"The Feds aren't here, are they? No? Good. Give me a hand here. My wife's off visiting the in-laws and I don't know where she put the books. Joe thinks he can get her with his old jalopy but I don't think that piece of junk will last an hour into the sun.

I never thought the Fed would come here in the middle of nothing to give us trouble.”

Gaoler says little, letting the PCs wander the offices, unless one of them asks him about Spider House:

“I never told you how we got this place? We set up a home in town years ago. I thought I was getting a job at a borax mine. Maria was going to sew. I found out I was had.

We were stuck, until Maria was watching a spider spin its web. She was looking out the window through the web and saw something glittering. She asked around, and they told her it was an old hospital from back in the Wild West days.

By then, word had gotten out that the government was outlawing liquor. Maria wanted to clean up the old hospital, and I needed work, so we opened a place for people to come out, stay a while, and have a drink.

Now, if we don't hurry up, the Feds'll come and shut us down if I don't got my books straight.”

Gaoler thinks he's Shylock Smith, one of the previous owners of Spider House. He refuses to leave until he finds the accounting books. He ignores anything anachronistic or out of place for Shylock's time, such as computers, photo IDs, and telephones. Of course, the majority of the Penitentiary's accounting information exists only in the computer network.

Those with the Clairsentience Gift immediately know that a spirit possesses Anton Gaoler. Those who Scry the warden see the image of a tall, thin, grizzled old man superimposed over Gaoler. Those who use Divination learn the man “speaks as the last rightful voice of the House.”

If the PCs prevent Gaoler from hunting down the accounting books or insist he isn't Shylock Smith, he pulls out his Desert Eagle from his shoulder harness. “This,” he points to the gun, “means that I'm not letting the Feds take my land. But I'd rather show them the books so it won't come to that. If I'm dead who'll take care of Maria?” He waves it in the PCs direction in an aimless yet threatening manner, then returns to his search.

Hospital Wing

The Hospital Wing consists of three sections. The first part contains a dozen metal-framed hospital beds (with rollers) and starts from the double doors and continues down fifteen meters. Another set of double doors leads to a rudimentary Operating Room which measures six meters to a thick single door that leads to the Pharmacy, also six meters long. The Pharmacy has a backdoor that leads directly outside. It also functions as a service window with a small metal tray (much like a late night gas station window) that the pharmacist can withdraw and extend to hand out pills without risk of attack.

Characters with a WILL Rating of 1 or higher sense a quiet, calming atmosphere. Guards who enter the hospital stumble toward an empty bed to lie down. They clutch their firearms with deadly intensity, refusing to be disarmed. Each complains of gunshot or battle wounds, occasionally crying out in pain.

Two guards lie in separate hospital beds. They both occasionally moan in discomfort and cover their eyes with a damp washcloth. Three inmates, still wearing their bright prison uniforms lie sprawled on the floor, surrounded by various vials and injection needles from the Pharmacy. They remain blissed out and completely harmless.

One nurse wanders between the two guards and the three inmates, placing a palm on their faces, feeling for their temperature, and placing a wet washcloth on their foreheads. When she notices the characters, she tells them to each take a cot and to be patient. If one of the characters claims to be in some serious distress with a successful Social Attribute check against a Difficulty of 16 (Normal), the nurse immediately tends to the character. If the character possesses either First Aid or Medical, he or she adds the skill to the roll.

Those with the Clairsentience Gift immediately know that a spirit possesses the body of the nurse. Those who Scry the nurse see an image of a small, motherly American Indian woman dressed in a simple white dress superimposed over the nurse. Those who use Divination learn she “speaks as the mother of the House.”

The nurse, whose nametag spells out “Cassie,” remembers everything up to a few days before. However, she is convinced that the people in the Hospital Wing are Pueblo Indians who survived an Apache raid. She sometimes calls herself Cassie, and other times Ysabel. She finds no contradictions with her memories or perception, blending both Cassie and Ysabel’s memories seamlessly.

Characters who ask “Ysabel” about her life receive the following explanation:

“My father learned the traditions, but I learned the white man’s religion instead. He wanted me to know how to read and write. He also knew that his traditions would fail him one day, and he wanted his children to survive in this new life.

Spanish Christians gave me money to build this hospital. They did not know that my father fought with Popé. If they knew, they

would have never helped me. But the other Pueblos must not know that I am a Tigua, or they would consider me a traitor. The other Tiguas come here as a safe haven from the labor of the Spanish and the anger of the other Pueblos. I tell everyone that we are all Pueblos and none of us have our land anymore. We only have each other left.

Grandmother Spider told me to name this place the House of the Spider. And since Grandmother Spider created the world, I created this place to house the sick and give the hurt a refuge. She said that she would watch over us as long as we kept the name.

