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UNKNOWN ARMIES

# ONE SHOTS

FIVE STAND-ALONE SCENARIOS



BY
TIM DEDOPULOS, GEOFFREY C. GRABOWSKI,
NICOLE LINDROOS, GREG STOLZE & JOHN TYNES

ATLAS GAMES PRESENTS

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**art director** *Thomas Manning*
**cover artist** *Dennis Detwiller*
**editors** *Greg Stolze*
*Timothy Toner* *John Tynes*

**graphic design, photos & production** *John Tynes*
**publisher** *John Nephew*

**illustrators** *Rob Nemeth*
*Dan Parsons* *Jim Pavelec*
*Matt Roach* *Brian Snōddy*

**special thanks to**

*Michael Daisey* *Dennis Detwiller*
*Tim Dedopulos* *Ken Hite*
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Atlas Games
P.O. Box 131233
Roseville, MN 55113
www.Atlas-Games.com
atlasgames@aol.com

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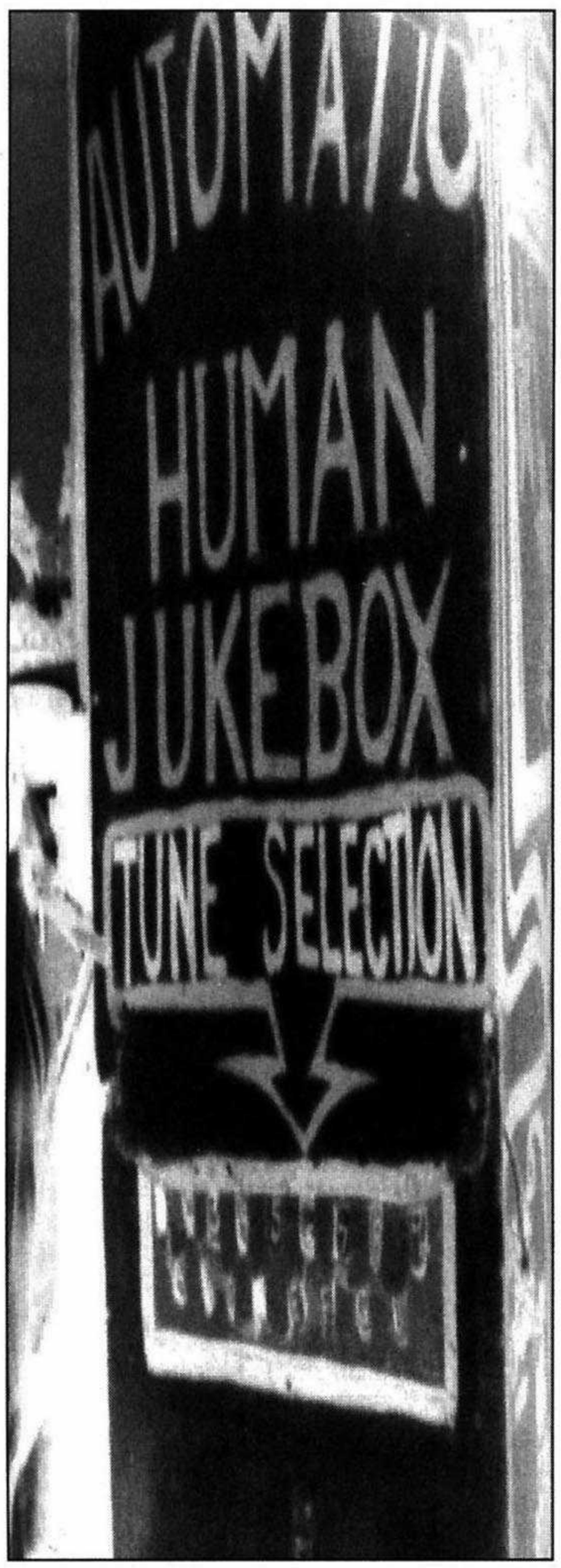


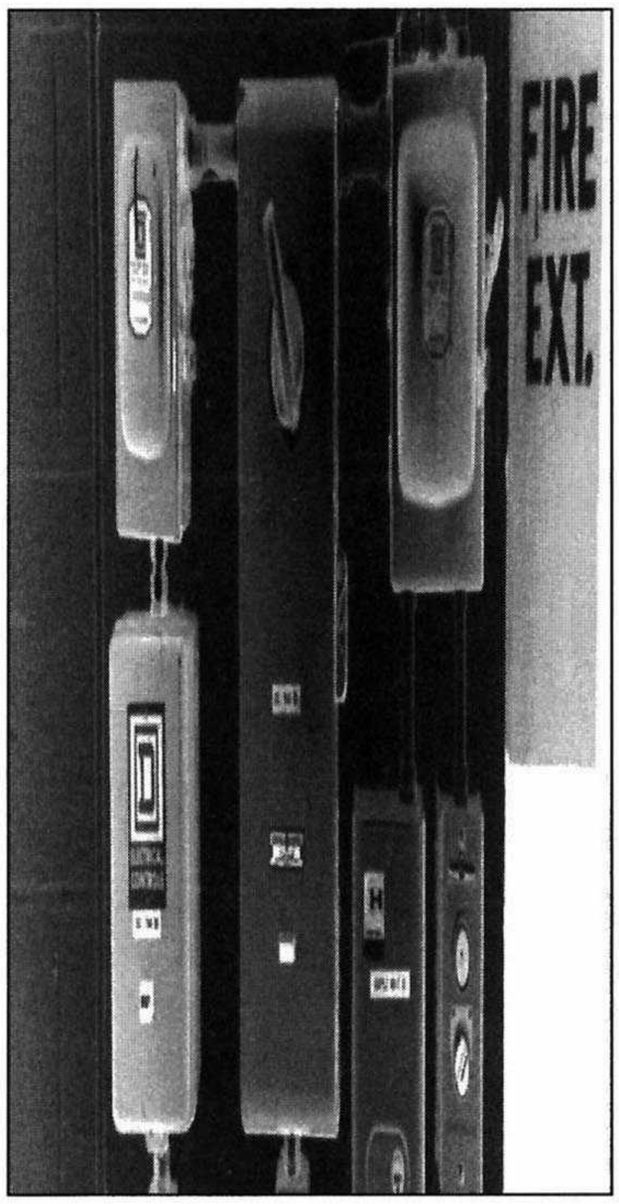



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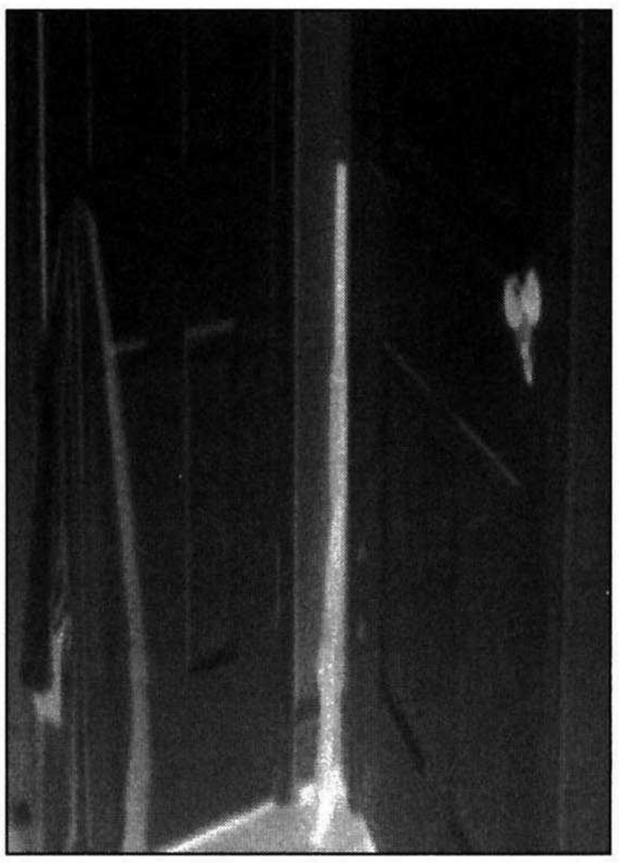


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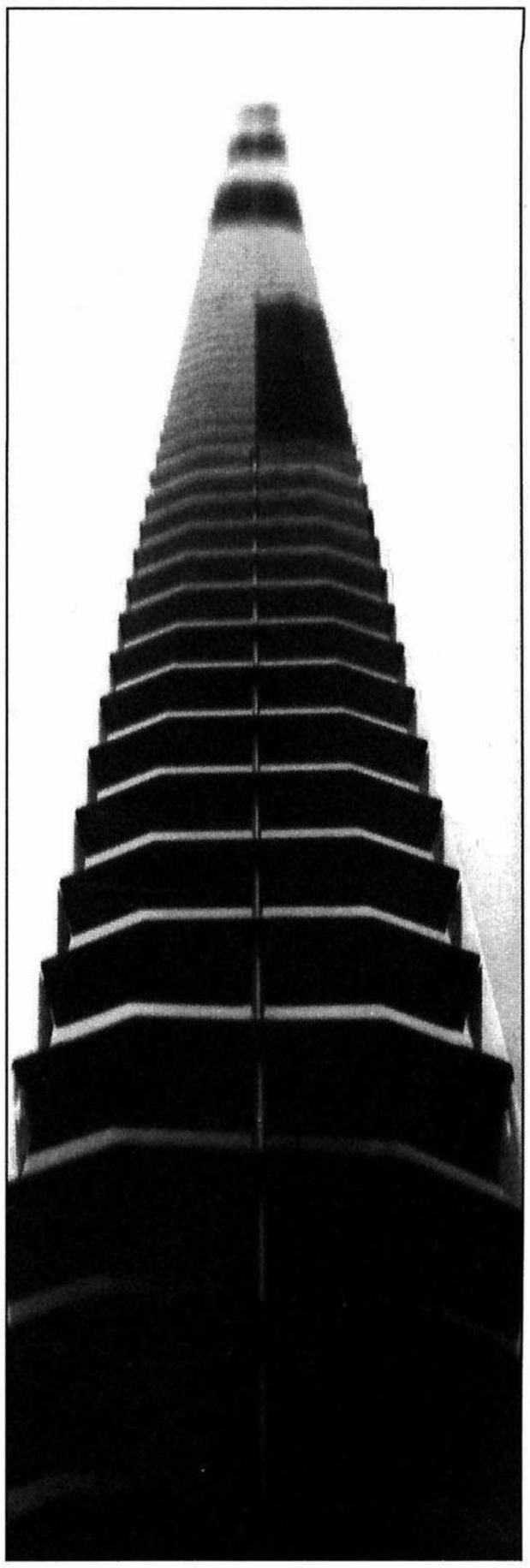


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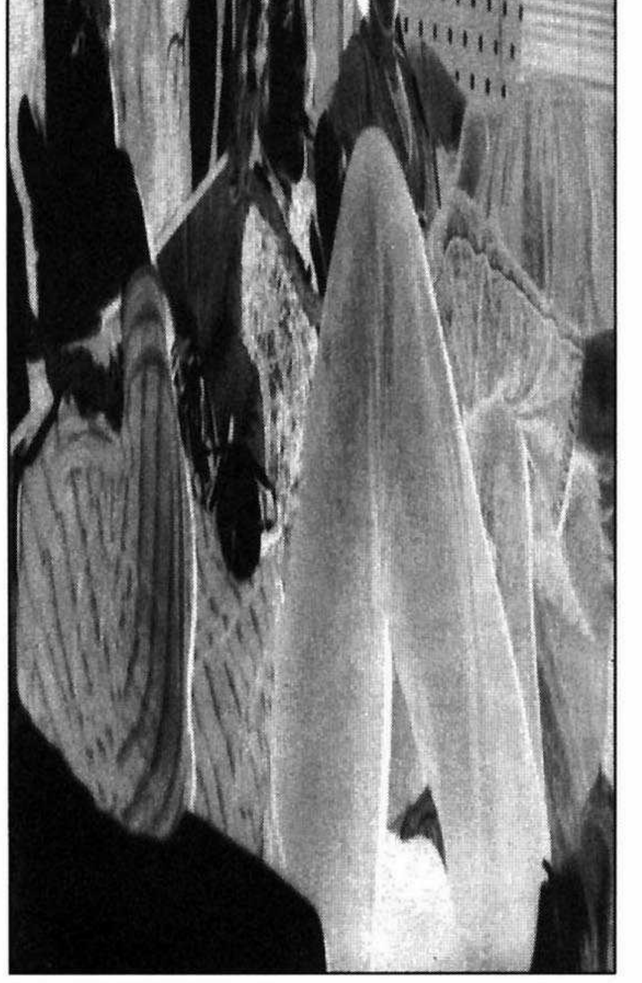


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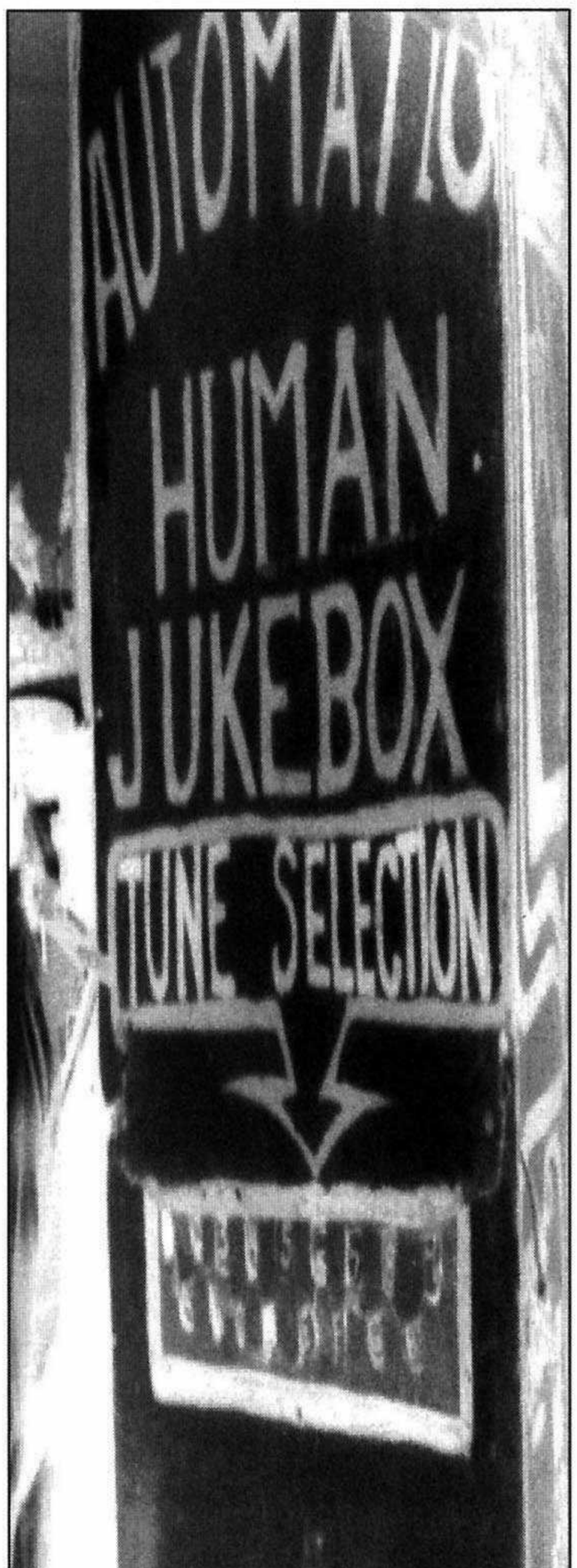
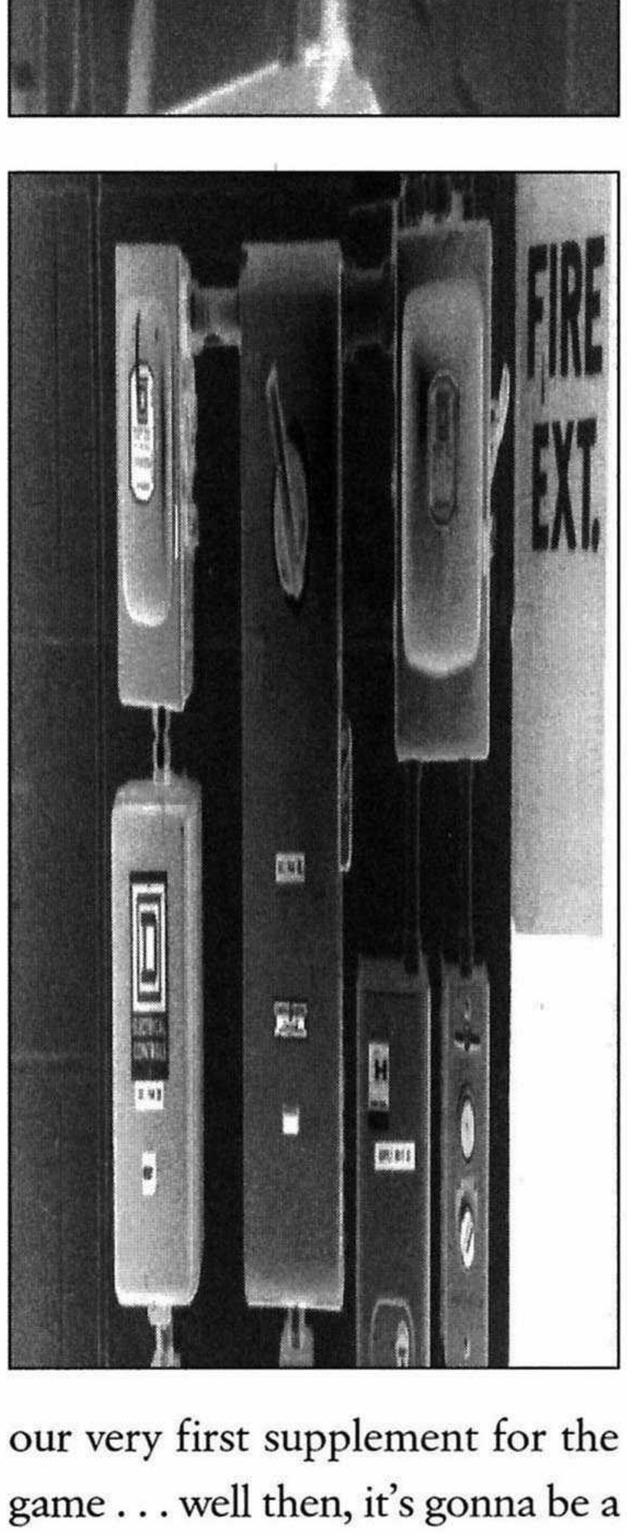
# Introduction

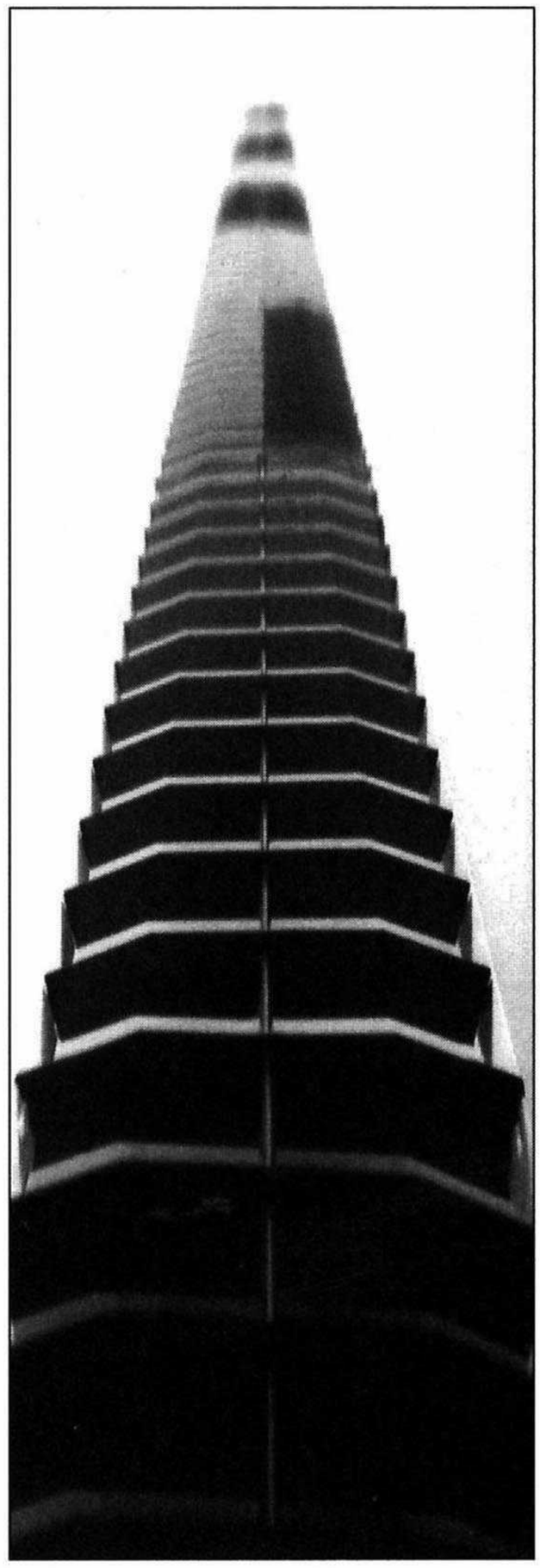
**If we've done our jobs** properly, you're not going to like one of the scenarios in this book. You'll be reading along, perhaps occasionally cackling with sadistic glee at the strange fates that await your players, and then *boom*—there it will be. The scenario that makes you yelp out loud, "What were they thinking? I'm not gonna run this!" ¶ If so, we're delighted to hear it. ¶ See, it's easy to do a book of middle-of-the-road adventures, a collection of scenarios



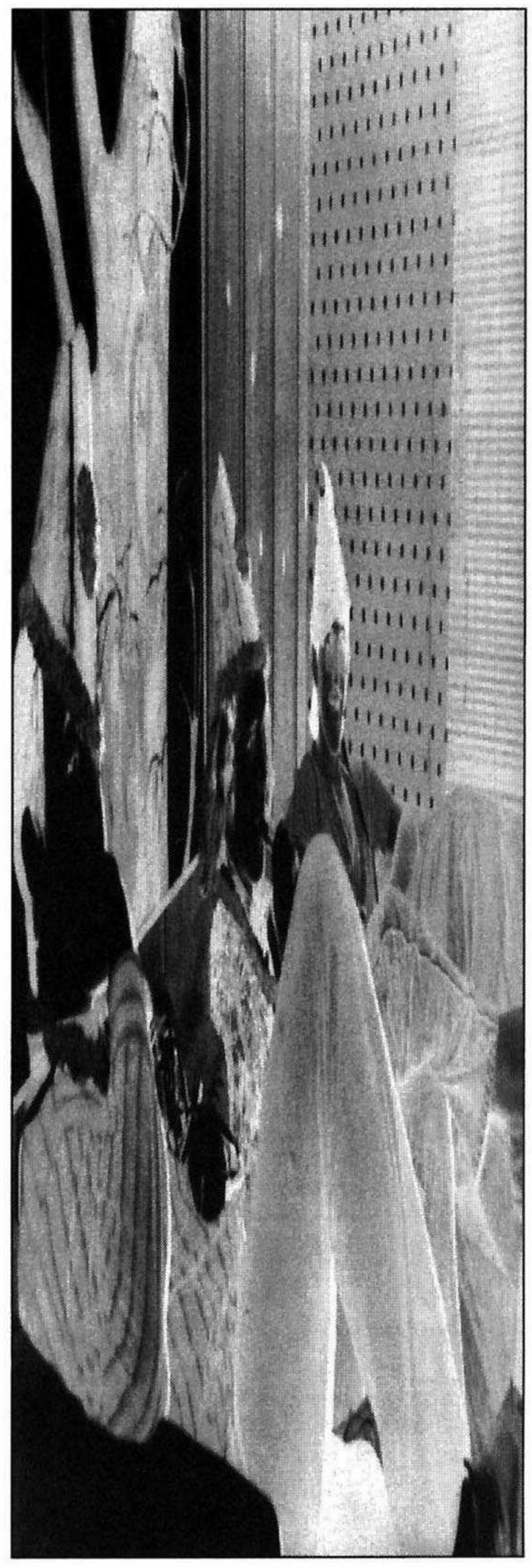

that color inside the lines and encourage you to say things like, "Yeah, I get it. I know what this puppy is all about. I got it all figured out." ¶ But we're just some contrary bastards. We'd rather that you came out of this book saying, "You know, every time I thought this game was gonna be one thing, it turned into another." Because if we can't surprise you, if we can't throw you a curve ball and shake up your notions of what *Unknown Armies* is like, in

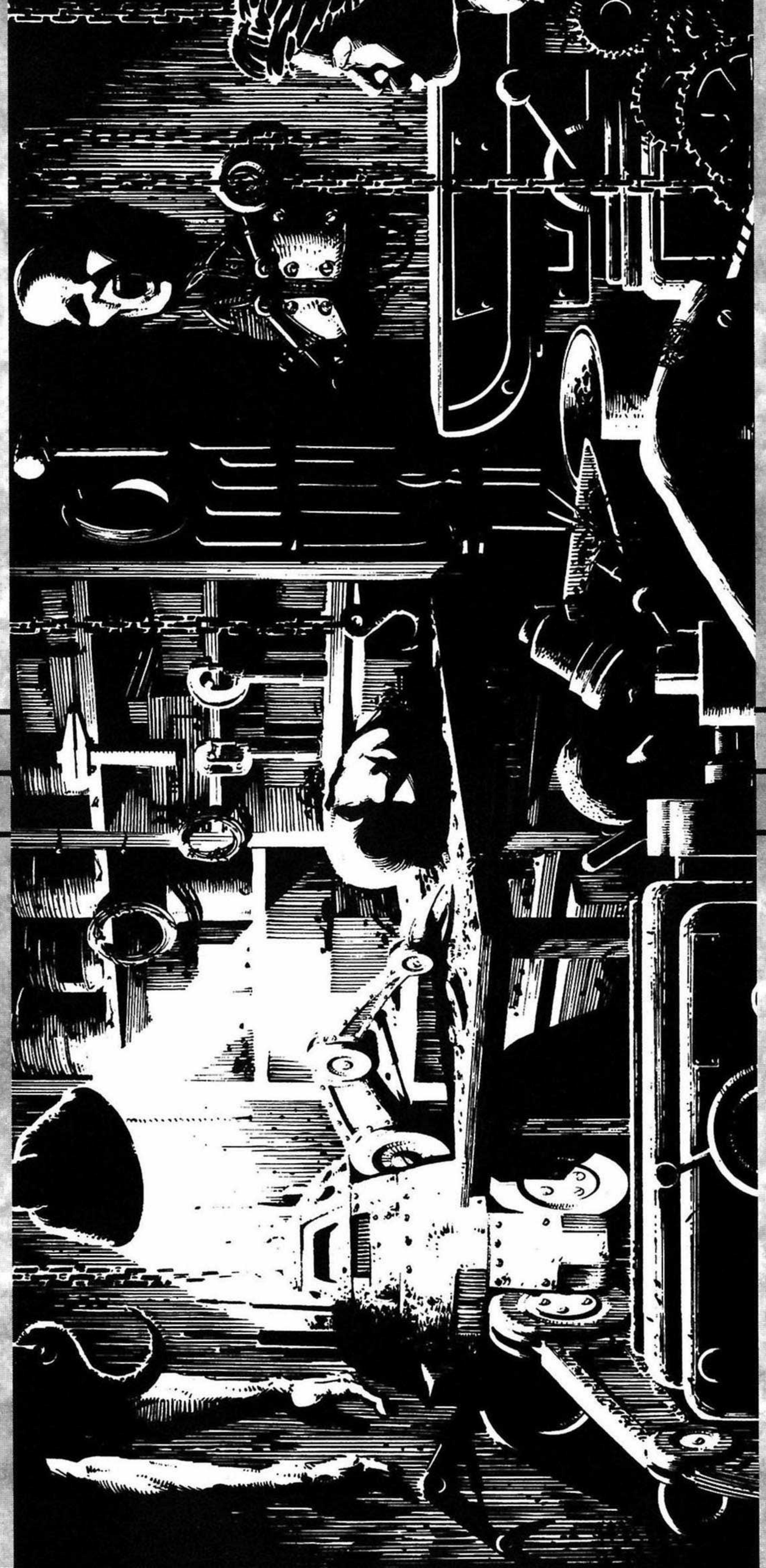



our very first supplement for the game . . . well then, it's gonna be a loooong product cycle. ¶ So yeah, these five scenarios are all over the damn map. We've got your player-versus-player conflict, your search-and-retrieve assignment, your psychosymbolic melodrama, your action-packed metaphysics, and just to prove that we've got a pair, the book ends with the end of the freakin' world. How's that for a



rousing finish? ¶ Of course, we'd be rather derelict in our duties if we threw all this crazy stuff at you and expected you to somehow make it all fit in your campaign into one coherent storyline. (Even we aren't *that* contrary.) As you hopefully know from reading the back cover text before you put down your buckage for this bookage, the scenarios in *One Shots* are just that: one-shots. Each comes with pre-gen PCs, ready for you to photocopy and hand out to your group, so you can grab any scenario you like and spring it on short notice. We know it can be tough to get a campaign going, or maybe you've already got one together—maybe even, gasp, for some other roleplaying game—but would like to take a break one session, because someone didn't show up or just because *you're* feeling a little contrary today. When that day comes, *One Shots* is ready for you ¶ And of course, you can always scrap all our ludicrous plans and just rip the pages apart, yanking out a character here, an idea there, and then fitting the pieces you've chosen into some loathsome jigsaw puzzle of your *own* design. There's a lot of useful stuff in this book, no matter how you decide to put it into play. ¶ Anyway, it's time to wrap this appetizer up and let you get on to the main course. Use these scenarios in good health, don't run with scissors, and for the love of pete—the next time someone asks you if you're a god, you say *YES!*





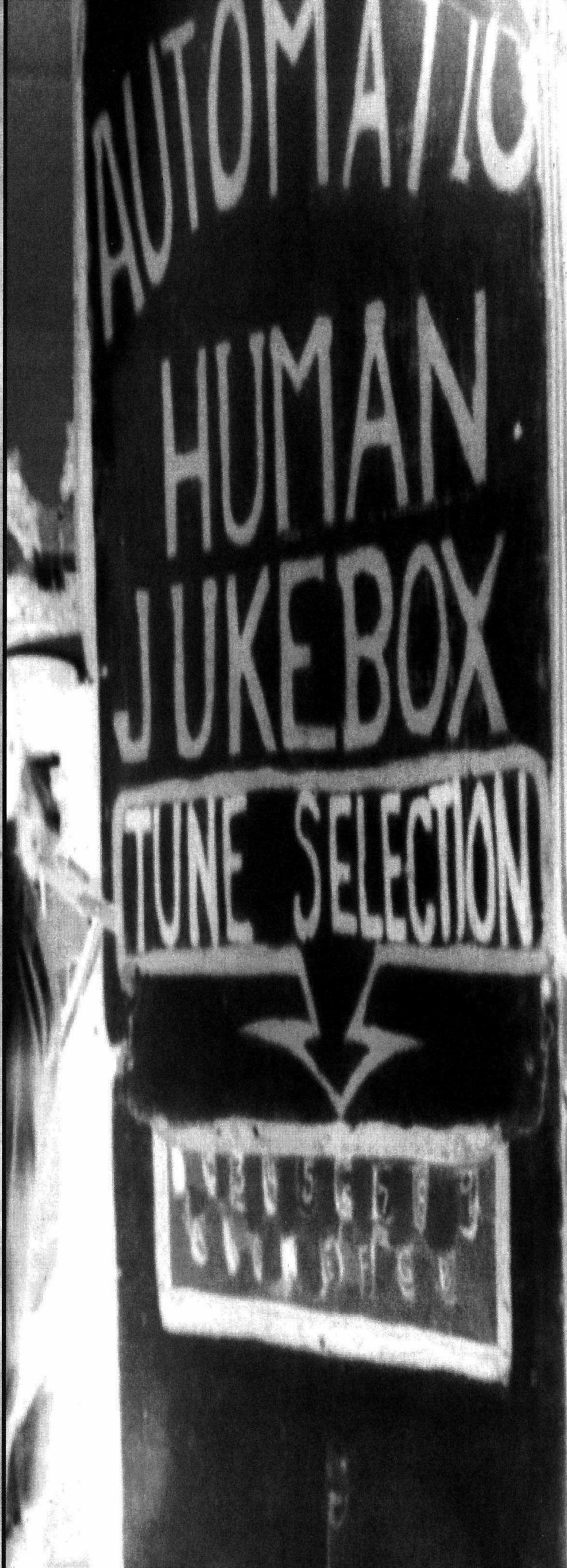
# JAILBREAK

## by greg stolze

# UNKNOWN ARMIES

"POWER COMES FROM THE END OF A GUN."
—ELDRIDGE CLEAVER

"OUT, AWAY FROM ALL—THAT'S WHERE TERROR AND BEAUTY MERGE. DON'T LOOK FOR THE OCCULT IN THE CITY, SURROUNDED BY COUNTLESS PRYING EYES AND NOSY NEIGHBORS. LOOK IN ISOLATION, WHERE IT CAN GROW UNDISTURBED . . ."
—URIEL STERNE



**This adventure may be a departure** from the typical RPG scenario. Usually, the players are a coherent group, working together towards some shared goal. In "Jailbreak" this is assuredly not the case. Some of the PCs are escaped prisoners, and others are their hostages. The convicts want to get away clean and evade capture, while the hostages want to be freed from the convicts.

It's more complicated than dividing the players up into two teams, however. Some of the convicts may be sympathetic to their prisoners. They might even like their hostages better than their allies. As for the law-abiding citizens, they're a mixed bag. At least one (a captured prison guard) will probably want to confront the convicts. The others might agree, or they might just decide to go along with their captors in order to escape with their lives.

It is essential that your players understand that the action in this adventure comes from them interacting with each other. If the hostages don't try to escape, or the convicts are uncharacteristically friendly and kind, this can be a damn boring scenario. On the other hand, if you get your players scheming against each other, this can provide a very taut and suspenseful evening's play. After all, players know the GM really should be fair to them: they have no such guarantees with each other.

If the players are sitting back and passively waiting for you to entertain them, you may want to show them the nearby boxed text labeled "Helpful Hint."

The first step to running "Jailbreak" is to assign characters to players, or let them pick. The choices are:

- Steve Updike, a wife-beater and the leader of the escaped prisoners.
- Jake Spundie, a corrections officer captured by the cons.
- Uder Krazmersky, the aged owner of the farmhouse where the cons hide out.
- Morton Willits, a quiet convict with a firm set of moral standards.
- Ella Krazmersky, Uder's lovely wife.
- Juan Riccinto, who was falsely convicted and is looking out for himself.
- Janet Mattice, a lawyer and one of the hostages.
- David "Icepick" Leyner, a con man and small-fry hood.
- Donna Ngwashi, Janet Mattice's client.

If you're going to assign the characters to your players, I recommend assigning them in the above order, starting with the unsavory Steve Updike. The first three characters have the most obvious conflicts with each other: Steve leads the cons, Jake won't rest until they're stopped and Uder just wants to be left alone—possibly to the point of being willing to kill everyone.

If you let your players pick, don't worry too much if Jake, Steve or Uder doesn't get picked: that just means you can run the odd man out as a GMC, pursuing his agenda and possibly screwing with both sides. The only pitfall to avoid at all costs is having one player be against all the others. If one player picks a convict and the rest of your players have chosen to be hostages, it's going to be very hard to run a fair, balanced game. Ask your players to reconsider and if they hesitate, explain the problems of having three (or whatever) players gang up on one poor lone soul.

This brings up the question of how you're going to handle the PCs scheming against each other. You can do this one of two ways: transparent or opaque. If you run this scenario with transparent actions, everyone stays at the same table and announces their actions normally. This means that if the hostages are down in the basement picking the locks on Spundie's handcuffs, the convict players can hear it. It would be dishonorable of those players to take advantage of this "out-of-character" knowledge, and GMs may have to keep players in line to prevent such cheating.

In an opaque game session, when PCs are separated and doing things that the other players shouldn't know about, the GM has to maintain an "information quarantine" between the separated players. It could be that the players all stay at the same table, but when one wants to take a secret action she writes it on a piece of paper and slips it to the GM. (In some opaque games I've played, the PCs eventually started handing messages to the GM that said "I don't want to do anything secret, but I want people to suspect that I am.") Another option is to take the players into another room and resolve events there, out of earshot of the other players.

A transparent session has the advantage of moving fast: the GM can go back and forth between different (but simultaneous) actions easily and use this transfer of attention to build suspense. For instance, if the hostages in the basement have said they're picking the handcuff lock, the GM could have them roll . . . and then switch to the other group without telling them if they failed or succeeded. Similarly, if the convicts go upstairs to investigate the peculiar thumping noise, the GM can cut out at a suspenseful moment and go to the other group.

Of course, an opaque scenario can have the same kind of switching, but the difference is that when the GM leaves the room, the tension is usually broken. In a transparent game, all the players are immersed in the game at all times, even when their characters are "offstage." In an opaque game, there's some unavoidable down time: the payoff is the genuine suspense of wondering what the cons or hostages are up to . . .

Transparent scenarios are best for players who have a firm sense of the boundary between player knowledge and character knowledge, and for players who are interested in creating the most diverting story overall. Opaque scenarios are

### Helpful Hint

Bored? Then do something!

CHAPTER ILLO BY BRIAN SNŌDDY

## Running "Jailbreak" as a Conventional Scenario

If the idea of pitting your players against each other doesn't sound like fun to you or them, you can easily run this in the standard RPG style: just have them all play convicts or all play hostages. There are only four convicts, so if your group is large they may be stuck in the role of the hostages. To make the conversion, all you have to do is assume the roles of the "other side" characters.

best for players who tend to identify strongly with their characters and have an intense drive to get their own way. Neither way is better or worse, they're just different. That said, opaque scenarios tend to be a little easier to run and play.

# Setup

The setting of "Jailbreak" is a small farmhouse close to the (fictional) Surrey State Medium Security Penitentiary. Some of the characters are prisoners who've escaped from Surrey. Others are simply caught up in the action.

Surrey isn't a jail for hardcore, violent criminals. Mainly it's filled with an uneasy mix of nonviolent repeat offenders, first time violent criminals (usually crimes of passion), and drug users serving mandatory sentences. It was recently the home of "Father Freedom," a cult leader convicted of fraud—though he was guilty of a great deal more than that. In any event, one of his followers drove a truck full of dynamite and blasting caps into the wall during his exercise time, and he escaped into a waiting car driven by three other devotees. Four other prisoners (Morton Willits, Steve Updike, Juan Riccinto and David "Icepick" Leyner) escaped in the confusion—taking Corrections Officer Jake Spundie with them as a hostage.

They made it to a highway just as an unseasonable hailstorm began. At the highway, they commandeered a car driven by Janet Mattice and her client Donna Ngwashi. They immediately took to the back roads—not noticing how low on gas the car was. When it ran out, they approached the nearest farmhouse, where Morton cut the phone lines. They plan to hide out until the heat dies down, then take off in the morning. The house is home to Uder Krazmersky and his wife Ella.

# The Weapons

## The Gun

It's a 9mm Colt. It holds seven shots, and currently has five left. It's got a damage maximum of 50. The gun starts out in the possession of Steve Updike.

## The Stun Gun

It's a normal Struggle roll to hit someone with the stun gun. The stun gun does no damage, but the target automatically loses their next two actions while jitterbugging around uncontrollably. The victim also has to make a Body roll; failure means they pass out. Being knocked unconscious by the stun gun lasts anywhere from fifteen minutes to an hour. The Stun Gun starts in the possession of David "Icepick" Leyner.

## The Pepper Spray

Hitting someone with pepper spray takes a successful Struggle roll, which cannot be Dodged. A person who gets hit by the pepper spray must make a matched, successful Soul roll or lose their next two actions while clutching their face and howling. Someone in this state is not a sitting duck: rolls still have to be made to attack him, but the spray victim can't use the Dodge skill because he can't see what's coming. Failing the Soul roll is a rank-3 Helplessness stress check. Janet Mattice starts out with the pepper spray; it is only good for one shot.

# The Farmhouse

The action takes place in the Krazmersky home just as a thunderstorm starts turning dangerous. The house is in the middle of some desolate, abandoned-looking land, just off a rural route in the middle of nowhere. The Krazmerskys own a thin parcel of land that lies between two large industrial farms. Though the Krazmerskys themselves don't farm, this is not immediately apparent, especially in the autumn when the fields are bare.

The house is two stories tall and spacious, but a little run down—it could use a good coat of paint (or even an average one) and the weather stripping on the windows is so loose that the glass panes rattle with each thunder crack. Uder and Ella are in the living room, reading and listening to records, when the action begins.

There are many rooms in the house, and a brief description of each is given, along with items of possible interest to the PCs. Many rooms contain examples of Uder's clockwork craft. These gadgets appear normal to a cursory glance, but anyone who pays attention to them as they operate has to make a rank-2 Unnatural stress check. If Uder can get his hands on any clockwork, he can rapidly take it apart and construct a makeshift lockpick out of the components. (When picking locks, Uder can use his Tinker skill.)

## The Living Room

There's something vaguely mittel-European about this room,

but nothing you could exactly point out. There are bulgy, overstuffed chairs and sofas, lamps and end tables, a big old-fashioned record player and several bottles of brandy, schnapps, and vodka. The most unusual item is a toy boxing ring with a windup gorilla and bear wearing boxing gloves. When wound up, they fight. Close inspection reveals that they don't just "mechanically" throw punches: they dodge, weave, and react to each other.

## The Dining Room

There is a large, heavy table in the center of this room, supporting a candelabra on a nice lace mat. There are heavy, stout chairs arranged around it. The family china and good silver is in an armoire nearby. People looking for weapons can find the heavy candelabra (+3 damage), steak knives (+3 damage), and a huge carving knife (+6 damage). Tucked behind the good silver is a little clockwork doll shaped like a grotesque old peasant woman with a bucket full of silver polish. When wound up, she sighs a tiny sigh and polishes the silver with an air of spiteful resentment. If anyone is watching her work, she periodically turns and glares a tiny glare at them.

## The Utility Room

This room is cluttered with tools, junk, and an aged washer and dryer that show signs of having been repaired by Uder. People looking for weapons can easily find them among the rakes, shovels, and garden hoes here (+6 damage). In one corner behind the washing machine (it takes a Notice roll to spot it) there's a large axe. It's rusty, but still plenty sharp (+9 damage). In one of the cabinets, there's a coil of clothesline that can be used to tie people up. (If tied up, the rope can be broken with a General Athletics roll that succeeds and beats a 20.) There is no lock on the door between this room and the living room, but there is a lock between the Utility Room and the stairs down to the Cellar.

## The Pantry

This is full of dry goods and canned food. There's a clockwork can opener here that's shaped like a man in a tuxedo. When you put a can between its hands, it gazes passionately at the can, then begins a series of dance moves with the can—first a deep dip, then a tango with many spins and turns. At the end of the routine, the dancer whips off the lid and gazes lustfully within. The dancer has many different dance routines, depending on the size of the can. This door has no lock.

## The Bathroom

It's a bathroom. There's nothing much of interest here, unless you're fascinated by Uder's old hernia truss. The door here locks, but can be kicked in by a successful Body roll.

## The Kitchen

The kitchen is spacious and well-appointed. The gas range is a little old-fashioned, but there's a huge freezer/'fridge (one of Uder's few concessions to modern technology). There's no dishwasher, but by the sink there's a bizarre Rube Goldberg clockwork contraption that washes dishes "by hand" in an elaborate and entertaining fashion, then dries them and puts them away where they belong.

People looking for weapons can find several regular knives (+3 damage) as well as a butcher knife and a 10" slicer (+6 damage).

There is no lock on the door between the kitchen and the stairs up to the second floor.

## The Closet

The front closet is large enough for one hostage, two with some stuffing, three if all the old coats, boxes of worn shoes, and other assorted closet crap is taken out. However, there is no lock on the closet door.

## The Unused Bedrooms

Upstairs there are three bedrooms that show no sign of being used for years. Two don't even have beds, just boxes of old junk. It's up to the GM to decide what's up here; the dueling pistol used to kill Bors (see p. 11) might be around somewhere. It's got a maximum damage of 40, if it even works. The doors to these bedrooms all lock, but the locks are flimsy and can be forced with a simple Body roll.

## The Master Bedroom

This is where Uder and Ella sleep, and it has their bed, a few chairs, lamps, and bookshelves. The most notable thing about the room is what appears to be a lovely young girl (maybe 14–15 years old) in a blue velvet dress, sitting in a chair and holding a violin. This is a clockwork, but it's amazingly lifelike. She seems to breathe and make minute shifts of balance like a real girl. If anyone addresses her or looks at her for more than thirty seconds, she says "Would you like me to play for you?" Her voice, like her face and hands, is completely lifelike. However, she can only speak that one phrase, and any sicko who tries to pick her up or look under her skirt will see nothing but cogs and gears. This clockwork can play any music put in front of her, and can modulate her playing according to the commands of her listeners ("louder," "slower," *etc.*). She has no other function.

Interacting with this frighteningly realistic clockwork is a rank-4 Unnatural stress.

This room has a sturdy door and lock. Trying to break this down with just Body requires a matched success.

## The Upstairs Bath

The medicine cabinet here is full of various headache remedies, salves, and stale prescription meds. On the counter is a little clockwork fat man holding Uder's straight razor (+3 damage). Whenever the razor is put back in his hands, the fat man cleans and sharpens it. If anyone other than Uder or Ella tries to take the razor, the fat man slashes at them with it. It automatically hits the first person that tries to take the razor; it does no damage, but it's a rank-3 Violence challenge.

## The Locked Store Room

The door to this room is extremely thick and there are two deadbolt locks. On the inside, the door is reinforced with iron plates.

This is a dim, creepy attic full of old furniture, crates of clothes, old memorabilia, and, in the center, a big, heavy steamer trunk. Inside the trunk is Bors (see p. 11) who will start to thump against the inside of the trunk once he hears someone enter.

## The Cellar

This is Uder's workshop, where he constructs his miracles. It's cluttered with every imaginable type of old-fashioned tool. Along one wall are countless coffee cans, all meticulously ordered, containing different sizes and shapes of nuts, bolts, cogs, wheels, chains, nails, screws, *etc.* Hanging from the ceiling and along one wall are racks of what appear at first to be body parts–heads, hands, eyes, breasts, legs–but on closer inspection, they're just very good counterfeits. The overall effect is a cross between an ancient repair shop and a morgue.

The Rack (see p. 11) lurks in one corner, awaiting its master's word. When it hears people entering the cellar, it will scuttle towards them, hoping to be of service.

There are all kinds of light tools like hammers and chisels (+3 damage), mallets and buzz saws and pickaxes (+6 damage), and similar makeshift weapons. There are also lengths of chain and spools of wire that can be used to tie people up quite effectively.

This can be one of the spookiest areas in the house if handled correctly. It is completely dark in the cellar at first–there are no windows to the outside. The only light source is a single bulb that hangs from the ceiling, turned on with a pull switch. This means that unfamiliar people are going to have to feel around the walls and ceiling looking for the light switch–the same walls and ceiling that have fake body parts strung around them.

Here are some fun ways to freak out your players in the cellar:

- Emphasize the darkness.
- Periodically mention a hesitant, scuttling, rasping sound–the Rack moving around, trying to be helpful without getting in the way.
- When people feel along the ceiling or wall, have them bump into dismembered hands, faces, legs. In playtesting, when one player was feeling around the ceiling, I said, "You feel this" and dragged my own limp fingers across his.
- It's perfectly possible that people feeling along the wall or floor will knock over a tin can full of bolts, creating a loud racket. This can be surprisingly spooky if you don't tell anyone what the sound means for a second.
- The workshop is full of sharp, dangerous implements, so feeling around the walls in darkness isn't the smartest possible option. If you're feeling nasty, you can ask for a Speed roll: failure means that the PC has just felt something cold and metal slice into his skin. Success means they felt the touch of something sharp and pointy and yanked their hand back in the nick of time.
- Finally, there's the Rack. It's harmless unless provoked, but your PCs have no way to know that. If they see a big metal spider covered with tools and pointy things scuttling towards them, what's going to be their first reaction? Seeing the Rack is a rank-2 Unnatural challenge, incidentally.

## Outside the House

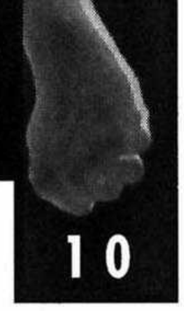
There's a garage and a toolshed with more of the same mundane stuff that's in the Utility room and the Cellar. There's an old De Soto up on blocks in the garage, as well as a rattling Dodge Dart with half a tank of gas. The Dart barely runs: anyone with a Drive skill over 15% who even starts it is going to realize this thing is a lemon with a top speed hovering somewhere around the speed limit. Plus it's nowhere near as inconspicuous as Donna Ngwashi's minivan.

Anyone who wants to siphon gas from the Dart into Donna's van is going to have to walk it out to where the van stalled out–that's about a mile hike in baseball-sized hail. Give them a die of damage every five minutes, and it's a half-hour hike to the van. People can safely dash from the house to the garage or shed with only minor bruises, but going anywhere else is going to be a chore.

## Starting Out Through Finishing Up

Because I'm a laid back guy who likes to offer options, I'll give you two good ways to kick this adventure off. One is to get characters to players in advance so that they have a chance to get accustomed to their history and personality. That way they'll have a better idea of what's going on and can react more easily when the action starts with the "Canned Intro" boxed text on the next page.

The other way to do it is drop them in cold: read the canned intro and then let them select characters, or just assign them or whatever.





## Canned Intro

It was not a quiet night: a sudden storm blew across the farmlands, bringing thunder and lightning. An old man and his wife looked out at the storm as it turned to hail. They discussed going to the cellar, deciding to do so only if the weather became more extreme.

They did not listen to the radio, so they didn't hear the news. They didn't try to call anyone, so they didn't know their phone lines had been cut. They did not know there had been a jailbreak. They did not know a guard had been taken hostage by four convicts, convicts who had then seized a van on the highway.

Maybe the wife briefly saw a face at the window and dismissed it as a trick of the light and her own fancy. Maybe the husband squinted his aged eyes into the storm. But their dog was quiet, their house was secure from the storm and neither really suspected.

They had no clue until they felt a cold draft from the direction of the back door, until they turned and saw a large man pointing a pistol at them. He was soaking wet, dressed in orange coveralls with "Surrey State Penitentiary" stenciled on the front and back. His eyes were wide but his voice was calm as he said "Do what we say and no one dies." Then he looked over his shoulder and said "Icepick, bring in the others."

One quick note on the canned intro: don't feel like you have to read this verbatim. Change it however you want or just put it in your own words. The sense of the scene is what matters. If you can describe it more smoothly in your words, ignore mine.

Thus the scenario begins: the convicts bring in their hostages (Donna, Jake, and Janet) and the players can start interacting. Jake is handcuffed and lightly injured (he's taken 5 points of damage to his back), the two women are untied and unharmed–so far. Uder and Ella are in the living room with Tristan the dog as the convicts file in.

Unless someone immediately tries some fancy maneuver, there's probably going to be some talking (or screaming), along with discussion and debate. One thing that makes this phase of the game much more interesting is not allowing the convicts to plan their next move out of character. If one convict's player says to another "We could just kill them all," the hostage players are going to hear it unless those two characters go off somewhere alone–leaving two convicts to watch over five hostages and a dog.

Some important facts to remember (and to remind the players, if appropriate):

- The convicts are tired and hungry, not to mention cold, wet and disorganized. This whole jailbreak was a spur of the moment thing; they may be repenting at leisure . . .
- Morton Willits is going to feel very protective towards the hostages. If he deliberately does nothing while Ella, Uder, Janet, or Donna is harmed, be sure to stick him with a Self check.
- Although Ella's player does not know it, she is herself a clockwork automaton. This means that if she's hit with a bullet, it does damage like a hand-to-hand attack. It also means that damage from her Struggle attacks are resolved like handgun attacks with no damage cap.

The convicts are probably going to want to try to restrain the hostages one way or another and wait out the storm. If they all decide to sit and watch over them, have them make Soul or Body rolls to stay awake while watching. If the convicts decide to tie them up or lock them in somewhere, that gives the hostages a chance to plot their escape. It's also quite possible that the convict PCs may come into conflict with each other, especially if Steve and Morton play their roles to the hilt.

As GM, you have to roll with a few punches and react to the actions and interactions of the PCs. However, if things seem to be bogging down or getting too dull, you can throw in a few changeups:

## To Serve and Protect

Did the convicts change out of their prison coveralls? A pair of state troopers (use the cop statistics from p. 211 of *Unknown Armies*) knock on the front door. They're warning people about the dangerous, armed, escaped convicts. They've got grainy pictures, so they know what the cons look like. If the convicts have things really under control, you can decide the cops spotted Donna's van and are now very suspicious. A distraction involving the cops can give the hostages time to do something, so be sure to give them a chance to react.

## Bors Returns

You can use this at any slow point, but it works particularly well if the convicts are in charge (or think they are). The storm lightens up for a moment, and then there's a loud noise from the attic. This wasn't the clatter of hailstones on the roof: it was closer and heavier. This was a thud like something big, moving suddenly . . .

This sound was, of course, the Bors Slavandrov clockwork (see p. 11). It managed to knock its trunk over onto

## For the Ella Player: Ella's Realization

It can't be true . . . but somehow you know it is. You're not really you, you're one of Uder's clockwork *things*. And in a paralyzing instant, you realize you've known it all along. That's why you haven't aged. That's why you don't sweat, or shit, or dream anymore: because Uder built you not to.

A hazy memory is coming back . . . terrible, terrible pain, you remember begging Uder to take you to the doctor. The steps, that's it, you fell down the stairs . . . and he wouldn't. "This will be better, don't you see? You'll live forever, darling! You'll never have to grow old, your beauty will still be fresh in a thousand years! You will have the perfect health you deserve, the unfailing perfection of a body without age . . . No, you don't need the probing fingers of some Yankee doctor, I can give you all you need . . ."

The agony. Now you remember the agony as he gutted you, put gears in the place of tissue and bone. All the time telling you of his love, a love that would give life eternal.

And when he was done, you forgot about it. You forgot it because he built you to forget it. You stopped eating and never thought about it, because he built you to ignore it. He changed you, shaped you, made you in his ideal, and ever since then, you've been more than his wife. You've been his *creature*. You've been his *masterpiece*.

one side, and it can now roll a bit on the rounded top of the trunk, making a definite, repetitive sound. Hearing this sound is either going to prompt the convicts to interrogate Uder and Ella, providing more interaction, or they're going to go up and look around. If they go upstairs, that puts the hostages in a better position to try to escape and it also provides suspense if they release Bors the killer clockwork.

## Ella Learns the Truth

Ella's a clockwork, but she doesn't know it, and neither does Uder. About ten or twenty years ago she fell down the stairs and broke her neck. She was in terrible pain, paralyzed, and she begged Uder to get her a doctor. He had a better idea, though: he decided to make her live forever. But to make the transformation, he'd have to give up a key, crucial memory. Well, what could be better than something he'd rather forget? Specifically, he chose to forget that he'd transformed her. It's taken a lot of self-deception to remain ignorant, but he's managed.

It's not hard for Ella's condition to come to light: for one thing, her aura is bizarre—Donna's never seen anything like it. More likely, if she gets injured, her skin tears and reveals the gears beneath.

Seeing the gears and oil underneath Ella's skin is a rank-5 Unnatural challenge to everyone but Uder. To him, it's a rank-5 Self challenge. For Ella, it's two challenges—the Unnatural and Self.

A boxed text (above) should give you an idea of what to tell Ella, but as always feel free to wing it.

## Conclusion

No one can safely leave the house till morning. If the convicts can deal with Bors, the troopers, the hostages and each other, then they can siphon some gas and move on. If the hostages survive (or overcome the convicts) then they have the satisfaction of victory. Otherwise, it's up to the players to decide if their characters "succeeded" or not.

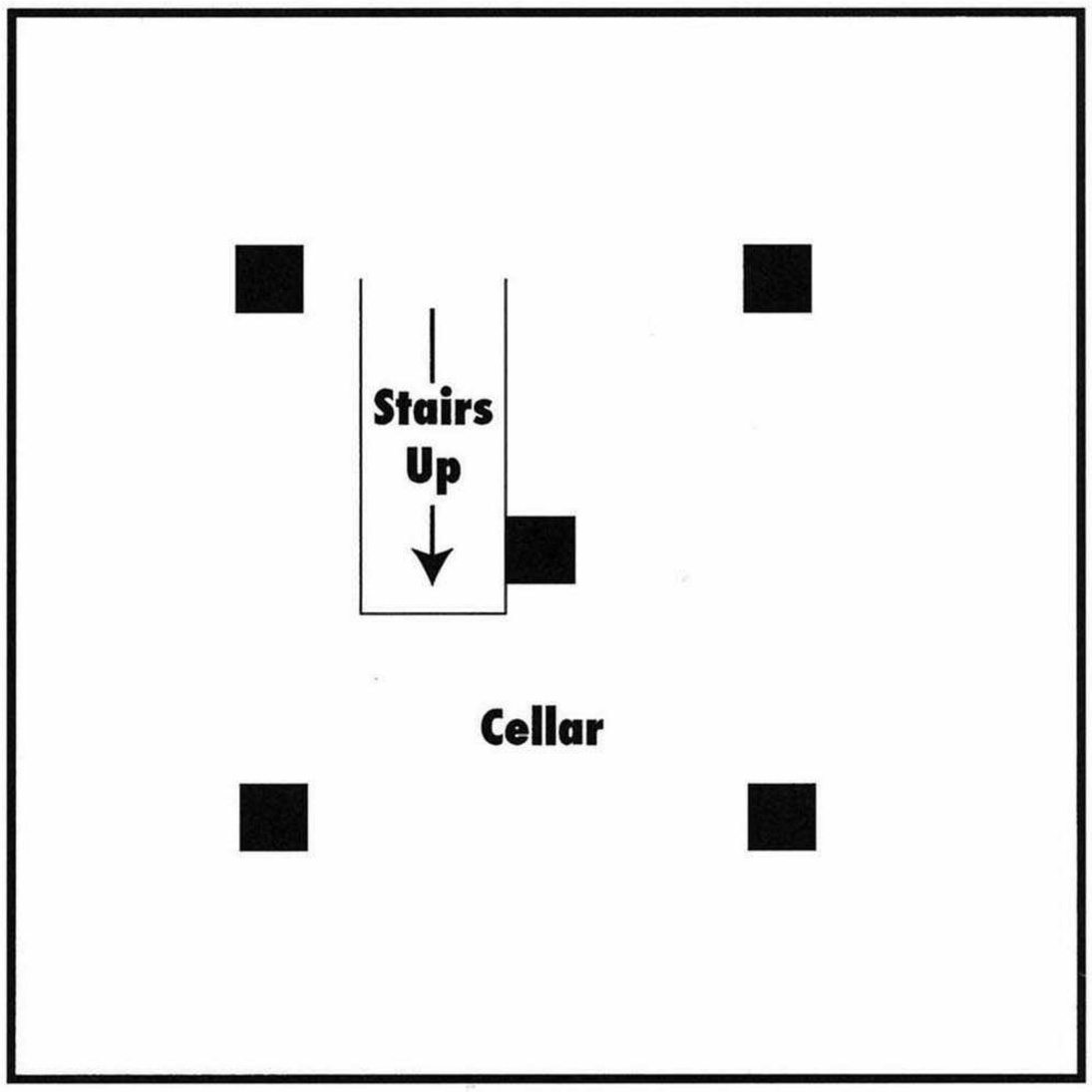
## For the Uder Player: About Your Clockworks

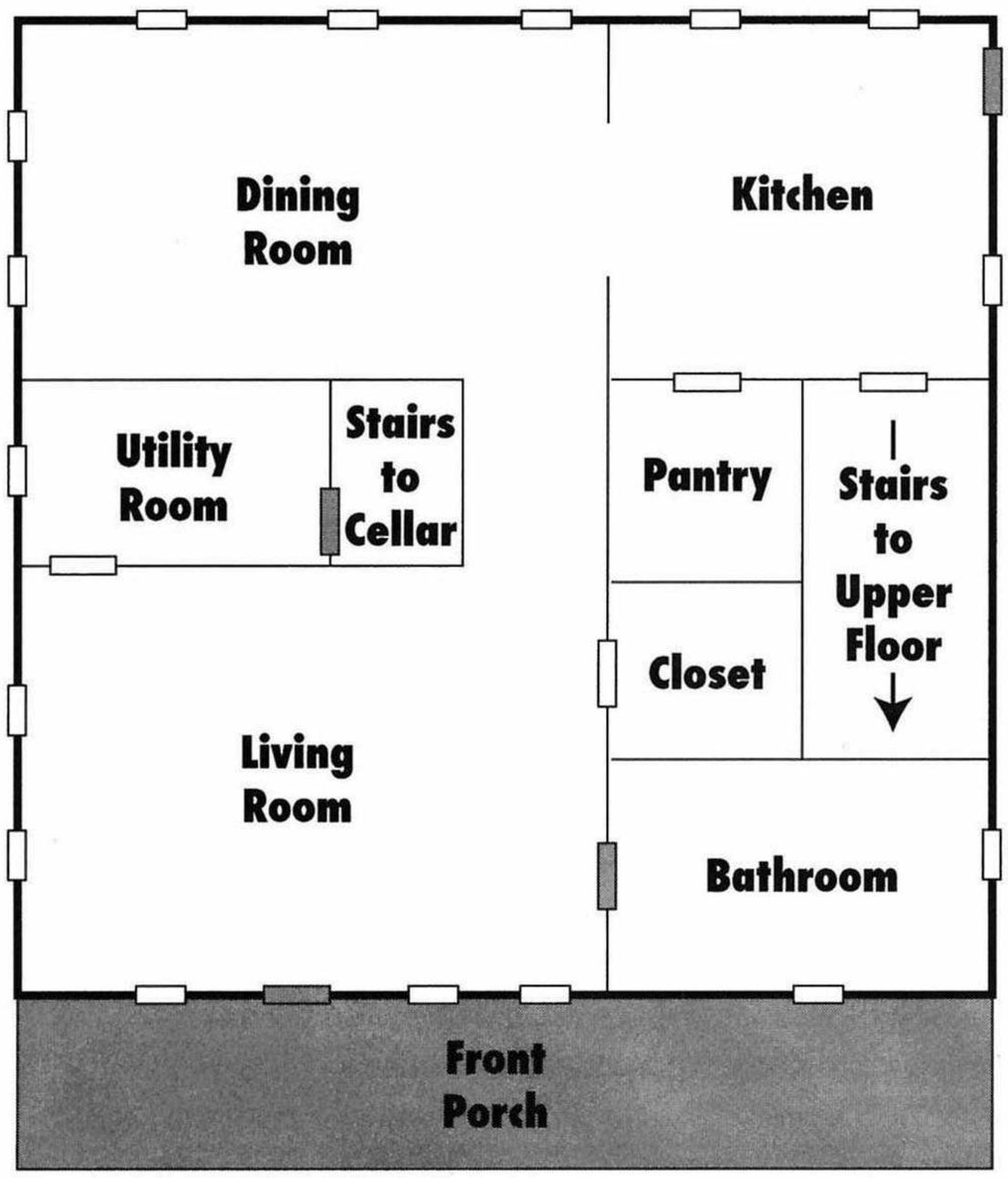
**Bors** has Speed 60, Body 60, and an attack skill of 60%. He takes damage from guns as if they were hand-to-hand attacks. (A bullet is likely to pass through a clockwork without hitting a crucial gear. A kick or a blow from a chair, on the other hand, is more likely to knock something loose.) His attacks (like your other clockworks) are resolved like a firearm attack with no maximum damage, but he cannot flip-flop rolls. His initiative roll is always a successful 60. He has to obey direct commands from you, but once he completes his orders he has free will. He is *very* dangerous and hard to control. He's dressed in his old military uniform and stowed in a trunk in the attic.

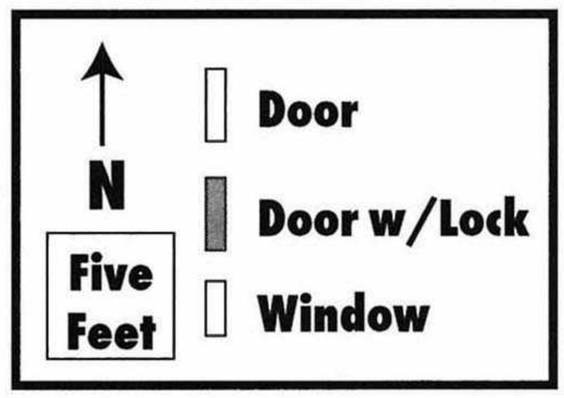
**Tristan** is a clockwork hound. He has Body 60, Speed 50 and an attack of 40%. His initiative roll is always a successful 50. He operates as a normal, well-trained dog, except he doesn't excrete and can't smell. He is otherwise completely realistic.

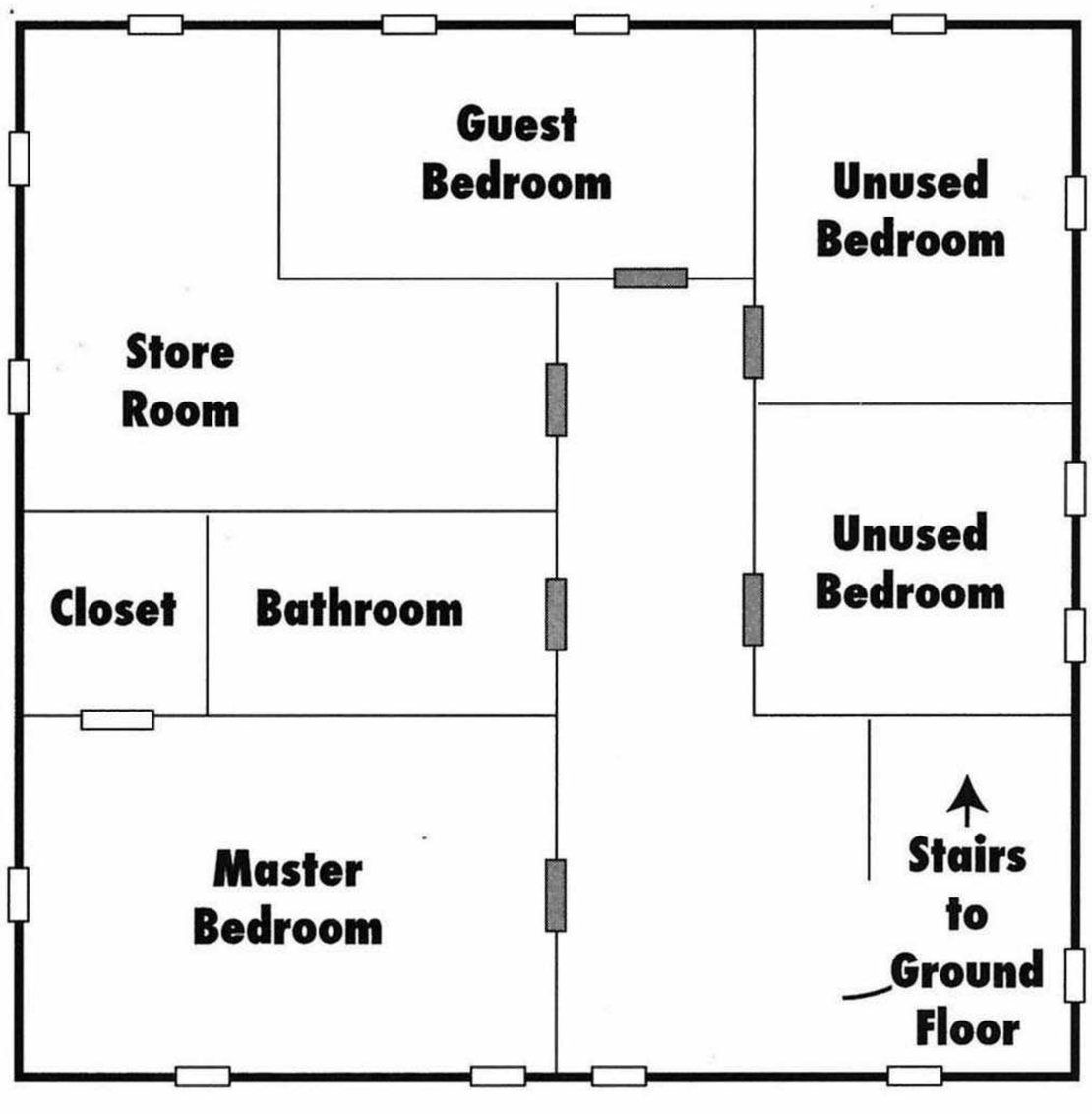
**The Rack** is your tool rack downstairs. It can't make it up the stairs on its own (and wouldn't fit) but can move around your workshop. It looks like a giant, black iron spider with various tools attached to its surfaces. It is capable of obeying simple commands, but cannot attack except in self-defense. It will obey only you and Ella. The Rack has Body 80, Speed 20, and an attack skill of 20%. Its initiative roll is always a successful 30.

# The Krazmersky Farmhouse

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# Morton Willits—The Quiet One

You should never have wound up in Surrey prison; you should be somewhere much worse. You got convicted for breaking and entering because you hadn't had time to slit the throat of the Russian mobster who was moving in on your boss's territory. You've killed six people so far, two of whom didn't fight back. It's okay though; they were all bad.

You *don't* hurt or kill good people. It's sloppy, unprofessional, and you just don't like it. At least, that's what you tell yourself; but deep down, you suspect that it's because you like killing far, far too much. You've never had a sustained romance—in fact, the closest relationships you've had have been with six dead men . . .

People underestimate you. You don't talk a lot, and when you do, you have a hard time getting your point across. That makes them think you're dumb, which you certainly aren't. You're also not very large, and by the time you hit thirty-five you were completely bald—so people don't think you're trouble in a fight.

Most people at the prison didn't know you had to kill Don Braddock. It was self-defense—but the question of who left the prison's worst bully and sexual predator in a broom closet with a sharpened spoon in his eye was a hotly debated one in Surrey.

You don't blame the guards for watching you or the courts for imprisoning you. You've accepted that you're a bad man; some day you'll probably die like the bad men you've killed. But there are different types of bad.

You know you're on the dark side, but that doesn't mean you like to see people leave the light.

## Obsession

You're morbidly fascinated by death. You never feel as alive as when you watch the light fade from a dying man's eyes.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** People who try to push you around because they think you can't fight back.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Violence) Losing control of the joy that you take in killing.
**Noble Stimulus:** Making sure the "good people" don't get pulled into conflicts between "bad people."

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 50 | (Nondescript) |
| **Speed:** | 70 | (Quick) |
| **Mind:** | 70 | (Mechanical) |
| **Soul:** | 30 | (Inarticulate) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 15%, Climb 10%, **Cut You Up 55%**
**Speed Skills:** Drive 15%, Dodge 15%, Shoot You 30%, Sneak 40%
**Mind Skills:** General Education 15%, Get Past Alarms 40%, Notice 45%
**Soul Skills:** Lie 45%, Charm 15%

**Cut You Up Cherries:**

| | |
|---|---|
| 11 | Re-roll damage |
| 22 | Take away opponent's weapon |
| 33, 44 | Immediately make another attack |
| 55 | Add an extra die of damage |

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed | 1 Failed | 1 Failed |

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# David "Icepick" Leyner—"Can't We Talk This Out?"

Know what the problem with people is? It's assumptions, that's what. People assume that just 'cause you're nickname is "Icepick," you're some kind of tough guy. (Actually, you got the name for being skinny and tall.) Similarly, some cops find pot in your car, they assume it's your damn pot, when in fact it belonged to your best gal Sally. Well, at least it was going to be after you sold it to her.

Whatcha gonna do? People just don't listen. So you might as well get with the program. Get off the tracks and get on the train. Roll with the punches. Get into it if you can't get out of it.

After all, possession of marijuana is a lighter charge than possession with intent to distribute. And Surrey wasn't the kind of place where tough guys were all the time fighting to be toughest guy. Hell, half the time you can get along just fine by going with the flow and letting people believe whatever the hell they want—encouraging them, even. After all, nobody ever went broke telling people what they wanted to hear.

Your keen sense of people's expectations has gotten you through life fairly well. You're generally an affable type, but if people want to believe the worst—well, you got a scar on your belly from falling out of a tree that looks just like a knife cut, and your badass routine has made a couple genuine hard-cases back off. You've been a pot seller, fence, telemarketer, bookie, used car salesman—basically, you can do okay at any job where you interact with people.

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## Obsession

People's expectations. You're always amazed at how much people prefer their own beliefs to reality.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Anyone who *believes* (or acts) like they're open minded and fair when they're just as self-absorbed as everyone else.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Self) People finding out how much of a fraud you almost always are. Sometimes you're not sure of your real identity.
**Noble Stimulus:** Keeping an open mind. You know lots of other people are completely turned around about how things really are, so you realize you could be wrong just as easily.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 50 | (Slim) |
| **Speed:** | 50 | (Jumpy) |
| **Mind:** | 60 | (Plausible) |
| **Soul:** | 60 | (Protean) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 15%, Run Away 35%, Struggle 30%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 45%, Drive 25%, Shoot Guns 10%
**Mind Skills:** General Education 25%, Notice 35%, Short Con 30%
**Soul Skills: Believe Me 55%**, Charm 35%

**Believe Me:** This is used any time you want to convince someone you're telling the truth—regardless of whether you're lying or not.

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 1 Hardened |
| 1 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed |

## Possessions

You've got Officer Jake Spundie's stun gun—you took if off him when you handcuffed him. You also have the keys to his cuffs.

# Officer Jake Spundie—One Tough Screw

You were watching over the exercise yard. You remember that. Then there was a loud noise, smoke, fire . . . convicts running everywhere. You saw a hole in the wall with a truck halfway through it, cons running at it. You yelled at them to stop, drew your gun, yelled again—it's doubtful whether they heard you over the sirens. Your own ears were ringing from the explosion. You fired twice, probably killed someone . . . then something hit you in the back. You fell on your face and when you looked up, there was Steve Updike, pointing your gun at you.

It's a guard's worst nightmare: taken hostage by convicts. Soon they had you in your own cuffs, and were forcing you through the hole in the wall. You're not even sure if anyone saw you—there was so much smoke and confusion.

You've always tried to be a good guard—tough, but not cruel. Now you're the prisoner. Part of you wants to just go along, do what they say, hoping you can get home to your wife and children. The other part knows it's your duty to stop them, before they can victimize someone else's wives and children.