And she did. When de Vargas came to take back the Pueblo nation, we feared revenge, and many warriors came here to hide. But de Vargas kept his word, left us in peace.”

Cell Block A

The door to Cell Block A is barricaded with desks, chairs, and miscellaneous furniture. A single person can squeeze through a space underneath all the debris. Doing this without an invitation annoys the sentries posted on the other side of the mess. They prefer the PCs yell through the barricade instead.

The two-story-high structure houses six jail cells on top of another six cells flush against one wall, allowing guards to walk the length of the wing and see clearly into all cells. A small steep metal staircase leads up to a narrow metal walkway on the second level. The cells are four meters by four meters and house a bunk bed and a toilet. On a normal day, the inmates spend most of their time out of their cells.

Twelve inmates remained here when the commotion started yesterday. A couple guards came, singled out “Hamlet”, and beat him to a pulp before dragging him away. The cook arrived wielding a meat cleaver and

helped Cell Block A strip the Central Hall of furniture to create a barricade and to plan their next move.

The group acknowledges the cook, Alfonso Ramirez, as their leader, but he spends most of his time meditating. Instead, an inmate by the name of George Tempe acts as the voice of the group. Any negotiations with Cell Block A go through Tempe.

Tempe and the others realize a change in attitude took place in Spider Penitentiary. None of the inmates hold to their gang allegiances anymore, whereas all the guards have gone off their rocker. Even stranger, the cook no longer calls himself Alfonso, but Daniel, and wants to teach them something called the Ghost Dance so they can make bulletproof shirts.

Tempe and other inmates agree that they want things to return to normal, despite their prison terms. They have no experience or practical knowledge on how to do this, but they sense that the disruption of the “natural order of things” cannot end well. They hope to retain their new sense of peace and clarity.

Characters with a WILL Rating of 1 or higher sense a quiet reverence in the air, as if from a church or other holy place. Guards refuse to enter the area, despite their bravado and desire to retake Cell Block A. If they get too close to the barricade, they “get the willies,” and quickly retreat.

Those with the Clairsentience Gift immediately know that a spirit possesses the cook. Those who Scry Alfonso see an image of a tall, stern American Indian dressed in proud warrior garb superimposed over his body. Those who use Divination learn he “is a spirit who speaks with spirits.”

The PCs find Alfonso sitting alone in a cell, taking apart cigarettes and placing the tobacco in small bundles of torn pieces of cloth. Several bundles sit in four groups around him, corresponding to the cardinal directions north, south, east, and west. He mutters to himself while performing his blessing ritual.

If talked to, he ignores specific questions and responds with the following (while continuing with his ritual):

“I thought I was a coward for running away from Wounded Knee when so many others died. I ran, hid, changed my name to my Christian name, and wandered the country until I collapsed somewhere.

A woman and her family took me in and healed my body and spirit. They told me I was meant to be here, said that Grandma Spider choose me to be here at this time. They said whatever had happened to me in the past no longer concerns what I needed to do here in the present. With those simple words, a weight was lifted and I was cleansed. But sometimes I hear the voices of the dead of Wounded Knee and I wonder what my voice would say.”

Psychology Wing

This wing possesses a counseling office, an observation room with a two-way mirror into a patient's room, a small group meeting room, and a padded isolation room. For whatever reasons, the guards and inmates left this wing alone and it remains relatively untouched.

The PCs find the accountant, James Warner in casual clothing cleaning the patient's room. When he encounters the PCs, however, he introduces himself as Joseph Smith, broadly smiling, shaking their hands and welcoming them to Spider House. He

pardons the lack of a staff; he has to clean the rooms himself, since his wife is expecting. He asks casual questions about the PCs, where they come from, where they are heading, what train they took to arrive here, etc.

Characters with a WILL Rating of 1 or higher sense an open and friendly atmosphere, like visiting a friend. If the guards enter this wind, they change personas and think themselves to be travelers in the Old West. ask James about room rates, about train schedules to California, and of any interesting local stories.

Those with the Clairsentience Gift immediately know that a spirit possesses James Warner. Those who Scry him see an image of a strong and solid black man dressed in a suit and tie superimposed over the body of the accountant. Those who use Divination learn he “speaks with a voice of old new-found freedom.”

If asked about his own past, he responds with the following:

“I got lucky. I managed to save enough money to buy my freedom. So I bought a train ticket to take me North, but I ended up on a train West toward California. Someone stole my money, and I ended up in New Mexico. I was looking for work, but I guess no one wanted to hire a free slave. By that time, I had heard of the Spider House, and I knew it was Anansi’s trickery that led me here. I found a woman, a job, a place to be. Now, I own this place. A land like this, where a slave like me can own something...”