## Obsession

To Serve and Protect. There's a thin line dividing good people from bad people, and you're part of that line. Sometimes people cross—both ways. It's important to recognize that. But it's also important to remember that most people stay right where they are.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Disobedient convicts.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Helplessness) Disobedient convicts.
**Noble Stimulus:** Protect the innocent & obedient, including convicts who seemed truly sorry—and those who went along to get along.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 70 | (Buff) |
| **Speed:** | 70 | (Smooth) |
| **Mind:** | 30 | (Single-Minded) |
| **Soul:** | 50 | (Earnest) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 25% Subdue & Restrain 55%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 30%, Drive 15%, **Target Shoot 55%**
**Mind Skills:** Criminal Lore 20%, General Education 25%, Notice 15%
**Soul Skills:** Authority Figure 50%, Charm 15%, Lie 15%

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 1 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed | 2 Failed | 0 Failed |

## Notes

Updike has your gun. It has five shots left. They've also got your taser, which is dangerous but probably not deadly. You're injured—one of the cons hit you with a brick from behind. Your back muscles are very sore, and your right kidney may be bruised. It hurts to stand up straight or run, but you can do it if you have to.

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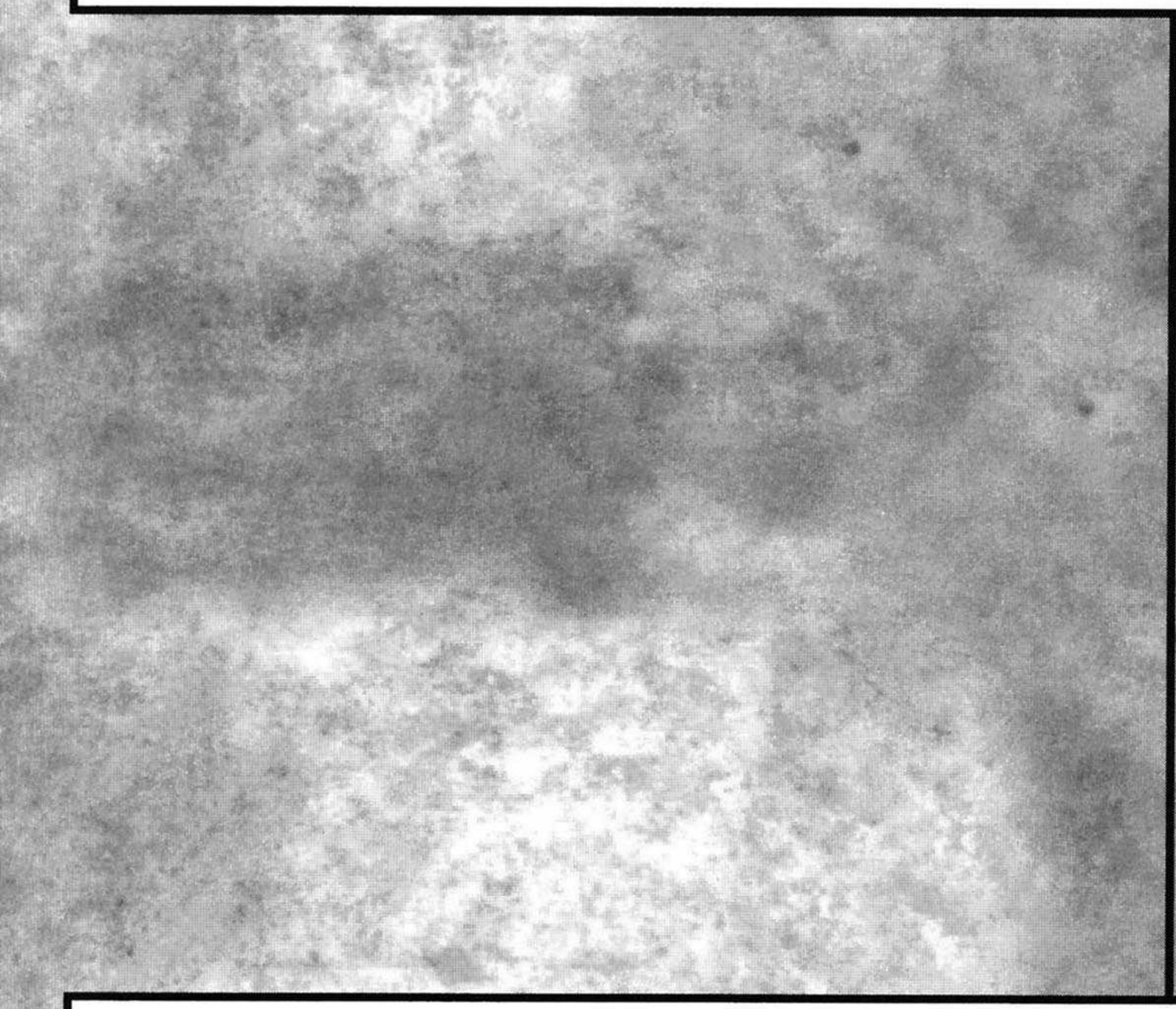
# Janet Mattice—"Listen, I'm On Your Side! I'm a Lawyer!"

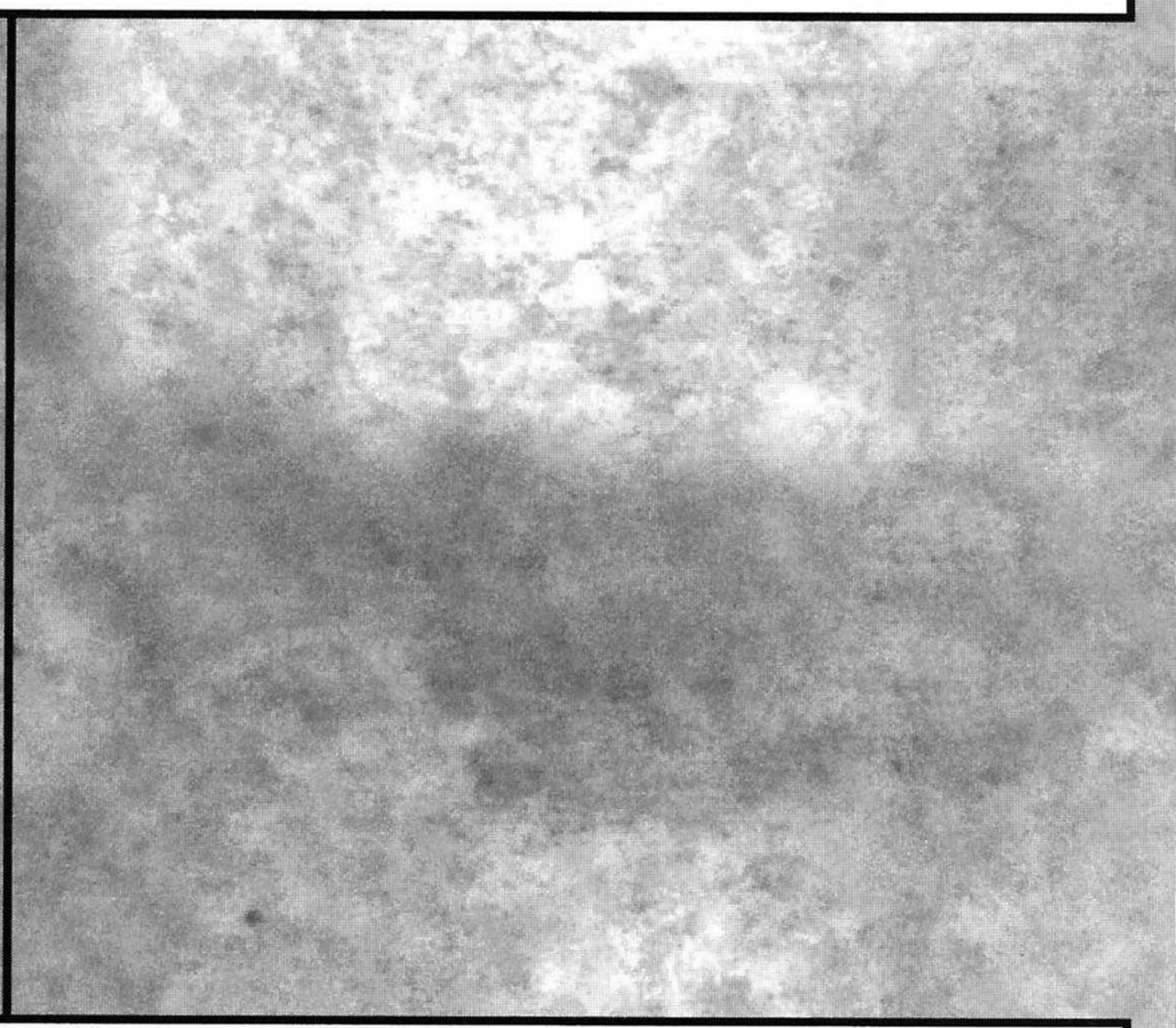
Ray Ngwashi's old lawyer really bungled the case. Clearly the little punk was guilty, but not a criminal—just another pothead teen. Not just that—a second generation pothead, a kid whose mom drilled a hole in her own fucking head—hell, you tell a jury that little factoid and they'll be all over themselves to acquit. Even if you got a jury of expatriate Texans or something, you'd probably wind up with a sympathetic judge putting the kid in rehab instead of jail. But no, the ding-dong had to go and stick with the facts of the case.

Never turn a case into a police procedural when a psychodrama will work. Who cares if the cops didn't dot every I and cross every T? Almost every jury is guaranteed to be packed with shiny-jawed, illiterate couch potatoes (at least they are when *you* get to pick 'em). They've been indoctrinated by Rush Limbaugh and the OJ trial to ignore a little police misconduct, but you give 'em a *story*—especially a weeper about a kid with cruddy parents, raised by drug fiends, probably beat up by one of mama's many boyfriends (something you can always imply, even if it didn't happen)—they'll fall over themselves to spring the little sprog. That F. Lee Bailey routine may work for celebrity show trials, but not for nickel and dime bags.

So now you're trying to open the case again, at the behest of Ray's wacky mom. You've told her it's a lot easier to do it right than to do it over, so she's primed to pay for a lot of hours . . . plus, you're fairly sure Donna Ngwashi still knows *lots* of people in the scene who are going to need a good lawyer some day. Springing her beloved dimbulb could be your ticket to a lot of low-level drug miscreants (your meat and potatoes), any one of whom might be your ticket to employment by a drug *kingpin* (your long-time ambition).

You were on your way out to Surrey to talk with Ray when suddenly there was a guy in the road waving a pistol at you. Now you're being held hostage by a pack of convicts, which means you can't even bill for your time. Still, think how good it would look to a jury if a *hostage* became the criminal's *lawyer*. Now there's a *story*. Juries eat that up . . . maybe the kingpin of your dreams would, too . . .





## Obsession

You're fascinated by crime and punishment in America, and are increasingly certain that there will be real justice in the justice system about the same time there are real girl scouts in girl scout cookies. You get a weird thrill out of getting obviously guilty people off the hook, as long as they're not hardened criminals.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Mealy mouthed do-gooders who get in your way.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Violence) Real bad convicts—you've seen some scary sickos on the job.
**Noble Stimulus:** You like to get people off when they're guilty of breaking stupid laws, such as sexual practices and drugs.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 50 | (Heavyset) |
| **Speed:** | 40 | (Hesitant) |
| **Mind:** | 60 | (Articulate) |
| **Soul:** | 70 | (Crafty) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 25%, Endurance Run 40%, Struggle 15%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 30%, Drive 15%, Sprint 25%
**Mind Skills:** Criminal Law 40%, General Education, Notice 15%
**Soul Skills:** Charm 25%, **Cold Read 50%**, Lie 25%

**Cold Read:** The ability to instantly size people up—figuring out their personality, profession, and attitudes from little "Sherlock Holmes"-like clues.

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed |

## Possessions

In your pocket, you have a canister of pepper spray attached to your keychain.

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# Donna Ngwashi—Concerned Parent

You ran away from home when you were sixteen, in 1966. The next few years are blurry—whole lotta drugs, free love—it was a hell of a good time. Then in 1970 you met some unusual people. They explained that humans are born with an opening between the brainpan and the rest of the circulatory system, but this gap slowly closes as you age, sealing off at age 21 or so. Psychedelics cause temporary widening of the blood vessels in the brain, opening the "third eye" and allowing for enlightenment, but that's really only a temporary solution.

The permanent fix is trepanation—drilling a hole in your skull to relieve built up internal pressure and restore the blood flow to its natural levels. Something went wrong with your operation, however (possibly because you freaked out and started screaming); you got an infection of your optic nerve which left you blind in your left eye. Your friends vanished when you went into the hospital, the surgeon who operated on your head got you slung into detox, and when you came out you seriously re-examined your lifestyle.

You were back in school when you got knocked up. In the middle of your labor, the scar on your forehead popped open—and you started seeing things. Specifically, if you concentrated, you could see glowing paths and flows of color around people. You'd heard of "auras" but you never thought you'd see them. Soon you could tell someone's mood, health and general attitude just by looking.

You dropped out of school and found a guru named Lobsang Ramja, who was the real thing; you could see a red flame in his brain that no one else had. But one night you saw him using his powers on some of his acolytes, and you decided to get the hell out.

Since then you've been working at an organic food collective and raising your son. You were appalled when he got arrested for pot—you could have told him how to beat the drug tests! He got sent to Surrey, which didn't seem *so* bad . . . until you saw on the TV that a cult leader named "Father Freedom" had been sent there for fraud. When you saw "Father Freedom" on the tube, your blood ran cold. It was Lobsang Ramja. Right then you decided you had to get your son out of *that* prison, no matter what the cost.

## Obsession

The power of human consciousness. You suspect your ability to see auras is just the tip of the iceberg . . .

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Hypocritical capitalist pig right wing cryptofascists.
**Fear Stimulus:** (The Unnatural) The abuse of mystic power.
**Noble Stimulus:** Enlightenment. You know you've glimpsed it, and you feel a duty to help others attain it as well.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 50 | (Fit) |
| **Speed:** | 60 | (Graceful) |
| **Mind:** | 50 | (Articulate) |
| **Soul:** | 60 | (Crafty) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 15%, RX Tolerance 50%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 40%, Drive 15%, Magick History 25%, Yoga 45%
**Mind Skills:** General Ed. 15%, New Age Lore 25%, Notice 15%
**Soul Skills:** **Aura Sight** 55%, Charm 20%, Lie 15%

**Aura Sight:** Allows you to evaluate a living being's physical, mental and emotional states—and also see them in the dark.
**RX Tolerance:** This is your ability to ignore the effects of drugs and pharmaceuticals.

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Hardened | 2 Hardened | 1 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 1 Failed | 1 Failed | 1 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed |

## Notes

Your Yoga skill can probably get you out of handcuffs or ropes.

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# Uder Krazmersky—Immigrant Inventor

You're a clockworker—the last of them, for all you know. You first learned your trade from your father, who was killed by a mob of superstitious peasants. Then his brother took you in and taught you the rest of what he knew.

Clockworking is a type of magick; you have the power to give the semblance of life to animate collections of gears, wheels and drive shafts. There's a cost of course; to give life to an object, you have to give up part of what's made you alive. Specifically, you must give up memories.

You're an old man, so maybe your memory is failing on its own . . . but you know you must have done some powerful things in the past, since you can't remember your father burning to death (though you know you were there). You know you've turned a human into clockwork at least once; you still have him locked up in the attic.

His name was Bors Slavandrov, and he found out what you could do. Bors was a customs official, in a country where many wanted to leave and few were allowed. He took advantage of his position in ways you'd rather not think about, and he made you build him clockworks to help him. You wish you could forget them, but you haven't given up those memories—memories of creeping things to kill his enemies, slithering metal to hold people motionless, hooks and edges and a primitive desire to do harm . . .

But that's all in the past. Maybe those works are still back in the old country, but you're in America now, and Bors Slavandrov—or what's left of him—is locked upstairs in a chest. (Sometimes he still bumps around.)

He tried to do . . . *something* . . . to Ella. And she's everything to you. He had to be stopped, and the two of you stopped him. Ella was so brave . . . but then you had a dying man on your hands, and Bors had friends—or allies at least, brutal men like himself who would ask questions. You couldn't have Bors' death on your hands, or it would be your own as well—and Ella's. And from these men, beautiful Ella would not have had a quick death.

So you made Bors into a clockwork of himself. Obedient—for the most part. Able to get you past customs, certainly. Able to get you papers to America.

You've lived in seclusion since then. You managed to find some distant family members, who got you work building toys for the children of the ruling class. You don't dare use magick on them—they're only worthless things of tin and springs, but they pay enough for your meager needs. You have a workshop, you have Ella, and no one bothers you. That's just how you like things.

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## Obsession

Magick. There is a wall between the world we know and the mysteries behind it, and you have made a pinhole you can peer through . . .

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Anyone who tries to hurt Ella.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Helplessness) Being discovered as an adept.
**Noble Stimulus:** Protect innocent women. You know you can never work off the debt you incurred helping Bors, but it would ease your conscience to know you'd done something.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 30 | (Frail) |
| **Speed:** | 50 | (Dexterous) |
| **Mind:** | 70 | (Sharp) |
| **Soul:** | 70 | (Penetrating Gaze) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 15%, Powerful Hands 20%, Struggle 20%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 30%, Drive 15%, Throw Things 35%
**Mind Skills:** General Education 15%, Notice 30%, Tinker 55%
**Soul Skills:** Charm 15%, Lie 30%, **Magick: Mechanomancy** 55%

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Hardened | 2 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 1 Failed | 1 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed |

## Notes

The GM has another handout for you that describes your clockworks and their gameplay capabilities.

# Ella Krazmersky—Loving Wife

Back when you were a girl, you never had any lack of suitors in the Old Country. Your father was a wealthy man (if distant and eccentric), and you were a quite a beauty. As it happened, however, your father arranged a marriage between you and Uder Krazmersky, a strange little shopkeeper of disreputable aspect. Your father was an avid collector of clockwork, and Uder was recognized as a master in certain select circles. You strongly suspect your father traded you to Uder for a set of four full sized clockwork people—two soldiers, two damsels—who could dance five different dances. (Very well; your father was *very* distant and *very* eccentric.)

Uder treated you well—it was clear that he was deeply infatuated with you, and eventually you convinced yourself that you were happy and loved him as well. After all, it was a bad time in the Old Country, and Uder had powerful friends.

One powerful friend, anyhow. Well, not really a friend; Bors Slavandrov, an influential officer in charge of guarding the border. You're not sure to this day what went on between Bors and Uder, for your husband insisted that you hide yourself whenever Bors visited. You know that Uder didn't like what Bors was having him do—something to do with his creations.

Then one day Bors visited unexpectedly when Uder wasn't home, and . . . he wasn't very gentlemanly. You managed to get free from him and run into your bedroom, where there was one of your father's old dueling pistols.

Uder got home in time to find Bors dying on the bedroom rug, cursing and swearing revenge. That was when you learned the full extent of Uder's skills.

Somehow, he kept Bors alive—or half alive. He turned Bors into a clockwork—an automaton that looked like Bors on the outside, that had Bors' memories and spoke with Bors' voice, but inside it was only gears and parts. It had to obey Uder, though this new Bors didn't like it and would try to fight . . . but Uder's control was enough to get the three of you over the border to America.

Since coming to America it's been years and years of quiet. Uder makes toys. You work in your garden. Sundays you go to church, but you don't really visit much with people. You don't even have a TV set—Uder's uncomfortable around machines he doesn't understand.

Uder has explained something of his clockworking to you. You know it involves memory—sometimes losing memory. You wonder if his magick hasn't worn off on you a little. So many things seem hazy and faint . . . you know they're memories, but they seem more like dreams . . .

## Obsession

People. You're very lonely with just Uder around.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Rude men who try to grab at you.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Helplessness) Rude men who try to grab at you.
**Noble Stimulus:** You're kind to strangers, especially since you don't see too many.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 60 | (Healthy) |
| **Speed:** | 60 | (Graceful) |
| **Mind:** | 50 | (Polite) |
| **Soul:** | 50 | (Sweet) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 15%, Gorgeous 25%, Struggle 40%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 30%, Drive 15%, Run 35%
**Mind Skills:** General Education 15%, Notice 30%
**Soul Skills:** **Charm 55%**, Lie 30%

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Hardened | 2 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 1 Failed | 1 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed |

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# STRANGE DAYS
## by tim dedopulos

# UNKNOWN ARMIES

"TO KNOW IS TO KNOW THAT YOU KNOW NOTHING.
THAT IS THE MEANING OF TRUE KNOWLEDGE."
–CONFUCIUS

"THERE IS THE SEEN, AND THERE IS THE UNSEEN.
ONLY A FOOL THINKS THAT HE CAN HAVE BOTH AND LIVE."
–WILLIAM HOBUCK

## Ancient Whaling Village in Fishy Mystery

Residents in the tiny Waatch tribal fishing village of Bahadea were woken in the early hours of the morning by a most unseasonable rainstorm—of fish, carefully filleted and barbecued. During the fall, which lasted some fifteen minutes, an estimated 200lbs of warm, cooked fish is thought to have fallen on the town. Tribal elders were unwilling to comment, but one visiting eyewitness reported: "It was the d—dest thing I ever saw. Fish, fresh from the barbecue, falling all over the place. I reckon it was salmon, cooked Cajun-style, by the smell of it. I guess some plane dumped its dinners by mistake. Made one hell of a mess of my boat. I want to know who's going to pay for this."

—August 1, Clallan *Courier*

CLIPPING ONE

## Vandals Damage Native American Relics

Vandals yesterday pulled off a baffling desecration at the Native American Waatch Cultural and Research Center in Bahadea. Several important relics dating from the 1400s were painted bright red by the intruders, who apparently found a way to gain entrance to the Center without going past desk staff. Damaged in the attack were a traditional canoe, several bowls, and a Thunderbird mask. "Restoration is going to be difficult and expensive," said the curator. "We have no idea who would do this, or why." The annual Culture Days festival, held at the village to celebrate Waatch tribal history, begins in just over a week.

—August 6, Clallan *Courier*

CLIPPING TWO

## Religious Fever Grips Reservation

Hysteria has swept through the 1,800-strong reservation of the Waatch tribe following a mass hallucination today. Members of the tribe, which retains traditional rights to hunt whales under the terms of an old treaty, reported seeing 'a great Wolf Serpent, with the head of a wolf and the body of a snake, which came out of the sea,' and slithered through the town of Bahadea, before disappearing along the coast. "It is a powerful omen," says William Hobuck, director of the town's Culture Days Festival, which opens in two days. "The Thunderbird first brought the Wolf Serpent to us to help our fishing, and now he returns."

—August 15, Clallan *Courier*

CLIPPING THREE

**Over the past month, several** extremely anomalous events have disturbed the normally peaceful reservation of Bahadea, on the northwest tip of Clallan County, Washington, itself the northwest tip of the continental United States. Sensing the possibility of an important find, Alex Abel has ordered one of his adepts, Michael Rosen, along with an enforcer, Big Steve, to assemble a team of freelance dukes to go to the village and find out the nature of these incidents. If there's anything useful, he is to retrieve it and bring it back. Rosen is to use the village's annual three-day festival—which starts tomorrow—as cover for the investigation. We'll get back to Rosen, Big Steve, and the rest of the team (the PCs, of course), in a little while.

## Bahadea

A tiny village in the top-left corner of the USA, Bahadea is only really known to environmentalists. The residents of the Waatch reservation are the last legal whale-hunters in the country, a right protected by treaty. This causes no end of irritation amongst the more-earnest ecologists, who feel that even a small group of Native Americans are a threat to Whalekind, and that they should be stopped. Tribal elders defend their traditional rights vigorously. While not all of their people sympathize, fishing is the main industry of the group.

Once a year, the locals hold their Culture Days festival. This opens on the evening of the third Friday in August, with the crowning of the annual Waatch Princess, a festive fireworks display, and the Talent Show. It then continues with three days of canoe races, traditional arts, crafts, and dance programs, salmon bakes, and a Grand Parade on Sunday afternoon. Visitors are welcome, providing they stay within the prescribed areas; the Hide-Out Motel provides good accommodation in the center of the village, and the Pacific Cape Motel and the Tyree Motel both have rooms and RV parks. The newly-built marina (it was finished in 1986) can house some 200 boats. The Whaadah Café on the seafront is one of the culinary centers of the village. There's also the usual smattering of small businesses, craft centers, marina services, and other such—about twenty in all.

The village is of academic interest for several reasons. Perhaps the most significant was the discovery, in 1970, of over 5,000 Native American relics dated as being between 300 and 700 years old. They were found at a nearby village, buried for several hundred years under a mudslide. (Some of these were damaged in the incident described in Clipping Two at the Cultural and Research Center.) At the time, the find was described as possibly the most significant archaeological discovery ever made in the USA. An old, abandoned air base can be found a short distance to the northwest of town, and the nearest hospitals are in the towns of Forks and Port Angeles, some ninety minutes away.

All told, the village is almost exactly what you'd expect—a small, native fishing village with a minor tourist trade that peaks at festival time. Most of the beaches around the area are out of bounds to visitors, as are certain areas further inland, but all these districts are clearly marked. During Culture Days, the locals more or less expect transgressions; they don't much like it, but tourists will be hustled back out again with greater restraint than at other times of year. The place is pretty normal . . . except, of course, that something decidedly odd is going on.

CHAPTER ILLO BY MATT ROACH

## The Odd Side

For those people who have ears to hear, the news clippings are shouting "Major Unnatural Event." First, there's the rain of fish. Well, rains of fish, frogs, and other such things are not unknown, at least in Fortean circles. No one, however, has ever heard of a rain of *barbecued* fish before. The eyewitness quoted in the cutting is absolutely right about what it was—it was salmon, and it was cooked in Cajun spices. He's absolutely wrong about the airplane, though. In fact, the salmon was translocated from the kitchens of a catering company in Mississippi, preparing to serve 500 people at a wedding reception. No one believed the chef who saw it vanish—not even *Sightings* wanted to know—and he's currently awaiting trial on charges of theft, malicious damage, and industrial espionage.

Then there's the bright red gloss paint that suddenly covered seven different exhibits at the Cultural and Research Center, appearing between 2:45 P.M. and 2:55 P.M. according to the baffled and upset director. Everything was fine when she took some people through the hall; when she popped back ten minutes later, the 'vandalism' had taken place. No one is totally sure how the glass cases were opened and closed without smearing any paint, or why, and no one can explain why the exhibits were dry when found, how no wet paint had run, and how exactly the vandals had managed to paint a seven-foot canoe both inside and out in the time available. Most of the villagers know all this, and are puzzled. What only the director of the Center and the council of Elders know, however, is that the items weren't actually painted—they were transformed into solid, dried, latex paint all the way through. Even the canoe, which still displays some damage from an accident a few months ago.

The final report refers to the Wolf Serpent vision. Every local in the village saw this, as if it were a real being. The tribal totem came out of the sea, slid through the town, and then left again, leaving no evidence of its passing behind. No one is really certain what it means, but the council have decided to play it for all it's worth in the hope of attracting Forteans, visionaries, researchers and other modern pilgrims to the town and boosting the tourist trade a bit. In private though, they're fairly concerned. Omens are one thing, but personal visits to the village are something entirely different.

Less well known is that five days before the rain of salmon dinners, a small clump of six people in the village suddenly keeled over and died. Four of them were in the grocery store, and two were walking past it. The deceased were a husband and wife by the candy section, a young man looking at the fresh vegetables, an older man getting some milk from the chill cabinet, and the two outside were a young couple. The cause of death in each case was found to be a sudden, massive heart attack. No one from outside the tribe knows anything about the "unfortunate coincidence," because any word of a rash of mysterious deaths would drive tourists away from the festival, and also make it difficult to sell fish or to get people to moor at the marina. The Waatch are a pragmatic people.

Abel's cutting bureau has flagged up the newspaper reports, and the conclusion is obvious—there's some sort of major artifact in the village. The next thought is pretty damn obvious, too: Alex wants it. The festival coincides perfectly; Rosen and his bunch can pretend to be culture junkies, find out where and what this damn thing is, and go fetch it for the New Inquisition. It's a good plan, and like all good plans, several other people have thought of it, too. Abel is well aware of that—one of his clairvoyants has been muttering about the Rider endlessly for two days, and common sense, backed up with divination, suggests that there are more forces besides—and while he's told Rosen to look out for competition, and eradicate it if possible, the specifics are not something that he wants to burden the adept with. He doesn't know about the deaths, but that's okay, because he wouldn't care about them anyway and he certainly wouldn't tell Rosen.

## Starting Out

If you're feeling lazy, you can read the Canned Intro on the next page to your players. You may prefer to rephrase it, expand it a bit, play with it, and otherwise make it more appropriate for your game. Feel free to tinker away. Furthermore, if you would rather not use the pre-generated characters provided, that's fine, too. In that case, have Rosen simply be a link-man who recruits the party to do the work and does not go along, with Big Steve as his minder. He won't mention the New Inquisition in this instance, even if asked directly. The information he passes on will be the same.

## The Leads

This scenario is largely about deception, false impressions, and confusing your players. The key to this is to use their knowledge and expectations against them. There's a lot of people converging on Bahadea, and they're not all interested in the festival. Some of them are there on totally unrelated business, while others are a lot more dangerous than they may seem. They all have their own agendas, and if the players don't interfere, they'll go about their business. The hotels—the Hide-Out and the Pacific Cape—both have rooms available. The Hide-Out is $70 a night per person for a twin room, and the Cape is $55.

When they get into town, chances are the players are going to investigate the leads that they have. We'll start with the rain of fish. The unnamed guy in the clipping was some tourist who has gone home already; it was a few weeks ago, and he was only down for the weekend. In fact, all the visitors who witnessed the event have left. Hotel guest-books and the harbor records will give the names and addresses of the eight or ten people who were around that weekend, if

## Canned Intro

As speeches go it wasn't the prettiest, but cash up front has a special sort of charm all of its own, particularly four big ones.

"It's like this," the peon–Rosen–said. "I've been told to go sniff out some mystery artifact and bring it back alive. We know where it is to within a couple of square miles–there's some weird shit going down in the area. Here, have a look at this."

*(At this point, let the players read the three news clippings at the start of the chapter.)*

"I need some backup, to help with the investigation and to keep the locals off my ass while we sniff around. I hear you're good and reliable. The pay is four grand for the three days, up front. If that sounds generous, well, that's 'cos it is. You're being paid not to get creative. If you're thinking of jerking around, don't. If we can afford to pay you well, we can also afford to pay someone else well to find you and deal with you, very slowly and painfully, if it comes down to it. So, are you in or are you out?"

Well, how could you turn down such a polite offer? When you gave him the thumbs up, Rosen merely nodded. "Be at the top of the Broadway on Friday morning at 9 A.M. Oh, and bring your own gun."

Which is how come you find yourself, mid-afternoon, stuck with a bunch of other freelance dukes in the back of a station wagon heading straight out into The Ass-End of The World, Washington. Clallan county. About as close as you can get to falling into the northern Pacific without driving out of the States. Lovely. "Welcome to Bahadea, ancient home of the Waatch. Population 1,800," the sign said. Yeah. By the looks of the place, they're very welcome to it, indeed.

the players can convince the staff or harbor master respectively that they need to see the books. Locals will acknowledge the event, and agree that it happened, and agree that it was strange, but will not comment on cause, give a detailed description, or anything else.

In fact, the locals are pretty damn uncommunicative this year. They're on edge, they're a bit freaked out by the mass vision and puzzled by the other odd events, and they're fairly scared by the deaths at the grocery. They really don't want any bad publicity, so they're not very happy about people poking around. To make matters worse, the DEA have heard a (true) rumor that the area may be scouted for a drug-smuggling operation, bringing a shipment of opium down out of Canada by boat, and they've warned the tribal cops to keep an eye out. The feds don't know that the shipment is taking place this weekend–they think that if the scouting goes well, the smugglers are back next week. The Waatch sheriff has kept it fairly quiet, but he and his deputies are more tense than usual at festival time, and the rest of the village has got the hint that something bad might be going on. Questions are going to be met with sullen silences, furtive glances, whispers behind the PCs' backs, meaningful stares, and the odd cryptic, heavily veiled threat. In other words, it's up to you to do everything you can to persuade the players that the locals mean to murder them in their sleep, and ideally that they're in league with Dark Powers.™ If you know your players are devotees of a certain classic 1900s American horror writer, you may like to describe the locals as having a common appearance that includes high, balding foreheads, thin hair, weak chins, bulging eyes, and a faint hint of webbing on the fingers. There's nothing to it at all, but a little misdirection can go a long way.

The locals aren't talking, and the visitors have gone, but there is one person who is clued up about Salmon Night. Teresa MacColl is a paranormal investigator, an earnest, introverted woman in her late twenties who passionately believes in almost everything. She believes in UFOs, she believes in Magick, she believes in lake monsters, she believes in the Chupocabras, and she most certainly believes in rains of fish. She got the clipping two days after publication, and has found, visited and interviewed the tourist, Al Nedelmeyr. She has also tracked down another witness to the event, a friend of Al's who came by car, and interviewed him, too. She's down on the quay, with a huge array of photographic equipment, taking snapshots and temperature readings and all sorts of other things. She's extremely obvious, and there are kids watching in awe. Physically, she's skinny, dressed scraggily in baggy pants and a big T-shirt, with long, messy brown hair. She has three cameras, an infrared lens, temperature and radiation gauges, and a range of other technological knick-knacks. A laptop computer is linked up to the gauges, recording data.

Teresa is very naïve, and rather shy personally, so if the PCs approach her in a friendly manner she'll be open and honest, and flattered at the attention. If they seem interested in the paranormal, she'll be keen to make friends. She'll proudly give them all the information she has on the "anomalous event," the basic facts of which are:

- There was a loud clap of thunder before the fall started.
- The fish was still sizzling when it hit the ground. When it landed, it went "splat."
- It fell in pieces, and was distributed in clumps over the village.
- It fell sporadically, not constantly, and there were several hundred bits (well, 520 to be exact–the caterers always make extra, just in case).
- The rain lasted for a total of thirteen minutes.
- The fish was lightly poached in oil, seasoned with Cajun spices, and fully cooked.

- The only other event where prepared food has fallen from the sky was a rain of beef chili lasting five minutes that fell on part of a town north of Mexico City in 1973. It, too, remains unexplained.
- Not all of the fish has been destroyed–three pieces were collected by the sheriff, who preserved them in formaldehyde, kept one in the office, and sent the other two to the forensics lab in Port Angeles for storage. Teresa has seen the sheriff's piece of fish–it's a nice-looking salmon steak, maybe 6oz.

That's all the information she has–she doesn't know that the salmon originally came from a fish farm not 300 miles from Bahadea before it was shipped to Mississippi–and with the exception of its place of origin, that's all the information that there is on the event. She's not interested in the vandalism at the Center–she doesn't know there's anything odd about it–and while she'd like to research the vision, she has made a personal rule to only deal with tangible events, so that when she makes her data public and changes the world (yeah, right!) she'll have proof to offer. If the players can convince her that something strange is going on at the Cultural Center, she'll be very interested in that. When the players are done talking to her and leave, she starts jotting notes on a pad, and occasionally speaks into a Dictaphone. She's just making notes on the conversation–she keeps notes on everything–but if it makes the players suspicious of her friendly, open manner, so much the better. Teresa is the only lead that the players can use on Friday afternoon/evening. Everyone else is out.

The Cultural & Research Center is actually rather good. It's a pretty building, nicely laid out, with lots of interesting Native American items. Admission is $8 for adults, $6 for seniors, and $4 for children under fifteen, and there's a nice café-cum-gift shop, too. In the museum section, there are a couple of rooms of standard exhibits under glass–mainly things recovered from the mudslide site mentioned earlier. Bowls, cups, pins, weapons, jewelry, children's toys, and other bits and pieces are dominant. Another room is set up to give the impression of being in a village from 500 years ago–there are tents, canoes, a mock fire, figures in costume, and things of that nature. Finally, there's a room of bigger and more valuable pieces–full dress costumes, a range of canoes, and other large regalia. The items that were turned to paint were scattered throughout the museum area. A canoe in the diorama was altered, as were a couple of bowls in one display room, a knife and a brooch in the other one, and a fairly nice ceremonial spear in the room of bigger items.

The director of the center, Mary Cloud, will acknowledge the public story freely. She's not very keen on talking to anyone much, but she will do it. It's not because she's worried about smugglers snooping around the center, though; she's having trouble coping with her exhibits turning to paint. If the players press her on it, she'll express bafflement at how vandals could have come in, painted and dried the exhibits without messing anything else, and then vanishing, all in the ten minutes between her going through the room once and then going through it a second time.

If the players are sympathetic, and express their amazement and so on, Mary will express her bafflement and irritation, and mutter a couple of comments like "Maybe it was some kind of radiation burst," and "Why would it transmute just those few? It doesn't make sense." Following up on these–and convincing her that they are not reporters or other journalists–will lead her eventually, grudgingly, to say that the items were in fact not painted, but turned into solid, dry paint. All the objects are now with Washington State University for testing. She hasn't kept samples.

If they ask her about why it happened as opposed to how, she'll phrase it in terms of some sort of surreal omen from the ancestors. Nothing else makes much sense to her. She thinks it's to do with the encroachment of modernity and the capitalist world: things like the marina, the café, and resident non-locals. There are three non-native residents of the village–Mike Nolan, the guy who runs the local postal service, brought in mainly as a convenience for visitors at the marina; Guy Budd, the clerk who serves behind the counter at the grocery store; and Eloise Carter, one of the maids at the Hide-Out, who is married to a local guy.