Cell Block B

Other than the barricade, Cell Block B appears identical to Cell Block A. However, the inmates remain locked in their cells, held hostage by the guards. The locking

mechanism reverted to manual control when the power went out, so the guards keep Cell Block B shut down.

Despite the danger, the twenty-four inmates remain very tranquil and hold no malice toward the guards, though they wish to escape their control. They instinctively know something supernatural altered their behavior and infected the guards.

The remaining six guards of the compound choose Cell Block B as their staging area. They intend to regain Cell Block A and attempt to recruit the PCs into helping them, though they have no solid plan to get through the barricade and have no intention of leaving the building. They do not consciously acknowledge the strange effects they suffer when they approach Cell Block A. If the PCs refuse to help them, they attack the PCs and handcuff them to the bars of a cell. The guards do not tolerate conversation between the inmates nor with the PCs. They resort to violence to enforce this, if need be.

When possible, a prisoner whispers to the PCs that two inmates suffered life threatening injuries from the guards during the previous day and languish in one of the cells. Their resident doctor, Doctor Frederick Comus cannot be found.

The characters need a successful Intelligence + Perception + First Aid against a Difficulty of 24 (Hard) to stop the bleeding on each inmate. But first, they need to convince the guards to let them tend to the wounded. Despite their aberrant behavior, the guards still retain most of their training, at least in an unconscious level, and require a successful Charisma + Attitude + Career: Law Enforcement against a Difficulty of 24 (Hard) to convince the guards to let them help the hurt inmates.

Solitary Confinement

This wing contains ten small cells only one meter wide and three meters long. Each cell has no light fixture and has a small cot barely wide enough for someone to lie on his side. At the far end, a tiny toilet sticks out of the wall. The space between the round metal bars does not even allow a horizontal outstretched hand to pass through. A switch on the side of the row of cells releases all of the crossbars that lock the doors shut. The switch is at the closed position and is locked by some complicated key mechanism.

One of the six guards in Cell Block B possesses the key to unlock Solitary Confinement. Otherwise, the PCs need a successful Dexterity + Perception + Lock Pick: Mechanical against a Difficulty of 28 (Very hard) to free the single prisoner.

In his 40s, Griffin Zhand is a tall muscular man with a shaved head and a stubble beard, sprinkled with a little bit of gray. He wears the orange prison uniform. He sits upright on his cot, eyes closed, relaxed but perfectly poised. He waits until the PCs talk to him.

For a person in solitary confinement, he appears quite calm and friendly. He explains that just a few days ago, they locked him in here for biting another inmate. Having a history of violent outbursts, the Warden assigns Cell Number 6 for him specifically. However, he explains yesterday's change of perspective as follows:

"I feel like my head has been opened, and air let in a tight space. You know, when you open a door to stuffy room and take in a breath of fresh air. Normally, I'm just trying to make it to the end of the day when I get put back into my cell, but suddenly, yesterday I can see my future.



I don't mean to say that I can predict what happens to me, but I can see me getting a job, getting place to live under the open sky, making friends, the things that hound me no longer matter. I can see what's been keeping people in here. Not just the law, but their attitudes, their perceptions of themselves. Even the good Doctor Comus, I can see the rage building inside. I don't know from what, but I know he's as lost as any of us.

Things feel sharper, vibrant, full of...potential. Like I know you folks have seen and done things beyond what normal people do. I know you have doubts and hopes about what you do with your life. I want to have those same feelings.

I don't know. I feel freer in here today that I have ever felt out there in the world."

Zhand instinctively knows something supernatural happened to him and to Spider

Penitentiary. He recalls that Doctor Comus claimed to have cured “Hamlet,” a mentally-disabled inmate who, as a young boy, killed his family in a fit of rage. (Someone nicknamed him “Hamlet” since the boy killed his stepfather, his mother, and his cousins.) He also overheard an argument between the Doctor and the Warden over the use of this new technique on the rest of the inmates. Warden Gaoler thought the whole thing preposterous and told the Doctor that he was there only because of regulations, not that he thought rehabilitation was possible. Zhand suggests that the good Doctor caused all this.

Zhand also knows that if the PCs succeed, he reverts to his violent self. He is fine with this, and hopes he at least remembers enough of this day to change his life.

Outside

Once the PCs enter the building, they cannot leave the compound. If they walk back outside, they see a wide gray expanse clear of even low-lying brush. A dark cloudy sky almost the same hue of the desert blends seamlessly in the horizon.

The PCs vehicle remains parked in the front lot, along with the other cars and buses. If they drive off into the desert to find help, the compound shrinks into the horizon, but remains just barely visible regardless of how far they travel. Even though the ground rolls beneath them, they never arrive anywhere. Driving back, they return to the compound in only a few minutes regardless of the length of time on the road. The desert remains perfectly flat and featureless.