Getting anyone to talk about the vision is almost impossible. All the locals will say that it is a good omen, and that is all. They will not describe it in detail. The three non-locals can be persuaded to talk, but we'll cover them separately in a moment. No non-resident currently in the village saw anything. If the PCs are in the village on Friday evening though, after the talent contest, a local will come up to the players, tell them he has watched them snooping around, and will demand that they reveal what they are up to. Whatever they reply, he will become angry, and threaten them in vague terms "We're watching you. You will be the next ones. We are watchful, and will not be pushed around." If they reply, he will then loudly threaten "The Wolf Serpent will strike you down! His fire is coming! He will cleanse the cape of the unworthy, and then you will be sorry. His vengeance has already begun, and your deaths will be next!" At this point, a couple of friends will bustle up, apologize to the players, and drag him off quickly. If the players attack him, they could kill him easily–he's too drunk to fight–and in doing so, they will start a riot: 400 outraged locals will rip them, and any other nearby tourists, to shreds. Oh well.

If they take the hint and ask about deaths, locals will tell them that the guy was drunk and foolish, he didn't mean anything, and that someone died outside the grocery, that's all. Mike Nolan, Guy Budd and Eloise Carter can provide further information on the deaths and on the vision, so it's time we discussed them.

Mike Nolan is a gossip. It goes with the territory of being in charge of the post office, especially since his dull job usually involves passing tax forms and junk mail to the elders and col-

lecting postcards from tourists. He's pretty lonely, and he feels isolated, as the locals all treat him with suspicion. He's been in the job–which is largely a courtesy for visitors–living on a boat in the marina for three years. He does a lot of fishing, which helps keep him sane. If the players go and chat with him, Mike will flirt pleasantly with the least attractive female party member or accompanying GMC (he reckons his chances are better that way), and will readily go along with anything much if it looks like he might get laid at the end of it. He draws the line this side of combat, though.

He didn't actually *see* the rain of fish, because he was asleep (drunk), but he saw it on the streets the next morning. You should be able to fill in the appropriate sketchy details by now. He doesn't know jack about the events at the Center, except that a truck came through a couple of weeks ago and took some stuff away. Apart from that, he thinks it was vandals. However, he knows about the deaths at the grocery, and is a bit freaked out by them; he tells the players about them, if prompted. He did see the Wolf Serpent, and if the players promise not to reveal where they got the info, he tells them all about that, too.

Monday morning, Mike was disturbed by a long, very loud howl that seemed to be coming from the sea. He went out for a clear look and saw a huge white snake, glowing brightly, lift up out of the sea, loop a coil around a handy bulwark, and slither up out of the water and onto the marina. It didn't look wet, and it held itself about 10 ft. tall, with a total length of some 50 ft., and an average thickness of about 2 ft. It had a wolf's head, natch. It slithered through the streets, taking routes so that it would not touch anyone or anything, and went off out the back of the village and into the hills, where it vanished. It did not leave a trail of water behind it, nor was the quay splashed where it pulled itself out. After the initial howl, it remained silent. He can't remember the exact route it took, but it went past the café, the Hide-Out, and the grocery store. He also mentions that the locals are actually pretty upset about it, but they're just trying to keep it quiet.

Eloise is much less willing to talk. She gets quite a lot of flak from her husband's family for not being local, and she's also ostracized by women of her age group (early 30s), who resent her, but her reaction is to try to conform as much as possible. She'll talk if threatened or bribed, providing she's guaranteed anonymity. She knows more or less what Mike does, except that her husband is one of the pool of reserve deputies, so she knows about the drug dealers that are expected. She also knows that the police have a full set of reports on the grocery deaths, and that the sheriff, who by nature of his job is a bit more worldly and cynical than most of his neighbors, is known to take a bribe. Mainly, though, she just wants to be left alone, and not to be seen talking to the players, or to anyone else for that matter.

Guy Budd, at the grocery store . . . well, we'll cover the grocery store later on. Trust me, okay?

Because of certain limits on space, it's not possible to go into full details on all the other general people the players may want to interact with. The sheriff is polite, disinterested and faintly hostile; he lets the players have a look at the grocery death reports if they know about the event already, and pay him a hundred bucks to go towards admin charges. If they don't know, he won't say anything. His reasoning is if they know already, it's probably better they have the facts, which aren't that incriminating. The official facts are that it was a coincidental sextuple coronary; just a meaningless statistical blip. Each body has it's own coroner's report, which lists no aggravating factors (apart from the one guy by the milk, who had some arterial disease), no toxins, and no sign of suspicious circumstances. The only material witness, Guy Budd, has made a statement, the gist of which is that "They just keeled over, man."

If the players try to meet up with any of the council of elders, they're met with polite refusal during the day. The elders are unavailable, asleep, busy, or not home. If they bully the location of an elder's house out of someone, there's no answer at the door; if they break in (*sigh*), there's no one around, plus after two minutes a posse of deputies comes by and attempts to arrest them. If it turns ugly, it may end in an anti-tourist riot. During the night (after dark), the elders are out at the festival, schmoozing and doing the "good politician" bit. They cheerfully brush off any tricky question and suggest questioners try some baked salmon–it's lovely. If you can give the impression that the elders are sunlight-fearing vampires, so much the better, but they aren't, obviously.

More than two miles outside the village, or on any beach other than the south one, the players are outside permitted territory. They'll be seen, and within five minutes a small posse will ask them to return to the visitor's area. If things get out of hand, it will not escalate to a riot unless there are some witnesses to carry word back to the village. If it seems that the locals are unusually prone to going berserk, remember they're pretty shaken up about the deaths, the vision, and all the other weirdness. They're also feeling fairly belligerent towards outsiders, courtesy of the vision. Basically, if any outsider kills or maims a local in front of other locals, particularly during the evenings when everyone is fairly drunk, it's going to turn very nasty indeed.

## Dramatis Personae

Got hold of your hat? This is where things start to get funky. The players are not the only group in town. There are three other forces at work this weekend, and none of them is exactly as they seem.

First up, we have the smugglers, Carlos and Jonas. A pair of guys out of Portland, they're inexperienced, nervous, and frankly not taking it as seriously as they should be–hence the lack of forward planning. The drop is Saturday night, on the north beach; they're going to check things out on Friday, and

if they don't say otherwise, it goes ahead. They're dressed in sharp black suits and very dark glasses, white shirts, and black ties. They're suspicious of anyone who seems to be paying them undue attention–*i.e.*, most people–and they'll be remembering who seemed interested. They talk in short, curt sentences, to try to discourage conversation, often making veiled threats, and if someone seems particularly interested, they warn them off. They may follow suspicious people for a while (but not very subtly, because they aren't very good).

Teresa MacColl is certain that they are Men In Black, and her reaction is to follow them, photograph them, and bravely respond to their threats by trying to be more secretive. Unless the players get in the way, their response will be to set fire to her RV on Friday night/early Saturday morning, when no one is looking. She's unhurt, but down to one camera and one notepad. She books into a hotel and tries to continue her surveillance (the fire just adds to her conviction), so on Saturday night, during the party time, Carlos and Jonah murder her quietly and dump her in the harbor. If the players have hooked up with her then they try to ambush the whole group, fleeing (if they can) if things get too tough. If not, her corpse will be floating in the water on Sunday morning.

Next we have the Rider, whom only Alex Abel has been warned about. The Rider is a demon, possessing the body of a forty-six–year-old father from New Jersey named Ed Lawrence. Ed has terminal cancer and about six weeks to live. In return for letting his body be possessed for a week, Ed gets cured–providing he lasts the week. He knows he might not, and that the demon's actions may well put him in prison. But for Ed, even a slim chance of coming out okay is better than impending death. This deal was brokered by the Bad Man, an avatar of the merchant (87%) who works out of NYC; the Rider, in return for getting to do whatever he wants for a week in Ed's body, has to find the mysterious artifact that's causing all these anomalies and bring it to the Bad Man. (TANSTAAFL.)

So Friday night, the Rider gets in to town. He eats a huge dinner at the café–*really* huge–then drinks bucketloads of booze and gets into a fight, where he enjoys being soundly beaten up. Later, he grabs a tourist on the way back to the RV park, and spends the night torturing and raping him. He then dumps the body at the café when no one is around. At dawn, he starts very slowly criss-crossing the village, sniffing for the power emanations that tell him where this artifact is, and he does this all day, getting off on the exhaustion. A deal is a deal . . . meanwhile, the sheriff gets posses roaming around the town and tries (unsuccessfully) to cover up the murder, so some visitors leave and others are ghoulishly digging into it. It makes the locals even more tense. The Rider passes out Saturday evening, and on Sunday he heads to the grocery, which is where things are centered.

If he's hassled, the Rider goes ape. If astral parasites, entropics, and other demons aren't enough to get him out of trouble–he'll graft parasites and entropics onto anyone who irritates him at all, just for the hell of it–then he also has a big gun. The Rider doesn't particularly want to get the body killed, but when push comes to shove he couldn't care less, so he's pretty trigger-happy. Lucky no one saw him abducting or later dumping his victim.

Finally, there's Archon. He's a high-grade fleshwarper, and he's after the artifact, too. He's bumped up to the nines, and takes a fairly rational approach–follow the same leads the players have, speak to the outsiders, try to avoid complications, then go grab the artifact on Sunday, once he's worked out where it has to be. There's just one little complication–he's in disguise. To be exact, he's used Chameleon to make himself look exactly like Daphnee Lee. Rosen will recognize 'her' immediately; other players can do so on a successful Magick or Occult Underground roll over 10. If the players rely on knowledge of Pornomancy to suss out Archon, they'll be in very, very deep trouble. Alter Archon's timeline to avoid the players as much as possible; he won't approach a place until after they've moved on, and tries to avoid them as much as possible. He won't back down from a fight, though.

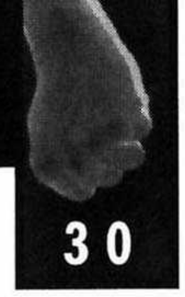
As well as significant people, there are a couple of decoys, too. Pete is an alcoholic. He's shabby, unpleasant, and pretty damn mad. He's got delusions of grandeur–he thinks God does him favors–and he's fairly sociopathic. He lurks in the corners, drinking spirits out of his battered old tin mug, and cackling. If anyone approaches him, he makes grand threats about smiting them, or other similarly misleading comments. Pete reckons God told him that there's a treasure in the town, down by the marina, and he drops hints about that, too. He's wrong, of course. He's not a dipsomancer either, just a very drunk old guy.

There's also this ugly, greasy Mediterranean guy, strong, with broad hands, hanging gormlessly around the seafront and staring at the festival costumes. His name is Yannis. He's Greek, and a bit simple, and he is here as a tourist. He wants to avoid trouble, and he's pretty easygoing most of the time, so if people threaten him to do things, he will, up to a point. If they push him too far though, or try to make him do anything illegal or unkind, he'll snap and go berserk, turning on his tormentors–which should be a very nasty shock for any players who mistakenly reckon they've netted themselves a handy golem.

Remember that the theme of this scenario is deception, so if you know your players tend to think along certain lines, add GMCs to further confuse them. Also, if you want to bring in one significant or major unnatural event at any point during play, go ahead. You might want to hit one of the players with a minor (or major!) blast, for example. Fine. With luck, they'll think an adept is sniping at them.

## Timeline

So, what's everyone up to, and when? Assuming that the players do nothing to interfere with the schedule (yeah, right . . . ), here's what is going to happen as the various actors move about the village:





## Friday

15:30 Players arrive. Teresa MacColl (in her RV) and the Rider are already in town. Both are at the marina—she's working, and the demon is eating.

16:00 Museum and Grocery close; both will re-open on Saturday at 8:30.

17:00 The locals award their Festival Princess beauty pageant title. The competition took place at midday.

17:15 Carlos & Jonas arrive, take a room at the Pacific Cape.

17:45 Archon arrives, takes a room at the Hide Out.

18:00 Teresa starts observing Carlos & Jonas, who pretend to ignore her, while resolving to rub her out.

18:45 Archon chats to Teresa about rain of fish.

19:30 Talent show starts.

21:00 Carlos & Jonas scout out the two beaches.

22:00 Talent show ends.

24:00 People start dispersing.

01:00 The Rider grabs a tourist.

02:00 Carlos & Jonas set fire to Teresa's RV.

04:00 The Rider dumps the tourist's gruesome, tortured, raped corpse.

## Saturday

06:30 The guy who runs the Whaadah Café find the tourist, fails his violence check, and freaks out.

07:00 Sheriff starts to organize security posses of six local lads; each posse has two revolvers and six nightsticks. There are five posses patrolling at any one time, and they will speak to the players if they have any reason to feel suspicious.

08:30 Archon goes to the Cultural & Research Center to speak to Mary Cloud.

09:30 Archon arrives back at the village and starts asking around about the vision—and also about the dead tourist.

11:15 Carlos & Jonas get up, start nosing around, see Teresa's still about.

12:20 The Rider starts quartering the village, hunting for the feel of power, and chuckling occasionally.

13:30 Carlos & Jonas check out the north beach again. Then, out at the Air Base, they are disturbed by a posse, whom they manage to surprise and kill. There are no witnesses, and no one finds the bodies until 17:30—even then they tell the Sheriff, who keeps a lid on it this time.

14:45 Archon interviews Mike Nolan.

16:00 Carlos & Jonas finish scouting, and get back to the village.

18:15 Carlos & Jonas lean on the Rider, suspicious of what he's up to. He sets astral parasites on them and leaves them to it.

19:00 In the RV park, The Rider surprises, overcomes and murders a couple, along with their young child. He then uses their RV—with the corpses still in it—to bed down for the night. No one will discover them until Sunday afternoon.

20:00 Archon talks to Eloise Carter.

23:00 Carlos & Jonas abduct Teresa MacColl, slit her throat, and dump her corpse in the harbor.

01:00 Carlos & Jonas take the drug drop, and immediately head out of town.

## Sunday

07:00 The Rider breaks into the grocery and finds the way through.

14:30 Providing the players have not already entered the grocery, Archon does so now and finds his way through. If they go in before this, Archon is only a few minutes behind them.

17:00 Dead family in RV park discovered. All suspicious-looking visitors—particularly the players—are actively thrown out of the village at this point, perhaps violently.

## Monday

08:00 Time's up . . .

# The Grocery

This is where it all comes together. First of all, it's surprisingly archaic. The floor is wood, covered with sawdust. The counter is solid, like a saloon bar. There are very few packaged and branded goods—most of the stuff is unbranded raw ingredients, including fruit, vegetables, grains in bins, meat, fish, milk and cheese in a chill box, plain bags of flour and sugar, boiled candy rather than chocolate, and so on. Where stuff is branded—like Coke, Twinkies, Kellogg's Cornflakes, and Jack Daniels—it's only brands that have been around for more than forty years; the packaging on these brands is contemporary, but the brand itself has a long history. The lighting in the shop is bulb, not strip, and so on. The overall effect is eerie and the shop feels wrong, but it's nothing that anyone can put a finger on.

Guy Budd, 24, is the clerk at the store; he's paid by the council of elders, who jointly own it. Like the postmaster, his presence there is largely a nod towards the visitors. Guy doesn't get out much. He has a small flat above the store, which he lives in. On Sundays, he rides back to his family home in Forks. Tall and thin, with lots of curly brown hair and a bit of a scar on his forehead, he's shabby and sullen and fairly unfriendly towards everyone, local or visitor. His clothes are well out of date, like the store—they look as if he brought them from a charity shop or thrift store. He is com-

pletely disinterested in the rain of fish, the vision and the Center, and doesn't know anything more than what people have said to him–not much–and he certainly didn't bother going outside to look at some stupid fish falling from the stupid sky, man. He's not dumb, but he's got very little imagination and not much motivation. Most of the time he just watches TV in his flat or on the little mini-screen by the cashbox (no electronic register, either). In fact, Guy's TVs are just about the only visible sign of modernity in the whole shop. Even the storeroom out back, with its big walk-in icebox, is straight out of the '50s.

He does know about the deaths in the shop though, given that he was there. If the players ask directly, he acknowledges the fact. He sounds faintly amused about it, and when he describes the people just suddenly silently toppling over dead, he adds that "it was cool, man." Guy is unpleasant and unmotivated, but that's all. He's not actually sinister.

The main shop has a door into a hall which connects the storeroom, a small staff kitchen and bathroom (with shower), and the space behind the counter. The stairs to Guy's flat are also in the hall. If the players head back there while Guy is around he yells at them, and if they ignore him he starts tugging a bell that's been fitted up so that locals will know there's a problem, and a posse turns up. If they break in outside open hours (8:30–4:30, Monday–Saturday), there's no alarm, but Guy is in his flat. He's not wasting *his* time with the stupid festival, oh no, he's watching *I Love Lucy* re-runs. He won't come to investigate noises. If the players go up to him (it's just a big bedroom up there) he cowers at the top of the bed. Apart from the TV and a load of shabby clothing, there's just a big old table and a few posters of Pamela Anderson. His motorcycle, a 400cc Honda, is outside, round the back of the store. If someone starts it up, Guy comes running. At 05:18 on Sunday, Guy drives off on it, not to return until 23:17 the same day, so getting in to the store should be fairly easy, if the players can get through the lock.

## Don't Go in the Cellar!

The important part of all of this is the storeroom. Obviously it's archaic, but there's a big trap door in the middle of the floor. Until 04:00 on Sunday, this opens onto packed earth, nothing else. Well, maybe a few spiders. After that time, the whole building feels significantly odd. Players feel dusty, slow, parched, and somehow anachronistic inside. There's a not-quite-audible sense of a slow, steady ticking–an old grandfather clock, or deathwatch beetles, or something–that they can almost hear. It sets everybody's teeth on edge. The feeling gets stronger as the trapdoor is approached. The rest of the village feels subtly wrong, too, but the players won't be able to tell why until they are within sight of the Grocery, which is then obvious as the source.

Now, it's important you don't spare yourself on this aura of stale time from Sunday morning onwards, because it's not accidental–it's being deliberately put on to attract adepts and magickally sensitive types to the Grocery and down into the cellar, which now exists again in time and space. So if it seems like an unsubtle hint, that's because it's *supposed* to be. It's *bait.*

The cellar is an old-style dirt coolstore. It's empty, which means that it is a small room carved from the earth with a steep wooden staircase leading down into it. It's reasonably lit by a light that's fixed to the stairs. The room is fairly big, some fifteen feet square, and about eight feet from floor to roof. It is dominated by a circular bank of earth, a big ring about a foot high and a foot thick, ten feet wide, centered on a big wooden chest in the middle of the room.

The Rider beats the players into the cellar. He's a demon, after all, and is sensitive to power sources, so he makes a beeline for the cellar as soon as it re-enters the real world. When the players get down there, he's in there, dead, face down in the earth just inside the circle. Well all right, the Rider himself isn't dead in the dirt–but poor old Ed Lawrence, the Rider's host, most certainly is.

A few minutes after the players get down there, they're followed in by Archon. He wants the artifact too, and he's pretty confident about being able to take it. Providing the chest is unopened, he gives the players a chance–leave now, and they can go. If they refuse, he opens hostilities by blasting (read "ripping the face off") whoever looks toughest–probably Big Steve. This is a nasty surprise for anyone who still thinks they're dealing with a Pornomancer.

If the chest is open, well, everyone will be too busy to worry about attacking each other, and Archon gets involved, because by the time he works out what's going on, he's in trouble too. The chest opens of its own accord after three spells have been cast. If somehow the players defeat Archon without three spells going off and decide to carry the chest off without opening it, that's fine–it opens up in the back of the vehicle halfway to Seattle, and the driver had better pull over very sharply.

### What's in the Box?

The box contains a Thaumovore. It's living, it's intelligent, it's not an artifact by any stretch of the imagination, and it eats magick. The Thaumovore looks like a bundle of slimy ropes of whitish-green ooze tangled together. It's not made of entirely solid matter, so it takes damage from all physical attacks as if they were hand-to-hand. It feeds by draining magickal charges and Soul out of people; it touches them with a tendril and *sucks.* Thaumovores generate major unnatural events on a weekly basis as a lure, and after a good feed, they then go off to a distant dimension to sleep the meal off, returning a few years later somewhere else on the planet. For every successful drain the beast makes in com-

bat, it can throw someone around using telekinesis, minor-blast them, or put them into a hallucinatory state.

When it pops out of the chest, it slams the trapdoor shut with telekinesis then wraps a tendril around–in order of preference–the person with the most significant charges, then the person with the most minor charges, and then the person with the highest Soul. A round of draining (including the first round) takes, in order of preference again, either all significant charges, all minors, or 50 points of Soul. A successful drain also bursts any ongoing spells on the target–so Archon will resume his own shape, that of a forty-five-year-old, 6'3" tough guy with a torso simply *covered* in scars. Being drained hurts–the character takes a D10 of damage for a successful drain. People with Soul reduced to 0 (the minimum) are put into a coma; they regain a point of soul a day, and wake up when it gets back into double figures. Remember that the Magick skill cannot be higher than Soul.

The best way to beat the 'vore is to gang up on it and overwhelm it with sheer numbers. Not an option the Rider had–the demon himself has been completely eaten, by the way. Ah well. When the dust settles, if Archon is still alive then he's happy to let bygones be bygones and just get back home for a nice, relaxing sleep. The Thaumovore does not leave a corpse behind. It's made of a form of energy, so it just fizzles away when killed. If the players all die, there's nothing to worry about. If not, there's Alex Abel to brief first thing Monday morning . . .

# GMC Stats

## Teresa MacColl, Earnest Investigator

### Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 45 | (Thin) |
| **Speed:** | 45 | (S) (Excitable) |
| **Mind:** | 70 | (Incisive) |
| **Soul:** | 60 | (Sympathetic) |

### Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 30%, Breaking In 20%, Struggle 25%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 15%, Drive 30%, Photography 30%
**Mind Skills:** General Education 15%, Notice 45%, Strange Events 40%
**Soul Skills: Blend In 45%**, Interview 25%, Lie 20%

**Blend In:** This allows the user to come across as if she belongs in a given area, so that she doesn't get noticed or challenged while snooping around.

### Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed |

### Possessions

Ooo, loads of stuff. Three cameras (one on a tripod, one with infrared & ultraviolet lenses, one for snaps), thermal gauge, radiation counter, magnetic flux counter, tripwires, timers, tape recorder, Dictaphone, static generator, broad-band radio receiver, portable satellite decoder, cellular phone, laptop PC, multimeter, small spectrographic analyzer, notebooks. She's also got a taser. After the fire, she'll have the taser, one camera, and a notebook.

## The Rider, Demonic Maniac

### Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 30 | (Terminally Ill) |
| **Speed:** | 40 | (F) (Emaciated) |
| **Mind:** | 55 | (Deranged) |
| **Soul:** | 85 | (Awakened) |

### Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 15%, Crazy Fighter 50%, Torture 30%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 15%, Drive 5%
**Mind Skills:** Gen. Ed. 5%, **Magick Lore 60%**, Notice 25%
**Soul Skills:** Astral Travel 70%, Charm 10%, Lying 15%, Sensitive 60%, Soul Drain 30%, Summon 45%

**Astral Travel:** This allows him to dissociate and wander around in his natural form without losing control of the body, thanks to the Bad Man's deal.
**Sensitive:** This lets the Rider feel the atmosphere of a place or person, get an accurate impression of them, and to be aware of adepts and magick powers.
**Soul Drain:** This is an attack against a person's Soul; it deals damage like a hand-to-hand attack, but it comes off Soul, not off Wound Points. It feels a bit like someone stabbing you in the solar plexus with an ice-cold dagger. If you go to 0 Soul or below, you drop unconscious; one further successful attack at this point will annihilate both you and your higher self. If you're left alone, you'll get back a point a day, and you'll wake up when your Soul gets back into double digits.
**Summon:** This allows the Rider to call up astral parasites, entropics, and other demons.

### Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 Hardened | 10 Hardened | 10 Hardened | 10 Hardened | 10 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed |

### Notes

These stats are for the Rider in Ed Lawrence's body. He is not bound by normal maxima and minima. Also, this particular demon is a complete sociopath.

## Possessions

A big knife, and a business card of the Bad Man's–if someone holds the card and thinks about needing something, the Bad Man will be aware of that specific need, and of how to get hold of the person. He'll have a deal . . .

# Archon, Cunning Epideromancer

Archon has spent a lot of time building himself up; he is an advanced and dangerous opponent. He charges himself up with the aid of a long, sharp stiletto knife, which he either slashes his chest or torso with lightly for a minor charge, or stabs through his side for a significant charge.

## Wound Points

190

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 80 | (Super-Solid) |
| **Speed:** | 75 | (F) (Lightning-Fast) |
| **Mind:** | 50 | (Tricky) |
| **Soul:** | 75 | (Driven) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 45%, Karate 65%, Resist Pain 50%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 40%, Drive 20%, Spring 55%
**Mind Skills:** Disguise 30%, General Education 30%, Imitation 35%, Notice 25%
**Soul Skills:** Lying 55%, **Magick: Epideromancy 70%**, Seduce 40%

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 Hardened | 6 Hardened | 2 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 4 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 2 Failed | 1 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed |

## Possessions

Stiletto knife, voice scrambler (a magickally enchanted ring that changes the pitch of his voice to a female register while he wears it), charges: 4 significant and 10 minor.

# Carlos Sanchez, Dumb Drug Smuggler

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 70 | (Muscular) |
| **Speed:** | 70 | (F) (Blinding) |
| **Mind:** | 45 | (Unimaginative) |
| **Soul:** | 30 | (Cold) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 25%, Knife Fighting 45%, Street Fighting 50%, **Torture 30%**
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 20%, Drive 25%, Handguns 40%
**Mind Skills:** Criminal Law 30%, General Ed. 15%, Notice 30%
**Soul Skills:** Charm 15%, Intimidate 30%, Lying 20%

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 4 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 1 Failed | 1 Failed | 1 Failed | 0 Failed | 3 Failed |

## Possessions

Two well-balanced daggers, Magnum .45 in shoulder holster (24 rounds), black suit, shades, mobile phone.

# Jonas White, Equally Dumb Drug Smuggler

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 60 | (Wiry) |
| **Speed:** | 70 | (F) (Whiplike) |
| **Mind:** | 40 | (Limited) |
| **Soul:** | 40 | (Unsympathetic) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 25%, Baseball 25%, Martial Arts 45%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 30%, Drive 15%, Handguns 50%
**Mind Skills:** General Ed. 15%, Observant 40%, **Torment 35%**
**Soul Skills:** Lying 35%, Sweet Talk 20%

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 Hardened | 1 Hardened | 1 Hardened | 2 Hardened | 1 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed |

## Possessions

Desert Eagle and four full clips, black suit, shades.

# The Thaumovore

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 40 | (Ickily Semi-Solid) |
| **Speed:** | 60 | (Blink & Miss It) |
| **Mind:** | 40 | (Cunning) |
| **Soul:** | 80 | (Got a Hotline to Hell) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Scuttling 25%, **Tendril Whip 40%**
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 55%
**Mind Skills:** Notice 35%, Telekinesis 25%
**Soul Skills:** Minor Blast 25%, Trance You 65%

**Tendril Whip:** 1D10 damage + drain (see main text)
**Telekinesis:** Can lift double its Mind score in Body points
**Trance You:** Cause hallucinations for Soul/10 rounds. Target makes Mind check each round or stares helplessly.

# PC Stats

This scenario does not rely on the PCs having specific attitudes, so all the character descriptions are fairly sketchy. The players are free to adopt any personality and history that fits, so long as you let them. There are five PCs here; feel free to add other starting characters if you need them. Alternatively, a player could take on the role of Teresa MacColl or, in a push, Mike Nolan, Eloise Carter, Guy Budd, or Mary Cloud, although the last four don't have stats here (none of them can or will fight, unless you give them out as PCs). Don't give out The Rider or Archon to a player, though, as they're considerably more dangerous than other individuals.

## Christine Rice, Cliomantic Researcher

(Leo) A twenty-six-year-old freelance researcher in the occult underground with a personal specialty in Native American history. She lives in a house built near the site where Chief Seattle signed away the Western territories to the Union, so she gets a fair number of minor charges. The Space Needle in Seattle is good for a significant charge once a week or so too, if no one beats her to it.

### Obsession

Knowing things. Christine needs to feel that she can impress people with her knowledge, particularly within her specialized field.

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Being treated as just another dumb broad.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Self) Looking stupid in front of others.
**Noble Stimulus:** She genuinely loves to help others learn and broaden their minds.

### Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 35 | (Girlish) |
| **Speed:** | 45 | (Distracted) |
| **Mind:** | 70 | (Brilliant) |
| **Soul:** | 70 | (Passionate) |

### Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 20%, Stay Up All Night 25%, Struggle 20%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 15%, Drive 25%, Sneak Around 35%
**Mind Skills:** General Education 35%, Native America 40%, Research 25%
**Soul Skills:** Charm 25%, Lie 20%, **Magick: Cliomancy 55%**

**Stay Up All Night:** This allows Christine to go stay awake all night without losing concentration, and to avoid penalties the following day. She needs to sleep the next night, though.

### Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Hardened | 2 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 3 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 1 Failed | 1 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed | 0 Failed |

### Possessions

Laptop computer with several encyclopedic-type CD-ROMs (to disguise her Trivia spell when necessary), notepad, camera (with flash & 25 shots), charges: 2 significant & 8 minor.

## Dave Banks, Charismatic Investigator

(Scorpio) Another freelancer with a reputation for being reliable and experienced in the occult underground, Dave likes to think of himself as a private eye, which, to be fair, isn't totally unreasonable.

### Obsession

Being known. Dave wants to feel that he knows everybody important, and that everybody knows him. Networking isn't so much a hobby of his as a crusade.

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Not having favors repaid, unless the person has a damn good reason.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Isolation) Being out of touch.
**Noble Stimulus:** Making introductions for people who need them, but have nowhere to start.

### Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 60 | (Persistent) |
| **Speed:** | 55 | (Alert) |
| **Mind:** | 50 | (Dogged) |
| **Soul:** | 55 | (Likeable) |

### Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 25%, Martial Arts 45%, Resistance 20%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 15%, Drive 15%, Pick Locks 20%, Pistols 20%, Sleight of Hand 15%
**Mind Skills:** General Education 15%, Notice 30%, The Scene 35%
**Soul Skills:** Charm 30%, **Contacts 35%**, Lie 20%

**Resistance:** This gives Dave the stubbornness to withstand mental and physical trials.
**The Scene:** This tells him who is who, what their reputation is, and what their interests are.
**Contacts:** This helps him find people who can get something done or give him some information.

### Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 2 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 1 Failed | 1 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed |

### Possessions

Colt Viper with 6 rounds, set of skeleton keys (to allow him to pick locks), mag flashlight (doubles as a nightstick).

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# Michael Rosen, Responsible Plutomancer

(Virgo) The leader of the team, aged 29. For obvious reasons, he lets Big Steve handle the money. He's happy being part of Abel's New Inquisition, and does his best to do his tasks efficiently, successfully, and on time.

## Obsession

Becoming a big shot. He wants to be a major player—not for the power, particularly, but just so that he feels he's "won," although he's not sure what it is he wants to win.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** People making him feel small.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Self) Being insignificant.
**Noble Stimulus:** Wants to protect those who acknowledge his dominance, so that they can stay as acolytes.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 40 | (Skinny) |
| **Speed:** | 60 | (Wired) |
| **Mind:** | 50 | (Thinks It Through) |
| **Soul:** | 70 | (Insightful) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 15%, Run Away 20%, Struggle 35%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 45%, Drive 15%, Pistol 30%
**Mind Skills:** Commerce 20%, Evaluate 30%, General Education 15%, Notice 15%
**Soul Skills:** Charm 15%, Lie 30%, **Magick: Plutomancy 55%**

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 Hardened | 3 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 1 Failed | 1 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed |

## Possessions

9mm Glock handgun with 16 rounds, spare clip of 16 rounds, charges: 2 significant & 5 minor.

# Eric Goodborough, Practical Sensitive

(Taurus) The final member of the team that Michael Rosen has assembled, Eric is a psychic sensitive. He generally makes his money by conning fools, though.

## Obsession

The Other Side. Eric is terrified by the idea of personal mortality, and needs to feel that his personality will survive the death of his body, which is why he surrounds himself with spiritualist trappings.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Anyone suggesting that death is the end of everything.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Helplessness) Death, natch.
**Noble Stimulus:** He'll go out of his way to try to help cure sick or injured people, because he doesn't want anyone dying.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 55 | (Robust) |
| **Speed:** | 40 | (Oblivious) |
| **Mind:** | 55 | (Ethereal) |
| **Soul:** | 70 | (Fey) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 25%, Feign Seizure 25%, Struggle 35%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 15%, Drive 15%, **Sleight of Hand 40%**
**Mind Skills:** Gen. Education 25%, Occultism 40%, Notice 20%
**Soul Skills:** Charm 30%, Lie 30%, Sensitive 40%

**Sensitive:** This lets Eric feel the atmosphere of a place or person, get an accurate impression of them, and to be aware of adepts and magick powers.

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Hardened | 1 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 4 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 1 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed |

## Possessions

Tarot cards, pendulum, crystals, pentagrams and other bunkum.

# Big Steve, Badass Financier

(Pisces) Big Steve, 32, works closely with Michael on a permanent basis. He's used to being the guy who handles the money, and Michael's abilities have got them both out of trouble from time to time, so he's happy with that. He is more loyal to Michael than to the New Inquisition.

## Obsession

Belonging. He needs to feel that people are looking out for him.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Betrayal. Don't double-cross the guy.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Isolation) Being alone.
**Noble Stimulus:** Kind and generous to waifs and strays.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 60 | (Big) |
| **Speed:** | 60 | (Graceful) |
| **Mind:** | 50 | (Stolid) |
| **Soul:** | 45 | (Reserved) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 15%, Chasing 25%, **Thuggery 55%**
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 35%, Drive 25%, Shoot Things 30%
**Mind Skills:** General Education 20%, Notice 40%, Sports Fan 20%
**Soul Skills:** Charm 15%, Intimidate 35%, Lie 25%

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 Hardened | 3 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 1 Hardened |
| 1 Failed | 0 Failed | 2 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed |

## Possessions

10" Hunting Knife (sheathed) hidden beneath his jeans; Glock 9mm pistol with 12 rounds; $3000 in cash

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# JOY & SORROW

## by nicole lindroos & john tynes

UNKNOWN ARMIES

"IT'S THE STRANGE THING ABOUT YOU MYSTICS—
HOW OFTEN YOUR LITTLE ECSTASIES WEAR A SKIRT."
—JOHN UPDIKE

"SORROW IS EVER THE MOTHER OF JOY."
—SARA

## Flesh mortifies. Marrow decays.

Organs liquefy. The corruption of inevitability overtakes life and reduces it to sludge. All a person ever was is lost, running into the soil to feed worms. Every sorrow nourishes the hungry Earth.

But the joy—the joy lives on.

In a room, a library dislocated from reality, Joy lives on. Her library warps across space, slipping into the cracks of the places we live. When the library materializes in your house, a new door or stairway or hall folds together from the undifferentiated matter of the cosmos, allowing you entrance into a room full of bookshelves. Joy greets you, and bids you to write down your happiest memory. When you are done sharing, when you have committed to posterity the time when you lived life full and loved with a purity that still brings tears, Joy closes the current volume and places it on the shelves, recording all the best that humanity has to offer. Then she and her library move on.

Sorrow follows her.

Sorrow criss-crosses the world, seeking the signs of Joy's passing. Every now and then, Sorrow is there in time, in time to catch up with Joy and the library's appearance in your home before you've fully understood the significance of this strange presence. Then, if through cunning or force she can convince you to bring Joy out of the library where she cannot venture, she writes her own volume. She tattoos a fresh new sorrow into Joy's young skin, the child screaming from the pain and the blood, and somewhere in the world at that moment that imagined sorrow comes true, visiting disaster on whatever random name Sorrow has plucked from the living air. She writes and cuts into Joy's flesh until there is not a usable surface anywhere on her sob-wracked body, all these fine sorrows winging their way across the world to bring misery to the commonweal of humanity, and then she pats Joy's blond head and sends her back into the library to cry herself to sleep.

Time passes. When Joy has grown enough, when her bones have stretched enough, when her skin has expanded enough, when there is once again enough room to write between the lines, within the distended old letters, Sorrow seeks her out and once more a flock of sorrows is set loose.

Eventually, Joy reaches adulthood. Her skin is dark with the writings of a thousand pains. The sorrows written deep into her flesh overwhelm her, and Joy walks out of the library of her own volition. When she emerges, Joy becomes Sorrow.

Sorrow seeks out her father-husband, the First and Last Man, from the secret lives he walks among mortals. They couple, and nine months later Sorrow gives birth to Joy and places the infant within the library, so that she may visit the child again and again to enact revenge for the injustices heaped upon her by her own mother. The elder Sorrows live out their mortal lives, growing older and more hateful, always ready to assist the latest Sorrow in hurting the latest Joy, as they were once hurt.

When Joy visits you, it is because Sorrow has hurt you. Some past tragedy has alighted upon your life, shattering your destiny, but that sorrow will one day nourish the hungry Earth and be forgotten. In recompense for this violation, Joy visits you, and gives you the opportunity to scribe your greatest happiness, and on that succor the Earth will not feed. Your joy will live on until the end of time, until the First and Last Man has read the first and last book and all the volumes in between, and calls the stars down from the sky to rebirth the cosmos and start the cycle anew.

But if Sorrow comes to your door, in search of her errant child, she will make you an offer. She is responsible for the terrible thing that happened to you, yes, but what was done can be undone, what was made can be unmade. If you will only bring Joy down from the library before you've written in her book, Sorrow will give you a knife and a needle and thread. She will hold Joy in her bitter hands, and you can cut loose the skin on which your sorrow was inscribed, then sew up the flesh around it. Little Joy will scream, little Joy will wail, little Joy will bleed, but then if you can just force yourself to eat that little piece of flesh, the sorrow that wrecked your life will be undone. History will be rewritten, your life will wend off on some different path, and perhaps you will be happy.

Deprived of your visit to the library, however, your greatest joy will pass away when you do. You will die, taking only memories, leaving only footprints, and the hungry Earth will swallow up all that you ever were, sorrows and joys alike corrupting and running into the mouths of scavengers in the aftermath of your death.

A simple proposition. Swallow your sorrow and it will be undone, and you may be happy; in exchange, your joy will be absent from the library, never to inform the cosmos that you ever were.

A simple proposition.

What would *you* do?

## Getting Started

The PCs are all residents of the Linda Vista Estates, a fresh suburban community outside some major city that does not concern us here. Each PC has been visited in recent years by a sorrow, sprung from the flesh of Joy. Their lives are now adrift, cut loose from the moorings of destiny and sailing on uncertain seas. Each has coped, as all humans do when faced with sorrow, but each regrets the event that spun them off into the mists.

Tonight, however, Joy is coming into their homes, offering something resembling redemption, a chance to justify their lives and contribute something lasting and good and true to the cosmos. But Sorrow is coming, too, with the cackling, elder Sorrows in tow. She has a simple proposition.

Once a month, the management of Linda Vista holds a residents' meeting. Modern suburbs offer graceful living at a price: a covenant that regulates how one maintains one's

CHAPTER ILLO BY ROB NEMETH

home. From the color of paint to the style of curtains to the acceptable times to cut one's yard, the covenant binds those who choose to live under it. At each meeting, violations of the covenant are aired, and remedies ordered.

The scenario starts at one such meeting, on a rainy Wednesday night. George Crookall, the administrator for Linda Vista Developments, chairs the meeting. There are numerous violations to discuss, all petty infractions, but it gives some residents a smug sort of superiority to chastise each other. They may secretly disapprove of your career, your children, your habits, or the color of your skin, but the covenant only governs your home, and it is through the covenant that embittered suburbanites wage their internecine wars against their neighbors.

Each PC has violated the covenant in various ways. George addresses each of them in turn, listing the following infractions and giving the PC a brief chance to respond. He has little patience, however, and tends to cut short any discussion or explanation, moving swiftly on to the next PC. (If there are any PCs that your group is not using, simply ignore their infractions; for our purposes, those characters do not exist in this story.)

"Mr. Daniels, you may not have had the chance to fully examine the neighborhood council by-laws, which include the necessity of trimming your lawn area to between ½" and 1", not before 9:00 A.M. and not after 7:30 P.M. I'm afraid your performance in this area is severely lacking. According to the by-laws, another infraction will result in a visit from the manager and a fine, but I'm sure it won't come to that, now will it? You have two days to correct the matter."

"Mr. Graham, it has come to our attention that you have been residing in number 2936 for more than thirty days, which is the maximum amount of time an unregistered guest may live within the Estates. I'm afraid that we will have to levy a fine against your parents for failing to register your presence with the neighborhood council before they left; in their absence, you will have to pay or face eviction. Can you tell us exactly how long you will be staying in number 2936? As only a resident can register a guest, the fines are likely to accrue."

"Mrs. Larsson, oh, many apologies, I mean Ms. Larsson. You have hung curtains in your windows, which the other tenants can see from the outside of the building. As you should know, the neighborhood council has approved white or off-white blinds as a replacement for curtains, both for their neat appearance and for their non-combustibility should there be a fire. I'm sure you can understand how this is a safety issue for your neighbors. Approved blinds may be purchased through Home Warehouse. Please remove your curtains before Monday."

"Mr. Michaels, there have been some complaints that unregistered guests have been allowed into the common areas to use the vending machines, especially in the pool area. I cannot stress enough that a tenant must accompany unregistered guests. I'm just trying to save your guests from embarrassment and inconvenience, you understand . . . rather than bringing your friends to Linda Vista, maybe meeting them in a public area someplace else, such as a coffee shop, would be more suitable?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Bonneville, several residents have noticed that your door chime is non-standard, and actually deviates so far as to play a polyphonic wind-bell sound. As I am sure you are aware, in the interests of communal harmony the council has approved the use of a muted church-bell chime. I trust you will see to correcting this breach of regulations before it becomes a serious issue?"

The players can respond as they wish. This part of the scene has no further consequence to the plot, but it should hopefully serve to remind each PC of just how miserable he or she is, to make them all feel helpless in the face of the pettiness of massed social order.

When each PC has been chastened and humiliated, George says he has another announcement. He nods to a group of four women at the back of the room, and they silently file forwards to face the residents. The women are of different ages: one is in her thirties, one in her fifties, one in her seventies, and one in her nineties. All bear a strong familial resemblance, looking simply like aging iterations of the same person. They're dressed in severe clothing, blacks and grays predominating. All wear prim white gloves and all have scarves or veils that hide their ears. The only skin they allow to show is that of their faces, which are uniformly covered in heavy makeup—the better to hide the relentless tattooing of words that cover their bodies. These are the Sorrows.

George introduces the youngest, Sara, and says that she and her family have recently moved into Linda Vista Estates. He calls for applause to welcome them. Then Sara addresses the crowd, and says that her daughter, Joy, is missing.

Joy, she says tonelessly, is a girl of ten, with blond hair and a sunny disposition. She was out playing this afternoon and disappeared. The authorities have been notified, of course, but Sara is hoping that some resident might see the little girl. She nods to George, who picks up a thick stack of business cards and hands them to the crowd, each person taking one and passing the rest on to the next. They simply say "Sara" and provide a cell phone number.

Sara asks that if anyone sees little Joy tonight, they should please call her immediately. She and some of Linda Vista's private security guards will be searching the neighborhood, going door to door since not everyone is at the meeting. She emphasizes that the residents should call at the very first sighting; Joy is delusional, and needs her medication urgently. Talking with the child will only confuse her. Better to just call Sara at once, so she and her family can come get the child and get her well again. She has given her photographs to the police, unfortunately, but trusts her kindly new neighbors will notice an unfamiliar little blond girl regardless.

Having finished her speech, Sara and her family leave the room, joining two security guards on the way out to resume the search. George encourages everyone to keep a sharp lookout and to drive extra carefully, then bids them all a good night. The PCs return home.

## The Library

At home, the PCs make a startling discovery: there's a new doorway in their houses, one that did not exist–*could* not exist–before. It looks into a hallway of bare white walls and floor, and at the end it opens into some larger room. It is impossible to reconcile the existence of these structures with the floorplan; some doorways may even be set into thin walls with a room on the other side, though the doorway cannot be seen from there. The realization of this impossible situation is good for a rank-2 Unnatural check.

The room at the end of the hallway proves to be a library of great size. It rises three full stories in height, with numerous alcoves. Every foot of wall from floor to ceiling is covered in bookcases, and more are freestanding throughout the room. Although brightly lit, there are no sources of illumination.

All of the PCs enter the library simultaneously (even if some hesitated), and see each other scattered about the perimeter, having entered through a variety of hallways. There are only as many hallways as there are PCs, and each leads back to the respective home of each PC.

In the center of the library is a large table around which are arrayed a dozen chairs. Seated at the head of the table is a little blond girl, about ten years old, wearing a plain white dress and black patent-leather shoes. She's swinging her legs back and forth, with an eager look on her face. Her skin is covered in a black latticework of words, tattooed into her flesh; the effect is ghastly. A second rank-2 Unnatural check is appropriate.

The PCs may react as they wish. The girl simply says hello and invites them to the table.

## The Conversation

Handling the PCs' conversation with the girl is tricky. Joy has full knowledge of her lot in life, and she can potentially recount the entire opening text to this scenario, explaining her situation and the threat to her posed by her mother. However, you should not give away everything right at the start, nor reduce the story of Joy and Sorrow to a mundane recitation of events. Joy's first priority is not to make explanations; she just wants to get each PC in turn to write an account of the happiest moment in their lives.

Joy's motivation here is twofold. First, this is what she is here for: to collect all the joys of the world. She takes this obligation seriously and sacredly. Second, as soon as a particular PC has finished writing down his or her greatest joy, that PC is of no use to Sorrow; he or she is simply invulnerable to her persuasive powers and can no longer make use of the proposition, and Sorrow will recognize this immediately. For Joy to escape, she must get all the PCs to write down their joys.

Joy will introduce herself, and explain in some fashion that all these books are full of the happiest moments of people's lives. She has a blank book open on the table, and a plain ballpoint pen to the side, ready to hand to each PC in turn. No other book or writing implement will do; it must be these, meaning only one PC can do this at a time.

To start things off, Joy–who knows every PC's name–will pick a random PC and ask why he or she is unhappy. This may take some prodding and will likely result in some initial confusion, but Joy is persistent: she wants to know what Sorrow has done to these people. She will ask questions for detail and amplification, gently encouraging the PC to tell the story in full. (The players here are expected to elaborate and extemporize, relating their varied sorrows in their own words and in character.)

Where possible, Joy will include everyone in the conversation. She may draw comparisons between sorrows, or ask a side question to another PC to help illuminate the current questionee's tale. ("Why do you think he did that?") As GM, your goal is to play Joy in such a way as to get all the players involved in sharing their stories.

Although Joy is persistent, she is not hurried. She fears that the Sorrows are nearby, but this process is important to her work, and she cannot simply rush through it *pro forma*.

When all the PCs have told their stories of sorrows, Joy gets up and goes to each in turn. She directs their attention to some part of her flesh–an arm, a leg, an ear–and points out how the root of each PC's sorrow is tattooed there in a simple sentence. She explains that her mother, Sorrow, is responsible for all these events, and that if Sorrow can get to her, she will do it again to more people.

With these stories told and these explanations made, Joy will retake her seat and turn to a random PC. "Now," she says quietly, pushing forward the book and pen. "Write for me the full story of your greatest time of joy. Do not skimp. Give it all to my book, that it may join all the other joys in this place for all time, and nourish the world thereby."

At this point, hand a piece of paper and a pen to the player, addressing him or her by the PC's name. (Instead of a piece of paper, use a fine, blank book from a stationery store if you possess a dramatic bone in your body and have the time and resources to make such a purchase.) Look expectant.

Nothing in the PC's write-up will give the player much clue as to what this time of joy might have been. It's up to the players to conceive of this themselves, in detail, and write it down.

## The First Knock

Once the player is busy writing–and no single sentence will do; Joy will expect the PC to fill most of the page, with even more being welcome–Sorrow comes knocking on one PC's front

door. Everyone can hear the knock clearly; it echoes oddly loud throughout the library, though it is also, strangely, obvious just which hallway and whose house the knock comes from.

"That's my mother," Joy will say. She encourages the PC (or PCs, if it's the Bonnevilles) to answer it, saying that Sorrow may grow angry if ignored—to uncertain effect.

It is indeed Sara knocking on the door. The elder Sorrows and two uniformed security guards stand on the sidewalk, out of easy earshot.

Sara will ask if the PC has seen Joy. Should the PC say yes, or say no and fail in a Lying check, she will calmly ask the PC to please bring her daughter out. Refusal means Sara will grow insistent, though she is careful to keep her voice down; she doesn't want to involve the security guards yet, since she isn't eager for them to see the library. Further refusal means Sara will grow cruel. She'll make veiled, cutting comments about the sorrow the PC has suffered, and then smile falsely and suggest that it can be undone, if only the PC will bring the girl out. "I have a knife, and some needle and thread. We can cut that sorrow right out of her skin, and it will be as if it never happened." She'll offer specific details of just what would be undone, using her knowledge of the PC's sorrow in an attempt to manipulate him or her. This attempt may trigger Self checks or some other check at your discretion.

If Sara is denied, or if the PC succeeded in the initial Lie check, she simply says good night and leaves.

If the PC succumbs to her offer, she is pleased. She instructs the PC to go and get Joy, by force if necessary, and bring her out. Adjudicate the result as appropriate; Joy will not go willingly, and the other PCs are likely to intervene, perhaps even violently. Should the PC succeed in getting Joy out, Sara will conduct the sorrow-cutting procedure as explained earlier—triggering a rank-1 Violence check and perhaps a change of heart in the PC—and then, true to her embittered word, the PC may eat the little piece of inscribed flesh, undo the sorrow, and bring about the end of the scenario.

## Tales of Joy

Assuming the scenario is still underway, Joy continues the procedure in the library. As soon as one PC is finished writing a tale of joy, Joy passes the book and pen on to someone else. She will choose PCs who have not yet been confronted by Sara over those who have, but will eventually—hopefully—get them all.

## Further Knocks

Whenever the time feels right, have Sara knock on another PC's door. The second knock should go to the PC who first finished writing his or her tale of joy. The encounter will then begin just as with the first knock except that now the next-eldest Sorrow will be at the door as well, but Sara will quickly realize that she is too late, that this PC has already written a tale and cannot be tempted. Both women will mock him or her with details of the sorrow, reminding the PC that it could have been undone if only the PC had not been so foolish as to accept Joy's offer.

The knocks continue as long as the PCs are still writing. Each time, Sara grows more irate. Each time, she will be joined by an additional Sorrow.

Timing is important here. The idea is for each PC to have an encounter with Sara, some before the PC's tale is told and some after. Do your best to tempt PCs who have not yet told a tale, since some interesting conflict will result if the PC accepts Sara's offer, but this is not critical; even if all the PCs refuse Sara, that's fine.

## Between Knocks

While the PCs wait their turn at the book and at the door, they may do what they like. Joy will answer their questions as best she can, elaborating on her strange personal mythology. They may wander about the library, read some of the books, discuss the situation among themselves, or whatever they like. Some PCs may elect to accompany those whose turn with Sara comes, standing together in opposition.

## The Final Knock

The last PC to face Sara—and, now, all of the Sorrows *and* the two security guards—will initially be treated the same as the rest. If the bargain can still be made and the PC desires to make the bargain, so be it.

If Sara is denied this final time, however, she is no longer willing to hold back. She turns to the security guards and insists that her daughter is in the house; another Sorrow will even shriek and point at a window of the house, claiming she just saw the little girl pass by. Sara will impugn the PC, branding him or her a pederast or a murderer or whatever.

The guards will move into action, demanding entry and then forcing their way in if at all possible. They'll break down the door, smash in a window, whatever, goaded on by the slippery words of the Sorrows.

Inside, Sara will usher the guards towards the library to retrieve Joy. It's up to the PCs to hold them off long enough for the final PC to write his or her tale of joy. They may barricade the doorway, get in a fight with the guards (they don't have firearms, by the way), or whatever. The Sorrows cannot enter the library; they hover at the strange doorway at the other end of the hall and shriek at Joy to come to them in terrible, inhuman voices. As the last PC writes, Joy pleads with him or her not to skimp; even against the final threat of the Sorrows, the PC must tell the tale in full, and not cut it short.

**This is the climax.** The PCs must fend off the guards while the last PC writes furiously. Play this out in real time; if the guards overcome the PCs and drag Joy from the library before the last player is actually finished writing in the book, the Sorrows win. If the player can complete his tale in full

(whatever you and the player decide that to be), Joy takes the book and runs to a high bookcase. She needs a PC's help to reach the right shelf; he or she can lift Joy up to slot the book in, but it must be Joy's hand that puts it there. If the guards are still at hand, they'll do their best to interfere.

If the last tale is told and the book put away, Joy smiles gladly. The library vanishes, and everyone finds themselves back in their respective houses. The guards and the Sorrows are in the house of the last PC to answer the door. The Sorrows scream and bang on the wall where the doorway was, then the baffled and disoriented guards lead the wailing women outside into the rainy night, never to trouble the PCs again.

If the Sorrows win, they run off into the darkness with Joy, cackling with pleasure. The little girl's screams resonate across the landscape.

# GMC Stats

## Sara, the Sorrow

**Summary:** Sara is the youngest of the four Sorrows, having left the library about a decade ago. She's assaulted her daughter, Joy, three times, including the time of her birth, and is ready to do so again. Most of the time, she's a sullen and passionless woman; it's only when she's getting close to finding Joy again that she begins to boil inside. Wherever Sara wanders, she makes her living as a seamstress. Her skin is covered with tattooed words; she keeps this hidden with clothing and makeup when she's seeking Joy, but in daily life she displays her inked-in skin proudly, almost fiercely, as if they were battle scars.

### Obsession

Hurting Joy, spreading sorrow.

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Being denied her obsession.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Helplessness) Death.
**Noble Stimulus:** The glory of the hunt.

### Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 40 | (Wiry) |
| **Speed:** | 65 | (S) (Quick Fingers) |
| **Mind:** | 45 | (Animal Cunning) |
| **Soul:** | 70 | (Deep but Hollow) |

### Skills

**Body Skills:** General Athletics 35%, Struggle 35%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 35%, Drive 20%, **Sew 40%**
**Mind Skills:** General Education 30%, Notice 45%
**Soul Skills:** Charm 15%, Commanding Presence 55%, Lying 30%

### Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 Hardened | 8 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 6 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 2 Failed | 4 Failed | 3 Failed |

## The Elder Sorrows

**Summary:** The three elder Sorrows–Mary, Lenore, and Harriet–are 52, 75, and 96 years old respectively. They no longer pursue Joy on their own, having ceded that obsession to their daughters in turn, but they do assist the latest Sorrow, Sara, in hunting Joy. In general, they are vicious, mocking, and embittered folk. Like Sara their skin is covered in tattooed words, which they display in daily life but keep covered when on the hunt. Their stats are identical for game purposes.

### Obsession

Hurting Joy, spreading sorrow.

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Any sort of personal frustration, even a wait in line for the bus, is too much to bear.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Helplessness) Death.
**Noble Stimulus:** Helping the other Sorrows; they only have each other, after all.

### Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 35 | (Frail) |
| **Speed:** | 85 | (S) (Brittle Quickness) |
| **Mind:** | 55 | (Keen) |
| **Soul:** | 85 | (Passionate Hatred) |

### Skills

**Body Skills:** Distracting Physique 35%, General Athletics 15%, Struggle 15%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 45%, Drive 25%, Squirrelly Reflexes 45%
**Mind Skills:** General Education 40%, Notice 45%
**Soul Skills: Augur 50%,** Charm 15%, Lying 50%

**Augur:** The elder Sorrows can make predictions about the mutable future, as long as their predictions directly relate to themselves; they can feel the thread of their lives unspooling before them. This is how they find Joy.

### Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 Hardened | 9 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 6 Hardened | 9 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 3 Failed | 4 Failed | 1 Failed |

# Eric Bonneville

(Pisces) You used to be a vigorous man, full of wit and sparkle. No one would know that now. In fact, no one but your wife, Sarah, knows you at all anymore. Unable to hold a job, you no longer try to accomplish anything when Sarah is not around. Pale and gaunt, you're prematurely graying and look at least ten years older than your youthful wife. In reality, you're two years younger.

You're like a top, humming with internal energy when Sarah is around. She is the framework within which you can function; when you're alone, your mind lashes out in all directions, unable to focus your energy, shying away from all stimuli that are not filtered through your wife. Noise of any sort bothers you, and you make your displeasure known when you're disturbed by the motions of others' daily lives by stomping on the floor, slamming doors in your house, banging on the walls, and occasionally shouting out the window. You also release a great deal of negative energy by glaring out of your window at people who disturb you, but only if you think you can't be seen. You find it hard to function without Sarah there to speak for you both, and you have great difficulty in focusing on issues at hand. You're fast losing any sense of yourself, and feel only an all-consuming need for Sarah.

**Unconscious Knowledge:** You don't know this intellectually, but you can sense it and may act accordingly if the time is right. You've made a terrible mistake. Sarah is not an inherently bad person, but your natural submissiveness has brought out a side of her that is slowly destroying you–and you're allowing it to happen. Your personality is emptying out, to be replaced by hers. But you've been too weak to do anything about it . . . and the terrible thing is, you've loved her too much to risk losing her by coming to terms with your unhealthy, co-dependent relationship.

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## Obsession

Sarah. Her presence is becoming the be all and end all of your life.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Anyone who threatens, insults or hurts Sarah.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Isolation) Being away from Sarah.
**Noble Stimulus:** Escape. Helping people get out of a situation that is trapping them.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 45 | (Scrawny) |
| **Speed:** | 85 | (Spring-Loaded) |
| **Mind:** | 65 | (Judgmental) |
| **Soul:** | 25 | (Needy) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 30%, Struggle 45%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 55%, Drive 20%, Sprint 40%
**Mind Skills:** General Education 40%, **Notice** 55%
**Soul Skills:** Charm 15%, Hunches 25%, Lie 15%

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 1 Hardened | 2 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 2 Failed | 0 Failed | 3 Failed |

# Sarah Bonneville

(Capricorn) You are the more normal of the Bonnevilles. By all appearances you're a young, attractive, intellectual woman of Asian-American descent. You drive a sporty-yet-practical Volkswagen, hold a regular job and a professional life, and have a busy social calendar. You're reservedly affectionate with your husband of three years, and while you are embarrassed by some of his behavior you defend him regardless.

You met Eric in college and have been together ever since. Eric's steady decline is not something you talk about, not even with your family. In fact, you've tried to get both of you as far from family and friends as possible. No one knows your husband, no one asks about him, and you like it best that way. If no one but you even knew Eric existed, you'd be delighted. He is your property.

Some part of you knows this is an incredibly unhealthy relationship. You've always been assertive, but no other boyfriend brought out this side of you like Eric did. With other guys, you could live in an atmosphere of give-and-take. With Eric, you take and he gives. That's it. And you like it so much that you're willing to ignore the voice of your conscience, which tells you that people like you and Eric should *never* get involved with each other.

**Unconscious Knowledge:** You don't know this intellectually, but you can sense it and may act accordingly if the time is right. You have a natural talent which might be mistaken for magickal skill. You're holding your husband within a tightly bound, co-dependent relationship. As Eric's mental and emotional state has deteriorated over the last three years, you've stepped into him to fill the gap. More and more you find your own personality is becoming subsumed to the Us and the We. You no longer speak your own mind, but speak as the voice of the unit you and Eric have become. The terrible truth you have not consciously realized is that the more you act as the will of your union, the more of Eric—the Eric you knew and loved, anyway—is sapped away.

## Obsession

Eric's decline. You're very concerned about the way he seems to be fading away inside himself.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Anyone who harms or slights Eric.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Self) That somehow you are the cause of Eric's decline, but that you might be left alone if you admitted it and ended the marriage.
**Noble Stimulus:** People who are unable to take charge of their own lives. You like to help lead people who seem to need guidance.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 60 | (Physically Fit) |
| **Speed:** | 50 | (Jumpy) |
| **Mind:** | 50 | (Insightful) |
| **Soul:** | 60 | (Alluring) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 50%, Struggle 15%, Yoga 25%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 40%, Drive 15%, Two Things At Once 25%
**Mind Skills:** General Education 40%, Notice 25%
**Soul Skills:** Atmosphere 25%, **Charm 40%**, Lie 25%

**Atmosphere:** This allows you to be aware of the emotional charge of a situation or location.

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed |

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# Dr. Martin Daniels, Academic

(Virgo) You've finally made it. After years of hard work, sacrifice, and study you have finally landed yourself a good position in academia. You're on the tenure track, with an Associate Professorship under your belt and a few supporters on the faculty, so things are good. Of course, it doesn't hurt that your area of specialty is a hot one right now. Your thesis was titled *The Pedagogy of Educating the Millennium*, and dealt with the historical, philosophical and religious changes and how they build toward the end of each century.

You've been through some changes of your own. Three years ago you were living with a terrific woman named Susan, who loved you dearly. You loved her, too, or at least you thought you did. You'd met in grad school, and been together for a couple of years. But as you immersed yourself in your Ph.D. program, you became more and more obsessed with your academic work, and with the power and reputation it would bring you. You became convinced of your own brilliance, and could visualize the rewards that it would bring—rewards that you richly deserved. You drifted away from Susan. When one of your freshman students began making eyes at you in class, you took advantage of her—because you deserved it. You made her worship you, mind and body, and reveled in the power and control you had over this young woman. It was intoxicating.

Susan eventually found out and left you, heartbroken. You were too arrogant to let yourself care. You *deserved* better.

By the time the summer break came around, your relationship with the girl had disintegrated. She could have easily destroyed your career, but she was so distraught and humiliated that she simply went home at the end of term. When fall came around, she didn't return.

The lesson you learned from this experience—the one you *allowed* yourself to learn, at least—was that you were better off staying single until you got your doctorate. You might have learned a different lesson from your behavior, of course, and maybe if you had, you and Susan could have reconciled. Instead, you simply buried yourself in your work, in building your brilliant career.

Of course, this path has cost you in other ways. While your friends from college went off and got jobs as computer programmers or data entry clerks, you stayed scrambling for work to keep your basement apartment stocked in generic pizzas and beef dinners and cheap beer while you kissed up to the right supporters and avoided the adversaries. Evenings involved writing, writing, writing and praying that in the end it would all be worth it.

You became increasingly isolated, racking up tens of thousands of dollars in student debts while your friends were settled into their post-collegiate lifestyles. They were corporate shills, but they had health insurance and retirement plans. Driven to prove yourself, you focused on your thesis to the exclusion of all else and sure enough, you and a handful of other favored students moved past the last hurdle together. You earned that Ph.D., and immediately changed the name on your checks to read Dr. Martin Daniels. When you got your post, you made that step towards permanency official by purchasing your own little townhouse in the Linda Vista Estates. Sure, you didn't have anyone to help you move in, but there will be time for developing faculty friendships later. For now, it's cozy, it's private, and it's quiet. Perfect for researching your new work, *The Appeal of the Apocalypse*.

If your next paper is equally acclaimed, you can turn that into a book, and you know what they say . . . publish or perish. You can't perish. You have a house and a chance at tenure. You also have a mound of deep-seated guilt over the choices you've made, guilt that can only be contained—for now—by professional success.

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## Obsession

Justify your decisions. Prove yourself as a scholar. First tenure, then chair, then dean of something.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Anyone who questions your scholarship or intellect.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Self) Anyone who questions your personal life.
**Noble Stimulus:** Your monastic love of knowledge drives you to step in on behalf of others who don't have the same access to information that you do. You won't stand silently by and let someone else's ignorance be their downfall.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 60 | (Shoots Hoops) |
| **Speed:** | 45 | (Half-Step Behind) |
| **Mind:** | 70 | (Like A Steel Trap) |
| **Soul:** | 45 | (Self-Absorbed) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 55%, Struggle 35%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 50%, Drive 20%
**Mind Skills:** General Education 50%, Notice 20%, **Sociology 40%**
**Soul Skills:** Charm 25%, Friend in the Family 25%, Lie 25%

**Friend in the Family:** You know an influential professor who is close to retirement.

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 1 Hardened | 1 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed | 1 Failed |

# Edwin Graham, Writer and Dilettante

(Leo) You're a big success as far as your writer's group is concerned. Some might say that's because it's a group that formed around you after you had published a few short stories, but you'll take your strokes where you can get them. A few short stories, a novel in a failed series about lycanthropic lizard men, and a serial about swing-dancing hep cats in the local free paper. It's not the New York *Times* best-seller list, but it's enough to keep you going. You're sure that you have at least one good book in you, so you keep plugging away. Maybe if you wrote a novel based around your juvenile exploits as a minor petty criminal . . .

. . . or about the fact that your *first* novel was plagiarized. You didn't intend for it to be that way, certainly. You found this old pulp magazine once at a rare bookseller's, and bought it because it had the work of an author you liked. Eventually you read the other stories in the issue, and there was this one story about lycanthropic lizard men by some writer nobody had heard of in decades. It was kind of dorky in some ways, but there were some great ideas, and some great turns of phrase. You started seeing how it could be turned into a novel, and you started writing it sort of playfully. After three chapters, you weren't playing around–you were writing. Sure, the ideas and characters and the better descriptions came from that yellowing old pulp story–but it was still *your* novel, right? And besides, no one ever caught on. And *besides* . . . it sure was a lot easier to write this way.

You're fond of the easy way. It's, well, easy. Why take responsibility for your life if you can cheat and get away with it? Why not just work a little bit, and live life as if you work a lot? You've got a couple of credit card debts, the phone and water are always on the verge of being shut off, but you still go to movies, buy books, and eat out as often as you can. After all, a man needs inspiration. Even on the easy way.

Happily for you, your parents chose to take that dream cruise of the Mediterranean, and leave you with legal authority over their condo in the Linda Vista Estates, just in case of an emergency. You've been living in the condo and getting used to the pleasant lifestyle that you refuse to admit comes only after years of hard work. The downside to this whole arrangement is that your parents will eventually return. You hope to have your one good book out by then; it's just a matter of time before you're living the good life full time.

The question is, will it be *your* book this time? And will anyone ever find out about the fraud you perpetrated? If so, the sham that is your life may come crashing down around your ears.

## Obsession

Convincing the world–or *scamming* the world–that you're a talented writer, and that you deserve to live the good life.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Blood-sucking extortionists. People who want you to part with your money had better have a damn good reason, and a six-month-delinquent credit card bill doesn't count!
**Fear Stimulus:** (Self) That you might be revealed as the scum you secretly fear you are.
**Noble Stimulus:** You believe there is room for everyone at the top, so there's no reason not to help people get ahead, too. You're ambitious without being ruthlessly competitive.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 55 | (Swing Dancer) |
| **Speed:** | 55 | (Good Reflexes) |
| **Mind:** | 60 | (Clever) |
| **Soul:** | 50 | (Cheaters Prosper) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Dancing 30%, In the Swing 15%, Struggle 35%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 20%, Drive 30%, Misspent Youth 30%
**Mind Skills:** General Education 35%, Notice 35%
**Soul Skills:** Charm 55%, Doublethink 25%, **Storytelling 45%**

**In the Swing;** This is the ability to continue with a physical activity for a short time past the point when you would normally be forced to stop. (*e.g.*, you twist your ankle while dancing, but are so caught up with the move you successfully finish the steps before the pain in your body registers with your brain.)
**Misspent Youth:** Covers basic ability in boosting cars, forcing door locks, scaling fences quietly, and petty shoplifting, acquired as part of a small-time gang during childhood.

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed |

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# Wendy Larsson, single mother

(Cancer) It was just three years ago that your hopes and dreams were tangible things that you held in your grasp. A wedding, a job opportunity, a life in a new city, a baby. In those first hours after the accident, no one quite knew what had happened. The last thing you remembered was sitting at a traffic light, three cars back from the intersection, waiting for the light to change. Michael was driving, you were in the passenger seat and Laura was sleeping in her car seat. You don't remember anything else until you regained consciousness in the hospital.

They didn't realize you were awake, or they wouldn't have been talking like they were. Half your face was covered with gauze and your "good" eye was swollen nearly shut. You thought you were dreaming and just waited for the dream to end instead of struggling to sit up, or crying out, or any of the things you see in the movies. When you began to hear more clearly what the nurses were saying, fear gripped you and paralyzed you further.

"I've never seen anything like it," she said. "The paramedic said the driver was talking at the scene, but I saw the body! He was ripped in half! The blood loss alone should have thrown him into shock if the impact didn't knock him out, but Grady swears the guy was calling out 'Laura! Laura! It's time to go home! Come on baby, we've got a journey to make!' Said the woman who started the accident plowed through five cars, doing 100 miles an hour. They took her to General with a broken arm. Can you believe it? And his poor wife, pregnant on top of all this!"

You never let them know you'd heard them. Later, when the doctor came in to check on you, you let him break the news. "They died instantly," he assured you, gently. Maybe he even believed it. Laura might have survived if the car hadn't caught fire, but Michael hadn't had a chance. And now you face parenthood alone, with the only piece of them that remains: Madeline Hope, three years old. To her, it's always been just the two of you.

## Obsession

Living every moment. You are haunted by how much of your life passed in a haze, how little of substance you can remember before the accident. You live your life in a state of hyper-awareness to make up for that.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Reckless actions that endanger others. Drivers who change lanes without signaling, gun owners who leave their guns and ammo lying around the house and bartenders who serve drunks "just one more" all earn your wrath.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Unnatural) That the afterworld really exists, and Michael and Laura aren't at peace there.
**Noble Stimulus:** In your darkest hours, you wish you could have traded places with Michael, or saved Laura. You'll throw yourself in the thick of trouble to try and save a helpless person from harm.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 60 | (Working Mother) |
| **Speed:** | 50 | (Faster than a Toddler) |
| **Mind:** | 50 | (Careful Listener) |
| **Soul:** | 60 | (Tender) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 40%, Maternal Stamina 25%, Struggle 25%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 30%, Drive 15%, React Quickly 35%
**Mind Skills: Childcare 30%**, General Education 20%, Notice 45%
**Soul Skills:** Charm 20%, Soothe 45%

**Maternal Stamina:** If you are trying to protect someone you care about, this will let you ignore pain and overcome injury while you try to get them safe.

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 1 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed | 0 Failed |

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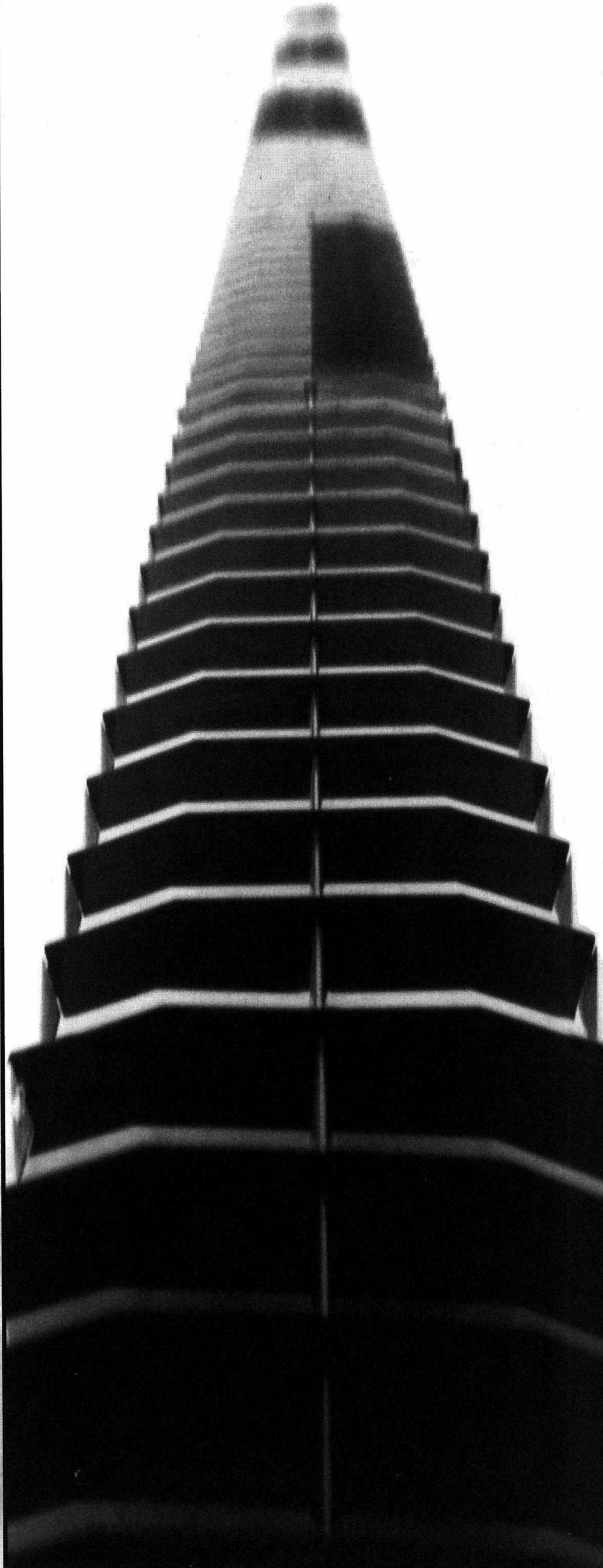
# FLY TO HEAVEN
## by greg stolze

# UNKNOWN ARMIES

"I'M READY FOR ASCENSION, IF I ONLY KNEW HOW . . ."
–TIM BOOTH & ANGELO BADALAMENTI

"NOTHING IN THE OCCULT WORLD IS MORE DANGEROUS THAN SOMEONE WHO'S BOTH DESPERATE AND TOO STUPID TO KNOW WHAT'S IMPOSSIBLE."
–DIRK ALLEN



# Stewardess Fatima Yijifil didn't have many expectations for Flight 333.

She'd taken the Denver/O'Hare run more times than she cared to count: it was just a job. It wasn't that many years ago that the journey between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains would have been measured in days, or even months, rather than hours, but Fatima had rarely considered that. The Boeing 747 had a wingspan of almost 200 feet and weighted close to 400,000 pounds empty–but she gave not a thought for the improbability of that much mass slipping gravity's shackles and floating off into the sky. This one plane was part of a transportation network that could carry thousands of people thousands of miles in the space of a few days, but Fatima was used to that. Mostly, she was thinking about her sore feet.

One more round of drinks and she could sit down. She looked down at a swarthy man in a scruffy army jacket. He was sweating.

"Can I get . . . ?"

"No, nothing," he said rapidly, cutting her off mid-sentence.

She smiled, a flight attendant's practiced smile of reassurance. "Haven't flown in a while?"

"Uh . . . sure. Yeah."

"We'll be in Chicago soon."

"Whatever."

She glanced up to the end of the aisle when she was between the wings: it seemed like a long, long way to go. Then she looked down at a short man, who was looking out the window with a moody expression. She'd noticed him when he came on board; he seemed to move stiffly, almost like an old man.