Five inmates made a break for it yesterday and currently wander this otherworldly desert hoping to find Highway 60 and hitch a ride. Regardless of the outcome in Spider

Penitentiary, they disappear into the spirit world never to be seen again.

Generator

A hundred meters from the Central Hall, on the other side of the building from the parking lot, a gasoline-powered generator continues running. However, no power channels through into the lights, refrigerator, or any of the Penitentiary’s electrical components. Anyone checking the electrical system, tests positive for power but cannot be electrocuted either.

Those who Scry the whole area see the ghostly outline of a spider that encompasses the generator, the Central Hall, all eight wings, and the round fence surrounding the compound. Those who use Divination determine that “Spider weaves a web of man-made lightning.”

The owners and construction workers of the Spider House inadvertently created a spirit-circle with the electrical system. Each successive improvement on the building increased the spiritual power of the area until yesterday’s massive outpouring of emotional energy brought the spirit of Spider House fully into this realm.

The characters may decide to shut down the generator. If the characters possess explosives, they may destroy the machine. Otherwise a successful Intelligence + Perception + Engineering: Electrical against a Difficulty of 20 (Extended) shuts down the generator without damaging it. Some with a Technician skill may attempt to shut down the generator, but he receives a One Step penalty to do so.

Chapter 3

The Little People

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

Martin Luther King Jr.

Doctor Frederick Comus

Doctor Comus has both a medical and psychology degree and strongly believes in a physiological cure for violence, anger, and depression. Perhaps this belief comes from his own issues with his temper. A very impatient man, his short fuse effectively cut him off from many opportunities. Now he languishes in a federally mandated position at the Spider Penitentiary as opposed to a better paid and more glamorous career in Albuquerque's prominent hospitals. On a social level, Doctor Comus never managed a lasting relationship, and became a bitter, lonely man obsessed with finding a cure for criminal behavior.

He is not popular amongst the inmates, the staff, or Warden Gaoler. With "Hamlet," Comus found a subject to test his weirder theories involving a combination of drugs, behavior modification, and mild electroshock therapy. Though the doctor believes he cured Hamlet, Warden Gaoler recently put a stop to this "voodoo medicine," which upset Comus to no end. He attempted one last experiment, launching the psychic madness infecting the Spider Penitentiary.

The characters need to stop Frederick Comus and his machine to undo the recent changes over the guards and inmates. To do this, however, the PCs must convince the spider spirit to help them.

Doctor Comus

Statistics

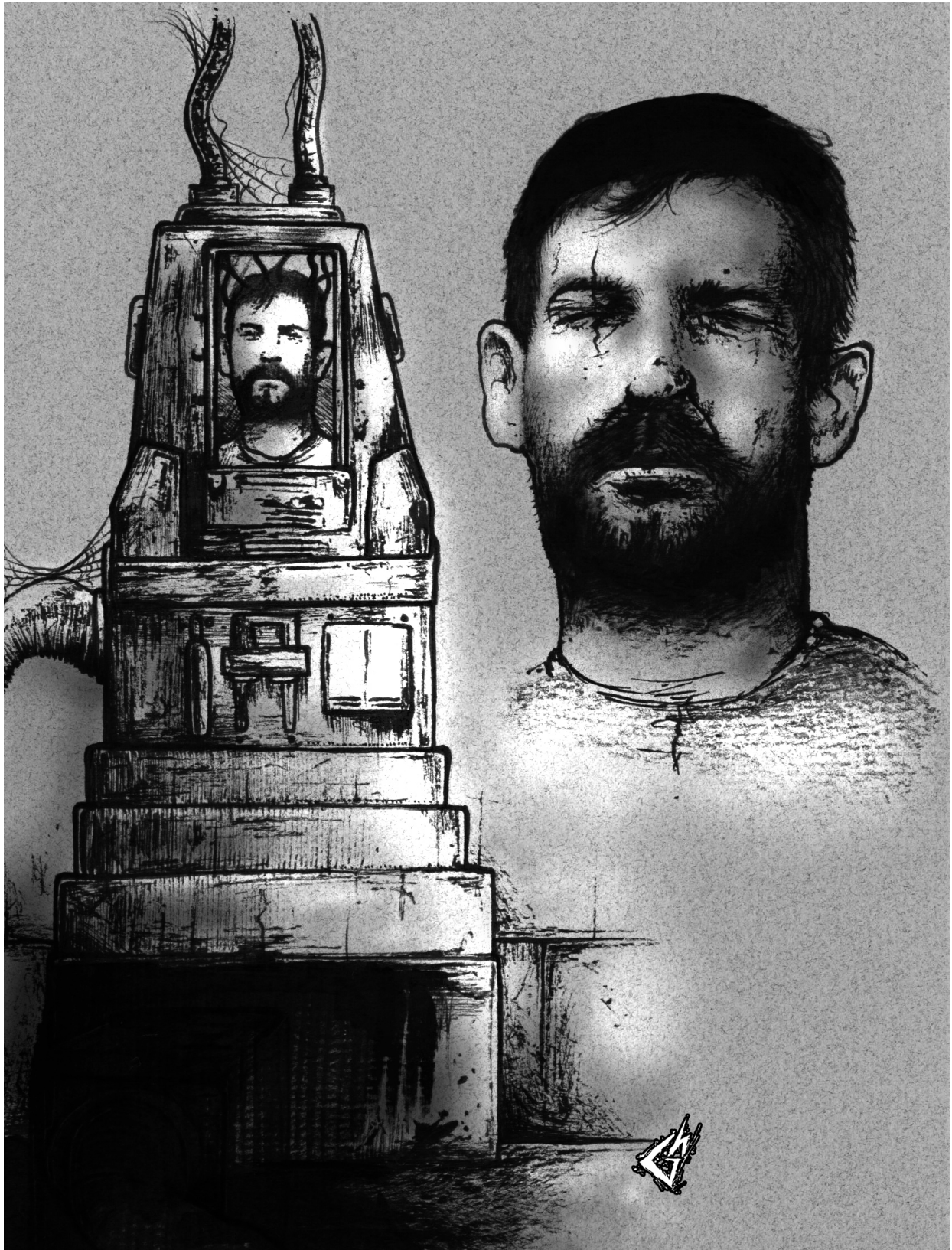
Strength	D12
Dexterity	2D6
Wits	2D6
Intelligence	D20
Attitude	D12
Charisma	D10
Perception	2D8
Intuition	2D8