"Can I get you something?"

He turned to her and she noticed a bruise on his cheek, half-hidden by aviator sunglasses.

"Sure: whiskey sour."

He was clearly in a bad mood, but he thanked her politely when she gave him his drink.

Right before the first class curtain she looked at the woman sitting by the aisle and smiled. There was a little boy snuggled into the seat next to her, gently asleep.

"Can I get either of you anything?" Fatima asked quietly. The mother shook her head.

"He's out like a light. I'd like coffee."

"Here you go. He does look comfortable."

"Sometimes I think these seats are built for children."

Fatima smiled, though a part of her mind was a bit sick of airplane humor.

On the other side of the curtain was a man who'd already had a couple drinks over the course of the flight. Another sad-looking guy, so she gave him the usual patter. "Coffee, tea, or milk?" For some reason, Americans always seemed to think something dirty when she said that. He shook his head and pointed at his plastic glass of ice.

"People may complain about airplane food, but you make a decent gin an' tonic," he told her with a charming grin. "How about another?"

"We're going to set down and you'll still be flying," she said as she poured.

"Oh, I feel more like a crash," he said.

Fatima poured more drinks for well-dressed executives and businesspeople enjoying their frequent-flyer upgrades. Finally there was only one more man, who didn't look like he belonged. He was wearing a leather jacket and typing feverishly at a laptop computer. He only paused periodically to scratch his scruffy beard. She wondered if he was a programmer or scriptwriter or something else where grungy clothes wouldn't cut into your paycheck. On the back of the computer was a giant decal of two glaring human eyes.

"Is there anything you want?" she asked him.

He laughed, and she felt a little uneasy. "What I want isn't on your tray," he said. His eyes glittered.

"Well, let me know if there's anything I can do," she said as she turned away and pushed her cart towards her alcove thinking of nothing but sitting down.

"One thing," he said. She turned around and saw a gun in his hand.

**"Take me to the pilot," he said.**

CHAPTER ILLO BY JIM PAVELEC

Simon Diulio is a bad man. In another age he might have been a slaver, or a palace torturer or a highway bandit. In another country he might have been a secret policeman or a drug smuggler. Even in the modern USA, Simon Diulio might have become a pimp or a pusher or a bomb-building anarchist. But he happened to fall in with the occult underground instead.

Simon has always wanted to be powerful, influential and fearsome, but he's got a counterbalancing weakness of spirit. He wants to bark with the big dogs, but he doesn't want to risk getting any fleas; he wants the power without the price. Being a dangerous magician sounded cool, but he didn't have the guts for chaos magick or the stomach for flesh warping. He was deep into his study of Cliomancy before he realized his teacher could have planted false rumors in his mind to make him want to follow that particular school—or to mold him into a different man. Pissed, he killed her and started looking for a new path.

He'd heard rumors about avatars, but like most sorcerers he dismissed them as bullshit and wishful thinking—until he was lucky enough to scam a third-generation copy of the Naked Goddess tape. That convinced him, and as soon as he believed the stories about joining the Invisible Clergy were true, he knew that was what he wanted to do. Positive or negative archetypes didn't matter one bit to him.

Simon didn't like the idea of trying to unseat someone who'd already ascended, so he decided to go for an archetype that seemed ready to bloom into the popular consciousness.

Simon decided to become the Terrorist.

## The Setting

This scenario takes place in midair aboard a 747 jumbo jet. A 747 is a big plane, and a little unusual because it's double decker: the cockpit is above the first class section, and behind the cockpit there's a small, supplementary passenger compartment. That's in addition to the long passenger compartment on the "main floor."

This is going to make things hard for the two terrorists, because they basically have four areas to watch. There's the large economy-class section (on the plane's main level), the smaller first-class section (main level), a smaller passenger deck on the top floor, and the cockpit (also on the top floor). The stairway up to the smaller passenger deck and the cockpit is between the first-class and economy sections, along with the kitchen and bathrooms.

## Combat in the Sky

Fighting on a stable surface with room to maneuver is one thing; fighting in a cramped plane surrounded by screaming, hysterical passengers is something else again, especially when there's gunplay involved.

On the other hand, who's to say what's a "normal" fight? The UA rules make the shocking assumption that fighting is *always* tricky, so there's no reason to impose penalties on combat skills just because the fighting is happening in the narrow corridors of an airliner. Sure, it impedes an attacker's ability to throw punches or grapple; but it impedes a defender's ability to dodge just as much. So it balances out.

## Using Flight 333 in Your Campaign

Like all the adventures in this book, "Fly to Heaven" is set up for independent play: you read it through a couple times, grab a group of players, and away you go. However, given the public nature of Simon's gambit for immortality, this adventure can be directly tied into an ongoing campaign.

Here's how you do it: you start by establishing Simon as an irritating dickhead antagonist. Set your PCs up to foil a couple of his plans, but make sure he gets away (of course). In fact, you can even play through Simon's backstory, where he knocks off his mentor and takes her place leeching historical energy from the Sears Tower. If you take some time to establish his mentor as a nice lady beforehand, that will make your PCs really want to see him fail. Make sure they understand that he's a half-bright, amoral scum pie with ambitions that way outstrip his current abilities. Then do something else for a couple sessions.

One afternoon, after your PCs have finished off one plot line, have one of them come home and click on the TV, or turn on the radio in a car. There's a special report announcing that an airliner has been hijacked midway between Denver and Chicago. "The police have not released the details of the terrorists' demands, but they have identified one of the men as the notorious Apu al Sayid. The police have not said anything about Sayid's history or record, but have said that he has probably used the alias 'Simon Diulio.' Anyone with information about Apu al Sayid or Simon Diulio should contact their local FBI office immediately."

The PCs know the stakes that Diulio is really gambling for, but they can't tell the FBI without sounding nuts, and there's no way they can get close to that plane. They know what's going on but can't do anything. Next session, hand them the characters who are on the plane: now they're controlling people who don't know what's going on, but who very well might be able to influence the outcome of events. When the session is over, go back to the regular PCs and continue the campaign.

You only need special rules for gunshots, and then only if they miss. Simon's no rocket scientist, but he's smart enough to load the guns with safety slugs. If a gunshot hits its intended target, there's no exit wound. If it misses, however, it's not just going to fly off into space or ricochet off a building: it's going to hit something else. To determine what gets hit, roll 1D10.

**Roll Result**

**1-5** **Passenger:** Some poor sap takes the damage rolled and starts screaming. Other people freak out too: just assume that there are failed stress checks going off all over the place. If you want to give the PCs a break, a couple passengers might hysterically attack the terrorists. On the other hand, they're just as likely to fight with the PCs.

**6-7** **Ceiling.** If this happens in the cockpit or the upper passenger compartment, there's a 1 in 10 chance of a hull breech (see 10, below.) If it happens in the economy-class lower compartment, you can pretend to roll if you want to build suspense, but nothing happens. If the ceiling is hit in the first class compartment, roll 1D10. If it's a 1, someone in the cockpit got hit and takes half the damage that was originally rolled.

**8-9** **Floor.** If this happens in the passenger compartments of the lower levels, nothing happened—the bullet hit landing gear or a baggage container. If it happened in the staircase between first class and economy class, a fuel line or fuel tank could be hit, but having the plane blow up at random isn't much fun, is it? So just assume it missed. If the floor is perforated in the cockpit, roll 1D10: on a four or higher, no one got hit and it struck the floor of the first class compartment without damage. Otherwise, someone in first class took half the damage that was rolled. If the floor of the upper passenger compartment is hit, nothing happens.

**10** **Window.** Uh oh. The cabin of an airliner is pressurized, and when a window gets pierced, most of the air in the cabin is going to go rushing out that hole, just like you've seen in countless disaster movies. Several things happen, all at once.

**The breathing bags drop from the ceiling.** (Did you pay attention during Fatima's safety lecture?) Everyone on the plane immediately starts suffocating, as per the drowning rules on p. 61 of *Unknown Armies*. This stops the instant they get a breath bag on, but starts again if they go too far away from their seat. Putting on a breathing bag requires a successful Mind roll if you're strapped in your seat. If you're in your seat but loose, it takes a successful Mind roll and a successful General Athletics roll. (Once you make one of these rolls you don't have to make it again. If on round one after the breech you make the Mind roll, you've realized that you have to get the bag on and you've remembered how to do it. Then you just have to make the Athletics roll to actually grab a thin, rapidly moving plastic contraption in a lurching plane while people all around you are flailing their arms wildly.) Incidentally, David Pryce cannot get his mask on without help. If you're standing up, you can only make those Mind and Athletics rolls to get a mask if you keep your balance, as described below.

**The plane lurches.** If you're in your seat with your seatbelt securely fastened, you don't have to worry about this, but if you're standing up (struggling with a terrorist, for example) you have to make a Speed roll. Failure means you're knocked down and go last in every round until you spend a turn getting up. (If Fatima Yijifil fails this roll, she can make a second roll on her Balance skill to stay upright.)

**People go nuts.** There are a lot of people on the plane, and a large portion of them blows it when the plane lurches. Some scream, some stand up and mindlessly try to run away, some start clutching whatever gets within reach.

# The Terrorists

## Simon Diulio, "Apu al Sayid"—Hell-Bound

What can we say about Simon, except that he's an excitable little villain? He had a rotten childhood and systematically ignored any chances he might have had to recover. He only knows one way to live: the hating way. Simon's forgotten how to relax. At night, he lies in bed and spins out ever more elaborate vengeance fantasies about his enemies, real and imagined. He gets more and more worked up, until eventually he exhausts himself and passes out. His days are a cycle of cringing fear of others, which causes self-hatred, which he directs outward to fuel his persecution fantasies, which leads to more fear.

Simon's teacher was a fairly decent Cliomancer woman who took a big risk with him. She thought that by "sculpting" his memories she could straighten him out somehow. It was a nice idea, until Simon got wind of it. He went berserk, but lucked out; he was unable to find her until his frenzy subsided. He thought about kidnapping her, torturing her, beating her to death, but in the end he poisoned her. He was too afraid to do it any other way.

Since then, Simon has used his magick powers on his own mind, building in delusions of grandeur and coolness that don't match up with reality. That's fine with Simon though: he's started self-medicating with a wide variety of street-level trash drugs. He likes uppers during the day, and

kicks back with 'ludes for his four hours of sleep a night. During the flight, he's ripped to the tits on Benzedrine and over-the-counter caffeine pills.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 55 | (Rawboned) |
| **Speed:** | 55 | (F) (Jittery) |
| **Mind:** | 40 | (Excitable) |
| **Soul:** | 70 | (Loud) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 35%, Struggle 30%, Wiry Strength 20%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 30%, Drive 15%, Guns 30%
**Mind Skills:** General Education 15%, Notice 35%, Threatening Rant 65%
**Soul Skills:** Charm 15%, Lie 45%, **Magick: Cliomancy 35%**

## Notes

"Apu" begins the scenario with two minor charges, which he will most likely use for Common Knowledge (see p. 85 in *Unknown Armies*) if he gets in trouble. He's been very busy with his other charges, using them to get guns past the gate guards in Denver and (perhaps most importantly) to cast a Scandalous Rumor about himself (or at least about Apu al Sayid). Everyone who hears about Apu al Sayid remembers dreadful things about him–he's a terrorist mastermind, he blew up . . . uh . . . some military thing, and he hijacked . . . some kind of big vehicle . . . killed a bunch of people . . . uh . . . anyhow, he's a real badass–one of the all-stars of international terrorism. Never mind that not one smidge of this is documented; within a few days of Flight 333, there are countless references to Apu's previous career in publications ranging from *Time* to the *Wall Street Journal* to *Soldier of Fortune*. Even Fatima remembers hearing something about Apu, though she only has to hear him rant to realize he's about as Muslim as Jerry Falwell. Hell, "Apu" isn't even an Arab name: it's Indian. (Simon lifted it from *The Simpsons*.)

Don't worry about making madness checks for this guy. Jerk or not, he's on the ascension path, and everything seems to make sense from his point of view . . .

## Possessions

Simon is armed with a Desert Eagle semi-automatic pistol (never mind the absurdity of a supposedly "Arab" terrorist using an Israeli gun). It has seven shots and its damage maximum is 100 when loaded with safety slugs.

He also has about twenty rolls of electrical tape, in a variety of colors. The tape serves two purposes: he makes designs with tape to symbolically transform the plane (see p. 59) and he can use them to immobilize and blindfold his victims. Someone who's been bound with the tape can make a simple Body roll to get out of it if a fellow passenger did the taping. If Simon or Ralph tapes someone, it's a Body roll and all rolls under 10 are ignored. This can be attempted as a single combat action.

# Ralph Eastlake

Before Simon/Apu got a hold of him, Ralph was a pretty normal guy. Worked at the airport loading cargo, hung out at the local sports bar, thought Tim Allen was really damn funny, was always sure that this was going to be the year the Cubbies made it to the World Series. Then he met Simon. Or Apu. Even Ralph isn't sure anymore.

See, by the time he met Ralph, Simon had taken over his mentor's position at the Sears Tower and was pulling in significant charges on a regular basis. With that much power to play with, it didn't take Ralph long to start rewiring Simon's brain.

Ralph remembers "Simon" running into him at the Sears tower and striking up a conversation about the Cubs, but he also remembers "Apu" pulling him out of a burning black helicopter after he was kidnapped by agents of a cryptofascist U.N. conspiracy. He remembers growing up in Wheaton, Illinois and playing baseball in high school, but he also remembers growing up in Northern Ireland, watching as the British (willing pawns for their ruthless U.N. masters) brutalized his family and friends. He remembers trade school and terrorist training, ball games at Wrigley Field and midnight maneuvers in Beirut. His head is full of contradictory memories, and the only one that seems to make sense is a memory of being brainwashed by U.N. goons at a secret facility somewhere in the Appalachians.

That, of course, was a memory planted by Simon. Or maybe Apu.

Ralph is a very confused young man, containing within him two contradictory identities. One is Fergus Mahoney, I.R.A. terrorist ("though 'terrorist' is just a smear applied by the U.N. to all oppressed people who have banded together after realizing the truth about their world dominance plans"). The other is Ralph Eastlake.

Since Ralph is the real personality, he really doesn't want to hurt anyone, but taking over the plane fits in with his memories. Still, a good talker could get him hesitant enough to crack–assuming Apu isn't around. Or Simon.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 60 | (Solid) |
| **Speed:** | 40 | (F) (Cautious) |
| **Mind:** | 50 | (Fuddled) |
| **Soul:** | 50 | (Uncertain) |

## Skills

**Body Skills: Athletics 40%**, Lift Heavy Stuff 20%, Struggle 30%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 20%, Drive 15%, Guns 20%
**Mind Skills:** Airport Knowledge 20%, Computer Hobbyist 20%, General Education 25%, Notice 15%
**Soul Skills:** Charm 25%, Lie 25%, Tell A Good Joke 30%

## Possessions

Ralph is armed with a Colt Viper revolver. It holds six shots and has a maximum damage of 55 when loaded with safety slugs.

## Events Unfold on Flight 333

The scenario begins with the players in their seats, except for Fatima. She's in the first class section, as is Matt Winokur, seated near the back. Ralph Eastlake is farther towards the front, typing away on his computer, which is hooked in to the in-flight telephone on the seat in front of him.

The two other players are back in the lower floor's economy class. Jack Chance is seated between the wings, while Jeanette Pryce is about three rows from the front, on the aisle. Simon/Apu is about eight rows behind Jack.

The terrorist plan is really a pretty rough one. As far as Ralph knows, the plan goes something like this:

1) Ralph establishes a telecommunications link from his computer to the ground. He's got a digital video camera and software set up to download moving images, and he's logged on to several news sites so that he can download footage and demands in real time. His camera has a cord fifty feet long, allowing him to film events in economy class and (with some stretching) in the upper deck. Ralph's job is to establish the video hookup and then, at exactly 3:33 P.M., seize a flight attendant and demand admission to the cockpit at gunpoint.
2) As Ralph takes over first class, "Apu" does roughly the same in Economy class, making sure the passengers stay meek. When Ralph goes up to the cockpit, Apu goes into first class and takes the video camera. While there, he takes the necessary precautions to make sure people don't try anything stupid. (Ralph is a little vague on exactly what Apu is going to do—with good reason.)
3) With Ralph in the cockpit and Apu controlling the lower level, Apu gets on the video camera and makes his demands: five million dollars, deposited in a numbered Cayman Islands bank account, plus the release of Terry Nichols and Ted Kaczynski.
4) After half an hour, Apu calls his banker and checks. If the money hasn't been delivered, he executes a few passengers live on video.
5) When they pay up (or when they get close to Chicago), Ralph comes down and Apu goes up. Apu kills the flight crew and takes over, flying the plane to a small airfield in Ohio instead of O'Hare. Confederates in the anti-U.N. cause are waiting there in the maintenance shed to effect a getaway.

The plan is fairly accurate, up to step five. Actually, Simon has no idea how to fly a plane, and he doesn't intend for Flight 333 to land. During steps two through four, Simon is going to be performing ritual actions intended to mystically turn the airplane into a microcosm of America, and of the human body (detailed later). All this will (he hopes) cement him in the position of the Terrorist who threatens and destroys America, because he plans to crash the plane into downtown Chicago—flattening the city at America's heart with an airliner, even as he flattens the pilot with a bullet in the brain.

## Apu Takes Over

When the terrorists make their move, there are any number of actions the PCs can take, ranging from a "wait and see" attitude to trying to fight immediately, to trying to negotiate. As the GM, you're going to have to be prepared to roll with the punches and react to a lot of action taking place at different places on the plane. As a general rule, Simon's first instinct is always to put his gun to someone's head. If that doesn't make a PC back down, he'll pull the trigger. Of course, if a PC does back down, Simon will then point the gun at him/her, say "Don't move" and walk forward until the barrel touches the PC's forehead. Then he pulls the trigger. So when the chips are down, the PCs better be willing to back each other up.

Ralph reacts very differently. If attacked, he spends his first action to point the gun at the attacker and order him to stop. If that fails, he shoots the next round, and if he hits then he has to make a rank-3 Self check to avoid freezing in horror at what he's done. If someone isn't attacking him but is doing something else he doesn't like, he threatens for three rounds before opening fire. If someone surrenders to him after a threat, he tapes them up good but won't kill.

All in all, it's fairly unlikely that the PCs try anything immediately, unless they're hair-trigger types. Matt probably won't do anything to Ralph when Ralph has a gun to Fatima's head, and Fatima is equally unlikely to try anything fancy with a gun trained on her. Jack isn't close enough to do anything (initially) and Jeanette probably doesn't want to draw attention to herself and David.

At 3:33, Simon stands up, brandishes a gun and loudly states his willingness to "Kill for Allah." He bandies about phrases like "capitalist swine," "godless harlots," and "lickspittles to the oppressor class." Between bursts of rhetoric he orders everyone to put their seat belts on. He pushes his way to the back of the plane, frequently turning to point the gun in a different direction. Once he's there, he seizes a stewardess and orders her to tell the other flight attendants to get in the bathrooms at the back of the plane. Once they're in, (crammed two to a toilet) he produces a tube of superglue and cements the bolt mechanism. Then he puts his gun to the head of the remaining flight attendant (a middle aged, matronly woman) and frogmarches her to the front of the compartment, near Jeanette and David's seats. Once he's at the front of the section he says "Would the Air Marshall on this plane please stand up? You have until the count of five. One. Two. Three. Four." On four, he pulls the trigger, killing the stewardess (unless someone stands up.) Seeing this is a rank-2 Violence check. (There *is no* Air Marshall, by the way.)

If someone stands up, Simon points the gun and walks slowly over to the standing person. He makes that person kneel, hands in the air. Simon frisks the "Air Marshall" and,

finding no gun, says "Well, you are brave. But I have to make my point." Then he grins and, very theatrically, executes the volunteer. (If a PC stood up—probably Jack—this gives him a good chance to try to seize the gun and wrestle Simon to the ground. If it's not a PC, just have Simon kill the poor GMC sap to show what a hardass he is.) Remember that this leaves six shots in his gun.

Once Simon's made his display, he tells everyone to put their hands on the back of their heads and then put their heads between their knees. "Listen to me, Yankee pig-dogs! I'm not the only freedom fighter in this section. I'm going to first class now, but I have eyes back here, and if any of you peek or talk or try anything tricky, I'll find out about it and you'll end up dead. Now keep those heads down until I come back!" He's bluffing, but Jack and Jeanette have no way of knowing this.

While Simon's doing this, Ralph and Fatima are going up to the flight deck. Ralph orders the upper-deck passengers to put on their seat belts and put their heads between their knees. Then he enters the flight deck and tells the pilot to announce that the plane has been seized.

This leaves Matt Winokur unguarded for a short period of time. The other first class passengers are chattering hysterically—obviously not going to be much help unless he calms them down and makes some plan, quickly. Give him about five actions to do his thing, then he hears the gunshot from economy class as Simon performs his execution. Three actions after that, Simon enters first class.

Here are some things Matt can do while unobserved . . .

- **Hide.** There's a bathroom in the area between first class and economy. Simon won't check it, so Matt might be able to get the drop on him if he waits and watches carefully. If Matt attacks from concealment, give him +10% to his skill if he attacks Simon or Ralph.
- **Arm himself.** There's not a lot of mayhem gear on the plane (for some odd reason) but there is a glass bottle of tomato juice on Fatima's cart. Used as a bludgeon, or broken to form a makeshift stiletto, this bottle adds +3 damage to a hand-to-hand attack. If Matt's player is more of a garrote fancier, the obvious choice is the cable attached to the digital camera.
- **Trash the computer.** Hey, one of the terrorists was doing something with it, so Matt may decide to wreck it on general principles. Doing this won't do anything to save Flight 333, but without the digital video feed, Apu al Sayid is just a name and a still picture to the CNN viewers of America. Unless they hear his voice and see him performing his executions, they won't pay enough attention to put him over the top into ascension. Naturally, taking the cord from the camera makes the computer pretty much useless.
- **Make some kind of plan with the first class passengers.** There's a nigh-unlimited number of plans Matt might suggest to his fellow passengers, so you just have to wing it. Just remember that he's going to need some good social rolls to get people to agree. Also remember that there are no (count 'em, zero) people in first class with a Struggle skill higher than 15%.

If Simon gets to first class undisturbed, he orders all the first class passengers with aisle seats to tape down the people with window seats. Specifically, the window-seat passengers are told to lace one hand through their buckled seat belts, and then the aisle passenger will tape their hands together, affixing them to their seatbelt. He paces around the cabin anxiously as this is done, periodically snapping "Tie it tighter, American pig! As tight as your stranglehold on the global economy!" As this is being done, he grabs the digital camera and broadcasts his first message—a semi-coherent anti-American screed.

While this is going on, Jack and Jeanette are unobserved in economy class, and can arm themselves or prepare an ambush for Apu. They can also attempt to convince the other economy passengers to do something, but without Matt's golden tongue it's likely to be an uphill battle.

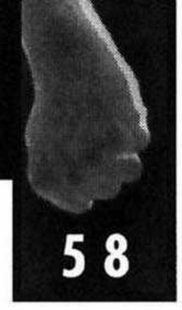
## Madge to the Rescue

It's perfectly possible that one of the PCs may misjudge a terrorist, or just roll badly while fighting, and end up dead. In a larger sense this is okay, since anything that takes a bullet out of a terrorist gun (especially Simon's) makes the death of the pilots and Simon's ascension marginally less likely. Pragmatically, however, it leaves one player without a character for most of the scenario.

To fix this, just give him or her control of a flight attendant. Use Fatima's stats and skills, only with a handgun skill at 35% instead of Remain Balanced and no Piloting or obsession skill. This particular stewardess (named Madge) was way far in the back when Simon made his move and was overlooked when he was dealing with the flight attendants.

It's a good idea to only do this once, however: if the players get the idea that they can blow through characters like tissue paper, it makes them less likely to think through the consequences of their actions.

Conversely, it's also possible that the PCs are so buff and efficient that they neutralize Simon within minutes. In this case, you can spring Madge on them as another one of Simon's brainwashed minions. Remember how he said he had a "hidden ally" watching them? In this instance, he wasn't bluffing.





Up in the cockpit, Ralph has made his point and is securing the people in the upper economy deck. He appoints Fatima as his "deputy" during this task. The seats here are three abreast, so he has the middle person tape the window person, then the aisle person tape the middle person, then has Fatima tape the aisle people. This takes a while, giving Fatima a chance to talk to Ralph (building rapport and possibly figuring out that he doesn't really want to hurt anyone) or deliberately tape the other passengers loosely.

If the computer has been trashed, at this point Simon calls Ralph down to try to fix it. (You can let Ralph roll or not, depending on how severely the machine was handled.) To do this, he goes to the foot of the stairs and yells up. He and Ralph briefly confer on the staircase (giving all the PCs an opportunity to act unobserved). Then Simon goes up and Ralph comes down. (If Fatima looks for a weapon during this time, the best she can do is a metal briefcase that does +3 damage. On the plus side, it can stop a safety bullet.) Simon/Apu begins ranting at the upper-deck passengers, making sure

## Archetype: The Mother

**Attributes:** This is one of the oldest and strongest of the archetypes. It embodies nurturing, comfort, protection and a powerful sense of a benevolent higher power. Mother stands for comfort, safety and love.

The negative aspect of this Archetype involves control and a retardation of autonomy: someone who is always worried about what mommy thinks can never grow into a fully independent human being. Some mothers create a sense of dependence and need in order to keep their children close; such children may have trouble "breaking the apron strings."

**Taboos:** It is completely contrary to type for a mother to harm a child or stand idly by while a child is harmed, or to do nothing while a child is suffering. (Of course, everyone is somebody's child; for the purpose of this taboo, it means a person under sixteen years of age.)

**Symbols:** The Mother has countless symbols, including (but hardly limited to) the Moon, the blue robe, the spiral, fountains and wells, the basket or cup, the dove, the Queen of Hearts in a standard poker deck and the Tarot cards the Empress, the Moon, and the Queen of Cups.

**Suspected Avatars in History:** Some people swear Eva Peron was an avatar (possibly a Godwalker) of the Mother; others vehemently disagree.

**Channels:**

**1%-50%:** At this level you are maternal and comforting. If you're present when someone snaps after failing a Stress Check, you can try to talk them down. To do this, simply say comforting things, put your arms around them, wipe their tears and tell them everything's going to be all right. Then make an Avatar: Mother roll. If you succeed, this works just like psychological triage, described on p. 69 of *Unknown Armies*.

This ability can even be used to heal physical damage. A successful Avatar: Mother roll will heal someone of five points of damage. This can only be done once per week on each damaged individual, however.

There's a limit to the use of these powers, however: you can only use them on someone who sees you as a mother figure. Your own children are susceptible, of course. Other than them, it has to be someone at least ten years younger than you and someone who sees you as a comforting, superior figure.

**51%-70%:** Ever hear the old chestnut about "don't get between a mother bear and her cub"? At this level, you're mama bear. If someone threatens your child, or someone with whom you have an established maternal relationship (that is, someone for whom you could use the first rank power), you gain a number of combat advantages when fighting that menace, until the threat to your children is removed. These advantages are:

- Any initiative roll that's lower than your Avatar: Mother skill is a success. If Avatar: Mother is your obsession skill, you can flip-flop initiative rolls.
- You can use your Avatar: Mother skill instead of Struggle when fighting.
- Any hand-to-hand attack you make does +5 damage, in addition to weapon damage bonuses (if any).

**71%-90%:** Anyone who tries to harm you, either physically, magickally, or psychologically, has to make a rank-10 Self check to do so. Making this check takes a combat action. You can also use your Avatar: Mother skill in the place of Charm. However, in order to use either of these abilities you have to be physically pregnant.

**91%+:** At this level, the Mother cannot be killed while in the presence of an endangered child. When she reaches zero wound points, she can continue to act without penalty until (1) the threat is removed, (2) the child is killed, or (3) she leaves the presence of the endangered child. At that time, she dies.

they're taped tightly. He waves his gun and threatens, but is hesitant to shoot Fatima because she looks Arabic: shooting her would undermine his credibility as an "Arab terrorist."

Assuming the computer was not trashed, however, and that the restraint of the first-class passengers goes according to plan, Simon does a few peculiar things before going back to the economy section. First, he points at the passenger who's farthest forward and says "You're Maine, got it? You're Maine. Who are you?" When the passenger hesitantly says "Maine?" Simon nods and says "Good." He repeats this with a couple other passengers, declaring them "New York" and "Washington, D.C." Those two get little plastic souvenir statuettes–the Statue of Liberty and the Washington Monument, respectively. Then he goes back into economy class.

While this is going on, Ralph is dividing his attention between the flight deck and the upper passenger compartment. Fatima might be able to sneak downstairs and do something while he's distracted, or she might be able to continue to talk to him and persuade him to stop what he's doing. Either of these actions can be taken by Matt as well, if he happens to be present.

When Simon/Apu goes back into economy class (assuming he isn't bushwhacked or something) he calls forward anyone who didn't have their head down. If they obey, he shoots them in the aisle, taping all the while. If they refuse to come out, he shoots them in their seats (or tries). Upstairs, anyone who's watching Ralph can see him visibly flinch after each gunshot, and begin to tremble.

Down in economy, Simon goes to the far back of the plane and gives a passenger a miniature plastic model of the Golden Gate Bridge. "You're California," he says. Then he takes a glass of water and spills it in a line across the middle of the plane, between the two wings. "The Mississippi River," he declares to no one in particular. (He doesn't film these esoteric actions.)

The purpose of these namings is to make the airplane into a symbolic representation of America. Since the plane is flying west, the westernmost passenger was called "Maine" and the easternmost passenger "California." The "Mississippi River" ties them together.

Next, he starts to make the plane into a parallel of the human body as well. The computer, through which America watches, is its eyes. With a black marker, he draws "feet" on the bathroom doors containing the flight attendants. This is a double symbol: they're the feet of the Plane As Human Being because they're tied to travel, and they're under the feet of the Plane As America because they're oppressed servants of the ruling class. (That's his rationale, anyhow.)

All America and the human being needs now is a heart, which Simon intends to make out of white males. He orders white men picked at random to huddle in the middle of the plane, on the "Mississippi River." (He gives these orders from the front of the compartment.) When they're gathered (including Jack Chance–if he hasn't done anything yet, Simon picks him out in particular) Simon/Apu throws them several rolls of red electrician's tape. "Tie each other well with these arteries," he says, a feverish gleam in his eyes "then start thumping your feet on the floor, like this." He demonstrates with a heartbeat rhythm–bump bump, bump bump. Anyone who resists or calls his actions into question gets screamed at and a threat from the gun. (It's a good idea to have someone say something at this point to distract Simon; this gives Jack Chance an opportunity to fiddle with his tape and make sure he doesn't get completely tied up. If Jack's player thinks to do this, have it automatically succeed: Simon is too drug-addled to notice. On the other hand, if Jack's player doesn't think to take advantage of this lapse in attention, tough cookies.)

He then tells everyone else in the plane to start singing the national anthem–"But not too loud! You cannot drown me out!"

When these bizarre conditions are met, everyone in the section begins to feel an eerie sense of immanence. Nothing you can put your finger on, just a brooding feeling of anticipation. Simon looks around, and his eyes fall on David Pryce. "Perfect," he says. "The future. You, go in the heart," he says to David, who doesn't understand. He then orders Jeanette to make David comply.

As soon as David is put with the white men in the "heart," the sense of dread redoubles. A powerful magick field has now been established, with the following effects:

- The air whistling past the windows of the plane begins to sound like screams.
- The entire plane pulses with the rhythm of the "heart."
- The people in the first-class section and the upstairs compartment spontaneously begin singing along with the national anthem in soft, eerie unison. They can stop in order to say something else if they concentrate, but otherwise their voices follow the lyrics in lockstep. The words to the virtually unknown second, third, fourth, and fifth verses spontaneously form in their memory, ready to be sung at the appropriate moment. At this point, people start to understand that something seriously weird is happening. Rank-2 Unnatural checks are appropriate, but even people who start screaming just scream along with "The Star Spangled Banner."
- Blood starts spontaneously dripping from all the red electrician's tape, from the plastic monuments and from the decal on the laptop.

Simon is now ready to speak to the nation.

## The Broadcast

"Attention, capitalist swine! Listen well, blood-bloated oppressors! The fire of wrath, the vengeance of the almighty, the sword of Allah is drawn and pointed at your corpulent

heart! Soon blood shall flow from the pierced breasts of your strumpet wives! Soon your children shall wail as their skin crisps in righteous fire!"

The instant he says this, Jeanette can use the second-rank ability of the Mother, if she couldn't before. As he's making his speech he's pointing the digital camera all around the cabin, but soon he turns his attention to the "heart"—the white men, probably including David and Jack. If Jeanette is still in her original seat, his back is now to her. If she's unbound, she can get up and attack him as one action. Simon's also within striking distance of Jack Chance—if Jack has managed to remain free of tape.

"America is doomed! A man who fears no death cannot be defeated, only destroyed! Your own weakness and luxury make you ripe for butchery! You place your faith in your tanks and planes, but you ignore the weapons of the spirit! Your weapons are meaningless against our faith! This plane will be a sign, a sword of faith aimed at the black cancer of America's heart! When the end times come, we will crush you as easily as I kill these ignorant swine!"

Then he opens fire—three shots (taking his clip down to four bullets if he hasn't shot anyone other than the stewardess at the beginning) at the "heart." There are about ten people in the "heart," including Jack and David. You can roll randomly to see who catches his bullets, or dictate whatever you feel is most dramatic.

Unbeknownst to Simon, his words are being rebroadcast and the pilots can hear them. So can Ralph. This was not in Ralph's script, and any attempt to persuade him to give up at this point automatically succeeds. Regardless, Simon starts making his way towards the cockpit once he's shot the "heart." The mystic energy bouncing around the plane is now immense. People are having spontaneous visions of the *Achille Lauro* and the 1972 Munich Olympics. Blood is dripping from the light fixtures, and a number of people are developing small, spontaneous wounds right above their hearts. Simon/Apu moves in an invisible radiance of incipient power. It's not anything you can see, but he seems more real than everything else in the plane—as if the other passengers are just shadows and he is the sun.

All Simon has to do now is crash the plane into downtown Chicago to complete his ascension. He intends to do this by going up to the cockpit, shooting the flight crew, and pointing the stick towards the skyline.

Now, there are several ways the PCs can stop this.

- **Take care of Ralph.** If they can talk him into paralysis or overcome him physically, they can get his gun and make a stand against Simon as he comes up the stairs.
- **Save the pilots.** If they make Simon and/or Ralph use up all their ammo on rebellious passengers, the pilots can barricade themselves in the cockpit and bring the plane down safely. (The door into the flight deck locks, and the only way in once it's locked is to shoot the lock off.)
- **Replace the pilots.** If Simon uses all his bullets up on the pilots, Fatima can still bring the plane in safely—if Simon is overcome by brute strength or numerical superiority.
- **Kill Simon.** The simplest and probably most satisfying outcome, and one that's likely to happen if the PCs can make him exhaust all the ammo in his gun without killing them. If it becomes clear to the passengers that the gun has no more bullets, all a PC has to do is to take one action to yell "Get him! The gun is empty!" If the passengers are told to do something, they rise up in a wave and tear Simon to pieces.

## Aftermath

If the PCs survive the scenario and were instrumental in saving the plane from Simon and Ralph, they become nationally famous for about three weeks. They're taken to dinner, given awards from various citizen groups, and their names become the punchlines for countless lame jokes. More specifically . . .

- Fatima Yijifil gets interviewed on *Nightline,* where her comments on the social status of Arab-Americans in an age of Middle East tension get her invited to speak on N.P.R. For the next several years she gets lucrative speaking engagements with various groups, ranging from airline employees to counterterrorist trainers. Her employers gladly pay for the rest of her flight training and use her in several commercials. Vanessa Williams plays her in the made-for-TV movie *Flight of Madness.*
- After making some great impressions on *Larry King* and *Crossfire,* Matt Winokur starts his own political career. Though he maintains a good relationship with his previous boss, he bases his political career on a gun control platform. (After all, the "soft on crime" label just won't stick on a guy who fought off a pair of terrorists.) Isabelle comes crawling back like a worm, and he tells her to scram. In the TV movie he's played by David Hasselhoff.
- Jack Chance is interviewed on CNN, and by the magazines *Black Belt* and *Soldier of Fortune.* His cleaning supply bosses give him a ton of money to make a few commercials, and he retires from that job to split his time between teaching Judo and commenting on the sport for ESPN2. In *Flight of Madness* he's played by Lee Majors.
- Jeanette Pryce appears on the cover of *People,* gets interviewed by *Time* and *Newsweek,* and eventually ghostwrites a book about her experiences entitled *No, Not My Baby!* It spends eight weeks on the bestseller lists. In the TV movie, she's played by Vanessa Redgrave.

If Ralph and/or Simon survive the adventure, they're beaten to death in prison before they come to trial. It's kind of peculiar, since they were supposed to be in isolation . . .

On the other hand, if everyone dies and Simon ascends, there's a nasty new archetype running around. The world becomes marginally shittier, terrorism increases at home and abroad, and paranoia-induced delays at airports hit an all-time high. If your players had characters who knew Simon before this adventure begins, they now have an enemy in the Invisible Clergy. While Simon might be so radically transformed by his ascension that he has bigger things to worry about than petty vendettas against mortals, it might also make things particularly ugly for your PCs. GM's discretion, of course.