Skills

Academics: Mythology 1
Academics: Theology 1
Brawl 1
Career 4
Computer Use: Windows 3
Computer Use: DOS 1
Endurance 1
First Aid 4
Medical 5
Medicine 5
Melee: Knife 1
Occult Lore 2
Science: Biology 4
Science: Math 2
Science: Physics 2
Science: Psychology 6
Surgery 5

Combat Stats

Combat Points: 16



Wound Ratings: 9

Wounds: 9

Severe Wounds: 4

Deadly Wounds: 2

Fatigue Rating: 6

Fatigue Points: 6

Jump: 2

Hand-to-hand Damage: 6F

Lifting: 120 lbs.

Fear: 2

WILL: 5

Background Effects

Angry (Primary), Arrogant (Primary), Gifted: Medical (Primary), Obsession (Primary), Scientist (Primary), Willpower (Secondary).

Archetype: Attention Seeker

Magickal Theory: Scientist

Gender: Male

Hair Color: light brown

Eye Color: hazel/green

Height: 6'3"

Weight: 140 lbs.

Nationality: USA

Ethnicity: Caucasian

Religion: lapsed Christian

Spider Spirit

The Spider remains a strong folkloric figure in many cultures. Hawaiian folklore tells of a giant spider creating the islands with each footstep, then falling into the ocean to form the main island. West African culture has Anansi, a trickster spider with her own collection of stories, while Grandmother Spider appears as the Creator of the world in Pueblo stories. The spirit of the spider inhabits Spider House, guiding each successive owner, bringing these people a new chance in life. In essence, the Penitentiary represents the antithesis to what the spider holds dear, second chances and freedom.

The Spider at the Penitentiary once encouraged freedom in all its other myriad forms, ranging from freedom against oppression to the freedom after conquering one's psychological demons. Instead, it attempted throughout the past half-decade to limit the growth of the prison, while pushing its inmates and staff to look within themselves and change their lives. Oddly enough, Doctor Comus provided a vehicle for the greatest change, but his inability to master his emotions led the spider spirit to intervene directly.

It built the strange machine housing Doctor Comus and it keeps its effects active. It intends to hold a mirror to each inhabitant's psyche. In this transitional shadow world, the inmates face their better selves, the guards their worst halves, and the staff their purpose in life.

Pipe Ceremony

To talk to the Spider Spirit, the PCs need Daniel to teach them a very basic pipe ceremony, which connects the participants to the spirit world. Cut off from the real world, they must use whatever tobacco they find as well as a pipe. If no one finds the pipe in the Employee Quarters, they must fashion one of their own. In addition, they can collect cigarettes from the inmates and separate the tobacco from the paper and filter.