Regardless of whether Simon ascended or not, it's possible that downloaded footage from the flight shows bleeding electrician's tape and weird, synchronized singing. The digital images are far from clear, of course, and there was no inexplicable blood found after the flight landed (if it did). If Jeanette Pryce survived to publish, her publisher systematically removes any mention of the paranormal, and another passenger's book, which does stress the paranormal aspects, is publicly ridiculed and examined by psychologists who specialize in hysterical confabulation.

Nonetheless, countless Americans see footage of a mystic event on the news. Not all of them are willing to discount what they see.

# The PCs

Some alert readers may note that these characters aren't strictly kosher to the rules in the main book. Specifically, they may have more or fewer skill points allocated than their stats would normally permit. Don't worry about it: they're only going to be used once.

## Fatima Yijifil (YEEJ-fil), Suspicious Stewardess

You're an attractive woman in your twenties. You were born and raised in the U.S. by Muslim parents who were always droning on about the old country with a mixture of hatred and nostalgia. You always felt awkward and marginal at school, never quite fitting in with either the white kids or the blacks, but you got along okay. When you went to college things got better: frankly, as you got farther from your parents things got better. You dated a few guys who were turned on by "the exotic east" but you've learned to steer clear of that by now.

The stewardess job was a recommendation from a friend who'd graduated a few years earlier. She was hired by the airline's personnel department and tipped you that they were looking to meet some quotas. You applied for the job and discovered (somewhat to your surprise) that you liked it and were good at it. You never get airsick, you like meeting people, you like seeing a lot of new places. More, you like the planes–the way their huge size hides so many compact spaces and efficient compartments. You've started going to flight school and working towards your pilot's license, hoping to eventually fly instead of ride, but you're in no hurry. Airline life is the life for you.

As long as you can stay alive through a hijacking.

### Obsession

Being normal. All your life you've been different or weird or exotic, and you've always envied the people who were "standard."

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Prejudice against Arabs.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Self) Disfigurement. You've had nightmares about being scarred and turned into a total freak.
**Noble Stimulus:** Taking care of people. You like the idea of being a pilot because it makes you feel good to think of a whole plane full of people relying on you to keep them safe.

### Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 40 | (Slender) |
| **Speed:** | 60 | (Sure-Footed) |
| **Mind:** | 60 | (Clear) |
| **Soul:** | 60 | (Pleasant) |

### Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 30%, Lift 10%, Struggle 30%
**Speed Skills:** Balance 30%, Dodge 40%, Drive 15%
**Mind Skills:** General Education 20%, Notice 25%, Piloting 40%
**Soul Skills: Fit In 55%**, Lying 35%

**Fit In:** Your ability to make people comfortable around you. You do this by convincing them that you understand what they're going through.

### Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 1 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed |

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# Jack Chance, Defeated Warrior

Judo is supposed to come down to technique. You were never the biggest fighter in your dojo, never the fastest or the strongest, but you worked hard, damnit. When your teacher said you had to hold your hand straight so your wrist didn't bend, you made sure your wrist didn't fucking bend. You did your squats and your ichi komi and you went to seminars and weekend practice sessions and you got good. Good enough to compete, good enough to win a few regional trophies, good enough to fight for the national championship in Denver.

You fought, and you fought hard. It's not like boxing, where only one division really matters and everything else is just fluff: a lightweight Judo champion is just as respected and admired as a heavyweight. You wanted to be that champion, more than anything in the world. You weren't the strongest or the fastest in your division, but you'd worked and your technique was damn near perfect.

*Near* perfect.

That's the thing about Judo. If you make a perfect throw, you can win the match in one second. It's called an ipon. You've thrown your share, and more. You were going in for a throw, a seoi nage hip throw, and you could feel your opponent–rude little cracker from Georgia–float out of it. This was not a problem, you had an utsuri goshi ready to catch him on the way around, but you were too slow, he got your legs in a scissors and the two of you went down in a heap. You were ready to try for a pin or a choke when the judges gave him an ipon and that was it: you were out of contention.

Now, he did get the drop on you. He did take you down with an adequately executed side sacrifice throw. But before that ipon you were ahead on points, and while his throw was good, it wasn't perfect. It wasn't even near perfect.

But you were a graceful loser and you bowed to him and the judges respectfully and went on to your consolation matches–but you were distracted. Everyone gets bad calls, but for some reason you couldn't let it go.

Oh well, there's always next year. Right now, there's nothing you want more than a chance to get home, put some ice on your bruised eye, and have a good sulk.

## Obsession

Perfect action. You aren't exactly sure you could articulate it, but the few times you've hit a Judo throw perfectly, there's been no sense of action or movement–just a sort of transcendent inevitability.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Bullies, especially people who try to push others around with physical power.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Self) You're afraid of being unimportant–an insignificant nonentity.
**Noble Stimulus:** You're a good winner–you always try to respect your opponent, in any situation.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 65 | (Leather-Tough) |
| **Speed:** | 60 | (Balanced) |
| **Mind:** | 50 | (Ordinary) |
| **Soul:** | 45 | (Nondescript) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 40%, **Judo 55%**
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 55%, Drive 15%, Squirrelly Reflexes 20%
**Mind Skills:** General Education 20%, Notice 35%, Sell Industrial Cleaning Supplies 25%
**Soul Skills:** Charm 35%, Lying 35%

**Judo:** A martial art that concentrates on grappling with an opponent and hurtling him to the ground, then choking him unconscious or locking his elbow or shoulder joints until submission or dislocation. It has no punches or kicks, but you are adept at the blood choke (see p. 62 of *Unknown Armies*). All your matches are Knock Down. You should choose your own Cherries before the game starts.
**Squirrelly Reflexes:** See p. 42 of *Unknown Armies*.

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed |

## Possessions

Selling industrial cleaning supplies is your day job, but since this was a pleasure trip you don't have any caustic chemicals on you. (Not that they'd let you bring them aboard–have to watch out for terrorists, after all.)

You're wearing a belt with a large, commemorative Judo belt buckle. If you wrap this around your hands, you can use it to entangle an opponent and throw him more forcefully. You do +3 damage on Judo attacks if you've had a chance to take your belt off and wrap it around one hand.

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# Jeanette Pryce, Concerned Parent

Little David is asleep, and you're worried that the noise of the plane may give him bad dreams. Looking at his precious face, you can't believe it. You honestly can't believe you produced this little miracle.

It wasn't easy. You always wanted kids. When you were first married it was in a back-burner kind of way–plenty of time for that when you had a house down-payment saved up, when your career was a little more stable. And one day you woke up and your biological clock went off. So you tried to have kids.

Instead, you had five miscarriages and three different courses of medication and countless uncomfortable gynecological exams with doctors talking about your most intimate parts like they were cuts of meat in a butcher market. Finally, the last doctor–Doctor Sudiata, whose hands were as cold as his voice, Doctor Sudiata went inside you with a laser to destroy cysts on your uterine lining.

And then you had David, and it was all worth it. Every second of pain, and fear, and guilt, and humiliation was all worth it for him. You'd do it again, a thousand times.

Even the fear is worth it–the fear of him eating an apple with Aylar, or falling off his tricycle, or getting an ear infection. Every moment of every day you're afraid for your priceless son, but it's all worth it watch him sleep, watch him smack his lips as he dreams, watch him turn over . . .

If anything happens to him, you will die.

## Obsession

Protect your son. Nothing else matters.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Anyone who might hurt David.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Helplessness) Something bad might happen to David.
**Noble Stimulus:** Your love for your son has grown into a general maternal instinct. You want to protect and comfort kids.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 60 | (Soccer Mom) |
| **Speed:** | 50 | (Unexceptional) |
| **Mind:** | 50 | (Well-Read) |
| **Soul:** | 60 | (Vivacious) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 35%, Endure Pain 40%, Struggle 15%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 30%, Drive 15%
**Mind Skills:** General Education 35%, Notice 15%
**Soul Skills: Avatar: Mother 55%**, Charm 20%, Lying 15%

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed |

## Notes

David Pryce has Body 20 and no other skills or stats of note.

## Possessions

In your carry-on, you have an empty thermos that once held coffee. It's heavy, made of cast steel; if used as a bludgeon, it adds +3 to any hand-to-hand attack.

# Matt Winokur, A Man with Nothing To Lose

You really thought Isabelle was The One–firework kisses, warm bubbly feelings, tugs on the heartstrings and everything. You liked her jokes, you felt refreshed and free and *young* when you were with her, and it didn't hurt that she was a knockout who made heads turn when you walked in the room with her on your arm. She could have been a model, or a movie star, or your wife; pity her ambitions were "bed doll for a ski bum."

She was poetry and art appreciation all rolled into one. She had everything a man could want except Superbowl tickets. She was The One for you–the woman that your next dozen dates are going to be compared to, unfavorably. She was The One, and everyone before her is now just The Half or The First or Old Whatsername. (And what were you to her? A face in the crowd? Face it Matt, for you she was one in a million; to her, you were one *of* a million.)

And now it comes–that cynical little voice in your head that's always there to sour your victories and aggravate your losses. The voice that whispers your worthlessness. The voice that says all the money in the world can't make a silk purse from a horse's ass. The voice says that when you take away all the fancy rhetoric you're just a political speechwriter, another lickspittle for an N.R.A. poster boy, another well-mannered hatchet man for a political machine that runs on public ignorance. The voice that tells you your life isn't worth living.

The scary thing is, you know it's your own voice.

## Obsession

Communication. You think most problems between people could be solved or avoided with more talking and listening.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** People who won't listen to reason.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Self) Your big fear is that Isabelle was right to ditch you–that you really are a boring, unworthy nobody.
**Noble Stimulus:** You can be very self-sacrificing. Usually it's meant working long hours and being a thoughtful boyfriend, but it could go a lot farther.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 50 | (Ordinary) |
| **Speed:** | 50 | (Slightly Gangly) |
| **Mind:** | 60 | (Bright) |
| **Soul:** | 60 | (Charming) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 25%, Struggle 15%, Throw Things 40%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 30%, Drive 15%, Target Shooting 45%
**Mind Skills:** General Education 45%, Notice 45%
**Soul Skills: Hot Buttons 55%**, Lying 35%

**Hot Buttons:** Your ability to provoke sudden emotional reactions in others. You can make someone indignant, courageous, afraid, or grateful with a few minutes of conversation. It tends to wear off after a few hours when they really think about what you said, but it's a handy skill for a political speechwriter.

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 1 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed |

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APT-RENT
HOTEL
BAR
TROSIES
GROCERY
OW-KMTH
PUB!!

# AND I FEEL FINE

## by geoffrey c. grabowski

## UNKNOWN ARMIES

"THIS IS NOT AN EXIT."
—BRET EASTON ELLIS

"SOMETIMES WHEN YOU COME TO A FORK IN THE ROAD, THE BEST THING TO DO IS PICK IT UP AND EAT YOUR DAMN DINNER."
—RICH DANSKY

DEDICATED TO JONATHAN TWEET, THE FIRESIGN THEATER AND TIMBUK 3, ALL OF WHOM INSPIRED THIS ADVENTURE IN THEIR OWN, UNIQUE WAY.

# To set the scene a little for the

upcoming adventure, most of our action will take place in or around the Rancho Mirago trailer park in the tiny, tiny High Desert hamlet known as Hellmouth, Arizona. The park's name is about as close to proper Spanish as Old El Paso is to authentic Mexican cuisine, but it isn't the kind of place where people are particular about that sort of thing.

To be honest, Rancho Mirago, and Hellmouth in general, are not drying up and blowing away. That happened long ago. What remains is the civic equivalent of cow skulls bleaching the sun. The Rancho itself is a wasteland of abandoned, dust-covered trailers and blowing tumbleweeds, inhabited only by a flotsam of human wreckage carried in on the desert wind.

Wouldn't it be odd if the inhabitants of a grimy little shantytown like the Rancho Mirago were the sole survivors of a cataclysm so vast as to be, from their perspective, completely inexplicable? And wouldn't it be ironic if this tiny outpost, perhaps the last survivors of the human race, were the victims of a stalking terror with no connection, or perhaps every connection, to the silent cataclysm that seems to have overtaken the human race while they lay sleeping in their dusty beds?

This is both an odd and an ironic adventure.

## The PCs

We have six players in this little drama. They are summarized below for easy reference.

- Kenneth Kerr, bank robber, desperado, killer when he has to be, but in general a pretty stand-up guy who likes kids and tries to help women in trouble. **Important:** He has a skill called Sixth Sense that you have to keep in mind during the game; check his character sheet at the end of the scenario for details.
- Kevin Kerr, younger brother to Kenneth and likewise a desperado with a heart of gold.
- Rebecca Borgstrom, a single mom making her good way in a bad world.
- Timothy James Borgstrom, a ten-year-old kid who likes the Kerr brothers, his mom, and his dog, Sparky.
- Uli von Mensch, a retired abortion doctor and ex-commune member, hiding out from the law and taking it easy.
- Rich Dansky, a bohemian academic living the simple life of a trailer-park manager. Hangs out with Uli.

## The Greater Hellmouth Area

Hellmouth and its surroundings are located in the middle of nowhere, off major highways, in a stretch of high desert that isn't going to be developed if they start building suburbs to Los Angeles on the moon. It is a place where things end, rather than start. This stagnation and placid decay forms part of the overarching mood. All throughout the adventure, the characters will be attempting to fight against entropy, as personified by both the town and their unseen antagonist, to escape stagnation and reach an outside world that can only be more dynamic.

Yet their isolation is not without its positive aspects. The characters could not really survive outside the Hellmouth region. While nothing can begin in Hellmouth, it is so isolated from the world as to avoid even an unspecified apocalypse. As a GM, you should probably play this up.

Physically, the Hellmouth region is high, hot, dry desert. Stunted plant growth, flat land and an almost total lack of water-induced decay make it a serene landscape of mirages and shacks deserted for decades. Only Rancho Mirago, the town of New Hellmouth, and the Ames Ranch are still inhabited before the start of the adventure. Each of them is described separately.

## The Rancho Mirago

The Rancho Mirago had its heyday in the early 1950s, but it's been downhill ever since. The trailer park sprang up in response to uranium prospecting in the area, but no ore was found, and the park soon entered a sort of zombie half-life. There was a temporary resurgence between 1969 and 1972, when a commune briefly inhabited the park. While it quickly disintegrated from internal tensions, remnants of the community, once thirty-five strong, can be seen here and there; many of the deserted trailers are festooned inside with dry-rotted cloth in tie-dyed patterns, either in tatters or seemingly whole but fragile as cobwebs.

Dead cars are everywhere. Uli's last car, a recently deceased Pinto, has had the top cut off and hood and trunk removed, and the dirt-filled corpse serves as a planter for his cactus garden. A Hudson Hornet leans nose-down in a small arroyo, slipping an inch or three further down as the wadi deeps with each runoff. The sandblasted corpse of a VW bus, another relic of the park's commune days, sits just inside the gate hung with a crooked and bullet-holed sign bearing the inscription "Rancho Mirago. We Make Dreams Happen!"

There are twenty-three trailers in the Rancho Mirago, ranging from tiny 1940s tow-trailers to a comparatively palatial 40' doublewide occupied by the Kerr Brothers. Only four are inhabited. The rest are ever-so-slowly weathering into oblivion from sand and the very occasional rain. In many of the abandoned trailers, the scattered personal effects of the last inhabitants still rest, tossed around by long-vanished looters and wearing thick coats of powdery Arizona dust.

## The Apocalypse?

As far as the PCs can tell, the end of the world has come and gone while they were asleep. The television receives nothing

CHAPTER ILLO BY DAN PARSONS

but static. No planes go overhead. The only radio station the characters are receiving is KMTH in Hellmouth, a low-wattage C&W station that caters mostly to truckers who pass through this lonely patch of desert. Today, all that KMTH broadcasts is the silence of an open mike. No cars or trucks ply the highways. It is, in fact, as if the PCs are the last people on Earth. Given how isolated they are already, this is pretty creepy stuff.

When the game starts, nothing other than the end of the world will have occurred. It's your job as GM to make them feel concerned. If they show immediate concern and scamper off to discover the rest of the adventure, cool and the gang. Your job is that much easier. However, there's a fair chance that the characters will hunker down for a few days and try to wait things out (this is, after all, the sensible thing to do during an inexplicable disaster).

There are two easy ways to deal with this. The first is the simple method. They're not set up for a long isolation—in a few days, they're going to be eating pop-tarts and that really dusty can of Manhattan-style clam chowder at the back of the cabinet. Once the tampons, beer, and cigarettes run out, they'll be forced to see what's going on in the outside world. You can just speed this along by telling them that several days pass, then they run out of essentials. That's the easy way, and it's not much fun.

The other way is, of course, to have the adventure come to the PCs. Take them through the first day of waiting in careful detail, taking ten or twenty minutes. Let them roleplay, and impress on them the brutal heat and oppressive monotony of Arizona life. Then, if they still haven't budged by evening, bring the adventure their way. First, one of the characters discovers the horribly mutilated corpse of Sparky, the Borgstroms' dog. Simultaneously, pick a PC who's isolated from the rest of the group and have him start rolling as if he's about to be attacked–some Soul or Perception rolls. When he's good and freaked, let him hear the shouts of the person who's just discovered the dog and then turn to see a nearby door swing shut, or some other sign that it was Almost Him. This should encourage the PCs to get a move on, though they may sensibly wait out the night all huddled up in one of the trailers with drawn guns.

Don't kill any of the characters if they spend the night up and jumpy waiting for the creature from the black lagoon to come for them—there are only so many PCs. Of course, you can give them negative shifts for being dog tired tomorrow and maybe have one drift off to sleep and have a terrible nightmare. Just don't kill them.

## Transportation Issues

Eventually, the characters are going to get in their cars and try to go someplace. They soon discover that Uli and Rebecca's cars don't work. If Kenny makes a successful Manual Labor roll, he'll be able to say that everything mechanical checks out as operational. Could it have been an E.M.P. burst, perhaps from the distant detonation of a nuclear weapon? Probably, but if so, why are the other electronics working? Who knows?

There is a good reason, of course. It's to limit the character's travel options and keep them together so this adventure isn't 200 pages long. It's also to build suspense and a fear of the unknown calamity that's taken the world as the unwary characters slept. Try to play it up. Describe the dull click as the alternator simply fails to turn the engine over, and let the characters putter around until *they* decide that the cars are inoperable.

Of the cars left running, the Kerr Brothers' is in excellent shape. It can even fit everyone, in a pinch. Rich Dansky's 1947 Ford pickup can also fit everyone, but it's fairly close to getting gallons to the mile rather than vice-versa. While it runs fine (at least for values of fine that don't include emissions compliance, comfort, or operating noise below hearing damage levels) getting it anywhere other than New Hellmouth and back without some sort of clever contrivance just isn't going to happen. Sounds suspiciously like the plot, doesn't it?

And indeed, it is. As you may have already guessed from the amount of detail that's gone into cars and their condition, the Kerr Brothers' car isn't going to be around for long. The adventure details the desperate attempts by the characters to get some larger fuel tanks for the truck while being stalked by a horrible, bloodthirsty nemesis. While it isn't original to be trapped in the middle of nowhere during a disaster with your life in danger and only a thread of hope to survive, most scary things aren't very original. Don't worry—it's a lot more enjoyable to play through than it is to read the one-paragraph synopsis.

## New Hellmouth

Sooner or later, the character's course of action is going to take them to the local outpost of civilization and see if there's any news there about events. New Hellmouth is that outpost, and as such, it barely fits the bill, severely challenging the proverb about "any port in a storm."

Located about twelve miles from the Rancho Mirago, New Hellmouth consists of two buildings that remain inhabited. There were seven others built during the same Uranium Boom that established the Rancho Mirago. Two of them have burnt, and their charred and gutted forms still stand, almost perfectly preserved from when they went up, down to the black fire-licks over the windows. Exploring is not recommended, though the exact consequences of playing around in the abandoned fire-gutted wrecks are up to the GM. The other structures still stand, and their peeling and weathered signs advertise their boom-town wares. There are two bars with apartments above them, a small hotel, a combination gas station and general store and constabulary of-

fice with a pair of cells whose lockless doors hang open, unused for decades. The ancient and barely legible signs advertise a variety of wares, from the mundane (Beer! Food! Lodging! Gas!) to the improbable (World's Only Two-Headed Gila monster! Live Bait! Free Performance With Each Fill-Up!) The abandoned buildings are only marginally safer than the burnt-out ones, and are mazes of cracked floor boards, rat's nests, and abandoned possessions half-looted and half-ruined by the desert.

The two structures in town that remain inhabited are the Old Reliable, a combination filling station, grocery, post office, sundries store, tourist trap, *etc.*, and the ugly white cinder-block KMTH building (pronounced K-Mouth). KMTH is run by a large media syndicate and the broadcasts are pre-taped programs recorded several weeks in advance, complete with ads. There are no DJs, just the station maintenance man, Chuck Parker, who lives there.

The Old Reliable is home to the prolific Thompson clan. Reggie and Becca Thompson and their three children, Frank (17), Denise (16), and Buck (11) all live in the large Old Reliable building, operating its many overpriced services (there's a discount for residents). Becca tutors the children at home, and other than a decidedly odd streak of Mystical Christianity (there are hex signs above their doors and they pray some decidedly odd prayers) they're as decent a bunch of folks as you could ask for, given that they operate a tourist trap in Hellmouth. The store is huge, dusty and full of strange, forgotten things. Fans turn slowly, stirring the bone-dry air of the store from their perches on the improbably high ceilings. An antelope head with an eye missing graces one wall, and a snowblower ages in a corner, its ostensible purpose unknown. As at the Rancho Mirago, the phones are out.

When the characters arrive in town, everyone is either dead or gone. How specifically they're dead or gone is up to the GM to decide. Here are three suggestions:

## Roanoke

They're just gone. Midnight snacks lie half-eaten on the table and the refrigerator door is open. Bedclothes are disheveled as if they'd been slept in. There's not a soul in the entire town, but none of the cars are gone. In fact, surprise surprise, none of the cars even function. The sole evidence is a dime-sized splash of blood on the front porch of the store. What happened? Where did they go? This one is good for instilling paranoia and getting the characters to go exploring around the town. If you have a large group and they all came to town, you might want to use this one, as it lets you potentially kill a couple of them. This one works well with the "Government Experiment" explanation for events (see the "Antagonist" section). Where did they go? Who knows—maybe it's the Rapture, or maybe the men in moon suits and black dress outfits made them disappear. PCs should be making Isolation and Helplessness checks.

## The Gran Guignol

They're dead. Very dead. There was an obvious struggle. The generators for both buildings, and all the cars, have been brutally, almost animalistically demolished. Frank Thompson's body lies head-down along the steps to the front porch of the store. Becca is dead with Buck in the cellar, her dead body mangled from her futile attempts to shield her youngest child. A long blood trail (more like a blood superhighway) leads to Reggie's body where he crawled several hundred years after taking astonishing wounds to the chest, abdomen, and face—a vain tribute to the human desire to survive at any cost. The kitchen is a mess from what must have been a titanic struggle, and Denise's body lies over the sink, twisted in impossible positions. She clearly put up a terrific fight.

Chuck Parker is dead in the KMTH building, and the air conditioner was cut off when the power went out. The little building is an oven by mid-morning, and the stench of blood and death hangs like a hot, wet wool blanket in the dark, still air. Could whatever it was that did this still be here, waiting? This explanation is good if the game is being run with a limited timespan, as at a con or a pickup session. You can't really miss the implication of twenty quarts of gratuitously splashed blood. It also fits the "One of the Party Members" explanation offered in the Antagonists section. Also, people get to make lots of Violence and Unnatural checks. The nature of the weapon used is left up to the GM—I've always been partial to fire axes, myself.

## The Furtive Murders

This is a little between Roanoke and the Gran Guignol in approach. Everyone is dead, but cursory attempts have been made to conceal the slaughter. Someone passing through town probably couldn't tell that there was anything wrong. However, there is enough evidence for the characters to realize that whoever or whatever killed the inhabitants of New Hellmouth wanted the bodies discovered. The "Closed" sign is up on the door to the store, and the cars are destroyed, but in a much more careful fashion than in the *Gran Guignol.* Inside, there are a few splashes of blood, and here and there, an end table has been upset or a knickknack broken. Characters who make successful checks against whatever they can justify to the GM will get a sense that the "accidental" destruction is anything but. It is as if the killer worked efficiently, and then went back through after they committed the murders and inflicted just enough damage to make it obvious there was a struggle. There are signs that there was a houseguest (the guestroom bed is turned down, *etc.*) but no sign of them. That should be good for a shiver or two.

The six bodies are all buried in a shallow grave behind the Old Reliable. They all appear to have died without strug-

gle. Dr. Mensch will be able to ascertain on a successful Medicine roll that they died either through ingestion or inhalation of a fast-acting and gentle poison, type unknown. He will also be able to ascertain that the blood splashed came from an incision on Reggie's arm. It shows no sign of being caused in a struggle, and every indication of having been made after death.

This scenario works best if the GM and players are familiar and the characters are being played well enough for paranoia to be a bonus. Also, because a certain amount of investigation is being played out, having plenty of time is also a bonus for running this piece. This murder scenario works best for the Dark Stalker antagonist.

## New Hellmouth Tips

Whatever murder scene the GM chooses to use, the primary goal here is twofold. The first is to knock off at least one of the PCs. The second is to get rid of the Kerr Brothers' Caddy. If the PCs have split up between the trailer park and New Hellmouth, then cut back and forth between town and "meanwhile, back at the Rancho." Just remember that the assailant is only active at one location at one time, and taking out the car is your first priority. Knocking one of the PCs off shouldn't be too much trouble, just try not to kill Kenny Kerr, as his Manual Labor skill is useful for the characters' survival. If you must kill him, just let General Education rule the day. Absolutely do not knock off Rich Dansky until the group becomes aware of the fuel tanks at the Ames Ranch.

If the PCs do something clever like stay together in pairs or leave a sentry with the car, the solution is simple. Kill both of them, or kill the sentry and then trash the car—this is horror, after all. Just remember that your goal is to frighten the players, not just whack their characters.

If the party has divided, there's a near-certainty that one group of them is going to end up stranded without a ride. Be gentle—after all, you contrived to kill the car. If this happens, let those with a vehicle suddenly come to the realization that all is not well with the other group, so that they can be reached before they perish from dehydration, blood loss and/or exposure to the elements.

## The Ames Ranch

The Ames Ranch, where Dansky dropped off a new fuel tank recently, is the characters' ticket out. To be explicit, they can take the fuel tank, put it in the bed of Dansky's truck, and head out to see what's wrong with the rest of the world.

The Ames ranch isn't really a ranch any more. It's more like a house with a lot of land. Mike Ames, 67, lives there alone. Located off the highway at the end of a long dirt road, it's a huge four-story monster of a house with a veranda and a central ballroom. It looks as if it had been stolen from some southern plantation and put down whole and intact here in this most unlikely of places.

The paint is peeling from the house in many places, baring wind-scarred silvery wood. The windows are cobwebbed and cloudy with dust in many places, and much of the house is abandoned. Outbuildings slump, abandoned for years, and a steel windmill creaks and squeals through the motions of pumping water, one of its eight sails missing. Whatever fate befell New Hellmouth befell Mike Ames as well. He may be crudely spread-eagle on the windmill's blades, turning corpse-cartwheels in the hot desert wind. Or Ames might be in an outbuilding, at the end of a set of too-obvious drag marks. Or he might be gone without a trace.

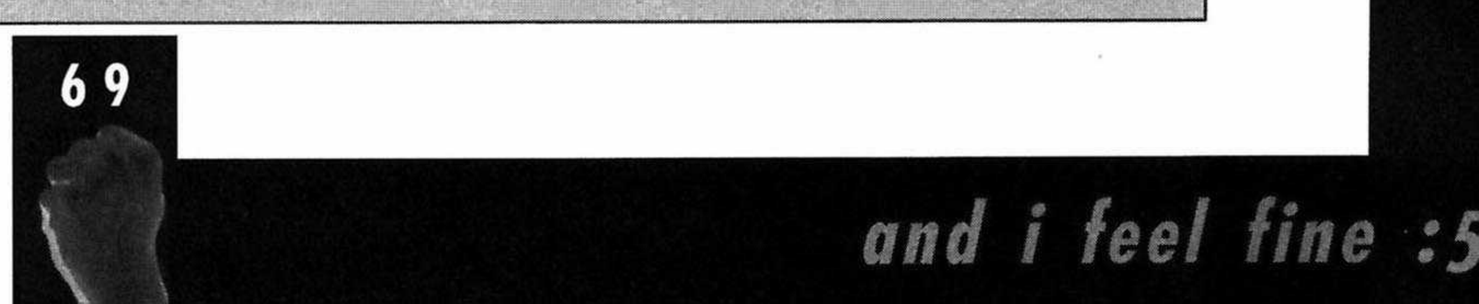
Whatever the case, the gas tanks are still out there in the outbuilding that houses the generator, awaiting installation. It'll probably take a couple of hours for the characters to jury-rig something with the tools and parts at hand. Have Kevin Kerr (if he's still alive) make some positively shifted

### Floor it!

The players may decide, especially if they're all in one car and see a bloody murder at the Old Reliable, to just stomp on the gas and keep going. Your job as a GM is to keep this from happening. Your tool in this is a blown out tire. While it might seem lame, it's really a reaction to player choices that do not reflect probable character choices. For instance, several of the characters are probably ignoring their Noble Stimulus in their haste to leave. Have the driver of the car make a Driving roll. If they succeed, the car slides into a ditch and breaks an axle. If the driver fails the check, the wreck is much more spectacular than that.

Roll percentiles for each character. If they can survive the result as gunshot damage, they take that much. If they cannot, tell them they need to come up with an improbable explanation for how they survived. If they're so witless as to be unable to explain how they lived, kill them. If they produce an explanation, however improbable, add the dice together and assign that as hand-to-hand damage. If you roll a match on the damage, however you apply it, something bad happens. Break one of the character's arms or legs, or give them a concussion, or something else suitably sadistic. Now the characters are not only without a car, they're also crippled and some of them may be dead or dying. This is known as the Stephen King method of wrestling unruly characters into the plot. Did Uli bring his medical kit?





Manual Labor rolls, or allow other members of the group to make General Education rolls to bolt down the gas tank and run a connecting hose. There's plenty of gasoline at the Ames Ranch, thankfully, so another trip to New Hellmouth won't be in order. All the characters have to do is survive long enough for the repairs to get done and for them to reach the open highway. Easier said than done.

## The Final Confrontation

By this point, the characters are either total blockheads off on their own or very wisely clumping together for protection. Feel free to pick off stragglers as the situation permits. Yes, as you've probably guessed, the Antagonist has come with them to the Ames Ranch.

How to handle the confrontation is really a matter for the individual GM to handle. The Antagonist will make one last try at the characters, at the end of which either the Antagonist or the characters will be dead or near to it—that's pretty much a given. The trick is to implement it in a fashion that works. Your players, unless they're mentally incompetent, will know that there's a climax coming. That's the way the dramatic process works. If you're lucky, you can surprise them. If you can't surprise them, you can at least shock them. Here's how.

First, build suspense. For example, let's say Sparky the dog dies the first night. Next, they are attacked just after dark when they arrive in New Hellmouth. They then spend the night walking back to the trailer park. After that ordeal, there's the journey to Ames' farm, which leaves scant few hours to fix the fuel tank onto the truck: a race against the setting sun. This not only establishes a pattern but also exploits the natural human dislike for darkness. It's then a simple matter to have the climax come at an unexpected time, either before or after the false climax of the sunset. If the Antagonist is the Dark Stalker, have him burst through the roof, wall, or floor just before the sun touches the horizon. If one of the party members is the Antagonist, have the sun go down fully without incident. The Change then manifests a little down the road.

Second, maintain pacing and atmosphere. This is horror. You've spent the whole game establishing a mood. Don't let that mood slip into a feast of the dice during the attempt to fix the truck. Do it in as few rolls as possible, and fight against the tendency to let things slip towards the end of a session. You want to maintain the tension down to the moment of the climax.

If the players are attempting to slack off, introduce some tension. Are some of the players injured? Complications could develop, or delirium might set in. Is Sparky the dog still alive? Obviously, he needs to run off to chase some strange animal, maybe to be seen again, maybe not. Watch Alien, and count the number of false events that generate tension versus the number of times an actual Alien shows up. As long as you don't abuse it (and you shouldn't need to, the GM of an RPG has a lot more control over pacing than the director of a movie) it's a valid technique.

Third, offer resolution. Make sure that when you end the story, it ends cleanly. While the setting is one of mystery and must necessarily stay that way, the current crisis should be resolved when the dice stop flying. "The End?"-type endings won't work very well in this setting, since there is essentially nothing more to tell for the characters. Make sure that by the end of the adventure the PCs or the Antagonist are disposed of without a doubt.

# The Antagonist

Thus far, the Antagonist has remained a generic opponent. Below are three specific Antagonists, with stats and explanations for how to tailor the adventure to any of the three. Not only does this give you the ability to customize the adventure to your own tastes, it also means that players who've read the book and metagame will be even worse off than the people in the dark. A perceptive GM will probably feed them a couple of false clues and let them hang themselves.

## Option One: The Dark Stalker

The Dark Stalker is the archetype of a particular human fear, that of the bloody-handed murderer. Very few bloody-handed murderers can become avatars of the Dark Stalker, however. The human fear is so much different from the reality of most maniac killers. Also, you can't ascend to the Invisible Clergy if you're a sociopath, and the whole nature of being the Dark Stalker rather hinges on sociopathy. Of course, this is also the case with most negative archetypes—being an avatar is never easy. If the Dark Stalker is the enemy, then who knows what the explanation behind the apocalypse is? Perhaps the last avatar is about to ascend to the Invisible Clergy and reality is slowly shutting down in preparation for the rebirth of creation. Perhaps the Dark Stalker is that last avatar. Or perhaps there's just been some sort of horrible holocaust that left the world largely deserted and the Dark Stalker is now practicing his trade more openly. Just because there's an Invisible Clergy and avatars and godwalkers doesn't mean there's some sort of law that the world has to be well-populated.

Carlos Williams has been an avatar of the Dark Stalker for almost twenty-three years now, and he's racked up quite a body count—119. Not that they've found many of them, or identified most of the ones they did find. The less said about his history the better, especially as his dialog will be limited largely to the sounds of rapidly expelled breath and the occasional sinister chuckle. Just take it for granted he isn't a very pleasant person and even if he loved some childhood pets or had a very nice grandmother he went to see every Sunday after church as a boy, he's come a long way since then.

# Carlos Williams, Dark Stalker Avatar

## Personality
Whacked out blood-junkie with a mean streak.

## Obsession
Killing things that breathe too much.

## Passions
**Rage Stimulus:** Smugness. Hit someone, take advantage of them, whatever you need to do to make a living or survive, but goddamn it, don't be smug about it. There's nothing that pushes your buttons like someone smirking about how they just fucked someone over.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Violence) Rats. As a kid, one of your cousins was badly bitten by rats when she fell into a basement. The memory of her scarred and bleeding face still lingers with you to this day.
**Noble Stimulus:** People who don't know better. You don't know how many times you've watched someone lacking common sense self-destruct before your eyes. Back when you had extensive human contact, you used to make an effort to try to educate people about how to avoid needless trouble. Not that it helped very often, of course.

## Stats
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 70 | (Punk Rock) |
| **Speed:** | 70 | (Far Faster Than He Appears) |
| **Mind:** | 50 | (Good With Tools) |
| **Soul:** | 50 | (Darkly Compelling) |

## Skills
**Body Skills:** General Athletics 55%, Struggle 70%

## Archetype: Dark Stalker
**Attributes:** The Dark Stalker (also called the Faceless Man) is the remorseless killer without motive. He loves nothing more than the sight of running blood and the feel of dead flesh under his fingers. He may appear charming, but under his shallow smile lies a desire only to murder. The Dark Stalker is a wanderer, a traveler who brings woe and mourning wherever he goes, and who serves no man at all save himself. He is no gloating villain or thug—truly advanced Stalkers are almost ascetic, veritable Saints of Murder. The Dark Stalker is antithetical to the Masterless Man, and Avatars of either cannot abide each other's presence. Many are quite educated, and none are base or ignorant; even the most brutal and uneducated Stalkers have the grace and dignity of their spirituality.
**Taboos:** The Stalker can never work as another's servant—they are either their own man or no one's man at all. A Stalker could be a doctor or a lawyer or professor, but never a laborer or soldier.