With limited materials, Daniel teaches the PCs a shortened pipe ceremony (a shamanic medicinal journey ritual, see page 21). While sitting in a circle, they first address the powers of the West which represent the rain and spirit world, then the North which represents integrity and strength, the East knowledge, and lastly the South for growth and medicine. They end the ceremony by touching the pipe to the ground to represent Mother Earth, raising the pipe to the sky to represent the source of life in the Great

Spirit, and then passing the pipe around the circle for each participant to smoke.

The ritual works even if only one of the participants succeeds on a Wits + Intuition + Visualization Magick: Shamanism (or other appropriate Visualization Magick or for True Magicians - WILL) check. Whoever makes the highest roll (while beating the WILL Rating) becomes the designated shaman of the ritual. Whoever fails, or does not participate, never sees the Spirit and cannot communicate with it.

For more rules on shamanic medicinal journeys see The Swing: Shamanism.

Upon successful completion of the ritual, the PCs notice a distinct, heavy breathing, and a rhythmic movement in the air. If they follow the sound and breeze, they end up in the Central Hall with a blurred image of a giant spider hanging over Doctor Comus' machine.

NPC's

Typical Guards

Statistics

Strength	2D8
Dexterity	2D6
Wits	D10
Intelligence	D12
Attitude	D12
Charisma	D10
Perception	2D6
Intuition	2D8

Skills

Athletics: Football 1
Brawl 3
Computer Use: UNIX 1
Career: Security Guard 3
Drive: Car 2

Endurance 3
Firearms: Pistol 3
Firearms: Shotgun 2
Gunsmith: Pistol 1
Gunsmith: Shotgun 1
Intimidate: Verbal 3
Martial Arts: Tae Kwon Do 2
Melee: Mace 3
Negotiation 1
Security: Electrical System 1
Security: Personal Protection 1
Survival: Desert 1
Video Systems: CCTV 1

Background Effects

Arrogant (Secondary), Equipment, Housing, No Sense of Humor (Secondary), Overconfident (Primary), Willpower (Secondary).

Combat Stats

Combat Points: 13

Wound Ratings: 11

Wounds: 11

Severe Wounds: 5

Deadly Wounds: 2

Fatigue Rating: 8

Fatigue Points: 24

Jump: 2

Hand-to-hand Damage: 1W & 10F

Lifting: 160 lbs.

Fear: 6

WILL: 0

PCs note with a successful Sensory Attribute check against a Difficulty of 16 (Normal) that the guards' faces look "just a little bit off" as if distorted by some reflection or light effect. Those with the Clairvoyant Gift see their faces constantly change like putty, straining against their skin.

A Divination reveals their "spirits unaligned with their bodies," while a Scry reveals the same image as the Clairvoyant Gift above.

All of the guards are Level 2 Security Guards and carry a Colt 1911A1, and the equivalent to a Fabarm FP6, as well as a metal baton (treat as a mace), and wears Type II body armor vest.

Warden Anton Gaoler

Use the Typical Guard statistics above and add with the following modifications:

Bureaucracy 1
Career: Law Enforcement 3
Communication Systems: CB 1
Locale Knowledge (Bernalillo County) 2
Occult: Folklore 1
Occult: Mysticism 1
Survival: Desert 1

Replace the following skills and statistics with the following:

Firearms: Pistol 4
Firearms: Shotgun 3
Intimidate: Verbal 5

Combat Points: 13
Wound Ratings: 13
 Wounds: 13
 Severe Wounds: 6
 Deadly Wounds: 3

Background Effects

Combat Sense (Primary), Tough: Physical (Primary).

Archetype: Apathetic
Magickal Theory: None
Gender: Male
Hair Color: black/balding
Eye Color: brown
Height: 6'0"
Weight: 185 lbs.
Nationality: USA
Ethnicity: Caucasian
Religion: None

Anton Gaoler also is a Level 2 Local Deputy Sheriff and a Level 2 Security Guard. He carries a Desert Eagle pistol.

Typical Inmate Statistics

Strength	2D8
Dexterity	D10
Wits	D12
Intelligence	D12
Attitude	2D6
Charisma	2D6
Perception	2D6
Intuition	2D8

Skills

Brawl 3
Climb 4
Combat Skill: Dodge 1
Combat Skill: Initiative 2
Debate: Fast Talk 1
Endurance 4
Etiquette: Street 1
Firearms: Pistol 3
Gambling 1
Intimidate: Verbal 4
Melee: Dagger/Knife 4
Scrounge 1
Streetwise: Urban 4
Survival: Urban 1

Background Effects

Combat Sense (Primary), Enemy, Night Vision (Secondary), Paranoid: Government (Secondary), Poverty, Tough: Physical (Primary).

Combat Stats

Combat Points: 13
Wound Ratings: 11
 Wounds: 13

Severe Wounds: 6
Deadly Wounds: 3
Fatigue Rating: 8
Fatigue Points: 32
Jump: 2
Hand-to-hand Damage: 1W & 10F
Lifting: 160 lbs.
Fear: 7
WILL: 1

The Staff (Carrie Veritas, James Warner, Alfonso Ramirez)

The information below reflects a blend between the host body and the ghosts that possesses them during the adventure. Even after the adventure, Carrie, James, and Alfonso retain a dash of their experiences.

Statistics with a slash refers to attributes that Carrie and James possess before the slash, and the statistics that Alfonso possesses after the slash.

Statistics

Strength	D10/2D6
Dexterity	2D6
Wits	2D8/D12
Intelligence	2D8/D10
Attitude	2D8
Charisma	2D8/D12
Perception	2D6
Intuition	2D6

Skills

Academics: Anthropology 1
Academics: History 1
Academics: Mythology 1
Administration 1
Bureaucracy 1
Career (appropriate to the character) 2
Computer Use: Windows 2
Drive: Car 1
Locale Knowledge (Albuquerque) 1

Occult: Folklore 1
Occult: Mysticism 1
Survival: Desert 1

Carrie Veritas, the nurse possesses the following skills: Crafts: Weaving 1, Crafts: Knitting 1, Crafts: Sewing 1, First Aid 2, Herbalism 1, Language: Tanoan 1, Medical 2, Medicine 2, Science: Biology 2, Science: Chemistry 1, Science: Mathematics 1, Science: Psychology 1, Surgery 1

James Warner, the accountant, possesses the following skills: Academics: Economics 2, Academics: Government 2, Debate: Fast Talk 1, Escape: Casual 1, Expression: Verbal 2, Finance: Accounting 2, Finance: Payroll 2, Finance: Taxes 2, Journeyman: Carpentry 1, Scrounge 1

Alfonso Ramirez, the cook, possesses the following skills: Academics: Philosophy 2, Academics: Theology 2, Arts: Dance 1, Brawl 1, Combat Skill: Dodge 1, Combat Skill: Initiative 1, Endurance 3, Gambling: Poker 2, Hobby: TV Trivia 2, Language: Lakota 1, Melee: Knife 2, Stealth 1, Strategy: Military 1, Visualization Magick: Dakota Ritual 1

Combat Stats

(Veritas & Warner/Ramirez)

Combat Points: 13
Wound Ratings: 8/10
Wounds: 8/10
Severe Wounds: 4/5
Deadly Wounds: 2
Fatigue Rating: 5/7
Fatigue Points: 4/21

Jump: 2
Hand-to-hand Damage: 5F/7F
Lifting: 100 lbs./140 lbs.
Fear: 1
WILL: 1

Background Effects

Alternate Identify (Secondary), Haunted, Self Sacrificing (Secondary), Visualization Magick (Secondary).

Carrie is a Level 1 EMT, while James Warner is a Level 1 Clerk. Alfonso carries a cleaver (treat as a dagger).

Carrie Veritas and James Warner possess the following Backgrounds: Academic (Secondary), Increased Will (Secondary).

Carrie Veritas

Archetype: Nurturer
Magickal Theory: God/Goddess
Gender: Female
Hair Color: dirty blonde
Eye Color: green
Height: 5'7"
Weight: 115 lbs.
Nationality: USA
Ethnicity: Spanish
Religion: None

James Warner

Archetype: Protector
Magickal Theory: God/Goddess
Gender: Male
Hair Color: bald
Eye Color: brown
Height: 5'5"
Weight: 125 lbs.
Nationality: USA
Ethnicity: Caucasian
Religion: None

Alfonso possesses the following Backgrounds: Mentally Challenged (Secondary), Spell (Ghost Dance)

Alfonso Ramirez

Archetype: Cavalier
Magickal Theory: God/Goddess
Gender: Male
Hair Color: black
Eye Color: brown
Height: 6'5"
Weight: 170 lbs.
Nationality: USA
Ethnicity: Spanish
Religion: None

Chapter 4

Conclusion

Men are not prisoners of fate, but only prisoners of their own minds.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Epilogue

While the spirit spider does not actually speak, the PCs (who succeeded with their rolls in the ceremony) intuitively understand the spider's meaning. It tells the characters that its intervention is long overdue, having watched white men turn a house of freedom into one of slavery. It waited until an acceptable shaman deemed to make the appropriate offering to come in full form. It now realizes that its shaman is diseased, sick in mind and spirit.

The PCs now have three choices. They may choose to save their own skins and leave the spirit in the Penitentiary. The spirit's cares only for the inmates, the staff, and the guards, so it has no reason to keep the characters stuck in Spider House. The PCs who climb in their car and drive back to civilization leave unmolested.