The Stalker is never crass or base. They are businesslike and professional—after all, they have a great deal of work to do. While they may take time out to perform some killings that have a certain poetic justice to them, they never look past the murder of the moment. A Dark Stalker with an agenda other than murder is doing a poor job living up to his Archetype's lofty detachment.
**Symbols:** The long dark coat, the wide-brimmed hat, the shadowed face, the red right hand; these are all attributes of the Faceless Man. The Dark Stalker always does his killing himself, either with a bladed weapon or with a noose or club. If he should kill subtly (as with poison), it is only be to excite greater fear in his next victim.
**Channels:**

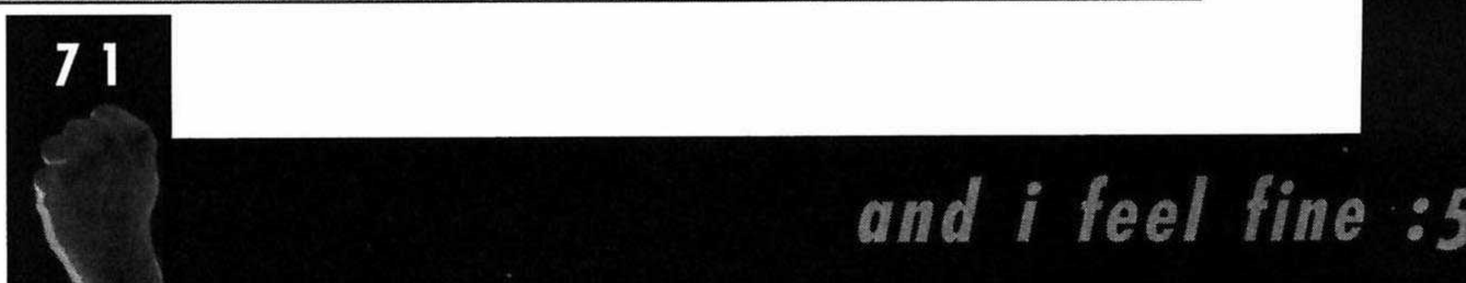
**1%-50%:** The Faceless Man has a certain quality of sincerity about him that makes him almost personable. If he fails a social test with a representative of justice, he may make a Dark Stalker roll. If it is successful, he can retry his failed roll. He can do this only once per failed roll. Note that this makes the Stalker able to avoid suspicion when stopped near a murder or if questioned. But if they catch you with the bloody knife in your hand, there isn't a lot of socializing to do.

**51%-70%:** The Faceless Man's ability to travel rapidly and without being noticed is amazing. Whenever he moves, he may make a Dark Stalker roll. If he succeeds, round up and divide the result by ten. This indicates the fraction of time actually spent travelling. If the result is 37, rounded to 40, then the Faceless Man's journey is only $40 \div 10 = 4/10$ as long as normal. Note that he also only occupies the real world for that many tenths of the journey, so someone attempting to, say, lay a roadblock only has an X-in-10 chance of the Stalker actually passing through the block. The Stalker isn't really aware of this distortion, and can't describe where he is when he isn't here.

**71%-90%:** The Dark Stalker takes a lot to put down. When reduced to zero or fewer wound points, the Stalker can make a Dark Stalker roll. The result is the number of wound points he regains. Every point below zero he takes subtracts one permanently from his Dark Stalker skill, however. If the Stalker rolls a match while attempting this, he just dies. So sorry.

**91%+:** The Faceless Man's mobility is difficult to impede. At this level of Channel, the Faceless Man may circumvent posses, barricades, security checkpoints, border guards, and any other snares laid in his path with a successful Dark Stalker roll.





**Speed Skills:** Dodge 15%, Driving 15%, Go First 50%
**Mind Skills:** General Education 15%, Notice 75%
**Soul Skills: Avatar: Dark Stalker 76%**, Charm 35%, Lying 35%

**Go First:** Williams rolls this skill before initiative the first round of each fight. If he succeeds, he can add the roll to his initiative score for the round. Don't let your PCs have this one.

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 Hardened | 5 Hardened | 5 Hardened | 5 Hardened | 5 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed |

## Possessions

Fire axe. Broad-brimmed black hat. Black silk shirt. Black cowboy boots. Black jeans. Long, thin black cotton jacket. Vial of gently-acting poison.

## Running with the Dark Stalker

If the Dark Stalker is the Antagonist, things can pretty much run in a totally vanilla fashion. He's out there, watching the characters, playing with them and picking them off one by one. The final climax will probably consist of Williams attempting to rush the party. Some ideas include a plunge from a ceiling onto the top of a recently started truck, or from a door frame onto the departing pickup. If Sparky the dog is still alive, there's a good chance that he'll point out Carlos's location. Use this to give the players a fighting chance—Carlos is deadly in combat and prone to coming back just when you thought he was dead. If you can lure the party away from the truck, either by having Sparky run towards the house to attack the lurking Williams or by some other stratagem, do so. The conflict is much more likely to be exciting with more space to play with than a fast melee around the truck. Since the PCs are mostly armed, space is essential, especially because a fight on or around the truck is likely to hole the fuel tank, stranding the characters in the middle of hostile Arizona desert and ending the adventure on what we in the gaming business call a "downbeat note."

# Option Two: One of the Party

Just as there are cancers of the body, there are also cancers of the spirit. One of the members of the party has been infected with just such a cancer. Similar to lycanthropy and schizophrenia, the affliction forces the victim's body through terrible physical changes as its rapidly mutating spirit attempts to find a form more suited. The episodes are at first occasional and mild, usually occurring in the victim's sleep. Later, they happen during the waking hours, and become increasingly severe as the condition progresses. During the time between episodes, the victim acts normally. Most memories of the episode are repressed or remembered with a dreamlike quality. All of this is of great interest to magickal practitioners. However, the characters are definitely not likely to develop an academic interest in things, at least not in the short run. The practical outcome is that the victim turns into a cross between a werewolf and John Carpenter's *The Thing*. While the condition isn't contagious, the new form of the spirit is almost always corrupt and essentially harmful. While cunning, it is both in pain and (usually) hungry for spiritual and physical material to fuel its haphazard growth. As an aside, if one of these things gets out and hangs around in the spirit world, it makes a hell of a demon, pardon the pun, though normally the condition is degenerative.

In terms of combat stats, the creature has a Struggle rating of 60%, a Dodge of 30%, and does +6 damage from horrible spikes, fearsome talons, and terrible jaws. It has triple the character's wound points, and treats bullet wounds as hand-to-hand attacks. Describe it however you want, or dance around describing it. Seeing it requires a rank-3 Unnatural check. Seeing the transformation (which is swift, noiseless, and apparently painless) calls for a rank-7 Unnatural check. It can run on all fours faster than a man but slower than a car.

## Running the Horrible Shapechanging Beast

Of course, one of the party members has contracted this ailment, at what can only be described as a somewhat inopportune moment. Over the last few days, it has ravaged the countryside during the night, thus the high body count in the surrounding area. The GM should decide which character it is who has the illness. Any of them will do—the role-playing ability of the player is really what counts. Try to pick the best player in the group to portray the victim. Take them aside ahead of time and tell them they've been having lost time, terrible nightmares, and feeling a little ill lately. Ask them for their cooperation later in the adventure. If they have an un-macho character like Uli, Timothy or Rebecca, so much the better. All the more surprise when the time comes.

You have two goals in running the shapeshifter Antagonist. The first is that you and the player must not blow the secret before the climax. This is important, and it can take some very careful nudging on your part to make sure the shapechanger gets time alone. The characters can suspect, but unlike the characters in a movie, at some level the players know there is a big horrible monster out there. After all, they're playing victims in a horror setting. Make sure the suspicions aren't very strong. It wouldn't be beyond the victim to hallucinate having "seen" an attack they committed. You can even describe it to them in horrific Technicolor detail and have them make a couple of Violence and Unnatural checks. Even disassociated and partially suppressed memories of chewing off an acquaintance's head are pretty scarring.

Your second goal is to make sure the Caddy gets trashed. This is a toughie. If you use Timothy as the Shapeshifter, you can have Sparky bound into the Cadillac and drop a suggestion that he'd like to go as a good excuse. If not, you'll just have to communicate to the player than they need to go and hope things turn out well. This may be touch and go; roll dice for credibility.

The fact that this scenario gains a great deal from intense roleplaying means that a good and open group makes for a great game. Unfortunately, it also needs a lot of time to set up. It's an ideal con game, if you have a long time slot. Otherwise, only try this one at home with a group that's ready for some possibly gut-wrenching roleplaying.

## Option Three: The Government Experiment

A more mundane explanation for the events is that Rancho Mirago is part of a pointlessly insidious government test of psychoactive chemical warfare agents. Maybe it's just a test gone wrong, an accidental release, or maybe they intended to wipe out this little town in the interests of national security. Who knows? That feeling of creeping paranoia the characters have is, of course, chemically induced. The lack of communication with the outside world is a matter of broadband jamming and other pseudo-scientific handwaving. Characters don't die grisly deaths; they disappear, dragged off to the noiseless black helicopters by men in moon suits with tranquilizer rifles. No doubt they'll be dissected in a facility that's a high-budget remake of the Wildfire complex from *The Andromeda Strain,* but that's somewhat beyond the scope of this adventure. The Cadillac isn't destroyed by brute force, it's hit by a one-shot particle beam weapon that hopelessly seizes up the internals and ruins the electronics.

Really, this is the most hopeless of the adventures. Even if they get the truck and the fuel tank together, they're going to end up in a hopeless race with a dozen black helicopters, some with real M-60s on he doors and a bunch of chase cars. They do get to wreck a lot of expensive government property, though, and whack some moon-suit clad agents, so the scenario isn't totally without bright moments.

Moon suit agents have the same stats as police detectives in the UA rulebook, and are wearing bulletproof vests under their C.B.R. gear. Their tranquilizer rifles do damage as hand-to-hand (those darts aren't exactly made out of foam) but their firearms damage as a percentile penalty to the character's skills, starting next round and lasting for several hours. If the penalty hits 100%, out go the lights. Too much shooting at these guys will bring troopers who didn't get their armaments surplus from *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom.* They have perfectly serviceable M-16s for their own use and M-60s for the Helicopters (assume a -20% flat shift to hit with a doorgun on a target any smaller than a car).

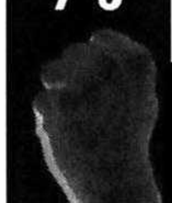
### Running the Insidious Government Plot

The key here is to play up just how insidious and powerful the effects of the psychotropic are. What exactly the chemical does is up to you. It definitely creates a feeling of being watched, of creeping paranoia that comes on gradually and finally culminates in a full-scale paranoid episode in 72 hours. The characters won't last that long, however, so don't worry about that. What other corollary effects it has should probably include flashes or episodes of vivid hallucination. Don't be cheesy. Dancing bears and video game characters talking to you isn't what this stuff is all about. This is designed for battlefield use, and the hallucinations are certain to be unpleasant, probably focusing on something the character has failed notches in.

As characters are bumped off one at a time (taken away for examination), reveal a little more, but make sure that the characters have hallucinated enough that they may not be able to take evidence of their senses seriously.

At the end, as the characters get more focused (probably on running like hell and shooting down helicopters), decrease the hallucinations and turn up the action. This one plays well for action-oriented crowds, so give them their money's worth.





# Kenneth Kerr

(Taurus) Growing up poor in Portland was rough for you and your younger brother Kevin. You never knew your father, and your mother worked endless hours as a waitress to make ends meet for the two of you. It wasn't out of mischief or spite that you ended up getting yourself and your brother involved in crime–it just seemed like the right thing to do. At least you got out of the house now and then, and the two of you eventually had enough money to get by on your own. You even helped out by paying the bills when you got older. Mom didn't like it, but once you started paying the rent she stopped complaining.

You've always had to take care of your brother, and you've always wanted to make something of yourselves. Small-time crime wasn't going to take you anywhere, other than the state correctional facility. While you might not be the smartest guy in the world, it was clear that it was either the big time or the big house for you and Kevin. So last year, you and your brother robbed forty-seven banks in Mexico.

You didn't really realize how hot it would get, so you're laying low, very low, back in the States until the heat dies down. It might be a while, so you spend some of your loot. Rancho Mirago isn't great, but the people here all have reasons to keep out of sight, and they aren't law and order types. Since most of the loot is in pesos, the fact that Mirago is cheap isn't bad, either. You think the trailer park guy and his old Nazi buddy are weird in a somewhat unpleasant way. You like Rebecca Borgstrom and her son, though. You try to play with the kid whenever you can, and you've been trying to help Rebecca with some of the money, but, like Mom, she's resistant to charity. Still, you've been able to buy her some groceries and so on from time to time, and you aren't willing to give up yet.

## Obsession

Getting your life together. Whatever stands in the way of a better tomorrow for you and your brother, you'll overcome. You might go around, and you might go over, but it's all the same to you.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Being treated like you're stupid. You managed to raise yourself and your kid brother and you've launched a moderately successful career in crime without getting caught. You might not be educated, but you sure aren't stupid. People who treat you like you are really piss you off.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Helplessness) Rats. When you were little, you mistook the rat that infested your bedroom for a pet. It bit you, and you've been terrified ever since.

**Noble Stimulus:** People on the down and out. Not on the skids–you don't have any sympathy for people who commit crimes and have to go on the run or booze themselves into the gutter. But people trying desperately to make ends meet really make your heart go out.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 60 | (Fit) |
| **Speed:** | 50 | (Deft) |
| **Mind:** | 50 | (Steady Thinker) |
| **Soul:** | 60 | (Likeable) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Brawling 55%, General Athletics 15%, Manual Labor 20%

**Speed Skills:** Dodge 45%, Driving 15%, Firearms 20%

**Mind Skills:** General Education 15%, Notice 30%, **Planning 35%**

**Soul Skills:** Charm 45%, Lying 25%, Sixth Sense 20%

**Manual Labor:** Things you'd do in shop class. Fixing cars, digging holes, building things from wood and metal. Nothing fancy–you can use a cutting torch and solder copper pipe, but not weld or work with electronics.

**Planning:** Working things out ahead of time. You can roll this if you have sufficient time and accurate information to plan an action or series of actions. If you're successful, the GM has to tell you any holes in your plan or things you've overlooked. If you get an OACOWA, your plan automatically goes off flawlessly, without undue complications. That doesn't mean it automatically succeeds–if you plan involves a shootout, then you'll still have to roll it out, but some cops who just happen to be driving by won't get into the middle of things. This skill cannot help you with problems you are unaware of, such as a traitor, magickal scrying, or a secret police task force.

**Sixth Sense:** You just have this way of knowing when something bad is going to happen. Whenever something bad is about to happen, the GM secretly makes a Sixth Sense check for you. If you succeed, you get a round of action to prepare, though the nature of the threat isn't immediately apparent. If you get an OACOWA, you automatically win initiative when whatever it is goes down.

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 2 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 1 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed | 1 Failed | 1 Failed |

## Possessions

Desert Eagle .50, collection of Zane Grey and Mickey Spillane novels, white 1969 Cadillac convertible, long gray shorts, white crewneck T-shirt with a pack of Camel Filters in the front pocket.

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# Kevin Kerr

(Libra) You've spent your whole life with your older brother, and the two of you are inseparable. Ever since you were kids growing up in Portland, he's taken care of you. When you were young, he made sure the bigger kids didn't pick on you, and later on, when you got into petty crime, he made sure that you didn't get left behind or set up or cheated out of your cut on jobs. Once you were old enough to realize how smart your brother was, and how good he was at taking care of the both of you, you decided to make sure that whatever Kenny wanted, happened.

Basically, your brother does the thinking, and you do the cleaning. You shot three men in Mexico, a bank guard and two cops. They would have put the two of you in jail, so it wasn't as hard as you thought it would be. If you had to, you'd do it again without a second thought.

You like it here in Arizona. You like it that your brother has a crush on that Rebecca Borgstrom chick, you like the weather, you like the place you live. Something about the run-down nature of the place just puts you at peace. It's a place that isn't full of challenges–you can just be yourself here. Hell, you even like the guy who runs the trailer camp and his buddy Dr. Mengele. Timmy, Rebecca Borgstrom's ten-year-old son, reminds you of how you wish you'd been when you were ten. You play with him a lot, and the two of you help each other keep a straight face while Kenny courts Rebecca.

If the world ended tomorrow and the inhabitants of the Rancho Mirago were the only people left alive on earth, you'd stick your hands up over your head and shout "*Fuck* yeah!"

## Obsession

Making sure Kenny's okay. Whenever anything gets in Kenny's way or hurts him, you make it stop. He protected you for all those years as a kid, so paying him back is the least you can do.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Getting hit. When you were young, you were slapped around by bigger kids sometimes when Kenny wasn't around, and getting hit, especially in the face, really flips you out.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Helplessness) Being cornered. You hate being put in a place where you don't have freedom of action. It's much like claustrophobia, but one of the walls has to be a person. You have a hard time at parties.
**Noble Stimulus:** People in trouble. You're the guy who runs into burning buildings to save little kids or dives into a river from a bridge to try to rescue someone drowning, regardless of the danger to you. People hurt or in serious physical danger draw you like a moth to a candle flame.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 60 | (Made of Coathangers & Determination) |
| **Speed:** | 70 | (Oiled Cobra) |
| **Mind:** | 40 | (Dawk?) |
| **Soul:** | 50 | (Often Says the Wrong Thing) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** General Athletics 25%, Scrapping 35%, Macho Displays 20%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 35%, Driving 25%, **Firearms 40%**
**Mind Skills:** General Ed. 25%, Movie Trivia 10%, Notice 35%
**Soul Skills:** Charm 45%, Lying 15%, Establish Sympathy 20%

**Macho Displays:** With a successful skill roll, you can open beer bottles with your teeth, punch through thick objects, break bottles over your head and drink unreasonably large quantities of alcohol, all with no ill effect and while still retaining the ability to wave your arm and bark to cheer the next guy on. Comes in handy for when you have to stick your fist through car windows.
**Establish Sympathy:** You're a pretty empathic guy. A successful roll on this skill allows you to establish a link with someone or something in pain, physical and emotional. It helps both to calm them down and to alleviate the pain. The more immediate the trauma and the less intellectual the subject's approach to ease the pain, the better this skill works. A successful roll on this skill may, at the GM's option, serve as therapy immediately after a character gains a Failed notch on their Madness Meter.

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed | 1 Failed | 1 Failed |

## Possessions

Two Colt M-1911A1 .45 automatics, black jeans and a black silk shirt, string tie with silver and turquoise brooch.

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# Rebecca Borgstrom

(Capricorn) Once, a long time ago, you were Rebecca Christianson, an average girl in an average suburban neighborhood. After graduating high school with a 3.8 average, you went to college at the University of Pittsburgh to study English Literature. In your sophomore year, you met Chet Borgstrom at a sorority mixer; he was a handsome young pre-med student who stole your heart. The idea of taking care of a beautiful house in the far suburbs with a couple of cocker spaniels and a wonderful child sounded just about right. Further, you found Chet's intelligence, attractiveness, and easygoing charm irresistible. What a mistake that was.

You worked your fingers to the bone as a waitress and a secretary to help Chet through Med school, you supported him through his internship, and you didn't complain when you only saw him three nights a week (at most) after he started performing surgery as a heart specialist. You even had a great kid, Timothy, who he could barely be bothered to learn the name of, and did you complain? No.

Unfortunately, Chet had other plans. He left you for some twenty-something sculptor with purple hair, unshaved armpits and pierced eyebrows, the bastard. His crummy lawyers kept you from getting a damn thing, except for the child support he never pays. You hear he's quite the patron of the Boston art scene now. And you? You're living in a run-down trailer park in Arizona, trying to get yourself together before you plunge into the West Coast job market. The fact that the collection agencies will never find you in this armpit of nowhere doesn't hurt, either.

## Obsession

A quiet, normal life. You've always just wanted to find a nice, calm place and settle down to a life with a husband who loves you and a stable day-to-day existence, just like your parents had before they got divorced.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Getting ripped off. Being cheated or having things that are rightfully yours taken from you really sets you off. It always has, which explains why you took the divorce so badly.
**Fear Stimulus:** (Isolation) Your son's health. Timothy is all you have in the world now. Nothing bad is going to happen to him.
**Noble Stimulus:** Hurt animals. You really like animals, and you're constantly raising nestless birds or abandoned bunnies. You volunteered at the local humane society all during your marriage, and your dog Sparky loves you and Timothy equally.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 40 | (Plump But Moderately Athletic) |
| **Speed:** | 50 | (Deft Hands) |
| **Mind:** | 60 | (Smarter Than You Act) |
| **Soul:** | 70 | (Very Personable) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 35%, Raw Endurance 20%, Struggle 15%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 15%, Driving 25%, Fast Grab 20%, Gymnastics 10%
**Mind Skills:** General Ed. 35%, **Homemaking 40%**, Notice 15%
**Soul Skills:** Charm 65%, Lying 35%

**Raw Endurance:** The ability to keep going, no matter what. A roll on this skill can be made to force wakefulness at the point when you would normally fall over and sleep from exhaustion. In this case, if the results are successful add the dice together as for a hand-to-hand attack. That's the number of hours you can go before sleeping (or making another roll). Raw Endurance also represents your ability to keep going even when smart people lay down and die. Once per session, if you reach the point where you would collapse or die from wounds, you may make a Raw Endurance check. If you succeed, the number rolled is the number of wound points you regain. That doesn't mean you can just waltz around with holes drilled in you (unlike the similar power of the Masterless Man archetype)—it represents an act of will. You're still going to need some time attached to the Machine That Goes Beep afterwards.
**Homemaking:** The Stewardship of a later day. The ability to cook, keep a house neat and stocked with food, manage domestic responsibilities, balance the household finances, organize and host parties, raise children, perform basic veterinary medicine, and first aid. Not as easy as it looks.

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 2 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed |

## Possessions

30' single-width trailer (rented), can of pepper spray, tan slacks, a pink blouse and flats, 1996 Pontiac sedan, several large debts, three-year-old golden retriever named Sparky.

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# Timothy James Borgstrom

(Leo on amphetamines) You're just an ordinary ten-year-old kid. You like to explore the world around you, find out how things work, and have a somewhat sadistic sense of fun and humor. Your dad, who you never really knew that well, left your mom for this weird woman with purple hair who was pretty and went to the bathroom an awful lot. You have a big, wonderful golden retriever named Sparky whom you love more than anything in the whole world. You're not sure, but you think you're poor now.

You live in a trailer park now, full of cool junk like wrecked cars and ruined trailers. Not a lot of stuff happens there, but you've got a Playstation, and it's great to explore, even if you have to watch out for scorpions and rattlesnakes. You're pretty sure you should be going to school someplace, but nobody seems to mind, so you're not complaining yet. You like Kevin and Kenny. They're fun and they like to play Playstation with you. You and Kevin think Kenny has a crush on your mom, but neither of you wants to embarrass them. You also both think the guy who runs the trailer park and the really old German guy he hangs around with are pretty creepy, but the old guy sewed you up after you cut yourself pretty bad a month ago, and you're feeling okay.

## Obsession

Neat things. Interesting and unusual things draw your eye. You like to discover and explore, but most of all you like to bring back souvenirs. You want to be a deep-sea diver and explore wrecked ships when you grow up.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Bullies. Anyone who kicks people when they're down or fights unfairly.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Violence) Large animals. You got chased by a bull at your grandmother's house last year, and since then, anything as big as or bigger than you has been right out. Sparky is grandfather claused, as far as you're concerned, but other large dogs give you the cold sweats.

**Noble Stimulus:** Girls. It seems silly, but that old-fashioned thing about helping out girls in distress really seems like an okay idea to you.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 30 | (Childish Energy & Durability) |
| **Speed:** | 60 | (Freakish Reflexes) |
| **Mind:** | 70 | (Fast Learner) |
| **Soul:** | 60 | (Friendly but Hyper) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Breakfall 20%, General Athletics 25%, Struggle 5%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 45%, Driving 5%, Fit Through Things 30%
**Mind Skills:** Dinosaur and Television Trivia 20%, General Education 5%, **Notice 65%**
**Soul Skills:** Charm 35%, Escape Certain Death 40%, Lying 5%

**Breakfall:** This skill represents the flexibility of children's bones and the ability of kids to bounce back from unholy catastrophes and keep running. If you take damage from falling or impact, roll this skill. If the roll is made successfully, add the dice together, just as for hand-to-hand damage. Subtract the result from falling or impact damage. Not great for long falls, but it can be a lifesaver for short ones.

**Escape Certain Death:** God loves children. Once per session, when you're about to suffer a horrible incapacitating injury or otherwise be put out of play, you can roll Escape Certain Death. If you succeed in the roll, lucky circumstances prevent you from taking any damage and give you a chance to flee the situation. You cannot, however, use your escape chance as an opportunity to launch an attack. When the wolfman cracks himself across the head on the doorsill and you simultaneously kick him in the nuts, you have to take off like a shot, not pump him full of .45 slugs.

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 Hardened | 1 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed | 0 Failed |

## Possessions

Collection of neat things found in the trailers (molted scorpion carapaces, doll heads, mouse skulls), powerful slingshot, cutoff blue jeans and a White Zombie T-shirt, black canvas high-top sneakers, a Playstation with various games.

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# Uli Von Mensch

(Scorpio) You grew up in Germany during the war and immigrated to America in 1950 with your family. You became a doctor and served a very important role in those repressive times: you were an abortionist. Unfortunately, a D&C went somewhat awry in the early 1970s and one of your patients died. Unfortunate. More unfortunate, her husband was both influential and displeased.

There were legal issues. You became a wanted man. Los Angeles was no longer your kind of town. A desert retirement was in order, and the Rancho Mirago seemed like the perfect place.

It was a little livelier then, with the hippies, but there was always need for a doctor in a commune. You delivered three children, treated two heroin overdoses, checked and okayed innumerable drugs as suitable for human consumption, and spent a few years high as a kite. It was a nice second childhood. Now you've settled down into a comfortable old age, and are enjoying these sunset years. You expect that you'll have to buy the trailer park and start paying the taxes on it soon, but you don't mind. You were rather in the high end of your profession, and the bank statements from your accounts in Argentina and Switzerland keep on coming in.

You know that the other residents think you're a Nazi fugitive, which is somewhat amusing, as you'd have to be about twenty years older than you are now. While you're old, you're hardly *that* decrepit.

## Obsession

Dignity. Even in your reduced state you are a scholar and a gentleman. You will not be, nor will you be treated as, anything less.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Making mistakes. You tend to flip out when you make mistakes. This can be big things like bad decisions, or small things like kicking the chair on your way to the bathroom in the night.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Helplessness) Losing your freedom. You've kept yourself out of jail this long. You aren't going to die an old man in prison, no matter what. Likewise, you have a terrible fear of senility, and constantly check your own actions to monitor your lucidity.

**Noble Stimulus:** Hurt people. You take your oath as a doctor very seriously, and will not refuse anyone medical aid, even if they're a machete-wielding maniac. You once even helped a state policeman who was in a car accident, though it hurt you at least as much as it did him.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 40 | (Old & Frail) |
| **Speed:** | 40 | (Palsied) |
| **Mind:** | 70 | (Sharp as a Tack) |
| **Soul:** | 70 | (Full of the Dignity of Age) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Act Young 20%, General Athletics 15%, Boxing 35%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 15%, Driving 25%, Firearms 20%, Take Away 10%
**Mind Skills: General Education 45%**, Medicine 50%, Notice 15%
**Soul Skills:** Bedside Manner 30%, Charm 35%, Lying 35%

**Act Young:** Once per session, whenever you're in direct physical confrontation or competition with someone younger than you are, or when you're performing a task someone younger than you could do better, you can add or subtract your entire Act Young skill percentage from a die roll.

**Bedside Manner:** The ability to put anxious people at ease and gain the trust and attention of those who would ignore your advice and make themselves sicker than they already are.

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 1 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 0 Failed | 0 Failed | 1 Failed | 1 Failed | 1 Failed |

## Possessions

Khaki shorts, loafers, black socks with garters, a white dress shirt with blue pin-striping, blue fedora, investments totaling slightly over one million dollars in Argentina and Switzerland, a medical kit containing enough drugs to sedate an active volcano, a 1997 black Lexus sedan, a .25 caliber automatic pistol, liver spot remover cream.

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# Rich Dansky

(Dyspeptic) You were an ordinary young intellectual. You had a fairly normal childhood in Philadelphia, did well in high school and took a Masters in English Composition from Cornell. Your first foray into the working world, however, led you straight into the satanic inner workings of an outplacement agency best described as non-traditionally managed. After a few years, you left. You were fed up with the academic world that wouldn't take your studies seriously, and the cynical businessmen who wanted nothing more than the bucks of desperate executives. "Fuck 'em all," you decided, and became a trailer park manager.

It seemed like such a good idea at the time. But the drunken brawls, the petty greed of the park owners, the hopeless feeling that pervaded the environment gradually wore you down. You managed as best you could. Maybe you drank too much, but at least necessary repairs were made and the cops only had to be summoned on a domestic call once or twice a month.

Then came the tornadoes. First one, then the next, just as you were rebuilding. The memories of the black winds, the howl of tearing metal and the crash of shattering wood, the screams barely audible over the storm, still haunt your dreams. After the second one, you found a child's leg, the foot still in the sneaker. That's all they found to bury of the little girl. That was it for you. You quit five minutes after you got back from the funeral.

You weren't really sure what you were going to do after that. You figured maybe you'd go live under a bridge and drink, but that didn't seem appealing after the first try. So you took the next best thing, and signed on with the management company that owns Rancho Mirago. No tornadoes out here! You've been working there for four years now, and you couldn't be happier. Your parents occasionally moan about how you're wasting your life, but what do they know? In the evenings, you play chess or sit with Uli, and watch the place slowly go to hell. It might not be "the life," but it's better than any other job you've had to date. What could go wrong in the middle of the Arizona desert? Hell, they're even starting to think of you as a local. Just two days ago, Mike Ames was having truck problems, and he asked you to take a new fuel tank for his generator out to the ranch—a couple years ago, he barely acknowledged your existence. Obviously, you aren't doing too badly.

## Obsession

Keeping your charges safe. You feel responsible for the deaths of those who died in your previous two trailer parks, and you're not going to let it happen again.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Bad guys. You keep your eyes open for thugs, bullies, home invaders, and all the other riff-raff out there who just want to hurt others.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Helplessness) Storms. Tornadoes, rain, whatever, it all gives you the heebie-jeebies. If it's not blue sky and sunshine, you're jumpy.

**Noble Stimulus:** Hardscrabblers. People who are eking a living in a marginalized environment, far away from the highways and the SUVs. You used to make fun of the kinds of people who lived in trailer parks and appeared on *Jerry Springer.* Now you're proud to stand by them and try to make a difference in their lives.

## Stats

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Body:** | 60 | (Husky) |
| **Speed:** | 50 | (Surprisingly Fast) |
| **Mind:** | 60 | (Well-Educated) |
| **Soul:** | 50 | (Self-Assured) |

## Skills

**Body Skills:** General Athletics 15%, Struggle 35%, Tackle 40%
**Speed Skills:** Dodge 25%, Driving 25%, Interpose Self 30%
**Mind Skills:** General Education 25%, **Notice 30%**, Writing 25%
**Soul Skills:** Academic Deportment 20%, Charm 35%, Lying 25%

**Academic Deportment:** You can appear dignified and mannerly (or a somewhat Bohemian definition of mannerly). You know how to handle departmental politics, deal with advisors, and act like a gentleman at cultural events. You must roll over your Academic Deportment total to not take a stiff drink when one is offered, though you may roll for each drink.

**Interpose Self:** You can add this skill to your initiative when your action involves getting in between two people with hostile intent towards one-another.

**Tackle:** If you successfully hit someone with a Struggle roll, you may choose not to do damage, but instead to body-check them. If you make a successful Tackle roll, this gives them a -10% shift to hit you, gives you a +10% shift to hit them, and probably gives you initiative on them. This skill doesn't work on people with higher Body stats than yours.

## Madness Meter

| Violence | Unnatural | Helplessness | Isolation | Self |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 1 Hardened | 0 Hardened | 0 Hardened |
| 1 Failed | 0 Failed | 2 Failed | 0 Failed | 0 Failed |

## Possessions

Blue jeans, high-top sneakers, airy white cotton dress shirt, string tie with a scorpion under glass as the brooch, crisp light brown Stetson, 1947 Ford pickup truck, bottle of Old Crow.

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# Just Because We Love You: The Master Firearms Damage Table

Okay, to be honest this was supposed to go in the rulebook, but it just wouldn't fit and it didn't seem like a huge priority anyway. So now we're getting around to it. ¶ All right, you sweaty-palmed gunfondlers, get ready! This table gives the *Unknown Armies* maximum damage for a wide variety of firearms calibers. Are you miffed because your favorite instrument of sudden and vengeful death was omitted from the rulebook? Just get the vital stats from some other game or book—name, caliber, capacity, whether it comes in a sweaty-palm-proof finish—and then look its caliber up here. Instant death! This data is derived with permission from *The Weapons Compendium* by John H. Crowe, III (Seattle, Washington: Pagan Publishing, 1995). Lock and load, friends!

| Handgun/Submachine Gun Caliber | Max. Damage |
|---|---|
| .22 long | 30 |
| .22 long rifle | 35 |
| .22 short | 25 |
| .32 ACP | 40 |
| .32 Colt New Police | 40 |
| .357 Magnum | 60 |
| .38 Colt New Police | 50 |
| .38 Special | 50 |
| .38 Super Auto | 50 |
| .380 ACP | 50 |
| .40 S&W | 50 |
| .41 Magnum | 70 |
| .44 Magnum | 80 |
| .44 Special | 60 |
| .45 ACP | 60 |
| .45 Colt Long | 60 |
| .50 AE | 95 |
| 7.62mm Type P | 40 |
| 7.63mm Mauser | 40 |
| 7.65mm Luger | 40 |
| 9mm Largo | 50 |
| 9mm Makarov | 50 |
| 9mm Mauser | 50 |
| 9mm Parabellum | 50 |
| 9mm Steyr | 50 |
| 10mm Auto | 55 |

| Rifle/Machine Gun Caliber | Max. Damage |
|---|---|
| .22 Hornet | 50 |
| .22 long | 30 |
| .22 long rifle | 35 |
| .22 short | 25 |
| .222 Remington | 60 |
| .243 Winchester | 65 |
| .25-06 | 65 |
| .270 Winchester | 80 |
| .284 Winchester | 80 |
| .30 Carbine | 60 |
| .300 Weatherby Magnum | 100 |
| .300 Winchester Magnum | 100 |
| .30-06 | 80 |
| .30-30 | 80 |
| .303 British | 80 |
| .338 Winchester Magnum | 100 |
| .35 Remington | 100 |
| .358 Winchester | 100 |
| .444 Marlin | 100 |
| .50 M2 | 170 |
| 5.45mm M74 | 60 |
| 5.56mm NATO | 60 |
| 6.5mm Mauser | 75 |
| 7mm Mauser | 80 |
| 7mm Remington Magnum | 100 |
| 7.51mm M31 | 80 |
| 7.62mm M1943 | 60 |
| 7.62mm NATO | 80 |
| 7.62mm Russian | 80 |
| 7.92mm Mauser | 80 |
| 12.7mm Soviet | 170 |
| 14.5mm Soviet | 180 |

| Shotgun Caliber | Max. Damage |
|---|---|
| 10-gauge, slug | 85 |
| 10-gauge, buckshot | 130 |
| 12-gauge, slug | 80 |
| 12-gauge, buckshot | 120 |
| 12-gauge Magnum, slug | 110 |
| 12-gauge Magnum, buckshot | 130 |
| 16-gauge, slug | 75 |
| 16-gauge, buckshot | 70 |
| 20-gauge, slug | 70 |
| 20-gauge, buckshot | 60 |
| 20-gauge Magnum, slug | 90 |
| 20-gauge Magnum, buckshot | 60 |
| 28-gauge, slug | 65 |
| 28-gauge, buckshot | 45 |

TO THE GLORY OF GOD,
AND IN LOVING MEMORY OF
ELEVEN CHILDREN,
WHO LOST THEIR LIVES
THROUGH ACCIDENT BY FIRE,
IN WORTLEY CHURCH SCHOOL,
NEW YEARS DAY 1891.

EMILY LISTER, AGED 12 YEARS.
HARRIET RILEY, AGED 11 YEARS.
ADA WHITTERON, AGED 11 YEARS.
MAGGIE KITCHEN, AGED 12 YEARS.
EMILY SANDERSON, AGED 9 YEARS.
ELIZABETH TINGLE, AGED 12 YEARS.
ETHEL FIELDHOUSE, AGED 13 YEARS.
CLARISSA ROBERTS, AGED 11 YEARS.
FLORRIE ELWELL BROCKES, AGED 9 YEARS.
CAROLINE EVELINE STEEL, AGED 9 YEARS.
JULIA FLORENCE ANDERSON, AGED 9 YEARS.

GOD IS
NOT DEAD
HE IS MERELY
UNEMPLOYED

UNKNOWN ARMIES

five stand-alone scenarios

UNKNOWN ARMIES

# Always put one shot in da BRAIN

**PUNCH IT.** IF YOU'RE GOING TO PLAY *UNKNOWN ARMIES,* YOU MIGHT AS WELL HIT THE GROUND RUNNING. LOCK AND LOAD WITH *ONE SHOTS,* FIVE STAND-ALONE SCENARIOS WITH READY-MADE PLAYER CHARACTERS. NO HEAVY PREP, NO GRAND PLANS–JUST DIVE IN AND GET A TASTE FOR THE OCCULT UNDERGROUND. SINCE EACH OF THESE NASTY LITTLE TALES IS SELF-CONTAINED, NOTHING IS GUARANTEED. NOTHING IS SAFE. NOTHING IS WHAT IT SEEMS. ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN.

**GO CAT GO:**

### Jail Break
*GREG STOLZE*
FOUR CONVICTS. FIVE HOSTAGES. ONE GUN. DO THE MATH.

### Strange Days
*TIM DEDOPULOS*
WHEN THE GOING GETS WEIRD, THE WEIRD TURN PRO–ON EACH OTHER.

### Joy & Sorrow
*NICOLE LINDROOS & JOHN TYNES*
SORROW IS ONLY SKIN DEEP. JOY GOES AS FAR AS YOU LET IT.

### Fly to Heaven
*GREG STOLZE*
MOMMY, WHY IS THE STEWARDESS DEAD? COFFEE, TEA & TERRORISM.

### And I Feel Fine
*GEOFFREY C. GRABOWSKI*
WHAT IF THEY HELD THE END OF THE WORLD AND NOBODY CAME?

ATLAS GAMES

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