If they return to Spider Penitentiary, a highway patrol blockade stops them for some simple questions, such as travel origin and destination. The officers ask the PCs to turn back around and not to pick up any hitchhikers since several inmates broke out of a local jail. If the PCs manage to evade the blockade, they find several officers searching an abandoned Spider Penitentiary.

A much harder solution involves the PCs somehow banishing or destroying the spirit. Since Daniel sees the spider spirit as benevolent, perhaps even necessary, he adamantly refuses to participate in this sort

of ritual. He advises the PCs that Spider does what it wants, irregardless of the characters. They must, therefore, find their own means to banish the spider spirit. Ritually, this requires some form of cleansing or banishing ritual appropriate to their style of Magick, as well as a strong and overbearing will. Mechanically, it comes down to a Wits + Intuition + WILL check against a Difficulty of 32 (Difficult).

Spiritually easier, but physically more dangerous, the PCs may confront Doctor Comus and his machine directly. On one hand, he is much weaker than the spider spirit. In addition, Spider does not want such an unstable shaman as its vessel and does not interfere. On the other hand, the negative energies released by such a ritual attract the attention of the roaming guards in the Penitentiary. (Guards caught up in the illusions in the Administrative, Hospital, and Psychology Wings remain there, though.) At least one character must attempt to complete the ritual, while the others fend off the guards.

In confronting Doctor Comus or the Spider Spirit, the PCs gain a One Step bonus if they manage to shut down the generator.

In the last option, the PCs convince the spirit to leave the Penitentiary and return it to its previous state. The designated shaman offers him or herself as a replacement vessel to Doctor Comus. The selected PC provides Spider a connection to the physical world

and acts Spider's will upon that world. Spider then provides spiritual power and guidance to the shaman. The character effectively gains the Ally, Mentor, and Haunted Tangibles manifested in the Spider Spirit.

Once the PCs banish or befriend the Spirit, or they win over Doctor Comus, the staff, guards, and inmates carefully return the Penitentiary to its original state in a quiet trance, even taking apart Doctor Comus' machine. This takes only an hour or so, during which they do not speak with each other. Once the inmates return to their cells, everyone snaps back into their original personalities and roles as if nothing happened. Even Warden Gaoler strolls up to the PCs unaware of the previous day's madness. He thanks the PCs for not being disruptive to the prison and asks them if they finished their survey.

Spider Penitentiary eventually closes and the staff and inmates sent to other prisons, leaving the compound abandoned. Some of the inmates, including Hamlet, wait out their prison terms and return to society changed men. Doctor Comus suffers a nervous breakdown while Warden Gaoler takes an early retirement and travels the country. It is up to the Seer to determine the consequences of the PCs actions.

Daniel's Pipe Ceremony

If the shaman succeeds at a Visualization Magick: Shamanism, the shaman can see, hear and communicate with the spirit world. The shaman may speak and hear any of the nearby spirits. This does not guarantee that the spirit(s) will help only that the shaman gets a chance to talk to them. All normal rules would apply to ask for assistance.

If the shaman fails on their Visualization Magick: Shamanism check, they either failed to perceive the spirit world.

Medicinal Journey, Sacred Pipe & Tobacco

Game Effects:

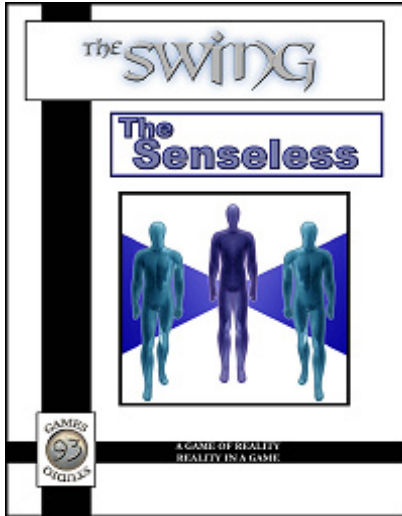
The shaman is able to see, hear and communicate the spirit world. This works much like how the skill Clairvoyance works.

Base Difficulty: -3 Step Penalty

Casting Time: 5 Minutes

Also Check Out....

Other *Tales of the Weird* from author Monte Lin:



"The Senseless" is a short introductory adventure for the Swing role-playing game. The characters run across an abandoned lab where psychological experiments went awry half a century ago. While the adventure does have physical dangers, the crux of the story involves gathering information and sleuthing.

"Blood of Dionysus" is a short adventure for the Swing role-playing game. An ancient jar filled with the divine wine of the Greek god of wine appears throughout the city, causing people to give into their basest impulses. The characters must track down the jar and somehow neutralize it before the city goes completely insane. However, a powerful wine patron believes the wine can cure his physical disabilities and stops at nothing to get that jar for himself.

